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Judy Batt, Misha Glenny, Denisa Kostovicova, Nicola Mai, Nadège Ragaru, Fabian Schmidt and Miranda Vickers

Edited by Judy Batt

Institute for Security Studies
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Introduction

Judy Batt

Is there an 'Albanian question'? If so, what is it? Is it a traditional 'national question', centred on redrawing territorial borders to form a new ethnic nation-state: a 'Greater Albania' that would gather in all the Albanian communities in the Balkans? Many outside observers, in particular among the Albanians' neighbours in the Balkans, see it that way and fear its destabilising consequences. They would argue that the Albanians already have a nation-state 'of their own' in present-day Albania, and see the prospect of a second – if Kosovo eventually achieves independence – as only the first step towards the political unification of all Albanians, setting off a domino effect of secessions by the Albanians of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, followed by the Albanians of Montenegro and southern Serbia – thus provoking an unstoppable avalanche of similar demands by others, for example the Bosnian Serbs in Republika Srpska, the Hungarians in Serbian Vojvodina and Romania's Transylvania and southern Slovakia, the Catalans and Basques, the Scots and Welsh...

None of the contributors to this *Chaillot Paper* find this scenario convincing. The core of the Albanian national question today is Kosovo, an issue that has the power to unite Albanians in the Balkans and in the sizeable diaspora communities spread across the globe. While the answer, for Albanians, is independence for Kosovo, beyond that, views diverge. It seems that only a minority of Albanians remains committed to the project of Pan-Albanian political unification in a Greater Albanian state, and indeed a competing variant exists, that of 'Greater Kosovo' which would cover Albanian-inhabited lands of the former Yugoslavia only. Most Albanians are fully aware of the diversity of interests of the various Albanian communities in the Balkans, who have lived in different states over the past century of their emergence into modern politics. The end of communism may have made it much easier for Albanians to cross borders and keep in better

contact with each other, but this did not lead to greater national cohesion – on the contrary. Political interests have consolidated on the basis of the existing territorial *status quo*, and three 'Albanian capitals' have emerged – Tirana, Pristina and Tetovo – in lively competition with each other. Thus today political realism prevails among the mainstream Albanian elites, and Albanian public opinion too shows little appetite for any variety of 'Greater Albania' project, being far more concerned to avoid further conflicts and focus on solving everyday issues of economic underdevelopment, poverty, corruption and crime.

However, in the still uncertain and potentially volatile Balkan context, nothing can be taken for granted. Nationalism is a protean ideology, subject to rapid redefinition of its goals in the light of circumstances and opportunities. The international guidelines for the resolution of Kosovo's status, defined by the Contact Group (comprising France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia and the US), firmly rule out both unification of Kosovo with adjacent territories or states, and partition of the province. At the time of writing, the protracted Kosovo status process was still struggling towards an uncertain conclusion. The longer it goes on, the greater the danger of an uncontrolled and violent *dénouement*. If faced with a stalemate in the international status process, Kosovar Albanian leaders are likely to unilaterally declare independence, and almost inevitably the Kosovar Serbs would react by declaring secession from Kosovo. *De facto* partition would be the result. At a recent meeting of the EUISS Task Force on the Balkans, one participant argued that this would 'unleash territorial resentments' among the Kosovar Albanians, leading to 'a change in the mode of settling the Albanian question in the Balkans'. Whether or not this nightmare scenario is allowed to play out depends not only on the will of the international community to prevent it, but also on whether Albanians really want it to happen.

The Albanians of Albania, as Miranda Vickers argues in Chapter One, are committed to the current 'Euro-Atlantic' mode of regional integration under the aegis of eventual EU and NATO membership. Pan-Albanian dreaming is being channelled into a sort of 'post-modern' reimagining of a looser 'new Albanian space' in the Balkans, in which Albanians can move freely and maintain cultural, economic and family contacts while respecting the state borders that divide them politically. One cannot say

that the Albanians of Albania are *satisfied* with their state – far from it. However, what bothers them most about their state is not its territorial extent or its 'national mission', but its malfunctioning democracy – a point to which we return below.

Kosovar Albanians certainly will not be satisfied until they have their state – but, as Fabian Schmidt explains in Chapter Two, *whatever* the status outcome, Kosovo will face major challenges of governability in the future. The challenge that has received the lion's share of attention to date is that of integrating the non-Albanian communities, chiefly the Serbs. But economic sustainability and the capacity to deliver jobs and welfare are vital, as is strengthening institutions, in particular the judicial system. Better results in these areas could do much to help persuade the Serbs that they have a future in Kosovo.

Elsewhere in the Balkans, Albanians live as minority communities in states that are more or less ready to accommodate their identities and interests. Thus we find not one, but several different varieties of 'national question' whose resolution is intricately intertwined with the national and statehood questions of the other peoples with whom they live. The most stable Albanian minority community is that in Montenegro, where they constitute some 5 percent of the population. So far, Montenegro has done well in integrating its Albanian minority, which voted with the majority of Montenegrin citizens in favour of independence in 2006. Skilful and politically mature leadership on the part of Ferhat Dinosa has enhanced the political influence of the Albanian community and won the respect of Montenegrin citizens, and the government has proved accommodating to Albanian interests. However, a recent study revealed a considerable level of mutual antipathy between Albanians and the large community of Serbs in Montenegro, who make up some 30 percent of the population.[1] The issue of Kosovo presents a challenge for Montenegro, but *not* in the sense of encouraging its Albanians to demand 'unification' with Kosovo – they are quite satisfied with their much better living conditions and prospects in booming post-independence Montenegro. The challenge that the Kosovo issue presents for the Montenegrin government is to steer skilfully to maintain the good relations it has developed with Pristina, while at the same time doing its best with Belgrade, which has not, until recently, made much effort in return.

Serbia itself hosts a small minority of restive Albanians, clus-

1. CEDEM (Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Montenegro) *Ethnic distance in Montenegro*. http://www.cedem.cg.yu/opolls/images/Ethnic_distance_2007.pdf.

tered along the border with Kosovo in the south.[2] Some of their leaders persist in calling their region 'eastern Kosovo' and demand border adjustment to join with Kosovo. Since the overthrow of Milosevic in October 2000, Serbian governments have made efforts to improve the economic conditions of these remote, impoverished and long-neglected communities (where unemployment is 70 percent). But they have not found it easy to draw them into the 'Coordination Body for Southern Serbia', set up to tackle the region's problems, and mutual mistrust remains high. One hopeful sign is the presence, since the January 2007 elections, of a deputy in the Serbian parliament returned by one of the Albanian minority parties.

The case of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, covered by Nadège Ragaru in Chapter Three, is a fascinating study of fragile stabilisation in a country that plunged headlong towards civil war in 2001, stepped back from the brink by accepting international mediation to broker the 'Ohrid Framework Agreement', and has since made some progress towards EU integration. But one of the many lessons from this illuminating case study is that national questions are never finally 'answered' once and for all. The Ohrid Agreement offered the Albanian community almost everything they demanded, and they are broadly satisfied with the results – but now the majority ethnic Macedonian community feels that their own interests have been neglected. The new government that came to power in 2006 responded to this mood, but in trying to redress the balance, found itself confronting a renewed crisis in relations with the major Albanian party. All sides had to learn that managing multi-ethnic statehood is not only a matter of finding a constitutional 'fix' but also of adopting a style of politics as a permanent effort at mutual accommodation.

The dramatic 'high politics' of the Kosovo issue tends to obscure the fact that for most Albanians, the most urgent questions today are not 'national' ones at all, but questions of economic underdevelopment, unemployment, the quality of democratic governance, political corruption and criminality, and the emigration of large numbers of the brightest and best of the younger generation. As Nicola Mai reports in Chapter Four, it is estimated that more than 1 million Albanians have left Albania since 1991 – one quarter of the population. Similar trends are evident in both FYR of Macedonia and Kosovo, although reliable

2. For more details, see International Crisis Group, 'Southern Serbia: In Kosovo's Shadow', Policy Briefing, *Europe Briefing* no. 43, 27 June 2006. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4184&l=2.

statistics are lacking. Mai argues that many of the migrants are driven as much by political as by economic motives. This is a point corroborated by all the previous chapters, which highlight the immaturity of democratic politics as a major source of frustration to all Albanian communities, irrespective of their majority or minority status. Clientelism and political corruption deny opportunities to well-educated aspiring professionals, in particular the young, and alienate the mass of voters who see leaders as selfish and greedy.

One thing that worries Albanians in the diaspora communities abroad, covered by Denisa Kostovicova in Chapter Five, is the poor international image of their nation, and in particular, the association of Albanians with organised crime. But, as Misha Glenny shows in Chapter Six, the most striking thing about Balkans organised crime is its transnational character, drawing together 'mafia' type structures from across the region regardless of nationalities. Glenny's colourful journalistic approach differs from that of the other authors here, but it is precisely his wide renown in the region as journalist and historian that has allowed him to get closer to 'first-hand' sources on this tricky topic than the rest of us are able – or would wish – to do. Glenny argues that organised crime is by no means an Albanian speciality, but primarily a consequence of post-communist state collapse and the failure of weak transitional democracies to break their links with old security apparatuses. Several contributors mention the implosion of the Albanian state in 1997 in the wake of the devastating collapse of pyramid savings schemes into which most of the population had invested their savings in the hope of a quick escape from grinding poverty. But the fragility of the Albanian state, albeit dramatically demonstrated in 1997, is not exceptional. Glenny gives a vivid account of the metamorphosis of Bulgarian secret policemen, in a curious partnership with the phalanx of 'wrestlers, weight-lifters, boxers and other assorted muscle-men' groomed for Olympic glory by the communist regime, who have turned their skills to new uses in protection rackets. But war in the former Yugoslavia offered unprecedented opportunities – and incentives – for criminal activity in alliance with warmongering regimes, or, in the case of Kosovo, an insurgent 'national liberation army'. The networks thus forged have not disappeared in the post-war era, nor will they soon do so. Yet Glenny points to two factors that are working to weaken their

hold. Firstly, having amassed enormous wealth by nefarious means, major criminal figures are now beginning to see the need for more effective states to secure their property and regulate the economy to provide the predictability that any investor needs. Secondly, the EU now recognises that durable stabilisation of the region will be best achieved by using the perspective of eventual EU membership to leverage political and economic transformation – strengthening state institutions, anchoring fragile democracies, modernising economies and societies, and providing a framework for reconciliation between peoples.

None of these challenges is unique to the Albanians, but each Balkan nation will confront them in its own way. Denisa Kostovicova, in Chapter Five, points to a special asset that is emerging within the younger members of the Albanian diaspora in the West: maintaining close links with young democracy activists in the Albanians' Balkans homelands by means of the internet. She presents the exciting potential of the new generation of Albanians to leap out of the isolation and introversion of the pre-modern traditional politics of village, clan and clientelism into a new 'post-modern' kind of transnational political community, committed to building democracy within their states and across them. These young people are ready to spearhead reform at home, and will no doubt prove a vital propellant of EU integration for their respective Balkan homelands. Their global cosmopolitanism will in time no doubt inject a vital new energy into the EU's internal and external – not least, transatlantic – politics. Who needs 'Greater Albania' when the world is one's natural arena?

The role of Albania in the Balkan region

Miranda Vickers

1

Pan-Albanian nationalism is far more layered and complex than the usual broad-brush characterisation of an ethnic Albanian programme simply bent on achieving a Greater Albania would have us believe. Albanian nationalism can indeed ultimately be defined in terms of irredentism: the reabsorption of all Albanian-speaking areas of the Balkans into a single state remains the core of the Albanian national programme. However, for all but a few extremists, contemporary political realities have significantly narrowed this goal into a pan-Albanian desire for the independence of Kosovo, and the removal of restrictions on cultural and economic cooperation between the various Albanian communities and states in which they live in the southern Balkans.[1]

Events such as the recent convention in Tirana of the Pan-Albanian Assembly (PAA) on 10 June 2007, which presented a 'Thesis for the Finalisation of the Albanian National Unification,' do little to dispel the widespread misunderstanding in international circles of Albanian national aspirations and the threat these pose to the security of the southern Balkans.[2] Yet the participants of this Assembly represent a tiny minority of the pan-Albanian population. The overwhelming majority have come to the sensible conclusion that their future prosperity will be best ensured by pursuing greater integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

Historical background

Kosovo is a prime element of Albanian national identity and the issue of its political status goes to the heart of the definition of Albania itself. Despite having been politically and physically divided from each other for many decades, Albanians from Albania, Kosovo, southern Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro have never lost their sense of a com-

1. For further reference on Pan-Albanian aspirations, see 'Pan-Albanianism – How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?', International Crisis Group, *Europe Report*, no. 153, February 2004.

2. The Pan-Albanian Assembly's Organising Council is the left-wing political structure of the Front for Albanian National Unification (FBKSh) and its military wing the Albanian National Army (AKSh). The PAA's agenda is to 'organise the direction of the movement for the national unification of Albanians into a single country.' It advocates first national unification, followed by European Integration. The FBKSh and AKSh have a numerically small support base and to a large extent nowadays are more of an internet-based group than an active political, guerrilla organisation.

mon national identity, and share the view that the borders drawn up by the Great Powers in the declining years of the Ottoman Empire represent a fundamental injustice.

In large part due to their relatively privileged status during the 500-year period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Albanians were among the last Balkan peoples to develop a national consciousness. What could be termed an Albanian national movement gradually developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century in response to the rapid decline in Ottoman authority in the Balkans. The Albanian-inhabited regions of the Balkan peninsula were claimed either wholly or in part by Serbs, Montenegrins, Greeks and Bulgarians as part of their own historical territories.

Albanian fears that lands they inhabited would be divided between their Balkan neighbours were realised at the 1912-1913 Conference of Ambassadors, which agreed to the creation of a new but territorially confined state of Albania. To the dismay of Albanians, the Conference assigned the greater part of the Ottoman *vilayet* (province) of Janina to Greece, and the newly-formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was awarded Kosovo and the Albanian-inhabited areas of what is now Western Macedonia and Eastern Montenegro. This left almost half the Albanian population outside the borders of the new Albanian state. The border was adjusted once more in 1921 in the wake of the First World War, when almost half a million Albanians found themselves resident in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and a further 70,000 in northern Greece. The elusive quest for national unification has preoccupied many Albanian academics, intellectuals and politicians ever since.

From this moment on, however, and until the present day, the national movement has only really had any meaning and relevance for Albanians living outside Albania. In 1915 the Committee for the Defence of Kosovo was set up illegally in the town of Shkoder in Albania. Led by political exiles from Kosovo, the Committee's primary objective was to secure revision of the borders and to unify all Albanian-inhabited lands. Branches were secretly established in every town in Kosovo and bands of *Kachaks* (outlaws) waged guerrilla warfare against the authorities. By 1924, however, the Committee found itself being ruthlessly suppressed not only by Belgrade but also by the new regime in Tirana.

The interwar period in Albania was dominated by the reign of King Zog, who had come to power with help from Belgrade. Zog

plotted ceaselessly to remain in power by liquidating or exiling his political opponents – many of whom were Kosovo Albanians. In order to maintain his good relations with Yugoslavia, he therefore consistently suppressed the irredentist activities of the Committee for the Defence of Kosovo operating from Albanian soil, and had most of its leaders hunted down and assassinated. So ended any hope for assistance from Tirana for the Kosovars' struggle for unification with Albania – a situation that has been repeated through successive administrations in Tirana right up to the present day.

Albanian nationalism briefly reared its head again during the Second World War when a form of 'Greater Albania' actually existed for four years under Italian and German occupation, when parts of Kosovo and western Macedonia were united with Albania. However, the national movement fared no better under the post-war communist regime which, like Zog, had to duck and dive in order to survive and had little appetite for irredentist activities. Thus, Serbian support for King Zog, the isolation of Albania under communism, the underdeveloped condition of the Albanian-inhabited regions of the former Yugoslavia, and the lack of a powerful and coordinated diaspora, all served to weaken pan-Albanian national aspirations until the very end of the twentieth century.

A key moment came in 1997 with the total breakdown of the Albanian state in the uprising that followed the collapse of pyramid banking schemes.[3] This event provided the means, in terms of weapons and a base, with which the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was to launch a campaign to 'liberate' Kosovo. The collapse of all state authority in Albania enabled looters to raid the country's military arsenals, thus supplying the Kosovo Liberation Army with a steady supply of small arms with which to attack Yugoslav security forces in 1998. Although the KLA officially disbanded after the end of the conflict the following year, many of its members believed that if they opened up a new front in the Presevo Valley in Southern Serbia, NATO would once again come to the rescue, release Presevo from Serbian control and annex it to Kosovo. They were very much mistaken however: NATO made it clear that it would not redraw borders, and that military provocations by Albanian militant groups would be treated as a direct security threat. Meanwhile, in the FYR of Macedonia, the neglect of legitimate concerns about Albanian cultural and educational rights had led to support for

3. See Miranda Vickers and James Pettifer, *The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007).

military action within the Macedonian Albanian community. In the spring of 2001, a brief but fierce conflict ensued, which culminated in the internationally-brokered Ohrid Accords as a result of which ethnic Albanian political parties were brought into the Macedonian government.

For Albanians in general the 'liberation' of Kosovo from Serbian control in 1999 marked a key turning point in the destiny of Albanians throughout the southern Balkans. Since the war, it has become clear that Albania has a role to play as a regional point of reference for Albanians living in neighbouring countries and is consequently expected to exert its influence over pan-Albanian issues. Nevertheless, Albania's overall influence over Kosovo and the Albanian-inhabited areas of Macedonia and Montenegro is much more symbolic than real.

Today, divisions between the Albanian communities spread across southern Europe remain pronounced. Albanians have got used to the idea of separate Albanian entities in the Balkans. Indeed in discussions with Kosovo Albanians, the vast majority are in favour of independence, yet few want union with Albania. Younger Albanians in Kosovo have developed a Kosovar identity of their own and see joining the European Union as a far more advantageous goal than any form of union with Albania. The Albanians of the Balkans are well aware of the cultural and ideological divisions between their different communities, and the majority are therefore content to preserve their separate political entities as long as business, cultural and travel restrictions are removed. To this end, there is a growing consensus amongst pan-Albanian leaders over issues concerning their national interests in what can be loosely defined as the 'new Albanian space'.

Although Albanians would like to see what they regard as a tremendous historical injustice redressed – the imposed incorporation of Albanian-inhabited territories into Yugoslavia and Greece – political elites in Tirana, Pristina and Tetovo fully accept the notion of the inviolability of existing borders and consequently have no desire to push for a Greater Albania. The desire to territorially unify all Albanians has long held far more power as a myth than as a practical political agenda. Today, the Albanian national question essentially centres on the indeterminate status of Kosovo and the political future of the ethnic Albanian populations of Macedonia and Montenegro. The complexities arising from the multi-ethnic nature of the southern Balkans has led all

but a few extremists to adopt a responsible attitude towards nationalism – namely that it can be contained and nurtured in the context of an independent, multi-ethnic Kosovo free of political control from both Belgrade and Tirana.

European integration and NATO membership

The last five years have seen a process of continual political stabilisation and economic progress in Albania, which is aspiring to be recognised as a European rather than a Balkan country. To Albanians the term 'Balkan' not only implies factional division and conflict, it is also a reminder of the centuries of Ottoman or Eastern rule that is generally perceived as having held back the development of the country and given Albanians a backward and non-progressive image. Consequently, despite long domination from the East and a predominantly Muslim heritage, Albanians are at pains to appear politically and culturally 'Western.'

Thus Albania's key foreign policy goals remain gaining full membership of the European Union and NATO. Support for NATO and EU membership is very high (around 80% in favour) in Albania, due to a widespread expectation that such membership will increase security and stability, human rights and stimulate development of the market economy. Ever since its creation in 1912, Albania has always enjoyed the patronage of a Great Power or Superpower, and the country now appears quite willing for the EU to assume such a role. Albania desperately wants to belong to the Euro-Atlantic community, yet Prime Minister Sali Berisha has criticised Albanian institutions that deal with the country's EU integration, accusing them of providing inaccurate information to Brussels, failure to implement EU directives, and inefficiency. In particular, Berisha accused the Ministry of Integration of sending 'sugar-coated' reports to the European Commission.[4]

Albania is still coming to terms with the concept of political pluralism, and it lacks the self-confidence to believe that it can stand alone, especially given the still unsettled issue of Kosovo and the generally volatile nature of the region. It is hard for many Albanians to accept the fact that it may take more than ten years before the country gains full EU membership. In their opinion, they have been fully-fledged Europeans since the end of the one-party state

4. *South Eastern Europe Security Monitor*, Sofia, 2 August 2007, p. 2.

in 1991. This is reflected in the tumultuous reception given to Dr. Sali Berisha following his victory in the country's first multi-party elections in 1992, when he greeted the crowds with the words: 'Hello Europe, I hope we find you well.'

But simply identifying oneself as 'European' is not enough to secure EU membership, as Albania has discovered. As early as 1995, Albania requested the opening of negotiations for an association agreement with the EU. Draft negotiating directives were prepared but no formal recommendation was adopted by the European Commission because of the flawed parliamentary elections in May 1996, and the uprising the following year. The EU then stressed that establishing contractual relations would depend upon convincing progress in terms of stabilisation and recovery in Albania after that crisis. The main achievement of the post-2001 Socialist Party-led government was the forging of a better relationship with the European Union. As a result, in October 2002, EU foreign ministers agreed to open talks on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and preliminary negotiations with the EU officially began on 31 January 2003.

The conditions set by Brussels before Albania can hope to progress to EU membership include completion of institutional reforms, tackling organised crime and corruption, strengthening government and administration at local as well as central levels, and the decentralisation of political and financial power. These fundamental pre-conditions are unlikely to be achieved without total political commitment on the part of the government. EU officials have continually stressed that there is no shortcut to EU membership. Yet, despite the government's professed commitment to tackling these issues, there is reason to believe that the political class may not have the will, or strength of purpose, to accomplish more than cosmetic changes.

The task is immense, as virtually every facet of Albanian society needs reform and a significant proportion of the population still lives in abject poverty. Although the political climate is calmer and stability has been restored throughout the country, grave social and economic problems underlie the evident prosperity in parts of Tirana and other central and southern towns. Much of the north and northeast of the country remains unaffected by the prosperity further south. Here the lack of infrastructure and investment produces a constant out-migration that contributes to the lag in social and economic development.

Apart from a brief experiment in 1924, parliamentary government has never previously existed in Albania. Consequently, understanding of modern political parties and their role in a pluralist democracy is limited. The long decades of hardline, isolationist Communist rule (1944-1991) have profoundly affected the psychological and social, as well as political and economic, development of the Albanian people. Successive post-communist governments have experienced great difficulty in breaking with many habits of the past, both personal and institutional. The communist administration depended upon a small elite of qualified and intellectually sophisticated personnel in Tirana. With the collapse of the one-party state in 1991, subsequent governments have been unable to distance themselves from the often elitist and undemocratic habits of thought and political practice of many members of this social group.

Public trust in the country's institutions of law and justice is very weak, and there are widespread concerns about media freedom. Recently several large demonstrations were held by NGOs in Tirana to protest against the government's continuing pressure on the media. Serious problems remain with a judiciary plagued by political interference and widespread corruption. A climate of apathy and poorly functioning state institutions have weakened the political centre in favour of regional loyalties. People have little sense of community, having gone from extreme collectivism to extreme individualism. Lack of trust in any institutions has led people to revert to a high degree of self-reliance, which means they take little responsibility for what happens beyond the confines of their families and homes. There is a strong psychological gap to be overcome before ordinary Albanians can be persuaded that any investment in their community is also an investment in the future well-being of their families.

Nevertheless, there have been several positive developments. Over the past few years the political temperature has been lowered and the overall performance of the economy remains satisfactory. The calm and orderly conduct of the general election of 2005 marked a positive step forward for Albania along the road to integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. The election was welcomed as a sign that the peaceful transition of power in Albania is now normal and an indicator of political progress since the years of turmoil in the late 1990s. Albania has also been credited as a key factor in regional stability as it strengthens political and commercial links with all its neighbours.

As a result of these and other encouraging signs of a break with the past, Albania finally signed the SAA in June 2007. This was interpreted by the Democratic Party-led government as an endorsement by the EU of the reform process so far and of the Berisha government's commitment to democracy. Yet the country is unlikely to join the EU before 2018 as the period envisaged for implementing the SAA in Albania is 10 years.[5] Throughout June and early July the country became polarised as Albania's political parties failed to reach agreement on the choice of candidate for the forthcoming presidential election, as the five-year term of President Moisiu expired. The situation became acute as the opposition Socialist Party called a boycott of parliament. A crisis was only averted on 20 July when seven opposition MPs ignored the boycott, thus helping to end a political impasse that was pushing the country towards early parliamentary elections. On 24 July, the deputy leader of the ruling Democratic Party, Bamir Topi, was finally sworn in as President of Albania. A popular political figure who has pledged to bring balance and transparency to Albanian politics, Topi could boost Albania's image abroad by helping to end the chronic political in-fighting, and to move forward with necessary reforms and the modernisation of institutions.

The EU has warned that the country must do more to fight organised crime and corruption. In regular pronouncements, successive Albanian governments in recent years have identified the fight against these two issues as a top priority. Yet few attempts have been made to curb the rampant and institutionalised corruption that is endemic within all political and state institutions, and pervades every aspect of the lives of ordinary Albanians. The weakness of the state has facilitated the growth and consolidation of organised crime and corruption combined with a culture of clientelism and patronage. Whilst the authorities recognise the existence of organised crime in Albania, they appear not to acknowledge the full extent of its links with individuals in top state offices, including the government and the police force as well as elements within the Albanian diaspora and the wider criminal world. The real challenge for successive Albanian governments is to deprive organised crime of its powerful political backers in Tirana.

Some progress has been made through the EU-supported comprehensive State Institutions and Public Administration Reform

5. For an historical account of Albania's European integration efforts, see: Mirela Bogdani and John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union – The Tumultuous Journey towards Integration and Accession* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), p. 115-19.

Programme. However, state institutions and the civil service remain weak and unstable, and the public administration functions poorly at most levels. Progress is slow and comes up against the mindset of a people that has come, through bitter experience, to regard any form of authority with suspicion. Institutional reforms still await genuine political negotiations and commitment. Successive governments have failed to implement the pledges that they appear to have made primarily in order to present a good image to the international community.

Challenging these negative forces is a new breed of young, foreign-educated activists who are beginning to emerge from civil society and academia. They are calling for change through popular civic movements such as *Mjaft!* ('Enough!'), which organises street protests, public opinion polls and other activities to publicise the concerns and wishes of the general public. For the foreseeable future, movements such as *Mjaft!* are the only internal drivers for change – all the more reason for the population as a whole to place their hopes upon patronage and pressure from external actors such as the EU and the US.

The Albanian people are, unfortunately, at the mercy of their own political class when it comes to speeding up the reform process and tackling the twin evils of corruption and organised crime that are the real stumbling blocks on Albania's path to Europe. Albanians have no confidence in their political leadership, whether of the Democratic or Socialist party, to deliver even the most basic services such as reliable supplies of water and electricity, let alone to bring the country into line with the criteria necessary for EU membership. As discussions on 'absorption capacity' have become increasingly frequent in Brussels, it is Albania's misfortune that it should be striving for eventual EU membership just at a time when enthusiasm for further expansion of the EU is waning amongst many of the original members.

Nevertheless, with no real alternative goal to strive for, Albania has little choice but to continue, however slowly and ineffectually, with the reform process. The role of parliament must increase as relations between the EU and Albania deepen, and parliament must become more engaged in the process of implementing the SAA. The real challenge will be Albania's own ability to maintain the work initiated by the international agencies and to engender a national spirit of cooperation and integrity. At a Council of Ministers' meeting in May 2007, Prime Minister Sali Berisha declared

that 'the government is determined to proceed each day with the implementation of reforms to fulfil article by article the requirements of the SAA.' As he said, 'We feel encouraged by the support we receive and remain determined to push ahead with these reforms. From the beginning, the government declared the SAA the most historic contract with the EU and I am determined to realise it'.[6] A more realistic goal for Berisha in the short term, however, may be membership of NATO.

Albania first requested NATO membership back in 1992 immediately following the country's first multiparty elections, and has since expanded bilateral military ties with several NATO members. Albania has signed military cooperation agreements with a number of states in Europe and within the region. It also joined NATO's 'Partnership for Peace Initiative' in February 2004, and is a member of the 'US-Adriatic Charter of Partnership' (signed in Tirana in 2003). Albania is an active participant in various regional initiatives, such as the South East European Cooperation Process, the Black Sea Initiative and Corridor Eight, all of which aim to improve regional cooperation.[7]

Relations with NATO continue to be fruitful and NATO appears satisfied with Albania's military reform processes. As a result, Albania expects to receive an invitation for membership in the next enlargement round at the NATO summit in spring 2008. During talks in Brussels with Albania's Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu at the end of March 2007, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that Albania and other aspirants in the region have concrete prospects of joining the Alliance, if they continue with necessary reforms, most importantly restructuring their armed forces and fighting corruption and organised crime.

The US has consistently given strong support to Albania's application for NATO membership. Hence, the Albanians expected strong support for NATO membership from President Bush during his visit to Tirana in June 2007. Bush's one-day visit to Albania was the first by a serving American President and he duly brought the anticipated message of support for Albania's aspirations. President Bush congratulated Albania on its ongoing reforms but added that more work was needed before it met the performance-based standards required for NATO membership. Like Secretary General Scheffer, he stressed the need to complete the required political and military reforms by the spring of 2008.

6. ATA news agency, Tirana, 9 May 2007.

7. On these, see Milica Delevic, 'Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans', *Chaillot Paper* no. 104 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies), July 2007.

President Bush's visit was followed by a high-ranking military delegation from the US Department of Defense headed by the Director for NATO and Southern Europe at the US Department of Defense, Anthony Aldwell, who held talks with Albanian Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu. The discussions centred on cooperation between the two sides, including an exchange of high-level military visits and joint military manoeuvres. Aldwell praised the achievements of Albania as well as the great support Albania gives to the US in the missions in Iraq. He said that Albania had made important steps towards NATO membership, but steps that needed to be intensified.[8] The Pentagon also announced the allocation of $50 million for the education and training of the Albanian Armed Forces.

The Bush visit was hailed as a milestone in relations between Albania and the United States. During a joint press conference with Bush, Prime Minister Sali Berisha said he was determined to take any decision, pass any law and undertake any reform to gain an invitation for Albania to join the Alliance. Unlike his similar pronouncements on EU reforms, there was a sense of passion and conviction in Berisha's statement. He can obviously see a more realistic chance for Albania to attain NATO, rather than EU, membership during his premiership. Indeed, on 21 January 2008 in an unprecedented show of solidarity with the opposition Socialist Party, Democratic Party MPs unanimously approved a draft resolution proposed by the socialists that pledged commitment from all parties to accomplish all the judicial and electoral reforms needed for NATO integration. Albania is expected to receive an invitation for membership in April 2008.

To some degree this reflects Albania's more pro-American foreign policy and lesser interest in exact coordination with the EU on every issue, now that EU membership seems to be an increasingly distant prospect. The new elite will try to extract whatever financial and other benefits there are to be had from the SAA process, whilst attempting to disguise from the European Commission the lack of real progress on local reform issues. In that sense, the relationship between Albania and the United States will follow the traditional pattern of Albania's relations with Great Powers going back many years. In general it can be argued that Albania is the most pro-American country in Europe, and would not balk at the role of being a client state of America. Rightly or wrongly, the United States is perceived as the bastion of democ-

8. ATA news agency, Tirana, 21 June 2007.

racy and freedom in the world, and when the Albanian nation saw itself under threat during the Kosovo conflict, it was to the US that Albanians looked for help. There is tremendous gratitude towards America for spearheading the NATO bombing campaign to 'liberate' Kosovo in 1999. Regardless of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's support, there remains deep suspicion of the motives of the European powers, which are often suspected of giving preferential treatment to Serbia.

This is not to suggest that the Albanian government is anything but pro-European, and the ongoing relations with the EU will of course continue. But in the current climate, Albania acknowledges that rapid enlargement of the Union is very unlikely. According to a public opinion survey conducted by the International Commission on the Balkans in 2004, Albanians are the most pro-European people in this region: according to the survey, Albanians were 72 percent in favour of the EU with only 2 percent against it. Many Albanians believe that joining Europe will greatly improve their standards of living by guaranteeing political stability and human rights as well as improving their employment prospects and eliminating the need to apply for visas to work in other EU countries. Yet, despite overwhelming popular enthusiasm for EU membership, without the corresponding will and drive from Albania's political class, this support has little real practical impact.

Aside from the key goals of EU and NATO membership, successive post-communist Albanian governments have focussed upon improving relations with the country's regional neighbours. A gradual loosening of border controls and the opening of several new border crossings has given a new impetus to communication between Albania and her immediate neighbours, and provided a much needed trade boost. Albania has been continuously engaged in building bridges with her immediate neighbours, each one of which – Greece, Macedonia, and Montenegro – has a sizeable ethnic Albanian population. Even if Kosovo becomes independent, Serbia will continue to have a large ethnic Albanian population in the Presevo Valley region of southern Serbia.

Albania's bilateral relations with Macedonia and Montenegro have been consistently progressive and devoid of political incident, especially since the latter's independence from Serbia. Over the past few years a number of bilateral initiatives have helped improve Albanian-Montenegrin relations. Several new border

crossings have boosted economic cooperation, and special attention has been paid to the improvement of road and rail infrastructure linking Albania and Montenegro. A huge bridge is being constructed over the Buna River, which will connect the beach at Ulcinj with that of Velipoja to facilitate communication between the two tourism centres. Montenegro is the one region of the former Yugoslavia where Albanians recognise that they are an absolute minority – roughly 7 percent of the population – consequently any national aspirations are centred upon improving social and cultural rights and their political status within Montenegro.

Albanian-Macedonian relations remain constructive given the two country's shared main goals – namely EU and NATO membership. The enormous strategic political advance that the 2001 ethnic Albanian insurgency and the Ohrid Accords, have given the Macedonian Albanians cannot be underestimated. Nationalist and separatist demands have been diluted by the prospect of social and cultural equality with the Slav majority in the state. Nevertheless, underlying all developments in Macedonia is the central issue of the independence of Kosovo. It remains to be seen how the Macedonian Albanians respond to any declaration of independence by the Kosovars, and how this may affect Tirana's relationship with Skopje.

Albania's relations with Greece are somewhat more problematic. Ever since the foundation of the modern Albanian state, the definition of the relationship with Greece has been complex and unstable. The present Greek-Albanian border has been disputed by elements within both Greece and Albania since the Protocol of Florence (December 1913) ceded to Greece the largely Albanian-inhabited region of north-western Greece known to the Albanians as *Chameria* and the Greeks as *Vorio Epirus*.[9] The issue of the property rights of the predominantly Muslim ethnic Albanians (known as Chams) who were forcibly displaced from their homes in north-western Greece during the Second World War, has remained unresolved for over 60 years. Other often violent displacements of Chams occurred during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, during the population exchanges between Turkey and Greece in 1922, and during the dictatorship of General Metaxas in the 1930s.[10]

Today, more than 250,000 Chams live in Albania and they are campaigning ever more vigorously for the Greek government to

9. For further information on the background to the Protocol of Florence, see: Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians – A Modern History* (London: I.B.Tauris, London, 2006), Chapters 3 and 4.

10. See: Miranda Vickers, 'The Cham Issue – Albanian National & Property Claims in Greece', Conflict Studies Research Centre, Balkans series, April 2002; and Miranda Vickers, 'The Cham Issue – Where to Now?', Conflict Studies Research Centre, Balkans series, January 2007.

return their confiscated properties together with compensation for their use since their expulsion. Whilst Tirana tries to play down the Chams' demands, Athens consistently claims that the Cham issue does not exist and refuses to enter into dialogue with Cham representatives. The Cham issue is very much interlinked with that of the Greek minority in Albania and the large number of Albanian seasonal and residential workers – estimated at between 400-500,000, who have been working in Greece since the border between the two countries re-opened in 1992. Albania's economy relies heavily upon the remittances sent home by such workers, and as a result Tirana has been slow to challenge Athens regarding the serious employment, social and general human rights issues facing Albanian workers in Greece. The Greek government does not recognise the existence of ethnic minorities in the country, and diverges from normal EU practice over several issues – minority education and language rights in particular. Yet despite these difficult and unresolved historical, ethnic and social issues, Albania's relations with Greece are generally good in the broader sense. However, all these controversial issues are going to have to be seriously addressed by both Tirana and Athens before Albania can successfully join the European Union.

Conclusion

It can easily be demonstrated that the agenda of the new national question is not being coordinated from Tirana. Evidence based on the events of the last five years shows that the Tirana elite is inherently cautious and careful not to say or do anything that stirs up nationalist feeling. Instead, Albania would like to be seen as a bridge to facilitate communication and understanding between all the region's Albanians and their non-Albanian neighbours.

Albania's authorities welcomed NATO intervention in Kosovo as a contribution to stabilising the region. However, they have been dismayed that almost a decade after the end of the conflict, Kosovo's political status is still unresolved. Until some form of durable settlement is reached, the threat to Albania's security will continue, with the renewed possibility of ethnic Albanian insurgent groups recruiting men and stockpiling weapons inside Albania. The continual threat of renewed violence in Kosovo also deters foreign investors and hampers the development of tourism in Albania.

Despite the bitter and destructive domestic feuding and violence of the last fifteen years, Albania has consistently followed a responsible line in its foreign policy. In the context of an unstable region, Albania has been keen to demonstrate that it can be a factor for stability. Despite worries in some Western circles that the aspiration to create a Greater Albania has not yet been laid to rest, in Tirana, successive administrations have adamantly opposed the notion of the unification of Albania with any of the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Ever since the Kosovo conflict in the late 1990s, successive Albanian leaders have been at pains to reassure the international community that Kosovo is very much a separate Albanian entity. Prime Minister Sali Berisha has publicly denied that Albania has any desire to unite with or to annex Kosovo. In an interview he insisted that 'even if Kosovo declares independence, Albania would not seek to make it part of its territory', noting that 'the division (of the Albanian nation) one century ago created two very different Albanian realities – one in Tirana, the other in Pristina'. He reiterated that Albania's prime focus is on EU and NATO integration.[11]

Instead of any political and geographical unification, the current, and previous, Albanian governments have advocated building closer cultural and economic ties amongst ethnic Albanians in the region: rather than aiming to change borders, the hope is that there need not be barriers between Albanians, and in this way, nationalist pressures from among the ethnic Albanians outside Albania can be defused.

11. APA (Austria) Agency, 19 January 2008.

Kosovo – Post-status challenges to governability

Fabian Schmidt

2

The challenges Kosovo faces once its status has finally been resolved are manifold. Whatever the status outcome, there will remain challenges that politicians in Kosovo, in close cooperation with the international community (represented mainly by UNMIK, KFOR, the EU and OSCE as well as relevant international financial institutions) have been grappling with for the last eight years since the end of the war. These include building up an efficient public administration and a judicial system that serves all citizens in a transparent and responsive way, and strengthening central and local government institutions in all relevant fields. It includes the protection of human rights in general, and in particular of minority rights and religious monuments; ensuring the right of citizens to exercise their religion; and promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. Also on the agenda are privatisation and property rights, economic reconstruction and development, promoting investments and restarting local production, as well as integrating Kosovo into the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and developing a sustainable banking sector.

But the status question itself entails challenges of its own, dependent to a large degree on how the status question is eventually resolved. The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Kosovo's Future Status, Martti Ahtisaari, worked for almost a year and a half to negotiate between delegations from Belgrade and Pristina in order to reach a status proposal. On 26 March 2007, he presented his final report, which concluded that compromise was not possible and that the way forward would be internationally supervised independence for Kosovo.[1] But by late July 2007, the UN Security Council had failed to draft a resolution to implement Ahtisaari's status proposal, largely due to Russian objections to it. There followed yet another negotiation process, mediated by a troika made up of Russian, EU and US diplomats, which by December 2007 concluded that no progress had been made

1. Martti Ahtisaari, 'Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status', *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, March 2007), p. 79.

towards agreement. Thus, at the time of writing, the UN Security Council has been unable to issue a new resolution due to Russian objections, so Resolution 1244 remains in force.

Meanwhile, the parliament in Kosovo is preparing to declare independence, in close coordination with the Western states that are prepared to recognise the independence of Kosovo. KFOR will stay in Kosovo. The European Council of 14 December 2007 confirmed that the EU is ready to send a mission to Kosovo to replace UNMIK (regardless of the fact that not all Member States are ready to recognise Kosovo as an independent state).[2]

Even though the Ahtisaari Plan will not serve as the legal foundation for the recognition of sovereignty, Kosovo political leaders have committed themselves to implementing numerous aspects of the plan, such as the provisions for minority rights, decentralisation and so forth, relevant to Serbs living in Kosovo. UNMIK will be phased out and the exhaustively planned EU-led civilian mission implemented as far as possible. Key challenges for the EU and NATO will be to sustain maximum unity in support of their respective missions in Kosovo in order to preserve their credibility in the eyes of their partners in Kosovo; to ensure the protection of minorities in Kosovo during the transition period and reassure especially the Serbs, but also other minorities in Kosovo, that they can stay; and to secure the cooperation of the Kosovo parliament and government in implementing minority protection and collective rights as envisaged in the Ahtisaari plan.

Further challenges for the EU and NATO will be handling Serbia's responses. At this point, apart from the certainty that Serbia will adamantly refuse to recognise Kosovo independence, and the near certainty that it will not respond with armed force against Kosovo, it is hard to predict to what degree Belgrade will implement any of the various policies mooted by politicians and reported in the Serbian press (e.g. economic blockade of Kosovo, suspending diplomatic relations with states that recognise Kosovo, withdrawing from the Stabilisation and Association Process, etc.). Nor is it possible to predict to what extent the entire process will be effected without major outbreaks of spontaneous or covertly coordinated mass violence.

The rest of this chapter focuses on the longer-term, systemic challenges of governance that Kosovo will face, which are not necessarily related to the precise form and modalities of its future status.

2. For further information, see the European Council background brief, 'Preparing for a future international and EU presence in Kosovo', December 2007. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/071214-after_CE_EU_Background_December_2007.pdf

Institutional viability and economic and financial sustainability

After eight years of development, Kosovo and its institutions are still young and comparatively weak. Checks and balances are developing, but in several fields their institutional underpinnings are still insufficient. However, with the substantial support of the international community, the Kosovo administration has been able to improve its capacity to deliver services to the public.

Generally, the institutions are increasingly able to secure revenue in a sustainable manner, but overall public resources are still fairly slender. The ceiling for the consolidated budget of Kosovo for 2008, as approved in June 2007 by the parliament's Economic and Fiscal Committee, is set at 852 million euro, an increase of 100 million euro compared to 2007.[3] However, taking into account that the total population is roughly two million people, the size of the budget reflects the continuing importance of the subsistence economy to families. It also points to the fact that the banking sector is not yet fully developed and that the cash economy is still dominant among small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of economic recovery. In 2004, per capita GDP was 964 euro and Kosovo's overall GDP 1,895 million euro.[4] GDP is estimated to have declined in 2005 by 0.2 percent due to decreasing donor support, but it picked up again in 2006 due to increased direct foreign investments, and especially to the resilience of the private sector.[5] The budget is being prepared in line with a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), which clearly defines budget ceilings for the years 2008-2010 on the basis of macroeconomic forecasts. The government managed to reduce the budget deficit from a peak of 6 percent in 2004 to 3.2 percent of GDP in 2005 and hopes to keep it a level below 3 percent in the coming years in order to maintain monetary stability. Note also that the euro is official tender in Kosovo.

The MTEF is designed to ensure budgetary discipline, and it was drafted in close consultation with relevant development agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and European Commission. The government, keeping in mind the post-status challenges, has defined seven key sectors for expenditure in 2008: rule of law, energy, education, transport, agriculture, health, support for private sector development and social cohesion. It intends to use the 2008 Budget Plan also as a

3. Press Release, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Pristina, 24 July 2007.

4. Economic Initiative for Kosovo, 'Kosovo: Key economic indicators'. Available at: www.eciks.org.

5. Commission of the European Communities, 'Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) 2006 Progress Report', Commission Staff working document, Brussels, 11 November 2006, p. 18.

basis for a donors' conference soon after Kosovo's status has been resolved.[6]

Private sector investment accounted for 20 percent of GDP in 2005, while the Kosovo Trust Agency continued to privatise formerly socially owned enterprises at an accelerated rate. By the end of 2006 the Agency was close to reaching privatisation of 90 percent of total assets and 50 percent of socially-owned enterprises.[7] The institutional and administrative framework is favourable to investors. The average time required for a company to enter the market is 23 days. However, deficiencies in the judicial system, unresolved property issues and infrastructural deficiencies (especially the unreliable electricity supply) continue to cause uncertainty and deter investments

The trade deficit of Kosovo has remained high in the post-war years. In 2005 it was recorded at 43 percent of GDP. The current account deficit – after foreign assistance – was around 15 percent of GDP. Exports were 14 percent lower than imports, reflecting the fact that small and medium-sized private enterprises are mainly engaged in trade and consumption, transport and construction. Local production remains limited to agricultural products and small consumer goods, as well as the energy sector, where fragile capacities remain a problem. In fact the limited economic recovery can largely be attributed to diaspora transfers (estimated at 17 percent of GDP in 2005) and financial assistance (21 percent of GDP in 2005).[8]

The official unemployment rate was around 44 percent or 323,000 people in June 2006, but the sizeable informal economy means that real unemployment is probably considerably lower. 90 percent of those registered are long-term unemployed. The unemployment rate is rising, due to wages that are comparatively high in the regional context, which discourages foreign direct investment and reduces export competitiveness.

Therefore the main challenges will be to create a favourable investment climate by accelerating the resolution of property issues and creating legal security for investors. Furthermore, Kosovo should make good use of its starting position with a slim and comparably efficient administration to boost the development of the economy. The large shadow economy leaves room to increase tax revenues without increasing taxes. Kosovo could provide a favourable investment environment provided that public revenues are used for future-oriented investment rather than subsidies.

6. Press Release, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Pristina, 24 July 2007.

7. 'Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) 2006 Progress Report', op. cit. in note 5, p. 20.

8. Ibid., p. 18.

Integration versus social segregation: bridging the gap between citizen and state

As a result of the historical development of Kosovo, the relationship between citizen and state institutions remains strained. Therefore, one of the most fundamental challenges of post-status Kosovo will be to forge this relationship anew.

Especially in rural areas with strong traditions of self-sufficiency, social structures continue to be founded on a segregated social system in which the family plays the role as the guarantor of individual security. The public sphere, however, is considered insecure and is avoided unless it is necessary to use it for the vital needs of daily life (e.g. going to market). In contrast to an open society, where the citizen regards public authorities and the social control they exercise as the guarantor of individual freedom, the authorities in a segregated society are considered potentially dangerous. In contrast, in an open society, the individual withdrawal characteristic of segregated societies is regarded with suspicion. Segregated social organisation, which is still strong in remote rural areas of Kosovo, dates back to Ottoman times when village communities regulated their affairs largely autonomously, only paying tribute to the Sublime Porte. This was as true of the Albanians, living in remoter parts of the empire, as it was for the Serbs, who enjoyed a high degree of autonomy within their communities through the *millet* system, which allowed religious communities to govern themselves.

The Catholic Albanians – who did not enjoy the *millet* privileges – also traditionally regarded the government as remote and, often, as hostile. Affairs both in Catholic and in Muslim families were regulated through the *Kanun* of Lek Dukagjin, a system of common law that was passed on orally and only recorded in writing in the nineteenth century. The *Kanun* regulated relations between families on the basis of a complex system of honour that required individuals to take specific revenge in case of the violation of honour, which in numerous cases led to blood feuds, some continuing into the twenty-first century.

Strong identification of the individual with the state did not exist among Kosovo Albanians, even in recent history. Since Ottoman times, most Albanians in Kosovo have not experienced a form of governance with which they could strongly identify. In the first Balkan war of 1912, as well as during World War I, many Alba-

nians and Muslim Slavs in Kosovo became victims of Serbian offensives against the Turks. The inter-war period, during which Kosovo was governed from Belgrade as part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, is not remembered as a period in which Albanians or Muslims of any other ethnicity could develop strong bonds with the state. Instead, the relationship was largely hostile. Then the early Communist period (between 1944 and 1974) was characterized by persecution by the Yugoslav secret police, especially under Interior Minister Aleksander Rankovic, who ruled Kosovo with an iron fist, violently cracking down on any opposition to the regime. While many Kosovo Albanians and Muslim Slavs welcomed the high degree of autonomy that Kosovo received under the 1974 Tito-era constitution, this new framework did not substantially alter the relationship between citizens and the state.

The demand of Kosovo Albanian activists for a fully-fledged 'Republic of Kosovo' during the protests of the early 1980s reflected the lack of identification with the government, especially with the rulers in Belgrade, and a new low point was reached in 1990 with the violent and illegal abolition of Kosovo's autonomy in 1990 by the late Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. But student protests also pointed to an alienation from the ethnic Albanian political leadership of the League of Communists in Pristina. During the 1990s, Albanians in Kosovo did identify with the underground 'shadow state' led by the dissident intellectual (and later Kosovo President) Ibrahim Rugova – but this was not able to deliver most of the essential functions of a state. The shadow state could best be described as a non-governmental organisation providing structures of self-help in a society under siege.

The escalation of the armed conflict in 1998 and 1999 was probably the most dramatic demonstration of alienation between the leadership of the shadow state and the more impatient parts of Kosovar Albanian society. It also showed clearly the weakness of the shadow state's strategy of non-violent resistance, which after almost a decade had failed to deliver any results on the international diplomatic stage.

The 1998-99 war forged a new identity among the Albanians of Kosovo, centering on the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) and the liberation struggle of those years. The political parties that emerged from within the UCK are nowadays dominant in the political life of Kosovo, while Rugova's Democratic League of

Kosovo (LDK) has split and been reduced to the role of a minor coalition partner.

The post-war 'Provisional Institutions of Self-Government' established in 2001 by UNMIK (the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo) do, however, enjoy a high degree of respect among Kosovo Albanians, as long as they remain credible in their pledge to become in due course the state institutions of an independent, self-governing Kosovo. However, the tradition of identification between state and citizen is still very young in historical terms and is not yet deeply rooted in society and the family. The state is still perceived as a mechanism to be exploited within the framework of a system of patronage. As the economic indicators mentioned above show, the shadow economy continues to be the driving force in the provision of employment. People generally do not expect a strong government, having developed habits of self-sufficiency and having learned to stand on their own for centuries.

Today Kosovo society is at a turning point. Since the end of the war, the rural segregated family structures are weakening. With increasing numbers of young people moving to the larger cities or going abroad to study or work in services and jobs away from traditional agriculture, the large extended families have come under pressure, as have their traditional value systems. Blood feuds have noticeably declined since the end of the war. The emergence of reliable democratic institutions that pledge to protect human rights, and the emergence of non-governmental organisations offering assistance (especially to women) are bringing about the break-up of patriarchal family structures, which were frozen in space and time during the recent decades. This process goes hand in hand with a shift of values among the younger generation. New teachers staffing the education system and teaching students about individual rights and freedoms are preparing the ground for stronger social integration and identification with the public domain.

Tackling ethnic segregation

While the process of Kosovo's transition from a segregated society to an open society will be a key challenge, it is the integration of the Kosovo Serbs into the institutional framework that potentially will prove the most difficult to tackle.

Since the end of the war, most Serbs in Kosovo live almost

exclusively in segregated enclaves (as in the cities of Rrahovec, Fushe Kosova, Peja, Decani, Klina or Lloqan), isolated and quite apart from the majority Albanian population and other minorities. Only a few live individually in Pristina, where the anonymity of the urban environment affords a certain degree of protection. Besides the enclaves that are spread throughout Kosovo, there is the divided northern town of Mitrovica, the northern part of which is now overwhelmingly Serb-inhabited, as are the northernmost parts of Kosovo.

There can be no doubt that the identification of the Kosovo Serbs with the state of Kosovo is almost nil. They have let themselves be represented by Belgrade in all relevant international forums, from the peace talks in Rambouillet in 1999 to the ongoing negotiations mediated by the 'troika' of EU, US and Russian representatives. They have largely been unable to formulate and pursue their own agenda at forums that are crucial in defining the future of the region. However, there are grounds for arguing that Belgrade has not been the best advocate of the interests of the Kosovo Serbs. For example, Belgrade has for years been discouraging refugee return and pursuing ethnic segregation of communities rather than reintegration. The interests of the Belgrade politicians seem generally to reflect more their political interest in pleasing their electorate in Serbia proper than in protecting the interests of the Kosovo Serbs by promoting a sustainable future for them within Kosovo society. Regardless of which of the three status scenarios outlined above turns out to be closest to reality, it is crucial for Kosovo policy-makers and for the international community to make sure that the Kosovo Serbs start speaking for themselves and start taking responsibility through the elected institutions of Kosovo.

There is reason for optimism, however. Serbian delegates do now participate in parliamentary commissions and working groups, while continuing to boycott the main plenary sessions of the legislature. It may not be too long before they realise that only through the elected bodies can they protect their interests and return to parliament. It is imperative, however, that international representatives encourage the Kosovo-Serbian body politic to use the opportunities they have to positively influence their own fate in the region.

In its 2006 Progress Report, the European Commission stressed that President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Agim

Ceku had started an 'extensive and highly visible outreach campaign towards ethnic minorities, in which they called on Kosovo Serbs and other minority communities to consider Kosovo their home and to work together with Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-government.'[9] The Commission also pointed out, however, that although there is an anti-discrimination law on the books, nobody had brought a case of discrimination to court by November 2006. The Commission noted that this reflects the fact that implementation of the law is 'unsatisfactory', and that Serbs continue to suffer harrassment and intimidation. Further, 'minority communities, mostly Serbs and Roma, face discrimination, serious restrictions in freedom of movement, access to education, health care, public utilities and social assistance, due to the poor quality of services and security concerns.' The report welcomes the cultural rights extended by the Kosovo institutions to the Serbs and other minority groups in the form of providing multilingual documents, web pages and road-signs. But it notes that these efforts are often not sustainable, due to lack of consistent funding and maintenance.

The 2007 Progress Report notes the appointment of the head of the Office for Good Governance in the Prime Minister's Office to co-ordinate and report on the government's human rights efforts, and commends the government's 'major efforts to communicate and justify the concessions made to ethnic minorities' in the course of the status negociations.[10] If the Ahtisaari Plan forms the basis of the status solution, it will offer minority communities a veto over 'key laws of particular interest to communities'[11] as well as setting up six majority-Serb municipalities with substantial self-government and mechanisms to ensure an inclusive justice system 'that reflects the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo.'[12] Furthermore the document contains substantial safeguards for the protection and promotion of cultural and religious heritage.

The backbone of the community rights that the Serbian communities would gain under the Ahtisaari plan rests on local self-governance. The main challenges will be to ensure that these provisions are fulfilled, that principles of good governance and transparency apply, that the community administrations in the six new municipalities will be fiscally sustainable and that they use their municipal competences responsibly for the good of all citizens.

9. Ibid., p 14.

10. See 'Kosovo under UNSER 1244 2007 Progress Report'. Brussels, 6 November 2007, p. 9. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/kosovo-progress_reports_en.pdf.

11. Martti Ahtisaari, Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status, *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, March 2007), p. 83.

12. Ibid.

Kosovo's other minorities

Often overlooked, the minority groups of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians mostly live in enclaves (such as Fushe Kosova) or in Mitrovica, but they are generally more mobile and willing to travel to other neighbourhoods than Serbs. Their living situation is particularly grave, however, and will pose challenges for the years to come. Most of the settlements where they live continue to lack proper housing and infrastructure, ranging from water connections to electricity or paved roads.[13] Furthermore, these groups often have no access to education, income, health services or even documentation. Only a systematic, integrated effort by all relevant government agencies of Kosovo, with serious commitment to tackling the roots of poverty in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities through education and job creation programmes will show sustainable results.

Since the end of the war an estimated 200,000 refugees and internally displaced persons have left their homes in Kosovo. Currently most of them are Serbs and Roma/Ashkali/Egyptians. UNMIK has made efforts to enable refugee return, but many families have not returned, even though their houses have been reconstructed. The return quota remains disappointingly low, at about 16,000.[14] While it is most likely unrealistic to expect that the return quota is going to change dramatically, it is imperative to make sure the process of property return continues at the current rate. While it may not be possible in the long term to convince Serbian or other refugees to resettle, it is at least possible to return real estate lost during or after the war.

Reforming the justice system and streamlining legislation

Since the end of the war, UNMIK and the OSCE have had to build up the Kosovo justice and penal systems from scratch. However, the challenges to the justice system remain huge. So far the deficiencies certainly derive from the comparably short time which the justice system had to develop itself. A key concern is the legal basis on which judges have to conclude their rulings: the body of applicable laws is divided between old Yugoslav laws, UNMIK regulations and laws more recently adopted by parliament and promulgated by the Special Representative. This makes for ambiguity and often uncertainty for judges as to which law applies.[15]

13. Observations during a field trip by the author in June 2007.

14. 'Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) 2006 Progress Report', op. cit. in note 5, p. 16.

15. Ibid., p. 11.

The Ministries of Interior and Justice were only established in December 2005, and in the following months the newly created Kosovo Judicial Council nominated candidates for the justice system. In April 2006 key competences were transferred to the ministries, including supervision of the Kosovo Police Service and the Correctional Service by the Ministry of Interior. At the same time a regulatory framework for the justice system took effect. Also, the Judicial Council started a recruitment campaign, targeting specifically judges and lawyers from minority communities. The work of the Kosovo Judicial Institute – an educational facility geared for the training of judges and prosecutors and of candidates for the administration of courts and the penal system – started up. The Institute also took over responsibility for the administration of the courts. This step severed the link between the judicial and executive branches and made the courts institutionally independent from the Ministry of Public Services, which had been in charge before.

However, as the European Commission pointed out in its Progress Reports, there are still shortcomings in several fields of the justice system. These concern mainly the efficiency and capacities of judicial institutions, issues that will have to be addressed even after the status solution. For example, procedures in administrative cases before the Supreme Court are lengthy and often burdensome. The same is the case in civil and criminal justice. At the end of 2006, Kosovo still faced a backlog of roughly 45,000 court cases. A recently-introduced modern case-management system must now be put into use by judges.[16]

The fact that the parliament of Kosovo appoints judges and prosecutors, rather than an independent body of the judiciary itself, leaves room for political interference. Therefore, it will be important to make sure that the new constitutional framework, envisaged in the Ahtisaari plan, includes provisions ensuring the freedom of the judicial branch from legislative interference.

The absence of a functional civil register not only poses a potential problem to the organising of elections, but makes it virtually impossible for the justice administration to implement court summons or to enforce judgements. Furthermore the absence of Serbian court messengers weakens the power of the courts, especially in the north of the divided city of Mitrovica.

There is a lack of cooperation between courts and public administration. Cases have been reported in which municipalities ignore court decisions, and police fail to implement them. Finally

16. Ibid., p. 10.

there is no effective and comprehensive witness protection programme in place.[17]

After the status of Kosovo has been resolved, Kosovo's legislators will have to substantially rewrite the legal system of the country. Due to its current unresolved status, Kosovo is not yet party to countless international conventions, which it will be able to sign only after reaching sovereignty. However, in most relevant fields, the current legislation already meets the standards of the main international conventions, because the core content has been adopted in national law. However, overcoming old Yugoslav law, UNMIK regulations and recent laws adopted by parliament and streamlining the legal sources will continue to pose a daunting challenge in the years to come.

Also corruption still poses a major challenge. An anti-corruption agency started its work in July 2006, parallel to an organised crime unit at the Kosovo Police Service. A special law on the suppression of corruption and respective references in the criminal code are on the books. Nonetheless, corruption at all levels of public administration is still reported to be rampant, as is noted in reports by the auditor general.[18]

Conclusion

After gaining its status, Kosovo will have to go through yet another substantial reform process. While much groundwork has been laid during the eight years since the end of the war, the heritage of the UNMIK administration is a mixed bag. The legislative framework of Kosovo will have to be largely rewritten, starting with the Constitution and ending with the task of streamlining the different and often contradictory legal sources that are currently valid. The justice system continues to need substantial support to develop into a fully independent and self-confident body that can be considered free from political interference.

Forging social cohesion and an open society as well as ensuring the participation of minorities, especially Serbs, in the institutions of the state may prove to become the most difficult tasks of all, considering that all democratic institutions will have to effectively convey the message to a largely suspicious electorate that they are there to serve *all* citizens of Kosovo. This will only be possible through the broad participation of minority representatives

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 11.

in all parts of the state. Another challenge remains to ensure equal opportunities to the most disadvantaged citizens of Kosovo, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, many of whom live in ramshackle houses without access to education, labour or essential public services. Therefore, all relevant agencies will have to work together, considering that only an integrated effort, addressing all essential sources of the problem, can be sustainable.

Finally the legislators of Kosovo should be aware that they are in a probably unique position among European countries, having a comparably slim administration with a low tax base. While increasing the tax base by pulling more businesses out of the shadow economy should be a priority of the economic development strategy, the government should continue to apply strict budgetary discipline and work to provide favourable investment conditions, including in promoting customer-friendly and non-corrupt administration and public services. And they should take into account that the competition for FDI within the CEFTA area is huge, while several neighbouring countries, like Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria have competitive infrastructure arrangements and larger markets.

The planned EU missions in Kosovo will have first and foremost the task of guiding Kosovo into the Stabilisation and Association Process. Already in the ongoing legislative processes, the groundwork for the harmonisation with the *acquis communautaire* must be laid. Since Kosovo's entire regulative and legal framework will have to be scrutinised, it also marks a unique opportunity for the elected representatives in Kosovo to get a head-start in the process of drafting new legislation to prepare for the challenges of integration that lie ahead.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: between Ohrid and Brussels

3

Nadège Ragaru

In the July 2006 parliamentary elections, a majority of ethnic Macedonians voted for the right-wing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO-DPMNE) in the hope that Macedonia would end a difficult chapter of its history. Since an Albanian armed insurgency erupted in February 2001, the political agenda had been dominated by interethnic issues. Early international involvement had prevented the armed confrontation from turning into a full-scale civil war. But the Ohrid Framework Agreement (FA) that put an end to violence on 13 August 2001, entailed major constitutional and institutional changes designed to redress imbalances between the ethnic Macedonian majority and the Albanian community. For five years, under close international supervision, Macedonia's ruling elites were compelled to devote most of their energy to minority rights and interethnic relations. In 2006, VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski built his political success on promises to make Macedonia a prosperous country and to boost ethnic Macedonian self-confidence. After years when members of the orthodox majority felt they were the major losers in the FA process, the VMRO-DPMNE's emphasis on national pride was welcomed by most ethnic Macedonian voters.

But renewed interethnic tensions emerged at the political level. In the elections, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), an offspring of the former National Liberation Army (NLA), had obtained a majority of the Albanian votes thanks to its contribution to increased rights for ethnic Albanians. The VMRO-DPMNE's decision to choose the smaller Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) as a coalition partner met with strong resistance from the DUI, whose leaders threatened to renew ethnic conflict, boycotted parliamentary sessions and put up a new list of demands. Under significant international pressure, the VMRO-DPMNE finally, in the spring of 2007, negotiated an agreement with the DUI on a few issues outstanding in the implementation

of the Framework Agreement. Meanwhile Macedonia had lost several more months in implementing reforms in the judiciary, state administration, education and the economy. Inter- and intra-party bickering did not abate in the second half of 2007 and more EU encouragements were required before a long-delayed reform package could be adopted in parliament in January 2008.[1]

Despite the dramatic changes that have taken place in Macedonia since the 2001 conflict, misunderstandings persist between the two major ethnic communities, which continue to hold different readings of the past conflict and of the FA. While segments of the ethnic Macedonian population now consider that at least some of the Albanian demands were legitimate, a majority only accepted ethnic compromises as a last resort to prevent war. In their perception, once the Ohrid reforms were adopted, other issues such as unemployment, poverty and corruption should have been allowed to return to the forefront, and Macedonia could reassert its sovereignty after years of (at times much resented) international scrutiny. The DUI's offensive political strategy in 2006-2007 simply confirmed widely-held views among ethnic Macedonians that Albanians are not really interested in the common state, and only rally together when they want to push ethnic demands.

Among the Albanians, support for the Ohrid agenda has been extremely high. While most members of the community feared the Macedonian majority would never agree to share power, recent developments have fostered a slight improvement in perceptions of the ethnic majority. Yet cultural prejudices and stereotypes remain high. Albanians often show little understanding of the Macedonians' insecure identity and still believe that, unless pressured from outside, ethnic Macedonians are unlikely to promote any policy aimed at improving the situation of the Albanians. In their view, majority/minority relations are not questions that can be resolved once and for all, but issues that require constant fine-tuning.

Interethnic relations on the ground have gradually recovered since the end of the conflict (although local situations vary greatly). But social distance between communities has on average increased. Intercommunity interactions often do not go beyond the sphere of professional relations, and there is little likelihood that the trend towards self-enclosed and physically separated communities will soon be reversed. Some of the Ohrid reforms aimed at favouring multiethnicity (like equitable representation

1. The reform package includes decisions relating to the Parliamentary Committee for Ethnic Relations and to the Judicial Council, the creation of a parliamentary National Council for European Integration, implementation of the much-debated Law on Police and adoption of the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office.

in the public sector), but others were bound to reinforce ethnic distance (decentralisation and higher education in the Albanian language, among others).

Under these circumstances, EU integration and NATO membership appear all the more important as they rank among the few projects on which members of the majority and the other communities agree. To various degrees, ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians are convinced that only the Atlantic Alliance can shield Macedonia from external as well as domestic threats, thereby guaranteeing peace in the country. Consensus on membership in the European Union is even stronger. Most citizens of Macedonia feel it holds the key to a significant improvement in socio-economic standards and to a better future. Should we then conclude that Macedonia is 'out of the woods'?[2]

Two major issues will weigh upon future chances for consolidation. Regionally, the prolonged uncertainty over Kosovo's final status has had a negative impact on the political process in Macedonia. Successful management of Kosovo's move towards independence by the international community would allow Macedonia to concentrate on the political and socio-economic reforms required for EU membership. Failure to reach a peaceful and internationally supported settlement for Kosovo could affect Macedonia's fragile internal equilibria. Domestically, the greatest source of weakness lies in the interaction between ethnic and economic cleavages, and between community-based politics and political clientelism.

The Ohrid reforms six years later

The Framework Agreement (FA) signed in Ohrid on 13 August 2001 proposed a series of constitutional and institutional reforms designed to reduce power asymmetries between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority in the field of language, representation in the public sector and the political process, decentralisation and education. In exchange for these, the FA reaffirmed the territorial integrity, state unity and the sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia, and federalisation was explicitly excluded. In addition, NLA fighters committed themselves to giving up their weapons and returning to civilian life.

The implementation of the FA was guaranteed through a mil-

2. See International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet', *Europe Briefing* no. 37, February 2005, at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/balkans/b037_macedonia_not_out_of_the_woods_yet.pdf.

itary and civilian international presence. A NATO mission, *Essential Harvest*, was deployed to oversee the disarmament of former Albanian rebels and destroy their weapons. It was followed by two other NATO operations that focused on preventing clashes in the former crisis areas, and providing military advice to security sector reform activities. As the security environment improved, the EU took over from NATO and deployed its first ever military mission, *Concordia*, in March 2003, followed on by civilian police missions. The civilian/political side of post-Ohrid crisis management was placed in the hands of the Office of the EU High Representative in Skopje with a strong involvement on the part of the OSCE.

Six years after signing the FA, where do we stand in terms of minority rights? When it comes to the ***legal status and symbolic recognition*** of the Albanian community in Macedonia's society and institutions, change appears significant. Constitutional amendments removed the offensive notions of 'nationality' and 'minority', which were seen by Albanians as signifying inferior status. The 1992 Law on citizenship was amended to ease naturalisation, which benefited Albanians from Kosovo who had emigrated to Macedonia during Miloševic's oppression of the province. This and the 2002 Amnesty Law, made it easier for some Albanians from the remote mountainous villages – whose birth had often never been registered – to regularise their situation without fearing that they might be arrested by the police. Yet several bones of contention remain. In October 2007, for instance, the Constitutional Court decided to abrogate certain provisions of the law on the use of flags and to limit the display of Albanian flags to the municipal level, thus renewing tensions between ethnic Macedonian and Albanian parties.

Language was a second sensitive issue. The FA provided that, in addition to Macedonian, 'any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language using its own alphabet'. At the local level, in municipalities where over 20 percent of the inhabitants speak a given language, they may use it in communication with representatives of the local and central institutions (a decision that also affects Turks, Serbs and Roma in certain municipalities). In parliament, Albanian deputies were allowed to use Albanian in oral communication. By the end of December 2007, though, the adoption of a new law on minority languages remained pending.

Higher education in Albanian.[3] The Ohrid Agreement pinpointed the need for the state to subsidise higher education in Albanian. An internationally-funded private South East European University was inaugurated, shortly before being officially registered with the Ministry of Education in April 2002, and claimed 5,400 students by 2004-2005, primarily from wealthier Albanian families. Representatives of the lower social strata, in contrast, tend to attend the University of Tetovo, which was accredited as Macedonia' third state university in February 2004. As a result, although ethnic Albanians remain under-represented at the university level, the percentage of Albanian students in higher education has risen from a mere 4.9% in 2001 to 14.9% in 2004.

Problems in staff recruitment, course curricula and (de)politicisation of the educational sector have not disappeared, but the new higher education institutions have given the western Macedonian city of Tetovo a higher profile and greater self-confidence both in its relations with Skopje and with the other Albanian 'capitals' of Tirana and Pristina. The city has also witnessed a boom in its housing market, while local cafés and restaurants have prospered. But will the new generation of Albanian graduates remain in Macedonia or join a future brain drain? If they stay, will they be recruited into the state administration and public enterprises or will they prefer to engage in private business activities? As of now it is too early to appreciate the impact of the new universities on elite dynamics (both intra-Albanian and intercommunity) in Macedonia.

Implementation of the FA opened up ***new professional opportunities*** for Albanian graduates. Before 2001, Albanians were particularly under-represented in the police (accounting for only about 3%), the army and the judiciary. The FA allowed local municipal councils to select regional police chiefs from a list provided by the Ministry of the Interior (which retained the power to dismiss police chiefs 'in accordance with the law'). The share of minority representatives in the police forces has risen, trained by the OSCE (in a hasty and not always extremely efficient programme) and by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). In 2006, Albanians accounted for 14.9% of the employees of the Home Affairs Office (80.6% were ethnic Macedonians). Improvements have been slower in the judiciary, in part due to the lack of a sufficient pool of Albanian lawyers and jurists, in part because the judiciary is engaged in a protracted and painful reform process.

3. See Rony Mirhvold, 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Education as a Political Phenomenon', *NORDEM Report*, 4/2005, at: www.humanrights.uio.no/forskning/publ/nr/2005/0405.pdf.

High levels of Albanian employees are to be found in the Ministry for Local Self-Government and Ministry of Education, whose Ministers are currently Albanians – perhaps an indication of political clientelism in a deeply ethnicised political system where resources are scarce and unemployment is high. The FA's 'ethnic key' has fostered massive 'local' recruitment. Some ethnic Albanians have been disillusioned when they have come to realise that party membership and local connections are often more important in gaining state employment than experience and diplomas.

Among ethnic Macedonians, the promotion of Albanians in public bodies – although at times supported in principle – created intense frustration. Minority recruitment started just when public administration was under pressure from the IMF to downsize and when loss-making public enterprises were scheduled for restructuring, privatisation and often closure. Macedonia's private sector was not (and is not) dynamic enough to create sufficient employment opportunities. Many Macedonians also resent recruitment of inexperienced young Albanians, whose performance they claim to be lower than that of their Macedonian colleagues.

With regard to the ***functioning of the Macedonian political system*** at the centre and in local self-government, two major reforms were adopted. The first was a requirement (known as the Badinter principle) that all pieces of legislation affecting the rights of the minorities be adopted with a double majority (of ethnic Macedonian deputies, and of deputies representing communities 'not in the majority'). Since 1991, members of the Albanian political elite had complained that, in a 120-member parliament, they were doomed to be in a minority and ethnic Macedonian deputies, albeit belonging to competing parties, were accused of coalescing to oppose minority initiatives. Second, a new proportional electoral system was introduced shortly before the 2002 elections, which increased the number of seats *de facto* allocated to minorities.[4] Abandonment of the previous 5% threshold fostered an improvement in the political representation of the smaller minorities (Turks, Serbs, Roma and Vlachs). Nonetheless, it may be worth underscoring an unintended effect of the electoral reform. The shift to party-list proportional representation has reinforced dependence of deputies on the leadership of their party, as chances of getting elected are determined by the candidate's ranking on electoral lists. In Macedonia,

4. See Kristina Belalovska, 'Macedonia 2006: Towards Stability?', *The Ethnobarometer Working Paper Series*, 2006, note 41, p. 63.

where elite responsiveness is in any case weak, the new electoral code is likely to reinforce local frustrations at the deputies' lack of commitment to their voters.[5]

Decentralisation and redistricting resulted in the most intense controversies, because of dominant majority/minority relations and because they were likely to directly affect people's daily lives.[6] The plan for new municipal boundaries announced in July 2004 provoked such an uproar among the ethnic Macedonian public and most of the ethnic Macedonian political elite that it nearly derailed the Ohrid process. Disagreements primarily focused on three cities, Skopje, Struga and Kicevo. Albanian negotiators wanted the borders of the capital to be redrawn so that Skopje would comprise over 20% Albanians, allowing for the Albanian language to become a second official language in the city. This required some Albanian-majority neighbourhoods to be incorporated. Also in Struga the boundaries were adjusted to give the Albanian community a clear majority in the municipality. In Kicevo, from which Ali Ahmeti, the DUI's leader, originates, redrawing the boundaries was postponed to 2008.

Some ethnic Macedonians, dismayed by these concessions, collected over 150,000 signatures in a petition that compelled the authorities to hold a referendum on the municipal boundaries in November 2004. In the end, the turnout (26.58%) was too low (the SDSM and the DUI/BDI had asked their electorate to boycott the vote) to validate the result – to the relief of the ruling parties and the international community. On the day of the referendum, a majority of the Macedonian citizens showed that, despite being extremely dissatisfied, they were not ready to jeopardise peace.[7] From that moment onwards, the SDSM, which had instigated this highly unpopular reform, knew (or should have known) they were bound to lose the next elections.

While reforms have moved ahead, several limits to the Ohrid process have become apparent. The FA addressed most of the identity-related grievances of the Albanian minority, but little compensation was offered to the Macedonian majority beyond a (promised) peace they feared might not last. In the dominant Macedonian perception, Albanians had enjoyed extensive rights in the 1990s, and most average citizens did not accept that minorities had suffered from discrimination or segregation. Few had ever engaged in an open debate on Macedonian identity and Macedonian nationalism. Under these circumstances, some kind of back-

5. See UNDP, *Early Warning Report, Macedonia June 2007 (*Skopje: UNDP, 2007), p. 13.

6. See Nadège Ragaru, 'Maillage communal, frontières et nation. Les imaginaires, enjeux et pratiques de la décentralisation en Macédoine', *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2005, pp. 163-204.

7. Recognition of the constitutional name of the country by the United States a week before the Referendum was also a major boost for the government and helps to explain the result of the vote.

lash was to be expected, as was a renewed search for self-confidence and pride. Part of the support enjoyed by the new Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE) amongst the ethnic Macedonians owes precisely to his insistence on 'non-ethnic issues', that is issues that do not concern ethnic minorities, but every (ethnic) Macedonian citizen.

Second, while the Ohrid peace deal succeeded in addressing some Albanian concerns, it mostly left out of the picture the 'small minorities' that had contributed to Macedonia's ethnic diversity (and peace). The 2001 war had forced the Turks, the Serbs, the Roma and the Vlachs to take sides, and since 2001 this trend has been reinforced. Those groups that account for less than 20 percent of the population feel marginalised. Some complain that their influence over local public issues has declined and fear being 'squeezed' between what they see as an insecure Macedonian majority and an aggressive Albanian minority with a strong demographic potential. Furthermore, the 'ethnic key' in public employment assumes rigid identities. Macedonia inherited from Ottoman times a very diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural make-up in which some cleavages were cross-cutting. The current move towards monolithic, ethnic-based identifications is likely to weaken the multiple bonds that had knit local communities together in the past and helped to preserve local equilibria.

Finally, the Framework Agreement targeted only the divide between majority and minority. It did not (and perhaps could not) address the question of distrust between political elites and average citizens. Regardless of the community they belong to, most citizens of Macedonia rank state capture, discretionary allocation of resources and corruption as the most serious problems after unemployment. Since its accession to independence in 1991, Macedonia has experienced a mixture of clientelism and community-based politics. On both sides of the ethnic divide, political legitimacy is based on (ethnic) promises of the future allocation of jobs, contracts and permits. Party leaders' support is conditional upon their ability to stay in power. Once in opposition, their electoral support may erode extremely fast. This is why electoral competition is so fierce. In order to regain legitimacy, politicians are often tempted to shift political debates from social and economic issues – over which they have only limited leverage – towards symbolic and national issues that can offer easy political gains. Sadly

enough, interethnic relations are held hostage to these political strategies, thus fuelling both interethnic mistrust and political frustrations in all communities.

The fragile politics of coexistence

A growing social distance between communities?

Regardless of ethnic backgrounds, citizens in Macedonia first and foremost aspire to lead a normal life, unhindered by memories of previous tensions and fears about the future. Perceptions of intercommunity relations have gradually improved over the past few years. In March-April 2007, only 7.6% of the people polled assessed interethnic relations as 'bad'.[8] But ethnic Albanians have a much more positive outlook, as a result of recent reforms. Thus 19.7% of the Albanians declared interethnic relations to be excellent (cf. 2.2% of the ethnic Macedonian respondents) and only 11.9% 'bad'. By contrast, over a third of the ethnic Macedonian participants in the survey (35.9%) ranked interethnic relations as 'bad' or 'very bad'.[9]

Beyond these quantitative data, recent social evolutions require a balanced and cautious assessment. The Ohrid deal aimed at promoting multiethnicity as well as a better integration of minorities in society, while institutionalising the social and cultural distance that already existed between the two major communities. It comprises a mixture of reforms geared towards increasing social interactions across communities and reforms that could weaken cross-community ties. Promoting minority employment in the public sector enhances chances that different ethnic groups will interact daily in the workplace and possibly develop professional solidarities that may help bridge the ethnic divide. The opening of the SEEU – where students and teachers come from diverse ethnic backgrounds – in Tetovo was predicated upon the same belief in the stabilising impact of more frequent interethnic contacts.

By contrast, decentralisation and recent developments in the educational system are likely to induce greater ethnic separation, if not segregation. Decentralisation entails the devolution of new responsibilities to local government institutions in areas such as culture, primary and secondary education, health care and urban planning. Local communities are thus enabled to manage more

8. See UNDP, *Macedonia*, op. cit. in note 4, p. 49.

9. Ibid, p. 97.

matters of concern to their community on their own. As a result, there is a possibility that members of local communities, be they ethnic Macedonians or ethnic Albanians, especially in homogeneous municipalities, will remain more frequently enclosed within their own municipal borders.

In addition, decentralisation is likely to lead to an increase in disparities between wealthy and economically fragile, remote municipalities.[10] The issue is not 'ethnic' as such, but can easily take on an ethnic dimension. Some Albanians believe that the government wants to use decentralisation as a pretext to stop funding under-developed Albanian rural municipalities. More broadly, in a context of polarisation along ethnic lines, there is little doubt that debates over financial transfers from the central budget will include references to opposing ethnic claims.

Growing separation and, at times, strained interethnic relations are also noticeable in the educational sector. With higher education now available in Albanian, we are likely to witness more demands for secondary schooling in Albanian and, consequently, more Albanian students with a rather poor knowledge of Macedonian. Secondary education has become increasingly segregated since the conflict. Now that two higher education institutions are available in Albanian in Tetovo, why go to Skopje or to Bitola? In the past, the vast majority of Albanians had a reasonable command of Macedonian but few Macedonians had a knowledge of Albanian. Despite the establishment of the SEEU, there is little likelihood that ethnic Macedonians will wish to redress this imbalance in the future, whereas ethnic Albanians might have a poorer knowledge of the majority language. In the past, some Albanians preferred to attend Macedonian language classes in order to enhance their chances of a good professional future in Macedonia. That time is now over. The upcoming generation of young ethnic Macedonians and Albanians will be less familiar with one another than their predecessors.

How many of these developmentss may be attributed to the post-Ohrid dynamics? Was the increased ethnicisation of life, society and politics written into the Ohrid FA? These two questions are in fact ill-formulated. Since the inception of political pluralism at the beginning of the 1990s, party politics in Macedonia has centred on communities, although after 1992 all post-electoral governmental coalitions have included an ethnic Albanian partner. Albanian political organisations compete over Albanian

10. See UNDP, *Socio-Economic Disparities among Municipalities in Macedonia* (Skopje: UNDP, November 2004) at: http://www.undp.org.mkdatacenter/publications/documents/Sosioekonomski%20ANG.pdf.

votes; their Macedonian counterparts try to achieve support in Macedonian-inhabited regions. In these two groups, cases of cross-community voting are exceedingly rare. In presidential elections, the Albanian electorate plays a crucial role in the second round, prompting Macedonian parties to court whichever is the dominant Albanian party. Typically, the defeated ethnic Macedonian candidate accuses his opponent of owing his election to Albanian votes. For the rest, some gentleman's agreement of mutual non interference seems to have ruled party coexistence up to now. Macedonian politicians do not interfere with the ways in which Albanians manage the ethnically homogenous municipalities they hold, nor do Albanians endeavour to establish a political presence in regions mostly inhabited by ethnic Macedonians.

One of the most acute problems lies in the fact that certain social understandings of territory, demography and power are shared by all communities (as they were in the former Yugoslavia). To put it bluntly, the moment one community comprises above 50% in any given unit of government, that unit becomes 'theirs'. The mayor will come from the majority community and he will be expected (by members of all communities) to defend the interests of his ethnic group in the first place. Minority rights might be respected, yet community preference will be the rule rather than the exception. Ethnic Macedonians applied this rule at the state level until 2001, but in this respect, 'minorities' do not 'behave' better than the 'majority' when they are locally dominant.[11]

Buttressing national pride: the new government's policies

Under the leadership of the young and dynamic Nikola Gruevski, the VMRO-DPMNE set out a programme that promised sustainable growth and foreign investment, anti-corruption policies, a more efficient bureaucracy and the opening of a new 'post-Ohrid' era. The government's composition and first political initiatives were in full harmony with Macedonian public expectations. Prime Minister Gruevski built up a team of young multilingual technocrats, most of whom had professional experience in the United States. Soon after being sworn in, the new government announced a package of measures aiming at revitalising the economy. In the sphere of symbolic politics, Gruevski started to use every single opportunity to stress 'Macedonianness', Macedonian pride and Macedonian history.

11. See Mirjana Maleska, Lidija Hristova and Jovan Ananiev, 'Power Sharing: New Concept of Decision-Making Process in Multicultural Municipalities', Research Report, Skopje, 2006, p. 18. Available online at: http://adi-macedonia.org/Downloads/publications/english.pdf.

Against this background, there is little surprise that the VMRO-DPMNE failed to anticipate the political cost of tensions with Albanian opposition political forces. Following the July 2006 elections, the DUI, which had won the most seats among the Albanian parties, expected to be invited to join the future coalition government, but the VMRO-DPMNE was extremely reluctant to ally with a party of former NLA fighters and Gruevski finally chose Arben Xhaferi's DPA/PDSH (with whom the VMRO-DPMNE had governed between 1998 and 2002) as a coalition partner. The DUI's response was prompt and dramatic. Albanian party activists took to the streets and blocked roads in Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Debar and Struga; several thousand Albanians demonstrated in front of the National Assembly to protest against the installation of the new government; while the DUI boycotted the legislature until 9 September. The DUI, itself strained between a radical (Rafiz Aliti, Fazli Veliu, Gëzim Ostreni) and a more moderate (Ali Ahmeti, Agron Buxhaku, Teuta Arifi) wing, pursued an aggressive strategy. Moreover, certain voices intimated that if democratic principles were not respected (i.e. that the largest of the Albanian parties should be in government), some Albanians might be tempted to take up arms again.

In the meantime, the DUI put forward a series of demands concerning majority/minorty relations that were not addressed under the previous government, but Gruevski initially refused to start consultations on these issues. Then the DUI ceased all parliamentary activity, effectively blocking adoption of some important reforms. Much international pressure – especially from the EUSR and the US ambassador – was required before Gruevski and Ahmeti finally reached an agreement in May 2007. Most of the DUI's demands were met. A list of 45 laws to be adopted through the so-called Badinter principle was drawn up. The parliamentary Committee for Interethnic Relations would have a majority of members from the opposition parties. But no consensus was reached on a law on pensions for the 2001 war 'veterans', nor on the DUI's demands for nationwide use of the two official languages, and for the formation of the government by double-majority vote. By the end of July 2007, renewed disagreements had appeared over the exact concessions made by the VMRO-DPMNE, and Gruevski came under heavy criticism from both the opposition SDSM and the DPA coalition partner for having bypassed the executive in interparty negotiations.

Many local and international observers were disappointed with the DUI's confrontational tone. Having seen this party promote policies in the spirit of the Ohrid Agreement between 2002 and 2006, they expected that it would remain 'moderate' while out of office. But the key question is not whether the DUI is more 'moderate' than the DPA or not. As suggested earlier, the core issue is how intra-Albanian party competition is structured and power exercised. Albanian political parties (this is valid for Macedonian parties too, although to a lesser extent) can only 'deliver' (jobs, contracts, public funds) when they are in power. The moment they are removed from government, they lose most of the resources they need to control political loyalties. Traditionally, Albanian parties have therefore tried to 'survive' while in opposition through adopting radical national discourses and 'ethnicising' day-to-day politics. Such practices are unlikely to change unless voters become less dependent for their well-being on resources provided by political parties, and politics ceases to resemble an extensive spoil system in which every single majority change induces thousands of layoffs and hasty party appointments.[12]

Whether we like it or not, in Macedonia ethnic issues are not likely to fade from the agenda anytime soon, all the more so as most upcoming reforms in state administration, local self-rule and social policies are likely to affect interethnic balances. If dominant parties endeavour to sideline ethnic issues, there is a risk that ethnic groups will find ways of making themselves heard. At every step, adjustments will be indispensable, as will be the search for broad consensus between government and opposition. This remark is especially true in a context where uncertainty over Kosovo's final status is likely to reverberate negatively upon chances for further stabilisation in Macedonia.

The Kosovo issue in Macedonian politics and society

Macedonia's cautious policies

Kosovo has been a highly visible and divisive issue in Macedonia in the past two decades. In the 1980s, developments in Kosovo raised fears, among Macedonian authorities, of an increasingly militant Albanian nationalism in Macedonia proper and prompted the communist elite to replicate some Serb policies (in the education sector, for instance). In the 1990s, the influx of Albanians from

12. See Osservatorio Balcani, 'EU and Macedonia: Do People Make Changes?', 11 October 2006, at: http://www.osservatoriobalcani.org/article/article-view/6258/1/216/.

Kosovo seeking refuge from the harsh Serb policies was seen as disruptive of prevailing ethnic balances in several Macedonian municipalities, particularly in the northern suburbs of Skopje. At the time of the 2001 conflict, ethnic Macedonians often made a distinction between the 'good' local (Macedonian) Albanians and the 'bad' Kosovo Albanians, who were blamed for worsening interethnic relations. In brief, Kosovo was understood as a major source of fragility for the Macedonian state.

Today, Kosovo remains one of the topics on which ethnic divergences are the greatest. A March-April 2007 survey shows that 95.3% of Macedonian Albanian respondents prefer independence for Kosovo, but among ethnic Macedonians, this causes deep concern: only 3.1% of them favour that option.[13] 30.5% prefer an 'independent Republic within Serbia' and a near equal share (33.9%), a return to the previous status. Reluctance to see a new Kosovo state derives from the fear that the mostly Albanian-inhabited northwestern municipalities of Macedonia might be encouraged to secede and to seek reunification with their Kosovo Albanian brethren within a 'greater Kosovo' (if not a 'greater Albania'). Additionally, a poor and weak state is seen as a future fertile breeding-ground for organised criminal networks. At a regional level, some Macedonians also worry about a potential spillover effect with negative repercussions on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Ethnic Albanians, on the contrary, believe that Kosovo independence will put an end to years of uncertainty and promote regional and local stability. The Western Balkans will be allowed to concentrate solely on their EU-NATO agenda. In the long run, membership in the European Union should also allow all Albanian-inhabited lands to belong together in a larger entity, where freedom of movement will be the rule.

In this context it is impressive that until now Macedonian political elites have managed to formulate a very balanced and cautious policy on the issue. When the Vienna talks started in 2006, Macedonian rulers made it clear that they would accept any solution to Kosovo's final status, provided that it was acceptable to the international community and to the concerned parties. Several political leaders, including President Crvenkovski (SDSM), endeavoured to explain to their electorate that what would be most dreadful for Macedonia would not be Kosovo's independence so much as a failure to reach a decision on the issue. The VMRO-DPMNE's accession to power in July 2006 did not alter

13. UNDP, *Macedonia*, op. cit. in note 5, p. 75.

Macedonia's official stance. On 3 February 2007 Prime Minister Gruevski declared that the proposal submitted by UN Special Envoy to Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, offered an 'acceptable' solution that 'may contribute to the stability of the region and help the countries in the region in their preparation for the European Union and NATO membership'. On the same occasion, Nikola Gruevski also expressed satisfaction at the proposed settlement of the Kosovo-Macedonia border demarcation issue. Martti Ahtisaari's plan foresees the creation of a joint technical commission, including one international civilian representative, within 120 days after the entry into force of the Kosovo settlement to oversee the border demarcation process. The commission's work is to be completed within one year of the date of its establishment.

Later in the spring, as it became clearer that Russia might be intent on blocking a UN resolution on Kosovo's final status and that disagreements between Kosovo Albanians and Serbia could not be easily bridged, President Crvenkovski (SDSM) went a step further, stating that 'if there is no [UN] resolution, as a candidate to the EU and to NATO, we shall follow the common policy of these two organizations (...). If their position is to establish diplomatic relations and to recognize Kosovo, then this is what we will do.'[14]

Despite showing extreme goodwill, Macedonia's politicians dread a stalemate in Kosovo. Throughout 2007, several developments caused further concern. On 10 February 2007 former NLA and KLA member, Fazli Veliu, currently a DUI deputy, attended the controversial 'Self-determination' demonstration in Pristina where two demonstrators died in clashes with UN police. The protest movement led by Kosovo Albanian, Albin Kurti, is known for being critical of the international community's inefficiency in managing the Kosovo issue and for advocating a unilateral declaration of independence. In July 2007, after Faik Fazliu, the leader of the KLA veteran association in Kosovo, declared that former Albanian rebels would be ready to take up weapons if Kosovo were denied the right to independence, in an interview to the Macedonian daily, *Dnevnik*, Fazli Veliu boasted that he could mobilise 10,000 men to go and fight in Kosovo. On 3 August, several thousand ethnic Albanians demonstrated in Tetovo in support of Kosovo independence. Three days later, two hand-grenades exploded one hundred metres away from the headquarters of the Macedonian government. This was the first incident of this kind

14. See http://www.president.gov.mk/info.asp?SectionID=6&InfoID=2662.

in several years, prompting fears that a deadlock in Kosovo might reignite interethnic tensions in Macedonia. In the autumn of 2007, growing tensions were recorded along the northern border with Kosovo, including one clash between the Macedonian police and an ethnic Albanian armed group on 7 November (the firefight left six people dead). Thus far Macedonian authorities have downplayed the security issue, saying that recent violent incidents were crime-related and denying risks of a return to the 2001 situation, while stepping up cooperation with KFOR and with the local police in Kosovo.

If ever the Kosovo independence process were to derail, local domestic tensions in Macedonia might rapidly increase. Yet such a development is not bound to happen. For the time being, an overwhelming majority of the Macedonian people simply yearn for peace and prosperity, and they believe Euro-Atlantic integration will help them achieve these goals. In this context, a credible EU and NATO commitment remains the best guarantee that Macedonia will look to the future rather than allow itself to be dragged back to the past.

EU 'Member-State building' and NATO membership: the only path to sustainable peace

In Macedonia, EU and NATO membership rank among the few projects around which both majority and minority communities rally. They may thus help build the vision of a common future in a state at peace with itself and with its neighbours. Correspondingly, both NATO and the EU have tried and will most probably continue to use Macedonia's expectations to foster political and economic reforms as well as comprehensive implementation of the Ohrid agenda.

In March 2007, 92% of the Macedonians supported NATO membership.[15] This result is particularly remarkable if one keeps in mind the intense anti-NATO feelings provoked, in the spring of 1999, by the Alliance's bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) at the time of the Kosovo crisis. During the 2001 conflict in Macedonia, both NATO and the US evoked ambivalent sentiments, as most ethnic Macedonians thought they were supportive of the 'Albanian cause'. NATO's image has undeniably improved over the past years, but in March 2007, 30% of the par-

15. Quoted in 'PM Gruevski: NATO membership - top priority of Macedonia's foreign policy', Macedonian Information Agency (MIA), 30 June 2007.

ticipants in the Brima Gallup opinion poll still declared they disagreed 'entirely' or 'somewhat' with the statement that 'NATO wants what is best for our country.'[16] Nevertheless, regardless of their cultural background, citizens in Macedonia feel the need to be part and parcel of a larger security organisation in order to preserve peace and stability in the country. The Alliance's efficient management of the post-conflict situation has also convinced members of the Macedonian political elite that NATO was a reliable and efficient partner, whose leaders knew what they wanted to achieve and how to get there.

In November 2004, Macedonia joined the so-called Adriatic Charter alongside Albania and Croatia, two other NATO candidates. Despite worries that Croatia might try to go it alone, cooperation between the three countries has gone smoothly. In May 2005, the Macedonian authorities also amended the Law on National Defence to allow for the creation of a professional army, due to be completed by the end of 2007. Additionally, Macedonia has engaged in a variety of international peacekeeping missions – in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina – and provided logistical support to KFOR in Kosovo, in order to demonstrate its commitment to NATO. Recent statements from NATO officials suggest that this strategy might bear fruit. At the 2006 Riga Summit, NATO Heads of state and government declared that countries meeting NATO standards would be invited to join at the 2008 Summit. In addition, on 5-9 October 2007, in Reykjavik, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution asking the Alliance's member states to invite Macedonia (as well as Albania and Croatia) to join NATO in April 2008, in Bucharest. The United States also seem to favour this option as a way to create a more secure regional environment in the Western Balkans. Macedonia has already made it clear that it might even agree to join NATO under the name of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) which it was compelled to accept in order to be admitted to the United Nations in April 1993 following Greece's refusal to recognise its constitutional name of Republic of Macedonia.[17] Yet on several occasions Greek authorities have threatened to veto Macedonia's membership in the event of no compromise being reached in the name dispute.

Perceptions of the European Union were never as sharply (ethnically) divided as those of NATO. In the elite there have been frustrations with the EU's internal divisions, and with the poor coop-

16. See UNDP, *Macedonia*, op. cit. in note 5, p. 76.

17. See : http://www.president.gov.mk/info.asp?SectionID=6&InfoID=2662.

eration in Macedonia between the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR, in charge of administrating financial assistance to Macedonia until 2008), the Delegation of the European Commission in Skopje and the EU Office for the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. Matters improved after the positions of EUSR and Head of the EC Delegation were amalgamated in the autumn of 2005. Although they irritate Macedonian authorities at times, rivalries between EU Member States also give local actors additional room for manoeuvre. Besides, among ordinary people the European Union remains widely associated with ideas of a better life and higher living standards. For those Macedonians who knew Bulgaria and Romania in the early 1990s and have recently travelled to these countries, the drastic economic and social changes that have taken place and the modernisation of infrastructure bear testimony that EU accession does matter.

By confirming that all Western Balkan states would join the European Union once they meet the established criteria, the Thessaloniki European Council (June 2003) gave Macedonian ruling parties a major incentive to maintain the internal reform momentum. Macedonia was the first Western Balkan country to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in April 2001,[18] and submitted its application for EU membership on 22 March 2004. In December 2005, the country was granted candidate status, mostly in recognition of the courageous implementation of the Ohrid reforms. But no date for opening negotiations on EU entry was set.[19] The EU's insistence on a stricter compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria (set out in June 1993), and further progress in implementation of the provisions of the SAA was greeted with mixed feelings by local Macedonian elites. They feared that the EU's internal crisis after French and Dutch voters rejected the EU constitutional Treaty in May-June 2005 would lead to the EU adopting a more guarded policy towards future enlargement. But at the June 2007 EU summit, the EU seemed to have overcome its institutional impasse. Following the signature of a new EU treaty in Lisbon on 14 December 2007, the European Union may hope to regain impetus, political credibility and attractiveness.

Macedonian authorities are fully aware that, following accession of ten new Member States in 2004, plus Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the EU needs to consider 'absorption capacity' when planning future expansion. The Commission's Communication on the enlargement strategy for 2006-2007[20] has made that point

18. The SAA was the specific instrument designed by the European Commission in its relations with Western Balkan states. Following the Thessaloniki summit (June 2003), the countries of the Western Balkans were given a clear EU perspective and the SAA were enriched to include elements taken from the EU enlargement process. Macedonia's SAA came into force in April 2004.

19. See Council of the European Union, *Brussels European Council, 15/16 Decembrer 2005, Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels, 30 January 2006, p.8, http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/87642.pdf.

20. See Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007, Including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members*, Brussels, 8.11. 2006, COM(2006), 649 final at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/Nov/com_649_strategy_paper_en.pdf.

clear, as have high-level EU official statements both in Brussels and in Skopje. Macedonian politicians also understand that issues such as a visa-free travel regime are extremely sensitive among EU Member States. At the same time, the EU's appeals for greater commitment to economic reforms, the rule of law and equality regardless of ethnicity will only be heeded if local actors are given a strong impetus to move ahead with socially painful and politically delicate changes. Giving a date to start membership talks, and moving from visa facilitation (agreed in September 2007) to a full liberalisation of the visa regime, would demonstrate that the EU is willing and able to improve people's life in Macedonia and that every Macedonian government should rank EU accession as its top-most priority. In a country where social issues continue to represent a major challenge to stability, allowing Macedonia to benefit from increased EU pre-accession funds would also do much to increase domestic social and ethnic cohesion (in 2007, Macedonia was allocated 58 million euro under the EU's new pre-accession instrument, IPA).

On 12 July 2007 the European Parliament made a strong case for keeping the EU moving, while encouraging the VMRO-DPMNE government to push reforms and opposition parties to refrain from parliamentary boycott. It called for 'negotiations to start as soon as possible',[21] and confirmed that the question of Macedonia's constitutional name should not prevent the country from initiating EU membership talks. The name issue has been plaguing the country's relations with Greece (and, consequently, with the EU) since the early 1990s.[22] Yet the European Commission's 2007-2008 Annual Enlargement Strategy and its report on Macedonia's progress towards the EU (published on 6 November) suggest that this advice was not heeded. While reaffirming its commitment to further enlargement, the Commission made it clear that, in the Western Balkans and Turkey, 'accessions are likely to occur in the medium to long term'. Macedonia was praised for the advances made in certain fields, like the fight against corruption and the implementation of decentralisation, but received no date for EU talks. Instead, local authorities were encouraged to step up the pace of reforms and strengthen political dialogue.

For Macedonia, as for the Balkans at large, 2008 will be a crucial year. If Kosovo's final status is resolved peacefully and if adequate decisions regarding Macedonia's future NATO and EU member-

21. See European Parliament resolution of 12 July 2007 on the 2006 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2006/2289(INI)), p.5, at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?Type=TA&Reference=P6-TA-2007-0352&language=EN.

22. Greece objects to its neighbour using the name 'Republic of Macedonia', saying that it implies territorial claims on a Greek province of the same name. For further details, see John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece. The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation* (London: MacFarland, 1997).

ship perspectives are made, remaining fears of potential intereth-nic confrontation in the country will recede into the background. If not, the EU might come to painfully understand that 'its time has not come' in the Balkans, nor is it likely to do so any time soon.

Albanian migrations: demographic and other transformations

Nicola Mai

4

Migration played a key role in the past and recent histories of Albania, Kosovo and FYROM and in sustaining their social and economic viability. Although these three settings share important demographic and socio-economic dynamics and are inhabited predominantly or significantly by Albanian populations, the way in which migration emerged and developed into the main strategy of survival within their separate post-communist trajectories cannot be understood as a pan-Albanian phenomenon, but needs to be contextualised within their different and related national histories. The present article will focus on the relationship between social and economic transformations and the emergence of migratory flows in Albania and will compare it with the realities of FYROM and Kosovo, in order to suggest that (regular) youth migration should be actively facilitated by the EU as a crucial socio-economic and cultural safety valve which could sustain the process of democratisation and socio-economic development of these societies in the short-medium term.

Main dimensions and causes of the Albanian migratory flow

In early March 1991, the arrival in the port of Brindisi of an Albanian boat crammed with 26,000 desperate migrants escaping political unrest and poverty was the opening act of one of the most significant East-West migratory flows of the post-communist era, which is still unfolding to the present day. Five months later, in the heat of August, a further 20,000 arrived on a flotilla of dilapidated boats and dinghies. A third mass arrival of Albanian migrants took place in 1997, as a consequence of renewed political unrest, triggered by the collapse of a set of huge pyramid investment schemes which bankrupted more than half the Albanian population. Over the same period a more consistent but less spectacular wave of

Albanian migration took place to Greece, mainly across the mountain border.

Although Albanian migration is usually described as being 'recent and intense', 'dynamic and rapidly evolving', largely 'economically driven' and characterised by a 'high degree of irregularity'[1] , it has now been unfolding for over 15 years and with the passage of time an increasing number of Albanian migrants have achieved legal status in the main destination countries (Greece or Italy) as a result of periodic 'regularisation' schemes over the past decade. According to statistical data elaborated by the Albanian government, more than one million Albanians have migrated abroad since 1991 – 600,000 to Greece, 250,000 to Italy, the remainder to other European countries and to North America.[2] This equates to one in four of the Albanian population, estimated at around three million in the 2001 census.

The main explanations for the magnitude of Albanian post-communist emigration underline the key role played by the combination of poverty and political instability, since the current Albanian socio-economic context is characterised by the most widespread poverty of any country in Europe, the least diversified and most backward economic base, the enduring and pervasive threat of disappearing financial and human capital, inadequate fiscal resources, and the reluctance of foreigners to invest in the country.[3]

As far as political instability is concerned, past open conflicts (the 1997 pyramid crisis in particular), the enduring polarisation of the political spectrum and the widespread presence of corruption and clientelist networks have hampered the development of economic reform and the reorganisation of vital infrastructures and utilities (electricity, paved roads and water in particular), which continue to serve the population badly. Moreover, the post-communist transformation was characterised by the emergence of local alliances between political groups/public functionaries and local power brokers, with the consequence that the Albanian state is unable to guarantee the exercise of the rule of law as well as safety for a large sector of the population. As poverty, unemployment, low wages, minimal pensions/social welfare and insecurity are an everyday reality for the majority of the population, emigration is still seen as the most rational route to self-improvement in contemporary Albania.

Besides these socio-economic considerations, an under-emphasised dimension of Albanian emigration is the demo-

1. Kosta Barjaba and Russell King, 'Introducing and theorising Albanian migration', in Russell King, Nicola Mai and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (eds), *The New Albanian Migration* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press), pp. 1-28.

2. Government of Albania, *National Strategy on Migration* (Tirana: Government of Albania in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration, 2005).

3. Hermine De Soto, Peter Gordon, Ilir Gedeshi and Zamira Sinoimeri, *Poverty in Albania. A Qualitative Assessment* (Washington D.C.: World Bank Publications, 2002).

graphic one, as Albania's rate of population increase since World War II and the end of communist rule was the highest in Europe. As a consequence, by 1990 one third of the population was under the age of 15, with only 5% aged over 65. Annual births continued to be high until the mid-1990s. Both in 1990 and in 2000, nearly one third of the population was under 15, which means that there is still an abundance of potential young emigrants for the next 10-20 years. However, the proportion of young people is kept high by the absence of relatively older strata of the population, many of whom tend to emigrate, while the rapid decline of the crude fertility rate during the 1990s shows a recent slowing down of population growth, as natural demographic increases halved over the 1990s.

Finally, men and women were involved differently in the Albanian migratory flow and the gender dynamics at play have changed since the early post-communist years. Whereas males were predominant in the early years of emigration, with the passage of time the gender balance was re-established in the main emigration contexts (Greece and Italy) as a result of periodic 'regularisation' schemes over the past decade and of the recourse to family reunification visas. However, different migration dynamics still affect men and women, as data from the 2002 Albanian Living Standards Measurement Survey show that whereas 90% of men migrated to work, more then half of women did so in order to reunite with their partner living abroad and only a third in order to work.[4]

Having overcome the acute difficulties of the first post-communist years and despite their relatively recent arrival, Albanian migrants are now both amongst the most 'objectively' integrated and the most stigmatised of all (non-EU) migrant groups in Italy and Greece. Indicators for assimilation include good knowledge of local languages, high rates of intermarriage (in Italy), balanced gender composition, large numbers of children of Albanian origin in the education system, geographical dispersion in the context of emigration, high levels of informal social contact with host populations and propensity to want to stay abroad and not return to Albania. On the other hand, high levels of stereotyping – with Albanian immigrants depicted as criminals, prostitutes, rough, uncivilised people etc – have been fostered largely by media discourses, building on political statements about the need for immigration control and, for Italy and Greece, to create a positive 'Euro-

4. Calogero Carletto, Benjamin Davis, Marco Stampini. and Alberto Zezza, 'A country on the move: international migration in post-communist Albania', *International Migration Review*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 767-785.

pean' identity for themselves in the face of pressures from the EU over Schengen borders and economic issues.

Who is most likely to migrate?

Although emigration has been a very pervasive and widespread phenomenon in Albania, some groups have been affected more than others. The analysis of the first Albania Living Standards Measurement Survey, conducted in the spring of 2002 and encompassing a section on migration, shows how 32.9% of the whole sample has considered migrating from Albania (42.3% for men and 22.5% for women) and that younger (under 25), more educated and unemployed people are, on average, more willing to migrate. Moreover, unsatisfactory housing conditions seem to have more impact on the intention to migrate than family size. Finally, people from urban contexts and those from areas characterised by the perception of a high crime rate and by land disputes are more inclined to consider migrating.[5]

Internal and international migration emerged as the main coping strategy for a large number of households in all regions of the country, as remittances became essential for the economic survival and sustainability of many Albanian families. However, the relationship between Albanian migration and existing social and spatial inequalities is a complex one, involving the interconnection of international and internal migration, the increasing polarisation and territorial redistribution of resources and the rise of new economic and political elites. In this respect, it is important to acknowledge the existence of three main regional socio-economic environments, that influence greatly the extent to which and the way people turn to migration as the main coping strategy for dealing with the challenges and predicaments offered by the post-communist transformation.

The north, especially the mountainous region, is still the poorest part of Albania and is a region of internal migration, mainly to the central Tirana-Durrës and to the regional capital Shkodër areas, as well as of international out-migration. Because of the enduring poverty of the area, there is very little evidence of return migration. This is not the case for the second socio-economic region, the south, where the relatively better economic performance and the proximity to Greece (the main migration destina-

5. Adriana Castaldo, Julie Litchfield and Barry Reilly, 'Who is most likely to migrate from Albania?', Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, Briefing no. 2, April 2005, available online http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/briefing_papers/BP2.pdf.

tion) allow people to engage in to-and-fro migration and (less frequently) to return and invest their remittances, mainly in the coastal tourist industry (hotels and restaurants), in small shops and mechanical workshops. The centre is the most affluent (or least deprived) area of the country and attracts a great deal of internal migration, as well as being the area with the highest number of returnees and a zone of emigration, particularly to Italy. Tirana and Durrës are Albania's urban-economic core, as these two districts alone received 60% of all inter-district migration during 1989-2001, which produced a massive population increase. Some local officials believe that the population of Tirana district alone may have exceeded 800,000 by 2001, from 368,000 in 1989.[6]

The impact of migration

Migration has had a long-lasting and profound impact on the social, cultural and economic texture of Albanian society. On a demographic level, this is mirrored in a significant reduction in the average size of households, which is also due to a decline in the fertility rate and a natural population decline of 3.6% between 1989 and 2001.

At an economic level, the main impact of emigration on Albania is the inflow of remittances, which, after the dramatic events which followed the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997, are now once again playing a crucial role in securing Albania's economic survival. Remittances have exceeded $500 million per year since 2000 ($632 million in 2002), according to Bank of Albania figures. Between 2000 and 2002 remittances contributed, on average, 15% of total GDP, were worth $200 per head of the Albanian population, were double the value of visible exports, and made up 55-60% of the trade deficit.[7]

Migration has a strong impact also on Albania's human resources. One positive consequence is the removal of unemployment, either directly (when the unemployed emigrate) or indirectly (when emigrants vacate jobs which are filled by unemployed people). A negative consequence of the Albanian migratory flow is the phenomenon of the brain drain, as, according to estimates of the Centre for Academic and Social Studies in Tirana, nearly half of Albania's scientists and academics left the country during the 1990s.[8] In addition to these highly skilled migrants, an increasing

6. De Soto *et al.*, op. cit. in note 3, 2002: 3.

7. Christos Nikas and Russell King, 'Economic growth through remittances: lessons from the Greek experience of the 1960s applicable to the Albanian case', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 235-57, Table 4.

8. 'From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Mobilising Albania's Skilled Diaspora', policy paper for the Government of Albania, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), April 2006.

number of Albanian students were able to receive grant and bursary schemes offered by international foundations and foreign governments. Currently over 5,000 young Albanians are studying at Italian universities alone.

Finally, emigration has been seen as constituting a potentially positive influence on political and civic culture, as migrants can bring about improvements in political and cultural behaviour either by returning or through their interaction with relatives and friends while visiting. However, apart from those who were *de facto* political refugees, for most Albanian migrants, migrating has been a way to put a distance between themselves and an untrustworthy and disavowed political system which is still perceived as being hostage to the duel between two symmetrical and discredited political formations and as ambivalently (at best) implicated in fighting corruption.

Albania will be able to attract its skilled and less skilled migrants back and to capitalise on their economic and social success only if it is able to develop a stable and secure political environment and to gradually reinstate a sense of trust in society – both towards the political institutions and amongst 'ordinary' members of Albanian society. This last consideration is full of implications for the way Albania might be able to capitalise on its migratory experience in the future. For instance, the Albanian government's National Strategy on Migration (NSM) aims at maximising the benefits of international migration for Albania through a comprehensive policy covering domains such as the channelling of migrants' remittances into economically productive business investments (instead of private consumption) and the encouragement of return migration, especially of skilled migrants.

Current experiences of the state can be seen as at odds with these aims. In fact, in Albania, any attempt by the state to 'manage' remittances would be resisted by the migrants as just another attempt to interfere with their individually-earned economic resources geared towards personal survival and the development of their own private schemes. For most, migration has been a private strategy of survival against the historical inefficiency of the public administration, and the collapsing collective context, widely perceived as corrupt and untrustworthy. With the memory of the pyramids fiasco less than a decade old, why should migrants listen to government propositions to invest their hard-won remittances this way or that way?

Moreover, as far as the brain drain is concerned, while much of this emigration was economically motivated, many people left for political and cultural reasons. The political nature of appointments to government, civil service and some academic posts in an environment which was (and remains) polarised between the two dominant parties meant that those belonging to the faction not in power had to leave the country or suffer humiliation. Why should people who refused to compromise with the still hegemonic culture of clientelism shaping Albanian academia and politics give up the hard-earned benefits they achieved through migration?

More generally, the Albanian government's desire to attract skilled migrants back to Albania clashes with a scenario of social, economic and cultural fragmentation, within which violence, criminality and trafficking have emerged as morally viable strategies of survival for different social actors in the context of the post-communist transformation. Individual and organised illegal activities (including widespread and endemic political corruption) have become inextricably intertwined with the process of post-communist political and social transformation and rooted in local and diasporic settings. While the government has responded with a series of highly-publicised anti-trafficking measures, these were probably meant more to reassure EU Member States about Albanian's compliance with the process of EU integration and did not impact significantly on the lived everyday life experiences of most Albanian citizens. Although the campaigns against human trafficking were consistent with a reduction in (registered) irregular emigration, this 'success' has to be measured against the increase in risks and expenses for those who still need to migrate in order to secure the survival of their families. For these, obtaining papers and organising a passage has become increasingly expensive, dangerous and difficult, in the face of the introduction of restrictive 'anti-trafficking' measures.

In fact, the authorities acknowledge the existence of organised crime in Albania, but they do not seem to be willing to acknowledge the extent to which it is rooted within key national and local institutions, such as the police, the judiciary and the political apparatus. Throughout the process of post-communist transformation, in many areas local political elites and groups could only emerge and survive by striking alliances with existing power-brokers, who, in their turn, enjoy the complicity and protection of police, customs officers, and high-ranking politicians. In the

light of the endurance of these deeply-rooted and pervasive socio-cultural and economic dynamics, it is difficult to see how migrants can retrieve the necessary trust to sacrifice all of their achievements and tie their lives back to Albania.

Emigration from Albania is likely to continue for some time, because of the enduring economic and demographic pressures and the existence of established migration networks, but it is unlikely to produce the level and intensity of the 'waves' registered in 1991 and 1997. In fact, in recent years the emigration rate has decreased due to various interconnected factors: the increased effectiveness of border control; the relative improvement of the Albanian economy (especially in the central area); and the fact that so many people have already emigrated.

The repositioning of the borders around the new Albanian state in the early twentieth century created a large 'diaspora' in Kosovo, Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro where, today, as many ethnic Albanians live as are in Albania itself. The history and development of migratory flows from these different national Albanian communities must be set within the specific context of post-World War II and post-communist transformations of the Yugoslav state(s). Unlike people from the Republic of Albania, Yugoslav citizens were allowed to migrate abroad before 1991. During the 1960s and 1970s, ethnic Albanians from former Yugoslavia migrated as *gastarbeiter* (guest workers) to Germany, Austria and Switzerland and established settled communities where their Albanian ethnic or regional origin (as Kosovans, Macedonians etc.) was often subsumed under another identity.[9] After 1991, the Yugoslav wars created multiple waves of displaced people which significantly altered the ethnic compositions of the different countries involved and the migration dynamics that followed.

Focus on FYROM

As far as FYROM is concerned, most of the Macedonian *gastarbeiter* who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s were Albanians who could not benefit from the socialist industrial transformation and therefore depended on labour migration as their main survival strategy. Besides Germany and Australia, other important migration destinations were the USA, Switzerland, Italy and Canada.[10] The economic recession of the 1990s, the Kosovo conflict and refugee cri-

9. Isa Blumi, 'Defining Social Spaces by Way of Deletion: The Untold Story of Albanian Migration in the Postwar Period', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 29, no. 6, 2003, pp. 949-965.

10. 'Strengthening Cross-Border Cooperation in the Western Balkan Regarding Migration Management', *Migration Flows in Modern Macedonia*, Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), Skopje, 2007, available online at: http://www.crpm.org.mk/Papers/Occasional/Occasional%20paper12.pdf.

sis and the 'internal security crisis' of 2001 exerted further pressure on potential migrants and asylum seekers from Macedonia. During the Kosovo crisis in 1999, Macedonia received more than 360,000 refugees within a two month time period. Two years later, conflict in Macedonia in 2001 led to 150,000 civilians fleeing, mainly to Kosovo.[11]

As far as the scale of the Macedonian migration is concerned, the lack of official and updated statistics and the presence of irregular migration practices makes it difficult to establish the number of international migrants, with current estimates converging around 300,000, equivalent to 15% of the population and 34% of the labour force.[12] A few sources underline that a significantly larger number of emigrants from Macedonia belongs to the Albanian minority,[13] but there are no data or estimates to corroborate this observation. Although it is difficult to determine with statistical accuracy the actual number and ethnic affiliations of Macedonian migrants, all current estimates indicate clearly how relevant migration remittances are for the survival of Macedonian economy, as in 2005 they amounted to 155 million USD, equivalent to 15% of exports and 2.7% of overall GDP.[14] Analyses of the main quantitative dimensions behind the Macedonian migration emphasise the role of pull factors such as income/wage differential and youth unemployment rather than 'push' demographic processes and underline how brain drain could constitute a serious problem in the future, as the most likely people to migrate are unemployed postgraduates, employed specialists who are dissatisfied with their status in Macedonia, and final year university students.[15] According to research carried out in 2003 among a section of the university student population, around 37% of students were thinking of or planning to leave the country for temporary employment abroad. Interestingly, the overall number of students planning to leave the country in general (not restricted to temporary migration) in 2003, was significantly higher than in 1994 (76%).[16]

Focus on Kosovo

Although, as in FYROM, people have migrated from Kosovo since the 1960s and 70s, they were also increasingly forced to flee from ethnic antagonism since the mid-1980s and from war in 1998-1999. According to the UNHCR, 350,000 people left Kosovo as

11. UNCHR, 'The Balkans: What Next?', *Refugees*, vol. 3, no. 24, 2001. Available online at: http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3bcd4fcc4.pdf.

12. Malgorzata Markiewicz, 'Migration and remittances in Macedonia', Centre for Economic Analyses (CEA), Skopje, October 2006. Available online at: http://www.cea.org.mk/Documents/LGU_Project/Fourth_USAID_report_on_migration.pdf.

13. CRPM, op. cit. in note 10, p. 250.

14. Markiewicz, op. cit. in note 12, p. 40.

15. Centre for Economic Development (CED), 'EU Enlargement and its impact on the social policy and labour markets of accession and non-accession countries', Sofia, 2003. Available online at: http://www.praxis.ee/data/CED_EUlaborchallenges_FH.pdf.

16. Ibid, p. 137.

IDPs or refugees in 1998, while in 1999 450,000 ethnic Albanians fled to Albania, 250,000 to Macedonia (FYROM) and 70,000 to Montenegro. After the end of the war in June 1999, 600,000 people returned to Kosovo.[17]

Whereas during the escalation of antagonism and violence in Kosovo most EU countries (Germany and Switzerland in particular) 'tolerated' Kosovo Albanians arriving in Europe and gave them provisional or permanent asylum status, after the end of Serbian control of Kosovo in 1999 many chose to return and/or were repatriated and regular migration became severely restricted, usually to family unification policies. This had a very significant impact on migration remittances, which had been one of the main economic safety valves for Kosovo Albanian society, as the total number of diasporic Kosovo Albanians decreased dramatically, while those who stayed abroad had to take care of their reunited families and therefore stopped remitting back to Kosovo. According to a recent study,[18] there is strong evidence to suggest that remittances have been declining steadily over recent years and that no more than 15 percent of Kosovo households now receive regular cash remittances. Although this contraction is a consequence of a positive development, the end of war and the return of displaced people, it was not accompanied by an improvement of the economic situation in Kosovo, whose socio-economic texture is still characterised by widespread poverty and unemployment, particularly for people below 25 years of age.[19] According to a recent UNDP report, current high poverty and unemployment rates continue to make migration an attractive option for young people, as surveys show that about 50% of Kosovo's young people would migrate if they could.[20]

Conclusion: is there an 'Albanian' migration question?

The analysis of the material reviewed above shows that the different Albanian groups and populations living in Albania, FYROM and Macedonia have been involved in migratory flows which are rooted in different national histories and economies and related to different geopolitical and historical dynamics. As a consequence, it is problematic to assume that there is a unified 'Albanian question' when it comes to examining the relationship between demographic and social transformations and migration.

17. UNHCR, 'The Balkans: What Next?', op. cit. in note 11.

18. European Stability Initiative (ESI), 'Cutting the lifeline: Migration, Families and the Future of Kosovo', Berlin-Istanbul, 18 September 2006. Available online at: http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_80.pdf.

19. UNDP, *Kosovo Country Report*, 2006. Available online at: http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/hdr_eng.pdf.

20. Ibid., p. 28.

However, the three settings examined in this chapter can be seen as having a few important common aspects, which are very relevant as far as migration dynamics are concerned:

1. A problematic economic sustainability regime, predicated on the existence of important flows of migration remittances and characterised by the lack of intellectually and economically rewarding positions for the educated and highly skilled population, low wages, widespread unemployment, an inadequate productive infrastructure and a negative import/export trade balance.
2. The presence of a large reservoir of (largely unemployed) potential young migrants who are willing and ready to emigrate in order to advance themselves and secure some economic relief for their families.
3. The subjection to directives and initiatives aimed at managing, curbing and reducing both regular and irregular migration, under the pressure of EU area stabilisation and integration facilities, which impose the adoption of Schengen-compatible measures and criteria as a pre-condition to negotiating a path towards EU accession.

In other words, Albania, FYROM, and Kosovo are finding themselves in an impossible position, as their economies struggle, their youth populations grow and the geopolitical area towards which they gravitate, the EU, enforces crippling restrictive measures on regular and irregular migration. Albania's, Kosovo's and FYROM's economies and societies are going to be stuck in this post-communist geopolitical and structural gridlock in the medium-long term period and young people are caught between their aspirations to self-advancement and the dire economic and social realities with which they have to deal.

As the 'Western Balkans' are constructed and addressed by EU policy and geopolitics as a privileged area of social and economic investment, young people from the area should be considered as primary resources for the construction of a sustainable future and their mobility and advancement should be promoted and facilitated in every possible way, both 'at home' and 'abroad'. In this regard, EU policy towards migration can be seen, at best, as contradictory. In fact, on the one hand it legitimises the need to resort to restrictive migration policies by brandishing the spectre of the

increase in organised crime and trafficking in human beings, while on the other these same restrictive measures actually make it more difficult and dangerous for people to migrate legally, as they automatically become more dependent on the transportation services offered by criminal or informal organisations.

Given that migration has historically been the fundamental safety valve allowing individuals and households to survive and develop by circumventing poverty, corruption, conflict and largely inefficient political systems, would it not make sense to facilitate the economic and social development of Albania, Kosovo and FYROM by allowing young people to migrate regularly and invest in their futures by studying and/or working in the EU?

Obviously, international migration cannot be considered as *the* answer to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of Albania, Kosovo and FYROM in the long term and indeed can be seen as detracting important resources for the advancement of local economic and social settings (i.e. through 'brain drain'). However, in the short term, migration can still be an invaluable safety valve, allowing local tensions to be defused and local inequalities to be redistributed onto a wider and richer socio-economic and cultural environment: the EU. Given current concerns about young people's increasing polarisation along ethnic lines and participation in illegal activities, and taking into account the fact that the social and economic situation with which they have to contend is not going to change any time soon, it is easy to see how they could benefit from accessing a richer range of discourses, resources and opportunities by studying and working in the EU, remitting money home and by being able to return, if they so wish, whenever they feel it is most convenient for the development of their life-trajectories.

Albanian diasporas and their political roles

Denisa Kostovicova

5

There is not just one Albanian diaspora; there are in fact many Albanian diasporas. The United States with some 400,000, Germany with some 300,000 and Switzerland with some 150,000 Albanians host the biggest established Albanian communities, while the new post-Communist 'exodus' of Albanians from Albania to neighbouring Greece and Italy has brought the number of Albanians there to some 500,000 and 200,000 respectively. Smaller communities are to be found in the Scandinavian countries, but also the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Austria, as well as Australia, New Zealand and China. By contrast, some 3 million Albanians are believed to live in Turkey, the original destination of Albanian emigration during the Ottoman period.

Since the creation of Albania in 1912, Albanian communities living abroad have reflected the divisions among the Albanians dispersed across different states in the Balkans. Increasingly, priorities of their respective homelands in the Balkans have framed their activities within their host countries. Nonetheless, a sense of one overarching Albanian identity was demonstrated during the Kosovo crisis in 1999. The national emergency involving the ethnic brethren in embattled Kosovo overshadowed all competing preoccupations among different Albanian communities worldwide. Eight years on, the goal of Kosovo's independence is still elusive. The issue fires up the national passions of Albanian diasporans, but other political and economic concerns have also resurfaced. Moreover, the Albanian diaspora has entered the information age, and the ease of computer-mediated communication has facilitated its further dissemination.

The diaspora's historic covenant

The death of Scanderbeg, the celebrated Albanian hero who led the resistance to the Ottoman invasion, ushered in the Ottoman

conquest of the Albanian-inhabited lands in the Balkans in the mid-fifteenth century.[1] However, it also triggered the first of many waves of Albanian emigration. Resisting conversion to Islam, Christian Albanians, known as Arbëresh or Italo-Albanians, sought refuge mostly in neighbouring Italy. The Arbëresh were the first *émigré* community to articulate the goal of full independence for an overall Albanian state even before the founding of the Prizren League in 1878. They were influenced by the *Risorgimento* in their adopted Italian homeland, and were keen to see it replicated in their original homeland. Four centuries later, the diaspora would assume a critical role in guiding the national struggle in the Albanian homeland in the Balkans.[2]

The early pioneers of the Albanian nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were mainly resident abroad. They argued that a national political struggle required a strong sense of national identity, largely absent among Albanians in the homeland due to the repressive policies of the Ottomans, for whom national feeling among Albanians was a threat. The prospect of losing Albanian-populated territories to Orthodox Slavs after the San Stefano Treaty in 1878 prompted the founding of the Prizren League, the military-political-cultural engine of the Albanian national movement. The military defeat of the League in 1881 shifted the focus to a cultural engagement, giving rise to the cultural movement *Rilindja* (Rebirth).[3] The cultural revival was promoted by the concerted activities of Albanian cultural, educational and literary societies.

The first, called The Society for the Printing of Albanian Writings, was established in Istanbul in 1879, under the guidance of Sami and Naim Frashëri, the brothers of the Prizren League's founder Abdyl, who himself came from Istanbul. The Society aimed to further the national struggle by publishing in the Albanian language and supporting the founding of Albanian schools.[4] Embracing the same goal, cultural societies mushroomed in Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt and the United States, as Albanian *émigrés* seized on their freedom of action abroad.[5] Their engagement led to the adoption of the unified Albanian alphabet and elevation of language into a central pillar of Albanian identity. Thus the potentially centrifugal impact of Albanians' religious division into Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox was overcome. The Ottomans' intransigent policy and the Young Turks' unfulfilled reform promises led Albanians eventually to embrace armed struggle to obtain independence.

1. Leften S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), p. 64.

2. Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 219.

3. Edwin E. Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1995), p. 275; Jashar Rexhepagiq, *Sami Frashëri dhe pedagogjia e Rilindjes kombëtare* [Sami Frasheri and the pedagogy of the National Awakening], (Pristina: The Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995), p. 19.

4. Stavro Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 120-1.

5. Jacques, op. cit. in note 3, pp. 287-307; Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London: Pinter Reference, 1994), pp. 49-53; Skendi, op.cit. in note 4, pp. 115-9.

The Albanian nation and its identity benefited from the Albanian diaspora's political, intellectual and financial input. Albanians abroad at the turn of the twentieth century set a standard in national commitment for future *émigrés*. Subsequently, the dynamics of the homeland-diaspora relationship was transformed, as was the diaspora itself, by the emergence of the independent Albanian state, which was a partial fulfilment of national aspirations; and by the allocation of Albanian-inhabited territories in Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which would become Yugoslavia. New borders cutting across Albanian-populated territories in the Balkans caused the fragmentation of the Albanian national cause, largely to the detriment of all-Albanian unification.[6] The latter goal was overshadowed by that of Kosovo's independence. The patterns of Albanian migration from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia diverged, moulded by unique political, economic and cultural dynamics in their respective homelands. Henceforth, it is more appropriate to talk about the Albanian diaspora in the plural.

Albanian diasporas as contested spaces

All diasporas are contested spaces, but this is particularly the case with the Albanian diaspora. The cleavages that cut through Albanian communities abroad are geographic, political, economic as well as based on gender and professional qualification. All these points of differentiation have been further accentuated by the latest, post-1990 wave of emigration and the arrival of 'new' Albanian immigrants into the midst of already established Albanian communities abroad. This wave is unique insofar as, for the first time since the Ottoman period, large-scale emigration of Albanians from Albania and Albanians from Kosovo has coincided. However, their encounter in host countries has only highlighted national differences, differences that go so deep that they could only be overridden by a sense of national catastrophe.

Waves

Since 1912, Albanian emigration from Albania and Kosovo has had different dynamics and different causes. The establishment of the community of Albanians from Albania in the United States is illus-

6. Cf. Paulin Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003).

trative. The first wave, between 1906-1930, comprised economic migrants, settling on the East coast of the United States in the Boston area and spreading to Chicago, Detroit and New York. The second wave in the 1950s comprised anti-communist opponents of Albania's leader Enver Hoxha, and the third wave in the 1970s was an anti-Yugoslav migration of Albanians originally from Albania who had sought refuge from Hoxha's regime in Kosovo, along with Kosovo Albanians as well.[7] The fourth, post-communist, wave resulted from a mixture of political and economic motives: disenchantment with the new political class and economic hardship during a turbulent transition to democracy. Although some Albanians migrated across the Atlantic, the majority aimed for neighbouring Italy and Greece. They fled amid harrowing scenes of a national exodus, first across the Western embassies' walls, then in makeshift boats across the Adriatic, only to continue with a flight for survival after Albania's descent into lawlessness following the collapse of pyramid schemes in 1997.[8]

Kosovo Albanians also emigrated in waves that were dictated by Kosovo's specific circumstances. The first wave was in the inter-war period during the so-called Serbian colonisation programme, when Albanians fled to Turkey *en masse*.[9] During the communist period the emigration from Kosovo correlated with key political turning points. The 1960s wave was a response to the repressive policies of the ruthless Serbian security chief, Aleksandar Rankovic. The 1980s emigration was prompted by a political crackdown after the Albanian demonstrations of 1981. In addition, Kosovo's persistent underdevelopment in the post-Second World War period was a steady push-factor for emigration. The abolition of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 and the repressive Serbian rule in Kosovo in the 1990s triggered another wave. It intensified after the outbreak of conflict between Serbian security forces and Albanian guerrillas in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1998-9,[10] and peaked during the 11-week NATO bombing campaign. During communism, Kosovo Albanians headed for Germany, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. Some ended up in the United Kingdom, especially in the post-communist period. The last wave of emigration was global due to organised government programmes for emergency evacuation of Kosovo Albanians during the NATO intervention in 1999.

Similarly, the emigration of Albanians from Macedonia has been linked to the political and economic situation in this former

7. Fron Nazi, 'Balkan Diaspora I: The Albanian-American Community', in William J. Buckley (ed.), *Kosovo: Contending Voices on the Balkan Interventions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), pp.149-52, pp. 149-50. Hugh Miall, 'Albanians in the post-communist transition' in Karle Cordell (ed.), *Ethnicity and Democratisation in the New Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 131-144: p. 139.

8. For a general overview of emigration from Albania, see Russell King and Julie Vullnetari, 'Migration and development in Albania', Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, December 2003, pp. 21-25; cf. Gabriella Lazaridis and Krystyna Romaniszyn, 'Albanian and Polish undocumented workers in Greece: A comparative analysis', *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1998, pp. 5-22; Corrado Bonifazi and Dante Sabatino, 'Albanian migration to Italy: what official data and survey results can reveal', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 29, no. 6, November 2003, pp. 967-95.

9. Malcolm, op. cit. in note 2, pp. 264-88.

10. Barbara Balaj, 'Kosovo's Albanian Diaspora: Blessing or curse on the economy?', January 2001, hhtp://www.worldbank.org.

Yugoslav republic. Unlike their ethnic brethren in Kosovo, who did receive some recognition of their ethnic rights within the autonomous Kosovo, no special constitutional provisions were made for Macedonian Albanians in the communist period. The response was a steady departure of Albanians, mainly from Western Macedonia, in search of work abroad, by and large following the Kosovo Albanian diasporic destinations in Western Europe.[11]

Politics

With their various geographical origins, Albanians have brought their diverse politics to their new homes. Former Congressman Joseph DioGuardi, the Chairman of the Albanian American Civic League, recognised the divisive power of geography: 'Albanians from six political jurisdictions in the Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Presevo, and Chameria) live in the United States and all have their own ideas on what they think about how best to politically represent their families in the Balkans. This is why it is very difficult to create a united voice for Albanians in America.'[12]

Political factionalism in the Albanian diasporas, historically and in the present day, has been reinforced by ideological differences. Thus, the original Albanian *émigrés* in the United States did not challenge Hoxha's rule in their native Albania, seeing the Communists as Albania's liberators from occupation by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These *émigrés* were ideologically opposed to the staunchly anti-communist newcomers from Albania in the 1950s. The latter infiltrated and took over the original diaspora newspapers and organisations, such as *Vatra* (Hearth), although their activity would later be channelled mainly through the US State Department-sponsored Albania Free Committee.[13]

The ideological differences became embedded in diaspora party politics. They both replicated the political party scene in Albanian homelands in the Balkans, and also affected its configuration. Hence, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), headed by the late Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova, after the suppression of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, was challenged by opponents of the movement's approach of passive non-violence both at home and in the diaspora. Calls for the activation of resistance came from within the LDK, as Bujar Bukoshi, Kosovo's then prime minister-in-exile, supported the protests of Albanian university students in

11. For example, Yugoslavs (of whom a significant percentage were Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia) comprised 77% and 68.4% of all the foreign population in Germany and Switzerland respectively in 1974. Russell King, 'European international migration 1945-90: a statistical and geographical overview' in Russell King (ed.), *Mass Migration in Europe* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1993), pp. 19-39.

12. Xho DioGuardi in 'Një burrë I fuqishëm në krah të Kosovës' ['A strong man on Kosovo's side'], *Zëri*, 25 tetor 2000/25 October 2000, http://www.aacl.com/Zeri_shqip.htm.

13. Nazi, op. cit. in note 7, p. 150.

the late 1990s, who sided with the political opposition at home headed by the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo.[14] Additionally, the LDK was outflanked by proponents of armed resistance living both abroad and in Kosovo as support for the KLA soared. Since the 1999 conflict, the loyalty of the Kosovo Albanian diaspora has remained divided between the parties descended from the KLA and the LDK. The same division runs through the American Albanian diaspora.

Tensions have been evident not only within the Albanian communities from the same place of origin, but also between Albanians from Albania and Kosovo Albanian communities. Ill feeling between the two communities in the United Kingdom is illustrative of this. After 1996 Kosovo Albanians were entitled to remain in the country as refugees. Albanians from Albania copiously exploited this provision by pretending to be Kosovars, to the resentment of genuine Kosovo Albanian refugees.

Economics

Cleavages along the lines of economic status or profession and gender have somewhat mitigated the divisive impact of cleavages based on geography. In London, young urban professional Kosovars, fleeing the repression in Kosovo in the 1990s, have preferred to befriend young professional Albanians from Albania rather than low-skilled or rural migrants from Kosovo. Gender has also been a cross-cutting factor. The liberal Western environment has provided an opportunity for young Albanian women to pursue their education and careers, endowing them with the financial independence to question their traditional role in family and society. Their empowerment led to family tensions and even to charges of betrayal of national mores and values. However, it also became another point of solidarity among like-minded Albanians, both male and female, regardless of their place of origin.[15]

In sum, the emerging image of the Albanian diaspora is that of a global patchwork. The 'core' diasporic communities in Western Europe, also in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the US, Turkey and as far afield as Australia, New Zealand and China, make Albanians a global diaspora. This diaspora has many historical layers, where *gastarbeiter* (guest workers) mix with destitute undocumented migrants and political dissidents as well as scarred and homeless refugees from all Albanian-populated lands in the

14. Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 192-95.

15. Denisa Kostovicova and Albert Prestreshi, 'Education, gender and religion: identity transformations among Kosovo Albanians in London', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 29, no. 6, 2003, pp. 1079-96.

Balkans. These are mirrored in different political and economic agendas, and many forms of organising among numerous Albanian communities abroad.[16] Nevertheless, underlying the cleavages in the Albanian diasporas is a strong sense of belonging to one single Albanian nation, conceptualised primarily as a symbolic community united by a national language, history and traditions.

Unity in the face of crisis

The Kosovo crisis of the 1990s demonstrated that a symbolic sense of Albanian national unity can translate into practical support for the national cause of Kosovo's independence, whether in the form of funds, arms or manpower. The Kosovo crisis unfolded in two stages. The first was a period of peaceful resistance from the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 until 1998. The second was the short but intense interlude of the Albanian armed resistance and conflict in Kosovo, ending with NATO's intervention in spring 1999. In both stages, the Albanian diaspora was a critical actor shaping the politics and national struggle in the homeland.

Forced suppression of Kosovo's political autonomy by Serbia in 1989 was followed by abolition of Albanian rights in all other spheres of life. A wave of dismissals of Albanians from their jobs in Kosovo's economy, education, health care, culture, sports, and media resulted in a jobless, humiliated and repressed Albanian majority in the province. The establishment of the Albanian parallel state in Kosovo prevented a slide into war in the early 1990s. Albanian national leader Ibrahim Rugova, elected president in clandestine elections, and his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), spearhead Albanians' non-violent resistance.

The building of the Albanian shadow state in Serb-ruled Kosovo was essentially a diaspora project, though its architects were in Kosovo. Due to Serb repression, the state institutions were not fully constituted. Government ministers had to seek refuge abroad, and the Serbian police prevented the parliament from convening. Only Rugova's presidential office was functional in Kosovo. Tapping into the network of the LDK chapters abroad, the Kosovo Albanians established a centralised tax-collection system. A three percent contribution from the Kosovo Albanian diaspora provided the necessary finance for the rudimentary functioning of the Albanian parallel state at home.[17] This financed a basic social

16. The sense of fragmentation is clearly captured in an online discussion about the organisation of the Albanian diaspora. See 'Komuniteti shqiptar jashtë – Si organizohet?', at the DERVINA.COM, Information page of Albanian Diaspora, http://lajme.dervina.com/?sherbimi=lajme&lajmi=9552-2055:398 (accessed 14 August 2007).

17. Albanians in Kosovo were also expected to pay their taxes. However, contributions of jobless and impoverished Albanians in Kosovo, who themselves depended on the handouts from their family members abroad, was an act of symbolic contribution to state functioning, rather than a significant source of revenue.

safety net in Kosovo. It also paid for the Albanian satellite broadcasting that beamed the news in Albanian, thus lifting the Serb-imposed information blockade in the Albanian language.[18]

Control of the diaspora's financial muscle was central to the political power struggle that erupted after consensus on the mode of national struggle broke down. The trigger was the 1995 Dayton Agreement. This brought peace to neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina, but the West gave in to Serbia's strongman Slobodan Milosevic and sidelined the Kosovo issue. To Albanians in Kosovo and abroad this was a signal that non-violence was ineffective.

Political developments seemed to vindicate small Kosovo Albanian *émigré* groups, the so-called *Enverists*, who opposed Rugova from the start. Their ranks were filled by Albanian political dissidents, many of whom had served time in Serbia's prisons. Their sympathies for Hoxha-style communism were an expression of Albanian nationalism, rather than ideological conviction. One of these groups, the Popular Movement for Kosovo (LPK), that established its armed wing, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), in the early 1990s, assumed dominance.[19] Increasing doubts about Rugova's non-violent strategy affected the flow of funds. Diaspora funds from Western Europe and the United States were redirected into the LPK's rival fund, 'Homeland Calling', or, more precisely, a network of accounts abroad. It was public knowledge that a donation to the fund was a donation to the Kosovo army.[20]

The collapse of pyramid schemes and ensuing lawlessness in neighbouring Albania in 1997 flooded Kosovo with cheap arms, and the increasingly confident KLA made its first public appearance in Kosovo. The heavy-handed way in which the Serbian security forces dealt with the Albanian armed challenge claimed an increasing number of civilian victims and filled the KLA ranks. The violence escalated from the end of 1997 into 1999. The NATO intervention to end Serb repression and armed suppression of Albanians was launched in spring 1999. A catastrophe of epic proportions unfolded. Nearly one million Kosovo Albanians were forced to flee their homes, protected from the sky but left at the mercy of Serbian security forces and paramilitaries on the ground. The number of Albanian dead has been estimated at up to 10,000.[21]

Importantly, the war in Kosovo precipitated the solidarity of Albanians globally and irrespective of their place of origin in the Balkans. In the first stage, Kosovo Albanians abroad were critical in

18. Denisa Kostovicova, 'Parallel worlds: Response of Kosovo Albanians to loss of autonomy in Serbia, 1989-1996', Keele European Research Centre South East Europe Series, Research Paper 2, 1997.

19. Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 99-134; cf. Chris Hedges, 'Kosovo's next masters?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 3, pp. 240-2.

20. Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 238-61. After falling out with Rugova, Prime Minister-in-exile Bukoshi used the three percent fund to finance another rival Kosovo Albanian armed group, FARK. Although this led to tensions with the KLA, the latter 's dominance was not challenged.

21. Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *Kosovo Report* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

providing a lifeline to their co-nationals with their financial support, though the political activism of the Albanian diaspora in the US, mainly comprising Albanians from Albania, on behalf of Kosovo should also be acknowledged. In the second stage, *all* Albanians abroad came together to aid their embattled Kosovar brethren in the homeland. Thus, the Atlantic Brigade ('Atlantiku'), manned by Albanian recruits from the US, organised, funded and equipped by their fellow diasporans, flew to Albania and crossed over the Kosovo border to fight the Serb forces during the NATO intervention. They joined the ranks of the KLA, swollen by Albanian volunteers from all over the world. Some laid down their lives, performing the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.[22]

Both the Kosovo and the Macedonia crises have demonstrated the ability of the Albanians in the diaspora to support, change, even radicalise the politics of the homeland, and, ultimately, start war there. According to the International Crisis Group, they 'could easily open up new fronts if they wish, to keep the pressure on the numerous unresolved Albanian-related issues.'[23] Albanians abroad influenced the conduct of policy on the ground largely through informal channels. As a result of the lack of transparency and accountability, the Albanian diaspora's patriotic engagement has become linked to organised crime and dirty money, mainly from international drugs trade and trafficking.[24] A small minority of Albanians at home and abroad may have been reaping benefits as a part of criminal transnational networks traversing the Balkans[25] (see Chapter Six). This has inadvertently created a new battle-line for the Albanian disapora: the defence of the national image.[26] Albanian involvement in a plot to kidnap Victoria Beckham, the wife of the global football star David Beckham, in the United Kingdom in 2002 is a striking example.

Unity after the crisis?

If the Kosovo war was a high point of unity in the Albanian diaspora, the record of all-national solidarity in its aftermath has been more patchy. Kosovo's independence has continued to mobilise the Albanian patriots in the diaspora. However, Albanians abroad have been increasingly dedicated to other pressing concerns, such as corruption in Albania. Given the weak capacity of states to deliver public goods (primarily jobs and development) in all Alban-

22. Stacy Sullivan, *Be not afraid, for you have sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the US into the Kosovo War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), pp. 245-76.

23. 'Pan-Albanianism: How big a threat to Balkan stability?', *ICG Europe Report* no. 153, 25 February 2004, p. 31.

24. Georgi Tsekov, 'Sons of the Eagle: Clan warfare, organized crime and state disintegration in the Western Balkans', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2002, pp. 1-24; Robert Hislope, 'Organized crime in a disorganized state: How corruption contributed to Macedonia's mini-war', *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2002, pp. 33-41; Cf. 'Albanian prostitutes in Soho', *The Economist*, 21 June 2001; Dominic Kennedy, Stewart Tendler and John Phillips, 'Albanian gangsters corner Britain's sex trade', *The Times*, 6 July 2002.

25. Marko Hajdinjak, 'Smuggling in Southeast Europe: The Yugoslav wars and the development of regional criminal networks in the Balkans', Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, 2002.

26. See 'Life in Kosovo lifts lid on Albanian image in Britain', BIRN Kosovo, 1 September 2006, http://kosovo.birn.eu.com/en/1/31/1596/.

ian-inhabited areas in the Balkans, attracting the diaspora remittances and maximising their impact has been one of the key preoccupations of policy-makers in the homeland.

The political battle for Kosovo

Following the armed interlude, the battle for Kosovo's independence reverted to the political track after 1999. At the same time, the situation in Kosovo has undergone a profound change. Although under the rule of the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Kosovo was rid of Serbian rule. Many influential diaspora political figures returned home to Kosovo, such as Hashim Thaçi, who became a leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and a head of the self-appointed administration in Kosovo after the war. Therefore, the changes on the ground affected the political landscape of the Albanian diaspora. As a consequence, political activity fell back on the pre-existing organisational infrastructure.

Albanians in Western Europe, most of whom are from Kosovo and Macedonia, reverted to existing social clubs and cultural associations. They have organised isolated initiatives aimed at policy-makers in their host countries, such as meeting with the members of the parliament and the officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom.[27] Kosovo Albanians' lack of a permanent body or a liaison office in main decision-centres, such as Washington, New York and Brussels, has had an adverse effect on their ability to sustain a campaign for the Kosovo cause.[28]

By contrast, the United States has emerged as a hub of Albanian political lobbying. The focus on the United States is due to the clout exerted byWashington when it comes to resolving the status of Kosovo. The Albanian Americans' political influence also benefits from an organisational structure, decades-long experience of political lobbying, as well as the financial weight of well-to-do American Albanians. DioGuardi's Albanian American Civic League (AACL) has spearheaded lobbying efforts since 1986, along with the National Albanian American Council (NAAC) founded in 1996. Although bitter rivals, the two organisations have provided sophisticated political lobbying for Kosovo reinforced by the insider knowledge of Washington's corridors of power and influential contacts, primarily in the Republican Party.[29] Closeness to the State Department has also attracted criticism from some, for affecting their independence,

27. Interview with London-based journalist Daut Dauti, who is one of the initiators and participants in these efforts, 7 August 2007.

28. Cf. 'Lobbyists interviewed for Life in Kosovo, Part II', BIRN Kosovo, 29 December 2006, http://kosovo.birn.eu.com/en/1/31/2066/.

29. Hockenos, op. cit. in note 20, pp. 202-19.

and from others, for distancing them from Albanian grassroots communities.[30] Neither organisation is exclusively devoted to Kosovo's independence, which represents only one, albeit important, cause among many, which also include Albania's democratisation as well as support for Albanians' minority rights in the Balkans.

Hence, the founding of the US-based Alliance for a New Kosovo in 2005, by the Kosovo-born Behgjet Pacolli, the contracting and engineering magnate, who made his wealth from his Swiss diaspora home, is a new development. The mission of this organisation is focused exclusively on the independence of Kosovo and the surrounding issues.[31] The Alliance is a part of a wider campaign, which also includes the hiring of an international lobbing company, as Kosovar capital put itself at the service of the national cause.[32] In keeping with the tradition of linkage between diasporic and homeland organisations, Pacolli set up a political party with the same name in Kosovo in 2007.[33]

The new pan-Albanian hubs of activity linked to the legacy of the Kosovo conflict, such as 'Atlantiku', comprised of ex-fighters, have also continued to be active on Albanian issues, taking political and economic issues on board.

Kosovo versus other national issues

The importance of Kosovo's final status notwithstanding, the Albanian diaspora has increasingly, and, no less passionately, embraced other important causes in the Albanian-inhabited territories in the Balkans. New concerns have to do with social and economic issues, aggravated by the pace and quality of reforms at home. Diversification of diaspora activism is led by a new generation of young Albanians abroad linked with a new generation of democracy activists at home. *Mjaft!*, the youth movement launched in Albania in 2003, has heralded radically new politics based on direct civic action in Albania, a new relationship with diaspora-based activists facilitated by computer-mediated technology, and a new kind of transnational organising, not just among ethnic Albanians, but also across ethnic lines.

According to its founder, Erion Veliaj, in its fourth year *Mjaft!* numbers 9,000 members in Albania, with 18 clubs throughout the country.[34] The movement's symbol is a red hand held up as if gesturing 'Stop!'. Its name, *Mjaft!*, which means 'enough', sums up

30. Interview with a New York-based insider, 16 August 2007.

31. 'Alliance for a New Kosovo: About the Alliance', http://www.newkosovo.org/ (accessed 08 August 2007).

32. Guy Dinmore, 'The Americas: the battle for Kosovo moves to the corridors of US power', *The Financial Times*, 2 December 2005, www.ft.com.

33. http://www.akr-ks.info/ and http://www.behgjetpacolli.net/.

34. Erion Veliaj, 'Kurajo! End nuk ka mbaruar', *Mjaft Telegraf*, mars-prill 2007, p. 3.

the movement's vision and activism: 'to achieve a well-governed Albania with active citizens and a positive image in the world.'[35] A proponent of participatory democracy and good governance, the movement strives to put a halt to corruption, unaccountability, unfair elections, poverty, unemployment, etc. Its campaigns have been energising, uncompromising and witty. Protesting about a recent energy crisis in Albania, the movement proposed that Pinocchio should be inaugurated as the country's Prime Minister and a two-headed eagle, which is a national symbol, replaced by a picture of a generator, torch and candle as a new emblem for the Council of Ministers.

The linkage with the diaspora on the basis of a civic principle, i.e. as a civil society actor, rather than on the basis of political party allegiance, also represents a new aspect of the diaspora-homeland relationship. Alongside visits by the movement to the Albanian communities abroad, the founding of a branch of the *Mjaft!* Movement of London is one way of extending new politics to the diaspora. The Serbian youth movement *Otpor* ('Resistance'), that played a critical role in mobilising grassroots opposition to the Milosevic regime, provided a model for the Albanian counterpart. More broadly, the *Mjaft!* movement fits into a context of transnational youth pro-democracy activism, also embodied by *Kmara* in Georgia and *Pora* in the Ukraine.[36] In fact, *Mjaft!* has made a transnational arena, cutting across national boundaries, the space for its activism, as evidenced by the joint organisation of the Tirana Activism Festival in 2005 by *Mjaft*, *Kmara*, *Pora*, Croatia's *Gong*, the Kosovo Youth Movement KAN and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia.[37]

Return and remittances as national challenges

The members of *Mjaft!* have also challenged the established thinking about the diaspora's 'myth of return'. Members of a diaspora are often said to be contemplating a return to their homeland, but never actually doing it. Many *Mjaft!* activists, including its founder, are returnees to Albania from abroad. As a personal example, they highlight one of Albania's most pressing problems: the flight of young people abroad. Researchers have pointed out that the problem for Albania was more serious than 'brain drain', i.e. the emigration of qualified and talented professionals. According to them, it is 'brain waste' since the majority of Albanian migrants do not use their qual-

35. http://www.mjaft.org/en/organizata.php.

36. See Taras Kuzio, 'Civil society, youth and societal mobilization in democratic revolutions', *Communist and post-Communist Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2006, pp. 365-386.

37. Sagita Muco, 'Tirana activism festival: sharing a vision of democracy', *Southeast European Times*, 17 June 2005, www.setimes.com.

ifications in jobs they hold in their host countries. Hence, a key challenge has been how to turn the 'brain drain' into a 'brain gain'.[38]

At the same time, the government in Tirana has been investigating ways of maximising the effect of remittances sent by the diaspora. Though the exact calculation of Albania's remittances is difficult due to money being sent via informal channels, the annual inflow is estimated at between $300 million and $1 billion. However, the vast share of remittances is spent on various forms of family consumption, while only a small percentage becomes a potentially productive capital invested in small businesses.[39] Albania is expected to experience a diminished influx of remittances in the near future. The neighbouring post-conflict Kosovo has already experienced a decline in remittances after their peak during the conflict.[40]

Kosovo Albanians abroad have been crucial in bankrolling repairs and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed family houses in Kosovo. Sending money home to Kosovo during the Serb repression and during the war was a form of help to immediate and extended family left behind. But, it was also a patriotic act. In post-conflict Kosovo, the sense of obligation to the family has remained, but not the sense of obligation to the government.

Kosovars abroad have expressed their disillusionment with corrupt politicians at home. This diminishes their incentive to send the money, they say. The Kosovo government has recently attempted to appeal to Albanians' sense of national duty by organising a meeting with the Kosovar diaspora. The venue was more than symbolic. The meeting took place in the village of Prekaz, in historic Drenica, home to the grave of the Albanian martyr Adem Jashari, whose family's massacre in spring 1998 marked a turning point in the conflict.

Instead, the Albanians in the diaspora have put their investment in Kosovo on a commercial footing. Many have bought restaurants and hotels and other small businesses, appointed their family members and relatives as managers, while they hold onto their jobs abroad. Again, what Kosovo and Albania have in common is poor infrastructure as well as weak governance, which is what potential Albanian investors have singled out as a key obstacle to investment. The uncertainty about Kosovo's final status is also a powerful disincentive.[41] The same reasons, alongside the standard of living and career prospects, have also deterred potential returnees.

38. 'From brain drain to brain gain: Mobilising Albania's skilled diaspora', UNDP Albania, Tirana, April 2006.

39. King and Vullnetari, op. cit. in note 8, pp.48-50.

40. See Gloria La Cava et al., 'Conflict and Change in Kosovo: Impact on Institutions and Society', The World Bank, Environmental and Socially Sustainable Development (ECSSD), Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region, December 2000, pp. 70-1. An additional factor affecting the remittance level in Kosovo has been a policy of repatriation of Albanians with an unresolved immigration status from host countries.

41. Andi Balla, 'US-Albanian diaspora bridges investment gap in Kosovo', BIRN Kosovo, 9 July 2007, http://kosovo.birn.eu.com/en/1/70/3611/.

Conclusion

Unlike a century earlier at the close of the Ottoman era in the Balkans, when the sense of Albanian identity was being forged thanks to the secret shipments of books, newspapers and journals, today the Albanians in the homeland and in the diaspora are availing of the communications revolution to maintain links with their co-nationals. Satellite television, the internet, mobile phones and text messages have shrunk the distance between Albanians abroad and at home. New technology that will define the profile of the Albanian diaspora in the future is already having a profound, and yet contradictory, impact on the sense of Albanian national unity.

The task of preserving the national identity of the Albanians in the diaspora, which was one of the chief concerns of the early Albanian *émigrés*, has been made much much easier. At the same time, new technology has also allowed Albanians from different areas of origin in the Balkans to foster their distinct identities. This is embodied in preoccupation with specific issues that bedevil Albanians in their different territories in the Balkans. The national issues, and in particular, that of Kosovo's independence, do have a unifying impact on the Albanian diaspora. The issue-based internet websites and chat-rooms are also making it possible for Albanians to come together, albeit in a virtual world, sharing an interest in other issues, such as arts, science, Albanian vocabulary, etc, and not necessarily intrinsically national issues.[42]

The Kosovo crisis, nonetheless, has demonstrated that a sense of one undivided Albanian nation can become an organising principle and guide many-sided aid action. The Albanian diasporas, like other global diasporas, will remain divided along the questions related to nationhood, generation, profession, geography, gender, etc., while maintaining a two-way relationship with the homeland. Nonetheless, another crisis and renewal of bloodshed in Kosovo still has the potential to trigger the demonstration of the unity of diaspora Albanians. In the event of a possible spillover of violence into neighbouring countries with an Albanian population, this sense of unity could precipitate a revival of the early twentieth century goal of unification of Albanian lands, which was sidelined by the Albanians' divergent national, political and economic development both at home and abroad.

42. See http://www.alb-net.com/ for a list of discussion forums and lists visited by Albanians.

Balkan organised crime

Misha Glenny

6

This chapter is based on part of the forthcoming book McMafia: Crime Without Frontiers*, due to be published by Random House in April 2008.*

For over a decade, south-eastern Europe's reputation has been tarnished by accusations of the region's alleged accommodation with organised crime. These accusations have provided grist to the mill of those arguing against the expansion of the European Union into south-eastern Europe. Supporters of Balkan accession treat the subject as an irritating distraction from the political process of integration. There has, however, been little examination of why organised crime has found the region such a fertile breeding ground for its activities, what the nature of its political and economic role is there, and, by implication, what might be done to reduce its impact in the region.

The present chapter merely hopes to focus the discussion on a much-neglected topic, but to begin with it is worth highlighting a number of basic points. Firstly, all former communist countries fell victim to high rates of corruption and crime in the years after 1989. The implosion suffered by the police and criminal justice system accounts for the emergence of protection rackets and the strength of organised crime groups throughout the entire post-communist world. It was exacerbated by the economic failure that followed the revolutions of 1989.

Some have escaped this trap with greater ease than others. The Visegrad countries, Slovakia and Slovenia, were sought-after partners by key EU Member States and their policies focussing on accession encouraged early foreign investment in key sectors of industry where large rates of unemployment threatened.

Russia and the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) and the Balkans had very different experiences. The unparalleled degree of disruption caused by the demise of the Soviet Union combined with the immense value of Russia's and Central Asia's mineral resources facilitated a huge penetration of criminal structures into Russia's economic and political life. In the Balkans, organised crime derived its power not from energy resources but from the war economy of the former Yugoslavia, and from its tra-

ditional role as the major smuggling route separating Western Europe from the rest of the world.

In recent years, there has been much discussion of Albanian organised crime as a particular threat to the region and Western Europe. To focus on a single nationality in this way tends to obscure the economic and political causes of organised crime – throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, all Balkan national groups became involved in organised crime at senior levels. Indeed, one of the key operational nexuses involved the Serb and Kosovar as well as the Macedonian and Kosovar mafias in the smuggling of heroin from Turkey into Western Europe. These mafia structures ensured the smooth supply of heroin throughout the conflict period of 1999, just as cooperation between the Bosniak, Serb, and Croatian mobs had continued uninterrupted during the Bosnian and Croat wars. The current prominence afforded to the Albanian mob is largely a consequence of Kosovo's historical underdevelopment combined with the economic failure of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the province, and the history of underdevelopment (exacerbated in its latter stages by Hoxhian autarchy) and volatility in Albania itself.

While there is much work to be done on national organised crime structures, the most striking phenomenon about organised crime in the Balkans is the way in which it pervades the entire region, completely bucking the trend of fragmentation that is so obvious and debilitating in most other economic and political sectors.

Bulgaria and the 'new capitalism'

In the 1970s and 1980s, communist Bulgaria was only surpassed by Romania and Albania as the most miserably depressing place to live in Europe. I recall tramping through the fog-bound streets of Sofia, drifting from one shade of grey to the next in search of a restaurant or café to alleviate the monotony and boredom. As a foreigner and journalist, my personal hospitality pack always included at least two minders from the Durzhavna Sigurnost (DS) – the State Security Police – who tracked my every footstep. Their presence ensured that on the rare occasions when I managed to persuade ordinary folk to engage in conversation, the best I could hope for was a little chit-chat about the weather.

But slowly I began to understand that beneath the moribund conformity fashioned by the DS, there were eddies of activity, some quite vigorous, which suggested the presence of more interesting lifestyles. I do not mean among those who chose the road of painful martyrdom – the intellectuals and dissidents who fought courageously against the injustice of communism – but among those who through serendipity or good fortune found ways to mould parts of the system to their advantage. For some Bulgarians, the DS (Bulgaria's equivalent of the KGB) was not the Orwellian instrument of repression that people in the West perceived. Instead, it was an avenue to status and influence.

The most lucrative business involving the Bulgarian secret service was smuggling – in drugs, in arms, and in high-technology goods. 'Smuggling is our cultural heritage,' Ivan Krastev, Bulgaria's leading political scientist, explained. 'Our territory has always nestled between huge ideologies, between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, between Islam and Christianity, between capitalism and communism. Empires riddled with hostility and suspicion for one another but home, nonetheless, to many people who want to trade across the prohibited boundaries. In the Balkans, we know how to make those boundaries disappear. We can cross the roughest sea and traverse the most forbidding mountain. We know every secret pass and, failing that, the price of every border guard.'[1]

Fortified by the might of the totalitarian state, the DS took full advantage of this romantic tradition. As early as the 1960s, it established a company called Kintex which enjoyed a monopoly on the export of arms from Bulgaria and sought out markets in troublespots like the Middle East and Africa. At the end of the 1970s, the DS expanded Kintex by setting up the 'Covert Transit' directorate. Its primary role was to smuggle weapons to African insurgent groups but soon the channels were also being used for illegal people trafficking, for drugs and even for the smuggling of works of art and antiquities.

Other companies specialised in the sale of an indigenous Bulgarian amphetamine, Kaptagon, to the Middle East where it was a hugely popular drug due to its alleged aphrodisiacal properties. In the other direction, some 80% of heroin destined for the West European market would cross into Bulgaria from Turkey at the Kapetan Andreevo border point and thus pass into the hands of the DS. Not only did Bulgaria make big money out of this, but the

1. Interview with the author, Sofia, May 2004.

trade helped to undermine capitalist Western Europe by flooding it with cheap heroin.

The DS enabled Bulgaria to play a pivotal role in the distribution of illicit goods and services between Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. But it was resolute in preventing anyone else from muscling in on the trade. Bulgaria's border force was ruthless and severe punishments were meted out to anybody caught smuggling drugs or weapons without authorisation. This resolve was not born of a commitment to uphold the rule of law (a concept that was anathema to the Security Service), but to underscore the DS's economic monopoly. At the heart of the smuggling operations lay Military Counter Intelligence, the 2nd Directorate of the DS, which controlled all of Bulgaria's borders.

Equally as valuable to its members was the intelligence and analytical capacity of its 6th Directorate, responsible for politics. In 1986, as Mikhail Gorbachev consolidated his authority in Moscow, western leaders were unaware that the Soviet Union's hegemony over its East European allies was coming to an end. The Bulgarian State Security service had no such illusions about the system it policed. Experienced observers of the Soviet scene, the DS's leadership calculated that communism did not have long to last.

Under pressure from Gorbachev, the Bulgarian Communist Party had passed Decree 56 which overnight allowed the creation of private enterprises in Bulgaria, known as joint-stock companies. Many in the party, still hardliners, were shocked by this development as it looked like the thin end of a capitalist wedge. But the Security Services, which habitually subordinated ideology to the love of power, took it in their stride.

A week after Decree 56 came into effect, the DS had formed Bulgaria's first joint-stock company. And within the first year, members of the DS had founded 90% of these nascent capitalist entities. While the bulk of Bulgaria's long-suffering population was still being force-fed the rhetoric about socialism's bright and eternal future, the regime's most senior representatives were teaching themselves how to make money. Having spent forty-five years expounding the theoretical evils of capitalism to ordinary Bulgarians, the secret police were now keen to demonstrate those evils in practice.

When communism fell in 1989, successive governments responded to the demands of many citizens by dismantling the

great machine of communist repression. Thousands upon thousands of policemen were sacked. All manner of operatives lost their jobs – secret police, counter-intelligence officers, Special Forces commandos, border guards as well as homicide detectives and traffic cops. Their skills included surveillance, smuggling, establishing networks, blackmail and killing people. By 1991, 14,000 secret policemen were kicking their heels and looking for work in a country where the economy was contracting at an alarming rate. One sector, however, was experiencing an unprecedented expansion and it was a line of work that was ideally suited to unemployed and disaffected policemen. This sector was organised crime.

Thus the collapse of communism was accompanied by a collapse in the state's ability to police not only society but, critically, commercial exchange which in a few short months in 1990 began to challenge the supremacy of the command economy. Those policemen who remained in work were completely overwhelmed, unaware of what was happening. They and the judicial system had no experience in enforcing contract law but everyone from market traders to aspiring business magnates suddenly required the ability to enforce contracts entered into.

But if the police were unable to regulate contract law between nascent businessmen, one group of men who, like the police, had experienced a sudden collapse in their social standing, understood much better what was required. This was Bulgaria's army of wrestlers, weight-lifters, boxers and other assorted muscle-men who the world had grown used to seeing cleaning up the medals at the Olympic games. With subsidies for such activities drying up as the state seized up, the wrestlers formed companies that offered 'protection' to new businessmen and women, making use of their sole resource, violence – or, more accurately, the effective threat of violence.

The same process was happening throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (although there were some cultural variations as to which social groups formed the protection industry – in Russia, for example, it was not only sportsmen but veterans of the Afghan war and strong ethnic groups like the Chechens or the Georgians). Protection rackets are the purest form of a mafia organisation, in effect a privatised law enforcement agency. In contrast to their state-run counterparts, the Interior Ministry or the DS, these flexible self-organised gangs had an instinctive under-

standing that there was a vibrant demand for their 'protection' or insurance services among the new business class. Instead of paying taxes to the state (which had in any case no idea how to tax the new small-scale private enterprises), businessmen willingly handed over between 10-30% of their turnover to local thugs who would ensure in exchange that they could continue trading. Furthermore, they would represent those business interests if a third party had failed to meet its contractual obligations (the great majority of such disputes ended peacefully but if agreement was not reached, then the protection racket would enforce the contract using violence. In doing so, it might well encounter resistance from the third party's own protection racket). After five decades of unchallenged dominance, the state was momentously conceding its monopoly on violence. Far from being the harbingers of anarchy, however, these groups of men were the indispensable midwives of capitalism throughout the region.

Of course, the new business class was the driving force behind the mafia, as it was their demand for protection services which enabled the 'violent entrepreneurs,' as the Russian scholar Vadim Volkov has called them, to prosper.[2] The incapacity of the state had, however, also triggered a second process whereby groups of individuals with influence inside and outside the bureaucracy were seizing the industrial assets of the state and claiming ownership at a knockdown price. Again this was common throughout Eastern Europe but it assumed a particularly effective form in Bulgaria:

> It was called the Spider Trap. A mafia don walked into the office of the director of Kremikovtsi, one of the biggest steel works in Eastern Europe. He was accompanied by a boss of the most powerful trades union, and along with him is a former director of the DS. And these guys tell the director of the enterprise – 'You have a choice...Work with us or we will destroy you!'[3]

The company director was told that from now on, he would be buying raw materials not directly from the Russians at a subsidised price but from a new company formed by the oligarch or mafia boss at the world market price. Then instead of selling the end product directly to the consumer, the director would have to sell it at a knockdown price to another of the boss's firms which would then sell it on the open market. The new man controlled the entrance and exit to the factory – this was the 'Spider Trap'.

2. Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002).

3. Author's interview with Bokyo Borrisov, former General Director of the Bulgarian Interior Ministry, currently the Mayor of Sofia.

After the revolution of 1989 Bulgaria's social security system collapsed, leaving a trail of poverty and destitution in its wake. The country had been hit hard as it emerged from the gloom and austerity of socialist economics into the blinding sun of free-market capitalism. Under communism, factories had survived thanks to massive state subsidies while the Soviet trading bloc ensured their shoddy products a guaranteed sale on East European markets. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, Bulgaria's markets crumbled with it.

With industry in near-terminal crisis, agriculture, the economy's traditional mainstay, assumed ever greater importance but this sector, too, ran into trouble. The European Union was unwilling to increase its miniscule imports of Bulgarian agricultural produce as this would undermine the protectionist racket that masquerades grandly as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). As the world's major powers began to trumpet the revolutionary significance of globalisation in the early 1990s, they skimmed over its inconsistencies. When countries opened up in the hope of greater cooperation with the mighty Western economies, the EU, the US and Japan demanded that these emerging markets accept the import and sale of European, American and Japanese goods. At the same time, they insisted on low corporate tax rates in exchange for new investments as the vogue for 'outsourcing' production to keep down labour costs took hold among Western corporations.

For most Bulgarians, the early 1990s looked grim: the country had lost its markets; the oligarchs were stripping the economy of all its valuables; nobody wanted to buy Bulgaria's goods; and furthermore now that Bulgaria was a fledgling democracy, the United States and the International Monetary Fund wasted no time in demanding that Sofia meet its obligations and start paying off $10 billion dollars worth of debt run up by the profligate communist regime. Who was going to pay for this and how?

One of the first industries in which both the wrestlers and the former secret police became involved was the import of stolen cars. At this time, tens of thousands of vehicles were stolen every month in Western Europe. The distribution network for the stolen cars in Bulgaria belonged initially to the wrestlers. Across the country, this tight-knit band of comrades took control of motels along the major transit routes. With their superior muscle and high level of trust among themselves, they embarked on a violent spree of both intimidation and incorporation of petty thieves and street gangs.

By 1992, the wrestlers enjoyed a near stranglehold on Bulgaria's major cities although in some areas they faced competition from protection rackets run by ex-policemen and security officers. The brighter sparks among them combined the skills of the two professions – sportsmen for muscle, policemen for networking. The hybrid organisations grew to dominate the economy and two groups, known by the acronyms SIC and VIS, became the overwhelming market leaders.

People were discovering all over Eastern Europe that when a country goes into freefall, the law is the first thing which is crushed in the chaos of transformation. Capitalism had not existed until 1989 and so the hopelessly weak states that emerged throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had simply no capacity to define what was 'legal' and what was 'illegal.' They had neither the money nor the experience to police the novelty of commercial exchange. Those who positioned themselves well in the first three years after the end of communism were often in a position to make up the rules of their brave new world as they went along.

The cross-border nature of the stolen car trade ensured that the emerging Bulgarian syndicates established links with similar groups in other Balkan and East European countries. Each country developed a reputation for being especially good in the trading of particular commodities. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, it was arms and cigarettes. In Bulgaria, it was cars. In Ukraine it was the trafficking of migrant labour as well as women. Everyone shifted narcotics.

Then – and not for the last time – the West did something really ill-advised. On 30 May 1992, the UN Secretary Council in New York passed Resolution 754 which imposed economic sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. The Balkans, war-ravaged, impoverished and traumatised, was about to be transformed into a hub of smuggling and criminality that had few if any parallels in history. While the world wrung its hands and fretted over the terrible nationalist urges of the Yugoslav peoples and their leaderships, the Balkan mafias started putting aside their ethnic differences to engage in criminal collaboration on a breathtaking scale. This would in turn reach out to counterparts across the globe, bringing together the mafias of Colombia, Russia, and the Golden Triangle to name but the most influential. It took the 'international community' years to even get an inkling of what was going on.

The 'cigarette mafia'

Everybody in the Balkans knew their region was a centre of the illicit trade in cigarettes. Soon after the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia in 1991, little boys as young as six could be seen sneaking in and out of restaurants in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo, wooden trays hanging from around their necks neatly stacked with the best-quality Western cigarettes. On the sidewalks, old men with the grey faces of chronic smokers were positioned every twenty-five yards offering Winston and Marlboro in cartons of 10 packs. In London these would cost $75, in New York maybe $40. But all over the Balkans, they cost just $10 a time. That price differential made smoking an entirely affordable bad habit even in the harsh conditions of war. Over half of people in the Balkans smoked – this was a lucrative market.

But there were two types of illegal cigarettes, the difference between them indistinguishable to the naked eye. One was produced with low-grade local tobacco, packaged as a Western product and then sold on the local market. It looked like the genuine article but it tasted like sawdust mixed with goat's droppings.

The second cigarette was high-quality, produced by Western tobacco companies as a Duty Not Paid (DNP) item, designated for export. Purchased direct from the factories in America, Europe and Japan, the merchandise was then sent to Europe's two major free-trade zones, Rotterdam in Holland and Zug in Switzerland. From here, they would be sold onto a third country with high levels of corruption – perhaps Egypt, perhaps Uzbekistan. Officials and organised crime syndicates levied a tax at every step of the journey and those aimed at the European Union market would make their final stop in Montenegro before re-entering the EU by speedboat. Even with everybody taking a cut in this fashion (the customs officer in Egypt, the director of ports in Romania and so on), the cigarettes were nonetheless over 50% cheaper when sold on the black market in Italy or Britain because taxation on tobacco in these countries is so high.

After an eight-year investigation into the trade, prosecutors finally filed a lawsuit in October 2002, accusing two US firms, R.J. Reynolds and Philip Morris, of complicity in the trade, although in 2004 Philip Morris struck a deal with the EU releasing the company from any liability. It also agreed to work with the EU against

Mafia penetration of the tobacco trade. R.J. Reynolds denies any complicity.

The charges levelled in 2002 were wide-ranging, including the claim that the Balkan cigarette trade was linked to the laundering of Colombian drugs money. The lawyers included a detailed breakdown of how the Montenegrin state made hundreds of millions of dollars from smuggling. Two Montenegrin companies, both controlled by President Djukanovic and the secret service, levied $30 on each case transited through the country. 'This money was divided up among various Montenegrin officials involved in this business and who controlled the licences to ship cigarettes through Montenegro,' stated the EU court submission. The second company, with the disarmingly frank name of Montenegrin Tabak Transit (MTT), was co-owned by Italians who have subsequently come under EU, Italian and Serbian investigation. 'MTT was created by certain members of organised crime in conjunction with Montenegrin government officials. The company was officially sanctioned by the Montenegrin Foreign Investment Agency and operated under the special protection of Milo Djukanovic,' the EU document claimed.[4] Djukanovic has always denied involvement in any illegal activity, maintaining that he only ever imposed a legitimate 'transit tax' on cigarettes exported to the EU via Montenegro.

As early as 1994, the EU had learned that the cigarette mafia with whom Djukanovic did his business was costing it an estimated $6-8 billion annually in lost tax revenue alone, largely in Italy and the United Kingdom. Italian prosecutors were desperate to indict Djukanovic on charges of smuggling. Yet at the same time, the United States sent discreet messages to the Italian Government in Rome, requesting that the Italians refrain from putting pressure on Djukanovic. Washington needed the Montenegrin President in their battle against Milosevic.

The alliance between politics and organised crime

During the 1980s and 1990s, a huge discrepancy in wealth had emerged between Western and Eastern Europe. But whereas in north-eastern Europe, living standards began to pick up after an initial dip, a very different fate awaited people in the Balkans. Here there was no light of prosperity at the end of the tunnel. The malign rule of nationalist leaders bent on war led to a grinding, debilitat-

4. EU Court Submission in the case of the EU v. R.J. Reynolds, Philip Morris and the Japan Tobacco Company, filed with the US Eastern District Court in New York on 30 October 2002.

ing collapse in incomes and lifestyles. The people were surrounded by successful Europeans and culturally, they still felt like Europeans. They watched European television programmes, took part in European sporting events, and they were aware of how rich their neighbours were. Furthermore, on those rare occasions when they were allowed to travel to their European Union neighbours, they faced frequent humiliation at the hands of immigration officers. Finally, they had to run the gauntlet of Balkan stereotyping which presented them as pathological killers who were only happy when slitting the throats of their neighbours. Given the juxtaposition of this miserable desert, characterised by unemployment, stagnation and violence, and a paradise of prosperity next door, should we wonder at how powerful the temptation is to become involved in organised crime?

Djukanovic's entanglement with the mob was the rule not the exception. More than in any other communist country, politics and organised crime became tangled in a tight knot throughout the former Yugoslavia as it descended into the most frightful fratricidal civil war at the beginning of the 1990s. Organised crime controlled dictators, opposition politicians, liberals, nationalists and democrats alike, and vice versa.

Most shocking of all, however, is how the gangsters and politicians fuelling war between their peoples were in private co-operating as friends and close business partners. The Croat, Bosnian, Albanian, Macedonian and Serb moneymen and mobsters were truly as thick as thieves. They bought, sold and exchanged all manner of commodities, knowing that the high levels of personal trust between them were much stronger than the transitory bonds of hysterical nationalism. They fomented this ideology among ordinary folk in essence to mask their own venality. As one commentator described it, the new republics were ruled 'by a parastate Cartel which had emerged from political institutions, the ruling communist Party and its satellites, the military, a variety of police forces, the mafia, court intellectuals and with the President of the Republic at the centre of this spider's web ... Tribal nationalism was indispensable for the Cartel as a means to pacify its subordinates and as cover for the uninterrupted privatisation of the state apparatus.'[5]

As a consequence of war, sanctions and corruption in the Balkans during the first half of the 1990s, the states of the former Yugoslavia turned to and indeed nurtured mafias to run the logistics of their military effort, and it was not long before the criminals

5. Milos Vasic, *Atentat na Zorana* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga/Politika Vreme, 2005).

were in control of the economy, the government and the war. Anyone with any serious political ambition had no choice but to get 'mobbed up'.

The arms embargo imposed on all Yugoslav republics played a key role in establishing the smuggling channels to Croatia and Bosnia and soon drugs were accompanying the guns along the same routes. But this was nothing compared to the Balkan-wide impact of the comprehensive UN economic sanctions imposed on the rump Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia (including the troubled province of Kosovo with a large Albanian population) and Montenegro. The UN imposed the sanctions in July 1992 because Serbia was aiding the Bosnian Serb military in violation of earlier Security Council resolutions.

Serbia, sanctions and the emergence of a Pan-Balkan mafia

Unlike the Croats and Bosnians, Serbia and her allies in Bosnia were not short of weaponry. But with the sanctions in place, Belgrade needed to guarantee oil supplies and it needed to find goods to export to pay for the business of waging war. Just as Serbia allowed weapons from Romania and Bulgaria to reach their enemies in Croatia and Bosnia via Serbian territory, so were the Bosnians, Croats and Albanians more than happy to sell oil to their Serbian enemies because of the extraordinary profits that a sanctions regime generates. These profits were then split between the state (which purchased more weapons with them) and the deep pockets of the mafia.

Sanctions had a negligible impact on the European Union and America. Most Western companies could afford to stop trading with Belgrade, an insignificant market, especially as their governments threatened tough penalties if anybody violated them. Serbia lies at the heart of all Balkan trading routes – its roads and its markets are almost as essential for its neighbours as they are for Serbia itself. The UN, of course, issued warnings to the surrounding countries that they must break off all links with Serbia and Montenegro. For Balkan countries, in contrast, the sanctions were a catastrophe.

Not a penny of assistance or compensation was offered to Yugoslavia's neighbours – they were all expected to shoulder the

costs of the international community's moral indignation about Serbia's behaviour in Bosnia. So the only way they could pay for pensions, wages and health care was by allowing the mob to shore up its control of the country's main trading routes and claim ignorance, helplessness or both. As the crisis deepened, so did this damaging symbiotic relationship between politics and crime. Virtually overnight, the vote at the UN Security Council ordering sanctions created a pan-Balkan mafia of immense power, reach, creativity and venality.

Even though the Bulgarian government could no longer officially buy and sell to Serbia, businessmen felt less constrained. They hired rail cars from the government in order to send millions of gallons of petrol into Serbia by train. They were accompanied by members of SIC, one of the two largest protection rackets in Bulgaria, and waved through by customs' officers whose meagre wages meant that their allegiance was easily purchased.

Criminals and businessmen throughout the region worked feverishly to create a dense web of friendships and networks to subvert the embargo. Some inside the US administration had warned President Clinton of such dangerous consequences. One senior member of the US Treasury told me that 'we made it plain to our colleagues in the White House that you could never break Serbia with sanctions. The Serbs were self-sufficient in food and given its centrality to the regional economy, the neighbours were bound to continue trading with them.'[6] Like so many warnings about the deleterious impact of sanctions, this one was ignored.

Soon everyone was selling oil to Serbia from wherever they could get their hands on it. The Romanians floated barges almost sinking under the weight of their appallingly low-grade oil. 'In Albania,' a US intelligence report noted, 'imported oil was shipped via pipeline across the northern border, by boat across Lake Shkoder, by caravans of cars with extra fuel tanks added, by donkeys carrying barrels of oil across mountainous regions ... The total oil flow was estimated to have brought Albania more than $1 million per day during 1993-1994.' Despite being one of Serbia's harshest critics, Albania played a key role in supplying Belgrade with oil. 'Barges were used to bring oil products from Ukraine,' the report continued. 'The volume of shipments along the Danube River attracted the interest of Serbian pirates who would cruise the Danube looking for fuel shipments to hijack ... Romanian oil products arrived by highway, by ship, and by an

6. Interview with the author, Washington D.C., March 2005.

underground pipeline from the Romanian oil facility at Timisoara. Cars were refitted to carry as much as 500 gallons of fuel.'[7]

The sanctions-busting carnival was also, of course, an opportunity that Russian business could not let slip through its fingers. Gazprom, the oil and gas giant, agreed to a barter arrangement with Serbia. Serbia was able to exchange its surplus grain stocks for between $100-250 million worth of oil a year from Gazprom.

The economies of the fragmented republics of the former Yugoslavia had been devastated – firms were often dependent on suppliers in countries with which they were now at war; the export of industrial products to Eastern and Western Europe had collapsed. But still they were purchasing billions of dollars worth of weapons, oil, food, consumer goods and luxury goods every month. Although the majority of the population was becoming poorer by the day, a hugely wealthy new class of entrepreneurs and gangsters was visible on the streets of all Balkan cities. Ferraris, Porsches, armoured Mercedes and SUVs clogged up Zagreb, Belgrade and elsewhere. Occasionally, men in shades would emerge from behind the smoked-glass windows. I well recall a terrified restaurant owner in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, asking me to pay my bill and vacate my table in a hurry as some special guests were arriving who he did not wish to disappoint. As I saw the platoon of Neanderthal-looking bodybuilders stride into the establishment while I exited, I noticed that they weren't even Macedonian but Bulgarian – they treated foreign countries as their own.

These men carried guns with impunity and would sport the nationalist insignia of their particular tribe – the four Cs of Serbia, the lily of Bosnia, the eagle of Albania or the chequered board of Croatia. Because although they were quite happy to trade with their equivalents in enemy territories, most were hooked up with the vile militias that were busy slaughtering civilian populations in the war zones of Bosnia and Croatia. In Bosnia, the Serb forces who had locked Sarajevo in a siege were not the only thugs in town. Bosnia's own Muslim warlords controlled the entire economy of the city, trading with the Serb besiegers and then squeezing every last penny out of their compatriots by ratcheting up the price of basic foodstuffs, many of which were stolen from the United Nations and other humanitarian organisations.

Somehow this orgy of war and consumer excess had to be paid for. The former Yugoslav republics were no longer in a position to

7. 'Enforcement of Serbian Sanctions and Embargo', United States Energy Information Administration (EIA), Washington D.C., June 1999. Available online at: http://www.eia.doc.gov/cabs/serbsanc.html.

balance the books with their traditional exports, and so they decided to finance the war by other means. And because the industry of sanctions-busting had now created a huge pan-Balkan network of organised crime (whose members had no sense of ethnic loyalty when it came to trade), the easiest way of underwriting the affairs of state was through mafia business: drugs, arms, oil, weapons, women and migrants. The foundations for a factory of crime had been laid.

Croats, Albanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Serbs cooperated splendidly in shifting contraband goods, narcotics and women from territory to territory. 'Licensed' by governments and the security services, these were effectively horizontal cartels that stretched across several countries. One of the largest combined Turkish heroin gangs with Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian syndicates to smuggle the bulk of the heroin originating in Afghanistan into Western Europe. The cartel functioned smoothly during both the Kosovo and Macedonian wars at the turn of the millennium even though the front lines cut right across the smuggling route.

While collaboration with national enemies proved easy, the criminals faced serious threats from competitors on their home turf. Among the hundreds of mob-associated murders between 1990 and 2007 in the Balkans, most were commissioned by compatriots of the victims – Serb-on-Serb or Croat-on-Croat violence was an everyday phenomenon.

A mobbed-up country like Serbia is inherently unstable. Huge discrepancies between rich and poor become extremely visible; inefficiencies plague the economy; corruption becomes endemic; and leaders like Milosevic are easily persuaded to engage in military adventures that eventually prove self-defeating. Defeat in the Kosovo war in 1999 unsettled Milosevic's criminal backers. There were signs that some major oligarchs and underground figures were tiring of the uncertainty which their own mob rule perpetuated. And the rise of Milosevic's wife and son as the bosses of a major cartel generated widespread resentment among ordinary people and competitors alike. Then six months after the Kosovo war had ended, Zeljko 'Arkan' Raznatovic was assassinated on 15 January 2000 in the Hotel Intercontinental in Belgrade.

Arkan's killers were found, tried and imprisoned but they were simply hired hands. To this day, nobody has discovered who

ordered the murder or why. But the consequences were profound as the events that January afternoon triggered an unprecedented internecine battle among Serbia's gangs, known as Bloody Spring 2000. Less than a month after Arkan's death, the Yugoslav Defence Minister was exterminated while dining in a Belgrade restaurant. Thereafter assassinations and executions occurred on a weekly basis as Milosevic's final months began to resemble the fearful *dénouement* of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

Much of the killing which took place between Arkan's death in January 2000 and Milosevic's fall was in anticipation of the latter event. The leading mobsters, oligarchs and secret police operatives were hedging their bets against a change in the regime. As Zoran Djindjic, the incoming democratic Prime Minister, admitted, several top bosses established discreet contact with him and his fellow opposition leaders in advance of Milosevic's demise. The new Prime Minister was characteristically frank about these events, 'The mafia,' he explained, 'had lost the Milosevic state and so it was looking for a new one.' Like all influential politicians, whether democratic or not, Djindjic commuted regularly between the grey and the black zones of the economy to fund his political activities – although his ultimate declared intention was to lead Serbia into the light. He was aware that a pair of clean hands and honest features were not sufficient to beat Milosevic and his criminal networks. So in the run-up to Milosevic's political collapse, Djindjic made deals with a number of criminal bosses who were not only involved in dirty business but who were also tainted by complicity in war crimes in Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere.

The chaos in Serbia at the turn of the millennium was mirrored by instability elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. With a decade of brutal wars coming to an end, the region was now full of testosterone-fuelled unemployed young men, often well-armed. The conflicts had also created hundreds of thousands of refugees, a majority of whom went to Western Europe, thus establishing efficient distribution networks for the illicit goods transiting the Balkans.

Naturally, cigarettes were not the only commodity traded across the Balkans and into the European Union. Nor did the Serbs and Montenegrins have a monopoly on these activities. Situated just below and across from 'the soft underbelly of Europe', the Balkan Peninsula has developed into the ideal transit zone for illicit goods and services from around the world whose pur-

veyors seek access to the most affluent consumer market in history – the European Union. Europeans could choose from a glittering array of consumer goods to make their lifestyle even more comfortable and fill their leisure time. Despite the boundless choice of licit consumer goods, a significant section, including both the wealthy and the poor, sought to satisfy its needs outside the legitimate market. Organised crime is such a rewarding industry in the Balkans because ordinary West Europeans spend an ever-burgeoning amount of their spare time and money sleeping with prostitutes, smoking untaxed cigarettes; sticking 50 notes up their noses, employing illegal untaxed immigrant labour on subsistence wages, stuffing themselves with caviar, admiring ivory and sitting on teak, or purchasing the liver and kidneys of the desperately poor in the developing world.

With no wars left to fight, former paramilitaries became engaged full-time in the transit of heroin, cigarettes, labour migrants and women into Western Europe. The Keystone Cops regime of the UN and NATO in Kosovo had no resources to combat the Albanian fighters from the Kosovo Liberation Army who had consolidated Kosovo as a new centre for the distribution of heroin from Turkey to the European Union. Elsewhere, Bosnia and Herzegovina was mired in an early scandal involving UN peacekeepers and trafficked women and revealed as the local money-laundering centre. Macedonia was about to dissolve into a civil war that was provoked almost exclusively by a dispute between mafia groups over control of the illegal cigarette routes through the country.

Conclusion

Slowly, legitimate economic activity is challenging the dominance of the criminalised economies in south-eastern Europe. This is in part because many of the major criminal figures and oligarchs have reached the stage where they would prefer the state to assume responsibility for the security of their economic activities. Having passed through the robber baron phase of capitalist development, they are now seeking to establish markets that are less turbulent than those prevailing in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

The ultimate key to the stabilisation of the region lies in a successful strategy to combat the damage wrought by decades of eco-

nomic underdevelopment and, more recently, by war and the trauma engendered by the collapse of communism and the rapid advance of capitalism. By absorbing Bulgaria and Romania, the European Union has taken a huge step towards stabilising the region but the process will remain incomplete as long as Serbia and the other aspirant countries of the Western Balkans remain outside the EU. Locked out of the markets and continuing to suffer from the aftermath of war and transition, the trading elites will continue to seek profits by supplying illicit goods and services into the EU market. If these continue to account for a significant part of the economy, the capacity of organised crime to subvert and capture state structures will remain comparably high. Political instability, such as the uncertainty currently surrounding Kosovo's future, channels economic actors into the grey and black zones while the mafia and privatised law enforcement systems continue to thrive in the absence of the rule of law.

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Abbreviations

BDI	*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim* (Democratic Union for Integration)
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Confederation of Independent States
DPA	*Partia Demokratike Shqiptare* (Democratic Party of Albanians)
DS	*Durzhavna Sigurnost* (Bulgarian State Security Police)
DUI	Democratic Union for Integration
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Commission
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FA	Framework Agreement
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FYR	Former Yugoslav Republic
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICR	International Civilian Representative
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LDK	*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës* (Democratic League of Kosovo)
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NAAC	National Albanian American Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLA	National Liberation Army
NSM	National Strategy on Migration
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAA	Pan-Albanian Assembly
PDK	*Partia Demokratike e Kosovës* (Democratic Party of Kosovo)
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SDSM	*Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija* (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia)
SEEU	South East European University
UCK	*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* (Kosovo Liberation Army)
UN	United Nations

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
VMRO-DPMNE	*Vnatresna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija-Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo* (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity)
USD	US dollars

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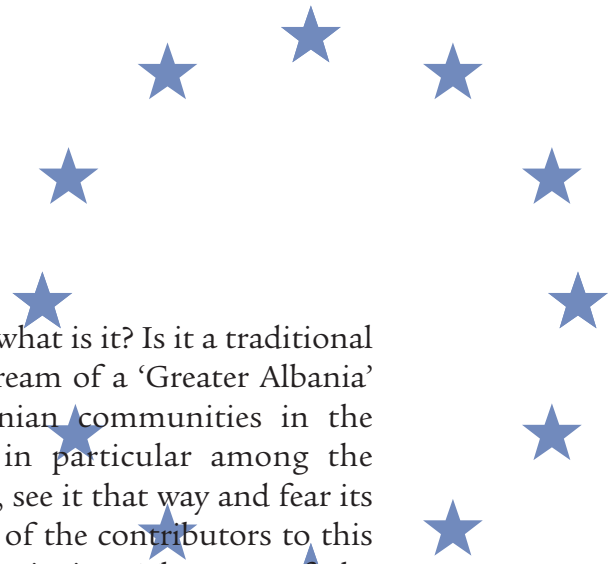

Is there an 'Albanian question'? If so, what is it? Is it a traditional 'national question', centred on the dream of a 'Greater Albania' that would gather in all the Albanian communities in the Balkans? Many outside observers, in particular among the Albanians' neighbours in the Balkans, see it that way and fear its destabilising consequences, but none of the contributors to this *Chaillot Paper* finds this scenario convincing. The core of the Albanian national question today is Kosovo, an issue that has the power to unite Albanians in the Balkans and in the sizeable diaspora communities spread across the globe. While the answer – for Albanians – is independence for Kosovo, beyond that, views diverge. It seems that only a minority of Albanians remain committed to the project of Pan-Albanian political unification. Most Albanians are fully aware of the diversity of interests of the various Albanian communities in the Balkans, who have lived in different states over the past century. The end of communism made it much easier for Albanians to keep in contact with each other, but this did not lead to greater national cohesion.

The dramatic 'high politics' of the Kosovo issue tends to obscure the fact that for most Albanians, the most urgent questions today are not 'national' ones at all, but questions of economic underdevelopment, unemployment, the quality of democratic governance, political corruption and criminality, and the emigration of large numbers of the brightest and best of the younger generation. None of these challenges is unique to the Albanians, but they possess a particular asset in their young diaspora in the West, closely linked via the internet with young democracy activists in the Albanians' Balkans homelands. This new generation of Albanians aims to leap out of the isolation and introversion of traditional village and clan-based politics to form a new 'post-modern' transnational political community, committed to building democracy within their states and across them.

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