



# BALKAN BLEND THE ROAD TO RENEWAL

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An anthology about and beyond the  
political scene in the Balkans

*Published by the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation*



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POLITICAL SCENE IN THE BALKANS

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# Introduction

Summer 2011 – The final negotiations are coming to a close for Croatia as the next member of the European Union. This was expected and hoped for by many for many years. The membership has been regarded as justified and right. At the same time it still surprises those who do not understand that the centre of our continent must be included in a unified Europe. And South Eastern Europe – as some call it – is the centre. Or the Balkans – as others say.

The Balkans and South Eastern Europe: Is there a difference? It definitely describes the identical European countries, but is used either in a geographical sense (the Balkans – “mountains” in Turkish) or as a cultural expression (South Eastern Europe). It is also used differently in different languages. In Germany you most of the time say “Südosteuropa”, while British publications and politicians prefer to talk about “the Balkans”.

Either way, it describes a part of our continent with a turbulent history. The Balkans have been under the influence of many and diverse super-powers of their times; the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Hungary-Austria, nations formed by different religions and cultures. In addition, this is a region, which experienced war, murder and torture less than 20 years ago. With effects that still today shape politics and economies. A diverse region with many and various problems, and many and different approaches to solve these problems. A region, where borders have been drawn and re-drawn on the drawing tables and most of the time do not reflect realities. Borders that cut through naturally developed communities, borders that separate families, borders that often create new tensions – even today.

But this region has the inalienable right to join the European Union, once the Copenhagen criteria are fulfilled - and if the citizens of the countries want it. A right which we, who already are members of the EU, must never forget.

It is our duty to keep the doors open. Though, the Balkan countries have to knock on the door themselves and they have to show that they are ready to join the EU. At that time we must act and let them in. Europe can definitely help the Balkan countries solve some of their problems, as EU: s soft-power has a vast attraction in the Balkans.

The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation is since long working in the Balkans. We have been active in helping our sister-parties finding the way in the corridors in Brussels and Strasbourg, and further refine their ideological standpoints. During many round-table-discussions we have exchanged views with our friends from South-East Europe and elaborated strategies for their European approach and our work for a better understanding of this part of the continent.

In this anthology we have put together a cocktail of the Balkans. A Balkan Blend, spiced with events from daily life, fight against bureaucracy and corruption as well as the conviction that European integration is the only viable way to go forward.

A blend that I hope will give you a taste for more.

A taste of a European future in the Balkans.

***Walburga Habsburg Douglas***

*Member of the Board of the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation, Member of the Swedish Parliament and Head of the Swedish Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*

# 20 Years of Independent Rule:

## The Former Communist States' Success Stories

by *Mart Laar*

*Defence Minister and former Prime Minister of Estonia*

This essay describes, analyzes and assesses the problems and challenges of the post-communist Balkan states. First we must explain what is understood by *the Balkan states* in this essay. I deal with former Yugoslavia successor states and Albania, leaving out two often mentioned countries – Romania and Bulgaria. The reason for such distinction is that as Bulgaria and Romania were typical Central and Eastern European communist satellite states, belonging quite firmly to the Soviet sphere of influence and the Warsaw Pact, former Yugoslavia and Albania were different – moving in different directions.

At the same time it must be said, that the Balkan countries are disparate. The contrasts are sharp – from most wealthy European Union-member state to poorest accession country. One state – Slovenia – is member of both the EU and NATO and Croatia is finishing its accession negotiations. At the same time a number of countries are merely starting to draw nearer to the EU. Still, the entire region will soon be united by the same destiny – Europe – even if integration is moving at different rates of speed. This makes the Balkans unlike other European “new neighbours” and this is the reason we can analyze the Balkans as one entity.

## **Cultural and political contexts of the Balkan transition**

The history of the Balkans has not been uncomplicated. It has been ruled by many countries and divided by different empires and civilizations. As a result we can find a significant mixture of cultures and religions in the Balkans, even as the differences in language are by example not substantial. In the Balkans the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and Islam are represented religions. In several cases even all three in the same country. In addition there are also different historical and cultural contexts. Slovenia and Croatia were for a long time part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, other countries have been part of the Ottoman Empire. All this has seriously influenced the developments in the Balkans.

After World War I, Yugoslavia was voluntarily created with the consent of most residents living in the area, but could not fulfil the hopes given to them on its creation. Yugoslavia was not stable and could not really unite the different ethnic groups living in it. During World War II Yugoslavia was crushed by the Axis countries [Germany, Italy and Japan] and then divided between them. The independent Croatia was created with a marionette government and a bloody partisan and civil war followed in which it was often hard to understand who was fighting against whom. The victory of the communists in 1945 was followed by a new wave of massive terror and killings.

All this created wounds, which stayed open and that after decades played an important role in the collapse of Yugoslavia and in the terrible war between 1991 and 1995.

The beginning of the communist era in Yugoslavia nevertheless looked as if it would be quite successful. After initial attempts to follow the Soviet model of command economy, which created serious economic problems, Yugoslavian leaders set out on their own path,

creating their own model of socialism. This caused a serious split with Moscow, which threatened Yugoslavia with military intervention. At that time Yugoslavian leaders looked for help from the West and partly opened their country to Western assistance and investments. As a result, even as the relations with Moscow were “normalized” in the 1960’s, Yugoslavia continued on its own way.

Its model of self-managing socialism had proven quite successful, especially in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Yugoslavia was effectively a free market, where starting in 1965 enterprises were free to dispose profits as they chose - through wages or reinvestment. Foreign investments entered the country, creating economic growth which raised living standards. Though, towards its end “soft constraints” and a lack of clear property rights dogged the Yugoslavian success story.

After the death of Tito, international confidence in Yugoslavia’s stability weakened and the inflow of foreign funds decreased. Having grown at more than 5 percent annually during the 1970’s, by 1987 Yugoslavia was experiencing rising unemployment, a quintupling of inflation ( to 150 percent) and a fall of 26 percent in real net personal income. But even with all these problems Yugoslavia was significantly wealthier and more developed compared to other communist countries. Slovenia, the most developed region of Yugoslavia, for example, had a GDP almost four times higher per capita at PPP than Estonia, one of the most developed countries of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980’s.

The situation was very different in Albania. The Albanian independence was achieved after the end of World War I, when poorly armed but tenacious Albanian forces pushed Italian occupation troops out of the country. Independence nevertheless did not bring much for the Albanians. In 1939 Albania was the poorest country in Europe with

a per capita income half of that in Greece. During the Second World War Albania was occupied by Italian forces. At this time the communist partisan movement developed, fighting at the same time against the invaders and its political opponents. This allowed communists to swiftly take power after the end of the war and eliminate all opponents. Nationalization, collectivization and other communist reforms followed. There were Western supported attempts to develop anti-communist resistance forces in the Albanian mountains. They failed, largely thanks to betrayal of Kim Philby, Soviet top spy in MI6.

For a long time Albania was “the best pupil in class “ in the eyes of the Soviet Union. Although, after the denunciation of Stalin the Soviet Union became too “revisionist” for the communist leader Enver Hoxha. At that point Albania looked east and allied with China, until China also became “revisionist”. In 1967 Albania banned all religious organizations and isolated itself from the World, developing the most paranoid and repressive dictatorship in the communist sphere. After the death of Hoxha some steps were taken to restore contacts abroad. But Albania stayed one of the poorest countries in the World. 39 percent of children in Albania were suffering from malnutrition

The communist experiment in the Balkans was a complete failure – as everywhere. Even as there was some development – and every country develop in 50 years – the other non-communist countries developed faster. The Balkans have of course always been poorer and underdeveloped compared to the rest of Europe, but towards the end of the last century economic disparities had widened enormously. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the disparities in per-capita GDP were somewhere around 3:1. Even with the positive catch-up during the last decade, in 2004 the equivalent numbers were 14:1 for Bosnia and Albania, 13:1 for Macedonia, 12:1 for Serbia and Montenegro and 5:1 for Croatia.

The national problems were hidden and repressed, as a result creating even more hate and xenophobia.

The result was a real catastrophe. The mounting problems in Yugoslavia strengthened the opposition movements and demands for more independence became louder and louder. The first country to leave the union state was Slovenia.

In 1986 and 1987 the opposition movement began to gather strength in Slovenia, finding supporters among the intellectuals and the youth in particular. In September 1989, the Slovenian Assembly reasserted the sovereignty of the Slovenian Republic and proclaimed its right to secede from the federation. By the end of that year, Slovenia and Serbia had descended into economic warfare. In March 1990, Slovenia dropped the word “socialist” from the republic’s title and in April, *Demos*, the centre-right alliance, won a majority in the elections to the Slovenian Assembly. In 1991, the Yugoslavian army, under the rule of Serbia, tried to regain control over Slovenia but met armed resistance from the Republic’s militia and decided to withdraw. At that point in time, Slovenia’s independence was recognized by the Western powers.

Unfortunately, the same thing did not happen as peacefully elsewhere. As Serbia has been “more equal than others” during the unified Yugoslavia, its former communist leaders decided to become nationalist leaders, hoping in this way to stay in power. The combination of communism and national xenophobia turned out to be a “bloody mixture” – pushing all countries to war, resulting in the most terrible ethnic cleansing seen in Europe after the end of the Second World War. Years of killing passed before the West intervened and put an end to it. There were no winners in this war. The Balkan wars left more than 120,000 people dead and economic damage worth tens of billions of dollars. Factories, companies, and state

or privately owned real estate were devastated, and the former common market collapsed. The destruction of industry and infrastructure only in Serbia stood at more than 17 billion dollars during the NATO bombing in 1999, due to the regime of repression of former leader Slobodan Milosevic against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The situation was also not easy in Albania, even as the collapse of communism wasn't followed by a vast bloodshed. The revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe weakened the authority of communist rulers and in 1989 the first demonstrations started, becoming massive 1990. Government used police and army against the demonstrators, at the same time making concessions. In 1991 the government in Albania found that it could no longer control the situation in the country, where demonstrations were accompanied by the destruction of monuments of former dictator Hoxha, the burning of books, hunger strikes and a massive exodus of Albanians to neighbouring Greece. The economy collapsed entirely, pushing even more people away, trying dangerous escape routes by sea to Greece. The stability was restored at a minimum level only after the parliament and presidential elections in 1992, when the oppositional Democratic Party under leadership of Sali Berisha came to power. At that moment the economy was in full chaos, industrial production had fallen to half of the previous year and inflation was at a rate of 226 percent.

The only way to get out of this mess created by communism was to start radical political and economic reforms, making decisive steps towards a market economy, rule of law and a working democracy. This way turned out to be difficult. Worst of all, the hearts and minds of people were spoiled by socialism. They were taught not to be active, but to rely on the state and hope that somebody would always solve their problems. This was a heavy heritage to overcome.

## **Hard transition**

After the fall of communism the Balkans were in a financial mess. The sad reality, hidden for so long, hit them now with full power. They had to realize that their industries were not competitive in the World market, creating massive unemployment. The infrastructure was in a disastrous state, and environmental problems were even more serious. This chaos was reinforced by the mistakes made by the first transitional governments, especially in regards to monetary policy. Loss of budget control resulted in real hyperinflation, which in Serbia and Montenegro reached 9237 percent in 1992. Money lost its value, making a large part of the population poor.

Slovenia was the only country rapidly introducing reforms. To fight down the hyperinflation a monetary reform was launched in 1991, making only dinar legal tender and convertible from the first days of the reform. After the successful monetary reform, other reforms didn't come about as fast. But the situation in Slovenia, at the beginning of the transition period, was so much better than in other transition countries, that the Slovenian government drew the conclusion that more radical economic and political reforms were not necessary! This resulted in economic stagnation and lower growth. The gap in development between Slovenia and other transition countries decreased significantly. At the same time Slovenia's economy stagnated, social problems deepened and unemployment increased. The effect of these developments was the growth of the centre-right opposition movement under the leadership of Janez Jansa, which won the parliamentary elections in 2005, making Jansa prime minister of a coalition government. Jansa launched radical reforms, which put Slovenia largely back on track, allowing it to become the first new EU-member state to adopt the euro on January 1, 2007. The following year Jansa lost the elections and once again reforms slowed down, making Slovenia vulnerable to external shocks.

The situation is significantly worse in other independent states which were created after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Even Croatia, which at the end of 1980's had higher living standards than most Central and Eastern European states, had in 2004 not reached the level of GDP of 1989. All these countries were seriously devastated by the war, even if they did not participate in it. One of the results of the war was high inflation, which in some countries grew to hyperinflation. This was fought down by monetary reforms and stabilization packages as in Serbia in 1994. The economic growth nevertheless stayed on a low level.

Economic inactivity has become the trademark, with people wanting more and more financial help from the state. Unemployment has reached about 20 percent in Serbia and Croatia, with the grey economy in the former estimated to 40 percent of the total activity. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, unemployment stands at more than 45 percent. They are grappling with mass poverty, badly damaged social fabrics, glaring inequalities, restricted mobility and most alarmingly of all, corruption and major criminal gangs that have taken over the control of large parts of society.

The most radical reforms during the first period of transition were launched in Albania. After the collapse of communism, Berisha's government first introduced austerity measures to reduce the huge budget deficit, a monetary reform was launched making the Albanian currency lek convertible, foreign trade was liberalized, prices were liberalized and inflation was reduced to single digits. Industries and services were privatized and the private sector was rapidly expanded. The weakest part of the reform program was the almost non-existent control of financial institutions, which resulted in growth of pyramid schemes. In 1996-1997 these collapsed and Albania fell first into anarchy followed by the rule of left wing governments. The reforms

were slowed down, but even so the rapid economic growth continued. In 2004 Albania was among the few countries in the Balkans, where GDP per capita was clearly higher than in 1989.

Macedonia has been the most reform minded country in the region measured by the Economic Freedom Index, created by the *Wall Street Journal* and Heritage Foundation. It occupies the 55th place (2011). Slovenia can be found on the 66<sup>th</sup> place followed by Albania (no. 70). Thanks to developments during the last few years Montenegro is no.76 and Croatia no.82, Serbia (101) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (104) are found on the non-free-side. This list demonstrates quite well why some countries have performed better in transition than others.

### **Why is the Balkans still so poor?**

How did we become so poor? is the one question that is heard all over the region.

It is actually not hard to find explanations for this condition. Firstly, the very bad starting position for most of the countries, after decades of communist failure and then of course the negative impact of war has to be taken into consideration. The problem lies not only in the massive loss of lives and overall devastation. In addition, the wars were used by former corrupt communist elites and criminals to gain power and to position people close to them at different levels in the economic systems. The result was the continuation of the former “vertical” power structures and massive corruption. Especially Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia became “hostage states”, where people in power made it possible for criminals or “mafia networks” to openly breach the laws, and make profits through corruptive transactions with public officials and politicians in power. The wars also discouraged big international businesses from more extensive investment in the region.

Second, local analysts remind us that old socialist mentality dies hard in the Balkans. That is why people in the Balkans hope and demand help from the state. It is hard to adopt the credo that there's a relationship between quantity of work and quality of life. That is why there is political instability in the Balkans, protests before government buildings, with workers demanding salaries and work from the state. As a result the necessary reforms are often blocked.

The third reason for slow development of reforms in the Balkans is that for a long time most of the states lacked even the perspective to become a member of the European Union. Such a perception and struggles to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria for EU-membership has helped Central and Eastern European transition countries to foster cross-party consensus on macro-economic policies, privatization, restructuring of institutions and legal reforms helping them move faster towards democracy, rule of law and working market economy. This also helped Slovenia to achieve the membership of the EU in 2004.

In this context the most important positive change in the Balkans happened in 2003 in Thessaloniki where the European Council met and the formal pledge of a possible EU membership was given to the Balkan countries. As a result of this the situation in the Balkans significantly improved during the second part of the first decade of the new millennium. In several countries new reform minded governments were elected to power, which launched radical economic reforms, making the region more attractive for foreign investments. As a result high economic growth was seen all over the region from 2006 to 2008. Nevertheless most of the countries stayed poor, but the improvement was clear. Slovenian GDP per capita at PPP increased to 91 percent of the EU average. In Croatia it was 63 percent and in Montenegro 43 percent, which was higher than in the poorest new member state Bulgaria which came in at 41 percent. It was lower in

Macedonia (33 percent), Serbia (33 percent), Bosnia-Herzegovina (31 percent) and in Albania (26 percent), where it has significantly improved during the last years.

### **Tax reforms in the Balkans**

For a long time one of the reasons for economic failure in the Balkan countries was the extremely complicated, messy and ineffective tax system. After the collapse of communism, most of the Balkan countries moved, by Western advice, to the progressive tax system. For the majority of countries the progressive tax system did not work. To guarantee the income, the tax level was raised to such heights that the people stopped paying taxes and a big portion of economic activity moved to a grey zone. The progressive taxation also did not support the entrepreneurship, but punished people that wanted to work and earn more. The tax system was also too complicated, demanding skills and experience that the new administrations clearly lacked. Especially in less developed Balkan countries such a tax system supported corruption and fraud, which decreased the earnings of the state even more. In an effort to boost government revenues Albania, for example, raised the top rate income tax in 1999, but the tax revenues still remained the lowest in Europe as these changes only fuelled the growth of the informal sector.

This state of affairs started to change in the second part of the first decade of the new millennium, when in several countries new reform-minded governments were elected to power. These leaders looked at the experience with flat tax – initiated in Estonia in 1994 and from the Baltic countries being transferred to other countries in the region. (A flat tax taxes everyone at the same rate, regardless of their income bracket.) The flat tax is easy to collect and to understand. It hits the grey sector and supports economic growth, everywhere resulting in higher earnings for the state budget even with a lower level of taxation.

Peacefully achieving independence from Serbia, Montenegro started its economic reforms, trying to fight down corruption, gathering more revenues for the budget and increasing economic growth. In December 2006, Montenegro's parliament approved a 15 percent flat tax on personal income. Effective July 1, 2007, it replaced the previous system of three rates on taxable income; from 16 to 24 percent. The law set the flat rate at 15 percent in 2007 and 2008, reduced it to 12 percent in 2009 and 9 percent in 2010. Even more complex reforms were passed in Macedonia. In July 2006 the people of Macedonia voted in parliamentary elections for radical economic reforms. One of the main pillars of new Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski's 100-point reform program was a flat tax, which was imposed in January 2007 at 12 percent. It replaced a corporate tax rate of 15 percent and personal income tax rates that ranged between 15 and 24 percent. The purpose of the low flat tax was to give Macedonia one of the lowest tax rates in Europe to help it emulate the success of the Baltic countries, which experienced strong economic growth after the adoption of their flat taxes.

With an objective to additionally stimulate foreign and domestic investments, Montenegro followed the Estonian model in corporate income taxation, slashing the corporate investment tax on re-invested profits to 0 percent. With such taxes Macedonia and Montenegro have the most attractive taxation package in Europe. The first year of flat tax in Macedonia was highly successful. As predicted the revenues were higher, foreign investments were growing and economic growth was speeding up. From Montenegro and Macedonia the flat tax has moved to neighbouring Albania. In 2007 the government of Albania agreed on a flat tax of 10 percent aimed at outdoing its Balkan rivals and attracting international investors. The flat tax has worked very well also in Albania, supporting economic growth and financial stability.

The flat tax is also actively discussed in Croatia and Slovenia. In Slovenia it was one of the promises of the Janos Jansa government. Unfortunately the government coalition in Parliament was scared by the opposition and pressed the prime minister to withdraw the flat tax proposal. It was explained, that Slovenia does not need such “extreme” measures as its economy is not in crisis. The introduction of the flat tax was postponed and it seems to be out of the agenda. The setback of an introduction of flat tax in Slovenia was supported by the failure to launch a flat tax proposal in Croatia. At the same time the discussion about the flat tax in both countries is on-going.

### **The Balkans and the World economic crises**

The World economic crises hit the Balkan countries badly. As a result of the diminishing export markets nearly all of these countries have experienced a fall in production and negative GDP growth, followed by increased unemployment. The most detrimental effects of the crises were the diminished inflow of foreign direct investment and lack of liquidity in the market.

The Economic Freedom Index shows that the Balkan countries which have done better in the field of reforms have also to a larger extent succeeded in reducing the impact of the crises. For example, even as Albania was seriously hit by the crisis, it remained one of few countries in Europe, still demonstrating positive growth. Albanians themselves are giving an even higher figure – 5.8 percent. For Albania the problem has been the budget deficit. The public debt in Albania is standing at 60 percent. To fight the deficit and debt Albania is introducing several cuts and austerity measures. Macedonia has also done quite well. Even as the GDP decreased Macedonia kept its budget deficit low, at the same time launching austerity measures, which includes a cut in government salaries by 10 percent.

In Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia, the fall of GDP has been bigger. During the crisis the public finances were kept under control with the budget deficit around 3-4 percent of GDP. This has demanded austerity measures and cuts in budgets. Economic outlook there is nevertheless positive.

There are more serious problems in Croatia and Slovenia. These have been the wealthiest countries not only in the Balkans, but also among other transition countries. At the same time they were more seriously hit by the economic crisis. In 2009 GDP in Croatia fell by 5.4 percent. To offset the plunging revenues and contain the 2009 budget deficit to financeable levels, Croatia adopted three supplementary budgets with a number of short-term measures, including expenditure cuts, a wage and pension freeze, a VAT rate hike, and the introduction of a temporary “solidarity tax” on incomes and pensions. Nevertheless, the general government overall fiscal deficit widened to just under 4 percent of GDP. Public debt increased to 35 percent of GDP or to 50 percent of GDP including the stock of government guarantees. High foreign debt has become a serious problem for Croatia.

Nevertheless, Slovenia, where the economy suffered a severe setback, was most badly hit. In 2009, the Slovenian GDP per capita shrank by -7.33 percent, which was the biggest fall in the European Union after the Baltic countries and Finland. Even as Slovenia has a relatively small public debt, this increased significantly in 2009 – from 22.6 to 35.7 percent of GDP. To keep the budget deficit under control, Slovenia introduced several austerity measures. Though, the recovery of the economy does not look rosy. It is clear that Slovenia needs additional reforms soon, but these are not expected to materialize under the current government.

All in all, the prognoses for the future of the region are nevertheless positive. Integration with the European Union and accession perspectives are supporting political stability in all Balkan states, creating positive expectations also in regards to the continuation of reforms.

### **What the Future has in store**

After the first hard years of transition, the developments in the Balkans are by now overall positive. Even as all these countries were badly hit by the economic crises, it is expected that most of them will rapidly recover. Nevertheless, to make sure that the positive developments continue, more reforms and stability are needed.

For this reason it is crucial that the integration with the European Union continues. The initiated integration with the EU is probably the main reason that positive changes have until now made much more headway in the Balkans compared to in the Commonwealth of Independent States (formed in 1991 by Russia and eleven other republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union). The positive effect of stronger bonds to the EU will soon be felt everywhere in the Balkans. But the European Union must overcome the current stagnation and work actively towards full integration of the Balkans as quickly as possible. This simultaneously depends on how well the applicant countries do their home work.

Secondly the Balkan governments must be encouraged to continue reforms, giving special attention to the rule of law, development of civil society, property protection and especially the fight against corruption and organized crime. The existing experience demonstrates clearly that even if reforms sometimes might be politically painful, they are boosting growth and prosperity. Central and Eastern European experience demonstrates that more radical reformers have stayed longer in office than politicians who were afraid of changes.

The same is true on current challenges. The Balkan countries must keep their budget in balance or at least under the 3 percent demanded by the Maastricht criteria. The government spending must be kept under control and necessary changes made when sustainable development is endangered. It is also highly necessary to avoid the debt trap, which is now the biggest danger for recovery in many European states.

When these conditions are fulfilled, the future of the Balkans will be secured and clear, making this region one more success story of the European dream.

## History of the Balkans

The Ottoman Turks invaded the region at the end of the 14th century and the Turkish rule lasted for some 500 years. The Austro-Hungarian Empire grew stronger in the north and loosened the grip of the Turks at the end of the 17th century. A major redefinition of the Balkan political boundaries was enacted by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Serbia, Montenegro and Romania became independent, and the principality of Bulgaria was created. Slovenia, Croatia stayed under the rule of Austria-Hungary which also took control of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was beginning to crumble. Sensing the opportunity, a wave of nationalism swept through the Balkans. War broke out in 1912, when Montenegrin troops moved across the border into the Ottoman Empire. Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece joined the war a few days later. These Balkan allies drove the Turks out of Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, which declared independence. Later the Serbs turned against the Bulgarians and occupied all of Kosovo as well as Macedonia. In 1914 Austria-Hungary sent the emperor's heir Franz Ferdinand to quell the unrest. He was shot in Sarajevo by a Serb nationalist, an event which triggered World War I.

After Austria-Hungary was defeated in World War I, the Versailles peace treaties defined a new pattern of state boundaries in the Balkans. The Kingdom of Serbs, Cro-

ats and Slovenes was founded. In 1929 King Alexander I changed the name of the state to **Yugoslavia**. The Serbs still dominated the government, which combined with an authoritarian monarchy gave rise to an anti-Serb movement.

World War II brought fresh turmoil to the region. As German troops invaded, they were welcomed by Croatian fascists. Hitler rewarded the Croats with a nominally independent puppet state, which also incorporated Bosnia.

In the course of a series of overlapping civil wars, widespread atrocities were committed by all sides. In Croatia, Serbs, Jews, gypsies and anti-fascist Croats were killed in concentration camps. Serbia came under the control of German troops while the Italians occupied Montenegro. Rival partisans under Josip Broz Tito, a communist, and Dragoljub Mihailovic, a Serb nationalist, fought the Germans - when not fighting each other. Kosovo was occupied by Albanian and Italian troops whilst the Bulgarians invaded Macedonia.

Socialist Yugoslavia was declared by Marshall Tito in 1945.

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# The Balkan Evolution Towards Modern Day Democracy

*by Antonio Milošoski*

*Foreign Minister of the Republic of Macedonia*

For centuries the Balkans has been the image of diversity of spirit, temperament, nationality, religion and conviction. In historical and cultural terms this area is linked with revolutions; struggle for ideas and convictions, turbulence, but also with strong energy, spirituality, innovation, and persistence. In a sense this demonstrates the widely spread, albeit one sided opinion that the states in this part of the world are burdened with its past and history. We who live in the Balkans have a predisposition - which in fact drives the world forward: we are united in our diversity, having a mosaic of modern values, rooted in the rich heritage of our civilization.

In the last decade following the transition, each of the countries on the Balkan Peninsula has had a period of thriving progress. Threading at their own pace, they have moved in the right direction and have opened new chapters in their history. The capacity of each of the countries and nations started to be viewed through a more pragmatic prism. Instead of separation, the integration paradigm has been chosen. The concept of higher living standards has demonstrated itself as the only attractive and motivating factor in building functional and sustainable societies. Today, the European Union integration is among the highest priorities of each Balkan state. Stability, democratic reform, strengthening of the rule of law, and the process of fighting organized crime and corruption are present in all our countries. We are now preoccupied with topics of vital importance for societal progress, such as economic cooperation,

## SEECF

The South-East European Cooperation Process is a forum for diplomatic and political dialogue - the participating countries are open to cooperation for the future development of the region, for defining common views and for sharing experience.

Participating countries are the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Hellenic Republic, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Slovenia, and the Republic of Turkey.

The initiative was launched in 1996 as a result of a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South-East European countries. This was a period of change for the countries in the region marked by the process of democratic reforms. A declaration was adopted, which expresses the will of the participating countries to start a long-term process of multilateral cooperation in the field of:

- Strengthening stability, security and good-neighbourly relations
- Economic development
- Humanitarian, social and cultural issues
- Justice, combat against organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking, and terrorism.

**Source:**

*Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE*

finding harmonized measures of solidarity to alleviate the consequences of the global crisis, designing joint large scale infrastructure, transport and energy projects.

European integration is part of the globalization process, which necessitates close regional cooperation, developing competitiveness and efficient utilization of resources. We thus learn about each other and show our solidarity with the citizens of the European Union and those aspiring to become part of it. The South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) is a case in point, illustrating the great extent to which countries in the region share goals and values, while dealing with the globalization challenges. The SEECP sets a relevant framework of regional cooperation, featured along with the commitment to closely cooperate with the EU and NATO, as well as with other regional initiatives.

Macedonia's policy towards the SEECP is founded on the conviction that it is only through further advancement of the cooperation among South-East European countries that the common goals of developing good-neighbourly relations, security and stability can be reached. In reaching this goal, the SEECP has played an important role in articulating the interests and commitment of participating states in a number of areas of mutual interest, especially their commitment to integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The commitments to advancing and strengthening good-neighbourly relations and the efforts to transform South-East Europe into an area of peace, security, stability and cooperation conform to the fundamental foreign policy priorities of Macedonia. During the Macedonian 2012-2013 SEECP Chairmanship we will endeavour for the full respect of such commitments.

### **Pursuing a European spiritual paradigm**

Macedonia in all its diversity is Europe in a nutshell. In Macedonia we differ by many things - ethnicity, language, religion and other cultural traits. Yet, fully respecting our differences, we endeavour and, even

more importantly, we succeed in finding modalities to foster and develop our various traditions and cultural values. Macedonia built a functional model of democracy in its multi-ethnic and multicultural society, which is our modest contribution in building the common European home.

We have adeptly overcome accumulated problems and historical prejudices in the name of the welfare and peaceful life of all our citizens. We have surmounted flaring nationalism, winning a coexistence centered on a multiethnic model based on the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which is a bright example of and a contribution to regional stability. In such a setting, the motive to build a quality society has become an everyday drive for all ethnic communities, political parties and for the civil society, also becoming a powerful cohesive factor of the Macedonian multifaceted society. All thus far undertaken affirmative measures of equitable representation of all ethnic communities in the state administration have been directed towards a single goal: as great as possible representation of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in the process of adopting and implementing measures of importance for the entire society, regardless of the ethnic affiliation.

By continually developing democracy and practicing an open market economy, Macedonia strives for a greater convergence with European standards and norms, as a prerequisite for a more progressive and dignified life. The multifaceted character of our society necessitates this for its everyday functioning. Therefore, when it comes to coexistence and tolerance, Macedonia is rightfully featured as the promoter of regional stability. Historical experiences and the legacy of respect for cultural diversity in our region have set the roadmap followed in the years upon our proclamation of independence and in building the modern Macedonian multicultural society. Hence, today in Macedonia the right to freely exercise all aspects of ethnic and cultural identity forms the foundation and the nucleus of our society. It is on these grounds that it is claimed that the degree of implementation of individual, quasi-collective and

# The Ohrid Framework Agreement

Unlike the neighbouring republics, Macedonia has not descended into civil war since its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. A spate of ethnic conflict shook the Macedonian state in 2001 following the war in Kosovo, but the international community managed to broker an end to hostilities, and Macedonian and Albanian leaders signed an accord at Ohrid in August 2001. The main elements of the Ohrid Framework Agreement are:

- A greater acceptance of Albanian as an official language in government
- An increase in the proportion of Albanians in public jobs, such as policing
- A greater majority necessary to pass items of cultural relevance in parliament
- A change to the Constitution's preamble
- A mention of religions other than the Macedonian church in the Constitution
- A reference to Macedonia's cultural heritage rather than Macedonian people in the Constitution
- A change in proportions on the Council of Inter-ethnic Relations
- A deadline for ratification of the Agreement and a law on decentralisation of government

NATO and the EU played an important role in the implementation of the Agreement, NATO by monitoring the contended border areas and the EU by establishing a police mission in Skopje.

**Source:**

*The House of Commons of the United Kingdom*

collective minority rights in Macedonia is at a high level, setting an encouraging example for the neighbouring countries.

The status and situation of respect for the human rights of persons belonging to the Macedonian minorities in neighbouring countries have been improving throughout the years. Yet, there still remains the need for more intensive steps towards full establishment and fulfilment of international law obligations in the human and minority rights area, as enshrined in contemporary international treaties. The latter, specifically the genuine commitment to respect human rights of the Macedonian minority, demands full guarantees of the right to personal self-identification. Hence the ensuing obligation for the neighbouring countries, that moreover are member states of the EU, is to provide all those that have autonomously decided that they belong to the Macedonian minority with a playing field where they can function freely without suffering any consequences for their decision. After all, many international human rights reports', recommendations related to improving the situation of Macedonian minorities, underline that the right to cultural identity can be fully realized only if individual civil, economic, cultural and social rights are backed by exercise of minority rights. This is regardless of whether it is a matter of individual, quasi-collective or collective minority rights.

During the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (May-November 2010), Macedonia has also reaffirmed its commitments to strengthening human rights protection and fostering integration, while respecting diversity and promoting youth participation, by transposing them into the chairmanship priorities. As the Macedonian chairmanship coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the European Human Rights Convention – the Council of Europe's main human right protection tool – these priorities have been widely supported for their relevance and topicality. Thus Macedonia contributed towards a successful implementation of reforms that in the forthcoming period

would transform the Council of Europe into a modern organization able to respond to the contemporary challenges and new international trends.

### **Macedonia on the road to EU accession**

Since the independence in 1991, Macedonia has established and proven itself as a reliable partner and a true ally of the EU. We have not bypassed any of the institutional stages in developing our relations with the Union – starting with the Cooperation Agreement in 1996, over to the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2001, followed by the candidate country status in 2005.

Today, Macedonia stands before a defining moment in the newer history. The possibility to start EU accession negotiations is before us. The responsibility for taking this historic chance is ours – of the Macedonian Government and of all political actors in the country. Yet this is a shared European responsibility, as well. For it is about the credibility of the European Union and of its commitment to integrate the countries of the Balkans and proceed with the process of unification of the European continent.

Since 2009, the European Commission has been recommending the EU member states that accession negotiations should be opened with Macedonia. Regrettably, the Commission recommendations have not yet been endorsed by the European Council due to Greece's insistence that EU accession negotiations should only start after the "name issue" has been resolved.

The constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia is the cornerstone of our national identity and a strengthening cohesive power, contributing to the stability of the country and the region overall. At the crux of the "name issue" imposed by Greece is the identity of the Macedonian people and this is why the issue is particularly sensitive. The difference with Greece regarding our name is discussed under the auspices of the United Nations and I trust that we will succeed in overcoming this es-

entially irrational issue, by fully respecting the founding principles and values of the European Union, including fundamental human rights and freedoms. Hence, our approach remains pro-active and constructive, offering ideas and proposals for a mutually acceptable solution that will not harm the national, linguistic and cultural self-identification of either the Macedonian or the Greek people.

Recognizing the identity of each culture is a vital pre-condition for successful outcome of the ambitious goal of creating an intercultural Europe. Where cultures exchange and interact constructively and where there is universal respect for human dignity. The right to self-identification of the Macedonian nation as well as all other nations is an integral part of the fundamental democratic rights in Europe.

The Republic of Macedonia has built its identity on the cultural layers left by civilizations on our soil. The various components of identity – the name, the language, the faith – are an inalienable, immanent and basic right of the human beings and their communities and they are theirs to choose and cherish. Requests to open discussion on these fundamental rights, or even more, to plea for a third party consent for their use, can in no manner agree with the declared European commitment to universal respect for human dignity. It is indeed particularly difficult for the Macedonian people to understand that in order to become a member of the Union of free nations our nation is to give up its freedom to exercise the right to self-determination, which is paradox *sui generis*.

It is known that the Balkans functions as a system of connected vessels, both in positive developments and in negative impulses.

With the EU support, Macedonia built a functional model of democracy in a multi-ethnic society that serves as an example in the region and beyond. Starting out as a security consumer and recipient of the first EU military mission, Macedonia became a security provider in the region and beyond. The EU perspective is a strong cohesive force in the Mace-

donian multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious society. Due to the close historical and cultural connections, the Macedonian model has relevance for the other countries in the Balkans and positively contributes to the regional stability.

This is why the EU accession process of Macedonia should not be considered only through the prism of the resolution of the name difference with Greece. What is needed is a consistent process enabling progress on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria and according to each country's own merits.

Opening accession negotiations with Macedonia will be a win-win situation for everyone. Macedonia will receive a strong impetus for further reforms. Greece will confirm, in the most tangible way, its commitment to peace, security, stability and growth in South-Eastern Europe and its Agenda 2014 initiative. The EU will be able to protect the entire capital and energy invested in the European integration of Macedonia, but also in the whole region.

### **The future of the Balkans lies in its European integration**

Europe as a whole and united in its diversity has been the dream of the founding fathers of the Union. The dream of a united Europe has to a great extent been realized. Yet, simply said, Europe cannot be whole and united without the Balkans.

EU membership is the only viable option for long-lasting stabilization and prosperity of the Balkans. The experience of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe tell us about the immense gravitational pull of the European Union and its positive influence on reforms. Only the process of European integration, by which a high level of convergence with the EU legal and economic order will be achieved, gives predictability and rational framework for further development of the democracies in the region. The experience so far shows that no other initiative has that attractive power and ability to mobilize all resources.

That is why the commitment of the European Union to continue to work on the enlargement is critical for our region. The Swedish EU Presidency recognized the importance of keeping this commitment credible and contributed to creating an enabling environment for taking the enlargement process forward. Macedonia is grateful for the efforts invested that have not stopped with the end of the EU Presidency.

Bilateral issues must not be allowed to stand in the way of the common goals of European re-unification. In parallel with the fulfilment of the membership criteria, the EU accession negotiations can catalyze the resolution of bilateral issues in the spirit of European cooperation and bearing in mind the overall European interests. Let us not forget that the European Union was born out of the necessity for lasting reconciliation, for reaching out the hand to the neighbour, and it has successfully contributed to the softening of conflicts and devising solutions in the interest of all.

Macedonia is convinced that the EU enlargement with the Balkans should continue upon these foundations and result in a merit-based accession to the Union of all of our countries within a reasonable time frame.

The time ahead of us should be used to vigorously bring the Copenhagen criteria to life in our societies, make effective use of the available European assistance programmes and prepare national institutions for EU membership. At the same time, we should strengthen political, economic, educational, research, cultural and other ties between our countries and with the EU, as a precondition for guaranteeing the peace, stability and prosperity of the region and Europe.

## Albania

Albania's history has been characterized by war and conflict. The Albanians were under Roman occupation followed by 200 years of sovereignty when the Ottoman Empire made advances into the Balkans. During the 1400's Gjergj Kastrioti, also known as Skanderbeg, headed a successful revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Skanderbeg is considered the main freedom fighter in Albanian history and a national hero. The Ottoman occupation lasted until independence in 1912. During both the First and Second World War, Albania was once again occupied. At the end of World War II the communist partisans took power under the leadership of Enver Hoxha. He turned Albania into a communist dictatorship and isolated it from the outside world. Enver Hoxha died in 1985 and six years later the country was at the verge of economic collapse. The new democratic institutions were very weak, while poverty was high and corruption and crime grew.

The leader of the centre-right Democratic Party (DP), Sali Berisha won the first democratic elections and ruled the country until 1997 when a violent civil war broke out. A pyramid scheme led to the collapse of the country's financial system and many Albanians lost their already low incomes. The rebellion was stopped with the help of an international peacekeeping force led by Italy. The Socialist Party (SP) came to power. DP's leader Sali Berisha returned to power in 2005 and is today Albania's prime minister.

Since the fall of communism the Albanian governments have struggled to establish democracy and market economy. The country is heading in this direction and Albanians strongly yearn for the day when Albania will become an EU member. On 1 April 2009, Albania became a member of NATO and today has a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. The agreement provides the framework for the rapprochement with the EU.

Still, some significant problems remain: high unemployment, poverty and many Albanians leaving the country to find jobs and a better life. In addition, after the parliamentary elections in 2009, SP accuses DP of electoral fraud resulting in a hardened political climate.

Albania still has a long way to go and many challenges must be resolved before an EU-membership might materialize. The main obstacle to this and further developments in Albania is the lack of rule of law, including weak and interest-driven state institutions, a high level of corruption and politicization at all social levels, including media and organized crime.

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# Serbia – Eppur si Muove

*by Dragan Velikić*

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Serbia is a tired society, weary of the dismal, never-ending present in which her citizens live. After a disastrous beginning and thirteen years under the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, it had begun to look as if the country was about to enter the new century, a new millennium with prospects of a swifter access to the community of European nations.

Serbia is weary of Milosevic's heritage – which has a ball and chain clamped to its foot as it attempts to cover the distance to the EU. The country's potential, especially its educated youth, calls for more speed.

October 5, 2000 was indeed to be an important date in recent Serbian history. People believed that a new day would dawn on October 6. However, change does not occur overnight. We should not forget that the invisible part of the iceberg makes up two-thirds of its height.

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***Eppur si muove!** - is an Italian phrase meaning “And yet it moves” purportedly uttered by the mathematician, physicist and philosopher Galileo Galilei after being forced to recant his belief that the earth moves around the sun, under threat of physical torture before the inquisition.*

After every historical transformation, the most difficult part of the road is the part we can't see, under the water. To many, it seems that change in Serbia is far too slow in coming as an entire decade has gone by in the attempt to achieve it. A lost decade? Or is two-thirds of the road still in darkness? One of the reasons for Serbia's tortuous path was the decision of the new government not to clear the decks of the previous incumbents. The men and women of the Milosevic administration have managed to leach into the nooks and crannies of the new democratic regime.

In the last ten years there have been several fateful events: the killing of the first democratically elected Serbian premier, Zoran Djindjic; the independence of the Serbian province of Kosovo, recognized as a state by many (principally 22 countries of the EU); and Serbia has taken a confident step towards the EU, her citizens now being able to travel through Europe without a Schengen visa. However, the process of drawing closer to the EU will be much longer than was anticipated a year or two ago. In addition to the far from simple bureaucratic procedures involved in harmonizing its laws with those of the EU, Serbia must fulfil its commitments to the Tribunal at The Hague. Radovan Karadzic has been arrested and transferred, but not Ratko Mladic.

Some illnesses require radical treatment. Where the surgeon's scalpel is required, aspirin won't help. However, experience teaches us that in politics, consistent aspirin therapy over a longer period yields results, and changes have indeed occurred at the invisible speed of the hands of the clock. Today, the clock shows a new time, totally different from that of ten or twenty years ago. It is a fact that on October 5, 2000, Serbia chose the right path of return to the community of European nations. The problems it faces ten years later do not question that choice. At the last parliamentary elections in 2008, an impressive majority supported taking the path to Europe.

It is enough to walk around Belgrade or any other Serbian city to see sights that would have been unimaginable ten years ago. The changes are not merely cosmetic. Before, the only foreigners on the streets were foreign correspondents. Today, there are tourists from all over the world. Passenger ships dock at the Port of Belgrade on cruises from Regensburg to the Black Sea. Novi Sad, the second largest city in Serbia, has recently become the destination for thousands of young people who have been arriving from abroad every July for the past ten years to attend the *Exit Music Festival*. Serbian students are once again members of international associations and now find it inconceivably easier to travel across the world. First-hand experience from other places is the best way to rid the national psyche of the stereotypes created by the Milosevic media and the idea that the forces of the world at large are aligned against Serbia.

### **Cooperation vs. the Mafia**

It is no exaggeration to say that under Milosevic the state not only created its own Mafia, but that the Mafia took over the state. With the inflation of the national morale, all the values once cultivated by Serbian society were destroyed. The cause, of course, lay not only in the wars Serbia waged – while officially claiming never to have been at war except during the NATO bombardment in the spring of 1999 – but also in almost ten years of isolation by the international community. Violating UN sanctions became a patriotic act, so that during the decade of isolation an endemic mindset appeared. “The world is against Serbia” was the chant of the Milosevic media. Odi-um towards the West was whipped up in many of those hypnotized by his propaganda machine. Xenophobia was encouraged, vestiges of which linger on to the present day, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Collusion between criminals and politicians at the time of the fall of Yugoslavia created power brokers throughout the entire Balkan

region, who decided on the fate of its inhabitants. They owned much of the media and were thus personally in a position to form public opinion. It is a fact that some of these criminal elites still have influence in Serbia. However, this is not just Serbia's problem. This is a problem of the entire region and is being resolved through cooperation among the countries of the Western Balkans with the help of the international community.

Many scandals have come to light in Serbia today. War has been declared on organized crime. Protocols of cooperation have been signed with the police forces of neighbouring countries. Cooperation with Croatia is particularly successful. Criminals, corrupt politicians and war profiteers are being arrested.

In recent years there have been many cases of less-than-transparent privatization, especially in the media, as it is they who decide what people think. Where the owner is unknown, it is easier to manipulate public opinion and thus influence political life. In order to understand the problems in Serbia today, it is necessary to refer briefly to its recent past.

### **A refuge of the Socialist nomenclature**

Today, from a distance of twenty years, I believe nationalism was not the only one of Milosevic's sins that excited the revulsion of the international community. In the Yugoslavia of the time, neither Tudjman nor Izetbegovic were democrats. Therefore, Milosevic's problem was not only nationalism, but also autism, sheer inability, or failure to understand that the first condition for any politician of a small country is to be compatible with the rest of the world. It is this very incompatibility with the world that dictated Serbia's role as the bad guy of the international community.

Unlike Tito, who liked to have intellectuals and performers about him, delighted in film and opera and regularly held gatherings for artists, in his thirteen-year rule Milosevic never once quoted or mentioned a single writer or scholar in a speech or public address. He never attended a theatre performance, exhibition or film show. Like the regime that he created, he was exclusively focused on the mission of acquiring the economic upper hand, which he naturally achieved by previously arrogating absolute political power to himself. During Milosevic's rule, the criminalization of Serbian society was complete. At the time of the economic sanctions imposed on Serbia, completely isolating it, the regime gave the green light for a mafia economy. At the top of the hierarchy were the Milosevic's, surrounded by a dozen or so other powerful families. In the middle was an extensive middle class operating along mafia lines, while the bottom was inhabited by small time traffickers and smugglers. Every honest citizen who changed German marks, the unofficial Serbian currency of that time, on the black market, participated in this mafia economy.

Naturally, some of these people visibly resisted the many revelations of the cause of Milosevic's policy, which followed his fall. A pale reflection of this resistance exists to this day. If it is true that the complete criminalization of society began and established itself under Milosevic, if he ordered the assassination of some of his political opponents, then this means that a major part of Serbian society had fallen in behind a murderer. Human beings find it difficult to face up to their own mistakes. This was the card played by the surviving elite from the Milosevic period that, following the changes of October 5, 2000, sowed antipathy among the public to the war crimes tribunal at The Hague and slowed Serbia's progress towards full integration with the world at large.

In aiding in the collapse of Yugoslavia (ably seconded by Slovenia and Croatia) the Milosevic regime – Serbia – became a bastion of anachronistic thinking. That same Belgrade, which at the time of Tito's Yugoslavia was the only major city in this part of the world where democratic freedom was appreciably greater than in the other capitals of the former Yugoslavia (Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo), became hostage to a defeated communist elite.

With the collapse of Yugoslavia, to which Milosevic made the largest contribution, Serbia became the refuge of the Yugoslav socialist nomenclature. It bore the liability for fifty years of a shared past. This legacy is one of the reasons for the country's slow covering of the distance that separates it from the EU.

The reordering of society, the emergence of the new face of Serbia, could not take place in the same way as it did in the other former Yugoslav republics. People always find it easiest to join forces against someone or something. None of the former republics could define that "other" within itself, since this would have led to civil war. The role was fulfilled by Milosevic's Serbia.

We cannot simplify factors and occurrences and reduce everything to national and geographical frames of reference. The severance of the other republics from Serbia meant severance from a policy which – let us not forget – had been jointly forged from 1945 to the mid-1980s. There existed a shared communist heritage, which the others shook off more easily by identifying it with Serbia, so that Serbia became the dirty laundry basket of all the nations and republics of the former Yugoslavia. Everyone defined their new face in relation to the outdated political model represented by Serbia, recognized as the guardian of the joint communist heritage. Serbia was the *Other* in relation to whom all the rest transformed.

However, throughout the time of Milosevic's reign there was always another Serbia. The problem of this *Other* was that it was inside Serbia, so that the emergence of a new face could only take place through civil war. This is why matters for so long were mixed and unclear within Serbia. Serbia was the one left carrying the can – clearly, though not entirely, through its own fault – which the former republics had to an extent abandoned to Belgrade.

It seems to me that the general tendency of international politics was to create national states in the Balkans. These smaller entities are easier to cooperate with and by far more compatible than the former Yugoslavia. Today, looking back at the break-up of Yugoslavia from a distance of twenty years, no one can convince me that the country could not have survived if this had suited the major powers at the time. Naturally, responsibility for this primarily lies with the politicians of the republics of former Yugoslavia.

Every country has the right to some kind of imaginary justice, but that right is proportional to the size and importance of the country. This is where Serbian politicians make their basic mistake.

It was Milosevic's policy of aggression that lost Serbia the right to Kosovo.

### **Kosovo as political bromide**

The irrationality of the struggle for Kosovo is in fact a quite rational strategy in order to remain in power. Hanging on to something that is no longer there is a safe bet, since what isn't there can't be lost. However, in the meantime we may lose what we might have hung on to.

Virtually all politicians play the Kosovo card when patriotic points are to be picked up on the eve of elections. Any kind of rational approach to the Kosovo issue, anything less than the maximum de-

mand, attracts immediate anathema. Anyone who dares take a rational view of the existing situation is branded as a traitor. Kosovo is the mantra by which politicians secure *carte blanche* support. This only prolongs the agony and inhibits finding a way out of a state of petrification.

The fact is that when the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia ended in June 1999, Kosovo became a protectorate. According to UN Resolution No. 1244, Kosovo is part of Serbia. On paper, that is. In practice, things developed in the direction of independence.

Zoran Djindjic was one of the rare Serbian politicians who understood the universality of the laws of physics. He once stated that the Serbian regime had smashed too much china to be able to count on the environment remaining indifferent.

There are those who link the assassination of Zoran Djindjic to him having played far too strong a hand in untangling the Kosovo knot. Djindjic's proposal to divide Kosovo certainly did not meet with a good reception from foreign powers. Did it suit Europe to have a strong political personality in Serbia at that point, someone who would try to prevent the independence of Kosovo becoming practice, although it already existed in theory, or to reduce it to its least radical version? Djindjic's murder took place in the shadow of the forthcoming war with Iraq. Perhaps this is merely a set of unrelated circumstances. On the other hand, perhaps it suited Europe at that moment to have a controlled dump on its periphery where the Mafia would settle accounts among themselves. Let us not delude ourselves, the methods applied by Europe and the US in treating the Balkans and, of course, Serbia, were not devoid of wrong diagnoses, which remain on the conscience of international power brokers. I do not think that this was done out of ignorance. It is more likely that the reasons for

these “mistakes” lie in the fact that the Balkans as a region straddles various spheres of influence.

Following the arrest and extradition of Slobodan Milosevic to the Hague, Zoran Djindjic embarked on a showdown with organized crime. The mafia, however, was one step ahead and carried out his assassination in cooperation with the Serbian security services. The perpetrators were caught, but not those who gave the orders.

However, let us return to Serbia of today.

The slogan *Both Kosovo and the EU* sends a message to the voters that the authorities are not giving up on defending Kosovo as part of Serbian territory, while at the same time continuing to pursue Serbia’s access to the European Union. Nice try. Unfortunately, the reality is different. Kosovo is not in practical terms Serbian territory, nor will Serbia join the EU without reaching a compromise with the government in Kosovo.

Announcements in the media of how the people think, what the people want, how the people decide, always strike me as pretty dreary. These are terms still in use in politics in Serbia.

The people think in accordance with what is served up to them in the media. An individual is someone who thinks for him or herself. Unfortunately, not all individuals are blessed with this trait. That is why the media exist, to hint to those who do not think what is good and useful, what has a future, and what is bad, not to say fatal for a society. Elites, in both politics and culture, define important goals and ways of achieving them, through argument and well-thought out strategies, of course.

Abandoning the bromide and confronting the reality in Kosovo is the task of the Serbian political and cultural elite. However, the elite continue to live in a vicious circle, mouthing the formula: “Kosovo is Serbia”. It *is* Serbia. It contains historical monuments of the Medieval Serbian state. There are the Orthodox monasteries, many protected by UNESCO, but there are also Serbian people who will not be able to continue living there if we close our eyes to reality. The Serbian politicians do not live in Kosovo, nor do they ever intend to. Entrenched in stalemate, the legacy of both Milosevic and Tito, they continue in an exhausting see-saw attempt to resolve the Kosovo issue by not resolving it.

I was in Belgrade on February 17, 2008, when the Kosovo government declared independence. It was a Sunday and I walked about the city. The people in the streets did not strike me as being downcast. All the front pages featured Kosovo, there was talk of “a precedent in international law”. The only thing that was forgotten was that, after the NATO intervention, Serbia had lost that war. And then in the evening, hordes of football fans appeared and began a rampage throughout the city. They smashed shop windows, looted, attacked the Slovenian embassy. Four days later, the Serbian government organized a protest. Demonstrators arrived from all over Serbia. After the rally, they rampaged through the town, setting the Croatian and US embassies on fire. A demonstrator was killed. To this day it has not been revealed who gave the signal for the police to withdraw, leaving the embassies unprotected.

The advisory opinion and announcement at the end of July 2010, of the International Court of Justice at The Hague (in reply to Serbia’s question on the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence) was a disappointment to the Serbian government. Though, it has had no palpable impact on individual daily life:

On a hot July day I took a stroll through Belgrade, as I had on February 17, 2008. I saw no signs of a demoralized citizenry. There are those, of course, who believe that the ICT's opinion is biased in regard to Kosovo, a view generated by some of the media. However, the situation is essentially peaceful. I think that the prevailing opinion is that Serbia cannot join the EU until it finds a way of working together with Kosovo.

At parliamentary elections in the spring of 2008, Serbia's people gave the green light for the European option. At the next round of elections, I do not think that any other option will receive the support of a majority. The readiness and determination of the Serbian government to effectively deal with corruption and crime will be proportional to the speed with which Serbia will gain access to the EU.

And in closing, the words of the Serbian educator, Dositej Obradovic, from an age when Serbia was being entered on the map of Europe as a new country following its liberation from Ottoman power:

“It is not enough to be born a patriot; one must also know something of how patriotic goals can be achieved to the benefit of one's people, in the real world and in real time.”

## Kosovo

During the medieval period, Kosovo became the centre of a Serbian Empire and saw the construction of many important Serb religious sites. The defeat of Serbian forces at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 led to five centuries of Ottoman rule during which large numbers of Turks and Albanians moved to Kosovo. By the end of the 19th century, Albanians replaced the Serbs as the dominant ethnic group in Kosovo. Serbia regained control over Kosovo from the Ottoman Empire during the First Balkan War of 1912.

Albanian nationalism increased in the 1980's, which led to riots and calls for Kosovo's independence. At the same time, Serb nationalist leaders, such as President Slobodan Milosevic, exploited Kosovo Serb claims of maltreatment to secure votes from supporters, many of whom viewed Kosovo as their cultural heartland. In the 1990's under Milosevic Serbian military, police, and paramilitary forces conducted a counterinsurgency campaign that resulted in massacres and massive expulsions of ethnic Albanians.

From 1999 to 2008 the province was administered by the UN.

On 17 February 2008, the Kosovo Assembly declared Kosovo independent. Since then, about sixty countries have recognized Kosovo. Though, Serbia rejects Kosovo's independence and it subsequently sought an advisory



opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality under international law of Kosovo's independence declaration. In July 2010 the ICJ ruled that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate international law.

## **Talks between Kosovo and Serbia**

EU-sponsored talks between Kosovo and Serbia were initiated in March 2011. The idea of the talks, says Robert Cooper, the EU official in charge, is to solve problems that can be solved. That means technical matters such as electricity, number plates and travel documents. Kosovo's leader, Hashim Thaci, said that talks with Serbia will focus on "matters that will ease the lives of citizens of both countries, such as freedom of movement, trade exchange and regional cooperation". The talks will not lead to the recognition of Kosovo, promises Borko Stefanovic, who heads the Serbian team. Yet Mr. Stefanovic says that, with goodwill, much can still be done. For example, aircrafts flying to Kosovo might be allowed to fly over Serbia, which they cannot do now.



## **The Ahtisaari Plan**

In April 2007, UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari submitted to the UN Security Council his plan for Kosovo. The Ahtisaari Plan is primarily focused on protecting the rights, identity and culture of Kosovo's non-Albanian communities, including establishing a framework for their active participation in public life. Special Envoy Ahtisaari also proposed that Kosovo become independent, subject to a period of international supervision. ■

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*The Economist, March 24, 2011.*

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# Why I Haven't Returned to Belgrade

*by Slavenka Drakulić*

*noted Croatian writer and publicist living in Sweden and Croatia. She has published numerous fiction and non-fiction books, some relating to the legacy of Communism and the 1990's wars in the Balkans.*

It was the first day of spring with gusts of a cold wind blowing strongly as I walked down Mariahilfer Strasse in Vienna a few years ago. It so happened that I overheard the conversation of three youngsters walking along. They spoke in Serbian about an event where also some Bosniaks and Croats were present. What drew my attention was not their language *per se*, you hear plenty of it in the subway and the streets of Vienna nowadays. It was an expression one of them used. “*I did not expect there to be so many people who speak our language,*” he said. It was apparent to me that by “our language” he did not mean one particular language such as Serbian, Bosnian or Croatian. On the contrary, the point was that the young man said “our language” on purpose, i.e. *instead* of naming that language by its proper name which would have been the politically correct thing to do. This is because “our language” is usually the expression refugees

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*This essay was originally published at Eurozine.com (a network of European cultural journals) and in Serbia in Politika (the oldest newspaper in the Balkans). A debate followed in the latter. Slavenka Drakulic has revised the text for this publication.*

and immigrants – or, for that matter, a mixed group of people from former Yugoslavia meeting abroad – use as *the name* for their different languages of communication.

The truth is that their language of common understanding has no common name any longer. It is not the Serbo-Croatian of before. So when one of the youngsters said *our language*, it was to name the minimum common denominator that established itself as a kind of norm after all the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, it serves as a code name indicating good intentions; we are not enemies, we can still understand each other in spite of everything that happened.

To my own surprise, I felt a kind of physical reaction to these words, a wave of warmth washing over me. These youngsters are communicating in whatever- the-name language, and that is what is most important I thought, looking at them walking along briskly, all three of them dressed in black urban outfits. They were so young, mere teenagers really. Probably just visiting Vienna from Serbia.

But suddenly, the realization that they were so very young, that they belong to a generation that grew up after the outbreak of the wars in Yugoslavia, hit me like a punch in the stomach. Maybe they were even born after I visited Belgrade the last time, almost two decades ago?

That first day of spring their conversation made it clear to me that an entire new generation had grown up since I was last there.

As they passed me, the old mixture of guilt and anxiety that used to haunt me from time to time surfaced again. How many times during the past years had I been invited to visit Belgrade? By my friends, by my publisher, by organizers of various international conferences and institutes of different kinds? And every single time I found a plausible way to refuse, to politely turn the invitation down. I never ran out of excuses.

As if exhausted, the wind subsided and I slowed down. I could not but ask myself the same old question again: why did I not visit Belgrade once in all those years? When my friends asked me the same question, I would habitually answer that I didn't know. I knew that I felt anxiety at the thought of going there again and that I certainly avoided visiting Belgrade after the war started, as if the city itself had become a metaphor for the war.

What was I anxious about? About "them"? About what "they" did to "us"? Or about what Serbs did to themselves? Maybe of being confronted with issues I didn't want to be confronted with? I was aware that I would have to travel there carrying with me the burden of those seventeen years like a heavy suitcase. If I were to open it, faces, memories, pictures, words – they would all spill out. Who would collect them and put them all back into the suitcase? Still, to postpone the trip until the whole new generation in Serbia had grown up suddenly looked extraordinary to me. As if I wasn't fully aware of the fact until I overheard the conversation on Mariahilfer Strasse that triggered the familiar feeling of anxiety.

I remember when I last visited Belgrade, in June 1991, just before Croatia proclaimed its independence. One of those three young people could have been born then, perhaps that very month. Perhaps the girl? She could have been born to parents living in the centre, near the train station, where I stayed with my friend Mirjana. Her mother probably bought bread in the same bakery nearby and visited the flea market on Kalenica pijaca on Saturday mornings.

Then my friend Mirjana died from a severe illness. Another friend, Boris, the one I had a coffee with the last day of my visit, got married. When I saw him ten years later at Frankfurt airport, his son had already started school. And Ana, another friend, left Belgrade and

moved first to Paris, then on to Sarajevo. Ljubica went to Slovenia then to Sweden, later to Belgium and came back only recently, tired from wandering around. One colleague, a journalist who used to visit Zagreb very often, became a minister of information in the government of Slobodan Milosevic. Another colleague became a chief executive officer with Serbian national television – the main nationalist propaganda machine. And a third one accompanied General Ratko Mladic in Srebrenica and documented his deadly triumph there.

In the meantime, bits and pieces of information arrived as proof of how we had changed, how this or that friend had become ... yes, what? An enemy? Or a person so different as not to be recognized any more, as a minister, a writer of nationalist prose, a loudspeaker of hatred? Did I ever really know them? Can one really know people, trust them? Depression was setting in with such questions, showing human nature as something ugly. Looking at myself in the mirror, I looked for signs of change, too. Fear of others is also fear of oneself.

I knew my visit to Belgrade would bring back half-forgotten images and feelings. Like the words of a Muslim woman from Srebrenica whose son was slaughtered in her arms by a Serbian soldier: *I was forced to drink the blood of my own son*, she said. Her words have been buried in my memory for so many years now.

Like the photo on the cover of Sarajevo's *Dani* magazine, showing a young man dressed in jeans, sneakers and a white t-shirt bending forward over a railing. There would be nothing special about that photo, except a huge hole in the place where his chest should have been. How strange, I thought when I saw it, that hole in his body through which you could see the iron bar. I deliberately focused my eyes on the iron bar because it made the whole scene seem less real ...

Do I, like everyone else, want to spare myself from the confrontation with my emotions about former friends in Belgrade, thinking that it is better to stay away, better not to go there? On the other hand, why would a trip to Belgrade be different to going back to Zagreb, say? On the contrary, I'd had to face the same kind of people there – old friends and colleagues who became nationalists and those who were just opportunists. I had to face the fact that so many people dear to me had left the country. From that point of view, going to Belgrade should be the same experience. But it is not. I live and work in Zagreb, it is my city and there is no way for me *not* to confront its post-war reality. That is, unless I want to leave it and never come back.

Belgrade I can avoid, I thought. “But Belgrade is a part of your past too,” Boris said to me when I recently met him. He returned home to Belgrade from the United States years ago. As usual we did not meet in my city, Zagreb, or his city, Belgrade, but in Vienna. At yet another conference, of course. We spoke about the uneasy feeling of returning to the old places that used to be ours but are not any longer. He described his first trip to Dubrovnik after the war to me. It was painful, he said, but not only because of his nostalgic memories of summers spent on the stone streets there. Or because he saw what bombs had done to this beautiful medieval town. It was sorrowful to be there, aware of the fact that the Yugoslav soldateska did it *in his name, too*. “You must come and see Belgrade and people there for yourself. After all, cities are people.” – he said.

Then Boris showed me a photo of his now grown up son, a tall, handsome young man dressed in a suit. It was hard to believe that the little boy I met at Frankfurt airport and then later on in their home in the United States is now a law student. This was just after I had overheard the conversation on Mariahilfer Strasse, and again I was reminded of the fact that there is a whole new generation that will soon be eligible to vote in elections.

The photo of Boris' son reminded me once more of not having faced up to the reality of these youngsters. I failed to notice something important, to see them growing up. What do I know about them? The fact that they couldn't travel abroad without a visa, couldn't see London or Paris, not even Trieste until recently?

How sad and absurd, and how humiliating their situation was, I thought as I remembered how, with the old red Yugoslav passport, my generation used to travel through Europe without visas. This was a source of pride, a *differentia specifica*, compared with the other countries belonging to the Soviet Block. They envied us as we, in the 1970's, travelled to Italy and France, to Great Britain and Sweden, to pick strawberries and make money over the summer. As a student I worked in Sweden in a warehouse for three months and came back with money for a whole year. Most of all, we were envied because we could buy a pair of blue jeans, fine Italian shoes, foreign books and records. The other side of that freedom to travel, however, was that it became one of the reasons for accepting the political system, functioning as a bribe of a kind. We were bribed into believing that "socialism with a human face" made sense and could work. We did not question it.

A few years ago, at that conference in Vienna, it occurred to me that these kids speaking Serbian on Mariahilfer Strasse were most likely not young Serbs from Serbia; if they were indeed from there, then they were among the few lucky ones who had managed to get visas. I had been listening to discussions about the visa problem for young Europeans outside the EU. Visas were hard to obtain, especially for Serbians, and in this way young people were isolated and prevented from seeing the world – so the argument went. Why punish youngsters for something they haven't done? They were not even born when the Yugoslav wars

broke out. They are not responsible for what their fathers did, one speaker said during the conference, with anger in his voice.

While his speech clearly aimed at evoking sympathy from the audience, I must confess that I did not feel any sympathy at all. I was *angry at his anger*. Speaking on their behalf he somehow suggested that the new generation *does not deserve* such a treatment from “Europe”. The implication of his argument was that because they are young they must also be innocent. It was exactly this *presumed* innocence of the Serbian youth that irritated me.

I know something about this. I myself, together with my generation, assumed our innocence because we were born after the Second World War. What could we possibly have to do with crimes committed at a time when we were not even born? The Serbian youth is not the exact parallel to our situation because our fathers fought a just, defensive and anti-fascist war (although I suspect that their fathers in Serbia would claim the very same thing too). But during the Second World War our fathers committed many war crimes that they never spoke about. I do not blame them, however, for their silence – the same kind of silence that I witness today after the last wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. But I do blame us for not asking the right questions like, for example, the simplest and most difficult of all: what did you do in the war, father?

It was my generation’s responsibility to question their justifications and their ideological interpretation of history. We failed because we did not do that. It was the responsibility of the next generation, to find out the truth about their war that was not only an anti-fascist war and a communist revolution – but also a civil war. However, we believed in official history and school textbooks be-

cause it was easier to live like that. Our attitude towards the past was one of the reasons why the new nationalist wars in the 1990's were so easy to start.

If I do not know much about the new generation in Serbia, I wonder about a more important question: how much do they know about their *own* past? Listening to the angry young Serbian man speaking about visas at the conference a few years ago, I thought he was wrong. Like us, his generation back home is responsible too: for its silence, for not asking what happened before they were born, for not caring about what their fathers did during the wars, for believing that they have the right to visas just because they are young and their hands are clean and their arrogance just. Most of all for not asking *their* parents why they, the children, were deprived of visas. True, the young generation of Serbs cannot be held responsible for the past. *But all of them are responsible for their present attitude to the past because it is important for their future.* That was the lesson that we, their parents' generation, should have learned.

As we did not learn it in time, we had to learn it the hard way.

Thanks to Boris' wise words, I understood that I am not afraid to see my friends in Belgrade again. After all, we met for all those years at conferences and festivals abroad, and we know exactly what each of us did or said or wrote during and after the wars. We also know about our mistakes and misunderstandings. For example about the mistake I made and am still ashamed of: it was in 1999 or 2000, I think, after the terrible exodus of Kosovo Albanians when my young colleague from Serbia, Vladimir Arsenijevic, wrote a text entitled "We are all Albanians". There was one sentence, I remember, that bothered me terribly. Arsenijevic wrote that he went into his kitchen, opened the fridge and took out a cold beer. As I vividly imagined that scene, I

realized that a “cold beer” was simply too much. He was describing the suffering of Kosovars and their exodus to Albania and Macedonia, long lines of refugees marching under merciless sun with all their possessions in a few plastic bags. And he went to fetch a “cold beer” to drink a sip before he continued to lament over their condition! Even if he did drink that cold beer, he should not have put it in that story. He should not have mixed it with refugees, not even in the form of his sympathetic essay. And no, we could not possibly all be Albanians, certainly not when one can drink a cold beer while the other is trying to escape terror. There was something wrong about this description, something hypocritical. And still, Arsenijevic was one of the very few Serbian writers opposing nationalism and the war in Kosovo. His text, just because I knew he was not like so many others, angered me more than the story of any nationalist writer would have done. Nevertheless, I was wrong to criticize him publicly for that. I was wrong in demanding moral perfection from him.

A few years later I met the young writer for the first time. It was in Croatia. He was a tall, slender man with long hair in a ponytail and gentle eyes. I introduced myself and apologized to him for my criticism. He accepted my apology with a smile.

Both Boris and I know what other friends and ex-friends did during the war. We can account for each acquaintance –*just like other people can for their relatives, friends and neighbours too*, about what they did in Bosnia or Kosovo. The difference is that the majority of people do not want to admit that they took part in wars. Not all of them are war criminals and murderers, so this is not a matter of guilt. But they ought to face their responsibility for voting for a murderous regime, for thinking that only they were victims of both Milosevic and the superpowers (after all, wasn't Belgrade bombed by the American superpower?), for believing that there was no other way

but to succumb to nationalist pressure. Unfortunately, there seems to be a little *desire in society to find out the truth*.

We citizens should not be silent. We should not repeat our own mistakes or those of our parents. We all have to confront the past. This is the task of all people who witnessed the war. This, I believe, is why I have not visited Belgrade for so long. I could not bear their silence and denial, as I could not accept it in my own country Croatia.

The young post-war generation has its own responsibility in finding out the truth as well. It is not the EU but their own parents who punished them: they were not deprived of visas because of *who* they are, but because of *what* their parents did or did not do. For many years the young generation of Serbia was suffering isolation because of the only thing it should do and is not doing – asking questions. The fact that, in December 2009 the EU abolished tourist visas for citizens of Serbia doesn't mean that they should forget about their past.

Neither Serbs nor Croats are willing to address and discuss the issue of responsibility for wars and war crimes. By this I mean nothing more than the ability to face this responsibility, if not necessarily accept it – after all, this is a process that takes a long time. The word “guilt” I do not even mention ...

But in spite of that unwillingness, recently, the Serbian government was, in a way, forced to say something about their accountability, even if they were mostly defensive about it. On March 30, 2010, Serbia's parliament, with a narrow majority, passed a resolution on Srebrenica. The text reads: “The parliament of Serbia strongly condemns the crime committed against the Bosnian Muslim population of Srebrenica in July 1995.” It also formally extends an apology to the families of the victims, albeit in a timid way, because “not everything was done to prevent the tragedy”. Let us remind ourselves of what happened in

Srebrenica: on July 13, 1995, the army of the Republika Srpska together with Yugoslav troops (controlled by Serbia) under the command of General Ratko Mladic, executed some 8,000 mostly civilian Bosnian Muslim men in less than a week. In the trial at the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Mladic's deputy commander, Radislav Krstic, was tried for genocide and sentenced to 46 years in prison (his sentence was modified later on). Srebrenica became the proof that it was possible to experience genocide in Europe even after the extermination of six million Jews. Also, let us remember that genocide is not defined by numbers of people killed, but primarily by the *intention to exterminate* a certain ethnic group or a nation.

It is good to have this resolution first and foremost because the official Serbia, from Slobodan Milosevic downwards, always strongly denied any involvement in the war in Bosnia and responsibility for this massacre. Furthermore, Serbs even denied that the massacre (not to mention genocide) ever happened: students of the law school at the University in Belgrade proclaimed just that a few years ago.

But now, with this resolution, Serbia is recognizing the fact that 8,000 Bosniaks were killed, and officially acknowledging responsibility for their massacre. Yet, the resolution does not recognize that the massacre in Srebrenica was an act of genocide, as defined by the ICTY. Victims' relatives also do not recognize it as a gesture of genuine regret – but as a political motion pushed through in order to facilitate joining the EU. It is interpreted as a half-measure, because the key alleged war criminal – Ratko Mladic – is still at large, as Serbia refuses to extradite him to the ICTY. It is evident that the resolution is forced by the political will and has a formal character. But the political will to deal with this issue is extremely important, and the parliament of Serbia should be credited with that.

Political will is still the key to resolve any affairs in the Balkans.

## Discussions in Serbia

During the months following the publishing of Slavenka Drakulic's essay "Why I have not returned to Belgrade" in 2009 the debate flourished in *Politika* and was also published in *Eurozine*. Opinions varied from that of publisher Natasha Markovic who claimed that "Belgrade has in the last years stoically accepted the attacks from various provincial intellectuals who deliberately forget that nations and cities are not guilty". It is her and numerous others' opinion that someone who doesn't know cannot be held responsible. Slavenka Drakulic's article is "sickly sweet, sentimental, nauseating talk coloured by propaganda", wrote the Serbian painter Ljuba Popovic along the same lines.

Others on the other hand were more self-critical for example Uros Djuric who wrote that the Serbian society shows a tendency of "indifference towards the truth, and yes, many Serbs live in denial of their recent past. But not all the Serbs and all the segments of the society, nor even the majority fit this pattern". Uros Djuric adds: This shameless, uncritical reduction to one self-explanatory category (the Serbs, i.e. Serbian society) is a stereotyped example of a culturally racist matrix.

"How can an article that is almost a confession, ... but demands only that the truth be found, that the truth be faced, believing only in its sobering effect, as she once believed, despite the personal consequences, when telling the incontestable truth about "her environment" – how can such an article provoke that amount of fury, that amount of cynicism, such a torrent of sickly sweet pathos, all trying to "defend our cause", wrote translator and essayist Mirjana Miocinovic, defending Drakulic against her critics.

Journalist Danica Vucenic asked herself how she should bring up her daughter. “Not only what I’ll tell her, but if I’m going to teach her to bravely ask questions one day. I’m not sure that the generation Slavenka Drakulic talks about is ready for that. They grew up in the 1990s and they weren’t brought up to ask questions. We are, as always, dealing with the feeling of others. I want to deal with my own feelings with regard to my own past. The problem our neighbours have is that they faced their own past; my problem is that we still have to face and explain what happened in Srebrenica or in Kosovo. Unfortunately, we always have this ‘but’”.

*[www.eurozine.com/comp/drakulic\\_debate.html](http://www.eurozine.com/comp/drakulic_debate.html)*

## **Visa Enlargement and the Balkans**

On November 30, 2009, the EU decided that the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia would be able to travel without visa to the Schengen area.

The Schengen area is made up of 28 European countries – all EU Member States except the UK and Ireland, as well as three non-EU members, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The European Commission started the visa liberalisation dialogue in early 2008 with Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Centre pieces of the dialogue have been the European Commission's roadmaps, setting out the conditions that each country had to meet. Late 2010 Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina were added to the list of countries exempt from EU visa requirements.

**Source:**

*The European Commission and the European Parliament*

# The EU's Soft Power and the Noah-Joker Effect

## — How to Transform the Balkans into a EU Foreign Policy Success

by *Gerald Knaus*

*Founder and Chairman of the European Stability Initiative*

Soft power is to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. As Mark Leonard described it in his 2005 book on the attractiveness of the European model, “Europe’s power is a ‘transformative power’ ... The USA may have changed the regime in Afghanistan, but Europe is changing all of Polish society, from its economic policies and property laws to its treatment of minorities and what gets served on the nation’s tables.” It relies on the attractiveness of one’s values and the esteem other societies have for one’s system.

In the past two decades a very diverse group of countries and societies, from the Baltic States to Turkey, have come to see joining the EU and embracing *European standards* as the best way to participate in a model associated with prosperity and democratic stability. This has been a unique demonstration of soft power, of politics through attraction.

At the same time, Russia in the past decade, ever since the arrival in power of Vladimir Putin in 1999, has even seen a reversal in the

attractive power of Europe. Instead of claiming to aspire to reform their society in line with the common standards of the EU, Putin's Russia has first rejected this model and then seen its attractiveness as a threat to its own aspirations in its neighbourhood. Seen from Moscow, the EU itself has often come to be regarded more as a structure inherited from the past rather than as a model for the future. Overall the transformative power of the EU in the Eastern Partnership region remains more of a promise than a reality.

Does this mean that the golden age of the EU's transformative power is already over? Has this soft power been overestimated in a moment of triumphalism, which has now passed?

The answer to this question depends on the responses the EU finds in the coming years to the challenges it faces in South East Europe. In this region the EU is in fact today engaged in one of the most ambitious projects of enlargement ever undertaken. It is a project that is putting its ability to inspire far-reaching change to the most demanding test ever. Honouring its current commitments and working to accept the countries of the Western Balkans (and Turkey) would bring about a deeper transformation of the EU itself: this is one obvious challenge. It would bring the number of EU members up to 36; even more strikingly, of these 36 members a full third would actually be from the South East (seven successor states of the former Yugoslavia plus Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece), compared to only one (Greece) member from this region one decade ago. Also, following the next South Eastern enlargement, the total population of the EU would reach around 600 million people; some 100 million of these could be Muslim. For this project of building a larger, more diverse community to succeed, applicant countries would have to undergo dramatic institutional change: turn around their economies, transform their political cultures, and leave hardly a stone unturned

in their administrations. This is a project so bold and ambitious that even those who have celebrated the transformative power of the EU in the past might wonder whether it can pull off the feat of bringing the post-crisis Western Balkans and Turkey into “the European mainstream”.

The project of the EU’s South Eastern enlargement, in short, puts EU soft power to its most demanding test ever. The outcome matters beyond this region. If the EU fails here, it also becomes hard to see how the EU is going to conjure the energy and confidence for a truly transformative policy, in regards to its so-called Eastern partners. And if it succeeds it is likely that a Union embracing the Western Balkans and Turkey enlargement will also look further east, as a new and more confident global actor.

### **Milosevic’s European vision**

There are different ways to convey how far the region, and Europe as a whole, has come since the 1990’s. One is to focus on the battle of ideas.

A prominent European thinker looked at the Balkans in the first half of the 1990’s; the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. In 1994 he published an article in the Belgrade paper *Borba*, with the title “Without Pity”. He argued, against the background of the war in Bosnia that “all European countries are going the way of ethnic cleansing. That is the real Europe ... Bosnia is only its new frontier”.

This deeply pessimistic vision, arguing either that the whole edifice of post-World War II European civilization was brittle, and all of Europe was doomed to a “normality” of clashes of civilization and ethnic hatred or that, at the very least, Balkan people and societies belonged to a different, pre-modern world distinct from the “civilized” rest of Europe, were actually widely shared in the 1990’s ...

not only in Belgrade or Zagreb, but also in Paris, London, Athens and elsewhere in the EU. This also explains how it was possible for Karadzic and Mladic to be welcomed as heroes in Athens in the early 1990's. It explains why some leaders thought that the most "realistic" response to the Balkan tragedy was to let events run its "natural" course. If soft power is the ability to get others to want what you want, then European soft power in the 1990's suffered from the obvious: that it was not clear what Europe wanted.

Ideas matter. Nationalist ideas. Ideas of Balkan exceptionalism. Eric Hobsbawm has underlined that intellectuals are to national movements what "poppy growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts - the suppliers of the raw material for the market." There were many such poppy growers mainly, but not only, in the Balkans. They prepared the ground, first for the disastrous wars of the 90's, then for the failures to stop them. At the same time during the 1990's the notion of a "return to Europe" was a complex one. There was a time, not long ago, when "Europe" did *not* stand for values of democratic governance and peaceful interdependence: when, as historian Mark Mazower reminds us in *Dark Continent*, European civilization was actually not tending towards democracy. Mazower writes that, "though we may like to think democracy's victory in the cold war proves its deep roots in Europe's soil, history tells us otherwise. Triumphant in 1918, it was virtually extinct twenty years on." There is a strong non-democratic, nationalist, militaristic and authoritarian 20th century European tradition, and it is one that Balkan leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic could refer to when he stressed the supposed debt Europe owed to Serbia.

Of course, after World War II Western Europe embraced other values. The question in the 1990's was in which European tradition Serbia and other Balkan countries saw themselves: the first or the

second half of the 20th century. The Central Europeans made a clear choice in 1989. The results were dramatic. In 1990 the number of Polish people who feared Germany was above 80 percent. By 2009 it had fallen to 14 percent. After 1989 the goal of joining an integrating democratic continent spread across the whole of Central Europe. And about a decade ago it finally became realistic to imagine that the same ideas would be embraced across the whole of the Western Balkans as well. It was also a major breakthrough in the battle of ideas: and it opened the way for EU's soft power to influence all of the countries in the Balkan region.

### **The Defiant Ones**

In the award-winning film *The Defiant Ones*, black convict Noah Cullen (played by Sidney Poitier) and white convict Joker Jackson (played by Tony Curtis) are planning an escape from prison. However, they are bound together by an unbreakable iron chain. With each man literally stuck to the other, the key theme of the movie is whether the two can overcome their mutual dislike and suspicion in pursuit of a common objective (the Noah-Joker effect).

The position of the six Western Balkan states today is strangely reminiscent of that cinematic scenario. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are all trying to escape from a disastrous post-communist transition that has given them two decades of political tension and economic isolation. Each would prefer to find its way without paying much attention to the parallel struggles of its neighbours. The European Commission also tells them that enlargement is an individual rather than a collective enterprise. It is “a regatta, not a convoy”, as former Croatian President Stipe Mesic put it. Those countries that believe that they are ahead of their neighbours resent the very notion of a linkage, for fear that it will slow them down.

As far as the core challenge of accession is concerned – adapting national laws and institutions to the European *acquis* – it is undoubtedly true that every applicant rows his own boat. However, the history of enlargement also shows that countries rarely advance all by themselves. From the days when Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark acceded together in 1973 to the Iberian enlargement with both Portugal and Spain in 1985, countries have tended to join the EU in groups. This was most obvious in the big bang enlargement in 2004, when ten countries acceded at the same time.

This means that countries can either advance together or hold each other back (Ireland had to wait for the French to make up their mind about the United Kingdom). The Noah-Joker effect can be a positive linkage, with the more advanced country pulling forward the weaker, or a negative one.

A perfect illustration of the power of positive linkage is the visa liberalization process for the Western Balkans. The decision to launch the process was triggered by the Serbian presidential elections in early 2008 when President Boris Tadic faced the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic. Serbia was the first country to receive a visa roadmap three days before the equally important parliamentary elections in May 2008. These were political decisions motivated by concern for Serbia. It was a powerful, timely and above all effective demonstration of EU soft power and it achieved its aims: the pro-European reformers won. Most importantly, big European countries' concern for Serbia also helped its Balkan neighbours: once the visa dialogue was started with Serbia, it could not be denied to its neighbours. Once Serbia had a roadmap, its neighbours received roadmaps within a month. What ensued was a race in which progress was measured by national achievements ... but the fact that all countries participated in the same race together was a major reason explaining why all suc-

ceeded in the end. It would certainly have been harder for Albania or Bosnia on their own, to make the case for a visa liberalization process.

The logic of merit meant that the same criteria were applied to all; but the fact that there was a group made it easier to make objective assessments. It was possible to compare performance. This did not undermine reforms, on the contrary. While initially some Bosnian leaders thought the process would take many years and in the end Bosnia would get visa-free travel regardless of its performance the incentives changed dramatically once Bosnian leaders realized that what counted was meeting the conditions. Serbia's, Montenegro's and Macedonia's success also demonstrated that the goal was within reach: suddenly both Albania and Bosnia carried out difficult and expensive reforms.

This is not the only way regional linkages can work. The bilateral linkage between neighbours Bosnia and Serbia is a good example of the Noah-Joker effect. Here too progress and stagnation can reinforce each other. Leaders in Banja Luka and Sarajevo agree on little, but neither wants Bosnia to fall behind Serbia on the road to the EU. As long as Serbia is stuck, this is not a major concern. Once Serbia advances, the equation changes. On the other hand, there are those in the EU who worry about the impact on stability in Bosnia in case Serbia makes rapid progress all on its own and leaves Bosnia behind. Thus the best for both countries is to pull each other along and make progress in parallel. As one country advances, it becomes easier to reform the other.

A similar dynamic can be seen in Macedonia. Since 2005, when it was awarded official candidate status (the only one of this group of six) Macedonia has been a front runner in the Western Balkans. It

was “best in class” in the visa liberalization process. In 2009 it was the first to get the official endorsement of the European Commission to start accession talks.

Macedonia advancing to real talks would be hugely beneficial for the whole region and dispel all fears that enlargement is no longer a key EU agenda. On the other hand, as a result of a Greek veto and the unresolved name dispute, Macedonia also risks becoming an illustration of a serious potential threat, the prospect of a never ending accession process or of an endless blockade due to a bilateral dispute. Instead of serving as a positive example, inspiring reforms in other countries, this has reinforced doubts in Balkan capitals about the seriousness of the EU’s enlargement promise.

Finally, the most obvious example of the Noah-Joker effect is the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia. For a long time, both countries’ leaders pretended that they could isolate their mutual relations (or non-relations) from their interest in European accession. By now it has become clear to every politician in Belgrade, however, that Serbia will not be able to join the EU without finding a way of settling the Kosovo issue. But the same is true for Kosovo: without a normalization of relations with Belgrade, Kosovo has no prospect of joining either NATO or the European Union. Pristina and Belgrade are thus very much like Noah and Joker: united by mutual dislike, they find themselves chained to one another. But what can they, and what can the EU do about this?

### **Enlargement in 100 years?**

A senior EU official working on the Balkans explained that “I am not sure whether it will take ten or 100 years for EU accession to be realized. I am selling ten years, but in my heart of hearts I do not know if it will not be 100.” Another senior European official said

## The Name Dispute Macedonia-Greece

The Macedonia naming dispute refers to the disagreement over the use of the name *Macedonia* between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia. Greece contains the region of Greek Macedonia and makes a direct claim to the ancient Macedonian heritage – including the use of the name Macedonia.

To solve the dispute the European Security Initiative has suggested that Macedonia and Greece first agree on a name, such as “Republic of Macedonia – Vardar”, or something similar, to replace Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) wherever the latter is used now: in the EU, in the UN and in other international organizations. Macedonia then changes its constitution to say that from the moment it becomes an EU member – but not at an earlier time - it’s international name will be this compromise name. In the Macedonian language the country would remain “Republika Makedonija”.

**Source:**

*European Security Initiative*

that “the signal from Berlin is clear: after Croatia there should be no more enlargements.”

It is worrying that this kind of thinking is widely shared by civil servants who are to make the Balkan’s EU accession happen. The fact that other politicians and analysts openly say so is even more so. In early 2009, on the eve of elections to the European Parliament, a party manifesto of the governing German CDU called for an “enlargement pause”.

Then there is the rise in European politics of people like Dutchman Geert Wilders, now part of the parliamentary majority that supports the new Dutch government. Wilders told Euronews in 2009 that, “no other country should join Europe. I’m even in favour of Romania and Bulgaria to leave the EU.”<sup>1</sup>

In early 2009, Germany blocked the European Council for three months from asking the Commission to even prepare an opinion (avis) on Montenegro’s application. In June 2010 the Sarajevo EU-Balkan meeting, announced by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, as chair of the rotating EU presidency, as “the largest international conference taking place in Bosnia-Herzegovina’s capital since the Stability Pact Summit in 1999,”<sup>2</sup> turned into a flop without any tangible outcome.

How seriously should Balkan leaders take such signals? Has EU (and German) policy really changed?

In fact, it is impossible to give a clear answer to these questions. There are obvious mood swings. In 2002 there were still concerns that the Western Balkans would be included in the European neighbourhood policy; then, in 2003, the Greek government fought for the accession promise made at the Thessaloniki summit. In 2005, following the

French and Dutch referenda rejecting the constitutional treaty, things looked even grimmer. This was followed by candidate status for Macedonia, the opening of accession talks with Croatia, Turkey and most recently Iceland, and of course the accession of both Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, not to mention the visa liberalization process.

2009 was actually a good year for Balkan enlargement, with supportive EU presidencies and the prospect of real progress as Albania and Serbia submitted their membership applications. This was followed by a disastrous first half in 2010 when, again, nothing seemed to be moving ...

### **What the future will bring**

What will the future bring? The truth is that nobody can know. The basic reality is that policy makers in accession countries do well to ignore mood swings. They might take courage from the fact that all previous enlargements also looked impossible at some stage. This was true for the UK, vetoed twice by De Gaulle's France with the argument, made in 1963, of "incompatible cultures":

"England in effect is insular ... She has in all her doings very marked and very original habits and traditions. In short, the nature, the structure, the very situation (conjuncture) that are England's differ profoundly from those of the continentals."<sup>3</sup>

At around the same time Italy prevented Austria from signing an association agreement with Brussels. The cause: bilateral disputes over South Tyrol. Austria failed despite support from Germany and a favourable report by the European Commission in June 1964 (at the time there were bomb attacks in Italian South Tyrol by groups who wanted to join Austria). Only after bilateral negotiations between Austria and Italy over South Tyrol removed this obstacle did

Austria and the European Economic Community (EEC) sign a free trade agreement in 1973. There are, then, ignoble precedents for the recent Slovenian veto against Croatia and the long-standing Greek veto against Macedonia.

Thus, deciding whether at any given moment the glass is half full or half empty is an intellectual exercise with little value for policy makers. And yet, the regional and European mood matters to both populations and administrators. The key to such moods is no longer words but actions – this is why the Sarajevo meeting in June 2010 with its ritualistic reassertion of a “European perspective” was such a disappointment.

### **The Iceland of the Western Balkans?**

Montenegrin European-izers like to compare their country to Iceland, another small maritime state which recently opened accession negotiations. Like Iceland, Montenegro is a tiny country with a small population. But Iceland is comparatively rich, does not have to cope with legacies of communism, and has already adopted a large chunk of the EU’s legislation. In addition, unlike Iceland, Montenegro suffers from an image problem in many EU capitals.

Montenegro has never had a change in rulers in its young democratic history. The Democratic Party of Socialists, the successor to the Montenegrin League of Communists, has been in power ever since the fall of communism. Except for a brief period from September 2006 to February 2008, one single politician, Milo Djukanovic, has been either the country’s president or prime minister. Montenegro still suffers from a reputation as a cigarette smuggling centre during the 1990’s, and – more recently – as a hub for doggy Russian capital. Allegations of corruption and links between political elites and organized crime are frequent.

And yet this is a rather distorted picture. Montenegro, after all, also managed to avoid most of the pitfalls its neighbours stumbled into in the past two decades. It has managed its interethnic relations better than any other country in the Western Balkans, despite its thoroughly mixed population. It has – with EU mediation – managed to achieve independence democratically and peacefully despite strong internal polarization. It recognized Kosovo as an independent country and did well in meeting the criteria for visa liberalization. On December 17, 2010 Montenegro was granted official candidate status for EU membership.

### **Macedonia and the sound of silence**

It would be foolish to be optimistic that the bilateral conflict between Greece and Macedonia (regarding the name of Macedonia) will soon be resolved. It has, in fact, all the characteristics of an unsolvable conflict. At its heart are non-negotiable identity issues. It has festered for two decades. Most outsiders have given up hope and few dare to get involved. Some warn that this could become another unsolvable bilateral dispute, like the disagreements between Spain and the UK over Gibraltar or the disagreements between Spain and Portugal over Olivenza.

There is one crucial difference, however: this frozen conflict is likely to keep Macedonia out of both NATO and the EU forever. As the EU noted: “Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue ... remains essential.”<sup>4</sup> A never-ending stalemate could even threaten one of the most important state-building projects in Europe today.

### **Europeanization on the Ibar?**

Serbia had long hoped that it might be able to isolate its EU process from its attitude to Kosovo. It has become increasingly clear that it cannot.

Kosovo has long thought that it was enough to focus on recognitions and work on its relations with the US. In fact, two years after independence, with no prospects of earning recognition by all EU members, there is a very real threat that Kosovo will be permanently stuck in its isolation and backwardness.

The solution is clear, and there is a growing recognition among some leaders and in Brussels: the Kosovo-Serbia relationship – a classic case of Noah and Joker – can either become an obstacle for both, or it can be of mutual benefit. It is an area where smart diplomacy on the part of the EU can make a major contribution and lead to a much needed demonstration of not only the soft power of the EU but also the advantages of the post-Lisbon structures for foreign policy making. Here is the real test for Brussels and member states whether the EU is now a more effective actor.

In reality there is a triangular relationship, with the EU as the third key player. The EU and Serbia need to find a consensus about what Serbia needs to do concerning Kosovo for this not to become a hindrance on its way towards EU membership. The EU and Kosovo need to sort out what the EU expects from Pristina in order for Kosovo to be allowed to advance towards the same goal. Currently neither is clear.

### **Incentives needed for both sides**

How can this relationship become more fruitful? One obvious fact is that to be an effective interlocutor the EU needs leverage and incentives for both sides. For Serbia this is clear: the prospect for accession talks, and later membership, have so far provided enough incentive for the Serbian political leadership to react to EU pressure. In order not to weaken this leverage, however, it is now – after Serbia backed down on the UN resolution – crucial to forward Serbia's membership application to the Commission for it to prepare an avis.

## **What is happening in Kosovo?**

What about Kosovo? Let us first look at what has gone right from Pristina's point of view: since early 2008 Kosovo is independent and recognized by a growing number of states and by most of its Balkan neighbours. There has been almost no violence (except one serious incident in Mitrovica right after the declaration of independence). Kosovo Serbs south of the Ibar have not only remained, but have taken part in recent local elections in larger numbers than ever before. The implementation of the Ahtisaari plan – including its provisions of minority rights for Kosovo Serbs – proceeded quite well, even in the absence of a UN resolution backing it up.

But note also what has not been achieved. There is no solution to the Serbian-controlled North: in North Mitrovica and the neighbouring municipalities there is an almost complete absence of the rule of law, as Kosovar courts do not operate and the UNMIK police do not enforce rulings of parallel Serbian courts. There is an ever present danger of provocations and violence. Here the implementation of the Ahtisaari plan failed (the UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari).

At the same time, Kosovo remains isolated. It was able to join the World Bank and the IMF, but to join most other institutions will require some support from Serbia or Russia, which is not forthcoming. Recognitions have been forthcoming a lot less rapidly than expected, even after the International Court of Justice decision. In many institutions Kosovo is still represented by UNMIK, which is hanging on. Finally, Kosovo is still formally a protectorate, with ultimate authority in international bodies. In terms of visa free travel, prospects for Kosovars to travel visa free to the EU look practically as bleak as in 2008. Moreover, the European Union remains as distant as it has ever been: not being recognized by 27, but only

by 22 members, Kosovo is in limbo. In a situation of unchanging economic underdevelopment and weak institutions, the absence of credible EU soft power is all the more problematic.

All of this also means that Kosovars continue to look to the US for guidance. The EU does not offer Kosovo what it can offer Serbia – a step by step progress towards candidate status and eventual EU membership. In short, the situation in Kosovo is far from stable: the poorest country in Europe, with the highest unemployment, a growing population, the least ability to travel legally, without a credible EU perspective, trying to build – according to the Ahtisaari plan – a model multiethnic society (with seats set aside in parliament plus quotas for minorities in all institutions, non-nationalist state symbols, etc.): a success for this project can hardly be taken for granted.

There are two big policy questions for Kosovo: first, assuming that the EU will continue to be divided on the status issue for the foreseeable future, what can Europeanization achieve in the Balkan country most in need of institutional reforms? And second, what does the EU's sharply reduced leverage mean for its efforts to get Serbia and Kosovo to meet and discuss their problems?

Currently, Pristina politicians have few incentives to make any, even the smallest, practical concessions. The natural way forward would be to find ways to develop a status-neutral EU accession process. Some people in the Commission are trying to work on this, but without political commitment they will not get far. The alternative is not promising: Kosovo remains isolated, excluded from the Europeanization process that is open to all of its neighbours, and the EU's leverage in Pristina will further diminish. In such circumstances, the talks between Serbia and Kosovo would be certain to fail.

## **Hand in hand!**

If Macedonia and Montenegro move ahead, this would have a huge effect on Tirana's polarized political scene. It would increase EU leverage and strengthen pro-EU forces in society. If Serbia makes progress, this is the best incentive for Bosnia. The key principle which worked well in the visa liberalization process is to treat countries fairly – i.e. in the same manner across the region.

The arguments for the EU and the US to be involved in the Balkans during the last two decades were usually negative: images of atrocities and anarchy, fears of further chaos, talk about failed states. Some still try this rhetoric today to mobilize interest, but it does not work well anymore. Serbia will not resort to violent means in its struggle over Kosovo. Macedonia is not going to implode in civil war if it does not start accession talks soon. Kosovo will not expel its Serb citizens if it does not get a visa roadmap. Even in Bosnia, the country that some analysts portray as at serious risk of disintegration, nobody actually expects a return to armed conflict. The actions of the US and the UK, most worried about retaining OHR (Office of the High Representative), speak a clear language, as neither has troops left in Bosnia.

Of course, it would be foolish to become complacent. If the region does get trapped, it is possible to conjure alternative scenarios that will work to the detriment of European interests in the Balkans.

On the other hand, the most important reason for the EU to be involved in the Balkans today is a positive one. Today it is the only region in the world where the EU is the undisputed hegemonic outside power, not challenged – once it makes up its own mind – by either the US or Russia. It is also a region where European tools needed for impact are already in place. Stabilizing the Balkans does not require

increasing defence spending or the deployment of Special Forces; it does not require coercion or bribery. The key to success is smart diplomacy and a wise use of soft power.

It is in the Balkans therefore that the EU can prove the usefulness of the Lisbon reforms for more effective foreign policy in the future. During the 1990's the Balkans became a laboratory for other interventions elsewhere. Even in recent years EU initiatives here have served as models: the EU visa roadmap process, after working well, is now adapted to the conditions of the Eastern Partnership region. The prospect of post-conflict multiethnic democracies forging a lasting democratic peace is a bold vision, but one the EU is fully capable, if it so chooses, to advance.

Of course, failure to stabilize the Balkans would undermine any claims that the EU is able, after Lisbon, to shape even its most immediate neighbourhood and advance its values. However, the best case for involvement in the Balkans today is not the threat of failure but the lure of success. Being linked together by ever stronger bonds must not be a problem for the states of the Western Balkans once there is no longer any need to plan an escape from a common European home.

## Notes:

- 1 *Euronews*, “Geert Wilders: I’m in favour of Romania and Bulgaria leaving the EU”, 6 July 2009, ([www.euronews.net/2009/07/06/geert-wilders-i-m-in-favour-of-romania-and-bulgaria-leaving-the.eu/](http://www.euronews.net/2009/07/06/geert-wilders-i-m-in-favour-of-romania-and-bulgaria-leaving-the.eu/))
- 2 *SeeNews*, “Spain organising big EU summit in Sarajevo”, 5 February 2010, ([www.seenews.com/news/latestnews/spainorganizingbigeusummitinsarajevo-105704304/](http://www.seenews.com/news/latestnews/spainorganizingbigeusummitinsarajevo-105704304/))
- 3 [en.wikisource.org/wiki/DeGaulle's\\_Veto\\_on\\_British\\_membership\\_of\\_the\\_ECG](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/DeGaulle's_Veto_on_British_membership_of_the_ECG)
- 4 General Affairs Council, 7/8 December 2009.

# Croatia's Road to the EU and its Impact on Regional Stability

by *Terezija Prskalo*

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The fall of the Berlin Wall brought along an unprecedented explosion of freedom that profoundly changed the political structure of Europe. The unfettered aspirations for democracy tore down the Iron Curtain and paved the way for the restoration of individual as well as national rights. Liberty became the guiding principle for countries in Central Europe, including Croatia, which sought to return to the family of Western democracies, a striving that was deeply rooted in the minds of all those so far burdened by decades of communist oppression.

This was the context in which Croatian citizens seized the opportunity to hold the first free elections in 1990 to change course and adopt a new political equation that could be graphically defined as “democracy = independence + Europe”. And this has been the guiding formula for Croatia ever since.

However, Croatia's transition process was all the more complex and demanding as it was given an additional, highly unfortunate dimension in the early nineties. Croatia was among those countries in South East Europe that were confronted with the wars Slobodan Milošević waged in his failed bid for a Greater Serbia. These difficult circum-

stances left no room to savour the times in which Croatia re-emerged on the map of Europe as a free and democratic state.

Unlike all other countries of Central Europe, and while being simultaneously faced with gaining statehood, Croatia's first imperative was to protect its regained freedom, defend its territorial integrity, overcome the consequences of war and embark on a comprehensive process of political and economic transition. All these factors certainly took a toll on the dynamics of Croatia's advancement towards integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Never losing momentum along this path which imposed a double challenge for the young state that Croatia was, only further strengthened the foundations of its democracy, as well as its adherence to the values, standards and beliefs that would one day be crowned by Croatia taking its rightful place in the family of European nations.

With Croatia's new constitution from December 1990 laying the fundamentals for a modern democratic state, it was not until the mid nineties that the threat to independence was eliminated, by regaining most of the occupied territories on Croatian soil. And only then were the conditions created to direct all national potentials towards structural reforms and integration into the EU and NATO.

The EU's increased awareness of the challenges in South East Europe as well as of the European aspirations of the countries in this region, led to the launching of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) in 1999, marking the first milestone on the journey towards membership in the European Union.

The SAP framework indicated for the first time that the association with the EU is both realistic and achievable, thus becoming a driving force behind all the efforts which were part of the uncompromising European orientation of the Republic of Croatia from the very beginning.

Between the first contractual and institutional link between Croatia and the EU in the form of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) signed in 2001 and applying for membership in 2003, Croatia was in a somewhat unprivileged situation due to the focus of the EU on the accession negotiations with 12 candidate countries, that were to join in 2004 and 2007.

Therefore, Croatia had to invest significant efforts in preparing both the EU and itself internally for its EU membership application and all the obligations stemming from it. This implied building up a good track-record in the SAA implementation and approximation of legislation with the *acquis*, but above all reaching full compliance with political criteria as the main precondition for opening accession negotiations.

In February 2003 Croatia formally applied for EU membership, and following the positive opinion (*Avis*) from the European Commission in April 2004, Croatia was two months later granted candidate status by the European Council: 3 October 2005 marked the formal beginning of accession negotiations between Croatia and the EU.

The entire process of Croatia's accession to the EU was conducted in a somewhat different environment than was the case with the previous enlargement round. This is not a statement of opinion, as it is an undeniable fact that both technical and political variables had become much more complex, and as such had a significant impact on the course of the process itself.

In political terms, two events of considerable importance marked the period as Croatia embarked on its negotiations with the EU. In May 2004 ten new member states joined the EU, and a year later the Constitutional Treaty failed on referenda held in France and the Netherlands. This created a political atmosphere in the EU which was

dominated by debates on institutional reforms, the future borders of the EU and Europe's role in a globalized world. And these were the reasons why enlargement fatigue, a term so often encountered, became a prevalent attitude in the discussions on the integration of the countries of South East Europe, even more so after Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007.

Against this backdrop, the EU adopted a new Enlargement Strategy in 2006, based on three principles: consolidation of commitments, conditionality and communication. In other words this entailed finding a balance between EU's commitment to future enlargement and its integration capacity, applying a strict but fair assessment of the candidate's compliance with the criteria for membership, and at the same time deepening the EU citizens' understanding of the rationale behind the project of enlargement, i.e. further spreading the area of peace, security and stability across the European continent.

However, perhaps the most significant dimension arising from this shift in the political attitude of the EU is that the integration process was not anymore considered to be a historic project, but rather a merit- and achievement-based one, and as such inevitably had a spill-over effect on the technical part of Croatia's accession negotiations.

So, what was the substance of this spill-over effect in concrete terms? Before explaining in which aspects the negotiations themselves became more demanding in regards to Croatia's performance, it should be recalled that the new complexity derived also from certain circumstances that Croatia had no influence on. The mere fact that the EU now consisted of 27 Member States meant that a greater number of potentially different interests needed to be taken into account, making the process more time-consuming than before. The same applies to the increased volume of the *acquis communautaire*<sup>1</sup>, evident

in the sheer number of 35 negotiation Chapters instead of 31, demanding legal adjustments in an increased range of policies, which as a consequence also required a more convincing track-record in the implementation of legal acts.

With regard to the negotiations themselves, the focus shifted towards the mechanism of benchmarks. As a result of lessons learnt from the fifth enlargement (Romania and Bulgaria), this tool now encompassed the fulfilment of precisely defined requirements both upon opening as well as closing respective chapters. Although benchmarks increased the workload for both Croatia and the EU, they proved a useful tool in guiding the process and proving the steadiness of achieved results, whereby it is crucial that benchmarks remain precise, measurable, and, above all, unburdened with issues which are not part of the *acquis*. What is undeniably a straightforward advantage of benchmarks is that their fulfilment clearly adds to Croatia's credibility as a future member state. At the same time this performance in meeting the membership criteria makes the introduction of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism<sup>2</sup> superfluous.

Another argument in favour of Croatia deservedly joining the European Union and the lack of need to introduce any post-accession monitoring schemes are Croatia's achievements in *Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights*. The mere introduction of Chapter 23 as a separate negotiation chapter significantly added to the already most complex accession process so far. It covers the reform of the judiciary, fight against corruption, refugee return, cooperation with the ICTY and minority rights protection. Fulfilling the benchmarks in this chapter represents much more than the alignment with the *acquis* and the implementation of legal acts, as it inevitably leads to a change in the mindset of the society as a whole. Being aware of the significance of this chapter, Croatia attaches utmost importance to meeting all the requirements, however difficult they might be.

When it comes to reforms, particular attention is given to the implementation of European standards in the Croatian judiciary system – to build a system which is impartial, independent, accountable, professional, competent and efficient. Testimony to all the efforts invested is the data that the Croatian court network has by the beginning of 2011 been downsized by 38%, and that at the same time the case backlog has been halved since 2005. Special focus has also been put on strengthening the legislative and institutional framework for fighting corruption. The enhanced coordination of competent bodies has already led to a number of successful actions, criminal proceedings and revealed cases of corruption at all levels. Moreover, these measures are underpinned by a strong political support of the Croatian Government. This sends a clear and explicit message – zero tolerance for corruption with nobody above the law.

Drawing a parallel to the fight against corruption, as an issue tightly linked to the EU accession process, but most of all demonstrating that Croatia has internalized the values the EU is built upon, credit must be given to Croatia's accomplishments in the field of minority rights protection. Croatia is especially attentive to this issue because the lesson learned in its recent history is that the respect of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and other differences, as well as their preservation, is the best safeguard for a stable, tolerant and secure society.

The same rationale lies behind Croatia's straightforward approach in making it possible for each refugee, who wishes to return to Croatia, to do so. Croatia's dedication to continue along this path until the very last request is solved is unquestionable. This is more than evident when one considers that Croatia has so far invested more than 5.3 billion EUR into refugee return, with only 5% of this amount being borne by the international community. The return of 348,000 refugees has been made possible, out of which more than a third

are of Serbian nationality. As to the expeditious implementation of a *Housing Care Program* for former tenancy right holders, as well as all other components of the *Refugee Return Program*, considerable financial means have been foreseen in order to complete it in its entirety. The essence of Croatia's approach to refugee return is to set an example and to inspire other countries in South East Europe in moving this issue from the political into the humanitarian domain, thus adding to the process of reconciliation which has already started taking root in this region.

When it comes to the ICTY, it is worth mentioning that Croatia was one of the countries that supported its establishment, and has been committed to full cooperation with the Tribunal ever since. Proof to this fact is that Croatia has fulfilled all 884 requests from the Office of the Prosecutor. Therefore it can be expected that in the end all the efforts Croatia invested will be properly valued by the ICTY as well as the EU Member States. At the same time, Croatia remains dedicated to prosecute all war crimes committed on its territory, regardless of the ethnicity of the perpetrators.

With equal determination as to the tasks covered by Chapter 23, Croatia approaches the fulfilment of the last remaining benchmarks in *Chapter 8 - Competition Policy*, namely the restructuring of Croatian shipyards. While mindful of the obligations stemming from the *acquis*, Croatia is taking into account the social and economic implications of the process as a whole, being attached to its maritime tradition, which is inseparable from its pronounced identity as a Mediterranean country.

The awareness that there are only final steps to be taken on Croatia's road to the EU most definitely adds to the vigour with which Croatia is moving towards closing the historical circle embarked upon

two decades ago. As joining the EU in the nearest possible future remains Croatia's main foreign policy priority, the vigour and the determination to spare no effort in passing the crucial milestones to EU membership will not waver, but can only grow in strength and resoluteness.

Reaching the final destination encompasses closing the negotiations in the remaining chapters, the confirmation of a concrete date of Croatia's entry into the EU, signing the Accession Treaty, and intensifying all activities within the extensive information campaign prior to holding a referendum in Croatia on its accession to the EU.

There are two sides to the coin of realizing this agenda, the first one certainly being Croatia's unquestionable perseverance along this path. However, equally important is the unwavering support of the member states, the European Commission, and the European Parliament.

It is the amalgamation of these two elements that will lead to Croatia's accession to the European Union as its 28<sup>th</sup> Member State. The significance of realizing this goal goes far beyond the deserved acknowledgment of Croatia's achievements. Apart from confirming the continuation of EU enlargement as its most successful policy, it would also send a message that attaining EU membership can turn from a dream into reality, thus providing strong wind into the sails of the European forces in the countries of South East Europe, inevitably contributing to the further strengthening of security and stability in this part of Europe.

There is no doubt that the forces that are to create this future are first and foremost the countries themselves. However, in order for them to sustain the persistency and enthusiasm needed to confront the challenges ahead, all their efforts need to be accompanied by dedica-

tion of the EU as well. Maintaining the goal of EU membership as achievable, in no uncertain terms, entails not only keeping this perspective open, but also providing additional and clear guidance. Not just setting signposts on the integration path, but enhancing the EU's coherence in dealing with the countries of the region. The EU should in the future be to South East Europe what it has been to countries across the European continent over the past six decades – a catalyst of change.

Croatia recognizes its share of the responsibility in driving this process forward. The rationale of supporting the advancement of each country of South East Europe towards the EU lies behind Croatia's decision to put its translation of the *acquis communautaire* at the disposal of its neighbours, thus facilitating its adoption in the respective countries. Croatia's commitment to the region has been and will remain unequivocal. It is about sharing experiences, listening to the needs of the individual countries, and acting as a voice for the European and Euro-Atlantic future of South East Europe.

And to those who might still pose questions as to why this is one of the major determinations of Croatia's foreign policy, the message is clear. Croatia wants to build a stable, peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood, and to have all the countries of South East Europe as partners in the European and Euro-Atlantic community of nations. But most of all, the responsibility Croatia feels towards the region derives from its understanding of how demanding it is to reach the point where Croatia stands today. It is about the understanding what it takes to become a part of the solution for South East Europe.

Although the region might still be perceived as reluctant to pursue various forms of cooperation, the mere fact that there is a long list of concrete examples proves precisely the opposite. The network of

ties in both bilateral and regional terms is being strengthened in trade and economy, energy and transport, as well as justice and home affairs. What is most important is that behind all these initiatives stands strong political will of the countries themselves to turn a fresh page in mutual relations, which cannot be linked exclusively to the European integration process.

And a paragraph which should certainly be written in bold letters on this page is solving open bilateral issues. The *Arbitration Agreement* reached between Croatia and Slovenia certainly serves as an example in this regard. The lesson learned from this experience only fortified Croatia's orientation not to use bilateral issues to obstruct the advancement of its neighbours on the European path. But beyond that, if Croatia had viewed the agreement with Slovenia only through the prism of overcoming the blockade in its negotiations, it would not have induced all the positive developments that followed.

Apart from bringing about a new dynamism in addressing the remaining open issues, together with Slovenia, Croatia added to creating an atmosphere of trust, dialogue and mutual understanding, all in line with its consistent and straightforward approach towards its neighbours – an approach which already bears fruit, an approach which triggered a domino effect in the region. For Croatia, it is a privilege to be the point of reference for the countries of the region in leaving old patterns behind and in increasingly assuming their part of the responsibility in embedding the values the European Union has been built upon.

Europe is a continent of shared values and beliefs, and it is through the continuation of its integration that all its countries will reap joint benefits and ensure that negative experiences of the past are not repeated. In this context the European People's Party (EPP) plays a

pivotal role. After the Second World War politicians from the European Christian Democrat and the European Conservative tradition took the lead in paving the way for European integration. Conrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi coming from the Christian Democrat tradition became the founding fathers of today's European Union, and at the same time Winston Churchill, as one of the central representatives of Europe's Conservative tradition, championed the European idea in many historic speeches.

These two political traditions were engaged in fostering the European integration project for five decades and are embedded in the European People's Party. In a similar way the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) played a crucial role, first on Croatia's way to freedom and democracy, and now on Croatia's way to European integration. Based on its Christian Democrat and centre-right values the HDZ understands the EPP family as its natural partner on the European scale. For many years and on various levels of European politics the EPP continues to support Croatia's as well as South East Europe's way to the European Union. With a clear vision of a Europe whole and at peace, it is the future guaranteeing all European citizens stability, security and prosperity that needs to be pursued as the most important task.

## Notes:

- 1 *Acquis communautaire* is the accumulated legislation, legal acts, court decisions which constitute the body of European Union law. See <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement>

During the process of the enlargement 2004/2007 the *acquis* was divided into 31 chapters. The reason for adding further chapters when negotiating with Croatia and Turkey was to divide the most difficult ones into more than one chapter for easier negotiation, at the same time unite some easier chapters, moving some policies between chapters, as well as renaming a few of them in the process.

- 2 The Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification (CVM) is a safeguard measure invoked by the European Commission (in 2006) in case some new member or acceding state of the European Union has failed to implement commitments undertaken in the context of the accession negotiations.

## The Arbitration Agreement between Croatia and Slovenia

On November 4, 2009 a border arbitration agreement was signed in Stockholm between Slovenia and Croatia. According to the agreement, the issue, which has been a stumbling block in Zagreb and Ljubljana's bilateral relations since the independence of the two countries in 1991, will go to international arbitration – and the decision will be binding. The dispute involves land on the Istrian peninsula, in the northern Adriatic.

"I welcome the result of the popular vote which has endorsed the Border Arbitration Agreement signed by the governments of Slovenia and Croatia. This initiative has demonstrated how bilateral issues in the region can be solved in a European spirit of compromise", stated Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Mr Stefan Füle on 6 June 2010, when Slovenian voters gave green light to the Border Arbitration Agreement between Slovenia and Croatia (51.5% in favour, 48.5% against).

### **Source:**

*The Government of Slovenia, the European Union (EurActiv.com) and the European Commission.*

# The Hague Tribunal

## – A Necessary Evil with Many Flaws

*By Christian Wehrschütz*

*Austrian Correspondent in Belgrade reporting for more than ten years for TV and radio, as well as writing for daily papers about the Balkans*

On February 12, 2002 the trial against Slobodan Milosevic began at the Hague Tribunal. The former Yugoslav president had to stand trial for war crimes and genocide in Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia. As spectacular, and in Serbia disputed, as his extradition on June 28, 2001 was, the trial attracted interest in Serbia – at least at the beginning. According to research made by the Belgrade polling institute SMMRI, 50 percent of Serbians sat in front of the television when Milosevic commenced his opening statement. These numbers increased to two thirds when Milosevic replied to the indictment. On February 18, Mahmut Bakali appeared as the first Albanian witness for the charge. He was cross-examined by Milosevic on February 19. One day later the headline in the nationalist Serbian daily newspaper *Nacional* read: „Milosevic vs. The Hague: one - zero“. The main reason for this headline was the disastrous choice of the first witness, according to the “propaganda”-point of view.

Born in 1936, Mahmut Bakali belonged to the group of long-living and passionate politicians of Kosovo. For two reasons he was a considerably poor first witness for the charge. First of all, he did not stay

in Kosovo during the NATO-war. Hence he could not give any direct witness of the crimes of the Serbian Special Forces or those of the Yugoslav army. In order to make clear to the Serbs and to make visible to them the crimes committed on their behalf, the mothers, the fathers or the descendants who had lost their relatives and suffered massively under the Serbian command, should have appeared.

The second substantial problem was the manner in which Bakali appeared. Even though he speaks Serbian nearly as fluently as his mother tongue he wore headsets while being cross-examined by Milosevic, in order to listen to the Albanian translation – perhaps due to political correctness towards the public mood in Kosovo. But Bakali understood each word when Milosevic addressed him, while the translation took much more time. Therefore Bakali answered in Serbian again and again reflexively before the translation was over, so he had to force himself to switch to Albanian in order to continue with his reply. This behaviour made him ridiculous in the opinion of the Serbian spectators – and this is the worst that could happen to an opponent in a TV-confrontation, which the cross-examination basically was.

40 percent of the Serbs gave the maximum mark of 5 to Milosevic; less than 20 percent gave him bad marks (Belgrade polling institute SMMRI). These marks did not refer to the politician Slobodan Milosevic, but were addressed to the defender of Serbia against the charges which many more of the Serbs considered as injustice than just the supporters of Milosevic. His political party therefore did not benefit from these positive marks. The disappointment of many of those Serbs, who consider the cooperation with The Hague basically necessary for coming to terms with their own past, was huge in regards to the obviously bad “marketing“ of the Tribunal. This group was and still today is a minority in Serbia. According to a representa-

## The Hague Tribunal

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is a United Nations court of law dealing with war crimes that took place during the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990's.

The key objective of the ICTY is to try those individuals most responsible for appalling acts such as murder, torture, rape, enslavement, destruction of property and other crimes listed in the Tribunal's Statute. By bringing perpetrators to trial, the ICTY aims to deter future crimes and render justice to thousands of victims and their families, thus contributing to a lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia. The tribunal is located in Hague, Netherlands.

**Source:**

The International Criminal Tribunal

tive poll by SMMRI in July 2009<sup>1</sup> only 21 percent of the surveyed individuals opted for a cooperation with the Tribunal, since this would be a way to “break“ with the crimes committed in the past. 45 percent voted for cooperation as a “necessary evil“ and 28 percent opted against it even in the case that Serbia would never become a member of the EU. Even in the Democratic Party (DS), led by the pro-European president Boris Tadic, only two in five were in favour of the cooperation because of the breach with the past, and half of them were in favour since they regarded it as useful. Only in the Liberal Party (LDP), which currently represents between 5 and 10 percent of the voters, 80 percent are in favour of cooperation without any reservations; the promoters within the nationalist and national-conservative parties add up to between 1 and 16 percent.

The political elite in Serbia must be held responsible for this climate revealed in the surveys; a circumstance, which I will comment on later. Though, the tribunal and its former head prosecutor Carla Del Ponte also essentially contributed to this since they never managed to bear in mind the mentality of the Serbs and the way the media were and are reporting about the Tribunal and the war criminals. So, what in Germany is called “Vergangenheitsbewältigung“ (dealing with the crimes committed in the name of a people), has not yet started in Serbia or in any other country of the Western Balkans.

The procedural regulations significantly contributed to the Tribunal’s weakness. Among these, the following have to be mentioned: the right of self-defence which was misunderstood in terms of its totality and the dominance of the Anglo-American legal system, and despite of the continental-European background grants a dominant position to the charging institution against the judges. By these means the basic finding of the truth was not facilitated since there was a possibility of vast agreements between the accused and the prosecutor

without the knowledge of the public and the judges.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, only such a “deal“ may explain the verdict announced against Drazen Erdemovic.

Ironically, Drazen Erdemovic was arrested by the Yugoslav authorities on March, 2, 1996 and extradited to the Tribunal under the government of Slobodan Milosevic. Erdemovic was surely the first to stand trial because of his direct participation in the mass-executions in Srebrenica. At the beginning he pleaded guilty for murder as a crime against humanity. Erdemovic has murdered 70 individuals. At the end of November 1996 he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. But in 1997 the Court of Appeal returned the case to the trial court, and in 1998 Erdemovic was convicted of murder and sentenced to five-year imprisonment. Serving his time in Norway Erdemovic was released after about three years, since the time spent in custody had to be taken into account. In addition, a release after two thirds of the imprisonment more or less became routine practice at the Hague Tribunal, whereas the practice is another one at for example the UN Tribunal for Rwanda.

Five years for 70 homicides – is this an appropriate sentence given a comprehensive confession?

But let us turn back to the case of Slobodan Milosevic. After a while the Serbian state television and the private TV-station *B92* ceased direct broadcasting. On the one hand, Milosevic should not be given a permanent platform, on the other, the interest decreased.

On March 11, 2006, after four years of the Milosevic-trial, the Hague Tribunal and Carla Del Ponte, experienced a political and personal disaster beyond all expectations: Slobodan Milosevic was found dead in his cell. The cause of death established by the autopsy was a heart attack. Milosevic suffered from hypertension and most likely

took medication. Although the cause of death was natural, according to the autopsy, many people in Serbia believed that he was murdered during the trial at Hague. Unfortunately the president of Serbia, Boris Tadic, made the same statement directly after Milosevic's death.

Milosevic was denied more advanced medical treatment, claimed Tadic. This point of view was not contradicted in Serbia. In this case the Tribunal could have reacted more offensively and professionally in regards to media and politics. Never the less the acting president of the Tribunal held a press conference in Hague; and a comprehensive contemplation of the cause of death was issued and published. But a press conference, face-to-face with journalists in Belgrade, where many questions about the circumstances of Milosevic's death could have been answered by the two Serbian physicians who took part in the autopsy of Milosevic, never took place. This, once again, was a huge media-political omission, since the effects of a press conference would have been much bigger in Belgrade.

Nevertheless, Milosevic died without a final verdict and is therefore, in judicial terms, innocent. In Serbia this fact has hit the minority in particular, which opts for the cooperation with the Hague Tribunal for reasons of justice.

A survey by SMMRI, at the end of July 2008, after the extradition of Radovan Karadzic (who besides the general Ratko Mladic stands accused of being one of the main responsible for the massacre against more than 7.000 in Srebrenica), showed that more than 70 percent of the surveyed consider the Tribunal an anti-Serbian and political court. But even worse is the fact that immediately after Karadzic's arrest, more than 60 percent of the surveyed did not know what Karadzic was accused of. This combination of mistrust and ignorance is the result of the fact that the state owned television does

almost nothing to encourage the coming to terms with Serbia's past. On the other hand *B92* has almost entirely stopped broadcasting such stories. As a private station *B92* has to attract ads and nobody wants to advertise before or after such stories, as such issues are not very well received by the audience.

The case of the Vukovarska Trojka (The Three of Vukovar) shows how problematic some of the verdicts of the Tribunal are and what political reactions they imply.

The East-Croatian town Vukovar is a symbol of the will for self-assertion of the Croatian defendants against the Serbian superiority. At the same time Vukovar is the first large war crime within the Yugoslav wars of disintegration. After months of siege the town fell into the arms of the Yugoslav People's Army in the autumn of 1991. Approximately 200 Croatian prisoners of war were escorted out of the local hospital by the army and handed over to a Serbian Territorial Defence Unit. When the army withdrew, during the night that followed, the prisoners were murdered by the Territorial Defence Unit. At the tribunal three individuals had to stand trial for this crime: Mile Mrksic, former commander of a Yugoslav elite unit, Veselin Sljivancanin, former security-officer and commander of the military police and Miroslav Radic, the former commander of a brigade unit. Radic was acquitted, Mrksic was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment, and Sljivancanin to five years in prison. Mrksic was found guilty for the murder of the 194 Croats and Sljivancanin for not preventing the torture of 194 prisoners. It was especially the verdict against Sljivancanin that triggered massive protests in Croatia, although it should be mentioned, that many of the former Yugoslavian people regarded the tribunal as truly positive only when a member of "the other nation" was sentenced.

The prosecution had demanded a life sentence for “Vukovarska Trojka“. In reality Sljivancanin could have returned to Serbia as a free person, given that he had been in prison since mid-June 2003. The prosecution, of course, appealed against this verdict; the Chamber of Appeal sentenced Sljivancanin to 17 years of imprisonment. In the higher court he was also found guilty of “abetment to murder“ in 194 cases. This drastically higher sentence triggered protests in Serbia, although in some other cases the Chamber of Appeal had reduced time to be served for accused Serbs. But this was not the end of the story. In December 2010 appeals judges ruled on a review, brought in by the defence and Sljivancanin was finally sentenced to ten years.

Beside all legal arguments and procedures that a wider public does not understand in any country one thing is clear: verdicts, which significantly deviated from each other, as in the case of Sljivancanin, have definitely discredited the Hague Tribunal. Moreover, it should be mentioned that in Hague significant changes of sentences are not uncommon.

On December 31, 2007, after eight years Carla Del Ponte resigned from the position as main prosecutor. Her memoirs,<sup>3</sup> which appeared a couple of months after her resignation, ignited a “bomb“, which for some time became an additional burden for the relations between Albanians and Serbs.

Del Ponte wrote about possible crimes, which allegedly were committed after the end of the war in June 1999 in Kosovo and Albania, under the eyes of NATO and the UN: 100 to 300 persons were deported from Kosovo to Northern Albania and kept prisoners in the region of Kukes and Tropoje. The younger and stronger are said to have been brought to the region of Burrell where they were “filleted“ by surgeons; their organs sold abroad via the airport of Tirana. The Kosovar irregular troops UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) and the organized crime in Albania are said to be responsible for these crimes.

Regardless of the question of truth, it remains unclear, why Carla Del Ponte let four years pass before publishing this case and why she did not make these accusations when she had the adequate legal authority.

In February of 2004 a team from the UN-Administration for Kosovo (UNMIK), amongst them forensic physicians, had examined the suspicious “yellow house“ nearby the municipality of Burrel. The team had found traces, which indicated blood on the walls, but it could not be established, whether the blood was of animal or human origin. According to the report, no “convincing evidence“ was found which would have indicated any crime. One of the reasons for that conclusion was maybe the resistance of the Albanian residents in the region to open the nameless graves to the experts of the UN. The reason for this was the fact that neither the UN-team in 2004, nor the team from the Council of Europe under Dick Marty, which visited the area five years later, could present a written order for the exhumation issued by the judicial authorities in Tirana.

In the summer of 2009 Marty visited Belgrade, Pristina and Tirana. His report presented in December 2010 provoked extremely emotional reactions. For the Serbs this report became a proof of the direct involvement of the current Kosovar Prime Minister Hashim Thaci in organ trafficking and the killing of Serb civilians. For the Albanians in Kosovo and Albania, Dick Marty almost became “enemy of state number one”. Although all parties involved have promised full cooperation and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo has started to investigate, so far no exhumations have taken place on the grounds in Northern Albania. But the issue of alleged organ trafficking must not remain unresolved because it is a serious obstacle for reconciliation between the peoples of Serbia, Kosovo and Albania.

How does one evaluate the job of the Hague Tribunal all together and what does the reconciliation and coping with the past look like in former Yugoslavia?

# Apology for the Srebrenica Massacre

## **Resolution in Serbia's Parliament apologizing for the Srebrenica massacre**

The motion, approved by a narrow majority, says Serbia should have done more to prevent the tragedy. It stopped short of calling the Bosnian war killings a genocide.

The murder of nearly 8,000 Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) was carried out by Bosnian Serb forces - allies of then-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. The massacre, in what was supposed to have been a UN safe haven, became a symbol for the atrocities of the Balkan wars.

### **Source:**

*BBC News March 31, 2010*

The Hague Tribunal must be seen as a great success since the war criminals would never have been sentenced without the Tribunal - due to fact that the judicial system in the former Yugoslavia was incapable of sentencing and the political circumstances. The conditionality linking cooperation with the tribunal and the approach towards the EU was successful, especially whenever the political elite of one of the respective countries wanted to draw closer to the EU as quickly as possible (Croatia for instance). But the right kind of politicians are required for such an aim. One such politician is the Croatian President Stipe Mesic who pointed out that crimes might be committed also in defensive wars and have to be punished since they cast shadows on such a war. Nevertheless, Croatia cannot be named as a good example, as far as the (judicial) coping with the past is concerned. Though, it is understandable that the Croats fear legal action against their generals, which could lead to the conclusion that the entire battle against the Serbian aggressors could be described as an injustice. These worst fears came true in mid-April 2011, when the judges of the tribunal sentenced the generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac to 18-24 years of imprisonment. The Hague ruling is, from Croatian point of view, a branding of the Croatian state founder Franjo Tudjman as war criminal. Thousands protested against the verdict and the judge's decision is likely to inflame anti-EU sentiment and give a boost to nationalist right-wing parties, which up to now were no political factor in Croatia.

It is clear that the legal proceedings at the Hague Tribunal have served justice, but inevitably only on a narrow scale. Many of the perpetrators who directly participated in the mass-murder in Srebrenica are still free. Without massive political pressure by the USA and the EU this is unfortunately unlikely to change significantly, and this is inevitably an obstacle for co-existence in Bosnia.

Especially the performance of the chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte<sup>4</sup>

and the approach of the international community during the short era of Zoran Djindjic as Prime Minister in Serbia (2001-2003) were counterproductive. Djindjic would have needed one-year of breathing space after the extradition of Slobodan Milosevic, in order to strengthen his power. But the West and the Hague did not grant any “pardon“; and Serbia and the rest of the region were basically forced to immediately reach results – for which, for example Germany but in particular Austria had needed decades. Djindjic failed to cope with this excessive demand. Although the delinquents, of course, are directly responsible for his death, nevertheless, the mental climate leading to his assassination could have been created in Serbia to some extent due to the excessive demands by the West.

One has to be aware of the fact that that the verdicts of the tribunal have not contributed to an individualization of the guilt or to a change of mind within the broad general public. The same applies to legal proceedings which took place at local and special courts (Serbia, Bosnia) and which continue to take place. The conclusion of Bosnian Rasim Ljajic, who coordinates Serbia’s cooperation with the Tribunal, looks rather grim in this respect:

“The tasks of the tribunal were to serve justice, to find out the whole truth and to contribute to the reconciliation and the coping with the past. I am not sure that the Tribunal has fulfilled its tasks in this regard, in particular as far as the coping with the past and the reconciliation are concerned. In other words: we did not move much from the starting position. We have tried to explain this to the people of the Tribunal as well. It is necessary that the Tribunal enjoys a certain dimension of credibility and the people have confidence in the Tribunal, namely in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, so that the verdicts are accepted, however they may be. But this is unfortunately not the case.”

In my opinion, the Hague Tribunal itself has in a non-negligible manner contributed to this lack of credibility, despite the fact that the current chief prosecutor Serge Brammertz does a far better job than his predecessor. He refrains from political statements, but I dare to say that the negative image of the Hague Tribunal is so deeply rooted in Serbia and the region that it cannot be changed anymore. From the perspective of reconciliation and effectiveness (Milosevic died un-sentenced) we could have expected more “output” from an institution, which has cost more than 1,5 billion USD so far.

The Hague Tribunal is not only a part of the solution, but also a part of the problem in the Balkans. Moreover, it seems that the EU and the US are interested only in the cooperation with the Tribunal, but not in reconciliation and coping with the past. To cope with the past a will is required, by the political elites and the media, to approach this subject with sincerity. Basically, none of the preconditions exist in Serbia. Among the media only the newspaper *Danas* and the TV- and Radio-station *B92* are dedicated to catching-up and none of these have as broad impact on the general public and are said to be notorious “betrayers towards the fatherland“ or “mercenaries of the West“. Sporadic presentations in the state-owned television<sup>5</sup> are not enough in order to truly change the awareness among ordinary people.

In addition, many Serbs do not believe what they see on television. According to a SMMRI-survey from 2006, only half of the population is convinced that the massacre of Srebrenica really took place! Furthermore, only 58 percent had heard about the 1000-days-lasting siege of Sarajevo (in 2001: 70 percent); and in the same year only 36 percent had heard about the banishment of Albanians after the beginning of the NATO-war in 1999 (in 2001: 57 percent).

These results demonstrate the need to discuss history in a broader context, but without euphemism. Moreover, post-war generations

grow-up and due to their parent's lack of coping with the past and the media situation, they know little about what really happened in the name of Serbia.

Bearing these results in mind it is no surprise that the crimes which Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic are accused of are little known. The lack of knowledge about the indictment and the crime are linked to the lack of willingness of the political elites to endorse dealing with the past. This is accompanied by the vague messages from these elites – whether the wanted or the extradited person is a Serbian hero or an alleged criminal. Thus, 29 percent of the interviewed Serbs (SMMRI, July 2008) consider Karadzic a hero, and only 17 percent consider him a war criminal. Slightly less than 50 percent of the supporters of the pro-European parties (DS and Liberals) considered Karadzic a clear war criminal.

Such surveys show that indictments issued by the Hague Tribunal do not and will not bring about a change of the awareness in Serbia. The pro-European elites are challenged, the president of the state Boris Tadic in particular. But Tadic will continue to act very carefully, since his Democratic Party (DS) and the former Milosevic-Socialists (SPS) of the Minister for internal affairs, Ivica Dacic, formed a coalition in 2008.

In my point of view the political leadership in Belgrade is ready to extradite the two remaining accused and the fugitive to the Hague Tribunal; because it seems that this would bring “silence” – after 46 extraditions, more than 550 witnesses who were released from the obligation of secrecy, and more than one hundred thousand of documents have been handed over to the Tribunal. Though, in reality “silence” will mean the end of any serious dealing with the past, since after the extraditions no further pressure will be raised by the West, pressure that so far has not touched the root of the matter.

After many years of debate, in late spring of 2010, the Serbian Parliament adopted a resolution condemning Srebrenica as a crime committed on behalf of Serbia. But the word “genocide” did not show up in the resolution, because this qualification is still very controversial in Serbia. Condemning Srebrenica does not make the government more popular within the country; on the other hand it clearly brings about visible political results on the European level - though too far away to motivate any Serbian politician to do more. Membership in the European Union is approximately ten years away which means that a politician now in power most likely will not personally benefit from any unpopular measures he would undertake today. This fact is even more important when keeping in mind that the Hague Tribunal is not the sole burden Serbia carries on her shoulders. The independence of Kosovo is still an open wound and many other painful reforms have to be undertaken to make the country fit for Europe.

Serbia has to become more oriented towards the future. Though as important as the road ahead is, so is dealing with the past. The EU and the US should not ignore the importance of “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” and reconciliation for a long lasting stabilization of the Balkans. Further democratization, reforms of the education system, elimination of national stereotypes and one-sided historical descriptions in history books, as well as regional cooperation and the rapid integration into the EU are equally important. The German sociologist Max Weber knew: “Politics means strong and slow drilling of rough boards, with both passion and good judgment.” In order to achieve reconciliation and to properly deal with the past the politicians of the region will yet have to “drill“ with the help of the EU, long after the Hague Tribunal has closed its gates.

## Notes

- 1 If the results in the in this essay quoted surveys do not add up to 100% in each case, the reason has to be found mainly in the circumstance that the deniers are not indicated separately.
- 2 Please refer among other things to an interview with Wolfgang Schlomburg in *Der Spiegel* January 17, 2005, page 97. Schlomburg was a permanent judge at the Chamber of Appeal of both criminal tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda 2001-2008.
- 3 DEL PONTE, Carla *The hunt: me and war criminals*, S.Fischer Verlag, 2009.
- 4 Carla Del Ponte solely cannot be blamed for the tribunal's lack of efficiency. In a revealing manner, she writes about her problems with the investigation team and writes: "The prosecuting teams do not achieve their aims quickly enough and despite of the successes of my predecessors Richard Goldstone and Louise Arbour in terms of building the offices in The Hague and Arusha some of these teams had caused a lot of costs during the years, but did not produce a sustainable indictment or concluded a case, so that court proceedings could not have been justified". DEL PONTE, *Carla, The hunt: me and war criminals*, page 167
- 5 In July 2005 an amateur video was shown in the Serbian state-owned television and in whole Serbia, in which the paramilitary unit "Scorpions" shot six civilians during the Bosnian war. There was a refusing reaction amongst the publicity and political elites; and not only some Serbs considered the video a forgery.

# A Common Future for the Nation States of Former Yugoslavia

*by Mladen Ivanić*

*Chairman of the Partija Demokratskog Progresa (PDP),  
Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Although the process of disintegration of former Yugoslavia is usually linked to June 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, it is undisputed that this process is related to the history of the Balkan Peninsula. Confrontations of great powers, like the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, have always refracted here, leaving deep traces in the mentality and history of the Balkan peoples.

As a result of all major conflicts that took place on Balkan soil, some people felt like victims and waited for an opportunity to prevail in new political circumstances. When we add the fact that three major religions (Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy and Islam) are represented equally and that the rulers have always instrumentalized religion in mutual conflicts, it becomes quite clear that there were numerous reasons for the ending of the former Yugoslavia. It is also undeniable that the roots of these developments are much deeper than the simple explanation that a few individuals are responsible for the destruction of entire countries.

Apart from Slovenia and Croatia, since 1991 until today, four more countries have been established and gained international recognition:

Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. The Albanians now do their best so that Kosovo should become the seventh country arising from the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. On February 17, 2008 Kosovo unilaterally declared independence. Serbia does not accept this proclamation of independence, neither does many other countries, among which Bosnia and Herzegovina is one.

The epilogue of the painful process of dissolution of Yugoslavia is terrifying. More than 200.000 casualties, degraded economy and infrastructure, enormous number of refugees and displaced persons, destroyed homes and families, criminality, corruption and poverty. Representatives of all peoples and religions have blamed each other for those developments, everybody insisting on their own truth and the guilt of others. There is still an ongoing search for missing persons and major headlines in the media are still devoted to processes connected to war crimes and the commemoration of sufferings.

Besides recovery of the infrastructure, which was damaged during the war and the establishment of a state administration, the newly founded countries have had to face a third major challenge, i.e. transition of the former socialist economies into market economies. Of course, this process has brought new problems. Former big companies, supported by the state, have lost markets and in many cases parts of their technological processes as well. The concept of state controlled economy in the former Yugoslavia was based on distribution of production facilities in different former republics, whereas the end products were assembled in one of them. Dissolution of the former common state meant a simultaneous collapse of big companies. As a result of the privatization process, the number of unemployed increased enormously and the standards of living dropped significantly.

Changes took place also in other segments of life.

The new countries opened their markets to new media. In addition, numerous electronic media appeared instead of the former exclusive public broadcast company. Currently, around 200 electronic media operate only in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The same happened with the printed media. A significant number of new print media were established, with different concepts and many of them nationalistically oriented. These developments paved the way for conflicts. The market for the movie- and music industry shrank and previously popular actors became undesirable in neighbouring countries. Sports clubs which were among the very best in Europe lost their ratings, new national leagues became much less attractive and the supporters lost interest. The tourist industry lost millions of guests, almost overnight.

The only political analogy in all countries established after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia is that politicians, but also the people we are told by different polls, emphasize European integrations as a desirable objective. Currently, the countries emerging from the former Yugoslavia don't share the same status in terms of EU-integration process. Slovenia is already a full-fledged member and Croatia is at the entrance. Macedonia has a candidate status as well as Montenegro and Serbia expects the same. After a good start in implementation of EU-criteria, Bosnia and Herzegovina entered a crisis caused by nationalistic tendencies. Ignoring the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, by which constitutional changes were imposed on Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as the inaction of the current elites, the country is in a position in which it risks to be banned from the membership of the Council of Europe. In this case the possibility of obtaining candidate status in the EU would also be wasted.

## **Cooperation between Croatia-Slovenia-Serbia**

Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia signed a memorandum regarding economic co-operation in other countries on April 1, 2011. This was not the first meeting. In 2010 they committed to a railway joint venture, in order to improve the competitiveness of transit via the X Transport Corridor (Salzburg-Thessalonica), which runs partly through Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. This time, a memorandum on bringing economic co-operation closer together on third-country markets was signed. The meeting of the three leaders was also held to show that, despite the unresolved problems in bilateral relations (including the Slovenian-Croatian property dispute and the suits brought by Serbia and Croatia against one another to the International Court of Justice), these countries want to develop economic co-operation and are striving for integration of the entire Balkan region with the EU.

**Source:**

*CeWeekly April 6, 2011*

The process of European integrations has set new obligations to the newly established countries. Apart from all the rules and standards stipulated in European documents and legislation, there is also the unwritten practice of mutual convergence and enhanced cooperation. As is customary, the economy was the first to open its doors to cooperation between the countries of former Yugoslavia. The trade, tourism, traffic, television and sports industries have recently begun to launch mutual projects in the new countries.

### **Cooperation works**

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and UNMIK/Kosovo have joined the economic organization of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Once CEFTA encompassed countries from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Black Sea and had a market of approximately 90 million people. This was prior to membership in the European Union. At that time the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria were also members of CEFTA. Currently Moldova and Albania as well as the countries of former Yugoslavia are members. All of today's CEFTA member states have good relations and a chance of membership in the European Union.

The declaration of the establishment of a joint railroad company in Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia was signed at the end of June 2010. On this occasion it was announced that simplified border crossing procedures would enable faster transport of goods and passengers on Corridor 10, connecting the European Union with the Middle East. Without any investments the joint railroad company should shorten the time for the transport of goods from Ljubljana to Istanbul from the current 65 to 40-45 hours.

Montenegrin and Macedonian railroad companies are also interested in partnering in this project. The basic idea is that Corridor 10 – from Ljubljana via Zagreb, Belgrade and Nis to Dimitrograd and Vranje – takes over a share of transport which is now conducted in far more difficult conditions on Corridor 4, via Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Besides the railroad companies, this project requires involvement of relevant ministries of interior, transport, agriculture and finance in order to shorten time spent in customs, police, traffic and phytopatologic (plant diseases) procedures on the border.

In Bucharest in April 2010 Serbia, Croatia and Romania signed an agreement establishing the Pan-European Oil Pipeline Construction Development Company (PEOP). The new oil pipeline is supposed to annul the domination of transport of raw oil via the Adriatic Oil Pipeline (JANAF), to several refineries in the region of former Yugoslavia. The Adriatic Oil Pipeline is still burdened with unresolved property relations between Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

Sportsmen didn't wait for an official integration processes to begin. Already in 2001 cooperation started by the establishing of the Adriatic League in basketball. After the initial obstacles, teams from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro started contesting in this league, and in the season 2010/2011 a team from the Czech Republic joined them. In 2002 the Adriatic League was officially admitted into the ULEB (Union of European Leagues of Basketball). In addition, the Adriatic Water Polo League has played since autumn 2008 and involves teams from Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia. Competitions in the Women's Regional Handball League have started and a joint football league also seems more and more certain.

Producers of television programs have provided a multi-million audience firstly with joint reality-programs and later also feature programs. It is now commonly accepted that Serbian, i.e. Croatian actors play leading roles in Croatian, i.e. Serbian movies. Musicians are able to have concerts around the region without any difficulties and can attract large number of fans.

The lotteries from the region of former Yugoslavia have agreed to establish joint games with unique payments and prizes. The idea of a joint lottery was initiated as early as in 2001 by the Lottery of Slovenia and the Lottery of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The actual development of the project started in 2007 by establishing the Association of Lotteries of South-Eastern Europe with head quarters in Ljubljana. It is expected that the start of the games might be soon and that the “YU lottery“ will be organized by the lotteries of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

The above mentioned examples have motivated politicians to better cooperate. A particular stimulus was provided by the presidents of Croatia and Serbia, who met on several occasions in 2010 and 2011 and issued very optimistic statements. That the conflict between Croatia and Slovenia over the Piran Bay waters was resolved had a similar effect.

### **Further cooperation to come**

It is obvious that the countries of former Yugoslavia in the future shall cooperate more and more closely. Geographic position, market economy, linguistic and other cultural similarities create conditions for further development of mutual cooperation.

All countries of the Western Balkans envision the European Union as a common objective and an institution that imposes cooperation

as an instrument of political action. Adoption of European criteria of performance provides an instrument with which to overcome serious national, religious and historic disagreements. Fear of domination and exploitation, which used to be the major cause for conflicts, slowly disappears when accepting these European norms.

Mutual cooperation of the Western Balkan countries shall develop, as the process of their approach to the EU accelerates. As unrealistic as it might seem at this moment, I am convinced that the process of cooperation between the countries that were recently involved in a war has started. One of the major reasons for this is that the political elites need to show their readiness for cooperation with the EU by developing cooperation in the region. Very soon it will become obvious that these countries are capable and ready to work together. Later on, when being members of the EU, they shall act much more in unison than anyone can imagine today.

This development will be useful and will provide better stability in the Balkans. And at the time when this has come to pass we will see that the above mentioned examples represent only the beginning of an irreversible process.

# The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation

The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation was founded in 1994 with the objective of promoting cooperation and European development according to the principles of freedom, democracy and market economy. The methods used are knowledge transfer and education aimed at political parties and organizations.

The work of the Foundation concerns mainly politically active individuals. Special emphasis is put on youths and women, while they are the political future of their respective countries. The principal sponsor of the Foundation is the Swedish international development cooperation agency (Sida), and the funds are part of the party affiliated democracy aid earmarked for “assisting the development of well-functioning party systems in developing countries and countries in Central and Eastern Europe in order to promote representative democracy”.

The education is carried out within the following domains:

- Structuring of organizations
- Communication, campaign work and public relations
- Education in ideology
- Counseling concerning hands-on aspects of politics

The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation is an organization affiliated with the Swedish Moderate Party.

## **JHS in the Balkans**

The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation has been active in the Balkan Region for more than a decade. The Foundation is working with centre-right parties in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia.

The main objective of the project is to help sister parties to develop strong and democratic party structures. This is being done through education and knowledge transfer in the fields of policy making, organisation building, campaign strategy, and media management. The intensity and type of activities differ from country to country and from time to time. A particular focus is put on youth and women.

European integration is another priority within the Balkan project. All of the countries in the region are striving for EU-membership. Some of them are standing on the threshold while others have just started the process of reform.

It is crucial for the region, in order to develop and prosper as well as to move towards an EU membership, to cooperate over the borders and between nationalities. To facilitate cooperation among the centre-right parties in the Balkans the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation organises regional conferences. Participants are leading representatives as well as youth and women.

# **JHS' Cooperation Partners in the Balkan Countries**

## **Albania:**

Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (Democratic Party)

## **Bosnia-Herzegovina:**

Partija Demokratskog Progresa, PDP (Party of Democratic Progress)

Stranka Demokratske Akcije, SDA (Party of Democratic Action)

## **Croatia:**

Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ (Croatian Democrat Union)

## **Macedonia:**

Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo, VMRO-DPMNE (Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity)

## **Serbia:**

Demokratska Stranka Srbije, DSS (Democratic Party of Serbia)

G17 PLUS

# Further JHS-Publications

## **Living and working as a dissident in Belarus**

A study in political oppression during dictatorship, by Marika Ehrenkrona, journalist with a master degree in psychology.

Marika Ehrenkrona has interviewed numerous dissidents in Belarus: about their everyday life, political ambitions and their struggles vis-à-vis the state authorities' repression. Ms Ehrenkrona's accounts are testimony to political life in an authoritarian regime. How the political opposition perseveres, day by day, and in the long run. The book also details the authorities' strategies, ruling by fear and deceit. (2011)

## **Diaries of Dissidents - Daily Routines in a Belarusian Prison**

15 Belarusian oppositional write about their prison time: the daily routines, the smell, the fear, the communal spirit, the joy of once more being able to breathe fresh air. The stories are personal and convincing.

Vytautas Landsbergis, Head of state of Lithuania after its independence and today Member of European Parliament writes in the preface: The ones who wrote this book of testimonies are not cautious observers, but living participants. "Belarus is alive, and we fear no more", "I am a citizen!" – that is the message. (2010)

ISBN 978-91-977569-9-0

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*Books can be downloaded at [www.hjalmarsonfoundation.se](http://www.hjalmarsonfoundation.se) or ordered from [info@hjalmarsonstiftelsen.se](mailto:info@hjalmarsonstiftelsen.se).*

## **Communism in the Baltic States**

by Andres Küng (author, debater and entrepreneur) was first published in 1999. Though, it is still one of the best documentation of the crimes against human rights in the Baltic states committed by the Soviet communists. (1999)

ISBN 978-91-977569-4-5

## **Triumph of Democracy**

To celebrate 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation published the anthology **”Triumph of Democracy”**.

Introducing the book Foreign Minister Carl Bildt wrote: ”Today, there is no more barbed wire, no fences and no passport checks. ... We have achieved what only a few believed possible and what millions dreamt of. We, who had the privilege of making concrete and resolute contributions to European reunification, have learned the importance of never giving up on the vision of a better future.” (2009)

ISBN 978-91-977569-8-3

## **Principles for a Free Society**

A study guide about the fundamental principles and values essential for a free, democratic and open society. It is written for the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation by Dr. Nigel Ashford. (2003 and 2009)


ISBN 978-91-977569-0-7

*This book has been translated into numerous languages; Turkish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, etc.*





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The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation has been active in the Balkan Region for more than a decade. The Foundation is working with centre right parties in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia.

It is crucial for the region, in order to develop and prosper as well as to move forward in the direction of EU membership, to cooperate over the borders and between nationalities.

Though, the road is bumpy. Mart Laar, Minister for Defence and former Prime Minister, Estonia, writes: “The Balkan governments must be encouraged to continue reforms, giving special attention to the rule of law, development of civil society, property protection and especially the fight against corruption and organized crime. The existing experience demonstrates clearly that even if reforms sometimes might be politically painful, they are boosting growth and prosperity.”



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**This anthology is a Balkan Blend**, spiced with events from daily life, the fight against bureaucracy and corruption as well as the conviction that European integration is the only viable way to go forward. “A blend that I hope will to give you a taste for more. A taste of a European future in the Balkans” writes Walburga Habsburg Douglas in the introduction to the eight essays written by politicians, authors and analysts.

