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BALKANS

Officer Block 2 and Enlisted Block 3

An Introduction to the Balkans Region

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CENTER FOR ADVANCED OPERATIONAL CULTURE LEARNING

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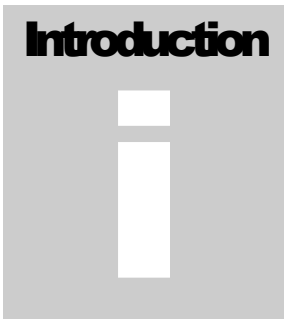


Introduction

One must distinguish between the study of regions, countries, and cultures. Chapters 1 through 6 in this document introduce a region and provide some information about its countries and their relationships. They do not introduce a culture or cultures. Those chapters simply provide knowledge about the region and the environment in which people with different cultures live.

Regions and states do not have a single culture; instead they have multiple, diverse cultures. Cultures are not necessarily bound by national borders. There may be multiple cultures in a single state, while people sharing a single culture may live in more than one state.

The case study in Chapter 7 is about one specific culture in the region. Building upon the information provided in chapters 1 through 6, Chapter 7 introduces one of the many cultures in the Balkans region, using concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document.

Why This Region is Relevant to You as a Marine

The Balkans region lies in southeastern Europe at a strategic and commercial crossroads between Europe, to the north and west, and Asia, to the east, in close proximity to the Middle East. The region is prone to conflicts and natural disasters that may require quick U.S. response. The region is an important transit point for goods and energy resources.

Although in the past the Balkans has frequently been a source of instability and conflict, threatening peace and security in Europe, the region is currently emerging as a geographic and political bulwark against instability in the Middle East and Russia's attempts to regain influence in Eastern Europe. The sweeping political changes following the Arab Spring in an already unstable Middle East, and the growing confrontation between Russia and Ukraine are making the Balkans an important element in U.S. attempts to maintain stability in eastern and southern Europe and to secure freedom of the seas in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

The U.S. military has extensive ties with the militaries of Turkey and Greece, which have been members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1952. The U.S. has also expanded defense ties with Bulgaria and Romania (joined NATO in 2004), Albania and Croatia (joined in 2009), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro (seeking to join NATO in the future). Even

USMC Cpl. Zachary Spicher, a team leader with BSRF-14, receives instruction on an AK-47 rifle from a Romanian soldier, during exercise Platinum Linx (Photo: 2nd Lt. Danielle Dixon, Defense Imagery)

Serbia, the only country in the Balkans to not seek a membership in NATO, has seen growth in its interaction with the U.S. military

U.S. Marines have worked with the militaries of all countries in the region. Marines participate in a security cooperation deployment (Black Sea Rotational Force, BSRF), conducting security cooperation events and military exercises, and peace-keeping operation trainings in the Balkans.[1] The militaries of almost all countries in the region have participated alongside American troops in missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa.

Chapter

1

Geographic Overview

Why a Geographic Overview Matters to You as a Marine

Geographic features include physical and biological factors tied to location, topography, climate, soil, environmental hazards, flora, and fauna. These features influence human and social characteristics such as beliefs, behaviors, social organization, economy, and politics, to name a few. This is not to say that geography determines how people and societies behave, but rather that it has varying effects on what they believe and do.

The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coasts have great influence on where people live, what crops can be raised, and what modes of transportation are suitable. Climate and weather influence how people dress, work, and earn a living. Natural disasters like hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes can devastate a region, and dislocate a great number of people.

Global Location

Geopolitically a transitional zone between Europe and Southwest Asia, the RCLF-designated Balkans region is a peninsula bordering Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, and Moldova to the north; the Black and Aegean Seas, and Asian part of Turkey to the east; the Ionian and Mediterranean Seas to the south; and the Adriatic Sea to the west.

Map of the Balkans (Source: CIA)

While the seas mark the eastern, southern, and western geographic borders of the Balkan Peninsula, the clear geographic delimitation of the region in the north is difficult. Geographically, parts of Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia are in Central Europe rather than the Balkan Peninsula. In addition, only a small part of Turkey is in Europe, and thus a part of the peninsula. However, for the purposes of the RCLF program all countries which have territories, however small, in the peninsula are included in the Balkans region.

Countries

The Balkans includes the following countries: Albania (capital city of Tirana), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo), Bulgaria (Sofia), Croatia (Zagreb), Greece (Athens), Kosovo (Pristina), Macedonia (Skopje), Montenegro (Podgorica), Romania (Bucharest), Serbia (Belgrade), Slovenia (Ljubljana), and Turkey (Ankara). The Balkan states are approximately the size of Texas.

Kosovo, a former province in Yugoslavia and later in Serbia, declared independence in 2008. Many states, including Serbia, still do not recognize it as an independent state.

Topography

The Balkans is a peninsula dominated by mountain ranges. Five of those ranges are clearly visible in this satellite image – 1) the arrow-shaped Carpathian Mountains in the north; 2) the Dinaric Alps running along the coast in the west; 3) the Balkans Mountains running east to west in the middle of the image; 4) the Rhodope Mountains south of the Balkan Mountains; 5) and the Pindus Range in the southernmost of the Peninsula.

Satellite image of the Balkan Peninsula (Source: NASA)

The topography of the Balkans is quite complex and diverse. The region is a peninsula, wide in the north, tapering down to the south, ending in a series of rocky islands off its western, southern, and eastern coasts. There are three major and numerous small mountain ranges dominating the region (almost 70% of the region is mountainous).[2] Among the large ones, the **Balkan Mountains**, the namesake of the region, in the east run from the Black Sea coast through the center of Bulgaria into eastern Serbia. The **Dinaric Alps** in the west, an extension of the Alps of Switzerland and Austria,

run parallel to the Adriatic coast in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania. In the north, the thickly forested **Carpathian Mountains** in Romania run to the east, then swing north forming an arrow pointing east, and cross into Ukraine. The Carpathians separate the Black Sea coastal plain from the landlocked Pannonian Plain, which covers western Romania, Hungary, northeastern Slovenia, northern Croatia, and northern Serbia.

There are many other smaller ranges of mountains including the forested **Rhodope Mountains** in southern Bulgaria and northern Greece; the **Pindus Range**, spanning from southern Albania into central Greece; the **Sar Mountains** running from Albania into Macedonia. Some of the smaller mountains reach great heights. The Rila Mountain in Bulgaria, for example, has the highest peak in the Balkans – Musala at 9,596 ft. (by comparison, the 14,504 feet-high Mount Whitney, in California, is the tallest mountain in the continental U.S., not including Alaska).

The extensive mountain ranges, formed primarily of limestone, vary from picturesquely hilly and forested to imposingly rugged and barren. The mountains in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example are similar to those in West Virginia – rolling hills covered by forests. On the other hand, the mountains in Montenegro may remind one of the rugged, barren relief of the Rocky Mountains in the state of Colorado.

Among the mountainous ranges, there are some extensive flat lands suitable for agricultural use. The largest ones include the valley of the Danube River, spanning northern Bulgaria and southern and eastern Romania; the valley of the Sava River, running through Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia; the valley of Maritza River running through southern Bulgaria and separating Turkey and Greece. There are also low lands, particularly in eastern Bulgaria and along the Aegean coast, suitable for agricultural use.

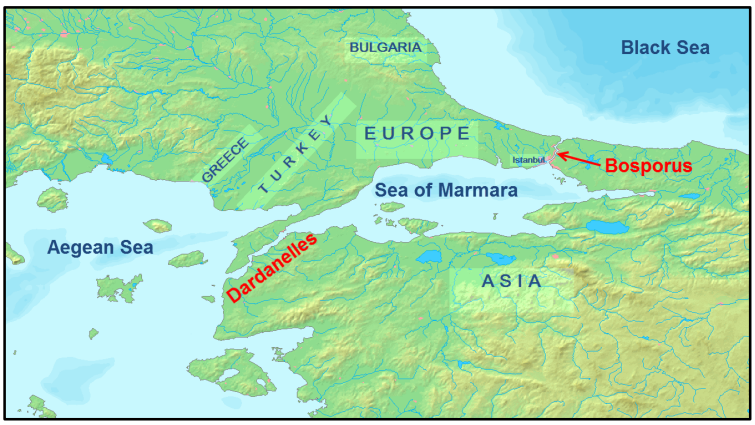
At the crossroads of Europe and Asia, invaders have historically enjoyed relatively easy access to the Balkans from the north and east, despite the dominance of mountainous terrain in the region. The broad Danube Plain and the low Black Sea coast provided east-west corridors of access. The Danube Plain, the largest valley in the Balkans, is wide open to the low lands in Ukraine and Russia to the north and connects the Black Sea coast to the Balkan interior and further to Central Europe. This route was used by numerous invaders from Asia throughout history.

The Morava, Vardar, and Maritza rivers provide north-south corridors of access through the more mountainous parts of the region. Numerous people and armies have used these corridors to penetrate or pass the mountains and connect Central Europe with the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, mountains, with the possible exception of the Dinaric Alps, tend to have passages even without river valleys.

Coastline

On the Black Sea coast there are no formidable physical barriers, although the coast is higher in Bulgaria than in Romania. Lagoons and sandy beaches are common along the entire black Sea coastline. The coastline of the southern Balkans is rocky and rugged, but this physical obstacle is mitigated by an abundance of bays and ports. In addition, Greece has over 2,000 islands (of which 170 are inhabited), some of which are only a few miles from the Turkey's Asian coast. The Dinaric Alps along the western Balkans rise abruptly from the Adriatic Sea and form an almost impenetrable barrier to those approaching from the west. However, there are over a thousand long and narrow islands and islets along the coast.

The Turkish Straits, consisting of the Bosporus and Dardanelles, divides Asia from Europe. Located in Turkey, the Bosporus and the Dardanelles are respectively 17-miles long and 40-miles long waterways connecting the Black and Aegean seas. One of the world's most difficult waterways to navigate and only half a mile wide at its narrowest point, the straits see an overage of 50,000 vessels, including 5,500 oil tankers, passing through annually.



The Turkish Straits (Source: Encyclopedia of Earth)

The passage of ships through the Turkish Straits is regulated by a 1936 international treaty, the Montreux Convention. The Convention gives Turkey control of the straits and grants free and unlimited access to civilian vessels under any flag. It also allows Black Sea states to move warships through the Straits with few restrictions. However, the Convention restricts outside navies' access to the Black Sea to 21 straight days per warship, and a maximum tonnage of 45,000 tons, with any one vessel no heavier than 15,000 tons. Non-Black Sea states must also give Turkey a 15-day notice before sending warships through the Straits.[3]

Geography and Culture

Topography and varied climatic zones in the Balkans have impacted cultures in the region and account for some of the variations in them. Although all mountains in the region are crossable, they have historically created formidable barriers to interaction between people and in many instances provided them with safe havens. Many groups found safety in the rugged mountains and were able to resist foreign invasions while the people in the lower lands were frequently and easily subdued by foreign invaders. For example, the people living in the mountains of present day Montenegro and Albania were able to preserve the independence of their states for many years despite the frequent attempts of the powerful Ottoman Empire to conquer them. One of the consequences of this geographic isolation of various groups living in the mountains was the preservation of cultural diversity.[4] It was only in modern times that states were able to establish full control over the people living in isolation in the mountains.

In addition to providing safe havens, mountains created formidable barriers to travel, trade, and communication. For example, ancient Greeks established trading villages on numerous islands along the Adriatic Sea (present day Croatia). However, Greek influence did not penetrate the Croatian interior as the Dinaric Alps along the coast posed a formidable physical obstacle. Later in history, Dubrovnik, a port city on the Adriatic Sea in present day Croatia, had more extensive ties for much of its history with the city of Venice in Italy than with settlements in today's Croatia and Bosnia.

Rivers and Lakes

Danube, the second longest river in Europe, is the main river in the Balkans, which originates in southwestern Germany and empties into the Black Sea into a marshy delta. Most of the other rivers

in the region are part of the Danube system. Those include the Sava, the Drina, and the Prut rivers. The rivers in Danube system are navigable and provide an important commercial highway connecting Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia with Western Europe. However, it must be pointed out that the utility of the Danube River was limited until late 19th century because a rock formation in Serbia blocked river traffic. Except for those in the Danube system, no other river in the Balkans is navigable. Most rivers flow out of the dry interior and their depths vary seasonally.

Climate and Weather

There are two main climate zones in the region. In Greece and the Adriatic and Black Sea coasts, the climate is Mediterranean – warm, dry winters and summers, and rainy autumns. In the rest of the region, the climate is continental – long, cold winters and hot, relatively dry summers with precipitation at all times of year. Conditions in the higher parts of the mountains tend to be more severe – some of the highest peaks in the region retain snow and ice all year round.

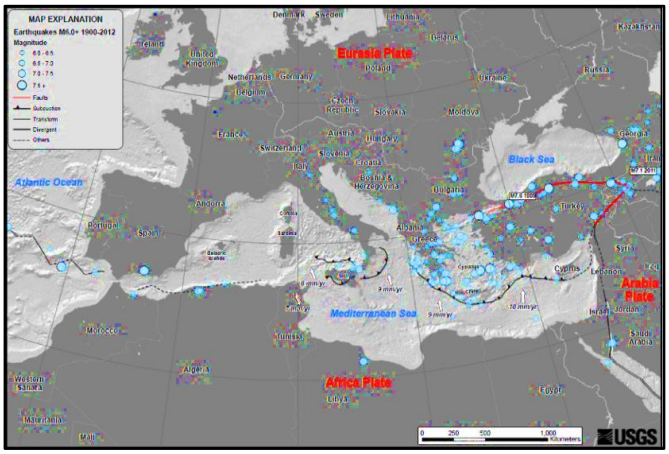
Environmental Hazards

All countries of the region are vulnerable to similar natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, wildfires, landslides, droughts, strong winds, snowstorms, frost, and hail. Often these disasters overwhelm the disaster-relief capacity of the states.

Country	Hazards								
	Earth-quake	Flood	Land slides	Drought	Extreme tempe-rature	Windstorm	Wildfire	Epi-demic	Techno-logical
Albania	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Bosnia and Herzegovina		x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Bulgaria	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Croatia	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Republic of Macedonia		x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Moldova		x		x	x	x		x	
Romania	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Serbia	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Montenegro	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Slovenia	x	x			x				x
Turkey	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x

Country-wise hazard matrix (Source: World Bank)

Earthquakes are the most dangerous hazard in the region – the Balkans is seismically the most active part of Europe. The earth beneath the eastern Mediterranean constitutes a broad boundary region between three major tectonic plates, the Eurasia, Africa, and Arabian plates.[5] Turkey is one of the most seismically active countries in the world, suffering from frequent and devastating earthquakes.



Map of large earthquakes in Europe in 1900-2012. Note the number of earthquakes in the Aegean Sea (Source: U.S. Geological Survey)

Ninety percent of the Balkan countries fall within trans-boundary river basins and all countries except Slovenia face high risk of

floods.[6] Romania is one of the most flood-prone countries in Europe. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro are highly vulnerable to landslides. Landslide events have considerably increased in these countries lately due to unplanned land use, forest and mineral resources exploitation, heavy rains, and change of water and land regulations.[7]

The level of preparedness and prevention varies from country to country. The countries in the region are relatively small (except Turkey) and they have limited disaster relief capacities. Although disasters in the region tend to transcend borders, the level of cooperation among the states in the region is very limited.[8] An analysis of disaster patterns in the region found out that there is an increase in the number of disaster events, particularly due to hydro-meteorological hazards in most of the countries in the region. Seismological studies show that there is a high probability of future occurrence of damaging and catastrophic earthquakes.[9]

Chapter

2

Historical Overview

Why History Matters to You as a Marine

History provides a knowledge of how people, institutions, and states in a region evolved into what they are today. It also provides insights into people's collective memory about their group and others. In other words, history not only shapes a region's current affairs, but also tells us something about the historical roots of the individual and group identities of its inhabitants.

History does not predict how groups, institutions, and states in a region may behave in the future. Instead, it provides insights into what is possible and probable.

Prehistory

History in the Balkans is kept alive in the forms of myths, stereotypes and prejudices, but not much via objective historiography. Although it plays a major role in their minds, many people in the region tend to have a very narrow and partisan knowledge of the history of their own nation and an even more limited understanding of that of their neighbors.

Prehistory is defined as the period before the presence of written records. Knowledge about the prehistory period is acquired through archeological analysis.

The Balkans has been the center of numerous civilizations and kingdoms since prehistoric times. The exact territories and borders of ancient states and settlements are heavily debated, because they are used as an argument in current conflicts in the Balkans.[10]

Recommended Reading: For a comprehensive overview of prehistory of the Balkans see *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 3, Part 1: The Prehistory of the Balkans, and the Middle East* (1982).

As a crossroads between Europe and Asia the region has long been used as a migration route. The Balkans is one of the most ancient centers of human habitation, with hunter-gatherer groups dating as far back as 45,000 years ago. There is solid evidence that people in the region were the first in Europe to adopt farming, a practice that arrived from the Middle East through Turkey. The earliest known settlements of these early farmers are 6,500 – 7,600 years old.

Between 3,200 – 1,500 B.C. people living in the islands of the Aegean Sea developed complex and sophisticated civilizations (the Cycladic and Minoan civilizations) including cities, stone temples, trade, science, arts, and literature. The inhabitants were organized in kingdoms and were able to project military power over seas. Another civilization, the Mycenaean Civilization (1,900 – 1,100 B.C.) in the same region is widely believed to be the beginning of the ancient Greek culture. Although the Mycenaeans had a written language, their writing remains un-deciphered. With the disappearance of the Mycenaean Civilization, the Greeks entered a period of so-called "dark ages" characterized by loss of literacy and disruption in socio-economic life for the next three centuries.

Homer's *Iliad* is an account of the war between the Mycenaeans and the city of Troy. In the book, the Thracians are allies with Troy.

Elsewhere in the region, other civilizations took root, including the Thracians in a region in present day Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey; the Illyrians who occupied territories west of the Thracians; the Dacians, who lived in and around the Carpathian Mountains. Organized in tribes, the local populations were mostly herdsmen and famers. Although they had a fierce warrior culture, they remained politically fragmented and, unlike the Greeks to the south, rarely managed to unify tribes into powerful states. The Thracians, Dacians, and Illyrians also developed rich material cultures, including crafts and arts. However, they left no written records and it is believed none of them had a written language. Despite the lack of such records and contrary to scientific evidence, many people in the Balkans claim to be direct descendants of these early settlers.[11]

Early History

As waves of people moved across the Balkans, they made it home and mixed with the local populations. Since antiquity, the region has been known for its large number of distinct ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Slavic, and Turkic presence in the region has left lasting human and cultural legacies.

Recommended Reading: For a short history of the Balkans see Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York, NY: Random House, 2002).

The beginning of recorded history in the Balkans goes back as far as 800 B.C. when written language reappeared in Greece. Greeks lived in independent city-states both inland and on many of the islands in the southern part of the Balkans. Each city-state was usually ruled by a single person (also known as a *tyrant*). In 507 B.C., the ruler of the city of Athens introduced a system of political reforms that he called *democratia* (known today as democracy), or rule by the people. Many other city-states in Greece adopted democracy as a political system. In the 4th century B.C., hundreds of city-states (out of almost 1,500 Greek settlements) were democracies.

Many of the political terms in our vocabulary are borrowed from the ancient Greeks: politics, democracy, tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy.

The vibrant city-states of ancient Greece have had a profound effect on the modern world. Many of the political and cultural achievements of the Greeks are considered to be the foundation of what later we call the Western Civilization. Greeks brought us the historian Herodotus, the scientists Archimedes, Pythagoras and Hippocrates, and the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to name a few.

Because ancient Greek left written records, we know much more about them than the other people in the Balkans who had no written language.

Because the landscape was mostly mountainous and arable land was scarce, the Greeks were forced to explore the seas and supplement the meager resources afforded by the immediate locale. Accordingly, the Greeks developed rich traditions in fishing, sailing, and trade. In addition, they began to establish coastal colonies in the Mediterranean and Black seas, and inland along the Danube River. The Greeks did not try to dominate the adjacent regions using these outposts, but instead sought to benefit from trade and commerce.

It is in the overseas exploits, that Greeks came into contact with the other inhabitants of the Balkans, including the Thracians, the Illyrians, and the Dacians, and in the process produced numerous written records about these peoples' deeds, history, and culture. Although the indigenous populations had long-lasting contacts with the advanced Greek civilization, they adopted little from the ways of these maritime and merchant pioneers, instead choosing to remain herdsmen, farmers, and miners. Fierce warriors, they were organized in numerous tribes. However, the mountainous terrain precluded the unification of tribes and the establishment of political unions.

Paradoxically, the same rugged terrain in Greece that forced the Greeks to explore the seas also prevented the city-states from establishing more extensive relationships among themselves, including preventing the establishment of a political union bringing all Greeks together in a single state. Occasionally, when facing a foreign threat, city-states did manage to create alliances and act in concert – at the beginning of the 5th century B.C., the city-states led by Athens and Sparta managed to push back attempts by the Persian Empire to conquer Greece. However, once the Persian Empire was held at bay, the former allies Athens and Sparta fought each other in a protracted conflict (the Peloponnesian War, 431-404 B.C.) which involved many other Greek city-states. Although Sparta ultimately prevailed in the war, all parties involved were weakened, which eventually allowed the Macedonian kings Philip II and later his son, Alexander the Great to conquer Greece. Alexander went on to conquer other lands (including the mighty Persian Empire) and create one of the greatest empires in the world.

The empire of Alexander the Great at its greatest extent, 334-323 B.C. (Source: Wikipedia)

The Greeks and later the Macedonians were very skilled at warfare. They mastered the *phalanx* formation (heavily armed soldiers marching in tight formation with their pikes pointing forward) and used it with devastating effect against their opponents, often prevailing against numerically superior forces.

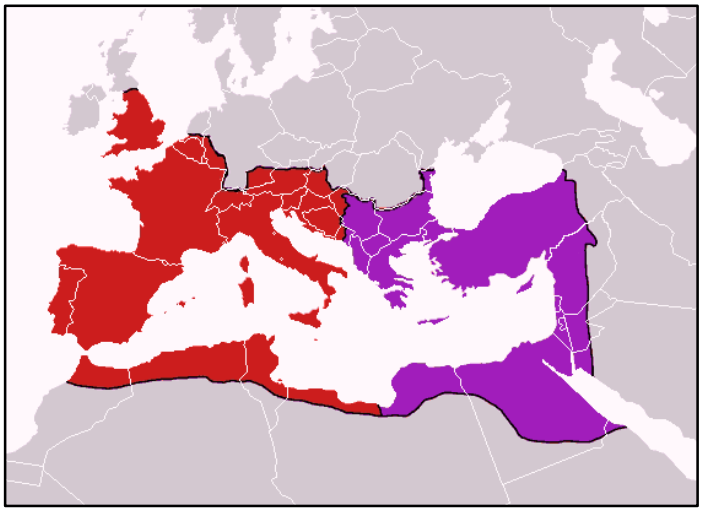
The history of the Macedonian Empire is a source of great deal of controversy today. Both modern Greeks and Macedonians in today's Republic of Macedonia claim the ancient Macedonians as their direct predecessors. The disagreement between Greek and Macedonians has strained relations between the two states. Greece refuses to recognize Macedonia by its official name (Republic of Macedonia), claiming that by calling itself "Macedonia," it appropriates part of Greek heritage and implies a claim against Greece's northern province, also called Macedonia.[12]

Early States and Empires

Roman theater in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, A.D. 2nd century (Source: Wikipedia)

Starting in the 2nd century B.C., the Balkans was gradually conquered by the Roman Empire, transforming the region into Roman provinces and ruling them for the next five centuries.[13] The Empire adopted many of the cultural and scientific achievements of the Greeks and created a sophisticated civilization of its own. The Romans established an unprecedented stability and order in the region, introducing a single legal code, providing defense against external invasions, building a region-wide infrastructure, and stimulating commerce and trade.

In A.D. 391 Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. At the same time, the Empire was in the midst of internal crisis while facing increasing pressure on its borders from tribes coming from the north and Asia. As a sign of this crisis, Roman troops pulled out of Dacia and retreated behind Danube River, retreating ahead of the advancing Goths. However, the Romans left behind the name of the state of Romania as well as the foundation of the Romanian language.



The division of the Roman Empire in A.D. 395 after the death of Theodosius I, superimposed on modern borders. The Western Roman Empire is in red and the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire) is in purple (Source: Wikimedia)

In an attempt to make the Empire more manageable and stable, upon his death in A.D. 395 Theodosius I divided the Empire between his two sons into two – the Roman Empire based in Rome, and the Byzantine Empire (or Byzantium) based in Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey). The dividing line between the two empires ran through the Balkans – the lands of present day Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Western Roman Empire, while the rest of the Balkans was included in the Byzantine Empire. Unlike the Roman Empire which disintegrated in the 5th century, Byzantium continued to exist for another thousand years (395 – 1453). The split of the Roman realm into eastern and western parts produced a cultural split with repercussions that still affect relations between people in

the region today. Whereas the language and culture of the Western Roman Empire were Latin, Byzantium was culturally and linguistically Greek, with strong ties to the Middle East.

For a long period, the Roman Empire had ensured that foreign invasions of the Balkans were relatively rare. However, as the Empire declined, foreign incursions into the region became more frequent and intense. After the split with Rome, the Balkan possessions of the Byzantine Empire had to endure a succession of tribal invasions from the north and the east, including Goths, Huns, Slavs, Avars, Bulgars, Majars, Mongols, and Turks (the Huns and the Goths managed to destroy the Western Roman Empire). Of these invasions, the most significant one was the massive influx of Slavs from the north, as it dramatically changed the demographics of the region.

Bulgarians, Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes are all Slavs.

The Slavic tribes began moving into the Balkans in the 5th century, creating agricultural settlements, while slowly advancing to the south. Byzantium initially tried to drive the Slavs back across the Danube but the new settlers' sheer numbers and the Empire's preoccupation with fighting a war with the Persian Empire in the east, allowed an even greater number of Slavs to pour in. By the early 7th century, unable to drive them out of the region, Byzantium instead established its authority over the newcomers. Meanwhile, the Slavs mixed with the indigenous populations – Thracians, Illyrians, Greeks, Dacians, and others – and sometimes completely assimilated them. In other cases, the local populations managed to absorb and assimilate the Slavs. Gradually, the Slavs became the dominant group in the Balkans. Only the Greeks, the Albanians (possible descendants of the Illyrians) and the Romanians (descendants of the Romanized Dacians) managed to either push back or assimilate the Slavs in their regions.

Although Slavs had a common origin, once settled in the Balkans they began to develop distinct identities due to living in different physical, demographic, cultural, and political environments. The predecessors of modern day Slovenes and Croats, for example, living much further away from Constantinople (Byzantium's capital city), came under the influence, and in many cases under the domination, of states and people to the west of the Balkans, while the people in the rest of the Balkans were heavily influenced by the Byzantine culture and politics.

The tribes streaming into the Balkans from the north and east were non-Christian. After settling in the region they began a gradual conversion to Christianity. Although at the time, there was only one body of Christians in Europe, it was characterized by diversity of beliefs and practices. Political, economic, and cultural differences between the eastern and the western part of the Roman Empire (and later between the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire) resulted in differences between eastern and western Christians. Gradually, these differences resulted in a split – the western, Latin-speaking, Rome-based church became the Roman Catholic Church, while the Greek-speaking, Constantinople-based church became the Eastern Orthodox Church.[14] Although normally dated to 1054, the split was the result of a prolonged estrangement between the two churches.

Most of the new settlers and soon their newly created states came under the influence of the Byzantine Empire. Accordingly they converted to the Eastern Orthodoxy. However, the Slovenes and the Croats in the western part of the Balkans, came under the influence of western states and accordingly converted to Roman Catholic Christianity.

The division of the Balkans between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox was paralleled by the adoption of different alphabets. While the Slovenes and Croats adopted the Latin alphabet, the Slavs who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy adopted the Cyrillic alphabet. The alphabet, which the Byzantine authorities actively promoted among the newly converted Slavs, was created in the 9th century by two monks, Cyril and Methodius. Even the Romanians, although speaking a Latin language, adopted the Cyrillic alphabet, which was in used until the 19th century, when Romanians switched to the Latin alphabet.

Saints Cyril and Methodius, the creators of the Cyrillic alphabet (Source: Wikipedia)

The general weakening of the Byzantine Empire allowed the emergence of new states in the Balkans. Although these states were almost always at war with each other and their borders were constantly in flux, in certain periods of time some of them (the Bulgarian and the Serbian kingdoms, for example) managed to grow in power and challenge the Byzantine Empire for supremacy in the region. However, none achieved the staying power of Byzantium.

Ottoman Rule

After the Slavs' settlement in the Balkans dramatically changed the demographic and political map of the region, another invasion, by Turkic tribes, in the 11th century began to once again alter the demographic and political map. First, the Byzantine Empire came under pressure from the Seljuk Turks (Turkic tribes were named after their leader) settled in Anatolia in the 11th century A.D. and created a powerful state.

In the late 13th century, another Turkic tribe, the Ottoman Turks rose to power and gradually pushed into the Balkans, initially bypassing Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire's capital, subduing all states in the process. In 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople, renaming it Istanbul and establishing the city as their own capital. By the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire emerged as one of the world's greatest empires, ruling over diverse people in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Modern-day Turkey sees itself as the successor to the Ottoman Empire, which lasted over 500 years until its demise at the end of the First World War.

Ottoman Empire at its greatest extent, 16th-17th century (Source: Wikipedia)

The key to the Ottoman Empire's expansion was the successful organization of non-Turkic ethnic groups. Initially, because the Ottoman Turks were a minority group in the rapidly expanding Empire, so they had no choice but to rely on assistance from other ethnic groups. For this purpose, the Empire's rulers successfully used Islam to integrate minorities.

Although the Ottomans managed to subdue most of the Balkans, they did not reach a universal control over all lands in the region. The Empire never conquered the lands of present day Slovenia and controlled only parts of present day Croatia; both countries came under control of other European states. The lands of present day Romania, although under Ottoman control, retained a degree of autonomy and managed its own affairs. Montenegro and Albania, due to their rugged terrain, managed to resist Ottoman advances for many years, and even after their defeat retained autonomy.

The Ottoman Turks' advance in Europe was finally stopped by the Austrian Empire in the 17th century. After several wars in the span of over a century, the two empires settled on a mutual border, which passed through the Balkans. While most of the region remained under Ottoman control, Transylvania and present day Croatia and Slovenia stayed out of the Empire.

The Ottoman presence in the Balkans lasted five centuries and profoundly affected its people. The history of Balkan societies during Ottoman rule, including resistance, subjugation, and liberation, is a major element of modern national identities in the region, especially in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro. Croats, inhabiting the periphery of Europe not subjugated by the Ottomans, see themselves as defenders of European civilization against a Muslim encroachment.

> The Ottomans finally subdued the Serbs after a decisive victory at Kosovo Polje on June 28th of 1389. Six centuries after the battle, Serbs still regard the event as a sacred day, a symbol of the Serbian nation and its will to resist in the face of overwhelming odds. June 28th is still officially celebrated in Serbia as St. Vitus Day, a rare case of a nation celebrating a day of defeat.

The Ottoman Turks, who were Muslim, instituted policies that gradually began to change the ethnic and religious make-up of the region. Although the Turks rarely resorted to the forcible conversion of the local populations to Islam, they instituted various political, social, and economic incentives for Christians to convert. Christians were subjected to additional taxes, had no access to political power, had more limited legal rights than their Muslim neighbors, had limits on their property rights and the right to move, and endured various other discriminations. Due to pressures and incentives, many Christians converted to Islam. This explains why people, who today share the same origin, language, and culture, consider each other to be very different people simply because they do not the share the same religion (e.g. Serbs and Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the former are Christian, the latter are Muslim). The majority of the population of present-day Albania and Kosovo, as well as a large share of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina converted to Islam. In addition, a large number of Muslims from the interior of the Ottoman Empire settled throughout the Balkans.

> Many scholars agree that the Ottoman Empire was a vast and diverse empire that provided a measure of safety and stability to its people and was generally tolerant to its non-Muslim subjects. However, most of the modern nations in the Balkans, which used to be under Ottoman rule, see this rule as a dark period of their history. Even today in some countries in the Balkans, the Ottoman rule is referred to as a "yoke" and the condition of its non-Muslim subjects in the Balkans as "slavery."

The Ottoman rule had other important effects in the region. It severed the ties the local populations had with the rest of Europe just as the continent was about to experience the Renaissance period. It also introduced a distinct economic system that in the long term stagnated economic development. Accordingly, this period witnessed a growing gap in economic and social development between the

Balkans and Western Europe. Only the Slovenes and the Croats remained largely unaffected by the Ottoman rule in the region, and retained strong ties with Western Europe.

Source: Boston College

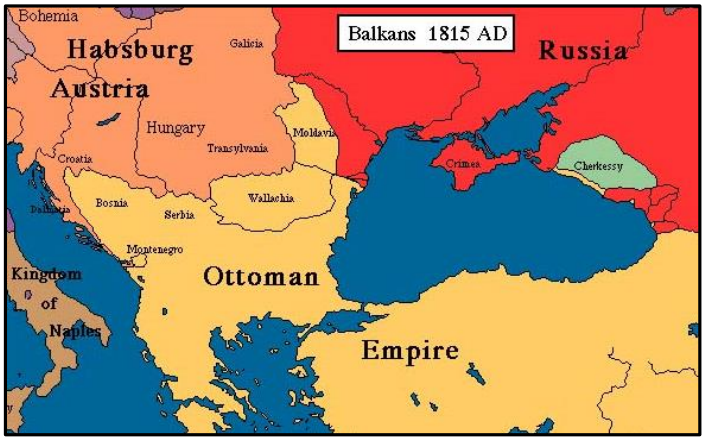
Emergence of Modern States

The Ottoman Empire began its decline in the 17th century. This development coincided with the emergence of powerful European empires, including Russian, British, French, and the Austro-Hungarian empires. The gradual weakening of the Ottoman Empire began to create a vacuum that invited the other empires to seek influence in the Balkans. In the late 17th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (collectively called the Great Powers) took control of Croatia and large parts of Romania. Of all Great Powers, Russia was the most active in its attempts to gain influence in the Balkans and in the 18th and 19th centuries fought numerous wars with the Ottomans in attempts to gain a foothold in the region. Russia considered itself a protector of Christians in the Balkans and sought to end Ottoman rule over them. On a geostrategic level, Russia sought to establish control over the Turkish straits linking the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea.

By the 19th century the Ottomans were on an irreversible retreat from the Balkans. In 1829, with the help of the Great Powers and after a bloody war, Greece gained independence. In 1877-78 Russia dealt a decisive blow to the Ottoman Empire and pushed the Ottomans outside the Balkans, except for a small strip west of the Turkish Straits. The Treaty of San Stefano, signed in 1878 between Russia and the Ottomans, created the independent states of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro as well as an autonomous Bulgaria.

Recommended Reading: For a history of the Balkans in the 18th and 19th centuries see Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteen and Nineteenth Centuries* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

The sudden expansion of Russian influence in the Balkans, however, alarmed the other Great Powers, especially Austro-Hungary and Great Britain. In 1878, at a meeting in Berlin, they forced Russia and the Ottoman Empire to accept a new treaty which, while affirming the independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro, also returned some Balkan territories to the Ottomans (Macedonia and Albania), greatly cut Bulgaria in size, and gave Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Croatia and Slovenia were already part of Austro-



Source: Boston College

Hungary). Although at the time, the Treaty of Berlin was hailed as establishing a stable order among the Great Powers, it also contained the seeds of future conflicts between the newly established states in the Balkans and between the Great Powers which continued to seek expanded influence in the region.

One of the reasons for the weakening of the Ottoman Empire was the emergence of nationalism as a powerful political force in the Balkans. Various ethnic groups in the region resented the rule of the Ottoman Turks and demanded their own independent states. Nationalism based on ethnic identity became a powerful tool to mobilize groups in their struggle against the Empire. Once nations became independent from Ottoman rule, however, nationalism pitted newly independent nations against each other, as each sought to incorporate what they saw as their ancestral lands and ethnic brethren in their new states. These aspirations created especially bloody and protracted conflicts in the Balkans, starting in the 19th century and lasting well into the 2000s.

Fulfilling these aspirations also proved very difficult partly because of one of the legacies of centuries of Ottoman rule – the mixing of ethnic groups. Very few regions in the Balkans were clearly dominated by a single ethnic group, and often several ethnic groups co-existed in the same territory. In other words, different ethnic groups lived for centuries intermingled with each other. When the Great Powers drew the borders in the Balkans in the 19th century, these groups discovered that these borders did not necessarily coincide with any ethnic borders since such did not exist.

In the early 20th century, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia were independent states, while all other present-day Balkan states were either part of the Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman empires. In 1912, these independent states created a military alliance and after a short war (known as the First Balkan War) pushed the Ottoman Empire out of Macedonia and Albania and nearly out of the Balkans altogether. However, the alliance disintegrated quickly after the victory and the former allies fought each other in the Second Balkan War (Bulgaria versus the rest) in 1913 over how to divide the conquered territories. Bulgaria was quickly defeated and the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913 established the new borders in the Balkans. Albania gained independence, while Macedonia was divided between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria. At the same time, the Great Powers remained deeply involved the Balkans' affairs, each of them supporting different parties to the conflicts.

Source: Boston College

The Balkan wars of 1912-13 were not the last attempts by Balkans states and the Great Powers to redraw the borders in the region. Furthermore, tensions in the Balkans increasingly affected relations between the Great Powers and directly contributed to the start of the First World War (1914-1918), which was fought

Recommended Reading: For a history of the Balkans in the 20th century see Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

between the Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary) and the Triple Entente (Russia, Great Britain, and France).

The Balkan states saw WWI as yet another opportunity for territorial expansion. The states in the region aligned with the side that promised them most in terms of territorial expansion. Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania joined the Triple Entente, while Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers. Of all the major participants, the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires had the most to lose in the war – they all were multi-national empires in which numerous ethnic groups demanded independence from their masters. Slavs living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks, wanted to break away from the Empire and either create their own states or join their brethren in existing Balkan states.

WWI ended with the defeat of the Central Powers and their allies Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. The war also led to the disintegration of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires and the creation of new states in the Balkans. A series of peace treaties following the war broke up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The settlement added former Austro-Hungarian territories to Romania. It also included most of the former empire's Balkan possessions in a new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (in 1929, the state was renamed Yugoslavia). In addition to Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the new state included ethnic Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Albanians, Macedonians, Hungarians, Turks, and others. Yugoslavia was created by the Great Powers, which neither took into account whether all these ethnic groups wanted to be part of the new state, nor consider the difficulties of creating a cohesive state encompassing numerous and diverse ethnic groups. At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of Yugoslavia was comprised of ethnic groups with different cultures and historical experience. While in the eastern part of the country, the Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Albanians, and partly the Bosniaks, had had centuries-long experience living under Ottoman rule, the population in the western part, including Slovenes, Croats, and Hungarians had spent centuries living under Austrian rule.

The Balkans between the two world wars (Source: U.S. Military Academy)

WWI also led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. After defeating the Ottomans, the Allied Powers sought to dismember the Empire. This prompted a national resistance movement, based in Anatolia and led by a military commander, Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, to wage a war against the occupiers. His forces were successful in expelling the foreign forces and the Turkish Republic was created in 1923.

Ataturk first came to fame as the Commander of the Ottoman forces during the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915-16. A large Allied expeditionary force launched a massive amphibious attack on the Gallipoli peninsula with the aim of capturing the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. After months of fighting and many casualties on both sides, Ataturk's forces repelled the attack.

Ataturk did not want to save the multinational character of the former Ottoman Empire. Instead, he envisioned a modern nation-state, a home for ethnic Turks. Therefore, Ataturk had no interest in the former Ottoman possession in Europe and the Middle East where Turks were minorities. Instead, the new state encouraged those ethnic Turks to move to Turkey. On the other hand, the Turkish victory forced the ethnic Greek population living in Anatolia to abandon their homes and move to Greece. Thus the Greek presence in Anatolia, which had lasted for thousands of years, came to an end. The loss of Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire's capital, to the Ottomans in the 15th century and the end of Greek presence in Turkey are great sources of resentment for Greeks even to this day.

The Balkans' political borders set after the end of WWI never seemed final. The states that lost in WWI resented the loss of territories, while nationalities in Yugoslavia sought to create their own states. Thus the eruption of the Second World War led to another redrawing of national boundaries. The main conflict in Europe involved the Axis Powers (Germany and Italy) against the Allies (Great Britain, France, and Russia, to be later joined by the U.S.). Bulgaria and Romania joined the Axis, while Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania joined the Allies. Under intense pressure by both sides, Turkey remained neutral in the war.

During the Axis advances at the beginning of the war, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary occupied territories in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania. During the war, people in the Balkans fought not only foreign occupiers but also each other. Croats in Yugoslavia allied themselves with the Nazis and established their own independent state. Independent Croatia's armed forces, called *Ustasha*, conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing pushing out or killing ethnic Serbs, Bosniaks, and Jews in Croatia. The Serbs responded by forming an irregular guerrilla force, called *Chetniks*, and battled the German and Italian occupiers as well as the *Ustasha* and the Bosniaks. Another force of resistance fighters, called *Partisans*, was a communist armed group led by Josip Broz Tito, a Croat-Slovene by birth. Although initially the *Partisans* included mostly ethnic Serbs, the group's initial military successes made it popular throughout Yugoslavia and people of various ethnicities joined it.

Throughout the war, all sides to the conflict in Yugoslavia engaged in a bloody war in which up to a million Yugoslavs lost their lives. The *Chetniks, Partisans,* and the Bosniaks fought not only against the Germans, the Italians, and the *Ustasha*, but also each other. The *Partisans* proved to be the most effective force in Yugoslavia. In fact, unlike the other Nazi-occupied states during WWII, Tito's forces were able to liberate Yugoslavia from German forces with relatively limited Allied military help. This made Tito tremendously popular in Yugoslavia and enabled him to rule the country after WWII without much interference from abroad. On the other hand, the occupation of Yugoslavia and the bloody civil conflict left death and destruction in the country and deeply affected the memory and identity of its people for many years to come.

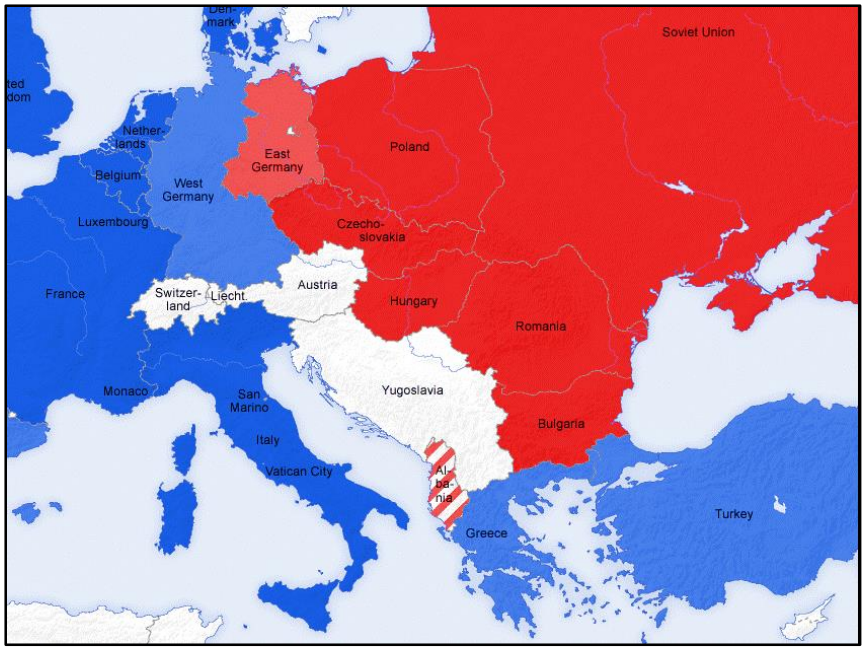
The Allied states prevailed in WWII. The Soviet Union occupied Romania and Bulgaria, while the *Partisans* in Yugoslavia managed to push the Nazis out mostly on their own. The Germans withdrew from Greece fearing being cut off by advancing Soviet troops. The national borders in the Balkans changed relatively little as a result of the war. Once again, it was the Great Powers, namely Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, that determined those borders.

Yugoslavia's new leader, Tito, in an attempt to squash simmering hostilities among the nationalities in the states, created a federated state, in which Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians had their own republics. The republics had their own constitution, courts, parliament, president, and prime minster. However, the real power was in the hands of Tito and his Communist Party, who was

elected president of Yugoslavia for life. Tito, the Communist Party, and the secret police brutally squashed any attempt by nationalists to seek independence from Yugoslavia.

In addition to the ethnic and national divisions in the Balkans, there appeared another division between the states. Most of the Balkans, with the exception of Greece and Turkey, came under Soviet and communist influence. In those states, communist regimes took domestic power and eliminated any attempts to establish multiparty democracies. Greece and Turkey, on the other hand, chose to align themselves with the West, namely the United States and Western European states. For the next 45 years, the main divide in the Balkans was not along the old animosities among the states, but along an ideological line – communist states versus capitalist states.

Turkey and Greece quickly sought to create strong and durable ties to the West. Both countries joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 as a way to ensure their territorial integrity in the face of Communist and Soviet threats. They also sought to join the European Community (later renamed the European Union). Greece joined the Union in 1981, while Turkey, which applied to join in 1987, still awaits accession.



NATO (in blue), Warsaw Pact (in red), and neutral (in white) countries during the Cold War in Europe (Source: Wikipedia)

Although the rest of the Balkan countries were communist, there was great diversity among them. Bulgaria was firmly allied with the Soviet Union and followed all directions coming from Moscow. Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union, on the other hand, quickly deteriorated and became openly hostile. Compared to communist states in Europe, Yugoslavia had a much more liberal and open economic and social system. Its semi-market economy was open to the world market. Yugoslavs were allowed to travel and work abroad and generally the regime, while not allowing political challenges to the Communist Party's one party rule, allowed plenty of social and personal liberties and freedoms. Romania and Albania, on the other hand, built very oppressive communist regimes, suppressing any domestic dissent and challenge to the political monopoly of the communist party. Both countries were also very suspicious of external enemies, including other communist states. These differences among the communist states in the Balkans affected their external alignment. Bulgaria joined the Warsaw Pact (a politico-military alliance dominated by the Soviet Union and targeted at the West), while Yugoslavia never joined and Albania withdrew from the alliance in the 1960s. Romania joined the political structure of the Warsaw Pact, but refused to join its military structure.

Recommended Reading: For a history of communist rule in the Balkans, see Joseph Rotschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Communist regimes in the Balkans began to disintegrate in the late 1980s. In 1989-90, Bulgaria and Romania ended the monopoly of the communist parties over power and held the first free, multiparty elections in 45 years. In 1991, Yugoslavia plunged into a civil war. Serbia and Montenegro wanted to keep the federation together while the other republics declared independence. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia became independent states. The civil wars, fought mostly on the territory of Bosnia but also in Croatia, claimed the lives of over 100,000 people and resulted in massive ethnic cleansing. The wars ended in 1995 when NATO, led by the United States, intervened militarily and forced the warring parties to negotiate a peace agreement. The international community considered Serbia to be the aggressor in the wars.

Recommended Reading: For an insightful view of the complexities of history, memories, and nationalism in the Balkans see Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: History of the Balkans: A Journey Through History* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

In 1999 NATO once again intervened militarily in the region, this time to stop Serbia from ethnically cleansing ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, a formerly autonomous region within Serbia. After a short air campaign NATO forced Serbia to withdraw from Kosovo and ultimately ended Serbia's authority over the region. In 2008 Kosovo declared independence, but not all states recognized it (the U.S. and many other European states recognize Kosovo's independence, but many others, including Serbia, do not). The disintegration of Yugoslavia finally ended in 2006 with the peaceful succession of Montenegro from its union with Serbia.

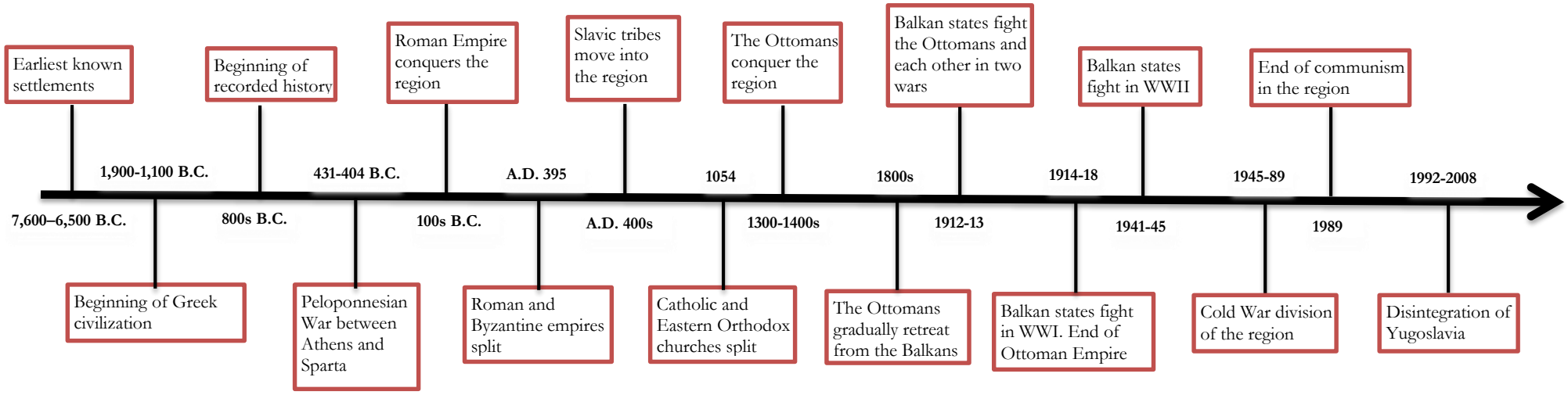
The Balkans after 2008 (Source: CIA)

Mycenaean funeral mask

Roman theater in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Suleiman the Magnificent, 1530

Josip Broz Tito, 1942



Hoplite helmet

Byzantine coins

Ottoman troops during the Balkan wars

Slobodan Milosevic, 1996

Chapter 3

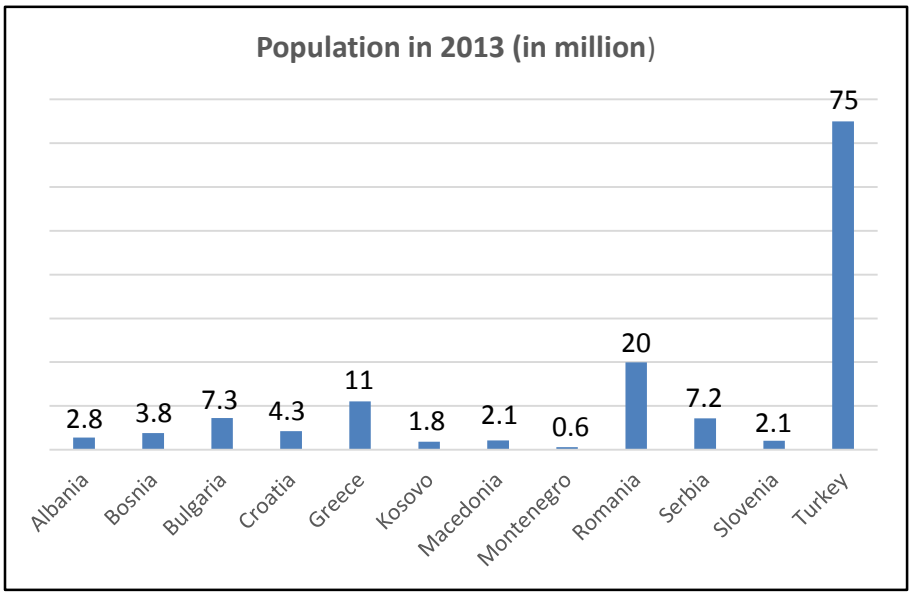
People and Society

Why People and Society Matter to You as a Marine

Missions across the range of military operations require Marines to understand, and work with, foreign populations. Knowing the people in the region, including their ethnicities, languages, and religions, as well as the way they live in social entities, enables Marines to create a mental picture of the human dimension of the region.

Population

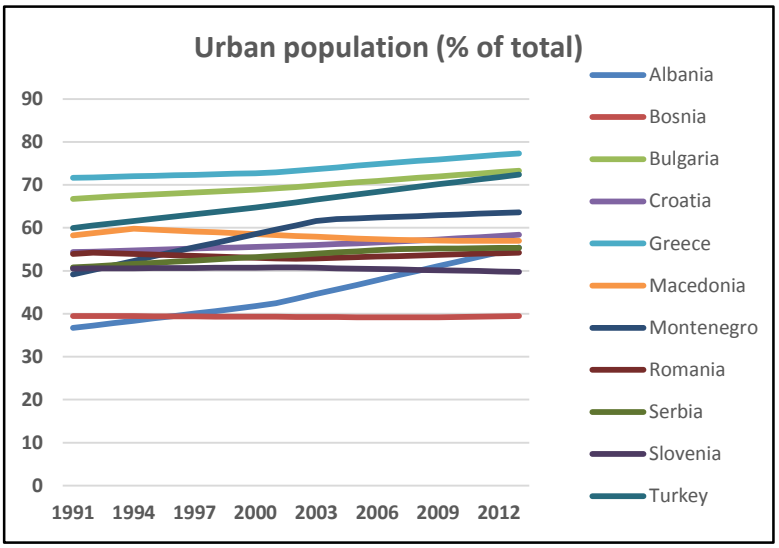
The Balkan states are approximately the size of the state of Texas but have more than four times the population, totaling 70 million people (this number does not include Turkey's population living in the Asian part of the country). The Balkan population density is approximately three times that of the U.S. as a whole, and is roughly comparable to the state of Florida.



Source: World Bank

Turkey has by far the largest population in the Balkans; more people live in Turkey than in all other Balkan states combined. In fact, Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, has a larger population (14.1 million) than any other state in the Balkans, except Romania.

The end of communism in the Balkans led to major population changes, except in Turkey and Greece. Most people living under communist rule faced multiple barriers to migrating, both inside and outside their countries (Yugoslavia was somewhat of an exception). In the early 1990s these restrictions were eliminated and many people moved. Some sought better job opportunities in urban areas, while others moved abroad, either permanently or in search of seasonal work. Of all the Balkan countries, only Bosnia and Herzegovina's population remained mostly rural, while the share of urban population in the most other countries increased.

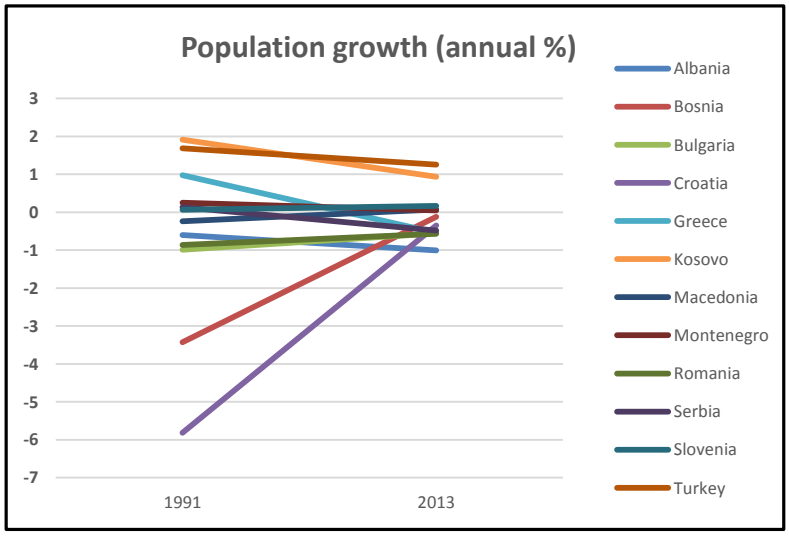


Source: World Bank

The civil wars in former Yugoslavia were more reason for population movement in the region. The wars displaced over a million people. The warring parties systematically removed ethnic groups from given territories with the intent of making them ethnically homogeneous. Many refugees moved to territories dominated by their ethnic kin, or moved out of the Balkans altogether. Bosnia was especially affected by ethnic cleansing, but similar events also took place in Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia which were both sources and recipients of refugees.[15]

> Due to the civil war, the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina decreased from an estimated 4.3 million in 1990 to some 3.4 million in 1995.

Even before the 1990s, the Balkan states experienced a general trend of either a very slow population growth or declining population numbers. The transition from communism and civil wars in former Yugoslavia only exacerbated the trend – birth rates and life expectancy declined and many people immigrated abroad. Experiencing declining economic standards and deterioration of public services (education, healthcare, etc.), many preferred to limit the size of their families. The total population in the region (minus Turkey) decreased from just over 68 million in 1991 to below 63 million in 2013. Even countries which experienced no civil wars, including Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania witnessed a dramatic decline in their populations. However, hardship is not the only explanation for the slowing population growth or declining population size. Turkey, which experienced an unprecedented

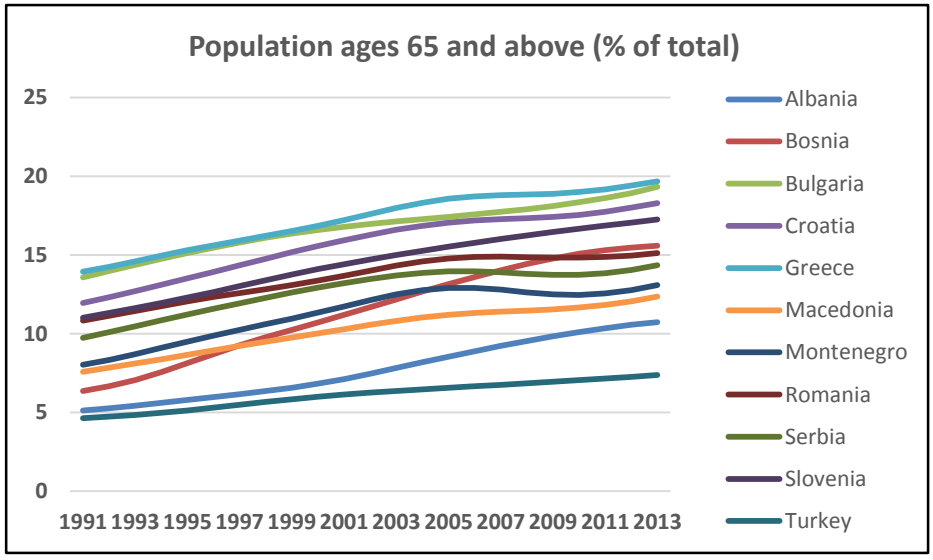


Source: World Bank

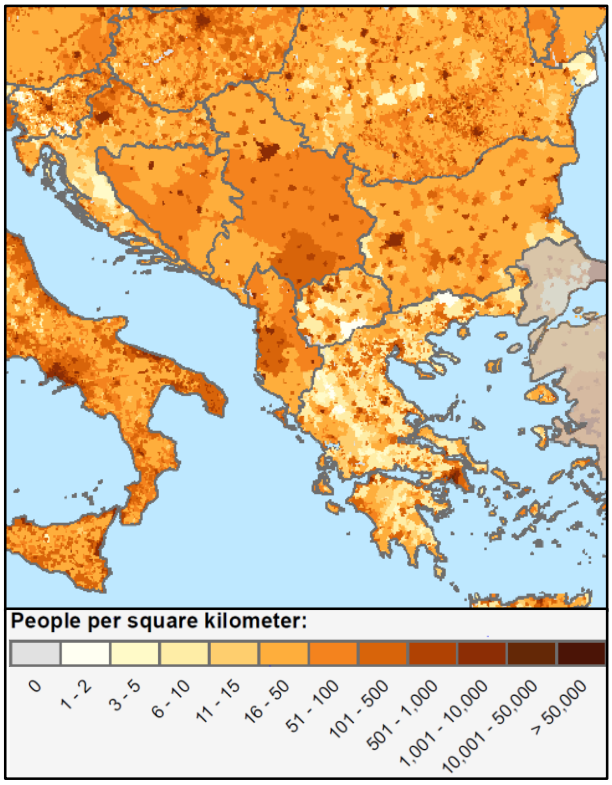
economic growth in the late 1990 and the 2000s, also witnessed a slowdown in population growth. Nevertheless, Turkey was the only country in the region which continued to experience a robust population growth.

Population Estimates (Source: World Bank)			
Country	**1991**	**2013**	**% change**
Albania	3,26,6790	2,773,620	-15%
Bosnia	4,373,715	3,829,307	-12%
Bulgaria	8,632,367	7,265,115	-16%
Croatia	4,510,000	4,252,700	-6%
Greece	10,256,292	11,032,328	8%
Kosovo	1,898,000	1,824,000	-4%
Macedonia	2,004,813	2,107,158	5%
Montenegro	616,158	621,383	1%
Romania	23,001,155	19,963,581	-13%
Serbia	7,595,636	7,163,976	-6%
Slovenia	1,999,429	2,060,484	3%
Turkey	54,911,233	74,932,641	36%

The population in most Balkan countries is not only decreasing or growing slowly, but also rapidly aging. Declining fertility rates and out-migration contribute to an increase of the share of people over the age of 65. The gradual integration of the Balkan countries in the European Union enables more and more people to seek opportunities outside the region, thus very rapidly changing the age composition in the region. Only Turkey and Albania continue to have youthful populations, although even they see an increase of the size of the population group over 65.



Source: World Bank



Source: Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Columbia University

It is easy to identify the capital cities on the map of the Balkans – they have the highest population density in each country (except for Turkey; Istanbul's population is larger than Ankara's).

Ethnic Groups

The population in the Balkans lives in mixed ethnic settlement patterns. Nevertheless, almost all countries are dominated by a single ethnic group. Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro are the only countries in the Balkans with no ethnic majority – Bosnia's population includes 48% Bosniaks, 37% Serbs, and 14% Croats; Montenegro's population includes 45% Montenegrins and 29% Serbs.[16] In all other countries, the titular ethnic group is also the majority ethnicity. The size of the majority ranges from as high as 93% ethnic Serbs in Serbia to as low as 64% ethnic Macedonians in

Ethnic map of the Balkans in the early 1990s (Source: CIA)

Macedonia. In other words, most of the countries in Balkans have big ethnic majorities. This gives each majority ethnic group great power in politics, economics, and culture.

In addition to a dominant ethnic majority, each country in the region also has minorities, usually ethnic groups which are majorities in neighboring states. Thus Bulgaria, for example, not only shares a border with Turkey, but also has a Turkish minority, about 8% of the population. There are also minorities in the Balkans, which do not have their own states – Kurds in Turkey (around 18% of the population) and the Roma who live in all Balkan countries.

Historically, the mixture of ethnic groups was not a source of conflict in the Balkans. In addition, the presence of the powerful Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires prevented the escalation of any conflicts into violent confrontations. However, the disintegration of the empires and the rise of nationalism among ethnic groups led to more frequent confrontations. Ethnic groups sought to establish their own, ethnically homogenous homelands and other ethnic groups were seen as an obstacle. The ethnic mix was especially volatile in Yugoslavia, and above all in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Religion

Two main religions dominate the Balkans – Christianity and Islam. Most Christians belong to two different branches of the religion – Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Croats and Slovenes are Catholic. Bulgarians, Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Romanians, and Serbs are Eastern Orthodox Christians. Albanians, Kosovars, and Turks are mostly Sunni Muslims. There are also small religious minorities including Protestants, Shi'a Muslims, and Jews.

Religious map of the Balkans – Catholics (in blue), Eastern Orthodox (in red), Muslims (in green) (Source: Wikimedia)

Many people in the region believe in a syncretistic blend of two or more religions, mixing Christian Orthodox, Catholic, Islamic, and Pagan beliefs and practices.

Many Muslim women in Turkey celebrate St. George, a Christian saint, by making an annual pilgrimage to Christian churches named after him, and offering up prayers for health and material success.

Religion has a complicated role in the Balkans. Until 1989, the communist countries in the region experienced over 40 years of rigidly enforced atheism under communist rule. Since the end of

communism, people in these countries renewed their interests in religion. Furthermore, in former Yugoslavia, religion became a powerful tool of ethnic nationalism. In a country where many spoke the same language and shared the same culture, religious affiliation became a defining element of identity. Frequently, during the civil wars, it literally meant the difference between life and death. However, many in former Yugoslavia were the children of mixed marriages (a Croat mother and a Serb father, for example) and had a hard time identifying with a single ethnicity. In fact, many continued to identify themselves as Yugoslavs long after Yugoslavia had begun to disintegrate.

After years of rigidly enforced secularism, Turkey, historically a Sunni society, is currently witnessing an increased display of Islamic symbols and practices. One of Ataturk's lasting secular traditions was the government ban on women wearing headscarves in public, political, and educational institutions. However, the ascent of the mildly Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2000s and the changing cultural norms in society gradually challenged this ban. After winning the parliamentary elections in 2002, the AKP's leader and Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan (currently Turkey's president) appeared in official ceremonies with his wife wearing a headscarf, a dramatic challenge to existing laws and norms. Today more and more Turkish women choose to wear headscarves as a symbol of modesty and religious devotion.

Young people in Istanbul, Turkey taking Iftar, the meal at sundown that signals the end of the daily fast during Ramadan (Source: EurasiaNet)

Despite the increased interest, many people in the Balkans still see religion as a cultural trait defining them as part of the nation, rather than as a spiritual trait or a connection between them and God. In other words, religious affiliation, especially in the former communist states, is still nominal. The actual percentage of actively practicing adherents is much lower. Religious commitment (praying on daily basis, attending church or mosque, etc.) is relatively high in Turkey and Greece. Religious commitment also tends to be higher in rural areas and lower in urban areas. Muslims in the Balkans are among the most moderate in the Islamic world in their attitudes and beliefs about religion and politics, morality, beliefs about Sharia, women in society, interfaith relations, etc.[17]

Languages

The official language in each country of the Balkans is the language of the dominant ethnic group. For example, the Romanian language is the official language of Romania. The only exception is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there are three official languages – Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Ethnic minorities in each country are allowed different

There was a single Serb-Croatian language spoken in Yugoslavia by Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the independent states of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly emphasized the distinct characteristics of the language spoken in their countries. They claim that they are three different languages and accordingly called them Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian languages.

degrees of freedom and provisions to use, study, and communicate official business in their own languages. Nevertheless, all minorities complain of language discrimination as official authorities encourage the study and use of the official languages. Most minorities in the region tend to speak not only their mother tongue but also the country's majority language.

The interplay between ethnicity, language, and religion

Religion, language, and ethnicity in the Balkans tend to be aligned. For example, those who consider themselves ethnic Turks tend to identify themselves as Muslims (although not necessarily as practicing) and speak Turkish. Those who consider themselves ethnic Serbs tend to be Eastern Orthodox Christian and speak the Serbian language, regardless of whether they live in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Informal social networks

Reliance on informal family networks and circles of friends and acquaintances in everyday life is a major characteristic of societies in the region. These networks are key sources of information, knowledge, and resources in every aspect of life.[18] The networks have strong bonds based on trust. Members of the network go out of their way to reinforce these bonds, spending substantial time and resources in the process.

While people in the informal networks develop trust and bonds within the network, they have limited trust in the formal institutions and in people outside the network.[19] Although modernization of societies and the democratization of political systems have undermined the power of informal networks, they are still ubiquitous in all countries in the region. In post-communist countries and in newly independent states, the turbulent transition and the weaknesses of new institutions have ensured the survival of the networks. Some of those networks have even expanded as they monopolized political power after the communist regime's collapse left a power vacuum.

Family structure

Societies in the Balkans are group-oriented and the family, including the extended family, is the most important group in the region. However, there is a great intra-regional and intra-country variation in familial organization and size. The variations are linked to regional and country differences in political, economic, social and ecological conditions. The types of family models range from the patriarchic in many rural areas throughout the region, to the nuclear family, which seems to be the dominant pattern in the last several decades, to the growing number of single-parent and unmarried-couple households in mostly urban areas.

Patriarchy includes elements such as: kinship is traced through the male line; newly wedded couples living with the husband's family; power relations that favor the domination of men over women and of the older generation over the younger generation; customary laws that sustain these patterns.

People rely on the immediate and extended family for emotional and financial support, as well as child and elder-care assistance. In general, the extended family provides a safety

The extended family includes much more than the American version of brother, sister, mother, father, and grandparents. It includes uncles, aunts, and cousins, many times removed.

net during hardship. The importance of maintaining these bonds and obligations is taught and encouraged from youth.

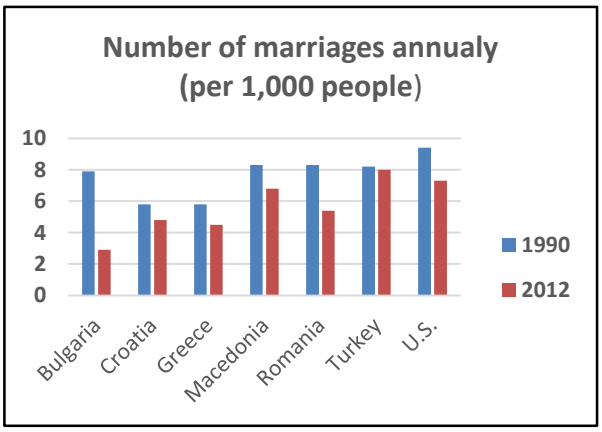
Family ties also serve as the foundation of social and professional interaction. People expect their kin to show favoritism, to help them out, or to receive assistance. This attitude – which may appear to an American as nepotism and cronyism, takes place at all levels of public and business life, from low-level bureaucrats to national institutions, to business corporations.

Traditionally, marriages were arranged by the bride and groom's parents. The bride and the groom also tended to be what Americans would consider underage. Although this tradition is no longer the region's common practice, it still occurs in certain rural, isolated areas, or among some minorities, particularly the Roma.[20] People now tend to marry later in life and parents tend to have very limited say in the decision.

All couples must go through a civil ceremony in order to be officially married. In some areas, wedding celebrations can last more than a day. The families of the newly wed spare no expenses to offer the wedding guests a memorable feast.

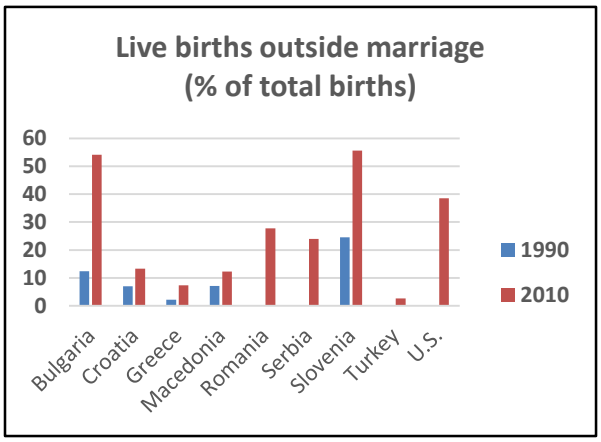
Extended families do not share dwellings, but members are obliged to promptly help any member of family at time of need. This obligation often includes non-relative neighbors, classmates, and fellow soldiers. Therefore, the idea of "acquaintance" is much more significant in the region than in the American society. With this in mind, building relationships with the people in the Balkans can help you toward mission success.

The traditional marriage and family patterns have experienced great changes in the last two decades in almost all countries in the region. In some countries fewer people are choosing traditional marriage and the divorce rates, universally rare in the past, are increasing. Instead, many couples choose to live together unmarried. As a result, the percentage of children born to unmarried women is increasing. However, these new patterns are not universal in the region. Some countries continue to have relatively high marriage rates, low divorce rates, and low rates of newborn to unwed mothers (Turkey seems to be the most conservative in this respect, holding to more traditional norms).



Source: World Bank

Geography, ethnicity, and religion do not explain why some countries in the region experience dramatic changes in the family structure and others witness a more gradual shift. Croatia and Slovenia, two mostly Catholic nations with similar historical experiences and geographic positions, have vastly different rates of birth outside marriage. Bulgaria and Macedonia are very close ethnically and share the Eastern Orthodoxy, yet have a very different marriage structure and birth rates to unwed mothers. On the other hand, Greece and Turkey, while ethnically and religiously distinct, have similar rates of births to unwed mothers. In other words, family structures in different countries in the Balkans have experienced different shifts in response to the dramatic changes taking place in the region since 1990. In addition, there are wide variations in the patterns within countries, especially in urban areas. While in rural areas the changes in norms and patterns are more gradual, urban areas witness wide variations.

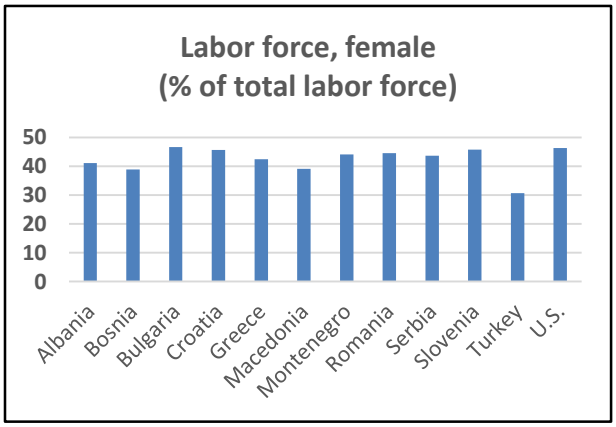


Source: World Bank

The end of communism in the late 1980s and the ensuing economic transformation have had a dramatic impact on the family in many Balkan countries. Millions of people sought employment opportunities in the West (one of the reasons for the population's decline in the region). Not all of them moved with their families; instead just one of the parents sought temporary employment abroad leaving behind single parent households for extended periods. This pattern had important consequences for family life as children grew up with single parents and many rural and small town settlements lost significant populations. A study of the United Nations in the late 2000s estimated that since 1990 women emigrants have outnumbered men in nine Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.[21]

Gender

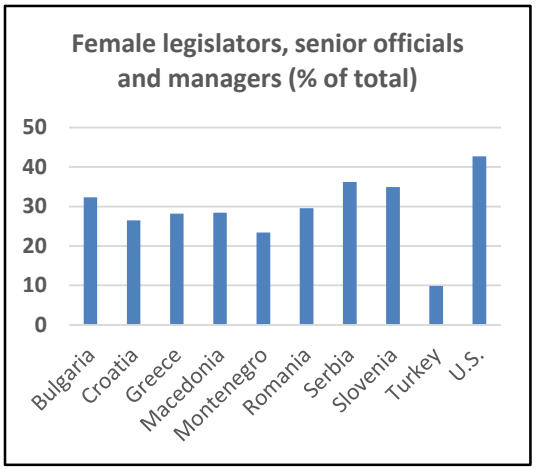
There are clear male and female roles common in all countries in the region. The societies are relatively patriarchic, especially in rural areas. Patriarchic attitudes permeate all spheres of life. Custom has long cast males as breadwinners, heads of households and the defenders of familial honor. Despite the strong patriarchic tradition, women in the Balkans have a very high participation in the labor force (similar to the United States' rate). This is a legacy of communist rule, which promoted gender equality in many spheres of life, particularly in employment choices. In Turkey, on other hand, the percentage of working women is low and marriage tends to be the main reason for their exit from the workforce.[22]



Source: World Bank

Although women have high workforce participation rate, they are expected to manage households and tend to children. Women are respected but not as equals. The concept of gender equality is not as important as in the United States.[23]

Modernization, industrialization, and mass education in the second half of the 20th century did a lot to elevate the status of women in the Balkans, although they never achieved even a partial equality. However, the end of communism, the civil wars in the Balkans in the 1990s, and the rise of mild Islamism in Turkey in the 2000s, partially undermined what women achieved in the previous period.[24] In many countries in the region, the percentage of women in employment and in leadership positions in politics and business declined.



Source: World Bank

Children of both sexes are given clear guidance on gender norms, and are actively corrected for departing from the norm. Correct displays of appropriate gender roles are regularly encouraged until adulthood. However, in big cities there are wide variations in gender roles and traditional gender norms are frequently challenged. Nevertheless, the societies remain rather traditional in observance of gender roles.

Class

In the past, membership in the Communist Party was the main path to high status in the communist states in the Balkans. A selected group of Communist Party leaders and bureaucrats (the so-called *nomenklatura*) had extensive privileges and access to resources. In general, however, the societies were relatively egalitarian – there were no great disparities in wealth. Since gaining independence in 1991, entrepreneurial skills, wealth, and access to power are the new measures of success in the post-communist states. Many members of the former *nomenklatura* used their connections, knowledge, and political power to accumulate wealth. Personal power and prestige rest heavily on either knowing the right people, nepotism, or cronyism.

Like the post-communist states, Greece and Turkey have no rigid class stratification. Personal status depends on wealth and access to power. The society provides relatively ample opportunities to move up in the social ladder. However, knowing the right people, family connections, and access to political power also play significant roles in social status. The rapid development in the last two decades in Turkey increased social mobility as millions moved to urban centers attracted by job opportunities. However, the rapid economic growth has also led to increased social stratification.

There are a number of factors that determine the social class of a person in the region. The most important include: the type of post held in government, income, scientific degree and teaching position in university; wealth; occupation; family prestige; value of home; neighborhood; and social reputation (based on either fact or often on rumors).

Urban dwellers, especially those in the largest cities, tend to look down on those who either live in rural areas or have recently migrated from the countryside. This plays a major role in the region's

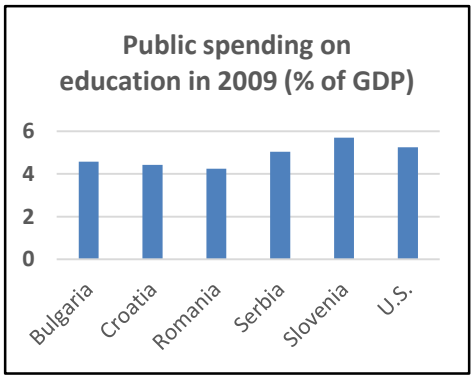
social stratification. The rural populations are generally less exposed to Western cultures and tend to favor traditional notions about lifestyles, behavior, dress, and music.

Ethnicity tends to affect one's social status. Ethnic majorities tend to view the attempts of ethnic minorities to gain certain rights – education in the mother tongue, the public use of minority languages, cultural autonomy, end of discriminatory policies, etc. – as special, extra rights undermining the rights of the rest of the population. On the other hand, ethnic minorities see themselves as being discriminated against by the majority in employment, culture, and access to political power. This perceived discrimination is reinforced by the fact that ethnic minorities tend to live in geographic enclaves and further isolate themselves from opportunities available to the majorities.

The armed conflicts following the breakup of Yugoslavia was another factor affecting social status in the region. The turmoil created by the conflicts displaced millions. Uprooted from their homes, many of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees became dependent on governments for food, shelter, health care, and employment, while facing different forms of discrimination.[25]

Education

All of the countries in the region have a universal, state-supported education system, and literacy rates are similar to those in the Western world. The education systems are highly centralized and local school districts have limited authority over budgets and curriculum. Although almost all countries in the region experienced financial difficulties during the transition from communism to democracy, they continued to have relatively high public expenditure in education at levels comparable to Western countries. One notable exception was Turkey, which historically spent relatively smaller share of its GDP on education. However, following the unprecedented economic growth in the 2000s, the Turkish government implemented education reform and gradually increased public spending in education (public spending increased from 1.8% in 2000 to 2.5% in 2010.[26]



Source: World Bank

The end of communism in the region also gave way to the emergence of private educational institutions, ranging from pre-school to colleges. A new trend in the region is also the increasing number of young people studying abroad, mainly in Western Europe and the United States. The gradual integration of all Balkan countries in the European Union, which actively promotes study abroad, enabled a greater number of young people in the Balkans to seek education in the West.

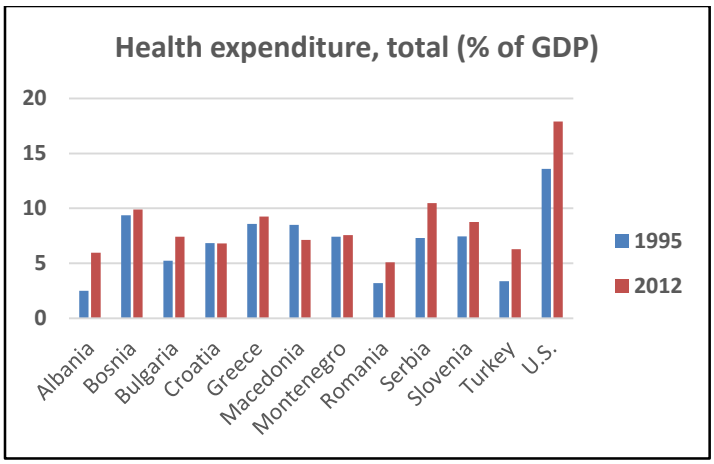
Health Care

Under communist rule, all Balkan states (except for Greece and Turkey) had a universal healthcare system, which although not of high quality, provided medical services to all citizens. After the end of communism, the states experienced deterioration of health services in the 1990s due to declining health expenditures, economic crises, and armed conflicts. At the same time, the states embarked on slow healthcare reforms while allocating relatively limited funding to

26% of healthcare cost in Bulgaria in 1995 was out-of-pocket expenditures. By 2012 the out-of-pocket expenditures reached 42% of the total healthcare cost.

support the system. Currently the healthcare system retains many features of the old system including centralized control, and high numbers of physicians and hospital beds. However, people in most countries are increasingly paying for many health services out of pocket.[27] Generally speaking, the healthcare system stabilized in the 2000s; accordingly, life expectancy, after stagnating in the 1990s, increased steadily.

One of the most significant problems in the healthcare system, especially in some post-communist states, is corruption. Medical personnel often use bribes to attain qualifications and better job placements, while patients bribe medical personnel in search of better treatment.[28] The level of corruption in the healthcare system in the region varies from country to country – it is usually a reflection of the general environment of corruption in the country.



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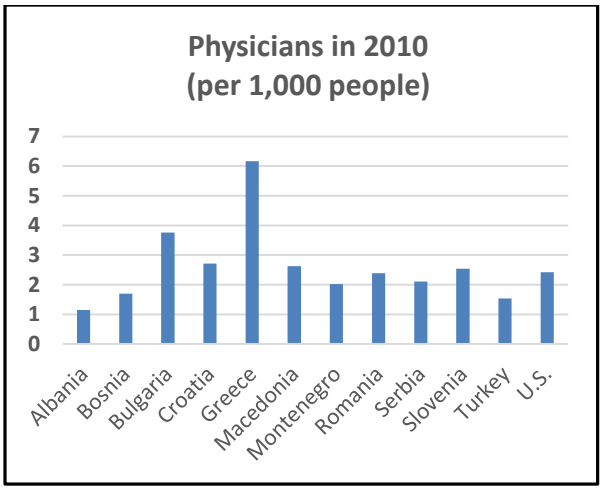

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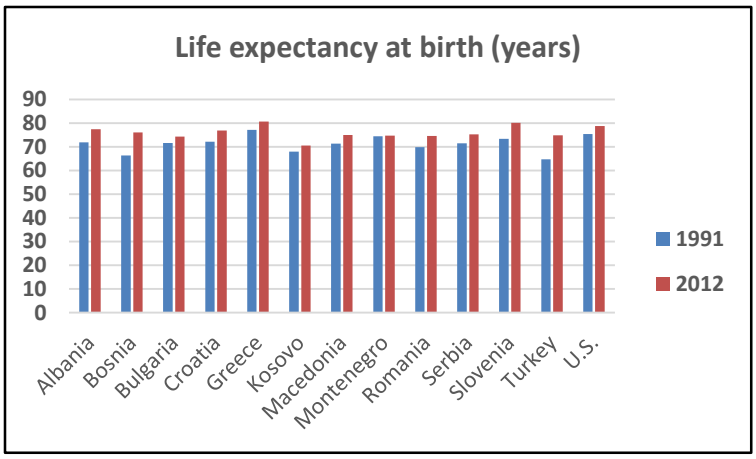


Source: World Bank

Healthcare expenditures, number of physicians, hospitals, and pharmacists, life expectancy at birth, etc., are only some of the indicators of the quality of a healthcare system. For example, Albania, Greece and Slovenia spend much less on healthcare than the United States, but the citizens in those three countries have a higher life expectancy than Americans. Greece has a very high number of physicians and pharmacists per 1,000 people, but the quality of the country's healthcare system is low by European standards and even trails in quality those of Slovenia and Croatia.[29]

One study ranked healthcare systems in 34 European states according to patient rights and access, outcomes, range and reach of services, and prevention. The study included some of the Balkan states. Slovenia, ranked 17th, had the best healthcare system in the Balkans. The other Balkan states were ranked as follows: Croatia – 19th, Greece – 25th, Macedonia – 27th, Albania – 29th, Bulgaria – 30th, Romania – 33rd, and Serbia – 34th.[30]

Chapter

4

Government and Politics

Why Government and Politics Matter to You as a Marine

Most people live in states governed by formal and informal institutions. Marines need to know how power and authority are distributed in the state by studying the formal and informal structures of governments in the region. In addition, Marines need to understand how people, groups, and institutions exercise power and authority, in other words, what comprises politics in the states.

Political and Institutional Order

All countries in the Balkans are secular, parliamentarian republics, in which political power is shared among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. However, how political power is distributed between institutions varies from state to state. At one extreme is Bosnia and Herzegovina, a loose federation consisting of two entities – the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina dominated by Bosniaks and Croats, and the Republika Srpska, dominated by ethnic Serbs – and very weak central government. Most other states, on the other hand, are highly centralized and political power tends to be in the hands of the legislative and executive branches of government; the judiciary branch of government tends to be weaker.

All states hold regular elections for parliament, president, and local governments. Parliament represents the legislative power. Most of the executive power is concentrated in the hands of a cabinet, including a prime minister and ministers. The prime minister and the cabinet are elected by the parliament; the parliament can vote the prime minister and the cabinet out of office at any time through non-confidence vote. Usually the prime minister is also the leader of the political party holding the majority seats in the parliament. When no single political party holds the majority in the parliament, two or more political parties form a coalition and elect a prime minister and a cabinet that includes representatives from the coalition.

All presidential institutions in the Balkans have much weaker executive and legislative powers than those of the president of the U.S. The president can veto legislation, but unlike the United States, the legislation has relatively easy time overcoming the veto. The judicial power in the states includes the courts at all levels and the prosecutorial offices. Although the judiciary is supposed to be independent, it is very vulnerable to political and state interference in its work.[31]

The constitutions of all states in the region accord the citizens certain civil and political rights and freedoms, which – on paper – define the political systems as democratic. However, the level of democratization in the region varies. In 2014, Freedom House, an independent organization, produced its annual survey on the state of freedom around the world according to the state of civil liberties, freedom of expression, democratic governance, rule of law, political freedoms, etc. The report classified some of the countries in the Balkans as "free" while the rest as "partially free." Even the states which are classified as free are deemed to have numerous problems with the stability and democratic nature of their political systems, the rule of law, and the state of human rights and civil liberties of their citizens. All in all, the countries in the Balkans are not only less developed than the countries in Western Europe, but they are also less democratic and their political and state institutions are less stable.

Country	State of Freedom
Albania	Partly Free
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Partly Free
Bulgaria	Free
Croatia	Free
Greece	Free
Kosovo	Partly Free
Macedonia	Partly Free
Montenegro	Free
Romania	Free
Serbia	Free
Slovenia	Free
Turkey	Partly Free

Source: Freedom House

Stability of Political and State Institutions

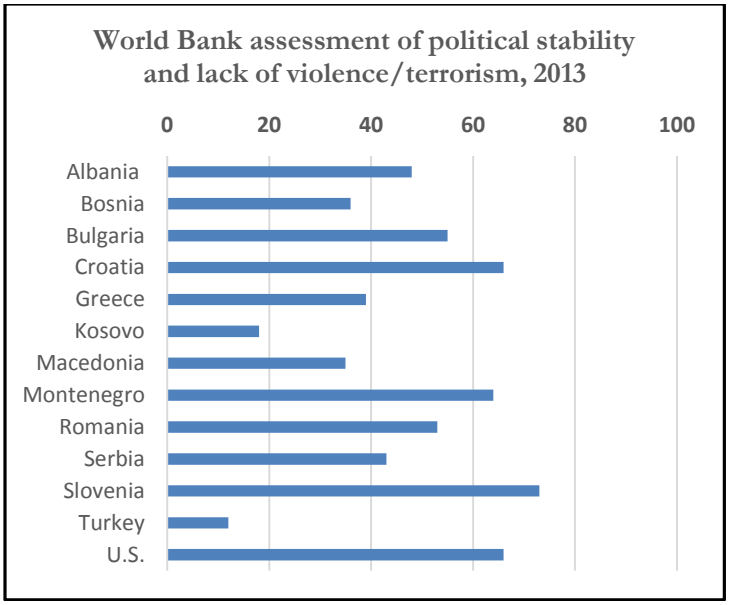
There are numerous reasons for the weakness of the political system and state order in the countries of the Balkans. First, in the early 1990s the former communist states transitioned from one-party rule to a multi-party political system, while having very limited experience in democratic politics. The transition was turbulent and sometimes violent. Second, the countries of former Yugoslavia gained independence and began building new political and state institutions. Third, the region experienced not only political and economic transition, but also civil wars, which inevitably weakened newly created political and state institutions. Fourth, the states experienced an economic transformation, transitioning from communist, command economy to free market economy, a process which caused repeated economic crises and social dislocations. Fifth, Turkey and Greece, the only two countries which experienced no communist rule, faced significant political and economic challenges in the last two and a half decades, which had negative consequences for governance and political stability. In the late 2000s, for example, the Greek economy collapsed and only an infusion of financial resources from the European Union saved the country from bankruptcy.

After a long period of political turmoil and civil strife following the end of communism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the states in the region reached a degree of stability in the 2000s. The political systems became less volatile, governments began to function normally, and civil strife became rare. All states hold regular elections for local and national government that are deemed mostly free and fair by international observers. In all states power passes from one political party or coalition to another peacefully, and the results of elections are rarely contested by the losing side. The likelihood that political disagreements will escalate into armed confrontation has decreased significantly.

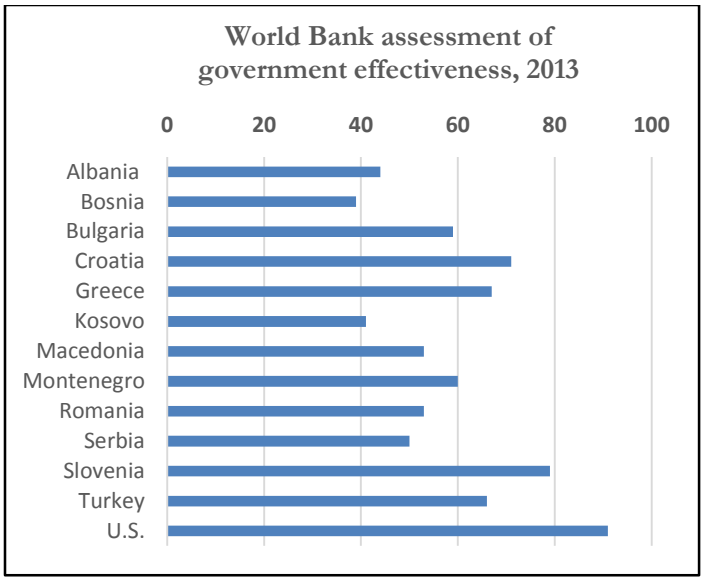
There are clear differences among the states in the region in terms of their stability, including political stability and the effectiveness of their governing institutions. The states with the least stable politics and state institutions – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia – also happened to be classified as "partly free." These states are prone to political and economic crises and their state institutions are less stable and effective. These four states are also the poorest in the region. Another

group of states – Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia – have more stable political systems and governing institutions compared to the group above. They also are more prosperous than the states in the previous group and are classified as "free" in terms of their level of democratization. Croatia and Slovenia – another group of states – have the most stable political systems and most effective governments in the region. Classified as "free" in terms of their democratic development, they are also wealthier than the states in the previous group.

Greece and Turkey are very different cases compared to the other states in the region. Until the late 2000s, Greece used to be economically the most prosperous state in the region and had the most stable political system. However, a deep economic and financial crisis in the country not only exposed the structural deficiencies of the economic system but also led to dramatic political and social turmoil.[32] The crisis also revealed the weakness of state institutions as they failed to perform basic functions. Turkey, too, is very different from the rest of the countries in the Balkans. An economic powerhouse, the state has experienced a dramatic political and social transformation – dramatically rising living standards, expanding political freedoms, and consolidation of political and state institutions. However, the country is still classified as "partly free" and the governing party in the 2000s and 2010s frequently undermined the functions of the governing institutions. In addition, unlike any other Balkan country, Turkey faces an insurgency, which partially accounts for the lower level of political stability in the country.



The assessment of political stability and absence of violence reflects perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism (Estimate ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).



Government effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (ranges from approximately 0 (weak) to 100 (strong) governance effectiveness).

The political systems in most Balkan states operate on the basis of consensus among elite groups that control economic and political resources. Societies have relatively little leverage over governments, except during national and local elections; civil societies are weak and people rarely self-organize for political action. As a result, citizens have little trust in political and state institutions. Turkey and Greece are somewhat of an exception – both have a long history of organized civic, political, and labor movements. However, Turkish authorities also have a long history of violent suppression of such organized protests. In the other Balkan states, organized civil, political and labor movements appeared only after the end of communism.

Populations in the region are most politically mobilized during elections, but there are only limited attempts to influence politics between elections. Usually, it is economic hardship that prompts people to organize and protest the policies of governments. However, one of the new trends in the region is the appearance of protest movements which are not focused on economic issues. Most recently, many Turks became politically mobilized between elections over numerous non-economic issues.[33] Elsewhere, people are increasingly mobilized for political actions over diverse issues including corruption,[34] environmental issues,[35] education,[36] the nature of the political system in the state,[37] to name a few.

Informal Power

The region has a long tradition of informal power centers. Chaos in the post-communist states in the 1990s gave rise to the alternative sources of power, including paramilitary forces (particularly in the states of former Yugoslavia) as well as clan, kinship, and regionally based networks which had their roots in communist times. These networks became alternative powerbrokers, which the weak central authorities were unable to ignore.[38] These networks exercised not only political power, but also economic power by gaining control over previously state-owned assets. Especially active in the creation of these informal centers of power were the former members of the communist *nomenklatura* who used their connections, resources, and knowledge to accumulate wealth and power. In most cases, these informal centers of power undermined the power of the legitimate institutions of the state. Although in the late 1990s and early 2000s the post-communist states were able to strengthen their authority and power, the influence of these networks remains strong in most states.

Turkey and Greece, too, have a long tradition of alternative centers of power, which operated without transparency and public accountability.[39] Turkey's armed forces have acted as the self-appointed guardian of the secular republic since its establishment in 1923. Starting in 1960, the military conducted coups d'état almost every decade (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997), removing governments which it deemed a threat to constitutional order, political stability, or the secular nature of the state and society.[40] However, starting in the early 2000s, the government led by the Justice and Development Party (known by the Turkish acronym AKP) gradually pushed the armed forces out of politics through constitutional amendments and mass prosecutions of active and retired military officers. Although the military still remains influential in politics, its ability to determine the political order in the country is severely undermined.

Political Parties

Political parties in the Balkan states range from left to right on an ideological continuum. Most of the leftist parties are successors of the communist parties, which after the end communist rule, transformed into left-of-center parties and embraced democracy and multiparty competition. Economically, most leftist parties advocate a mixed system of free market and extensive government regulations aimed at ameliorating what they consider to be negative effects of capitalism. On the other hand, right-of-center political parties advocate free market and less government interference.

Political parties in the region can also be divided into mainstream and radical parties; each can be found on either side of the ideological left-right divide. Radical parties tend to reject the entire political system and vow to destroy and remake it; many of them vow to take the country out of the European Union and NATO or to renegotiate the terms of membership in the two organizations; emphasize law and order issues; subscribe to racist and xenophobic views and call for restrictions on minority rights and freedoms; and use very populist rhetoric. Mainstream parties, on the other hand, accept the existing constitutional and political order and are generally supportive of the country's membership in the European Union and NATO or seek to attain it in the future.

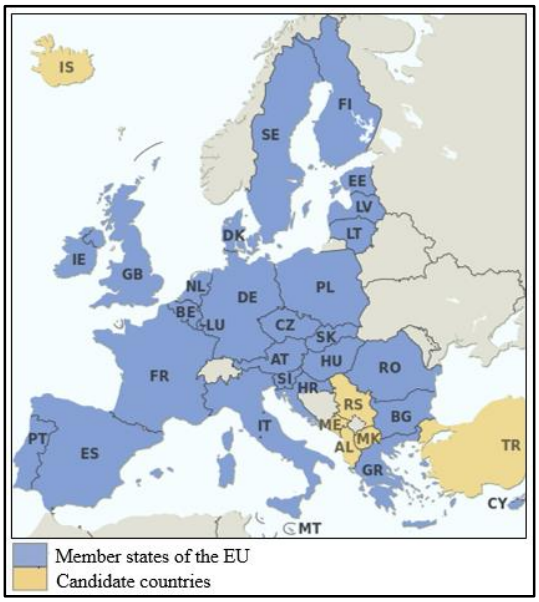
In one aspect, Turkey's political party system is unique in the region. While in all Balkan countries, the mainstream political parties are secular, the dominant political party in Turkey since 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), is mildly Islamic. Although the party leadership rejects this label, since coming to power, the party has eased the country's strict secular laws and rules and promoted Islamic symbols and norms.

Political Stability, Governance, and the Integration of the Balkans in the EU and NATO

One of the main reasons for the growing political stability and quality of governance in most countries of the Balkans is their gradual integration in the Euro-Atlantic institutions, namely the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the early 1990s, the former communist countries embarked not only on a massive political and economic transformation, but also sought to join NATO and the EU as the ultimate guarantee for their security, prosperity, and democracy. However, there were some substantial differences among their approaches to this goal. At the time, Greece was the only Balkan state that was a member of both organizations, while Turkey was a member of NATO and a candidate to join the EU. On the other hand, the states of former Yugoslavia were initially occupied in fighting for their independence and integration in NATO and

the EU was out of the question. Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, on the other hand, declared membership in both organizations as their foreign policy priority.

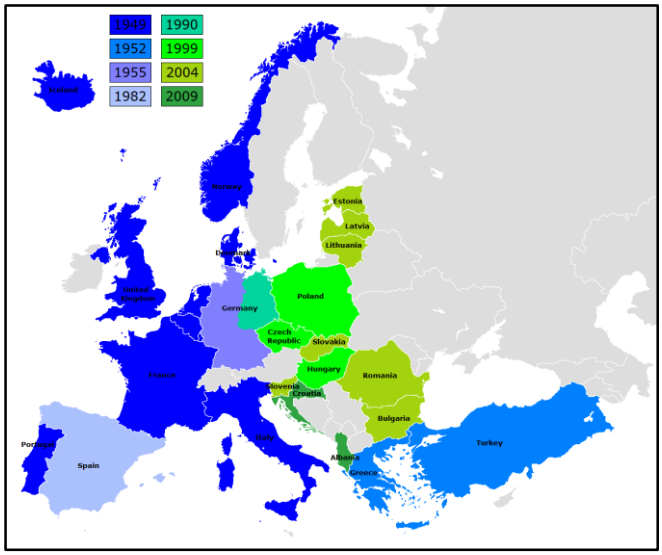
Civil wars and uneven democratic and economic development made Balkan states unequally prepared to meet the stringent requirements of membership in the EU and NATO. Both organizations have extensive criteria in the area of democracy, rule of law, human rights, economic development, to name a few, that all states needed to meet. Accordingly, some were quicker than others in gaining membership. Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia joined NATO in 2004, while Croatia and Albania joined in 2013. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro are on their way to joining the Alliance, and expect to become members in the near future. Of the Balkan states, only Serbia and Kosovo are a long way from gaining membership – Serbia, because of its complicated relationship with NATO, and Kosovo, because of the state's difficulty of consolidating its statehood.



Source: Wikimedia

Joining the EU is proving to be an even more formidable task for the Balkan states.[41] Slovenia, although newly independent, emerged as a star political and economic performer and was able to join the EU in 2004. Bulgaria and Romania followed suit in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey are currently in the process of adopting the EU's laws and obligations but remain a long way from joining the Union. Albania and Macedonia are recognized as candidates to join but have not started the formal negotiation process. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are recognized as potential candidates in the future.

In addition to enhancing security and economic prosperity in the region, membership in the EU and NATO has important consequences for governance and politics in the region. First, candidates for membership adopt the laws and regulations of the Union, aimed at creating and maintaining a stable and democratic political system and government. Second, the Union provides substantial financial assistance to the candidate countries in order to facilitate the process of joining the EU. Once the country is in the Union, it is bound to continue to receive financial resources assisting the country's attempts to achieve the prosperity common for member states. Third, both the EU and NATO memberships moderate the political process in the member states, as prosperity and security tend to marginalize the influence of fringe political parties. Fourth, the EU and NATO provide venues for solving conflicts between states



Source: Wikimedia

and thus reduce the likelihood of conflict escalation. Fifth, membership in both organizations creates a stable environment in each country, which attracts foreign investments that create further prosperity and stability. Partially as a result of these effects, the Balkan states are much more stable and predictable today than in the early 1990s.

Greece and Turkey

Unlike the other Balkan countries, Greece and Turkey have had a very different political transition in the last several decades. Turkey's modern transformation started with the establishment of a republican government in 1923. The constitutional and political order established by the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Ataturk, included instituting separation of powers, holding regular elections, giving women the right to vote, separating state from religion, and social and economic modernization. These policies transformed the country from an autocratic empire into a nation-state. However, for a very long time, Turkey remained politically unstable and relatively underdeveloped by European standards. Although the country joined NATO in 1952 and in the 1980s applied to become a member of the European Community (later transformed into the European Union) it remained unstable, which prompted the military to intervene and restore stability several times.

Starting in the 1990s and especially in the 2000s, political and economic reforms finally propelled the country into fast economic growth and political stability. Starting in 2002, the mildly Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by Recep Erdoğan, won three consecutive parliamentary elections and presided over an unprecedented economic expansion. In addition to steering the rapid economic development, the AKP used its big parliamentary majorities to push social and political reforms. The government improved social services in areas like health and education, oversaw numerous public works projects and several mega-infrastructure projects (including a tunnel under the Bosporus Strait connecting the European part of the country with Anatolia), and brought development to previously neglected parts of the country, particularly in eastern Anatolia. Politically, Erdoğan severely limited the role of the military in political and public life, and effectively recognized the Kurdish minority in the country by introducing policies aimed at maintaining their distinct cultural identity.

Although Erdoğan introduced many positive policies and reforms, he also began to concentrate power in his office and increasingly equated any public opposition to his policies with attacks against the entire state.[42] Erdoğan also further undermined the power and independence of the judicial branch of government: when prosecutors arrested scores of public officials and businessmen close to AKP on charges of high-level corruption, the government purged hundreds of police officers, prosecutors, and judges leading the investigation, effectively bringing it to an end.[43]

The ruling AKP won a third term in office in the parliamentary elections held in 2011. Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan became the only Turkish prime minister to win three consecutive parliamentary elections. Erdoğan became an even more dominant figure in Turkish politics when he won the presidential elections in 2014.

After the Second World War, Greece was the only monarchy in the Balkans. The country sided with the West during the Cold War and, along with Turkey, joined NATO in 1952. Western assistance helped the country experience a rapid economic growth and relatively stable politics. However, after a severe political crisis, the Greek military took power in a *coup d'état* in 1967. After mass protests, the military regime collapsed in 1974. In a referendum, the Greeks rejected the monarchy and instead chose to adopt a republic as a form of government. In the next decades the country experienced

relatively little political and economic turbulence; joining the EU in 1981 brought further stability and prosperity to the country. However, in the late 2000s, the country entered an unprecedented economic crisis which affected not only the economy but also politics and the society. Although the EU intervened to prop up the Greek economy, the country is the process of painful restructuring of the economic and social systems as a condition for continued assistance.

Chapter

5

Economic Overview

Why Economy and Infrastructure Matter to You as a Marine

The goods and services that people exchange, the infrastructure that people use to move them, and the formal and informal structures that make exchange possible all play critical roles in survival. A thorough understanding of a region is impossible without knowledge of its economy because the region's political, social, and cultural trends both reflect and shape economic developments and trends.

Economic Transition

All Balkan countries have been experiencing significant economic changes since the early 1990s. In terms of economic development, the countries can be divided into two groups – the first including all post-communist countries and the other including Greece and Turkey. It must be pointed out that economic prosperity and political democracy tend to be correlated; thus the rule of thumb when assessing the economic development in the Balkans is that the more democratic and stable countries in the region also tend to have more developed economies and their citizens tend to be more affluent.

The Post-Communist States

Before the establishment of communist rule in the 1940s, the economies in the region were underdeveloped and dominated by the farming sector. Communist regimes nationalized industries and collectivized the farmland. For 45 years until 1990, most states in the Balkans had a centrally planned market system. Private property did not exist and the state did not allow free enterprise activities. Yugoslavia was a partial exception to this – its economic system was a mix of a planned economy and a decentralized, worker-managed enterprise system; very small private enterprises were also allowed. In general, the communist economies had weak links with the world economy, including international trade and financial markets. Once again, Yugoslavia was a partial exception to this rule.

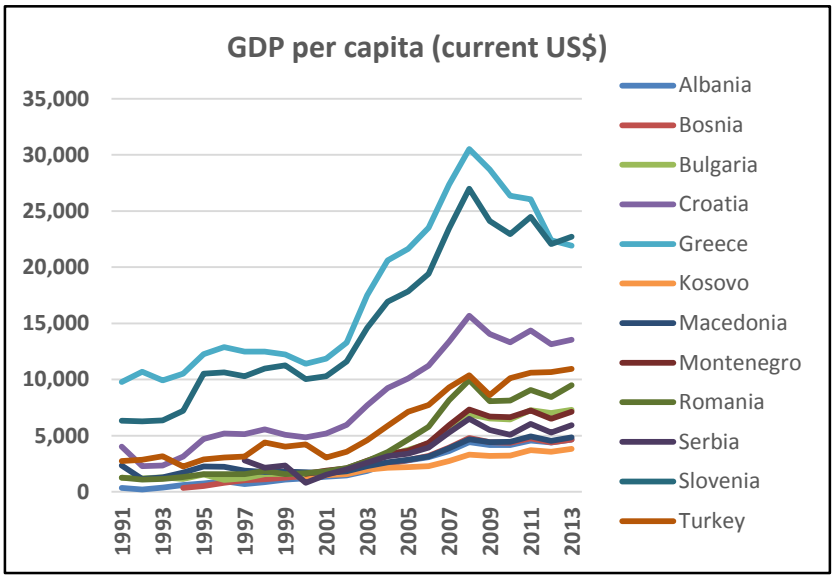
Most communist states introduced a modern industrial sector supplying machine tools, chemical products, textiles, and other manufactured goods as well as power generation facilities and modern transportation infrastructure. Agriculture, traditionally the most developed sector of the economy, expanded further. However, the planned economy was inefficient and inadequate to meet the demands of consumers. Cumbersome bureaucracy, corruption, and ignorance of market mechanisms further reduced the effectiveness of the economy. In addition, state-owned companies provided not only employment but also a wide range of social services including housing, healthcare, education, and recreational facilities, which undermined economic efficiency.

By the 1980s, the economies of all communist states were in decline. Thus, at the end of Communism in 1989-91, the states (some of them newly independent) inherited decrepit industrial bases, surviving on state subsidies. Most industrial enterprises in the region were incapable of competing on the international market.

When communist rule collapsed, the countries embarked on an economic transformation, albeit at different paces. The transition was especially difficult in the former states of Yugoslavia most affected by the civil wars, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other states, civil strife, lack of political stability, and the political dominance of the former communist elites – including in Albania, Macedonia, and Serbia – prevented the implementation of any meaningful and far-reaching economic reforms. Similarly, in Bulgaria and Romania, political instability and the lack of reform-minded elites in power resulted in half-measure reforms, stagnant economies, and declining standard of living.

Serbia's GDP declined 10% in 1991 and further 27% the next year. In addition, inflation increased dramatically. Other Balkan countries fared only slightly better in the early 1990s.

By the 1990s the post-communist states already exhibited different capacities to transform their economic systems. Slovenia and Croatia, although newly independent, were relatively quick to implement market reforms and in the 2000s experienced a robust economic growth (both countries also used to be the most economically advanced republics in Yugoslavia). Foreign investments in the two countries grew, real wages increased, and people experienced a growing prosperity. Due to its economic growth, political stability, and level of democratization, Slovenia was the first country among the post-communist states in the Balkans to join the EU.



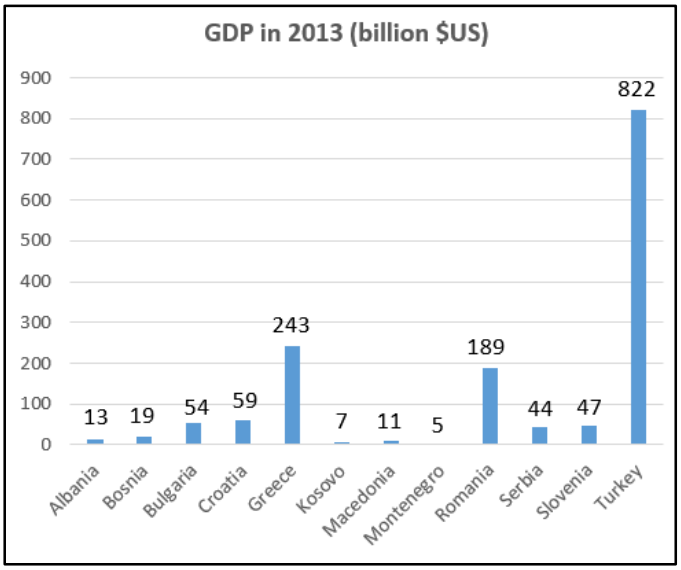
Source: World Bank

The rest of the former communist states experienced much lower rates of growth compared to Slovenia and Croatia. The economies of the states faced the burdens of the Communist legacy, while facing the headwinds of corrupt state structures, complicated tax and customs systems, lack of rule of law, and political interference.

Although the new political elites were slow and unwilling to implement deep changes after 1989-91, the former communist states managed to introduce some market reforms, including privatization of land and industries. However, the main beneficiaries of this process, especially in the industrial sector, were the elites close to those in power.[44] A common feature of privatization was corruption, patronage, and lack of transparency. However incomplete, progress was made in economic reforms, including fiscal and monetary austerity, which tamed inflation, privatization of industries, and attracted foreign investment flows. In the 2000s, the countries returned to economic growth and increase in real wages.

Turkey and Greece

Turkey not only has the largest economy in the Balkans, but also a distinct economic background and path compared to the other countries. Until the late 1990s it struggled with burdensome regulations, state monopolies, weak rule of law, corruption, and high inflation.



Source: CIA

However, political stability and reforms introduced in the 1980s began to yield results – by the early 2000s Turkey's economy began to grow rapidly and soon the country emerged as a regional economic powerhouse. While in 2000 Turkey's GDP per capita was $3,576, in 2012 it reached $10,666.[45] The same year, Turkey was the 18th largest economy in the world.[46]

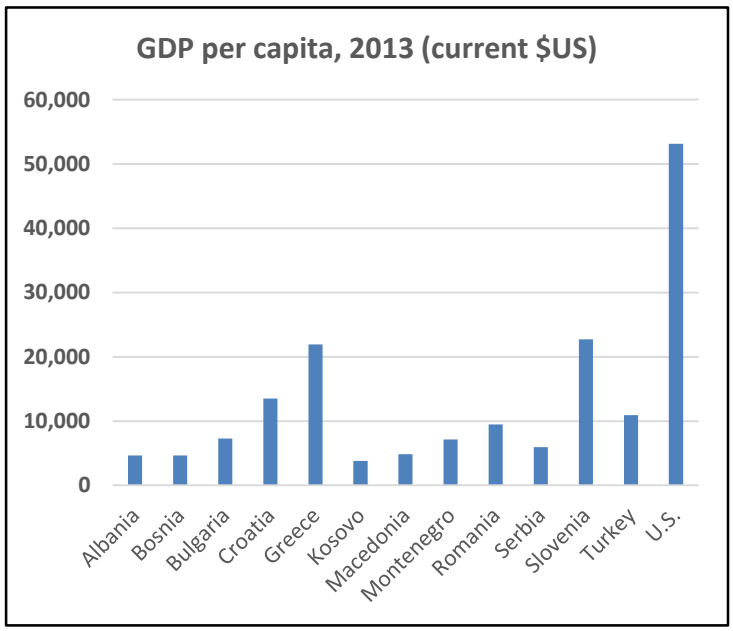
The Turkish economic boom was fueled by the rise of socially conservative, market-embracing business elites in Anatolia. The new elites, leading mostly family-owned small- and medium-size companies, were pious Muslims who used their social networks to forge business networks.[47] Now Turkey has a largely free-market economy, increasingly driven by its industry and service sectors, although its traditional agriculture sector still accounts for about 25% of employment.

Greece, too, has a very distinct economic development compared to the other Balkan states. The country experienced a rapid economic growth after WWII. Opening to the world economy and joining Western institutions (including NATO and the EU) contributed to unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. While in 2000, Greece's GDP per capita was $11,396, in 2010 it reached $26,380.[48] Throughout the post-WWII period, Greece had the wealthiest economy in the Balkans, and its population was the most prosperous.

The Late-2000s Economic Crisis

The period of economic growth in all Balkan states came to a sudden halt during the world financial crisis in the late 2000s. It affected all states, although to different degrees. The crisis was especially severe in Greece. The crisis revealed the structural deficiencies of the Greek economy and the weakness of national institutions including rampant corruption, clientelism, and cronyism. It also led to skyrocketing unemployment, real incomes were slashed by 20 to 50 percent, and expenditures for public services declined.[49] As a condition for receiving international assistance, the government had no choice but to reform, including privatization, slashing public services, rolling back the welfare provisions, imposing fiscal discipline, and fighting corruption. The reforms provided no quick fix to the economy and the country's GDP per capita declined from $30,536 in 2008 to $21,910 in 2013.[50] In fact, in the early 2010s, Slovenia overtook Greece as the wealthiest country in the Balkans as measured by GDP per capita.

The crisis exposed similar structural problems in the other Balkan states, although its effects were much milder than those in Greece. In fact, due to its economy's size and diversification, Turkey weathered the crisis almost unscathed.[51] Other states also returned to growth, although at much lower rates compared to the pre-crisis period.[52] Despite the economic difficulties associated with the late 2000s global financial crisis, the economies of the Balkan countries (except for Greece) reached a degree of stability in the 2010s that provided a basis for future sustainable growth. The future prospects notwithstanding, the Balkans used to be, and still remains, one of the poorest, and economically underdeveloped, regions in Europe. Countries in the region are also much poorer than the United States (see GDP per capita table above).

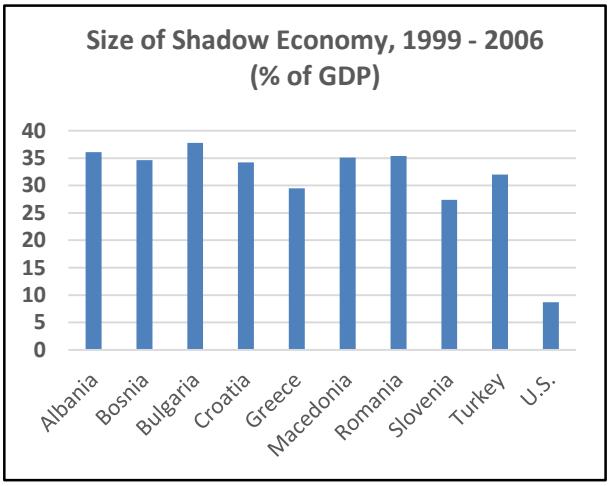


Source: World Bank

Informal Economy

The informal economy includes those economic interactions and exchanges that are not recognized, regulated, controlled, or taxed by a state government.[53]

All countries in the Balkans have significant informal economies.[54] The informal economy allows employers, employees, and self-employed to increase their take-home earnings. On the other hand, it results in a loss of budget revenues for governments. Those involved in the informal economy also lack work and social security.



In addition to the legal business activities and exchanges taking place in the informal economy, there are also widespread criminal activities in the countries, including drug trafficking, smuggling, gambling, prostitution, human trafficking, etc.

The informal economies in former communist countries used to be larger at the start of the political and economic transition after the end of communism. In general, civil strife, economic crises, corruption, certain cultural traditions, and dysfunctional state institutions tend to favor the growth

and persistence of the informal economy. However, in the last decade, the relative political stability in the Balkan countries enabled them to limit the size of their informal economies.

Industries

Rank ordering of industries starting with the largest by value of annual output, 2014:[55]

Albania: food and tobacco products; textiles and clothing; lumber, oil, cement, chemicals, mining, basic metals, hydropower

Bosnia and Herzegovina: steel, coal, iron ore, lead, zinc, manganese, bauxite, aluminum, motor vehicle assembly, textiles, tobacco products, wooden furniture, ammunition, domestic appliances, oil refining

Bulgaria: electricity, gas, water; food, beverages, tobacco; machinery and equipment, base metals, chemical products, coke, refined petroleum, nuclear fuel

Croatia: chemicals and plastics, machine tools, fabricated metal, electronics, pig iron and rolled steel products, aluminum, paper, wood products, construction materials, textiles, shipbuilding, petroleum and petroleum refining, food and beverages, tourism

Greece: tourism, food and tobacco processing, textiles, chemicals, metal products; mining, petroleum

Kosovo: mineral mining, construction materials, base metals, leather, machinery, appliances, foodstuffs and beverages, textiles

Macedonia: food processing, beverages, textiles, chemicals, iron, steel, cement, energy, pharmaceuticals

Montenegro: steelmaking, aluminum, agricultural processing, consumer goods, tourism

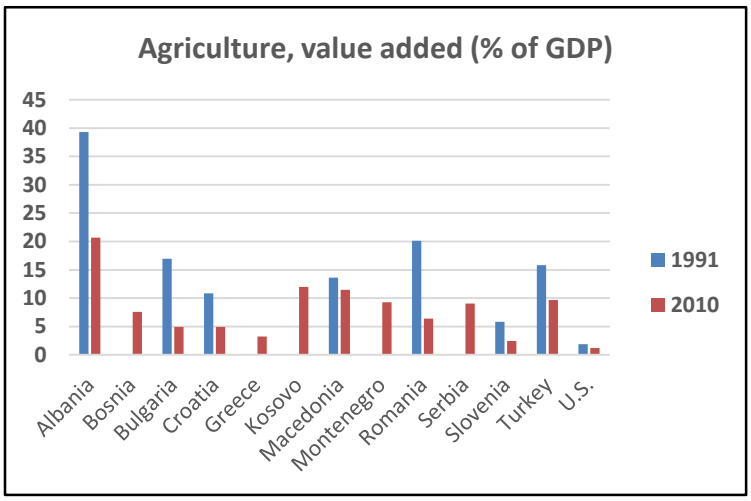
Romania: electric machinery and equipment, textiles and footwear, light machinery, auto assembly, mining, timber, construction materials, metallurgy, chemicals, food processing, petroleum refining

Serbia: automobiles, base metals, furniture, food processing, machinery, chemicals, sugar, tires, clothes, pharmaceuticals

Slovenia: ferrous metallurgy and aluminum products, lead and zinc smelting; electronics (including military electronics), trucks, automobiles, electric power equipment, wood products, textiles, chemicals, machine tools

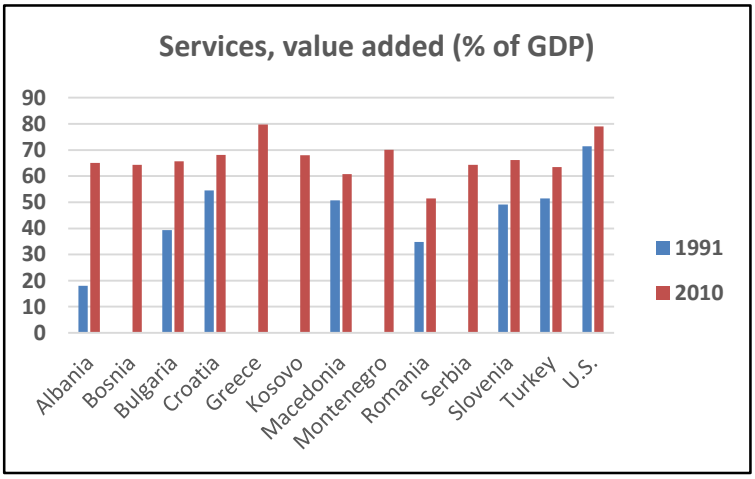
Turkey: textiles, food processing, automobiles, electronics, mining (coal, chromate, copper, boron), steel, petroleum, construction, lumber, paper

The economic transformation in the early 1990s in the former communist states in the Balkans was associated with deindustrialization which increased the share of the agricultural sector in the economy. Economic reforms and growth gradually shrank the share of agriculture in economic activity. However, even today, agriculture remains one of the major economic sectors in the region. Agriculture as a share of the economy tends to be greater in the poorer countries, including Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Montenegro, but also in the much more economically dynamic and prosperous Turkey.



Source: World Bank

In the 2000s and 2010s, the region witnessed a steady growth of the service sector (wholesale and retail trade, transport, government, financial, professional, and personal services such as education, health care, and real estate services). In this trend of economic activity, the region increasingly resembles the more developed states in Europe.



Source: World Bank

Infrastructure

Transport Infrastructure

One of the signs of underdevelopment is the lack of an efficient transport network. An integrated transportation network, on the other hand, generates wealth in addition to numerous political and social benefits. Geographically, the Balkans has the advantage to either host or be in close proximity to important trade routes linking the Mediterranean, European, and Asian regions. However, the Balkan transportation system has historically been underdeveloped. The region still lives with the legacies of long divisions and conflicts as well as historically limited investments in transportation networks. The divisions during the Cold War prevented the Balkan countries from cooperating on regional road networks. Albania, for example, pursued an independent and isolationist policy, which precluded transport links with its Balkan neighbors. Later, in the 1990s, wars in former Yugoslavia not only precluded any cooperation on regional transport infrastructure, but further degraded the existing one.[56] In addition, the countries have historically been relatively poor and thus lacked the resources to invest in infrastructure.

The end of the wars in former Yugoslavia, the increased economic growth in the region, the inflow of foreign investments, and the gradual integration in Europe enabled the countries in the region to increase investments in the transport infrastructure and to cooperate regionally. Nevertheless, the region has a lot of catching up to do until it develops an adequate transportation infrastructure.[57]

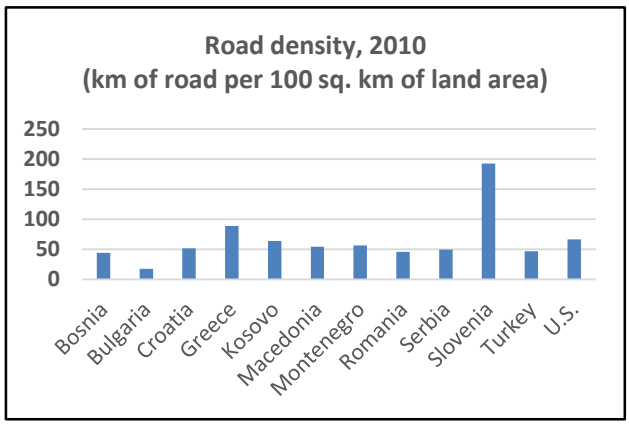
Of all Balkan countries, Turkey and Greece have perhaps the best transportation systems, only moderately below the European Union's average.[58] More than a decade of rapid economic growth allowed the government to increase public investment in transport infrastructure from 1.6% of GDP in 2004 to 1.92% in 2010. As a result, Turkey's transport sector has been growing both in terms of its size and the quality of the network. Of the various modes of transportation, the quality of roads and ports rate high, while the quality of railways remains poor. Greece, too, has witnesses a rapid expansion of its transportation network since the early 1980s, when the country gained access to the infrastructure funds provided to EU members.

Air Transport Infrastructure

Air transport has undergone a dramatic progress in terms of development and modernization in the last decade in the Balkans. The states have been able to attract foreign investors to modernize the air transport infrastructure and make it more efficient. At the same time the countries were successful in integrating their air transport systems into the larger European system, which is the main market for destinations and departures for civilian and commercials routes. Accordingly, from 2001 to 2007 air traffic between Western Europe and the Balkans increased by 130%.[59] Even the global financial crisis starting in 2008 did not seem to dampen the rapid growth in air transportation.

Road Infrastructure

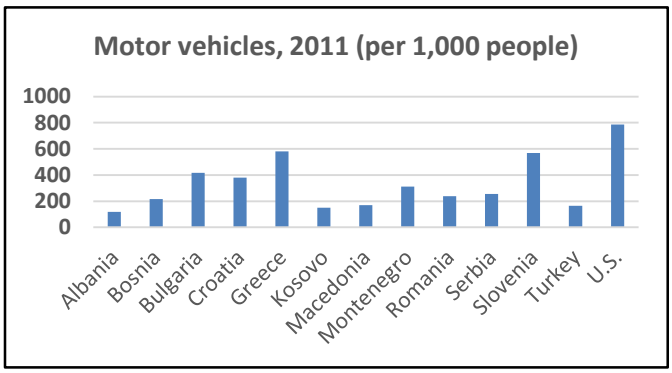
Most of the countries in the region have relatively dense road systems. In general, the quality of the road infrastructure is poor compared to Western Europe. Although at the start of their political and economic transition in the early 1990s, most of the countries inherited a relatively well-developed and dense road network, years of conflict, neglect, and scarce resources led to general deterioration of roads. Beginning in the 2000s, the return of political stability and economic growth enabled governments to increase public expenditures in the road infrastructure. However, the road conditions remain poorer compared to the ones in the EU, due to the inferior quality of construction and materials used, and the lack of regular preventive maintenance after road construction.



Source: World Bank

The quality of the road system also differs across the region due to each country's integration into the EU. Generally, the current members of the EU, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia have access to funding from the Union and are in the process of rapidly modernizing their road infrastructure and linking it across the region. Greece, as the oldest member of the EU from the Balkans, has perhaps the best road infrastructure in the region. The states still seeking the EU membership, on the other hand, have relatively limited access to outside financing.

Car ownership in the region varies according to the country's wealth. The region has one of Europe's highest traffic-accident rates, with many fatal accidents. Drivers frequently ignore traffic rules and regulations.

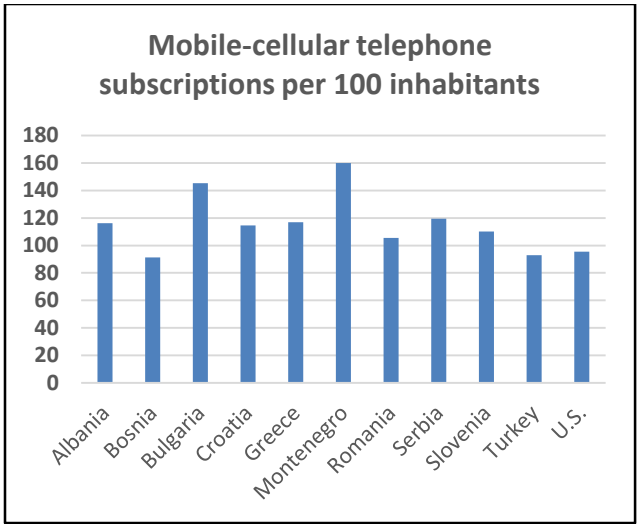


Source: World Bank

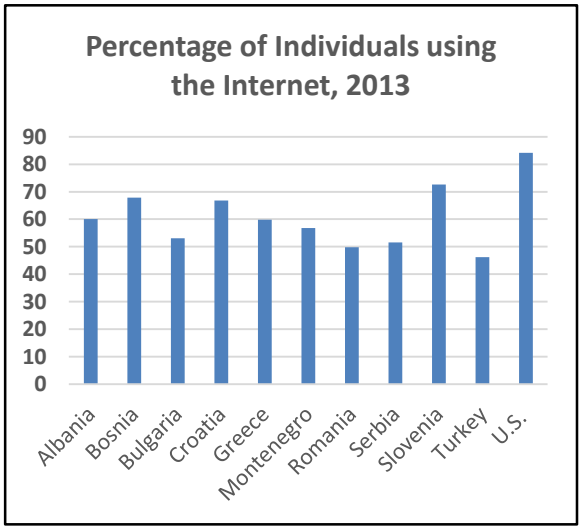
Communications Infrastructure

For many years all Balkan countries had poor communication infrastructure – the number of phone lines was limited. In the last decades, however, all countries have invested in mobile phone infrastructure and now cell phones are ubiquitous.

The countries in the region have also witnessed a rapid raise in the access to, and use of, Internet.



Source: ITU



Source: ITU

Media

The Balkan countries witnessed a massive growth in media outlets in the last two decades, especially in the former communist countries. People have unrestricted access to both domestic and foreign media through newspapers, cable TV, radio, and Internet. However, there are also significant problems with the freedom of information in all countries, including limited pluralism of opinions, lack of media independence, self-censorship, restrictive legislative framework, lack of transparency, and frequent government interference in media. Very frequently, media outlets are beholden to the economic and political agendas of their owners, promoting their personal agendas. Governments frequently harass and prosecute journalists and media outlets which venture to investigate those close to the powerful.[60]

Reporters Without Borders, an international organization promoting freedom of the press around the world, ranks 180 countries according to the degree of freedom enjoyed by media and journalists. According to its survey in 2014, of the Balkan states, only Slovenia came close to the countries with the greatest freedom of the press. Turkey, on the other hand, was among the countries with the most restrictive media environments.

2014 World Press Freedom	
Rank	**Country**
34	Slovenia
45	Romania
54	Serbia
65	Croatia
66	Bosnia
80	Kosovo
85	Albania
99	Greece
100	Bulgaria
114	Montenegro
123	Macedonia
154	Turkey

Chapter

6

Regional Security Issues

Why Regional Security Issues Matter to You as a Marine

A thorough understanding of a region is difficult without an account of its most significant security challenges. These challenges tend to affect not only relations between states in the region but also the behavior of its people and the choices they make. Regional security issues encompass a host of topics ranging from wars between states, to insurgencies, to organized crime, to weak institutions, to systemic corruption. Some of them involve violence, while others weaken states and societies and have the potential to turn low-level conflicts into violent confrontations.

Introduction

The countries in the Balkans are facing multiple security challenges ranging from armed conflicts, to problems of governance, to widespread corruption. The roots of these challenges are numerous but can be grouped in a few categories.

First, the Balkans has for a long time been an underdeveloped, unstable part of Europe. Compared to the rest of Europe, most of the region has historically lagged behind economically, socially, and politically. People in the Balkans tend to give various explanations for this underdevelopment, including the Ottoman rule, Communist rule, the small size of the states (except for Turkey), the interference of outside powers in the region, etc. Whatever the actual causes, this level of development makes societies and states in the regional vulnerable to problems and crises.

Second, for all countries, except Greece and Turkey, there is the communist legacy. After the end of communist rule in the late 1980s, the states embarked on a rapid and sometimes volatile transformation of political, economic, and social order. Very often, this transition led to instability and violent conflicts. Although the former communist states have come a long way in establishing order and stability, the institutions of some of the countries in the region are still not sufficiently consolidated and therefore conflicts can easily destabilize the states.

Third, the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and emergence of seven new states in the Balkans changed international relations in the region. Newly independent states frequently find it difficult to reconcile disagreements with their new neighbors, while old states have difficulties formulating foreign policies in an altered regional environment. In addition, most of the states reoriented their foreign policies, discarding old alliances and seeking closer integration in the institutions of the West, including the European Union and NATO.

Fourth, the end of Communism was followed by violent ethnic conflicts in the region. Communist regimes managed to keep ethnic rivalries at check, preventing various conflicts from escalating into full-blown wars. Once the Communist rule was gone, various ethnic groups became free to pursue their political agendas, ranging from demands for equal rights to the right to live in their own state. In the most extreme case, these conflicts led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the appearance of seven new states. But even states that experienced no civil wars or state disintegration witnessed low-level ethnic conflicts as societies worked out new political and social arrangements between ethnic majorities and minorities. Tensions between ethnic groups continue to exist in almost all states in the region, although unlike the 1990s, the likelihood of escalation into an open warfare is much lower.

Fifth, for political and historic reasons, the countries in the regions do not find it easy to cooperate with each other. That makes it difficult to solve existing conflicts within and outside their borders and to prevent new ones.

The Balkans face the following regional security issues:

- **Ethnic conflicts**
- **Conflicts between states**
- **Governance and rule of law**

Ethnic Conflicts

As the history section points out, the Balkan region was dominated by the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires for an extended period of time. The populations of both empires were multi-ethnic. Various ethnic groups tended to co-exist peacefully but tensions and conflicts between them became more frequent with the spread of nationalism, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nationalism, an "ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests,"[61] proved a powerful tool in mobilizing ethnic groups for action. In fact, the disintegration of the two empires was caused not only by their defeat at the end of WWI but also by mobilized ethnic groups among their populations seeking to gain independence and create their own states.

The emergence of new homelands for various ethnic groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, did not end ethnic conflicts. Many ethnic groups imagined the borders of their respective states as overlapping. Other ethnic groups found themselves minorities in newly created states, while their ethnic kin lived as majorities in neighboring states. In addition, other ethnic groups remained stateless. Thus the history of the Balkan states after the disintegration of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires is marked by a constant struggle for territorial expansion of existing states and attempts by ethnic groups without their own states to create new ones. The process of disintegration of states and the creation of new ones which started with the gradual demise of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century lasted into the 21st century. Thus, while in the early 19th century there were only two states in the Balkans – the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires – in the early 21st century, there are 12.

The Balkans in 1815

The Balkans in 2015

The desire of ethnic groups to create their own homelands was not the only reason for ethnic conflicts in the region. Some ethnic minorities simply sought equal political rights or cultural autonomy, rather than an outright secession.

It must be pointed out that for most of the time throughout history, various ethnic groups in the Balkans have managed to co-exist peacefully. However, from time to time, competing nationalist interests and agendas pit ethnic groups against each other. The resulting conflicts vary in intensity, ranging from peaceful political confrontation, at one extreme, to violent civil wars, at the other. The intensity also varies over time, as conflicts can transition from one phase to another.

There are several notable conflicts in the region based on clashing nationalist interests. The list below is not exhaustive; it includes conflicts that either involve ethnic groups that have violently clashed in recent history, or inter-ethnic relationships that have the potential to disrupt social peace in the future. Most of the conflicts are not confined within the borders of a single state and frequently affect relations between states. You will also notice that many of the ethnic conflicts are interrelated.

The Ethnic Conflicts in Former Yugoslavia

Until 1991, Yugoslavia was a federation of six republics – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. For most of its history after 1945, Yugoslavia held together under the shrewd and ruthless reign of Josip Broz Tito, a celebrated leader of Yugoslavia's resistance against Nazi occupation. Tito witnessed the carnage of WWII, inflicted not only by the Nazi occupiers but also by various ethnic groups fighting each other. He recognized the power of nationalism and after WWII sought to suppress it, lest it challenge the unity of Yugoslavia. Although he was able to hold the republics together, many ethnic groups, notably the ethnic Slovenes, Croats, and Albanians, remained resentful of the federation, which they increasingly saw as dominated by ethnic Serbs, the most populous ethnic group in the state.

Ethnic map of Yugoslavia in 1991 (Source: CIA)

Tito's death in 1982 and the disintegration of communism in the late 1980s awakened nationalism in the federation. Ethnic Slovenes, Croats, and Albanians increasingly sought secession from Yugoslavia, while ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins were intent on keeping the federation together, fearing that many ethnic Serbs would find themselves as minorities in newly independent states. Ethnic Albanians, living in the Serbian province of Kosovo, never had their republic in the federation and accordingly wanted either a republic status or outright independence. By 1991 all groups were willing to resort to violence in order to achieve their national goals. On the other hand, most of the ethnic Bosniaks and ethnic Macedonians, living in the Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia respectively, were rather ambivalent about independence, feeling relatively content within the federation. Nevertheless, when Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia had no choice but to follow suit.

Recommended Reading: For an insightful overview of the initial disintegration of Yugoslavia see Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (Penguin Books, 1996).

Croats vs. Serbs vs. Bosniaks

The disintegration of Yugoslavia caused a violent civil war, which took place mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.[62] Both countries had significant Serbian minorities (in the early 1990s, ethnic Serbs constituted 17% of the population in Croatia and 30% in Bosnia and Herzegovina), which wanted to either keep the federation intact or join the remainder of Yugoslavia (also known as "Rump"

Yugoslavia), which now comprised only Serbia and Montenegro. In addition, at the time of independence, Bosnia and Herzegovina had no majority ethnic group – out of a population of 4.4 million, 43% were ethnic Bosniaks, 31% were ethnic Serbs, and 17% were ethnic Croats. To protect the Serbian minorities, rump Yugoslavia sent troops and supported the ethnic Serb militia in both states.

Ethnic Serbs were able to control one third of Croatia's territory until 1994, when – in a well-prepared campaign – Croatian Forces routed the Serbian militias. Fearing for their safety, most of the ethnic Serbs left Croatia and moved to rump Yugoslavia. The ethnic Serb population of Croatia declined from 17% just before the war, to less than 5% after the war. Approximately 20,000 people on both sides, including military personnel and civilians, lost their lives in the conflict.

The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was much bloodier and protracted. Very early on, the ethnic Bosniaks found themselves under assault – not only by ethnic Serb militias and Yugoslav forces but also by ethnic Croat militias, which were assisted by Croatia. Memories of past injustices suffered by all ethnic groups, especially memories of the violence ethnic groups inflicted on each other during WWII, reinforced all sides' determination to achieve their goals in the war. As a result, nearly 100,000 people were killed and half of the population was displaced.[63] All sides to the conflicts engaged in ethnic cleansing in the territories they controlled. In 1994, ethnic Bosniaks and ethnic Croats reached an agreement and combined their forces to face the Serbian forces. In addition, NATO began to assault Serbian positions from the air. A combination of NATO strikes, a Bosniak-Croat alliance, and a general exhaustion among the warring parties forced all sides to the negotiating table. The Serbian party at the negotiations – held in Dayton, Ohio – was led by the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, while the leaders of the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina were marginalized.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Source: U.S. Department of State)

The warring parties reached a peace agreement in 1995 (the Dayton Agreement), which ended the war but also entrenched the results of ethnic cleansing. The agreement set up two separate entities – a Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (51% of the country's territory), and the ethnic Serb dominated Republika Srpska (the rest of the country's territory), each with its own government, including president, parliament, police, etc. The two entities were largely based on the territories held by the two warring sides at the time. It also created an overarching, central Bosnian government and rotating presidency. In addition, the Bosniak-Croat entity is divided into ten cantons, and both entities are divided into self-governing municipalities. The ultimate authority in the state rests with the Office of the High Representative, an official appointed by an international council and tasked to supervise the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. In addition to this overly complicated governing structure, the country is a host to a heavy international

presence, providing financial and security assistance to the war-scarred society. Although the Dayton Agreement was successful in ending the civil war, it also reinforced separatism and nationalism by creating an overly complex governing structure with weak central authorities and strong localities dominated by ethnic loyalties. Although some people have been able to move back to their homes after being driven out in an ethnic cleansing campaign during the war, the ethnic communities remain deeply divided.[64]

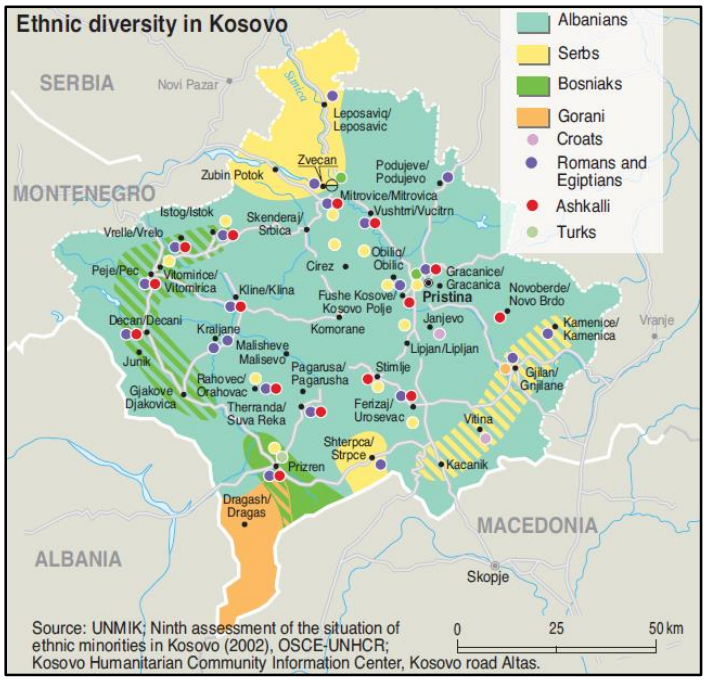
The end of the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was not the end of violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Unable to prevent the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia, rump Yugoslavia faced more internal challenges to the unity of the state. First, the ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo, after years of a peaceful campaign demanding self-government, increasingly sought to achieve their goals through violence. Second, as most of the international community pointed at Serbia as the aggressor in the civil wars in former Yugoslavia, Montenegro began to resent its association with Serbia in rump Yugoslavia and increasingly sought a way out of the union.

The Kosovo Conflict

Until late 1980s, Kosovo was an autonomous province of Serbia. Over 80% of the province's two million population was ethnic Albanian and the rest mostly ethnic Serbs. As part of Yugoslavia, Kosovo Albanians (also called Kosovars) resented the fact that the province had no republican status within the federation. Accordingly, they demanded a republican status within the federation. On the other hand, ethnic Serbs felt increasingly marginalized in a region which has a special place in Serbian history and identity (see the history chapter in this document). The higher birth rate among Kosovars, the lack of economic opportunities in one of the most underdeveloped regions of Yugoslavia, and the increasing hostility of Kosovars drove many ethnic Serbs to leave the province, decreasing their share of the total population. Facing the rise of nationalist fervor across Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and fearing the loss of the province, Serbian authorities severely curtailed Kosovo's autonomy and instead imposed a direct rule.

After failing to attain their goals thorough peaceful means, Kosovars increasingly resorted to violence, mounting an insurgency aimed at gaining outright independence from rump Yugoslavia. The Serbian authorities responded heavy-handedly, sending military forces to crush the insurgency. In a very short period of time in 1999, hundreds of thousands of Kosovars were driven away from their homes and many ended as refugees in neighboring countries. Fearing a repeat of the Bosnian tragedy in Kosovo, NATO forces led by the United States launched air strikes against Serbian forces. The air campaign, lasting 78 days, took its toll on Serbia, and President Milosevic finally agreed to withdraw Serbian troops from Kosovo. International peacekeepers, mostly NATO troops, took control of Kosovo, effectively ending Serbian authority in the province. Later, the United Nations began to administer Kosovo. International organizations allocated massive amounts of resources in attempt to build the governing institutions and the economy of the province.

The end of violence in Kosovo did not lead to improvement of relations between Serbia and Kosovo or between Kosovars and ethnic Serbs in the province. Lack of prospects, persistent intimidation, and low-level violence continued to drive ethnic Serbs away from their homes in the province. Many moved to Serbia or Montenegro and the rest settled in ethnic enclaves, the largest one in the northern tip of Kosovo, along the border with Serbia. To this day, Serbs in Northern Kosovo are reluctant to cooperate with both Kosovo authorities and international organizations providing security, development, and governance. After a period of building its institutions and reaching a level of stability, in 2008 Kosovo declared its independence. Many states recognized Kosovo's sovereignty (the U.S. among them), while Serbia and others refused to do so.



Ethnic map of Kosovo (Source: UNMIK)

Relations between Serbia and Kosovo remain tense, as do relations between Kosovars and the remaining ethnic Serbs in the newly independent state. Tensions between the two communities occasionally escalate into violent incidents.

The Serbia – Montenegro Split

Serbia's loss of Kosovo was not the end of state disintegration in former Yugoslavia. In the early 1990s Montenegro joined Serbia in attempts to preserve Yugoslavia and people in Montenegro displayed commitment to the federation. Of the former Yugoslav republics, Montenegro and Serbia were the closest historically, culturally, and linguistically. Nevertheless, a sense of a distinct Montenegrin identity continued to thrive in Montenegro.

Montenegro's population of 620,000 (2011 census) comprises 45% ethnic Montenegrins, 29% ethnic Serbs, 9% ethnic Bosniaks, 5% ethnic Albanians, and others.

Differences between Montenegrins and Serbs are a matter of continuing controversy. Although isolated from each other for centuries during the Ottoman period, both groups retained their Orthodox Christian religious traditions and many other common cultural attributes – including language and the Cyrillic alphabet. Because of such obvious commonalities, most Serbs used to see Montenegrins as "Mountain Serbs," and many – but certainly not all – Montenegrins see themselves as Serb in origin.

The wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina only increased Montenegro's sense of distinctiveness. Relations between Serbia and Montenegro began to deteriorate. Montenegrins became increasingly frustrated with Serbia's unequal use of power in rump Yugoslavia. Disagreements over the conduct of the war in Bosnia and Croatia soon led to the withdrawal of Montenegrin units from

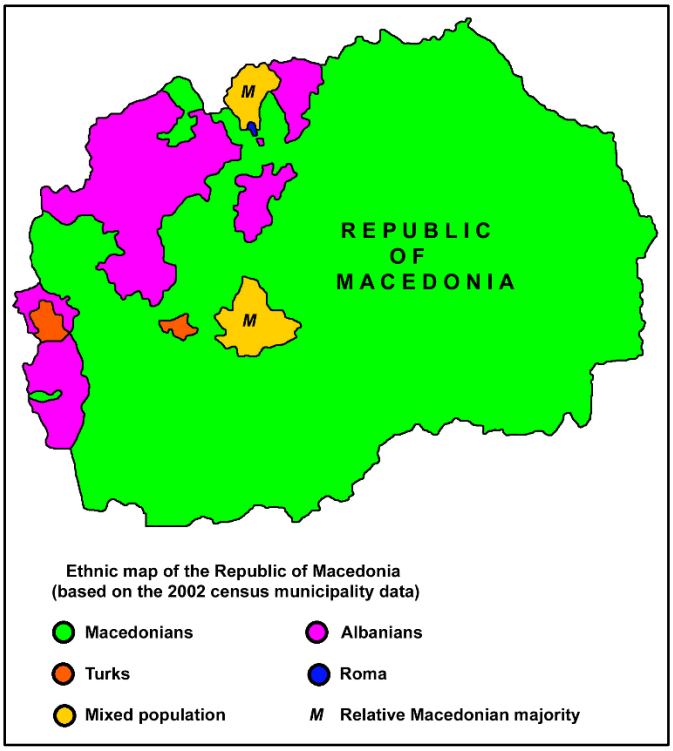
the Yugoslav army. By 1997, Montenegro found the alliance with belligerent Serbia under Milosevic too costly. Montenegro began to go its own way, cultivating Western support, building separate institutions, and even adopting the euro (the currency of the European Union) as its currency.

Serbia's retreat from Kosovo in 1999, the electoral defeat of Serbia's strongman, Slobodan Milosevic, and his subsequent deportation to the Hague Tribunal to face justice for crimes against humanity accelerated the disintegration of rump Yugoslavia. In March 2002, Serbia and Montenegro signed an agreement of governance, officially changing the name of the country from the Republic of Yugoslavia to Serbia and Montenegro, and changing the federation into a new "Union of States." According to the agreement, on February 4, 2003, the new state of Serbia and Montenegro essentially dissolved the country formally known as Yugoslavia. Despite the new arrangement, the political differences between Serbia and Montenegro did not disappear, and Montenegro's leaders continued to pursue independence. In May 2006, Montenegro held a referendum, at which over 55% of the electorate voted in favor of independence. On June 3, 2006, Montenegro declared independence, and it was recognized by the Serbian parliament two days later.

Ethnic Conflict in Macedonia

Macedonia initially avoided the fate of other former Yugoslav republics, peacefully seceding from the federation in 1991. The rump Yugoslavia, while resisting the independence of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, seemed to have no interest in keeping Macedonia – the poorest republic in the Yugoslav Federation, with a very small Serbian minority (1 percent) – in the federation. For more than a decade Macedonia managed to avoid the kind of brutal inter-ethnic conflict experienced by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia.[65]

However, the country had its own ethnic mix that and history that made the potential for violence high. Out of a population of 2.1 million, 64% are ethnic Macedonians, 25% are ethnic Albanians, 4% are Turks, and 3% are Roma.[66] Most of the Albanians live in the country's north and northwest, along the border with Kosovo and Albania. Historically, relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have been tense. The two communities lived segregated lives and were suspicious of each other.



Source: Wikipedia

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially the ethnic conflict in neighboring Kosovo led to radicalization of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Some Albanians were unhappy with the pace of political reforms in the country and what they considered as their failure to gain adequate political representation and access to resources. Other Albanians demanded that Macedonia be turned into a bi-national state, in which Macedonians and Albanians would be two equal nations, living

in a single state. Another group of Albanians was more radical, seeing the disintegration of former Yugoslavia as an opportunity to create a Greater Albania, unifying Albanians living in Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia. Ethnic Macedonians, on the other hand, resented the demands of the Albanian minority, considering its status in the country comparable to the status of minorities elsewhere in Europe. Their greatest fear was that any concession to Albanian demands would lead further demands and the disintegration of the country in the future.

Radicalism was also fed by a stream of ethnic Albanians from former Yugoslavia seeking refuge in Macedonia and Albania. The tensions between the two communities increased dramatically after the Kosovo crisis in 1999. The Macedonian authorities were caught by surprise when a militant Albanian group waged an insurgency in the early 2001. Macedonian security forces responded heavy handedly in a region populated by Albanians and the country found itself on the verge of a full-blown civil war. Nearly 250 people were killed in the half year-long conflict.[67] Only a diplomatic intervention by the U.S. and its Western allies stopped the conflict. Under Western mediation, Macedonian and Albanian leaders agreed to the so-called Ohrid Framework Agreement. The Agreement saved the unity of the state, but granted the Albanian minority wide-ranging political and social rights and freedoms in a substantially decentralized state. In addition, a small contingent of international peacekeepers was deployed in the country.

Since 2001, relations between the majority and the ethnic Albanian minority have been more peaceful. Political parties representing the minority routinely participate in government and the minority have achieved many of the goals prescribed by the Ohrid Agreement. However, tensions between the two communities persist.[68]

The relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in the country are also influenced by external factors. Macedonia has turbulent history and has often dominated politics in the southern Balkans. In the late 19th century, during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the newly independent states of Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria clamored to dominate Macedonia, each states seeking to impose its own national identity on a diverse population. After the Balkan Wars, which drove the Ottomans out of the Balkans, the geographical area of Macedonia, was divided between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria. In 1946, the Serbian part of Macedonia became a constituent republic of communist Yugoslavia.

Source: Wikipedia

Ethnic Macedonians, who speak a Slavic language, claim to be descendants of the ancient Macedonians made famous by the exploits of Alexander the Great. Accordingly, after declaring independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the new state adopted many of the ancient Macedonian symbols. However, Greece – which has a province also named Macedonia and which claims that the ancient Macedonians were part of ancient Greece, object to the use of the name "Macedonia" by the newly independent state. Greeks consider the people living in the new state to be Slavs, who have no connection to the ancient Macedonians. Using its diplomacy, Greece blocked the international recognition of the new state by its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia, and

instead forced it to accept the temporary name of "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM) as a condition for membership in international organizations, including the United Nations.

Bulgarians, too, questioned the identity of the newly independent state. Bulgarians have historically seen Macedonians as part of the Bulgarian nation, sharing the same ethnicity, language, and religion. Bulgaria was the first country to recognize the newly independent state, but made the point that it does not recognize a separate Macedonian nation. Naturally, Macedonians object to these Bulgarian claims.

Greek and Bulgarian claims about Macedonian's history and identity pose challenges not only to relations between the states, but also to relations between communities within Macedonia. Macedonians are finding it hard to make concessions to the demands of the Albanian minority in the country as granting more autonomy to Albanians is seen as yet another victory for opponents of Macedonian independence and sovereignty.

Ethnic Conflict in Bulgaria

Before the collapse of Communism in Bulgaria, the country experienced heightened tensions between the ethnic Bulgarian majority and the ethnic Turkish minority. According to the 2011 national census, of population of 7.3 million, 85% are ethnic Bulgarians, 9% are ethnic Turks, and 5% are Roma.[69] The Turkish minority in Bulgaria is a legacy of the 500 years of Ottoman rule. Since the end of Ottoman rule in Bulgaria in the late 19th century, the Turkish minority in the country has experienced a cyclical history of toleration and repression. At some times, the minority enjoyed equal political and cultural rights, while, at others, it faced enormous pressure to shed its Turkish identity and assimilate into the Bulgarian ethnicity.[70] The most recent attempt to force the minority to assimilate took place in the 1980s. The Communist authorities fearing the minority's challenge to the unity of the state, embarked on a campaign of assimilation, forcing Turks to adopt Bulgarian Christian names instead of their Turkish Muslim names. The government also appealed to Turkey to admit all ethnic Turks wishing to leave Bulgaria, as a way to decrease their share of the total population. As a result, in the late 1980s, over 300,000 ethnic Turks left the country for Turkey, although almost half of them returned after the collapse of the Communist regime in 1989.

After 1989, unlike in former Yugoslavia, the post-communist government in Bulgaria was quick to address the concerns of the aggrieved Turkish minority. Ethnic Turks were allowed to restore their original names and to create political parties representing their interests in government at the national and local level. The ethnic Bulgarian and Turkish political elites reached various accommodations, averting confrontation between the majority and minority.

Although relations between the Bulgarian majority and the Turkish minority have been peaceful since the early 1990s, the two communities remain suspicious of each other. Ethnic Bulgarians see the ethnic Turks as the legacy of the much despised Ottoman rule and resent what they consider minority's demand for special rights. Ethnic Turks, on the other hand, fear a repeat of Bulgarian attempts to strip them of their rights and assimilate them culturally.

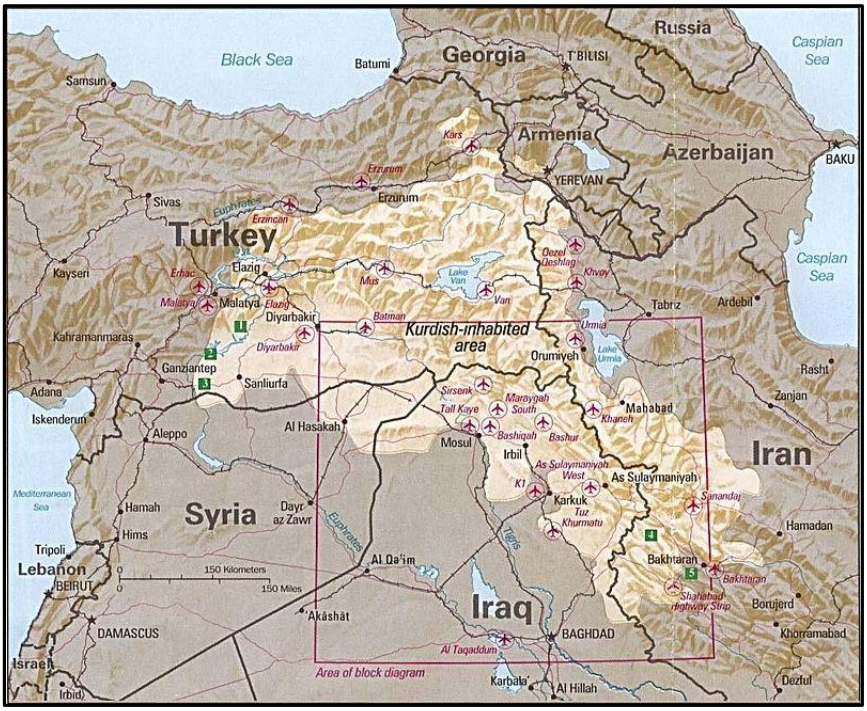
Ethnic Conflict in Romania

After WWI, Romania gained territories at the expenses of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The newly acquired territories had an ethnic Romanian majority, but also an ethnic Hungarian minority. The

Romanian treatment of the minority has been inconsistent and included periods of toleration following by periods of repression.[71] In the early Communist period after WWII the Hungarians enjoyed a political and cultural autonomy. Later, however, the Communist regime increasingly resorted to Romanian nationalism as a tool to mobilize the masses. As a result, the autonomy of the Hungarian minority was eliminated and Hungarians came under increased pressure to assimilate. The end of communism did not end tensions between Romanians and Hungarians. As many in Hungary called for either greater protection of Hungarian minorities abroad or called for reversal of the territorial settlement of WWI, Romanians feared that the Hungarian minority would seek to secede and join Hungary. The tensions escalated in occasional violent confrontations in the early 1990s in Transylvania, where most ethnic Hungarians live. In March 1990, supporters of an extremist Romanian political party clashed with supporters of an ethnic Hungarian party in Targu-Mures, a city in Transylvania, leaving 6 people dead and hundreds injured.[72] After this initial period of ethnic confrontation, however, the ethnic Romanian and ethnic Hungarian political elites worked out political arrangements, including constitutional and other legal provisions, to avert further conflicts between the two communities. As a result, the Hungarian minority enjoys a degree of cultural autonomy and political parties representing the minority are a fixture in Romanian politics. Nevertheless, suspicions between the two communities remain.

The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

The Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the world. Numbering near 30 million, the Kurds inhabit mainly regions in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. There are also small numbers in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and Russia. Kurds speak the Kurdish language and the majority is Sunni Muslim.



Map of area populated by Kurds (Source: CIA)

Ethnic Kurds constitute 15 to 20 percent of Turkey's population.[73] They are largely concentrated in the southeastern region of the country and in urban areas. Since its creation in 1923, the Turkish Republic has denied the existence of ethnic Kurds in the country and has sought to assimilate those who considered themselves Kurds. Accordingly, Turkish authorities used harsh measures, including violence, to suppress Kurdish identity. This long-standing Turkish policy changed only recently.[74]

In 1978, Abdullah Ocalan, an ethnic Kurd, and few associates founded the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) whose goals was to create by armed struggle an independent Kurdistan for all Kurds in the Middle East. The movement soon turned into an insurgency and in 1984 the Turkish military waged

an on-and-off campaign against PKK. The struggle was most intense during the 1990s. PKK was able to establish a complex support network, partially financed through criminal activities and contributions from Kurds in Turkey and Europe. The movement also established safe havens in Iraq, Syria, and Europe. Since 1984 the armed conflict has claimed the lives of over 40,000 people, displaced nearly a million people, and has made more than 200,000 people refugees.[75]

In the early 2000s the conflict's dynamics began to change. First, in 1999, the Turkish authorities scored a major victory by apprehending and then imprisoning Abdullah Ocalan, who called from prison for an end to the armed struggle. Second, unable to prevail in the conflict, both sides began to modify their goals and approaches. The government recognized that the integration of Kurds into Turkish society would require political, cultural, and economic development approaches in addition to traditional security approaches. For their part, the Kurdish movement, now broader than PKK, dropped secessionist demands and instead insisted on greater cultural and political autonomy within Turkey. Turkish authorities implemented cultural and political measures that virtually recognized the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity and interests.

Despite the progress in solving the conflict, PKK's armed struggle is still underway and the number of casualties continues to grow. The organization still possesses the ability to mobilize resources and inflict damage on Turkish interests.

Ethnic Conflicts in the Balkans – Conclusion

The ethnic conflicts discussed in this section of the chapter include only those that either have had an impact on the stability the region, or have the potential to affect it in the future.

The ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia starting in the early 1990s, were the most significant not only in the Balkans, but also in Europe. They claimed the lives of 140,000 people and displaced almost 4 million people.[76] The civil wars in former Yugoslavia sped up the process of ethnic homogenization in the western Balkans, a process that started with the disintegration of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Thus in place of the two multiethnic empires, there gradually emerged numerous states dominated by single ethnic groups.

The ethnic conflicts in Romania and Bulgaria were less significant in terms of their human and material tolls, although they also led to crises in already unstable countries in the early 1990s. The Kurdish conflict in Turkey, although violent and inflicting high human cost, had no discernable impact on the stability of the Balkans, as it is taking place in the Asian part of Turkey.

Conflicts Between States

The end of Communism not only created new nations in the Balkans but also transformed the relations between older states in the region. It led to major realignment of foreign policy orientations. Generally, all states either continued, or began to seek deep integration in the Western community of states, including memberships in NATO and the European Union – a common policy which has a positive effect on relations among states in the Balkans. Nevertheless, history and unresolved issues continue to plague relations between the states in the region.

The following provides a list of conflicts between the states in the Balkans. It does not include all conflicts, but those that either have caused regional instability in the past, or have the potential to cause it in the future.

Relations between the States of Former Yugoslavia

The wars in the former Yugoslavia not only inflicted human and material toll on the states, but also affected their post-war relations and policies. After the wars, all participants in the conflicts had a difficult time coming to terms with their war actions, especially with atrocities committed against civilians. Among all states, Serbia has encountered the most challenging process of facing its wartime past. The Serbian ruling elite was unable to deliver on its promise to unite all ethnic Serbs in a single state through war, and in the process Serbia had come to be considered the main aggressor in the wars. Serbs, however, are reluctant to see their nation as a perpetrator of crimes and instead argue that all sides committed atrocities in the wars in the 1990s. This public attitude complicates efforts at improving relations with neighboring states. Other states in former Yugoslavia face similar challenges coming to terms with their actions during the wars, although not to the degree Serbia does. In any event, the near past continues to be an issue in relations between the states.[77]
The new states' actions during the wars also complicates their attempts to join Western institutions, particularly in the European Union and NATO. Both organizations define good relations with neighboring states as a precondition for membership. Once again, of all the states of former Yugoslavia, Serbia faces the greatest challenge meeting this condition. Belgrade does not recognize Kosovo as an independent state and there is little evidence to suggest that both the EU and NATO would consider granting membership to Serbia unless the country accepted Kosovo's independence. For its part, unlike its neighbors, Serbia is relatively reluctant to embrace membership in both organizations.

All in all, the states of former Yugoslavia have taken a considerable steps in addressing problems in their interstate relations.[78] Even one of the most intractable problems – relations between Serbia and Kosovo – seems to have been addressed as Serbia in 2013 finally agreed to negotiate with authorities in Kosovo.[79]

The Macedonian Question

As pointed in previous sections, Macedonia faces the double challenge of improving relations between the ethnic Macedonian majority and ethnic Albanian minority in the country, and establishing normal relations with its neighbors, which question the identity of the newly independent state. Greece does not recognize the constitutional name of Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia) and, as member of both the European Union and NATO, is blocking the country's attempts to join both organization. Greece demands that Macedonia uses another name for the country and stops appropriating what Greeks see as their ancient symbols as their own. Greece argues that the continued use of the name "Macedonia," implies that the authorities in Skopje have claims on the Greek province of Macedonia.

While Bulgaria has no problem with the use of the name "Macedonia," Bulgarians resent Skopje's claim of the presence of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, and accordingly the need for its recognition. In addition, Bulgarians do not consider Macedonians to be a distinct nation, and instead claim that Macedonians were forcibly separated from the Bulgarian nation and only pressured to adopt a distinct national identity by Yugoslav authorities. Accordingly, Macedonians are seen as speaking a dialect of Bulgarian, rather than a distinct language. Macedonians, for their part, resent Bulgarians'

assumptions about their identity. These frictions tend to complicate relations between the two states. Accordingly, Bulgaria occasionally joins Greece in blocking Macedonia's attempts to integrate in the European Union and NATO. Both Bulgaria and Greece continue to insist that Macedonia improves relations with its neighbors before Skopje is allowed to negotiate accession with the EU and NATO.

Relations between Greece and Turkey

Frictions between Greece and Turkey have a long history. Although both countries were members of NATO and supposed allies, they came close to a war in the 1990s. The history of confrontation between the states started with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the retreat of Byzantium. The Ottomans not only subdued the Greeks but gradually pushed them out of lands that had been inhabited by Greeks for many centuries. The Ottomans also turned the capital of the Byzantine Empire into their own capital. The final violent confrontation between the two countries at the end of WWI was accompanied by the exodus of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Greeks from Anatolia to Greece and thousands of ethnic Turks in the opposite direction.

Although both states have avoided armed conflicts since the end of WWI, their disagreements remained serious. The two countries argue over the treatment of the small Turkish minority in Greece and Greek property in Turkey. They also disagree over Cyprus, an island country in the Mediterranean Sea, bitterly divided between an ethnic Greek majority and ethnic Turkish minority (Turkey invaded the country in the 1970s and currently supports a self-proclaimed Turkish state, which dominates the northern part of the island).

Source: Wikipedia

Turkey and Greece also disagree over the maritime issues in the Aegean Sea. Almost all of the more than 2,400 islands between the two countries belong to Greece, some of them literally a few miles from the Turkish mainland.[80] The dispute involves questions of territorial seas, continental shelf, airspace, overflights, and the militarization of the Aegean islands. Although in the last decade the countries have made considerable steps to lower the tensions and address the multiple points of friction, the sheer number of issues plaguing relations makes it difficult to predict stability bilateral relations.

Other Conflicts

Although various ethnic groups in the Balkans have experienced extended period of peaceful coexistence in the past, there are numerous factors that pose challenges to peace and stability. The region's populist and nationalist elements thrive when government institutions do not meet the public's expectations and political and economic crises threaten citizens' wellbeing.

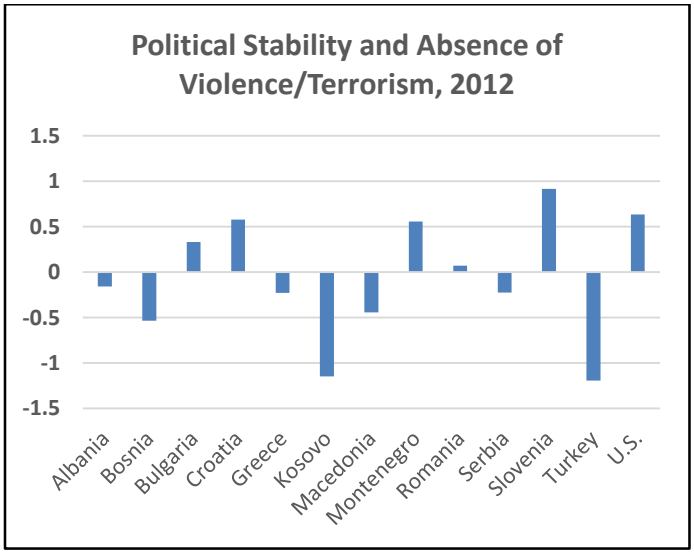
In addition to the conflicts discussed above, there are numerous other conflicts that, under certain conditions, may escalate into violent confrontation. In southern Serbia, Albanians in the Presevo valley

seek unification with Kosovo. Bosniaks living in the Serbia's region of Sandzak push for autonomy, if not outright unification with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Montenegro, many ethnic Serbs in the north of the country resent the break between Serbia and Montenegro and seek either autonomy or a unification with Serbia.

One of the most significant ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, although one not likely to lead to a disintegration of states, involves the status of the Roma people. The Roma moved from India to the Balkans, and subsequently to other regions of the European continent around the 14th century.[81] Although the Roma (also known as "Gypsies") adopted many of the cultural traits of the majorities in whose midst they live, they generally do not integrate successfully in any of the countries. Roma tend to have much higher levels of poverty and unemployment, and children drop out of school much earlier and at higher rates than their non-Roma peers. Roma also face a widespread social and economic discrimination, including discrimination perpetuated by state authorities.[82]

Governance and Rule of Law

All states in the Balkans have gone a long way toward establishing stable state and political institutions, but they are still very vulnerable to external and internal sources of instability. The institutions of governance, including parliament, judicial system, bureaucracy, political parties, and other institutions suffer from various shortcomings including lack of transparency and accountability, arbitrariness in decision-making, weak rule of law, a tendency to serve the interest of those in power, lack of checks and balances, incompetence, corruption, etc. As a result, the institutions of governance are frequently unable to function properly, do not meet public expectations, and lack public trust. In such environments, internal and external challenges (ethnic conflict, economic crises, external threats, etc.) tend to create public perceptions of threats to the stability of public and state orders.



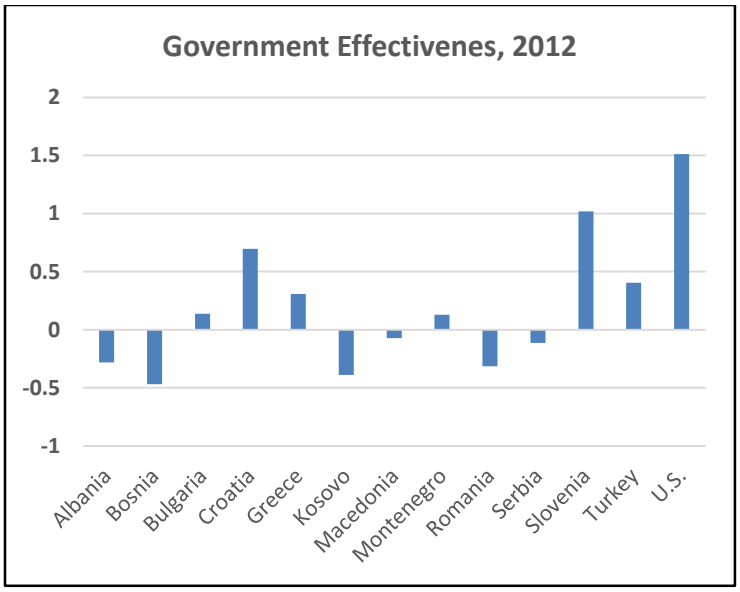
The assessment of political stability and absence of violence reflects perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism (Estimate ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).

Source: World Bank

However, as the table above indicates, there are significant differences between the states in terms of their stability. While some like Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia appear as relatively stable states (note that all, except Bulgaria, only recently became independent), others have their citizens concerned about the stability of the established order. The sources of these concerns are diverse –

ethnic conflicts (Bosnia), external threats (Kosovo), economic and political crises (most states), a history of military intervention in politics and an ongoing insurgency (Turkey), etc.

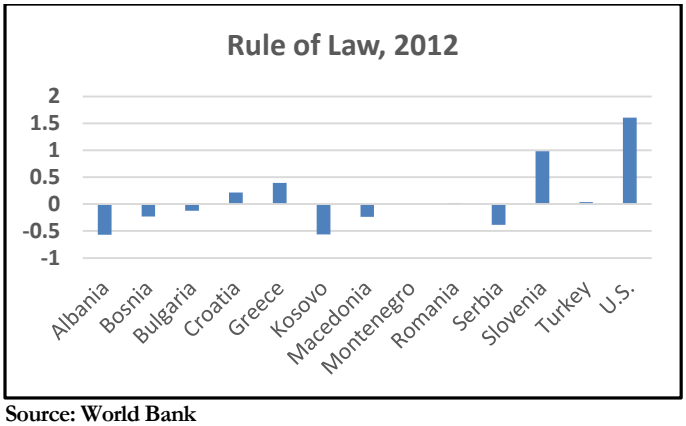
Political stability in the state is also affected by the quality of governance in the country (see table below). Once again, there are wide variations across the region in terms of how governments perform. With the exception of Slovenia, and possibly Croatia, the institutions of governance in the region do not meet the expectations of citizens in terms of public services and policies.



Assessment of government effectiveness reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance).

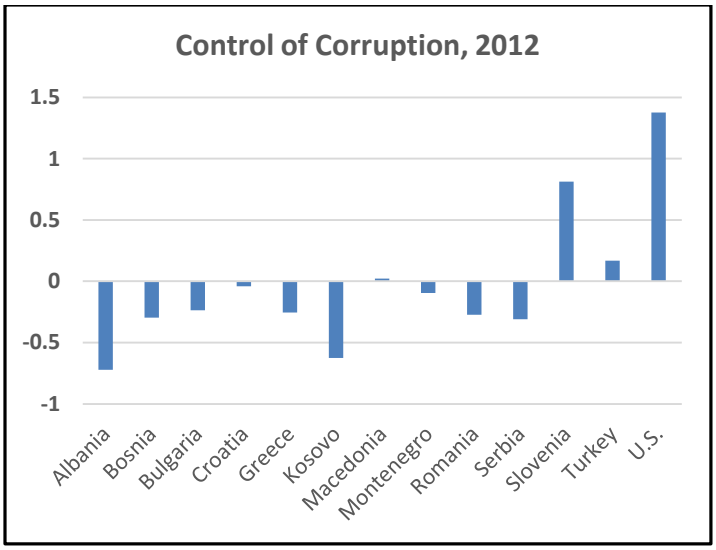
Source: World Bank

The citizens' assessment of government effectiveness is also affected by their perception of the degree of rule of law in the country and the extent of corruption they encounter in dealing with each other and with the state (see tables below)



Assessment of rule of law reflects perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance.

Source: World Bank



Control of Corruption captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests. Estimate gives the country's score on the aggregate indicator, in units of a standard normal distribution, i.e. ranging from approximately -2.5 to 2.5.

Source: World Bank

The wars in former Yugoslavia, along with the severe political and economic crises accompanying the transition from Communism to democracy in the 1990s, led to a general increase in criminality in the Balkans. The post-1990 period also witnessed the massive transfer of previously state-owned national resources into private hands, a process that was marked by fraud, plunder, and general lawlessness.[83] Members of the former *nomenklatura* (high-ranking communists) and secret services were able to appropriate material and financial resources using legal and illegal means. Organized crime, including corruption, privatization fraud, protection rackets, and smuggling, began to overwhelm already weak state institutions. In fact, there emerged a fusion between crime syndicates, political leaders, and economic elites. The dividing lines between legitimate commerce and criminal enterprise were blurred and hazy.

The vulnerability of some Balkan countries to the combination of organized crime and weak state institutions is best illustrated by events in Albania in 1997. The failure of several financial pyramid schemes in which a large share of the population had invested, led to a collapse of the government and disintegration of public order. Public buildings were burned, prisons were attacked and prisoners were released, the national arms depots were looted, and many regions of the country became ungovernable.[84] Although the country was able to recover quickly, the crisis also demonstrated the vulnerability of pubic and state order to criminal threats. The brief crisis also points to how a domestic problem can easily have implications beyond the national border – vast quantity of the arms looted from Albanian arms depots were smuggled into Kosovo and Macedonia and enabled ethnic Albanian insurgents to challenge Serbian authorities in 1999 and Macedonian troops in 2001.[85]

However, the end of civil wars in former Yugoslavia, the gradual consolidation of state institutions throughout the region, and assistance from the European Union resulted in decline in crime.[86] Law-enforcement agencies, became more capable of rooting out criminal activities, while state institutions became more effective in addressing the root causes of criminality. Nevertheless, crime remains a significant problem in the region.

The nature of crime in the Balkans is somewhat different from the one in Western Europe and the United States. Violent crimes, including homicide, rape, assault, and robbery, are rare. The rates of

these crimes, already low, continue to decline. For example, the combined number of murders in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia declined by 50% between 1998 and 2006.[87]

While violent crime is rare, other types of crime remain highly problematic for the region. Among them, corruption, economic fraud, and the activities of organized criminal groups, are the most significant. Corruption and economic fraud continue to exist at high rates despite occasional government campaigns to eradicate the practices. Evidence suggest that the inability of the countries in the region to address corruption and fraud is less of a matter of capacity, and more a result of the lack of political will on the part of the ruling elites to face the two phenomena.[88] Although there is a steady decline in the influence of organized criminal groups throughout the region, they still cause great damage to law and order.

Chapter

7

Case Study: The Culture of Bosniaks in the City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The case study in this chapter introduces a culture from the Balkan region, using the concepts introduced in the Operational Culture General (OCG) document (see attached document).

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforward Bosnia, for short) is home to a diverse population comprised of numerous ethnic, religious, and other cultural groups. Out of a total population of nearly 3.8 million, 48% are Bosnian Muslims (also known as Bosniaks), 37% are ethnic Serbs, 14% ethnic Croats, and 0.6% identify themselves as "others."[89] It must be noted that according to the 2013 census, the population of the state had almost 600,000 fewer people than what was reported in the 1991 census.

Bosnia is a multi-national state and is comprised of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), with a 51% share of the territory, and Republika Srpska (RS). In addition the Brcko Disctrict, a multiethnic self-governing administrative unit is part of both entities. The Federation is predominantly Bosniak and Croat, while the Republika Srpska is Serb. Both FBiS and RS have significant autonomy. Each one has its own legislative, executive, and judicial institutions. The FBiS is furthermore divided into 10 cantons, each with its own local government and autonomy.

Although the thee ethnic groups in Bosnia – Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats – have a long history of co-existence, frequent conflicts in the 20th century and especially the bloody civil war accompanying the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1992-95 strained inter-ethnic relations and dramatically affected cultural patterns in the state. These patterns vary not only among the ethnic groups but also within each group as environments and experiences differ sometime dramatically across regions and time.

The 1992-95 war in Bosnia forced Bosniaks in Mostar to change their cultural patterns.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the culture of ethnic Bosniaks living in the city of Mostar in southern Bosnia. Bosniaks' culture in Mostar has been undergoing a rapid change due to the 1992-95 civil war and its ongoing non-violent conflict with ethnic Croats in the city. Previously a place where multiple ethnicities co-existed peacefully, the city witnessed a violent confrontation which changed not only the ethnic makeup of its population but also the local Bosniaks' cultural patterns.

Mostar, the fifth largest city in Bosnia, is an administrative center of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. According to the 2013 census, the city's population is 113,169.[90] By early 2015, the Bosnian government had not yet released the census information on the ethnic makeup of the city. According to the 1991 census, however, the city population was almost equally divided between ethnic Bosniaks and ethnic Croats (35% and 34% respectively), while 19% were ethnic Serbs, and 10% were Yugoslav. The civil war of 1992-95 affected this ethnic makeup as most Serbs and many Bosniaks were pushed out of the city and ethnic Croats gradually became the majority. Thus, Mostar is the only major city in FBiH in which Bosniaks are a minority, while the Croats are in the majority.

Before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, there had been a trend for more and more people to identify themselves as "Yugoslav" – as citizens of Yugoslavia – rather than identify as "Serbs," "Croats," or "Bosniaks." This trend reversed as Yugoslavia disintegrated.

Although there is evidence that the area of today's Mostar was settled in antiquity, very little is known about it until it came under Ottoman rule in the fifteenth century. Laying along the Neretva River, on the trade route between the Adriatic Sea and the mineral-rich region of Central Bosnia, Mostar grew in prominence in the Ottoman period. It became a garrison town in the 16th century. The town was named after the guardians of a famous bridge (named *Stary Most*, or Old Bridge) spanning the two banks of Neretva.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Source: U.S. Department of State)

Along with the rest of Bosnia, Mostar was incorporated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1878. In 1918, the city was included in the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed Yugoslavia).[91] After the WWII, Mostar was part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the six constituent republics in communist Yugoslavia.

After Bosnia declared independence in 1992, the city endured an assault by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav military, which attempted to stop the collapse of Yugoslavia. After the Serbs were defeated in Mostar, the Croats – who had already declared their own state in the area, intending to annex it to Croatia – turned on the Bosniaks. Croats declared Mostar the capital of the new state and by 1993 fierce fighting broke out between Bosniaks and Croats. Croats largely asserted their control over the city, and in the process demolished most of its eastern part, inhabited mostly by Bosniaks (70% of the pre-war housing units were destroyed, and there was no electricity and running water). The hostilities in Mostar claimed the lives of over 2,500 people, the majority of them Bosniaks.[92]

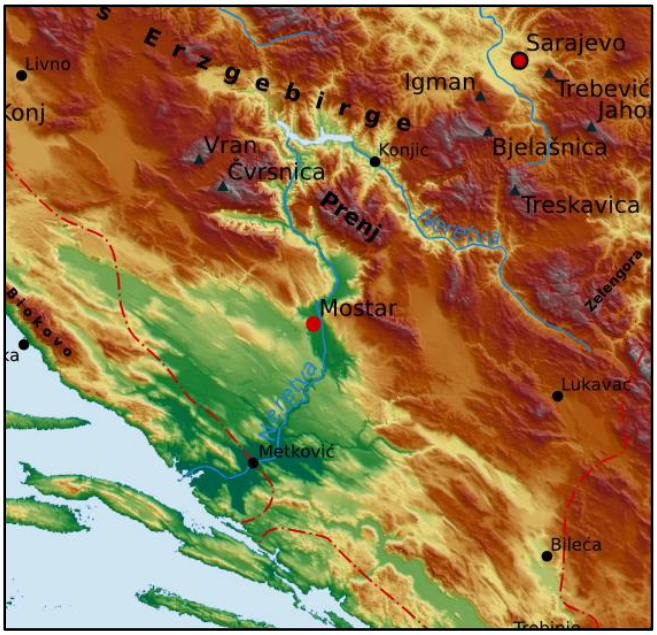
Hostilities in the city ended in early 1994 when Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia forged an alliance against the Serbs, who were trying to annex Bosnian territories dominated by their ethnic group to rump Yugoslavia. In 1995 after a decisive international military intervention led by the U.S., and lengthy negotiations between the warring parties held in Dayton, Ohio, the civil war in Bosnia ended. The Dayton Agreement, although preserving Bosnia's sovereignty, divided the state into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska. The Agreement also created the office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which oversees the implementation of the Agreement. The internationally appointed official has substantial powers, including the power to remove Bosnian politicians who obstruct the Agreement and the power to impose binding decisions when national and local officials seem unwilling or unable to act.

Aiarial photo of Mostar in 1997 (Source: U.S. Department of Defense)

Physical Geography

Mostar is located in southern Bosnia at a strategic crossing of the Neretva River. The city (elevation 200 ft) is in a valley at the foot of the mountains Cabulja, Prenj, and Velez, which are parts of the Dinaric Alps. Almost completely surrounded by the steep and barren mountainous ranges, the city controls a southern approach from the Adriatic coastal plain to the mountainous interior of the country. Mostar is about 100 km south of Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital.

Approximately 220 km long, the Neretva River is the largest tributary of the eastern part of the Adriatic Sea basin. It drains substantial parts of the southern and central region of the Dinaric Alps, which experience significant rainfall throughout the year.



Topography of southern Bosnia and Herzegovina (Source: Worldofmaps)

Despite the presence of mountains, the climate in the city is heavily influenced by the Adriatic Sea. It has a mostly mild Mediterranean climate. Summers can be oppressively hot, the high temperature averaging in the upper 80s F in July and August (by comparison, Camp Lejeune in North Carolina witnesses average highs in the upper 80s F in June, July and August). The winters are mild, the low temperature averaging in the mid-30s F, and high temperatures in the lower 40s F in December and January. The dry months are in the summer, from June to September (ranging from 1.7 inches to 3.8 inches of rainfall a month), while the rest of the year witnesses more rainfall, ranging from 5 inches to 7.9 inches.

Mostar is built on karst (a landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks including limestone, dolomite, and gypsum) and is surrounded by large hills which are impeding urban development. Constrained by the mountain ranges, the city grew along the north-south axis, parallel to the river's course. Urbanization gradually filled both riverbanks and the city inevitably expanded up along the mountain slopes. However, this growth was constrained by the difficulties of providing potable water to the upper reaches of urban development.

Mostar and the surrounding area at the foot of the mountains support number of plants belonging to the Mediterranean flora. The soil in the region also supports a wide range of agricultural activities. However, the rapid industrialization after WWII and the often unregulated urban reconstruction and expansion following the end of the civil war in 1992-95, swallowed substantial portions of the agricultural land in the region. The urban expansion has also been accompanied by the clearing of vegetation and heavy construction which compromises the stability of slopes above the central parts of the city.[93]

The Economy of the Culture

Under Ottoman rule, Mostar emerged as a center of manufacturing and commerce in the mid-16th century.[94] Mirroring the decline of the Empire, the city faded economically at the end of the 18th century. The Austro-Hungarian rule, starting in 1878, revived its economic fortune by creating industrial zones, producing coal, timber, wine, and tobacco. A power plant built in 1911 brought electricity to the city.

Significant deposits of brown coal were discovered in the mid-19th century and coal-mining remained a significant industry in Mostar until the outbreak of hostilities in the early 1990s.[95] After WWII, the availability of river with power-generating potential and the discovery of bauxite ore turned Mostar into a center of aluminum-refining and bauxite-ore processing industry. This industry, in turn, supported a robust defense industry including aircraft manufacturing, and factories producing munitions and chemical warfare components. In addition, a metal-work factory, cotton textile mills, and food- and tobacco-processing plants were built. The rapid industrialization fueled population growth in the city and its region as thousands moved in to take on newly available jobs. Between 1945 and 1980, Mostar's population grew from 18,000 to 100,000.[96]

Following the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, the industrial sector in Mostar collapsed. Although the reconstruction of industries commenced after the end of hostilities, Mostar has a much altered economic structure compared to the pre-independence period. During communist rule, economic activities were directed by the state and private entrepreneurship was extremely limited; but after the war the state embarked on privatization process and laid out the foundation of a free-market economy.

The reconstruction of the aluminum factory in the city began in 1997. By 2013 the factory was Bosnia's leading producer of mineral commodities in terms of export value, and was also a significant employer in the region.[97] On the other hand, other industries show little sign of recovery. For example, coal mining which even before the war was in rapid decline, has very little prospects of becoming a major industry once again.

Agriculture is also an important economic activity in the region. Because of topography, most of the farms are along the Neretva River, supporting Mediterranean vegetables, fruits, and vineyards. There is also a food processing industry. The region is noted for its quality wines. Tourism is another important industry in the region.

In addition to meeting the population's requirements for potable water, the Neretva River is used in agriculture and industry as well as the generation of electrical power and recreational activities. The river is not navigable.

The prevailing cultural norms and the existing political structure in the city heavily influence the culture of the economy in the city. The existence of an overly complicated system of governing institutions and public services in Mostar breeds a culture of corruption in a place already susceptible to corrupt practices. After the war, the privatization process – the transfer of public property into private hands – was one area that witnessed corrupt practices on a massive scale. For example, in 1996 the Democratic Croat Union (HDZ), the leading Croat political party in the city, managed to take over the management of the aluminum factory and privatize it at a greatly deflated price and in the process benefited mostly the Croat workers and management.[98]

Surveys conducted by the World Bank repeatedly rates Mostar as one of the worst cities to do business in Southeast Europe.[99] Faced with a maze of bureaucratic and political barriers, many in Mostar have no choice but to offer bribes to the politically connected and city bureaucrats. The political elites in the city, both Bosniak and Croat, on the other hand, have little incentive to trim the bureaucracy and city jobs because reducing the city payroll means losing valuable patronage and alienating clients and electoral supporters.[100] Conversely, almost all economic activity depends on the favor of officials. In addition, government has large shares in a vast number of industries, especially in energy, telecommunications, infrastructure construction, banking, and forestry, in addition to direct control over public utility companies. This contributes to the power of patronage in the economy.

Even before the war of 1992-95, there were differences in economic development between the western and eastern parts of Mostar. The former had a more developed economy, based on industry and trade. The latter, having the historic downtown from Ottoman time, attracted tourism. This economic disparity did not matter much before the war as employment did not depend on ethnic affiliation. After the war, however, Bosniaks were cut from job opportunities in the western part and inherited mostly destroyed economic infrastructure in the eastern part of the city.

Social Structure

In communist Yugoslavia, Mostar experienced rapid industrialization accompanied by dramatic population growth. After WWII the population of Mostar grew dramatically and to accommodate this growth, authorities built large residential blocks. One consequence of this policy was that by early 1990s more people lived in state-owned housing than in private dwellings, in contrast to housing patterns in the rest of Bosnia.

Before the 1992-95 war, Bosniaks were a slight plurality (35% of the total population) in the city, while the Croats were the second largest group (34%), with the rest either Serbs or people who refused to identify their ethnicity.[101] Mostar was often cited as 'little Bosnia,' a miniature of the state's multinational character within communist Yugoslavia.[102]

In the initial stages of the civil war, the combined forces of Bosniaks and Croats pushed most Serbs out of the city. Later, when the former allies turned on each other, Croat forces overwhelmed Bosniaks, pushing many Bosniaks either out of the city or into its eastern part. In turn, most Croats living in the eastern part, either left or were pushed out. The fighting also caused a much greater destruction to the eastern part of the city than to the western part (it is estimated that four-fifths of the damage was done in the Bosniak-held part of the city[103]).

The war of 1992-95 dramatically changed the ethnic makeup of the city. Croats became the majority (between 50 and 60 percent of the population), while Mostar became the only major city in FBiH, in which Bosniaks are the minority (about 40 percent). Although the civil war in Bosnia ended in 1995, Mostar remains the only truly divided city in Bosnia. For years after the end of hostilities, Croats went out of their way to keep Bosniak refugees from returning to the city and discouraged those who wanted to cross into the western part.[104] Although now the traffic between the two sides of the city is unimpeded and there are no acts of interethnic violence, the city remains separated in all aspects of life: politically, socially, and economically, including in matters of education, health care, public utilities, media, and governance. On occasion, Mostar is described as "literally two cities" living side by side.[105]

The war changed the social structure in other ways. Thousands were driven out of the city, others were moved across the east-west divide in a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign, while thousands of people displaced elsewhere by the wider war in Bosnia found refuge in Mostar. In other words, the pre-war population of Mostar was dislocated and diluted, thus making it hard to restore the shared pre-war Mostarian identity.

The war also created short- and long-term barriers to reintegration of the population. All twelve bridges connecting the eastern and western parts of the city were destroyed. In addition, long after the end of the conflict, nationalistic political leadership on both sides actively continued to discourage the restoration of city-wide infrastructure and the return of refugees dislocated by the campaigns of ethnic cleansing.

According to the 1991 census, 10% of all marriages in Mostar were mixed, the highest rate in former Yugoslavia.[106] After the war, interethnic marriages became very rare as both ethnic groups became less accepting of it.

Ethnic Identity

Slavic tribes settled the Balkans starting in the sixth century. Over centuries they converted to Christianity – some became Catholics, others Eastern Orthodox. During the Ottoman Empire rule, many of them converted to Islam and as a result gained privileged political, social, and economic status compared to their Eastern Orthodox and Catholic neighbors. The descendants of those Muslim converts are today's Bosniaks. Although the Bosniaks retained their language and continued to share many cultural traits with the Christians, those who remained Eastern Orthodox and Catholic resented

them and associated them with the ruling Ottoman Turks.[107] This attitude persisted in modern times and during the 1992-95 war, many Serbs and Croats called Bosniaks "Turks." Bosniaks, on the other hand, even under Ottoman rule, always considered themselves distinct from the Turks.

Although sharing the Muslim religion, Bosniaks were very distinct linguistically and culturally from the Ottoman Turks. Because they had different political, social, and economic interests, they were also distinct from their Eastern Orthodox and Catholic neighbors, with whom they shared language and many cultural traits. Nevertheless, Bosniaks did not consider themselves a distinct ethnic group during the Ottoman rule. The rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Bosnia, starting in 1878, did not significantly change that self-perception. Bosniaks lost their privileged political status but continued to enjoy a good economic status.

After the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918, both Croats and Serbs attempted to enlist Bosniaks in their struggle for political power in the state and pressured them to adopt Croatian and Serbian identification (many Croats considered Bosniaks to be Muslim Croats and many Serbs considered them Muslim Serbs). Partially as a reaction to this pressure, many Bosniaks gradually began to identify themselves as a distinct community. During the Second World War, Bosniaks were not united as some joined the forces of pro-Nazi regime in Croatia fighting the Serbs, while others joined the multinational forces of Communist *Partisans* led by Tito.

After WWII, partially as an attempt to prevent Serbs and Croats from using the Bosniaks as a pawn in their struggle for political power, the Communist leadership of Yugoslavia established Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the constituent republics of the federation. Furthermore, in 1968 the Communist Party officially declared the Bosniaks a nation (calling them Bosnian Muslims). These decisions were a great impetus for Bosniaks' self-awareness as a district group with its own identity and interests.

Although the emergence of Bosniaks' nationalism ended the Serbs' and Croats' dreams of assimilating them into their respective nations, the pressure on the Bosniaks did not disappear. The death of Tito and the end of communism in Yugoslavia freed nationalistic passions among all groups in Bosnia. Various nationalistic parties began to manipulate historical memories and to mobilize ethnic groups for action. Bosniaks increasingly came under assault by Serbian and Croatian nationalists. The political and economic crises accompanying the end of Communism were blamed on the secular Bosniaks, who were portrayed as Islamic fundamentalists bent once again on European conquest. Serbian and Croatian nationalists saw themselves as saviors, defending Europe from another "Turkish" or Muslim conquest.

The attitudes of nationalist Croats and Serbs, notwithstanding, the Bosniaks remained deeply secular. Decades of secular education and official atheism under Communist rule, intermarriage, and urbanization ensured that Bosniaks remained mostly indifferent to religion. Thus, Bosniaks developed a group identity that was built around their historical attachment to Islam, even though most members of the community were not particularly devout Muslims. Being Muslim was the main trait that identified the Bosniaks as a separate nation.

Language

While part of Yugoslavia, the official language of Bosnia was called Serbo-Croatian language. After the 1992-95 war, however, the three main ethnic groups in Bosnia claimed to speak three distinct

languages and gradually adopted Bosnian (spoken by Bosniaks), Croatian, and Serbian as official languages. Each group increasingly adopted new words and forms, thus increasing the distinctiveness of each new language. Mostar was not isolated from this state-wide process. Bosniaks and Croats are exposed to different languages through education, media, governing institutions, and social surroundings. Nevertheless, both groups continue to speak a language that still makes it difficult to distinguish whether one is a Bosniak or a Croat.

Education

Bosniaks' identity is partially influenced by the educational system in Mostar. Bosniaks receive an educations that is distinct from the one offered to Croats. Mostar schools have two curricula, one for schools in the eastern parts of the city attended by mostly Bosniaks, and one for Croats in the western part. Although the two curricula have a common core including for math, the contents for language, history, geography, and religion are distinct.[108] Thus, Bosniak are exposed to history from textbooks with a Bosniak slant, Croat children read from history books published in Croatia. Even when with international help the city managed to reconstruct a famed high school and opened it to students of all ethnicities, classes were offered in two different curricula.[109] Most children in the city tend to attend schools that are mostly ethnically homogenous. In the few ethnically mixed schools, classes are offered in the two distinct curricula.

Although both curricula mostly steer away from controversial topics that may inflame nationalistic passions, including treatment of the civil war, ethnic biases and ethnic-centric perspectives inevitably seep into the education both Croats and Bosniaks receive. The two distinct education systems in Mostar reinforce ethnic divides.[110] In addition, parents and politicians exert a powerful influence over students and are often seen as fostering nationalistic feelings.[111]

Higher education in Mostar is no exception to the deep divisions in the city. It has a university in the western part of the city that caters mainly to Croats and a university in the eastern part, whose students are mostly Bosniaks.

Political Structure

Although the likelihood of renewed interethnic violence is low, the two communities find it hard to cooperate and govern the city jointly.[112] Mostar's political structure is similar to Bosnia's. The city has been under close international supervision, mostly the European Union's, for much of the time since the 1992-95 war. The city is run according to internationally-imposed laws and institutions designed to empower all ethnic communities in the city and to assure their representation in government. The system is supposed to promote consensus by preventing one ethnic group from imposing its will on the others. However, for years the system has proved unworkable in Mostar and the rest of Bosnia because of the lack of inter-ethnic agreement. Politics in Mostar are dominated by the struggle between political elites representing Bosniaks and Croats for political dominance in the city. The political leaders representing both communities have found it easier to obstruct each other rather than work with each other. As a result, government in the city has frequently been paralyzed for extended periods of time.

After the war, there were numerous attempts to not only reconstruct the city but also to remove the divisions created by the violent conflicts. Initially, in 1995, Mostar was divided into six municipalities, three controlled by Croats and three controlled by Bosniaks, thus devolving powers and

responsibilities to communities in the city. This structure did not work well as the Bosniak and Croat communities remained deeply divided, while creating parallel institutions and public companies. The city had a weak mayor and a redundant administration. The Bosniak and Croat parts of Mostar created two of everything – two tax agencies, two post offices, two bus companies, two public utilities companies, two public pension funds, etc. The duplication of institutions and public services only served to perpetuate the sense of existence of two separate cities in Mostar; the city remained deeply divided.

In 2004, the High Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina imposed a new interim city statute, dissolving the six municipalities, strengthening the powers of the mayor (executive power), and creating city-wide institutions and public companies. The new statute also created fixed ethnic quotas in the city council, with fifteen seats each for the Bosniaks and Croats, four for the Serbs, and four for "others." These changes did not provide a long-term solution to the crisis. Even when the city council finally reached decisions aimed at eliminating duplicate governing bodies and public services, the city failed to implement them. The two main communities remained locked in a struggle for political dominance in the city, while the formally unified city-wide institutions and public companies did not eliminate the existence of parallel structures in the divided city. Although one of the goals of the change was to consolidate the governing and administrative institutions, there is little evidence that new institutions have eliminated duplication and continued ethnic separation.

The current political system, created by the Dayton Agreement and the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, enabled the Bosniaks, who are the minority in the city, to block governing decisions in the city.[113] On the other hand, Croats in the city resented what they saw as the disproportionate political power of Bosniaks in the city. They consider it undemocratic to deny the majority to rule the city. When Bosnia's constitutional court adopted a decision on election rules (calling for a change to the 2004 interim city statute) for Mostar that seemed to favor the Croats' demands, Bosniaks effectively blocked any attempt to change the electoral system in the city. With memories of the war in which Bosniaks suffered disproportionate loses still alive, the Bosniak community feared a growing economic and political power of the Croat majority in the city. They considered any changes to this system as enabling Croats' agenda of turning Mostar into a Croat capital of Croat-dominated cantons in Bosnia – in other words, a direct threat to Bosniak presence in the city.[114]

What makes the political stalemate in the city intractable is not only the lack of political will both in the Bosniak and Croat communities, but also Bosnia's overly complicated political system. For example, local elections in Mostar are regulated by city statute, the constitutions of FBiH and the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and Bosnia's Law on Elections.[115] Thus even the political elites of both communities are to agree on changes, it would require that political structures outside Mostar change the regulations, a no small feat in a deeply divided state.

The two main political parties in Mostar are the SDA (a nationalist party representing Bosniaks) and the HDZ (a nationalist party representing Croats). Although in the first years after the end of the war, the parties dominated political life in the city, in the early 2010s the Bosniak and Croat communities became increasingly open to voting for other parties as well. Thus in early 2015, Mostar's city council (the city's legislative body) was composed of 35 councilmembers, of which 12 were independent and the rest came from five political parties and coalitions.[116] Although representatives belong to different parties (or are independent) there is a strong pressure on councilmembers to maintain their ethnic loyalty and vote accordingly. SDA and HDZ continue to be the major political players in town.

The existence of duplicate governing institutions and public services further breeds corruption in the city's political system. Political leaders exercise an enormous influence over appointments at all levels of government and in public-owned companies, and thus buy the loyalties of their subordinates. Subordinates, for their part, use the government's power over public companies for directing money and jobs to vast networks of family, friends, and loyalists. Not only can the government stimulate financially favorite people and businesses, it can also actively impede the activities of those it disfavors. This can involve excluding companies and individuals from lucrative city contracts, sending taxmen to out-of-favor companies, levying fines for technical slips, using regulations to burden business activity, etc.[117] Above all, however, political leaders and their subordinates dispense favors based on ethnicity – Bosniaks favor Bosniaks and Croats favor Croats. Ethnicity trumps competence and merit.

Another factor that breeds corruption and government dysfunction is the influence of organized crime in the city. Organized criminal groups – including persons with a criminal record dating from communist time, former communist leaders, heads of ethnic militias, etc. – emerged during the wars and accumulated power and resources that assured their influence after the war's end.[118] While involved in the war effort, often acting as the shock troops of the Bosniak and Croatian forces, these networks were also involved in smuggling, appropriation of properties and resources belonging to the other ethnic group, and generally in the accumulation of political and economic power. These networks were led by strongmen, who maintained their power and influence after the end of the war, taking on ostensibly legitimate political and economic roles.[119] At one point in the 2000s, the population of Mostar considered organized crime to be the biggest threat to the country (nationalism came second).[120]

Despite the political deadlock and the resultant dysfunction in city government, Bosniaks in Mostar find ways to circumvent barriers in every-day life. People use legal and illegal means to obtain the services normally functioning cities provide, by relying on networks of family, relatives, friends, and acquaintances.

Mobilization

The power of political parties in Mostar to mobilize people by appealing to their ethnic loyalties and to deter them from challenging the political status quo has its limits. In early 2014, Bosnia witnessed massive public protests against government at all levels. Although the protesters did not have a single message and program, the variety of demands clearly demonstrated that ethnicity and nationalism are not the only issues that can mobilize the public for action. Demonstrators demanded that political parties break the political deadlock, while expressing anger with chronic high unemployment, corruption at all levels, and economic stagnation.[121] Mostar was one of the cities, which witnessed violent demonstrations attended by thousands. During the demonstrations, protesters torched the buildings of the city and cantonal administrations, and the HDZ and SDA headquarters in the city. Initially, ethnic affiliation had no influence on the demonstrations – both Croats and Bosnaiks took to the streets. However, Croats gradually dropped from the protests due to intimidation and peer pressure.[122] Croats were told that political changes may endanger their status not only in Mostar but also in Bosnia. Bosniaks, on the other hand, continued to protest, despite the pressure of political parties representing them to halt the demonstrations. In fact, all political parties in power, regardless of their ethnic affiliation, resented the protests and considered them a threat to the political status quo.

The protests in early 2014 demonstrated that Bosniaks in Mostar can be politically mobilized for reasons other than ethnicity and nationalism. As memories of the civil war began to fade and a new generation was becoming active in the city's political, social, and economic life, Bosniaks displayed increasing variations in what makes them politically active and mobilized for action.[123] However, this is not to say that issues related to ethnicity are no longer capable of mobilizing Bosniaks. Many Bosniaks in Mostar intentionally suppress memories of the war despite the everyday remainders of its effects, including the efforts of Bosniak-dominated institutions (government, education system, media, etc.) to keep the memories of suffering and victimhood alive.[124] However, it is possible that under certain conditions in the future a political leadership may manipulate ethnic loyalties and mobilize the group for action. In other words, although the likelihood of an interethnic violence appears low, there is always the possibility that an unforeseen crisis may be exploited to renew frictions between ethnic groups.

The massive protests in early 2014 in Mostar demonstrated that Bosniaks are capable of being mobilized by something other than a sense of ethnic belonging as in the past. Instead what mobilized them were economic and political issues.

Belief System

Symbols

Although Bosniaks are secular, religious symbols matter to them. Bosniaks were particularly offended in 2000 when Croats erected a 100-feet tall cross on Mount Hum, a hill overlooking Mostar, and visible, day and night, from almost every point of the city. Bosniaks saw the cross not so much as a religious symbol but rather a symbol of yet another Croatian attempts to dominate the city at expense of Bosniak presence (during the 1992-95 war, Croats used artillery on Mount Hum to inflict heavy damage on the Bosniak sector). Needless to say, Croats in the city do not share this attitude.

Old Bridge in Mostar (Source: Wikipedia)

The battle of symbols was waged on both sides. When the city celebrated the rebuilding of famous, 16th century Ottoman bridge (Old Bridge) linking the eastern and western parts of the city and destroyed by Croat forces in 1993, the Croat Catholic leadership and many Croats boycotted the event.[125] While Bosniaks in Mostar saw the bridge as a symbol of a reunited city and a past, peaceful coexistence, many Croats considered it a symbol of Ottoman past and a renewed Islamic presence.[126] This conflict of symbols extends to other parts of the city. During the war, both sides deliberately targeted for destruction sites that had symbolic value for the other side – churches, mosques, historic buildings, etc. After the conflict, both sides started reconstruction, deliberately rebuilding old symbols, eliminating those associated with the other community, and creating new ones.

The Old Bridge as a symbol is a good example of how conflict leads to a change in group's beliefs. Before the war, the Old Bridge was seen by most people in Mostar as one of the city's most recognizable symbols – a beautiful, old structure attracting tourists and local alike to the old part of the city. Croat forces destroyed the bridge during the war not only for military purposes (the structure was in a section mostly controlled by Bosniak forces) but also because Croats increasingly emphasized its Ottoman origin. Bosniaks, in turn, regarded the destruction of the bridge as a symbol of their victimization at the hands of Croats. After the bridge's reconstruction, Bosniaks saw the bridge as both a symbol of their suffering and a symbol of a peaceful past in a united and multicultural Mostar. Croats, on the other hand, regarded the bridge as a Bosniak symbol.

It is also important to point out that the international community's understanding of the symbolism of the Old Bridge differed from those of most people living in Mostar. As overseers of Bosnia's stabilization and reconstruction, the international community drew heavily on symbolic language and actions as a way to promote this process. Rebuilding the Old Bridge in Mostar, one of the last cities in Bosnia to remain stubbornly divided along ethnic lines, was presented as a symbol of reuniting the two halves of the city and reconciliation.[127] Few citizens of Mostar shared this belief. The rebuilding of the bridge (one of many in Mostar) had no discernable effect on how the two sides in the city interacted. Although there are no physical barriers between the two parts of the city (even before the bridge was rebuilt) the lives of Bosniaks and Croats are still separated. They do not actively seek each other and a citizen of Mostar is bound to spend the great majority of his or her time with people of the same ethnicity, and rarely cross the invisible line dividing the city.

In this competition of symbols, the Bosniaks felt outgunned as they had more limited resources. The Croat community in the city was more prosperous and could always rely on Croatia and Croats living abroad for additional resources. On the other hand, the relatively less prosperous Bosniak community often had to rely on external sources for reconstruction after the war. Some of the assistance came from Arab countries and was aimed at building and rehabilitating existing mosques. Some of this reconstruction took places at sites that had been abandoned as mosques long before the war. The campaign to build or rebuild mosques did not seem to be driven by any public demand, but rather by the wishes of the foreign sponsors. In fact, many Bosniaks in Mostar were displeased with what they considered the construction of an excessive number of religious buildings.[128] While in 1980 there used be merely 16 mosques in the eastern part of Mostar, by 2002, there were already 38.[129]

What the two communities choose as symbols reflected the deep divisions between them.[130] While in the past the Communist regime imposed common symbols that emphasized a shared, but also a multicultural identity, common symbols in Mostar are currently few and far between. For example, in communist Yugoslavia, Mostar used to have street names and monuments commemorating Serbian, Bosniak, and Croat members of the Communist *Partisan* struggle against the Nazi occupiers in WWII.[131] After the 1992-95 war, however, both communities increasingly chose to celebrate heroes associated with their own histories, struggles, and identities. Croats frequently display national flag of the Republic of Croatia in public and private spaces, while Bosniaks display the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosniaks renamed streets and erected monuments in the eastern part of the city to commemorate their struggle for survival in the 1992-95 war. In addition, they renamed streets after what they consider heroes of the communist and anti-fascist *Partisan* movement during WWII, many of whom fought against Nazi-allied Croatian forces (the *Ustasha*). Bosniaks' policies toward street names and

monuments also indicated a positive attitudes toward the communist past – no doubt because it was the communist leadership of Yugoslavia that created Bosnia and Herzegovina as constituent republic of the federation and declared Bosniaks a distinct national group. Croats, on the other hand, adopted symbols that mark their own struggles in addition to displays identifying their Catholic faith. Street names in the western part of the city (dating from communist times) were renamed to reflect Croats' reading of history. Remembering the communist rule as a time when Croat nationalism was oppressed, there are symbols commemorating Croats' anti-communist struggles and various prominent figures in Croatian history, politics, and culture.

Thus in everyday life Bosniaks see and adopt symbols – mosques, monuments, street names, flags, etc. – that are very different from the ones Croats in the other part of the city see. Frequently, symbols each side adopts are explicit messages to the other side – "this is ours, we belong here, we are dominant here."[132] There are also cases symbols have been desecrated and vandalized.

Bosniaks and Croats' adoption of different symbols reflects deep differences in beliefs and narratives. Although they agree that the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army was the main threat to Mostar at the beginning of the civil war and it required the joint Bosniak-Croat military effort to save the city, they sharply disagree on the reason for the conflict between the former allies after the Yugoslav forces were repulsed. In the prevailing Bosniak narrative, the Bosniak-Croat war was presented as liberation struggle against the fascist Croat forces supported by the regime in Croatia and bent on partitioning Bosnia, very much like *Ustasha* campaign in WWII. On the other hand, in Croat narratives, the Bosniaks, after being saved by the more capable Croat forces during the initial Serbian assault, turned on their former allies in an attempt to drive them out of the city and turn it into a Muslim area.[133]

Variations

Bosniaks' beliefs, memories, and narratives are not monolithic and instead there are notable variations. Most Bosniaks remember the pre-war Mostar as a peaceful and tolerant place – multiple ethnic groups co-existed peacefully and in fact few paid any heed to one's ethnicity. However, different generations of Bosniaks experienced, and now remember, the war and the post-war period in different ways. The current middle-age generation, with no memories of WWII and the formation of communist Yugoslavia, experienced the most disruption and trauma not only during the 1992-95 war but also in the after-war period.[134] The civil war shattered their beliefs about the nature of inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia, while the difficult political and economic post-war conditions robbed their hopes and prospects for normal life in the country. To this generation, pre-civil war Bosnia was a secure and safe place that was lost forever. Members of this group tend to value higher the relative social security and peace provided by the communist regime, when conflict was minimal, employment was almost guaranteed, and one needed not fear the future. The older generation, on the hand, having witnessed the horrors of WWII and the difficulties of post-war reconstruction, was less shocked by the return of violence in the early 1990s. In their narrative, WWII and the 1992-95 war were related and fit a pattern of violence in the region. The youngest generation – those with very little or no memories of pre-1992 Bosnia – seems to have experienced the least disruption. The young in Mostar, although facing grim economic and social prospects, do not feel robed of their hopes and prospects, unlike the middle-age generation.

Conclusion

You might have noticed that the case study does not include all, or even many, of the concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document. This is only natural; a comprehensive body of literature devoted to the study of a single culture is rare. In fact, Marines are frequently called upon to operate in areas where current information on local culture is scarce. What the OCG and the chapters in this document do is help Marines learn about their assigned region and acquire skills and concepts that will assist them in operating effectively in complex cross-cultural situations in any part of the globe when information is scarce or rapidly changing.

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