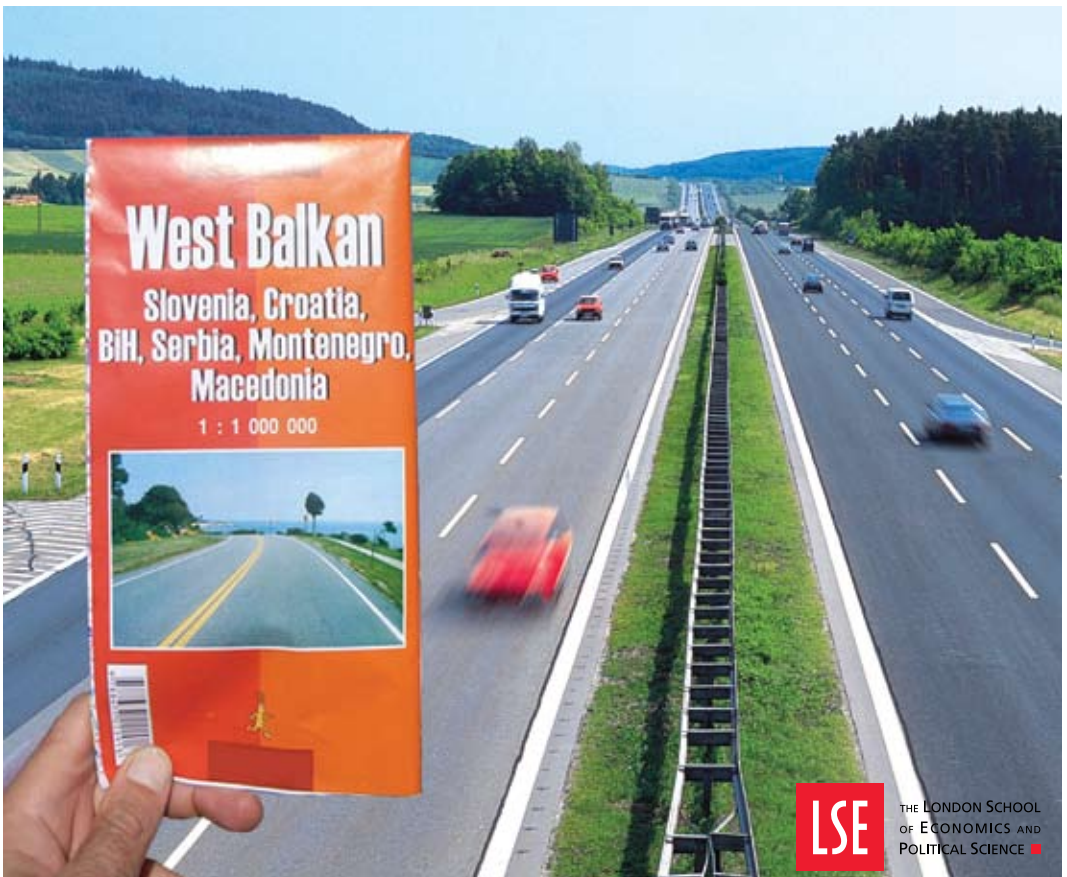


Good news from the Western Balkans

# YUGOSLAVIA IS DEAD LONG LIVE THE YUGOSPHERE

## TIM JUDAH





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**LSEE**  
Research on  
South Eastern Europe

**LSE** THE LONDON SCHOOL  
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# LSEE Papers

LSEE, the LSE's new research unit on South East Europe, welcomes you to the first of the LSEE Papers series. As part of the activities of LSEE we aim to publish topical, provocative and timely Papers, alongside our other core activities of academic research and public events. As part of our commitment to quality and impact we will commission contributions from eminent commentators and policy-makers on the significant issues of the day pertaining to an ever-important region of Europe. Of course, independent submissions will also be considered for the LSEE Paper series. It is with great pleasure that the LSEE Papers are launched by a hugely stimulating contribution from Tim Judah whose knowledge and expertise of the region is second to none. Tim Judah worked on this paper while with the LSE as a Senior Visiting Fellow in 2009 and we are delighted to inaugurate the series with his work on the 'Yugosphere'.

*Dr Spyros Economides*



# Preface

In general terms good news is no news. That is as true for the Western Balkans as it is for anywhere else. But sometimes it also presents a problem. After all, if there are many good things going on as well as the bad ones which do get reported, then how is anyone supposed to know? The idea behind this paper is that since the end of the Balkan wars of the 1990s – but especially in the last few years – there have been huge changes on the ground, which have profoundly affected people's lives for the better, but the problem is that few people outside even know they have happened. In that case how can they react properly? How can we correctly analyse the Western Balkans and draw the proper conclusions if decisions are made based on stereotypes, old news, bad news or dated research? And more than that: What if the single most profound change – the emergence of a Yugosphere across the countries of the former Yugoslavia - is one which many people, for reasons of political correctness perhaps, or because it challenges what they stood for or believed in the 1990s, do not even want to talk about or even acknowledge?

This paper aims to examine the Yugosphere and to put it in a European context, both in terms of comparing it to other spheres, and

in terms of what it means for European integration. It does not aim to present the idea as a *fait accompli* but rather to initiate discussion and provoke debate. It aims to show how the Yugosphere is different from the notion, and geography, of the Western Balkans. It does not suggest that the old Yugoslavia is returning under a different guise and it does not seek to cover up the real and profound problems afflicting the region. It does however aim to show that there is as yet an unappreciated dynamic at work on the ground, which should be borne into consideration as we seek to analyse the region, its problems and its future as a whole.



# Our countries...

In July 2009, Serbian President Boris Tadic was attending the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Sharm el-Sheik in Egypt. The Non-Aligned Movement is a ghostly survivor of the glory days, half a century ago, of Egypt's Nasser, Indonesia's Sukharno and of course the then Yugoslav leader Marshal Tito. Recently the movement, which seems to serve no particular purpose, has been useful to Serbia because it conveniently gathers together scores of countries which Serbia needs to lobby to stall recognitions of Kosovo, which declared independence from it in 2008.

This year in Sharm el-Sheik, Mr Tadic made two interesting declarations. Firstly, pandering to nostalgia for the days when the movement counted for something, he pitched to host its 2011 summit. This would commemorate its first, which was held in Belgrade in 1961. But Serbia of course, was not the host in 1961 – Yugoslavia was. So, Mr Tadic said that it would be a good idea if the other former Yugoslav republics should help it organise the 2011 gathering. Surprisingly perhaps, since none of the former Yugoslavs are members, as opposed to observers, and that none of them even wish to be non-aligned, as opposed to EU and NATO members, the initial response

was positive.<sup>1</sup> Since then discussions have been held on the matter in the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and the former Yugoslavs are continuing to discuss how to follow up on this idea.

Mr Tadic's second suggestion was just as interesting. He said that since companies from the former Yugoslav states are, on a global scale, very small, they should cooperate to seek contracts abroad, especially in the fields of construction and specialised military equipment. Some days later Croatian president Stipe Mesic responded warmly to this idea. Companies from 'our countries' he agreed, were often just too small to compete in other markets.

To a great extent the comments made by presidents Tadic and Mesic are obvious. Of course most companies from the former Yugoslav states are too small to seriously compete in the world market, but together they could make a difference. However their comments, and even the discussion about holding the 2011 Non-Aligned meeting, point to something else. That is that, while Yugoslavia is long gone, a Yugosphere has emerged across the lands it once encompassed.

From Slovenia to Macedonia, despite all their differences, the people of this region have an awful lot in common, and while the idea

of a Yugosphere has never been formally articulated until now, it has clearly emerged in recent years.

## So what is it then?

What exactly do we mean by this term? Firstly, let us consider some basic facts. The vast majority of the 22 million or so people who live in the region of the former Yugoslavia, ie., Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Montenegrins all speak the same language with minor dialectical variations. At either end of it many Macedonians and Slovenes either still speak what used to be called Serbo-Croatian or understand it. In the same vein as Stipe Mesic's 'our countries', the vast majority of people, including young people who do not remember Yugoslavia, do not regard other parts of the former Yugoslavia as 'abroad' in the same way they might regard other neighbours, such as Greece, Austria or Romania. Also, and importantly for the creation of the sphere, with the partial exception of going to Slovenia, most people within the region can travel freely, in some cases just using their identity cards.

Secondly, it is clear that with every passing month, ever more economic links broken during the 1990s are being restored. Trade between the six ex-republics plus Kosovo is intense. The first and sec-

ond markets for Bosnian exports are Croatia (17.2%) and Serbia (14%) respectively, and likewise Bosnia's leading partner in terms of imports is Croatia (17.1%) with Serbia third (10.6%) just after Germany.<sup>2</sup> Macedonia's leading export market is Serbia (23.5%), as it is for Montenegro (28.3%) which imports just as much from there (29.9%).<sup>3</sup> A large proportion of Kosovo's trade is either with Serbia or Macedonia, or comes through them. Kosovo's figures are highly unreliable but even according to official data, they show that for the year to June 2009 11.1% of its imports came from Serbia and 15.2% from Macedonia, with 10% of its exports going to Macedonia.<sup>4</sup> In the period 2000-2007 Slovenia was the sixth largest investor in Serbia.<sup>5</sup> *Telekom Slovenije* through its investment in *IPKO*, the mobile and cable TV network operator, is one of the biggest investors in Kosovo and in March 2009 it also acquired the *Cosmofon* and *Germanos Telekom Skopje* networks in Macedonia from Greece's *OTE*. Other subsidiaries include *Pogodak!* a search engine with Slovene, Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian and Macedonian portals, *On.net* the second largest internet provider in Macedonia, *Blic.net* the main internet provider in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and *Aneks* a fixed line provider there too.<sup>6</sup> Serbia and Croatia did €1bn worth of business together in 2008 with Croatian exports to Serbia amounting to €600m with €400m going the other way.<sup>7</sup> (Serbs however do complain that Croatia is still less open to Ser-

bian investments than vice versa, a point which was noted in the European Commission's 2009 Croatia Progress Report.<sup>8)</sup>

One hardly needs to pore over dry economic data to notice how supermarkets from Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, owned by *Konzum*, *Delta* and *Mercator* respectively are opening across the region. Increasingly companies, both from within the region and from outside, are treating it as a whole again and old links are being revived, albeit in new forms. Some examples: With such small domestic markets it is only natural that publishers should seek to capitalise on the regional whole. This is reflected in the business done at regional book fairs and the fact that a major Croatian publisher like *VBZ* now operates in Serbia, Slovenia and Bosnia too. Across the region television channels from all the ex-republics have been available on satellite and cable for years, in all of the rest of them, and for their diasporas too. Look at the flags of all the ex-Yugoslav republics with local access numbers running below adverts from everything up to and including fortune tellers. In other words much programming is being marketed for the whole region. Companies like Swedish giant *Ikea* are interested in returning to the former Yugoslavia because they know their market will be much wider than the particular country they are in, an experience already born out by *Ipercoop*, the Italian supermarket chain which, for example,

caters to Serbs from Serbia by having at least one store close to Vojvodina in Osijek in eastern Croatia.<sup>9</sup> Today, as there is not yet an *Ikea* store in the former Yugoslavia, shoppers from Serbia make up 8% of sales from *Ikea* in Budapest while Croats buy a quarter of everything sold in its store in Graz, in Austria.<sup>10</sup>

Study the masthead of many of the bigger newspapers and magazines and you will notice the price in the currencies of several, or even all of the six former Yugoslav republics. Serbia's leading daily *Politika* has international pages and then 'region' and 'ex YU' online coverage<sup>11</sup>. *Pink* Television broadcasts across the region but has slightly different programming adapted for Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro and plans for Croatia. All the mainstream reality shows like Big Brother and Farm seek to reflect, more or less, some ex-Yugoslav component by including contestants from other nationalities or former republics and there are even websites dedicated to, as one says in its masthead, 'All exYu gossip in one place.'<sup>12</sup> When Serbian tycoon Filip Zepter was reported in August 2009 to be interested in buying Croatian shipyards no one thought this odd, or newsworthy, just because he is from Serbia.

In a similar vein we can see the restoration of links between companies, big and small. Take the former giant *Zastava* combine in

Kragujevac. In the pre-war years Croatian companies provided key parts, such as plastics, for *Zastava's* iconic *Yugo* car. Now with the return of *Fiat* to Kragujevac to make *Puntos*, those links are being restored. Companies from Slovenia and Bosnia will also supply parts including, in a classic but poignant Yugoslpheric twist, *Cimos* from Potocari. This company is Slovene and Potocari is the village outside Srebrenica where men and women were separated at the UN base before the massacre of up to 8,000 Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. Undoubtedly many of those who died were killed with Kalashnikovs, also made by *Zastava*.

Today, for important jobs, Croatian companies will employ say Serbian electricians if they are better and more competitive than their Croatian counterparts and because the Croatian education system is resulting in labour shortages in certain sectors. In the same way former Yugoslav brands have returned across the region. These include Croatian biscuits and chocolates (*Kras*), food additives (*Vegeta*) and wines, Slovene milk (*Alpsko*) and white goods (*Gorenje*), Macedonian fruit and vegetables and Montenegrin wines (*Plantaze*) too. A typical recent Serbian headline announced the planned 'conquest' of Croatia, not by armed force but by *Cipiripi*, a Serbian chocolate spread. In the summer of 2009, for the first time since the wars, Belgrade was full of billboards advertising

the attractions of Croatian holidays – ‘So Beautiful, So Close’ - to Serbs.<sup>13</sup> These posters were, by the way, jostling for space and attention with adverts for Montenegrin holidays. The Croatian ones made a difference. The number of Serbs holidaying in Croatia in 2009 was expected to be some 100,000, up from 88,000 in 2008.<sup>14</sup> Despite so many years having passed since the end of the war with Croatia many Serbs have remained reticent about returning there on holiday. That phase is clearly in steep decline now and Croatia’s main problem, as far as Serbs are concerned, is price. Many Serbs however still have holiday homes in Croatia, just as many Serbian and other ex-Yugoslav companies and institutions still have property and assets there.

It may seem a flippant example but it is not. It is just the tip of the iceberg. Every year people across Europe gnash their teeth at the Eurovision song contest when the former Yugoslavs, (just like the Scandinavians, the former Soviets, and Greeks and Cypriots,) band together to vote for one another. But then, it could hardly be any other way. Most former Yugoslavs like the same music as they do much of the same food.

Some people always knew it would be like this. Criminals never stopped trading across the frontlines during the Yugoslav wars and,



despite its often nationalist overtones, turbofolk music remained popular everywhere. Today all the ex-Yugoslav favourites such as Lepa Brena, Hari Mata Hari and Dino Merlin perform to packed audiences everywhere, and lingering nationalist opposition to one or another of them for this or that statement or action from the 1990s has become little more than ineffective whimpering.<sup>15</sup> Post-war musicians such as Severina from Croatia or the Damir Imamovic Trio play to packed houses too, as they did for example during the ‘Sarajevo Days’ festival in Belgrade in May 2009.<sup>16</sup> Anyone on Facebook with friends in the region can see people from one end of the Yugosphere to the other selling or looking for tickets for big bands playing anywhere from Ljubljana to Skopje. Every year thousands of young people from the region (and now of course everywhere,) come together at the Exit music festival in Novi Sad. Anyone interested in literature can keep up to date by following the quintessential Yugoslpheric site, *Knizevnost.org* and all serious business websites cover the whole of the ex-Yugoslavia as a matter of course, all of them tracking the stock markets of Zagreb, Belgrade, Podgorica and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas before it was only criminals who disregarded boundaries of all sorts, now policemen cooperate on a daily basis but criminals, or those in trouble, take advantage of both their former Yugoslav

heritage and mock the justice system of a region now split into so many jurisdictions. In 2009 for example, Branimir Glavas, the former strongman of the Croatian town of Osijek was convicted of torturing Serbian civilians during the war and so fled the few miles across the border after having prudently acquired Bosnian citizenship some months before.

A perfect example of Yugosphere criminal cooperation came in the wake of the 2008 murder of Ivo Pukanic, the highly controversial Croatian publisher and editor. Police and journalists quickly established links between Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Montenegrins in this case. In April 2009 Sreten Jovic aka Joca Amsterdam, a figure associated by the Serbian press with organised crime, was arrested on suspicion of having organised the murder.<sup>18</sup> Then Stipe Mesic warned Boris Tadic that his life might be threatened because of this case. Ratko Knezevic, the sworn enemy of Milo Djukanovic, the prime minister of Montenegro, claimed the murder was connected to revelations by Pukanic of Djukanovic's alleged cigarette smuggling activities in the 1990s in league with Serbian businessman Stanko Subotic 'Cane'. But cases, or allegations like this, which shed some light on the murky relationship between Yugosphere politicians, big businessmen and organised crime are just the tip of the iceberg. For example, everyday drug and human trafficking

in the region can only take place if Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians and Croats all work together in harmony, which they do.

At a tactical level policemen within the region work better with one another with every passing year. Typical examples of the intensification of cooperation in 2009 were the signing of agreements between Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia on joint border patrols, while Montenegro and Bosnia signed agreements on joint border checks. In October 2009 Serbia and Croatia, which had in May already signed an agreement on police cooperation, agreed to work together closely to control sport related violence.<sup>19</sup>

On the military front too there is increasing cooperation between soldiers. Officers now regularly come together for specialised training programmes, many of them aimed at readying soldiers for peacekeeping missions abroad. The majority of these are conducted under the aegis of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and typically take place, for example, at the Center for Peacekeeping Operations of the Serbian Army's General Staff in Belgrade and its equivalents, be they in Skopje, Sarajevo or Zagreb. What is quite possible is that in the future, instead of small Balkan contingents being attached to others from outside the region, for example Serbs with Norwegians in Chad, that they might come together as a Bal-

kan battalion.<sup>20</sup> Today all the former Yugoslav republics are members of what is called the South Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial which aims to boost regional military cooperation, (but above and beyond the Yugosphere,) but only Macedonia is thus far participating in its South East European Brigade which consists of six other countries and is based in Turkey.

## Let's get together and feel alright

On the official front what is quite stunning are just how many regional meetings of everyone from firemen to vets to central bankers and ministers of just about everything take place every month. Although regional organisations often include members who are not former Yugoslav states, more often than not, as I shall show below, they are the core members. In general terms many of these meetings, which increasingly show results, are not reported or widely known, because they cover dull, technical affairs which may make life easier for people but hardly make for sexy news copy.

In 2008 the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was formed as a successor to the post-war Stability Pact. The Stability Pact was established on 10 June 1999, which was the same day as the UN

Security Council voted for Resolution 1244 which ended the Kosovo war. So, while Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Albania were members of the pact, just as they are of its successor, its clear aim was to stabilise the former Yugoslavia.

The RCC is based in Sarajevo. A close examination of what it aims to do, and what it does, bears out the theory that a new geopolitical reality is taking shape in the Western Balkans. According to Hido Biscevic, its Croatian Secretary General, the RCC has aspired to support the accomplishment of the ‘common aims’ of South Eastern Europe which are, ‘economic and social development’ and advancement on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. In its first annual report he wrote: ‘we contributed to forging a new regional spirit marked by cooperation, solidarity, all-inclusiveness and partnership.’<sup>21</sup> It thus aims to carry on where the Stability Pact left off, although the idea of the new organisation is that be in perception and reality, one which is more “locally owned” than driven by outsiders and their interests.

It is worth quoting in some detail what the RCC sees as its aims, because they bear out the theory of an emerging Yugosphere:

The RCC was launched in order to sustain the principle of local ownership and enhanced regional cooperation and

place the responsibility for the future into the hands of the region.

Promoting and enhancing cooperation in the priority areas, namely, economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and cross-cutting issues, and parliamentary cooperation, the RCC also supports...European and Euro-Atlantic integration and creates a political climate susceptible to carrying out projects of a wider, regional character to the benefit of...each individual member.<sup>22</sup>

To understand this properly one has to read between the lines. Membership of the RCC includes all the countries of South East Europe, ie., the seven post-Yugoslav states, (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Slovenia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro,) plus Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Albania and Turkey. However, Turkey has little really to do with the RCC and Bulgaria, Romania and Greece are already members of the EU and NATO. Slovenia too is already a member of the EU and NATO but, by virtue of its history and intense commercial links with the rest of the former Yugoslavia can be nothing else but a part of the Yugo-sphere. Albania is clearly not, but it is a part of the Western Bal-

kans which is defined as the former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia plus Albania. Albania is however, like Croatia, a member of NATO. Kosovo's membership – as a state, as opposed to a region of Serbia administered by the UN, is of course contested by Serbia. However both have decided, for now at least, to compromise. So long as Kosovo comes to the table with a nameplate bearing the number 1244, which represents the June 1999 Security Council resolution which ended the Kosovo war, Serbia will accept Kosovo there, and indeed in other regional and international forums where it has any leverage, (ie., unlike the World Bank.) Kosovo's government has in turn decided that being described as Kosovo/1244 rather than the Republic of Kosovo, is a price worth paying for being represented at the table.<sup>23</sup>

This leaves just Moldova, which has no real connections to the former Yugoslavia or the Western Balkans and, unlike the Western Balkans, no commitment from the EU about membership either. Hence it is part of the RCC as though it really had nowhere else to go, which to a great extent is true. In other words, give or take a certain flexibility, with some countries opting in to programmes and some out, it is clear that that the RCC is a regional organisation based on the former Yugoslavia. What is interesting then is really how many organisations it in turn is involved with and which,

many by virtue of their technical and hence rather dull nature are completely unknown to the public at large, let alone anyone outside the region, including many specialists. Let us examine some of them briefly:

- The South East European Health Network. Note that its political declarations were made in former Yugoslav Dubrovnik in 2001 and Skopje in 2005. Funding comes from Slovenia, amongst others.
- The South East European Trade Union Forum. A regional organisation. Support from, amongst others, the Croatian Trade Union Association.
- Electronic South Eastern Europe / Centre for eGovernance Development. This aims to promote the development of Information Society in South Eastern Europe. Again Slovenia is a key funder and partner and a Centre for eGovernance for the region has been established in Ljubljana.
- The Central European Free Trade Agreement. (CEFTA) The regional trade agreement. Don't be confused by the name, which was retained for historical and political rea-



sons. Members are the Western Balkans (as defined above) plus outlier Moldova. Not a single country is actually in central Europe. CEFTA gives the region a single set of EU compatible trade rules instead of the 32 previous, bilateral deals.

- The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative. (MARRI). Members are Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. It is based in Skopje.
- The Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative. Nine countries and one observer, which is Kosovo. The non-ex Yugoslav members are Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. Based in Sarajevo.

All these organisations are typical, and the above are just a few of them. Without going into details others include the Secretariat of the Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe, the South East Europe Police Chiefs Association, the South East European Cooperative Initiative Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime, the South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for

South Eastern Europe, and so on. Again, while all of them do have non former Yugoslavs as members, the former Yugoslavs generally form the core.

## What's in a name?

What does all this add up to? What it means is that almost 20 years after most of the political and economic links were smashed between the former Yugoslavs a large number have now been re-connected albeit under the often conveniently politically correct, neutral sounding, official nomenclature of 'South East European' or 'Western Balkan'. In the case of the RCC itself the 'region' is supposed to be self-evident.

This is a movement which might have been natural anyway but is one which has certainly been accelerated and encouraged by the EU and other outside actors. For example, for 2009, some €600m have earmarked for the region by the EU (with more from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank.) The aim of much of this is that governments are encouraged to apply for these funds, not individually, but together, for projects in fields such as energy, infrastructure and economic cooperation.<sup>24</sup> Some of these are big, but not all

of them. Under the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) for example, €1.62m have been set aside for cross border co-operation between Croatia and Montenegro, €1.1m for the same Montenegro and Serbia and €1.1m for Montenegro and Bosnia.<sup>25</sup>

All this is a not a phenomenon which is particularly well understood either inside the region or outside. There has been little academic research into it and preliminary discussions about the nature of the Yugosphere reveal a number of things. Firstly that it is often misunderstood or misconstrued as an attempt by outsiders to re-constitute a new Yugoslavia. This is clearly not the case. Secondly, amongst the most vociferous critics of the idea are those whom one can only suspect were amongst the most nationalist of the nationalists in the 1990s and who take exception either to the emergence of the Yugosphere or even to its identification. Some, especially Croats object to the name, and some to the idea, and many objectors, one suspects, deny its existence, not because it does not exist but because they wish it did not exist.<sup>26</sup>

## What is a sphere then?

What makes a sphere? Trying to define a sphere in the sense that it is being used here probably makes as much sense as trying to ask

how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. It is clear that on a global scale Europe, in the sense of a shared geographical space, shared history, shared experience and so on could be said to be a sphere. Most Europeans share fairly common values and, broadly speaking, the same culture. Most, but not all come from a Christian tradition. Much but not all of Europe is a common market, many European states share a currency and so on, and there are, of course, scores of common European organisations. However, if Europe is an overarching sphere then it is clear that it exists as a kind of roof over many sub-spheres. Like Venn diagrams some of these are completely European, but some are only partly so. The Yugo-sphere is clearly completely European but, by contrast, one can be Portuguese and European (clearly) and also at the same time, live within a wider Lusophone sphere, doing business say with Angola, watching Brazilian soap operas and going gambling in Macao. Likewise a Spaniard can coexist within European, Spanish, Iberian and Latin American spheres as well as a regional ones, the most obvious being the Catalan and Basque ones of course.

So, as we shall see, the emergence and identification of the Yugo-sphere does not imply uniqueness for the region of the former Yugoslavia, but rather a kind of maturity, in the sense that the post-war Balkans is becoming again, more like any other part of Europe.

It is an area of mostly like minded people with a lot in common who are increasingly coming to cooperate, and work together for mutual advantage, as much as they can, given their recent history. But, just as one can identify a Yugosphere, this by no means contradicts the existence of both national spheres within it, a Serbian sphere, a Croatian sphere and so on, but also, again as in Venn diagrams, an Albanian sphere, which is partly within it and partly outside. Thus one could say that all Albanians live within the general European sphere and all Albanians live within an Albanian sphere but only some Albanians, ie., those that once lived within the former Yugoslavia can also be said to co-exist within the Yugo-sphere. This however, is to get ahead of the story.

Let us examine some other European or European-based spheres so that we can set the Yugo-sphere in context.

One of the most discussed spheres in recent times has been the Anglosphere. Exactly how it is defined varies but, in general terms, it seems to comprise Britain (obviously), Ireland (maybe yes, maybe no,) the US (definitely), Canada, Australia, New Zealand and so on. What is questionable is whether it could be said to encompass say India, English speaking Africa and the Caribbean and so on, or just their elites, or whether the Anglosphere is in effect a new way

of describing (more or less) the old (white) imperial Dominions with all the psychological baggage that comes with that. Whichever way one might chose to look at the Anglosphere however there are those who argue that its very existence helps explain Britain's perennial lack of enthusiasm for Europe and the EU, because the UK is already somehow anchored, culturally, by family ties and by language, not just by its relationship with the US – or “AngloAmerica” as this particular subset has been defined, but also with this nebulous Anglosphere.<sup>27</sup>

Across the Channel we are confronted with a different set of dilemmas. Compared to the Anglosphere *La Francophonie*, as an international organisation, is defined as comprising countries which “share” the French language or which the French think have a special tie to France, even if they do not, but the link may be sentimental, as with Romania.<sup>28</sup> Even that is open to question though as Yugosphere Macedonia is a full blown member and Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia are observers. But perhaps more relevant for us here is the extent to which a real French sphere – a Francosphere – exists within Europe. This would encompass, other than France, obviously, Wallonia and the French speaking cantons of Switzerland. Unlike the Yugosphere however what is clear here is that what is outside France is relatively small, ie., France dominates. Still, turn

on the European channel of France's international station and the logo defines the European Francosphere. It says: *TV5Monde Direct: France, Belgique, Suisse*. Interestingly, in Belgium, the political option of joining France, known as "rattachement" is one which has no attraction for Walloons, and those in favour rarely garner more than 1% of the vote. Still according to Pascal Delwit, Professor of Political Science at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, their general culture (television, literature etc.) has been 'homogenised' with France although their political culture remains very different.<sup>29</sup> However, according to a poll taken in 2008, if Belgium does break up, then 48% of Walloons would then be in favour of union with France.<sup>30</sup>

Switzerland is where the Francosphere rubs shoulders with a German sphere. It comprises the German speaking cantons, Austria, Germany obviously and one or two other small regions, such as Eupen and the German speaking region of Belgium. Clearly this is a sphere, and one with historical baggage like the Yugoslphere, but here the comparison stops. Within this sphere identification with the state is generally strong and there is, at least for most people, no feeling (any more,) of belonging to a wider German nation. Non-Germans indentify themselves as Austrian or Swiss, whereas most Serbs or Croats in Bosnia for example would not identify

themselves as Bosnians. The Germanic sphere however lends itself to further research and comparison, especially in terms of language and growing apart. We have noted that the largest number of people in the Yugosphere speak, more or less, the same language. But dialects can grow apart. Many Swiss German speakers, struggle increasingly with High German. Over the last couple of decades they have been taught in this dialect, watch television in it and speak it not just at home but all day long. When do dialects become different languages?

With the exception of Finnish, Scandinavian languages are also related, albeit different. Still it is clear that there is a sphere which encompasses Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. Indeed it even has a name, i.e., Scandinavia. What is worth asking here, and which we will return to, is whether the natural institutional cooperation of the Scandinavians, for example in the Nordic Council, can serve as a model which can be adapted and borrowed by the ex-Yugoslavs? It is worth remembering that Scandinavia was not always such a peaceful and cooperative region. It too has been subject to Balkanisation. After all, Norway broke its union with Sweden in 1905 and Iceland declared independence from Denmark, much to its chagrin, in 1944 when it was occupied by Britain and the US and Denmark was occupied by the Nazis, and thus



in no position to do anything about it. Some in the Balkans might draw certain contemporary parallels here, however inaccurate they might be.

Once you examine the map it is easy to start identifying ever more spheres in Europe, some small, such as the Hellenic one encompassing Greece and Cyprus, a Dutch speaking one of Holland and Flanders and some far larger, and in many ways more nebulous, ie., the post-Soviet ones. Within these of course is the Russian sphere encompassing sometimes those that speak Russian, but may not be Russians, and sometimes the world of ethnic Russians from Crimea and eastern Ukraine to the Baltic states and Kazakhstan. Another sub-sphere, albeit one which has not much content for now is the Russia-Belarus union. Overlapping with the Yugosphere one can also identify a Hungarian or Magyar sphere which stretches from Vojvodina in northern Serbia and parts of Croatia to Slovakia and the solidly Hungarian speaking counties of Harghita and Covasna deep in the heart of Romania.

Spheres then are clearly a central part of modern European life and vary in every possible shape, way or form. But, the Yugosphere, for all the re-connecting that is going on within it does stand out as different from others, at least in the west if not the

east of Europe. That is to say that despite its similarities and differences from, say the German speaking sphere or Scandinavia, it is still a very fragile construct, like the Russian sphere for example, and thus, assuming one approves of such a benevolent development, which Balkan nationalists certainly do not, it is something which could easily be destroyed. What is the difference between Scandinavia and the Yugosphere or the German-speaking world and the Yugosphere? The answer is that Scandinavia is based on nation-states, and for all its exceptions such as the Sami or the autonomous Swedish speaking Aland Islands of Finland, they are states based primarily on one group of people who identify themselves as a nation. The same is true for the German speaking world where people, even if they don't speak the same language as others in their country, as in Switzerland, still identify themselves with the state they are in, not the other people who share their language or religion. There is no movement for the secession of Italian-speaking Ticino canton and for its attachment to Italy. The same cannot be said for the Balkans where, positive developments aside, for many, especially in Bosnia, (but not just there,) as some say, "the war in people's heads is not over". Indeed many Bosnians exist in a kind of schizophrenic world. They live as part of the Yugosphere sharing almost everything with their neighbours, from taste in food to music to culture and tradition and business,

while simultaneously rejecting this commonality. Notoriously of course this is best demonstrated in the fact that only Bosniaks support the national football team and identify with the national flag, while Bosnian Serbs support the Serbian one and fly the Serbian flag and Bosnian Croats the Croatian ones. In the Balkans nation still trumps state and this leads to confusion and potential dangers. The emergence of the Yugosphere is certainly a good thing, but let us not be starry-eyed about it. Its future is still far from secure.

## Sphere v Nation in the Balkans

Let us examine the Balkan national spheres starting with the Serbian one. Geographically it stretches from at least Drvar, the only Serbian majority town and municipality within the Bosniak-Croat federation within Bosnia, through the Republika Srpska and Serbia obviously, down to Serbian controlled northern Kosovo and the Serbian enclaves. This is an area in which Serbs outside of Serbia exist in a kind of Serbian world, where the state they are in has less relevance than the sphere they are in. Economically and culturally Belgrade is their capital. For serious medical problems one goes to Belgrade (not Sarajevo and certainly not Pristina,) and

young people hope to go to university in Belgrade. Serbian newspapers and television often give the weather for this region as a whole. Serbs outside Serbia can get Serbian passports and this is a phenomenon which will increase in Bosnia, as from January 2010 those with Serbian passports will have visa free travel to Schengen countries while Bosnian passport holders will not. To varying degrees it is clear that the Serbian sphere blends into Montenegro, certainly amongst the one third of its population that identifies itself as Serb, and to a certain extent, especially culturally, into Macedonia.

The most vivid example of this Serbian sphere is in Kosovo. The north, from the bridge in the divided city of Mitrovica to the border really looks and feels just like another part of south Serbia. But in the enclaves, for example in Strpce in the south, one has the feeling of being on a Serbian island, whose extent can be gauged by the radius of the Serbian mobile phone network coverage. Here almost everything operates as Serbia, though euros are accepted as well as Serbian dinars. Children go to Serbian schools, people commute to jobs in Serbia if they have them, or in many cases commute from Serbia to work in Serbian parts of Kosovo. Voters vote in Serbian elections and in Serbian local elections, which means that two mayors, both Serbian, work in the town hall, one being part

of the Kosovo system, his mandate having been extended by the authorities after it expired.

Within the former Yugoslavia the Serbian sphere is simply the biggest because there are more Serbs than others. In terms of importance the next biggest sphere is the Croatian one, which takes in western Hercegovina and those regions of Bosnia inhabited by Croats. As with many in the Republika Srpska, they are citizens of Bosnia, not because they want to be, but simply because that is the way the war ended. All Croats in Bosnia use Croatian passports and vote on a diaspora ticket for deputies in the Croatian parliament. To a certain, if immeasurable extent, one could argue that the Croatian sphere blends into Montenegro, especially along the coast.

A smaller but perhaps growing sphere is the Bosniak one. Clearly there have long been strong historical, family, economic and religious links with the Muslim parts of the Sandzak, now divided between Serbia and Montenegro. However one could argue that it is growing in the sense that many Slav Muslims in Kosovo now identify themselves as Bosniaks, even if they have never had much to do with Bosnia and never thought of themselves as Bosniaks or Bosnians before.

# Albanians: Odd sphere out

As noted above the final major sphere which lies only partly within the Yugosphere is the Albanian one. During the Yugoslav years Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia, Presevo and those other parts of southern Serbian inhabited by Albanians and in Montenegro clearly had much in common. Kosovo was also their centre in terms of Pristina university, literature and national pride. Above all however it must be remembered that being the biggest non-Slav minority in Yugoslavia, and one which was unwillingly incorporated three times, in 1912, 1918 and 1945 into Serbia and Yugoslavia the Albanians were always the odd ones out in the country. So, today the ex-Yugoslav Albanians are the odd ones out in the Yugosphere. At the same time it is clear that after decades of being divided from Albania a large and overlapping Albanian sphere is now emerging across the regions inhabited by Albanians. This does not necessarily herald the eventual creation of a Greater Albania just as the existence of Serbian and Croatian spheres do not necessarily herald the eventual creation of a Greater Serbia or Croatia, though of course, it does not rule them out either.

One of the effects of Yugoslav rule and resistance to it in Kosovo was the creation a Kosovo Albanian identity as distinct from a purely Albanian one. That is not say by any means that Kosovo Albanians today do not identify themselves as Albanians, they do, it is just that a pride and identity as a Kosovo Albanian has been created which is more than something just regional. It is also noteworthy that, until now, no party which has proposed the creation of a Greater Albania has ever succeeded in the polls, either in Kosovo or in Albania. Still, it is clear that a dynamic Albanian sphere is now emerging and one whose form will become ever stronger with the opening in 2009 of the new highway linking Kosovo with Albania which has already cut driving time from Pristina to Tirana from some ten hours to five.

In recent years what we have seen is like Wallonia and France perhaps, a homogenisation of culture, though not that of politics. Satellite and cable television are in great measure responsible for this as is the fact that in the last decade, with more and more facilities developed, more and more Kosovars and Macedonian Albanians take their holidays in Albania. Still, history remains a strong point of division between Albanians. Historically Kosovars and Macedonian Albanians have looked north, going to work in Croatia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia certainly but also especially

in Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria and so on. Since the end of communism by contrast Albanian Albanians have gone to work in massive numbers in Greece and Italy above all. Back home this is reflected in what is available in the shops, habits and economic links. We have already seen how economically Kosovo is as much part of the Yugosphere as other regions. By contrast half of Albania's trade is with Greece and Italy and only a tiny, although growing percentage is with Kosovo, however this is bound to change with the development of the new highway, which is also designed to give access to Kosovo, and trade to and from it, via the Albanian port of Durrës. Still, as Ylli Sulla an Albanian advertising executive explains, old habits die hard. He would find it hard to sell Italian milk in Kosovo he says because there Slovene milk is regarded as the best.

These divisions mean that while a pan-Albanian sphere is emerging, it is doing so only slowly. In only one significant domain, apart from television and entertainment of course, is there a real pan-Albanian market. That is insurance. The reason for this is that Albanian companies were able to take advantage of the vacuum following the end of Serbian rule in Kosovo in 1999 and in Macedonia, where the insurance market was relatively underdeveloped, they were able to play a patriotic card in enticing Macedonian



Albanians to sign up with them, as opposed to Macedonian companies.

Albanians both from Kosovo and Albania complain that it is hard to break into each other's markets. Kosovar businessmen and Albanian ones often seem to put Albanian patriotism aside in order to keep interlopers out. Today there are virtually no Kosovar products on sale in Albania except for some beer and few Albanian ones in Kosovo, also apart from beer and bottled water. It is also true though that both countries only produce a limited amount anyway and that much of what they do produce, such as chrome from Albania, is of no interest in Kosovo. One exception though: In Kosovo the few bookshops that there are, are flooded with books published in Albania. In Albania it is virtually impossible to buy books from Kosovo because protectionist pressure by Albanian printers resulted in high taxes on printed materials from abroad, including Kosovo. One recent exception high profile exception to the difficulties faced by Kosovars in Albania was the purchase in 2009 of Albania's fourth mobile phone network by *PTK* from Kosovo. Interestingly, the Serbian giant *Delta* is also present in Albania after having bought the domestic *Euromax* supermarket chain in 2008, which now carries a good deal of stock from the Yugoslphere countries.

As elsewhere in Europe, it is important to note that not all identities are mutually contradictory and likewise with spheres. It is possible to coexist in several at once and many do. A Catholic Albanian from Tuzi in Montenegro might happily watch Albanian television, send his daughter to Podgorica University, do business with Serbia, go on a pilgrimage to the Catholic shrine of Medjugorje in Hercegovina and visit cousins in Kosovo.

## Yugosphere and Eurosphere

As we have noted above the idea of the Yugosphere and, the overlapping Albanian sphere, is simply a description of what exists and what is emerging. In a region where, unlike much of western Europe, nation state building was never completed, what has been described need not consolidate in the long run, into a cooperative and stable region in which people accept existing borders but co-exist within different spheres, both the Yugosphere and their national ones. The aim for policymakers must be to absorb this region, with all its fissiparous tendencies, into the institutions of the wider European sphere, ie., the EU. This of course is not a very original conclusion, but in the current state of stasis does begin to describe a situation in which, if integration, is to be a longer proc-

ess than originally foreseen, then there is already an existing situation on the ground which can be put to good use to consolidate progress.

At the moment it is easy to decry the lack of progress in terms of EU integration as due to Balkan nationalism. For example the failure of the Bosnians to agree on just about anything, or voices calling for the Belgianisation of Macedonia and so on and so forth. However, many of these trends flourish when it is outsiders who hold up progress for their own nationalist or electoral reasons, including Greece, Germany or Holland. It is a shame that one of the prime culprits was Slovenia, a Yugosphere country which spent much of 2009 blocking the accession of Croatia.

In recent years Serbia has been pursuing a very active foreign policy. Much, but not all of this, is related to Kosovo. While it is pursuing its goal of European integration, in May 2009 it hosted (like Kosovo and Bosnia,) Joe Biden, the US vice president and in October alone it hosted Dmitry Medvedev and Abdullah Gul the Russian and Turkish presidents, Carl Bildt the Swedish foreign minister and Toomas Henrik Ilves, the Estonian president. In August Tadic spent several days in China. As we noted at the beginning, Serbia is also looking for friends and trade amongst members of the Non-

Aligned Movement. While this policy is sometimes mocked as that of a small country of no global import trying to emulate the role it had as Yugoslavia, this policy is actually quite sensible for what Parag Khanna of the New America Foundation has called a 'second world' country.<sup>31</sup> That is to say that small countries do need to manoeuvre to gain the greatest advantage from the highest bidders. Still, the geopolitics of the region are such that Serbia, like the rest of the Yugosphere is surrounded by EU and NATO countries and in the end, small and divided, none of them add up to very much unless they cause trouble, as they did in the 1990s. Even a Serbia zigzagging between the EU, Russia and China, or Kosovo between the US and Europe and so on and so forth does not really add up to much, save for the relatively small number of people who live there.

But could it be that the Yugosphere and its now more than embryonic organisations like the RCC provide a way for these countries to pull more weight in Europe and the world and also deliver more efficient services to their people? We do have some examples in Europe, ie., Benelux and the Nordic Council, which did, especially before their countries (mostly,) joined the EU provide a good platform for cooperation amongst themselves. In the current period of EU introspection and enlargement fatigue one does need to won-

der, not whether there are alternatives, but rather what can be done productively in the meantime? It may, of course be idealistic, or perhaps just obvious, or maybe premature to suggest that countries of the region can do more together than they can alone, that their bargaining power is greater together than by themselves, but it does seem that if there was a Balkan Adenauer or a Balkan Schuman, then the Yugosphere countries, probably without Kosovo, could move much faster for the benefit of their citizens. For the moment this is not on the agenda.

In Bosnia above all, politics remains entrenched in the past. However, it does seem that in general terms, the existence of the Yugosphere does imply that the region is ripe for far more cooperation than we have seen up to now. Of course, even to suggest such a thing to many, smacks of trying to recreate Yugoslavia, but for all their differences and much publicised antagonism, it would still seem that in the background the region has moved far in the last decade and indeed, according to Hido Bisevic of the RCC, the process has been accelerated by the world financial crisis. Indeed he says, it was even 'good for the region,' because it demonstrated to the small former Yugoslav republics that 'still lived with the illusion of their great importance that they were not so important after all...I guess it is clear that even the biggest countries in the world cannot solve problems alone, so how can our small countries

do that without cooperation? The crisis helped us get rid of stereotypes from our past. It is impossible to wish to do business and at the same time advocate the politics of alienation.<sup>32</sup>

The trick, over the next few years, is to consolidate what people have common and keep their governments busy on doing just that all the while harmonising their politics and governance with the rest of Europe. Indeed, what so many people have forgotten elsewhere is that the EU was founded to cement peace in Europe and in the Yugosphere and the wider Balkans including the Albanian speaking regions, that job is not yet finished.

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# Endnotes

- 1 Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro are observers. Only Serbia does not, at least officially, want to be a member of NATO, although that could change.
- 2 EIU, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Country Risk Service. August 2009, p13. Data is for 2008.
- 3 EIU, Macedonia, Country Risk Service, July 2009, p.14. EIU, Montenegro, Country Report, April 2009, p.6. Note the date for Montenegro is from 2007 and exports and imports from Kosovo are included in the Serbian figure.
- 4 Republic of Kosovo, External Trade Statistics, 2009. Series 3. <http://www.ks-gov.net/ESK/eng/>
- 5 Serbia Investment and Export Promotion Agency: [http://www.siepa.gov.rs/site/en/home/1/investing\\_in\\_serbia/strong\\_fdi\\_figures/](http://www.siepa.gov.rs/site/en/home/1/investing_in_serbia/strong_fdi_figures/)
- 6 See: <http://www.pogodak.com/> also: <http://www.telekom.si/en/company/subsidiaries/>
- 7 Ambassador of Croatia: Investors from Serbia welcome to Croatia. VIP Daily News Report. 31 August 2009.
- 8 See: European Commission. Croatia 2009 Progress Report, p.18. [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2009/hr\\_rapport\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/hr_rapport_2009_en.pdf)
- 9 In February 2009, Ipercoops in Croatia were bought by the Austrian company Spar which will keep the Ipercoop brand though.
- 10 Ikea's Balkan Expansion sees "situations". Gordana Filipovic. Reuters, 17 August 2009. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLH45311420090817?sp=true>
- 11 See: <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/exyu/index.1.lt.html>
- 12 See: <http://www.najnovijitracevi.com/>
- 13 See: <http://www.javno.com/en/foto.php?id=21&rbr=13815&idrf=582270>

- 14 See: Number of Foreign Tourists from Serbia at Foreign Destinations Down by One Third. VIP Daily News Report. 21 August 2009.
- 15 See: Catherine Baker. The Politics of Performance: Transnationalism and its Limits in Former Yugoslav Popular Music, 1999-2004. This essay is in perhaps the only book which begins to look at the topics discussed in this essay: Denisa Kostovicova and Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic (eds) Transnationalism in the Balkans. (2008).
- 16 See: <http://www.danisarajeva.com/?cat=4&language=en>
- 17 See for example, <http://limun.hr/en/default.aspx>, <http://www.seebiz.eu>, <http://www.emportal.rs/en/>
- 18 Jovic arrested in Pukanic Case: CC Watch, 28 April 2009. [http://reporting-project.net/new/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=260&Itemid=43](http://reporting-project.net/new/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=260&Itemid=43)
- 19 See: Serbia, Croatia to improve cooperation to control sports violence: <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?id=60056>
- 20 Minister Attends Preparations for Chad: [http://www.mod.gov.rs/novi\\_eng.php?action=fullnews&id=1667](http://www.mod.gov.rs/novi_eng.php?action=fullnews&id=1667)
- 21 RCC Annual Report on Regional Co-operation in South East Europe, 2008-2009, p.6.
- 22 *Ibid*, p.10.
- 23 Officially Kosovo is described as being a member thus: “United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.
- 24 See: New Deal for South East Europe, by Eduard Sostaric, Nacional 14 July 2009. The English translation of this piece is here, posted on the RCC website: [http://www.rcc.int/index.php?action=doc\\_archive](http://www.rcc.int/index.php?action=doc_archive)
- 25 According to Podgorica’s Institute Alternativa’s Daily Briefs for 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, projects between Montenegro and Croatia were envisaged as dealing with

the protection of the environment, cultural and natural heritage, tourism, cross-border community development issues, and had to involve people from both sides of the border. With Serbia money was envisaged in order to encourage socio-economic cohesion, “to build common physical, business, social and institutional infrastructure and capacities between two countries, at same time as helping establish administrative capacities for managing and implementing...programmes of cross-border co-operation. The money for Montenegro and Bosnia was for “promoting cooperation between people, communities, and institutions in the border areas, aiming to help establish sustainable development, stability, and progress for both countries.”

- 26 I have drawn these conclusions from comments made in the wake of the initial Economist piece I wrote on the Yugosphere and comments to reports in the region about it. Entering the Yugosphere. 20 August 2009. [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=14258861](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14258861)
- 27 Andrew Gamble. “Anglo-America” Britain, Ireland and Differentiated Integration. A paper presented at the British Academy Research Workshop at Cardiff University Whose Europe? The Politics of Differentiated Integration, September 10-12, 2008
- 28 See: <http://www.francophonie.org/oif/index.cfm>
- 29 Une société aux antipodes du modèle français. Jean-Jacques Mével. Le Figaro, 29 July 2008.
- 30 Les Wallons tentés de rejoindre la France. Jean-Jacques Mével. Le Figaro, 29 July 2008.
- 31 Parag Khanna: The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order. (2008)
- 32 Radjanje Jugosfere iz Pepele Jugoslavije. Ines Sabalic. Globus, 4 September 2009. You can also see an English version of the piece translated on the RCC site : [http://www.rcc.int/index.php?action=doc\\_detail&id=116](http://www.rcc.int/index.php?action=doc_detail&id=116)





In general terms good news is no news. That is as true for the Western Balkans as it is for anywhere else. Since the end of the Balkan wars of the 1990s – but especially in the last few years – there have been huge changes on the ground, which have profoundly affected people’s lives for the better. The problem is that few people outside the region even know they have happened and many who live there also don’t understand quite how far reaching the changes have been. Above all that is true for the single most important change of all – the emergence of a Yugosphere across the countries of the former Yugoslavia. What is it and what does it mean?

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