

Partition, Frustration, and Identity in the Former Yugoslavia

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Partition is one of a cluster of approaches to political organization, nationality politics and resource disputes deployed in the context of West European-style state formation, collapse, and adjustment. Population transfer, secession, and internal resettlement strategies share with partition a context in which communities are separable—these approaches often operate in an environment where land and/or resources are scarce relative to population, but where one piece of turf is not essential to different groups of people. The partition of Africa over the past two centuries into colonial and then synthetic state structures has done harm to former symbiotic/competitive systems involving transhumant nomads and sedentary farmers, as well to trans-African trade routes.

The initiative for partition can come from different points in society. In Europe, the oldest approach was for kings or other landed lords to divide territory as a result of conflict, negotiation, or compensation for a settlement involving an exchange for land transferred somewhere else. After the 18th Century, communal entrepreneurs defined land claims for the nations they helped bring into being, leading to competing demands inside multi-ethnic empires. After these collapsed in World War I, newly national communities turned against each other in conflict and in appeals to great powers. The movement from the old imperial security cap to a successor state context amounted to a process of serial partition extending through the rest of the twentieth century. The formation, division, re-formation and collapse of Yugoslavia was itself both part of this European instability and—via the process of forging new successor states in the 1990s—a variation on the 1918 theme.

At times, larger powers will “partition” territory with an eye more toward their own spheres of influence than formal changes in the locals’ notional boundaries. One example of this was the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland and the Baltic states—Lithuania at first went to the Germans but then to the Soviets as compensation for the Wehrmacht having ended up farther east in Poland than planned. It should be remembered that Hitler’s redrawing of Eastern Europe in the early 1940s included the partition of Royal Yugoslavia between Germany, Italy, Hungary, and the Fascist independent state in Croatia. The partitions of the 1990s were deeply informed by the legacy of this earlier activity.

Sometimes partition is an almost organic process of separation along clarifying social lines. The Netherlands went through this twice, first during the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the Catholic, Habsburg, southern Netherlands became clearly distinguished from the Calvinist Dutch Republic. This cleavage remained

salient enough to overturn the desire of the victors of 1815 to create a united Netherlands strong enough to block putative renewed French aggression—in 1830 a very lower case “revolution” led to the separation of what now became “Belgium.” This process was not unlike that 100 years later, when the Versailles victors set up the partitioned shards of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires as a bulwark against the feared revival of German power.

The post-Communist partition between Czechs and Slovaks was a variation on this theme. The construction of a linguistic and national Slovak identity was a more conscious, constructed process than the inertial maintenance of the Catholic community in the southern Netherlands,¹ and involved anthropological layers piled up from imperial, inter-war, and Fascist and Communist eras as well as the years after 1989. This “Velvet Divorce” was part of a more complicated process involving the gradual split of peoples with different “relevant others” (Germans for the Czechs, Hungarians for the Slovaks) and the gradual coming together—albeit not without mutual resentment—of Bohemian and Moravian communities that for a long time might have been expected to partition the Czech lands between them.

Partitions of the post-Ottoman, Anglo-French dominated Middle East after World War I and the British Raj after World War II were much less seamless and reflected different stages of global European hegemony. What was loosely called “Palestine” was partitioned first to create a “Transjordan” so there could be a throne for the second son of the Sharif of Mecca. This notable was supposed to get the new “Iraq” but had pushed aside in favor of his elder brother, who lost Syria when it came under French instead of British control. Palestine’s partition continued with the creation of Israel in 1948—blessed this time by the United Nations—and then with Israel’s conquest of the West Bank in 1967. This serial partition also created the spatial basis for a Palestinian nation (superseding family loyalties and separate from greater Syrian or pan-Arab alternatives) that also was a by-product of the Six Day War. Not only does this partition remain contested, but recent developments have led to a *de facto* partition between Gaza and the West Bank, one that could prove more enduring than any two-state Israeli-Palestinian agreement eventually negotiated under international auspices.

In the context of this paper it is worth noting that the Balkans and Middle East share a status as two partitioned peripheries of the former Ottoman Empire, neither of which has been able to find a stable condition (one which every communal participant agrees is a legitimate status quo) since the passing of the Ottoman era. The polities in these shattered former Ottoman zones share the pattern of frustrating great powers and revealing the clear limits of the political, legal, and security reach of international organizations—including the UN—that remain largely a collective extension of those great powers.

The partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan marked a failure to gracefully end an empire, as opposed to traditional deals between empires that thought they still had legs. The solution in 1947 provided lessons for later partitions; a line was drawn and

people were given a fixed amount of time to choose which side they would be on. This led to a very bloody denouement, but once the line was set (at least in Punjab) both countries recognized it a firm boundary. In Kashmir, where a contested troubled sub-partition came about instead of a clear division, the two countries remain at odds.

Size Matters—Smaller or Defined Space Makes For Clearer Partitions

Partition currently is in bad odor within the universe of authorities, commentators, and academics who make up the paradigm/system termed “the” International Community. Three overlapping myths reinforce this orthodoxy—especially in Europe:

- The current American and European versions of the various “West” claiming to lead global affairs since about 1798 insist that there is no alternative to their teleology of Democracy, Transparency, Free Markets, and rule of Law. Partition of land and resources in the Balkans, Africa, and elsewhere provides a dissonant threat to slogans of economic and multiethnic integration.
- The Helsinki pathology, the notion that borders cannot change and communities should not move dates from a Final Act in 1976 that presumes to mark an endpoint to history but is proven wrong each time a border in the former Yugoslavia (or in former Czechoslovakia, and—perhaps—in Belgium) does change or a community does move.
- The creation myth of “Europe” posits secular evolution from Herder to Kant. The story goes that Europeans have learned from their past and have sworn off war and other aspects of the old ways, of which nationalism and the diplomacy of partition and identity conflict is a part. Europe’s global role is the altruistic offer of its wisdom and benevolence to help others avoid making the old mistakes. This is using necessity to proclaim virtue. “Europe” is possible only because Europeans, in destroying their own power during the “short” 20th century, first found their status diminished from powerhouse of the planet to theater in a conflict between US and Soviet giants on their flanks and—after 1991—to that of declining importance in a world with many layers of power. Having benefitted from slavery, colonialism, conquest, protectionism, and other such central building blocks of their states and nations, Europeans and their American counterparts declare these things illegal and brand as illegitimate partition and similar management tools.

This paper does not advocate or oppose partition as an engineering approach to international conflict.² It is simply one of many possible tools for managing communal conflict and struggles for resources. Neither partition nor other synthetic constructions can “solve” inter-communal disputes, competing border claims, or other problems they typically are applied to. This also goes for notions of legal/constitution drafting exercises, economic aid, or development theories. Under all conditions short of a decisive, devastating military decision all contestants in every dispute remain capable of challenging a status quo should they choose to, even if the existing situation is bolstered by external imposition or by such blessings of legality as a UN Security Council resolution.

At best, partitions can mitigate acute disputes, but they often only redefine the future problem set. For example, the division of Sudan in 2011 neither settled the question of whether Arabized northerners could extract resources from the South, nor rivalries over resources and power between dominant Dinka politicians and Nuer and other non-Dinka communities. Fighting between Nuer and Muerle groups over water and cattle also has plagued the partitioned state.

- The issue for UN security organs, peacekeepers, and development mavens is to manage conditions and mitigate problems as effectively as possible, while avoiding the temptation to force feed the teleologies of political science and development theory.

Partition is a relevant concept only where—as in Europe—the land at stake is small enough so that competing groups do not live (or cannot get) far enough away from each other. It usually was not an issue along pre-modern imperial boundaries because marginal areas on vast peripheries set physical or logistical limits on durable, competing claims between, say, Romans and Parthians in west Asia or Han Chinese and Turkic tribes to their West. Less sedentary formations—various invaders approaching Roman Europe in late antiquity or the Mongols—either were interested in avoiding other armies-on-the-move and in finding a place to settle, or else sought unbridled conquest.

Proto-states in the small area that was early modern Western Europe formed the cohesive concept of formally bounded states that created conditions under which the modern concepts of partition and population transfer would come to make sense. In a context of constant warfare, territories and estates of various sizes moved back and forth between competing sovereigns—their ownership, not the identities of subject populations, were the units and stakes of rounds of conflict and negotiation. The three partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century reflected the collapse of a decentralized political form in the face of states gaining unprecedented levels of control over their territories—not just the capital and other areas under the direct supervision of the Court and militarized frontier garrison towns.

Nineteenth and twentieth century nationalism shifted the context of territory and population transfers. Instead of compensation packages agreed on by individual sovereigns, border changes and population movements partitioned land to settle rival claims to primordial rights or to separate competing groups who did not want to live together in the same state. Following the ideas of Hamann and Herder, land, language, and history were tied together in narratives designed to permit the expression of developing identities. These bumped up against each other as nationals attempted to carve out and control, first, autonomous regions in the Russian and Austrian/Austro-Hungarian empires and, after 1914, independent states.

Movement of people and changes in borders were the norm of European life until modern and industrialized states in the system destroyed themselves in the wars of the twentieth century. At times (for example, the Greco-Turkish population swap of 1923), “partition” amounted purely to the movement of people rather than the erecting of boundary markers.

The partition of Germany and the expulsion of Germans from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1945 (and movement to Palestine of much of Europe’s residual Jewish population) were in line with European standard operating procedure. Until well after World War II, borders changed, people moved, and the entrepreneurs of identity competed for land, resources, power, and the narrative of history that legitimized their seizure or recovery. What had been swap or compensation zones for the monarchs and other notables became fracture lines for emerging communities whose once-local frame of reference was being remade into “the nation.” In a series of conferences after each major conflict during this period—“Westphalia” (1648), Utrecht (1714), Vienna (1815), Versailles (1919), San Francisco (1945)—great powers changed the rules of the game and adjusted what was “legal” to legitimize their authority to dictate conditions and decide which actors and actions were acceptable and which were not. Despite ideological rhetoric designed to impart the virtues of internationalism, the contemporary United Nations remains largely a tool of its most powerful member states—the UN is best considered in the context of the chain of great power diplomacy since the 1640s rather than as a conceptual or structural break with the past.

Partitions at the margins of strategic confrontations have measured the limits of great powers. The three Cold War-era partitions of Germany, Korea, and Vietnam all were tested as the Soviets and Americans added their weight to local forces. The latter eventually unified the national space by force (Vietnam), tried to (Korea), or (in Germany) accepted the permanence of division, only to be overruled by what was largely unification from below (no matter its subsequent management by Helmut Kohl).

It was only with the Helsinki Final Act in 1976 (and the general—ultimately erroneous—assumption that Cold War borders were fixed for the foreseeable future) that Europeans attempted to permanently fix borders in the context of the creation myth of an evolving, multi-cultural “Europe.” This, however, did not entirely remove the need to

partition places within multicultural states where ethnic entrepreneurs or substantial numbers of people from different communities did not choose to live together. Consociational politics has been made necessary by national or communal metastasis. Rather than split territory or move people, the state itself can be partitioned to create room for unreconciled communities to co-exist uneasily within state borders none wanted—or were strong enough—to split among them.

Who Partitions? Who is Partitioned?

European-style partition can take the form of major reorganization in complex shatter zones as well as relatively “simple” agreements to divide a contested border area between communal protagonists. It can result from the top-down diktats of great powers determined to quiet down regions where there is actual or potential conflict between the locals, themselves, or both. Alternatively, partition can be a result of such conflict, either where the fighting has produced a new status quo—resulting in an international legal blessing meant as much to bolster perceptions of the efficacy of larger powers as to sanctify the local result—or where inconclusive conflict has exhausted the combatants and created room for outside intervention.

What happened in the Balkans after 1991 was well within the tradition of earlier European top-down and locally induced partitions. The collapse of Yugoslavia can be seen as similar in form to the dividing up of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires after World War I. In all these cases, international decision makers moved immediately to create or ratify successor states.

In 1919 this involved the conflation of concepts of democracy and modernity with states dominated by titular nations—each of the latter a *Staatsvolk* privileged with the power (for the most part) to dictate conditions of existence to the minority communities unhappy enough to find themselves within the new states’ borders. The so-called “international community” of the 1990s and after has rejected that Herderian concept of national self expression but has found itself unable to escape the straitjacket of national and ethnic competition inherent in the process of partitioning multi-communal political forms into *Staatsvolk*-dominated states. In large part this is because post-Yugoslav partitions have resulted from limited local conflicts and military outcomes, rather than from a larger conflict like World War I, after which exhausted Balkan participants were subsumed within a larger military decision.

The victors of 1918 and “international community” of the 1990s drew or sanctified boundary lines—often arbitrarily—and chose winners and losers. In the earlier case, Serbs, Romanians, Poles, and Hashemites benefitted in 1919 while Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Croats did not. Often forgotten are the partitions of the 1940s, in which Hitler’s Germany oversaw the Vienna awards and other decisions to reverse the earlier

decisions. After 1945 a third set of border adjustments came in the context of the larger partition of Europe into Communist and non-Communist zones and unprecedented population movements, largely but not entirely of Germans leaving long-settled areas in the East.

In the 1990s, Slovenes and Croats were able to carve out their states in the field and then get first German and then international blessing. (Promotion of partition of the Yugoslav carcass was the first foreign policy initiative of a Germany that in the early 1990s was in the process of undoing its own partition of 1945). I will argue below that the internationals' decisions have made the Bosnjaks (Muslim Slavs who molded their identity in a series of struggles extending after 1919, through the horrors of World War II, shifting identity politics of the Tito era, and the wars of the 1990s) relative losers rather than winners. The sheer weight of demographic facts has prevented the same thing from happening to the ethnic Albanian universe farther south.

The Balkans: From Imperial Borderlands Toward National States and "Yugoslavia."

Communities in northeastern Europe initially were not candidates for the sorts of hard "partitions" familiar to contemporary politics. In that area land was plentiful relative to people. Serfdom, designed to keep people rooted to the great estates, came into being just after the end of West European Feudalism, a system in which common folk would face existential danger if they were forced to endure the "freedom" of being thrown off the land. There was no dominant imperial form in this area. Nevertheless, the development of such formations as the lands of the Teutonic Knights, relatively powerful states in Livonia/Lithuania and Poland, and then competition among Sweden, Russia, the Habsburgs' various holdings, and, eventually, Brandenburg/Prussia created competitions among various notables that divided and re-divided lands among them.

These were aristocratic competitions, "Lords' Wars" in which notables had little regard for the existence (much less the preferences) of local populations. Indeed there was little evidence of popular support for the upper-class rebellions in the Russian piece of Poland (and Ukraine) in 1830 and 1863. Only with the catastrophe of World War I could the idea of national communities intrinsic to the partitions of the twentieth century overcome the engrained domination of Polish and Hungarian landed aristocrats with a very different notion of who made up the "nation," who should own what, and who should have the right to decide how to divide contested territory.

Conditions were different in what now is called the Balkans. Until road and—especially—railroad construction in the nineteenth century difficult topography and the poor navigational prospects of most rivers south of the Danube and the Sava helped ensure fragmented identities and relatively small functional landholdings. "Big Men,"

family and patronage notables, rather than the more powerful landed aristocrats in charge to the north, succeeded medieval princes as local powers during the years of Ottoman rule. To this day, powerful family heads, organizers of political patronage networks (some of which make up the personalized structures termed “political parties” throughout the region), and “businessmen” who work in both legal and illegal but locally legitimate universes are as important in partitioning land and resources as are governments or foreign overseers. The Balkan region has been an area of durable opacity in law, economy, and politics. Therefore, this area did not and does not consist of cohesive polities with clearly synthesized boundaries (as opposed to the natural limits provided by rivers and mountains) relevant to the sorts of division and compensation systems that operated in northwestern Europe.

The border between Ottoman and Habsburg, important to later partitions, was not the result of some agreed partition of land that henceforth would be considered a permanent property division. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the two empires simply acknowledged lines and territorial changes reflecting their relative military strength—both sides knew there would be further violent tests and resulting shifts in borders.

This changed with the process of dual decline that set into both empires in the nineteenth century. The continued existence of the Ottoman Empire came into question—within as well as outside the Empire—following the shock of Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt (a central holding in that its conquest in 1517 had brought with it guardianship of the holy places and, therefore, the Caliphal title). The question of who would control—or divide—the Ottomans’ European holdings bedeviled statesmen then and remains an open question now, irrespective of matter Western declarations that “final status” has been achieved in Kosova/o or that the only way forward in Bosnia is civic statehood and the gradual integration of its two current entities.

The diminishing power of the Habsburg state in the context of growing, competing national movements was equally important to the trajectory of the serial partitions of the past two centuries. The period from the lifting of the siege of Vienna in 1683 through the *Ausgleich* of 1867 was marked by Austria’s effort to find local allies to help balance the strength of Hungarian magnates brought back within the Habsburg system. Such considerations of power brought the “Balkans” into the Habsburg lands in ways that still resonate. Croatian troops fought loyally for the empire from at least the period of the Thirty Years War³ through the First World War; a central problem for Croatian entrepreneurs was to use fealty to Vienna as a means to undo the persistent “partition” of their lands among Venice, Austria and Hungary and to prevent the latter from gaining control over them all. The façade of the parliament in Budapest continues to be adorned by the Croatian coat of arms among other symbols proclaiming Hungarian sovereignty.

The Habsburgs also invited Serbs to live and serve in imperial border areas. The first wave, at the end of the sixteenth century brought groups of Serbs to what became the “Krajina,” the military frontier between the empires. These garrison communities, at first

relatively less connected with each other than each was with its martial purpose, became a more conscious identity community with the building of railroads in the nineteenth century. They gained a disproportionate role in Tito's Yugoslav National Army, and would be active participants in the contest to partition Yugoslavia until their defeat and sudden dissipation in July 1995.

A second wave of Serbs came 100 years later and settled in the fertile area to the east of Krajina/Slavonia and to the north of the Sava/Danube junction and the city of Belgrade. This Vojvodina (named after the warlords traditionally credited with having led this Boer-like trek) became wealthy through its fertile farmland (and, later, oil refineries) but also found itself within the sphere of influence of the Hungarian magnates—even before the *Ausgleich* of 1867 ratified its assignment to the Hungarian portion of the dual Monarchy. Vojvodina, unlike the Krajina Serbs (but not unlike post-1878 Bosnia), melded naturally into the imperial/royal economy and did not have a great problem with Hungarian overlordship.

On the other hand, these Serbs, more prosperous and, to an extent, better educated than the Ottoman counterparts, nurtured a sense of superiority relative to those in what would become the heartland of the Serbian state. After 1918—when the Versailles victors awarded Vojvodina to the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, these class pretensions were reinforced by a suspicion of a motherland state that showed increasing interest in taking a portion of the region's produce and cash for the sake of greater Serbian development.

The different trajectories of the two empires in the nineteenth century complicated partitions to come. The Habsburgs attempted to tamp down national movements by reimagining the dynasty as the one unifying force capable of preventing what was shaping up to be ethnic conflict. The harsh behavior by the short-lived (1848-9) Hungarian Republic toward Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, and other groups helped shore up the dynastic myth. Despite active debate among restive ethnic entrepreneurs and various theorists on nationality issues, after the *Ausgleich* there was no significant local secessionist movement or effort to carve up this Empire until well after the start of World War I—by and large, troops from the various nationalities remained loyal until 1918.

The Ottoman Empire, in contrast, spent the nineteenth century sloughing off new states. First Greece and Serbia, then the Principalities (reconstructed as "Romania"), Montenegro and Bulgaria, achieved *de jure* or *de facto* independence and immediately began squabbling over the extent of their national patrimonies. How to partition the European portion of the Ottoman Empire (and, after 1915, its Middle Eastern parts as well) has remained a question among local notables and communal entrepreneurs as well as great powers.

The opposite of partition became more important to the locals than to outside powers. Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Greeks, and—later—Albanians worked (some continue to work) to undo perceived divisions of national patrimonies that took place through

decisions of various wars locals often started and resulting international conferences they then found themselves subjected to. In 1844 Illyia Garasanin's "Nacertanje" outlined a program for the unification of Serb lands (somewhat similar to the "Megali Idea" that drove pretensions to a greater, neo-Byzantine Greece until 1923).⁴

Where were these Serbs? Wherever people spoke the Serbian language, there was Serbia. This would remain a rallying cry for the next century and a half in opposition to the competing, wider visions of "Illyrian" or "Yugoslav" schools of thought and the construction of the synthetic "Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian" language that lasted from about 1850 until the end of the wars of the 1990s (having seen its Slovene component drop off earlier). The Serbian state created out of uprisings by local notables from 1804-1830 would seek to gather in other Serb lands, to include—but not always highlight—the battlefield of Kosovo Polje.

- In the Balkans, the concept of partition has continued to involve categories of language, religion, and culture as well as territory, despite serial Western and UN-directed efforts to enforce on the region a coercive utopia of civic identity and modernist teleology. Under the much-mentioned "millet" system, during the nineteenth century the Ottomans helped partition identity among Orthodox Christians by granting Serbian and Bulgarian churches separation from the Greek patriarch, a development Greeks had attempted to forestall since the previous century and resisted through the period of the Macedonian struggle before World War I. Tito would borrow from the Ottoman playbook by allying the Yugoslav state with the Macedonian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and separating it from Serbian ecclesiastical authority; in contrast, orthodox Albanians today remain under Greek Patriarchal authority. Worth noting is that this is how the church is referred to in the neutral literature, but Serbians would probably not like the addition of "autocephalous."

The Greek national experience of the same period is highly relevant to the issues of partition and ingathering in the Balkans but has been somewhat neglected, perhaps because Greece was only marginally involved in the wars of dissolution of former Yugoslavia. There were at least three major views among Greeks. Many of the "Phanariot" (named after a largely Greek section of Constantinople) elite of Greeks who administered the Ottoman Balkans for the Sultan had no interest in a Greek state and wanted to retain their advantageous position under the waning status quo. A second set, nationalists looking both back to classical glories and to modern statehood under the tutelage of German, French and British Philhellenes, established the small Greek state around Athens and looked—like Serbia—to increase its territory and cultural reach. A third and sometimes dominant strain (overlapping with the second) looked to reestablish the Greek Ecumene and Orthodox universe of the Byzantine centuries. In 1919 Greeks

attached to Allied armies occupying Constantinople would resume the service at the Hagia Sophia at the point traditionally believed to be when Ottoman soldiers cut it off as they conquered the city on May 29, 1453.

Bulgarians fought against both Serbs and Greeks to elbow in their own claims to land and identity and to take part in the partition of the faltering Ottoman Empire. The initial effort by an “international community” to establish a final partition of the region, the Congress of Berlin in 1878, took place in reaction to an effort by Russia to preclude such a partition through the establishment of a Bulgaria large enough to reach nearly from the Aegean to the Adriatic. The peeling back of this Bulgaria created a shatter zone in which Serbs, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Greeks struggled over land and identities. The claims of Bulgarians to pride of place are anachronistic now in the wake of lost wars and subservience to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but their efficacy in the earlier context should not be underestimated.⁵

- The settlement of 1878 tottered in 1908 with the dual crisis of Bosnia’s annexation by Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria’s simultaneous declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire, and then was shattered by the Balkan wars of 1912-13. Subsequent internationally-imposed solutions and their component partitions have proven similarly fragile.

The issue of imperial partition and national self-determination came to a head with the end of World War I. The decision to create what would become “Yugoslavia” consciously rewarded Serbia for its role in the War and—as in the 1990s—attempted to force other communities to accept as final an internationally-imposed division of Balkan territories. As already noted, Romania—which acquired Transylvania—was the other winner while Bulgaria and especially Hungary were the big losers. The partition of the Hungarian lands remains a point of contention for Hungarians despite their incorporation into the post-Communist myth of “Europe.” (Greek claims were less in Europe than Asia, where the dream of the Ecumene was shattered by the army of Kemal Atatürk).

From the beginning, this first Yugoslavia was explicitly a Serbian royal state. For Serb nationalists, history should have stopped on June 28, 1921—anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje—when the government promulgated the country’s constitution in a pointed reminder that this would be a Serbian-dominated entity. Other communities finding themselves inside this state wrestled with the decision of whether or not to accommodate their relegation within it.

This was especially true of the Croats, for whom from this point forward Serbs replaced Hungarian magnates as the relevant Other. It was not immediately obvious that Croats would reject this arrangement. Some Croatian ethnic entrepreneurs knew the participation of Croatian troops in the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia in 1914 did not do their cause any good. They had favored a sort of “Yugoslav” arrangement in

which the allegedly modern, European Croats would naturally lead Serb brethren who had lagged behind under the weight of the “Ottoman Yoke” and therefore were in need of tutelage. In addition, even if they did not get their own state, being inside Yugoslavia meant that for the first time since the 11th Century all the Croatian lands—Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Croatian areas in Herzegovina and Bosnia—now would be in one political unit. As with the Serbs of the Nacertanje, the ingathering of Croats and reversal of a perceived national partition became a communal goal.

It soon became clear the Serbs were in no mood to be tutored, but they too considered how to find a way to structure the new relationship with new compatriots defined by their Catholic faith and Latin script. King Alexander Karadjordjevic attempted first to co-opt Stjepan Radic, a leading Croat politician, but his success in cajoling Radic to move from jail to power ended when the latter was assassinated on the floor of the Yugoslav parliament. Prince Paul, royal regent after Alexander’s own assassination in 1934, then instituted what amounted to a Yugoslav *ausgleich*, a partition of Bosnia between Serbs and Croats through an agreement (“*Sporazum*”) in 1939. Bosnia’s Muslims were largely ignored in this process. Despite the existence of such groups as the Muslim Youth Organization, the community which eventually would identify themselves as “Bosnjak” was not accepted by Serbs and Croats as made up of more than formerly Christian Slavs (Serbs or Croats, depending on who did the telling) who had converted to Islam during the Ottoman Centuries.

This partition was mooted by the onset of World War II and Hitler’s own partition of the Balkans with Mussolini and in favor of his Hungarian allies. Nevertheless, the *Sporazum* remained a model for partition; Serbs and Croats in the 1990s would discuss dividing Bosnia between them largely on along the 1939 line without regard for the interests of the Bosnjak plurality.⁶

- One problem for Western and UN-led efforts to create and enforce a post-Yugoslav Bosnia has been the persistence of Bosnjak suspicions—personified by Haris Silajdzic, current Bosnjak member of the collective Bosnian Presidency—that the 1995 Dayton partition is permanent or else could deteriorate either into something like the old *Sporazum* or a new three-way split involving the morphing of the current *de facto* autonomous Croatian Bosnian community into a *de jure* third entity.

Tito’s Re-Partition and Its International Acceptance after the Yugoslav Collapse

The triumph of Communist partisans over Serb royalist Chetniks created a new Yugoslavia in which the Serbs were relegated to being just one of a set of constituent communities. Tito enforced a series of changes that worked to “partition” Serbian interests and territories. The creation of the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Macedonia in

1945 came out of Serbia's hide. The grant of autocephalous status to a Macedonian Orthodox Church challenged an important traditional element of Serbian authority—since Ottoman days the church's clergy had been subsumed within the Serbian Orthodox church.⁷ In 1966, the fall of Alexander Rankovic—Yugoslav Vice President, boss of the security services, protector of Serbian prerogatives, and bane of Kosovar Albanians—accelerated what had been an off-again-on-again decentralization that worked against the interests of Serbian ethnic entrepreneurs as well as those who favored a centralized Yugoslavia.

- Bosnian Muslims finally were given the right to identify themselves as a community (as opposed to Muslim Serbs or Croats) in 1968 and did so for the first time in the 1971 census).
- Vojvodina and Kosovo became “autonomous provinces,” still nominally inside Serbia but (given their independent provincial parties and equal representation in the state and Party leaderships) clearly at more than arms length from Belgrade's control.

There exists a considerable nostalgia for Tito and stability now that he is safely gone, but by the time he died it was clear Yugoslavia was at best a problematic formation with unifying ideology and power structures of questionable reach. Still, the Federation survived its creator by a decade, and during those years the slogan of “*bratsvo and jedenstvo*” (brotherhood and unity) represented a hope that Yugoslavia could avoid new conflicts and new partitions. The school of thought exists that Conservative elites in fact moved defensively to forestall a mobilizing movement for pan-Yugoslav reformism.⁸ This is supported largely by an uncritical reading of public opinion polls showing a majority in favor of a unified Yugoslavia, and by an exaggerated memory of federal authority during the period from 1989-1991, when Ante Markovic (President of the Federal Executive Council) represented a largely un-mobilized hope that Yugoslavia might move in a direction somewhat akin to the Prague Spring of 1968.

In fact, Markovic was a relatively minor player in the collapse of the Federation. He was unable to use effectively even the limited central power he had and was easily brushed aside by the slew of local power brokers who dominated events after early 1990. Yugoslavia, like the rest of Communist Europe, had moved beyond the Communist reformism he represented to favor a more complete break with the previous half century. Markovic and figures from the reformist days of the early 1970s were rejected in Yugoslavia much as Dubcek and others proved superannuated elsewhere. With the collapse of the federal League of Communists (LCY) and quiet dissolution of the Yugoslav National Army it was clear that a general partition was coming—the fear of conflict and growing belief it was likely helps explain why Yugoslavs expressed support

for continued unity in opinion polls and then consistently voted in decisive numbers for separatist nationalist parties in election after election in each of the component republics.

- From the beginning (say, the collapse of the LCY in January 1990), international efforts to manage the cascading collapse of Yugoslavia were hampered by a hyper-optimistic projection of the *annus miribilis* of 1989 to the Yugoslav situation and an unrealistic belief that public opinion in favor of keeping the Federation together indicated that significant groups were mobilizing in favor of this option and in support of civic democracy. In fact, the failure of those who might have been civically-minded to mobilize effectively against the ethnic entrepreneurs was one of the central—and little remarked on—aspects of the Yugoslav tragedy. The failure of civic politics and belief in the myth of a “moderate” majority continues to skew UN and Western policies toward the partitioned shards that succeeded Yugoslavia.

Making Sense of Partition in Bosnia

Understanding the causes and implications of the Dayton partition depends first on viewing all that happened after 1990 in the context of the history of fragmentation (largely driven by geography and too often by economic marginality), post-imperial partition, and contested state formation that marks the region’s history. In addition, the fact that since 1875 this area has descended into conflict each time a larger security cap has weakened or has been removed should give pause to those promoting teleological faith in the ideology of multi-culturalism and civic identity.

Another problem in approaching Bosnia’s partition is a common failure to consider it in context, both in terms of the general partition of Yugoslavia and of the developments in Slovenia and Croatia that led into the Bosnian war. The tendency to blame Milosevic, Tudjman, and various nationalists for the Yugoslav partition obscures the role that some associated with reform and Westernization played in the collapse of the federation.

Slovene reformers, for example, helped bring Yugoslavia down. Slovene leaders had long chafed at having to pay into a fund to support the Federation’s poorer republics and provinces. The process of decentralization that became dominant after 1966 and accelerated after Tito’s death—which left power largely in the capitals of each of the Federation’s constituent parts—gave Slovenia the choice of whether or not to cooperate with a system that some felt involved terminal siphoning off of Slovene resources. In the looser cultural atmosphere following Tito’s death, students and others associated with a periodical called *Mladina* used jokes and a reputation for being—in US jargon—“hip” to help undermine the “Brotherhood and Unity” ideology underpinning Yugoslavia’s increasingly fragile unity. Use of German in the name of the rock band *Laibach* and the idea of a “*Neue Slowenische Kunst*” was another way of reviving the notion of a “Central

European” Slovenia distinct from other south Slav nations. Slovene authorities increasingly tolerated and sometimes encouraged this cultural sabotage, after the mid-1980s.

Slovene cooperation with their Yugoslav partners depended on Ljubljana’s to influence federal budget making, which in turn depended on the center remaining weak. That condition was measured by the inability of Serbia or any other republic to control a critical mass of votes in the state or party apparatuses. Once Milosevic had gained control of four of the eight federal votes (Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina, Kosovo) Slovene secession became virtually inevitable. In the context of the self-immolation of the League of Communists, irrelevance of Ante Markovic and the Federal Executive Council, fumbling stances toward the emerging crisis in European capitals and Washington, and Milosevic’s serial unwillingness to use force to hold together anything aside from his own personal power, the Federation simply fell apart.

The partition of Yugoslavia was (and continues to be) a cascading, multi-layered process involving a mix of agreements among regional paladins, the stop-and-start of international interventions (legitimized by a slap-dash legal patina involving various UN Security Council resolutions), conflicting demands from nationalist and Westernizing political entrepreneurs, and open violence. The first step, Slovenia’s well-planned (likely including getting a wink from Milosevic) and easily won “war” against the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) remains the most successful—with little effort, Slovenia left the Balkans and joined NATO, the EU, and, more recently, the OECD.

Croatia had more trouble doing the same. Franjo Tudjman, unsure whether Milosevic or the JNA would resist Slovene secession, held back when Ljubljana’s leaders broke away. He also had a problem that did not exist in ethnically homogenous Slovenia—the danger that Serbia would defend the interests of Croatia’s fifteen percent Serb population, a group with a tradition of martial identity that had become a cohesive community after the Habsburg administration introduced railroads in the region in the nineteenth century. Ethnic entrepreneurs among the Krajina Serbs prepared for a partition of their own through the carving out of a “Republic of the Serbian Krajina.” This entity came into being through military success in 1991-2 and died as a result of military disaster—the Croatian operations that drove this 400 year old community out of Croatia in July 1995 (again, with Milosevic’s likely *a priori* acquiescence). That decision is final—the later agreement adjudicating reentry of Serbs to Croatia has enabled only large puddles of disempowered people to subsist as supplicants in a Croatian national state.

- No matter rhetorical claims that there are no military solutions in the Balkans, in fact most of the decisions involved in the ongoing partition of former Yugoslavia have been made on the battlefield and then ratified or adjusted in detail through diplomacy.

This initial action took place with minimal international influence, creating a sense of frustration in a Europe full of post-Communist pride in what was hoped would be a burgeoning unity and restored—but now benign—global footprint. Germany, engaged in the partial reversal of its own partition in 1945, now attempted to take the lead in cauterizing the threat of instability in Europe's southeast. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's chosen solution involved international acceptance of the successful secessions of Slovenia and Croatia without a companion plan for the rest of the Yugoslav space. This amounted to a partition of the easy from the hard; take the richer, more Western republics into "Europe" and then figure out what to do with the rest.

When other Europeans and the US balked, the Germans issued clear threats to recognize the two republics on their own. At this point (1991-1992) a reluctant United States stepped in, insisting that the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina too must be recognized. It was feared that a vacuum of regional or international authority would result in a civil war there among the province's three major ethnic communities. In the event, Bosnia got both international recognition and civil war, a combination that led to the Dayton partition of 1995.

Bosnia's communities, the neighboring "mother countries" of Serbia and Croatia (suddenly no longer compatriots in a wider Yugoslav entity), and various international actors all had their own interests and preferences regarding what should happen in Bosnia. As these are laid out, it is important to keep in mind that no stand-alone Bosnia, as opposed to a provincial unit of a larger imperial or Yugoslav political space and market, had existed since the fifteenth century. The political, communal, and economic implications of this major change in condition were largely ignored as nationalists, neighboring dictators, and international diplomats and legal scribes dispatched troops and bureaucrats, issued declarations, and created self-enabling powers and "laws" to justify all they were saying and doing. Along with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,⁹ Bosnia, another place where identity is in question and communal divides matter a lot, remains the piece of partitioned Yugoslavia most at existential risk.

- It made sense that Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Macedonia were where Ante Markovic's "Union of Reformed Forces," a loose political formation hastily cobbled together in 1990 in a futile effort to hold Yugoslavia together, received the most support.

Even so, Markovic got less than 20 percent of the vote in Bosnia—over the past two decades there has been very little evidence of significant local mobilization in favor of the multicultural ethnically integrated Bosnia that remains the stuff of international ideology. In fact, as Slovenia and Croatia hived off, the three communities in Bosnia quickly formed political and military wings and prepared for a fight (and for an effort to recruit international support for their side of it).

The Bosnian Serbs had to decide what kind of a partition they wanted. That depended on whether there would be a serious effort to satisfy the traditional Serb slogan that wherever there are Serbs, there is Serbia. It was not unreasonable for Serbs to argue that, since Slovenes and Croats were leaving Yugoslavia with international blessing, why should Serbs not be able to remain within it, no matter what part of the old federation they happened to live in? Why should what had been boundaries internal to Yugoslavia suddenly and arbitrarily become the only permitted basis for its partition? Notions of civic citizenship had been trumped by ethnic dominance and—in Croatia—partition (Slovenia had the luxury of not having to worry about the civic vs. national divide), so why not in Bosnia as well?

For the Bosnian Croats, smallest of the three communities, the issue was (and is) whether to depart Bosnia and join Croatia, align with the Serbs to divide Bosnia, concentrate their population in the areas of Herzegovina where they have a majority—and dominate the town of Mostar—or attempt to maintain their presence in central and northern Bosnia, especially along the Sava River. A fourth choice, leave for a better life in Western Europe, the US, or Australia was an option many young Croats shared with generational cohorts of all former Yugoslav communities.

As noted above, a version of the 1939 *Sporazum* partition of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia likely would have happened in Bosnia if Serb and Croats leaders had been able to act without opposition. Instead, Bosnian Muslims—who increasingly dusted off the old Ottoman-era term “Bosnjak” to define their identity—managed to organize enough political and military power to defeat Bosnian Croat forces in the field and to hold off Bosnian Serb efforts to conquer Sarajevo. International efforts to create and manage what became the Dayton settlement depended centrally on the ability of the Bosnjaks to prevent the outright military defeat that the internationals likely would have had no choice but to swallow.

International authorities struggled to keep up, much less manage, this deteriorating situation. The Slovene and Croatian secessions put to death the international slogan that Yugoslavia must remain unified and democratic (it was never either one). International forces sent in under UN auspices were irrelevant in Croatia, where warfare created and then destroyed the RSK. In Bosnia UNPROFOR—the blue helmeted peacekeeping force—was allowed to defend itself and monitor the locals, but not to do anything that would keep the latter from the fight they all knew was inevitable. Passive rules of engagement created the embarrassment at Srebrenica in 1995, when Bosnian Serb forces turned passive Dutch peacekeepers into hostages. Meanwhile, a UN-sanctified arms embargo hampered Bosnjak efforts to obtain the weapons they needed to take on the Bosnian Serbs and enabled the black market in arms and other goods so central to the local economy.

As they struggled to deal with immediate Bosnian realities, international actors vacillated among five options for a settlement. The first, a unitary central state, was never

seriously on the table. A second, civic federalism, remains a declarative international fiction. Serial studies by the various UN, diplomatic and NGO officials in the region (not to mention a legion of academics) continue to judge Bosnia's progress toward various notional metrics of democracy, rule of law, and multicultural integration. There is little evidence of progress toward this desired end, no matter insistence from diplomats that there is no alternative to it.

A third possibility was cantonization, somewhat along the lines of an interwar effort by King Alexander to defang national differences by redistricting and renaming the country's units. Various international plans envisioned 10 cantons, some with and some without an ethnic majority. The notion was to combine this with a central state strong enough to control resource distribution and policymaking country-wide.

Fourth, there might have been a three-way partition, somehow separating the co-mingled nationalities and distinguishing a rump Bosnjak state from pieces that would join their Serbian and Croatian mother countries. This was stillborn, not only because the internationals rejected it, but because not every Serb and Croat in Bosnia or outside it was sure they wanted such a result.

The fifth option was a confederal arrangement in which the three sides would control various parts of a country tied together by a central authority too weak to challenge decisions reached in regional and local units. While often rejected rhetorically, this is closest to what actually has happened, along with a dash of cantonization. Bosnia's current central authority somewhat resembles post-Tito Yugoslavia, with its ineffectual federal executive (complete with collective, revolving Presidency) and various local power centers controlled by politician/oligarchs who enforce opacity in terms of what is "legal" and politically expedient.

This condition grew out of a two-stage diplomatic process, culminating first in the Washington Agreement of February 1994 and then in the more famous Dayton partition at the end of 1995. The first ended Croatian-Bosnjak fighting and created the bi-national Federation that would then be folded into Dayton. This Federation ensured the Croats would maintain their control in Herzegovina and that Mostar—with its ethnically balanced six districts—would be a point of inter-ethnic tension for the foreseeable future (no matter a notional EU presence that supposedly would mediate a transfer to civic politics).

The Dayton truce melded the Washington arrangements with a delineation of the Republika Srpska (RS). Dayton marked a Serb diplomatic recovery from the military setbacks of 1995. The partition formula giving 51 percent of Bosnia to the Federation and 49 percent to the RS was held to, even though this formula—which had been invented when the Serbs held perhaps 70 percent of the country—greatly favored a Serbian entity that was under pressure in the field. Serbian control was restored in large areas of Western Bosnia, not only negating the results of Bosnjak military victories of a few

months earlier, but—critically—ensuring that Bosnjak-majority areas in the center of the country would not be linked with the Bosnjak-majority Bihac region in the northwest.

This served Croatian as well as Serbian interests. Tudjman was a relatively relaxed player at Dayton because neither Croatia's military destruction of the Krajina Serb proto-state nor Croatian dominance in Herzegovina was in question. For their part, Bosnian Croats were less satisfied. Their leaders continue to seek the third entity they failed to force into existence during the fighting of 1992-1993. That goal defines Bosnian Croat support for constitutional reform.

The Bosnjaks were the losing party at Dayton and remain the aggrieved community in today's Bosnia-Herzegovina. They achieved neither a unitary, civic state strong enough to overawe ethnic entrepreneurs (the desire of Silajdzic, the President of the Collective Bosnian Presidency and most vociferous supporter of muscular constitutional reform), or a smaller, cohesive entity in which Bosnjaks could securely nurture various flavors of cultural and Islamic identity.

In contrast, since the promulgation of the Dayton Agreement the single goal of the Bosnian Serbs has been to keep that arrangement just the way it is. The current arrangement guarantees that the central state has little writ in the RS and cannot prevent that entity from maintaining close—and opaque—relations with Russia as well as Serbia. Not even the lure of EU membership trumps the RS interest in preventing encroachment by what by their lights is a necessarily hostile Bosnian central authority. In my view, noises from RS strongman Milorad Dodik threatening a referendum on secession from Bosnia are bluffs designed to ensure that the internationals do not press for a centralization the Bosnian Serbs would resist. Even assuming they could not prevent it, a critical mass of Bosnian Serbs would reject integration and await a time they could throw off externally imposed multiculturalism.

The partition process and international frustrations with it did not end with the Dayton agreement. After the deal was signed rhetorical attention turned to Sarajevo, where UN officials promised to protect the Serbian presence to symbolize the country's integrated, multicultural future. Instead, in January 1996 virtually the entire Serbian population of several districts left en masse. The official international line is that nationalist thugs forced this exodus, but it is just as likely that many Serbs left because they simply did not want to live in a Bosnjak dominated state. In any case, UN officials found themselves in the embarrassing situation of protecting a population transfer they promised would not happen.

Since then, those refugees and displaced persons who have returned to or remained in Bosnia largely have concentrated in areas dominated by co-nationals—the promise given by international diplomats to the Bosnjaks at Dayton of universal return to pre-war homes has not been fulfilled. Meanwhile, a sense of frustration has been growing among international officials and some in the NGO community who fear the Dayton construction is going to fall apart.

In my view, these concerns stem from a myth about Bosnia's trajectory since 1995. The story goes that—despite inter-communal squabbling and occasional setbacks—things in Bosnia initially began to go “the right way” toward democracy, and multi-cultural integration. This version of what is termed “transition” was shepherded by the first UN High Representatives, culminating in the term of the British Lord Paddy Ashdown. Sadly, in the orthodox view, Ashdown was succeeded by a series of weak officials unable or unwilling to use their Bonn Powers (the legal basis for authoritarian international rule of the place) to force recalcitrant locals to toe the international line.

In fact, Bosnia never has been headed toward either multicultural integration or a unitary status. It is true that the office of the High Representative (OHR) has proven unable to maintain the vice-regal approach Ashdown used to cajole and bully the locals, but the three communities have not altered the general combination of zero sum strategy and tactical flexibility that has marked their scorpions' dance. The perception of some internationals that Bosnia might fall apart reflects more the bankruptcy of international policies than any ground truth in the Balkans.

What happened with parallel “reform” processes in 2009 encapsulates the problem. The internationals pressed (and still press) for constitutional reform designed to make the place over into something like a functioning state. This culminated in an October deadline for the sides to come to heel at Butmir. Meanwhile, paladins representing the three sides met without international approval in what became known as the Prud or Odzak process. They agreed on steps different from what the international were demanding; the internationals rejected them out of hand. The sum of these parts is a relationship in which the elites representing the three communities distrust each other but agree they neither respect nor fear their international overlords.

An alternative would be for international authorities to accept anything the three sides can agree to—while holding back the carrot of EU membership if they do not like what that agreement says. The one thing that might galvanize action among the patronage networks that make up the current Bosnian fabric would be an indication that the great powers are prepared to ignore their squabbling, even if that means the locals might once again come to blows.

For all its problems Bosnia is not in danger of collapse, at least for now. None of the sides want a return to fighting and—so far—two of the three communities have not decided to gang up on the other one. At the same time, the poor economic condition of a Bosnia set adrift from its former association with larger markets ensures the continued domination of informal economic and patronage networks that traditionally have provided security and subsistence to people otherwise bereft of material prospects.

Transparency is just what Bosnia must avoid if it is to remain free of conflict. The Ottoman and Titoist systems accepted legal ambiguity and parallel patronage systems to endure that everyone—no matter what community they identified with—could have someone they could go to when they needed staple economic, political, or cultural goods.

Each time this blurry arrangement was threatened—the loss of the imperial security cap by the 1870s, the fascist partition of the 1940s, and the international insistence on focusing power and resources in transparent, civic states in the 1990s—the region fell into war. What we consider corrupt or criminal behavior is as illegal in the Balkans as anywhere else. Nevertheless, as in most places outside the North Atlantic region, illegal activity that serves communities without hope of being able to compete in the formal economy is—and will remain—legitimate and of central economic importance.

- International actors are hardly immune from involvement in these robust, central, informal economic systems. UN troops involved in peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia during the fighting were active participants in the smuggling and corruption so necessary to survival and social interaction.¹⁰

The longer-term danger to stability in Bosnia eventually might take the shape of a realization by Bosnia's Serbs and Croats that they have more interests in common with each other than either does with the Bosnjaks.¹¹ A more coherent and determined international effort to force creation of a strong federal system or a civic Bosnian state would necessarily threaten Serbs and Croats as it empowers the Bosnjak plurality. In that situation, Bosnian Serbs might prefer to risk opening the Dayton arrangement to revision by favoring a separate Croatian entity.

Amidst a perception of demographic decline, the position of Bosnia's third largest community is especially precarious. A strong central authority would threaten to grind it between its larger "partners"—there would be another exodus of Croats from Bosnia and those who would stay increasingly would find themselves in a position similar to the defeated Krajina Serbs. Those choosing not to leave could join forces with Bosnian Serbs against a Bosnjak adversary too large to be overawed but too small to enforce stability on its own.

Kosovo: Partition From the Sky

In October 1990 a National Intelligence Estimate predicted the collapse of Yugoslavia within 18 months.¹² It also predicted an early coming of instability to Kosovo, the province of Serbia populated by a 90 percent ethnic Albanian majority. That this did not happen for almost a decade after the collapse of the former federation was a major surprise to many of us working on the region at the time.

The Kosovo case is one where partition cannot be understood without considering population movements. The battlefield at Kosovo Polje and the region's magnificent religious centers may well be the heart of Serbian identity, but for centuries Serbs have been voting with their feet against living in Kosovo. The settlements in Krajina and

Vojvodina were populated partly by Serbs from Kosovo. The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century saw no move to re-populate the area with Serbs—epic poems were virtually the only involvement Serbs seemed to want with “Old Serbia.”¹³

- This lack of any significant effort to resettle a claimed homeland or rekindle local nationalist sentiment stands in sharp contrast to the coincident Zionist enterprise or the competition to claim national adherents¹⁴ or to “win” census results in other parts of the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

Serbia gained control over Kosovo in as a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. In 1919 many ethnic Albanians in the region also became part of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. At Versailles, Belgrade attempted to annex Albania as well—which would have put the entire Albanian universe inside a Serb-run country—but that effort was blocked by Woodrow Wilson.

Albanians had been slow to join the nationalist universe of nineteenth century Europe. Individual Albanians had risen to the highest ranks of Ottoman administration, but daunting terrain and internal linguistic and cultural differences (religion was a fluid and less decisive element in this case) had obstructed the development of a cohesive community. The League of Prizren, organized in that town in Kosovo in 1878, failed to get great power attention at the Congress of Berlin that year. Although an Albanian state came into being before World War I, it was not a significant player in the Albanian populated regions beyond its borders or, in some respects, even northern Albania proper through World War II.¹⁵

The sniping and rhetorical tension between Communist states in Albania and Yugoslavia after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 had relatively little to do with Kosovo. Both sides gradually became aware of the weight of the growing ethnic Albanian majority in the province. Albanian Party boss Enver Hoxha, however, was from Gjirokaster in the south, and so had relatively little interest in pan-Albanian dreams or in Kosovo in particular. There occasionally would be polemics based on Albanian accusation of Yugoslav mistreatment of the Kosovars, but there is no evidence agitation from Tirana made a measurable contribution to the inter-ethnic agitation that marked provincial politics in the last two decades of the Communist era.

The explosion of the ethnic Albanian population, fallout from the ouster of Rankovic in 1966, and new rounds of exodus of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo prepared the ground for the inter-communal struggle to come. The removal of Rankovic’s boot enabled ethnic Albanian riots in 1968 that were greeted not with renewed repression but rather with policies that led in stages to the virtual separation of Kosovo from Serbian control. Other factors were at work in the decisive decentralization involved in Tito’s last Constitution in 1974, but its impact in now-autonomous Kosovo was to create an Albanian-dominated state and party apparatus and to enable development of the

University of Pristina as the educational magnet for Albanians from Yugoslav Macedonia as well as Kosovo.

- Thus, many in the ethnic Albanian elites from both places knew each other and kept in touch as Yugoslavia fell apart over the question of how ethnic Albanians should organize their interests as its partition proceeded.

Meanwhile, in the 1970s and 1980s Serbs and Montenegrins once more left Kosovo. Serb nationalists claimed they were being driven out; others pointed to poor economic conditions as a more likely cause. In any case, nationalism on both sides likely was less important than economic conditions once Yugoslavia and Communism fell apart after 1989. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, pieces of the partitioned Yugoslavia had to deal with the structural and economic implications of Communism's demise as well as the special conditions brought about by the federal collapse. Implosion of state-owned enterprises meant there were not enough jobs for everyone. In Kosovo, the competition for jobs at the chronically inefficient (and environmentally challenged) Trepce mining complex exacerbated ethnic tensions. Ethnically (and family) based patronage networks that were (and remain) the basis for subsistence and influence ensured that communal and economic cleavages reinforced each other.

Slobodan Milosevic's efforts to garner control over votes under the old federal system hastened its demise, but in Kosovo it also led to the reversal of the decentralization process and the reintroduction of Rankovic-type repression of the Albanian majority. In 1987, Milosevic had cemented his undeserved reputation as a Serbian nationalist via a staged television appearance in which he promised to protect ethnic Serbs from physical assaults by Albanians. After his crackdown began in 1990, Serbs got education, jobs, and support from Belgrade. Ethnic Albanians got none of the above. Still, renewed Serbian control did not bring Serbs back into Kosovo. In fact, there were rumors that ethnic Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia refused efforts to convince them to resettle in the province.

Conflict in Kosovo was slow to materialize through the 1990s, in part because Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Kosovar independence movement, was committed to non-violence. Nevertheless, by 1997-8 low-level fighting between Serbian forces and a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)—people impatient with a decade of Rugova's non-violence—developed into what promised to be a long-term, gradually escalating insurgency.

International actors, scarred by their ongoing frustrations in Bosnia initially ignored the fighting aside from ritual calls on protagonists to protect human rights and negotiate their differences, but there also existed a determination to avoid the dithering and armed ineffectiveness of that so far had marked UN and Great Power policies in the Balkans. Milosevic's effort to force Albanians out of the province at the beginning of 1999 brought matters to a head. Talks at Rambouillet, a French presidential residence outside

Paris, predictably failed to solve the problem, but provided the diplomatic cover for those who had long desired what became NATO's bombing campaign.

Milosevic used the air assault as an excuse to accelerate his effort to push the entire Albanian population out of Kosovo—he could claim Albanians were fleeing the bombing instead of Serbian forces. In fact, cooperation by local Serbs with the military's efforts to identify and expel Albanians from multi-ethnic urban apartment blocks would lead to ethnic Albanian reprisals after the bombing stopped and NATO forces occupied the province. The net result has been a partition from below, with boundaries set by population movements rather than international diktat of the type hammered out at Dayton.

Kosovo came under the rule of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which incorporated agreements reached between British general Michael Jackson and Serbian officers shortly after Milosevic capitulated to Russian demands that he accept NATO conditions. That resolution included security annexes permitting possible reintroduction of Yugoslav (Serbian) forces into Kosovo under specified conditions. These annexes established a legal basis for Serbian claims of sovereignty.

- UNSC 1244, like Dayton, is a legal club the Serbs deploy to protect their interests and obstruct any change in the official status of the Bosnian and Kosovar shards of the partitioned former Yugoslavia.

While Dayton adjusted and accepted a partition hammered out on the ground, the 1244 regime maintained the fiction of a united Kosovo in the face of the region's partition at the Ibar River.¹⁶ Serbs living to the north reinforced by refugees from the south, have maintained control there, successfully resisting waves of international diplomatic efforts and attempts by UN and EU officials on the ground to establish a Kosovo-wide administration.

- As in Bosnia, local Serbs have had a more constructive relationship with military commanders than with international civil authorities. Military peacekeepers have a more constrained writ than diplomats and administrators charged with implementing political, economic, and civil integration.

Left to themselves, EU governments likely would have left Kosovo alone as they turned their attention to greater questions of European integration and EU expansion. In the post-9/11 environment the Balkans was relegated to the back burner (aside from scrutiny of the region for alleged Wahhabi infiltration of local Islamic communities).

The United States, however, grew impatient for "final status," the independence of Kosovo and the conclusion to the division of former Yugoslavia. In 2006 Washington

began a concerted effort to obtain the UN resolution necessary if there was to be a clear legal basis for a change in the region's legal position.

Russia, however, was a different player than in 1995 or during the 1999 bombing campaign; American assurances that Moscow would not be an obstacle to a new resolution made it easier for Russia to become one. The Yeltsin years were marked by Russia's retreat from its previous international stature, but in the Balkans the extent of Moscow's withdrawal can be overrated. Russian forces cooperated with NATO in Bosnia in 1995, when Russian diplomats were just as betrayed as their NATO counterparts by promises from Milosevic. The skillful administration by ambassadors William Farrand and Susan Johnson of the town of Brcko, a transportation node on the Sava so important to all sides that it was the one place in Bosnia not assigned to either entity, depended in part on what in general was a constructive relationship between those administrators and their Russian counterparts.

Despite Serbian appeals (through Milosevic's brother, who was Belgrade's Ambassador in Moscow), Russia did not obstruct the 1999 NATO bombing campaign. As it ended, Russian troops joined NATO forces in preparation for the coming international occupation. Moscow, however, appeared to distrust Western behavior toward the KLA—one Russian official told the author his government believed the US had reneged on promises to disarm and disband that organization—and may have believed it would be denied any influence over Kosovo's future. Therefore, without warning Russian forces took control of the airport in Pristina, perhaps hoping to replicate the strong position French military administration of the airport in Sarajevo sometimes gave Paris (in comparison to other European governments but not to the United States) regarding international negotiations over Bosnia.¹⁷

Subsequent years of international occupation helped the ethnic Albanian majority reconstitute itself after a decade of a Helot-like status under the Milosevic regime. At the same time, the now-defeated Serbian minority had to rely on a direct presence of international forces in Kosovo (KFOR) to prevent assaults from those ethnic Albanians unreconciled to notions of multi-cultural tolerance. Meanwhile, Serbian authorities north of the Ibar and some from Serbia itself worked to ensure the existence of parallel political and legal systems. These still underscore the lack of Kosovar and international reach north of the river, press Serbia's claim to sovereignty over the whole of Kosovo, and work to intimidate Serbs living south of the Ibar from cooperating with the developing Kosovar state. Riots in the early spring of 2004, which took local leaders and international forces by surprise, reminded all actors of the inherent dangers of the situation.

- Still, some Serbs living south of the river appear to accept their status as a minority in a foreign country and—haltingly—cooperate with local authorities.

The current state of Kosova¹⁸ is the product of a poorly conceived, imperfectly implemented, and still incomplete process that began after those riots ended. In early 2006 US officials made it clear it was time to dictate the entity's "final status" and that this status would be that of an independent country. Diplomats prepared the ground for a new UN Security Council Resolution that would replace 1244 (and terminate the security annexes that Serbia and its Russian patron used skillfully to legitimate Belgrade's claim of sovereignty). Western officials appeared confident that Moscow would acquiesce in such a resolution.

These tactics turned those favoring independence into classic diplomatic *demandeurs*. This made it easy for Russia and Serbia to gain a diplomatic victory. All the former had to do was allow the West to expend energy making demands and then say no at the Security Council. Belgrade's only task was to make sure the Russians would stick to that simple policy. As a result, UNSC 1244 remained in place, leaving the US with the job of forging *ad hoc* international agreements to recognize independence outside the UN framework.

This was only partially accomplished. The declaration of the independent state of Kosova in February 2008 attracted some international recognition, but only a majority of EU bought the program. Spain, Cyprus, and other states feared that Kosova's independence could become a precedent in their own countries. The argument that the Kosovo situation was unique and could not possibly have resonance elsewhere was silly on its face, rejected by these countries and others, and exploited by Russia in its successful (and—given the strange behavior of Georgian President Saakashvili—somewhat serendipitous) war of dismemberment in Georgia later that year. Lack of the UN patina and of universal recognition means Kosova's status remains unclear, no matter rhetoric claiming that its independence is irreversible.

This means the partition of the place also is not necessarily finished. On July 22, 2010 the International Court of Justice ruled that Kosova's unilateral declaration of independence did not violate international law. This setback "fell heavily" on Serbia, according to President Boris Tadic,¹⁹ but Belgrade and its supporters in Moscow, Beijing, and five EU capitals gave no ground. Some press reports indicate at least some in Serbia would settle for a *de jure* recognition of the current *de facto* partition of Kosova/o.²⁰ Others carry ritual denials from all sides that further partition is possible.²¹

Partition possibilities come in various permutations. A new division could involve some sort of swap of largely Albanian areas of southern Serbia for northern Kosova. Or perhaps there will be some sort of new *Ausgleich*, with autonomous pieces of Kosova/o linked by a loose central authority. Of course—as in Bosnia—at some date a new military round could create a new status quo. It is conceivable that at some future point authorities in Belgrade and Pristina could agree on a new partition only to see it rejected by recalcitrant internationals—more likely in Washington than in Europe—and undermined by local spoilers.

- The Europeans already have moved slightly away from absolute opposition to partition; some observers believe the EU would accept a “special status” for northern Kosovo.²² This would put paid to the moribund “Ahtisaari Plan,” under which the Western powers initially attempted to force through a unified, independent Kosovo. Given the EU’s disunity on the issue, Serbia is likely to have opportunities to keep the status issue alive after the ICJ delivers its ruling.

Meanwhile, the UN mission in Bosnia and Kosova/o is drawing down. The absence of fighting has led to lower troop levels in Bosnia, and a similar process is underway in Kosova/o. The European Union, still struggling to figure out its foreign and security identity, gradually is taking over titular responsibility for monitoring and encouraging “progress.” There is no agreement yet to close up shop at Bosnia’s OHR, but in Kosova/o the UN Mission has passed the baton to a European legal entity—the so-called “EULEX.” Neither side so far is impressed—the Kosovars are angry that EULEX is dealing with Belgrade over customs and judicial issues (and thus undermining Kosova’s sovereignty), while the Serbs are convinced EULEX will continue to extend ethnic Albanian control in such events as the surprise July 2 forced establishment of an office of the Kosova government in Mitrovica.²³

In Lieu of Conclusion: Partition Continues.

It is important to remember that the post-Yugoslav metastasis did not end with Bosnia and Kosova/o. In 2006 Montenegro broke away from Serbia after a ten year process that had more to do with personal power than popular sovereignty. Milo Djukanovic, an erstwhile Milosevic crony, made two mirror mistakes but then recruited international support to help him survive them—and flourish. In 1996 Djukanovic thought Milosevic was going to fall from power as a result of demonstrations that followed his effort to steal local elections. Djukanovic was smart enough not to try to reconcile with Milosevic once the latter had survived that crisis, and so suddenly opposed Milosevic’s violation of human rights and made himself over into a good democrat. He appealed for Western support and over the next couple of years attempted unsuccessfully to provoke Belgrade into armed action that might ensure that help.

In 2000, Djukanovic assumed Milosevic would be able to steal national elections and so did not run any candidates for the new National Assembly. Wrong again--this time Milosevic fell, leaving the Montenegrin boss without any voice in the newly democratized rump Yugoslavia (aside from his personal connection to Zoran Djindjic and less prominent figures among Serbia’s new figureheads). This made it imperative that Djukanovic move toward independence to ensure his continued personal rule. He did so,

and managed to cobble together a referendum majority in favor large enough to meet the 55 percent level arbitrarily set as a measure of legitimacy by the internationals. During various elections in this period Djukanovic was able to win enough votes to maintain power, but only by margins making it clear the country remains split between those who want to be separate from the Serbs and others who believe they are Serbs. That division will remain important going forward, and so Montenegro's independent status could come into question if the regional context changes again.

The hiving off of Montenegro from Serbia involved the partition of Sandzak, an area with a largely Slavic Muslim population that suddenly found itself divided between the two countries. Many in Sandzak are beginning to identify themselves as Bosnjaks—a cleric/politician named Muamer Zukorlic is attempting to parlay this developing identity into a politico-religious movement under his leadership that would transcend the border between Serbia and Bosnia.

As in the Albanian universe, some Bosniaks are adopting religious practices more devout than has been typical in the Balkans; a few of these are susceptible to Wahhabi or other Salafi influence. Poor economic conditions and the reputation for corruption that clings to leading Sandzak politicians contributes to a nascent political Islam that eventually might link up with similar sentiment in Bosnia, leading perhaps to pressure for a larger Muslim state in Europe.

- In short, dissatisfaction among Bosnjaks in Bosnia with the Dayton partition they had counted on the internationals to prevent and then to overturn has ramifications outside Bosnia's current borders.

Perhaps the greatest short-term danger in the region is in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the one piece of former Yugoslavia whose fate has not yet been decided by a military conflict (Montenegro owes its independence at least in part to the outcome of the NATO bombing campaign in 1999 and the contested overthrow of Milosevic the next year). Through the 1990s the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was the one success story marked by a local agreement to have both Slavic and ethnic Albanian representation in the country's government and a small international troop presence—one US and one Nordic battalion.

Still, each community believed the other had more of the public pie than it deserved. Ethnic Albanians wanted more government jobs, economic help, and the right to use the Albanian language and national symbols in public as well as private life. Facing challenges to different aspects of their authority from Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, Macedonian Slavs demanded the state affirm its sovereignty from those living within its borders. Small-scale (but unexpected) fighting in 2001 led to an agreement at Ohrid that continues to be the country's consociational social contract.

- The gulf between the two communities remains considerable and the politicians who forged deals over the last decade and a half either have passed from the scene or are being outflanked on their nationalist flanks. The overtly nationalist “Skopje 2014” campaign by the current government led by Nikola Gruevski is provoking anger among ethnic Albanians convinced they have little stake in a state politically dominated by Macedonian Slavs.

Any breakdown of the consensus in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would bring into high relief the Albanian question—which is *the* question in the southern Balkans. It is not clear this would lead to a greater Albania. Instead, the pattern of current economic relations and linguistic affinities could enable a “greater Kosova”—increased ties among Kosova, northern Albanian and the west of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

- In the Balkans, transportation issues are far more ancient and indelible than ethnic disputes. Current road projects linking northern and southern Albania and Kosova with both will be more important than constitutional issues and electoral systems in determining future patterns of politics and social discourse among Albanians and between the various ethnic Albanian communities and their non-Albanian neighbors. The economic imperative to extend that road north through Serbia (parallel to the existing railroad line) gives the Serbs their most potent leverage over future negotiations on further partition or other alternatives.
- The same is true regarding Bosnia and its struggle to find a replacement for the imperial and Yugoslav markets it has lost—the pattern of road construction and commercial growth matters far more than Western notions of constitutional reform and “rule of law.”

In the ongoing partition of what once was Yugoslavia, the United Nations and the great powers that dominate it have cobbled together largely arbitrary legal, political, and diplomatic arrangements in reaction to events they neither anticipated nor managed successfully. For the moment, as on Cyprus, these conflicts are frozen; for now, no one in Bosnia and very few in Kosova/o and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is interested in a fight. Going forward, no matter the likely repetition of hortatory international rhetoric or possible universal Balkan membership in the EU, the region likely will remain up for grabs.

Notes

¹ See Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) for an exhaustive analysis of the construction of the linguistic, social, and political underpinnings of Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovaks, and a virtually every other would be contestant for the term “nation” from the Baltic to the Aegean.

² For an analysis of pros, cons, proponents, and opponents of partition see Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially pp. 149-203.

³ See the considerable references to Croatian political support and military service in Peter Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁴ Obrad Kesic is among those who believe the Nacertanje had a broader pan-Slavist orientation. In my view, this was a much more minor key in Garasanin's work than a coalescence of Serbian identity and political organization.

⁵ In 1906 Albert Sonnichsen, a reporter/adventurer from San Francisco, went to Ottoman Macedonia and fought with rebel groups who called themselves “Bulgarian” as often as “Macedonian” and fought far more often against Greeks than Turks. See Albert Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit: A Californian in the Balkan Wars*, Santa Barbara, CA: The Narrative Press, 2004).

⁶ Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 82, 358.

⁷ The coincident revival of the archdiocese of Ohrid remains a related point of contention. A renegade Macedonian Slav priest interprets this in a way to justify his claim to being loyal to the Serbian, rather than the Macedonian Autocephalous Orthodox Church—he claims to be a bishop of the “legitimate” Serbian Orthodox Church in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

⁸ An articulate advocate of this view is V.P. Gagnon, Jr., *The Myth of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁹ The article originally referred in all cases to “Macedonia” rather than “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” or “FYROM.” The editors have changed all these references to accord with their policy toward this sensitive issue. The author accepts the changes in the context of their views on the subject—after all, this is their journal. Nevertheless, he wishes to stress his strong disagreement with them.

¹⁰ See Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008) for a comprehensive history of activities and relationships many of us working on the region at the time heard about in jokes and rumors.

¹¹ The announcement in May 2010 of an electoral agreement between leaders of the ruling Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat parties does not presage an immediate alliance of the sort I suggest, but could be the first of a series of steps pointing toward such a result. Croatian President Josipovic's conciliatory visit to Bosnia in the Spring of 2010 was met with approval in Belgrade and among Bosnian Serbs.

¹² NIE 15-90 “Yugoslavia Transformed,” published in *From “National Communism” to National Collapse: US Intelligence Community Estimative Products on Yugoslavia, 1948-1990* (Washington, D.C.: NIC 2006-004, December 2006).

¹³ This is how Rebecca West termed the area in her classic *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (New York: Penguin, 1982).

¹⁴ Pieter Judson has written extensively on this issue. See his *Guardians of the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ For example, interwar Albania's King Zog, from Central Albania, had little interest in the north or in Kosovo—and so had good relations with Yugoslavia and the Serbs.

¹⁶ The notion that Kosovo within its pre-1999 borders is a historic whole itself is something of a fiction; Tito had added some territory to the province from Serbia proper as part of his effort to whittle down Serbian influence in his post-Karadjordjevic Yugoslavia.

¹⁷ US and Western mishandling of Russia in 1999 is part of a broader failure to develop a constructive relationship with the Russian core of the defeated Soviet state. For a cogent general critique (if a bit over-

the-top in its admiration for Mikhail Gorbachev) see Stephen F. Cohen, *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), especially pp. 163-198.

¹⁸ “Kosova” refers to the Albanian spelling of the new state. When I use the form “Kosova/o,” I refer to the de facto partition a territory currently divided between at the Ibar River—the north is still “Kosovo” because it remains under Serbian control. The Albanian-dominated state south of the river is “Kosova.”

¹⁹ Tanjug, July 22, 2010.

²⁰ Augustin Palokaj, “Major Powers Refuse to Reopen Case of Kosovo Partition,” Brussels WAZ.euobserver.com, May 25, 2010.

²¹ For example, see “Kosovo Prime Minister Says Idea About Exchanging Kosovo Territory ‘Will Be Ignored.’” Pristina, RTK TV July 1, 2010.

²² For example, Brussels WAZ.euobserver.com, July 7, 2010.

²³ The sudden appearance of international civil satraps and troops led to the symbolic opening of a government office and emplacement on a building of a plaque representing Kosova’s sovereignty. It also provoked the expected angry response from local Serbs. An agreement between Kosova/o and Serbia brokered by the EU and signed on April 19, 2013, grants an internationally recognized legal status to a Serbian municipality in Kosova/o. Serbia, of course, is a universally recognized state. This leaves the Kosovar state without the clear legal and political status possessed by its internal and external adversaries.. Unless the five EU states that currently do not recognize “Kosova” change their minds, this deal will lay the groundwork for future trouble.