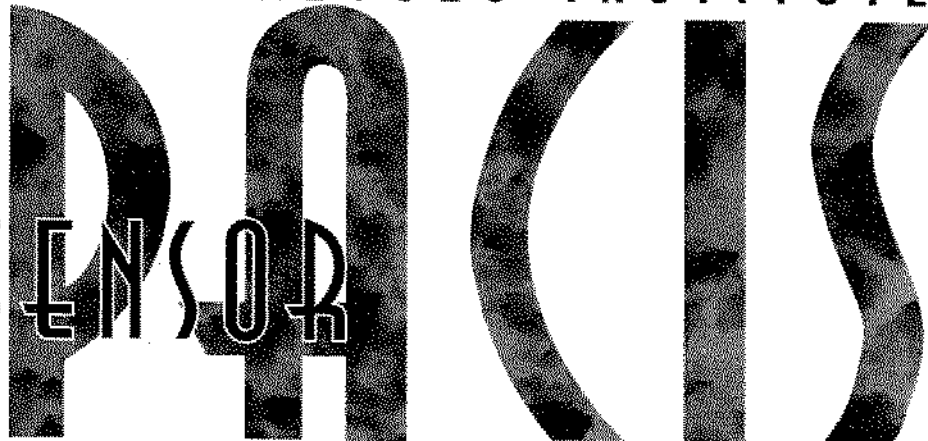


ISSUE 12  
SEPTEMBER 2002  
€ 11.74

DEFENSOR



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# THE END OF WAR IN THE BALKANS?

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**A**fter more than a decade of dominating international attention through a series of Wars, humanitarian crises and acts of often unimaginable brutality [1], the prospect of renewed armed conflict in the Balkans appears significantly reduced for the foreseeable future. Threats to stability remain, but their sources are to be found primarily in domestic issues and factors that include the provisional, constitutional status of certain states and territories, crime, corruption and weak governments. The nature of the perils posed by irredentist movements, virulent nationalisms and outside interventions that were largely responsible for the conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), has been transformed, following the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing War against international terrorism. In effect, the Balkans have been reclassified as a regional and not an international problem.

The nature of contemporary International Relations was of course fundamentally altered by the end of the Cold War. A transitional period arose (aptly described as "the interregnum" [2]) of relative uncertainty about the threats and issues that were to replace the firm and clear realities of the previous bi-polar confrontation [3]. John Lewis Gaddis has presciently observed that: "The post-Cold War era...began with the collapse of one structure, the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and ended with the collapse of another, the World Trade

**By Theodore Couloumbis and Aristotle Tziampiris**



The world's mass media and public opinion have justifiably concentrated their attention on the developments and complex parameters of what seems to be a long-term, determined effort to pursue a relentless campaign against international terrorism

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Center's twin towers on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001"[4].

Without any doubt, the momentous events of September 11<sup>th</sup> also have some significant effects on the Balkans. The world's mass media and public opinion have justifiably concentrated their attention on the developments and complex parameters of what seems to be a long-term, determined effort to pursue a relentless campaign against international terrorism [5]. As a result, the Balkans are receiving far less scrutiny and publicity. The perception, that the region is only of peripheral importance to the new priorities of the international community, will probably also reduce future funding for various projects. However, of considerable consolation is the fact that the loss of attention by the media and many policy-makers has probably contributed, for more than a year, to a peaceful respite in the Balkans. This situation is far preferable to the "front-page" treatment that the series of Wars associated with the violent break-up of Yugoslavia were eliciting and demanding since 1991.

September 11<sup>th</sup> has also substantially complicated (if not neutralized) the violent aspirations of the armed Albanian irredentist movement, that were expressed by the KLA in Kosovo and the NLA in FYROM. Until recently, this movement had replaced Serbian nationalism as the most destabilizing factor in the Balkans, entailing the serious danger of military conflicts spilling over to neighboring countries. However, both the US and the international community are no longer willing to tolerate acts that come perilously close to being perceived as terrorist in nature. Post-September 11<sup>th</sup>, Albanian guerrillas run the risk of being branded as terrorists, given the new sensitivities and priorities that have emerged.

The campaign against terror is being pursued primarily by the US, and this is also consequential for the Balkans. In the past, America's direct involvement in Southeastern Europe was of central importance to regional developments, especially in the Dayton negotiations that ended the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina [6], and in the Kosovo Conflict and its aftermath[7]. The substantive and symbolic value of the US troops stationed in the Balkans should not be underestimated. Additionally, Washington enjoys particular credibility and leverage with the Albanians and their leaders. Nevertheless, the reduction of the "Balkan Burden" to America's taxpayers and military personnel is inevitable. The Bush Administration's propensity for selective unilateralist, witnessed more recently in the debate concerning exemption for US peacekeeping forces from the World Criminal Court's jurisdiction [8], will also contribute to some reduction of America's role in the Balkans.

Fortunately, in the foreseeable future, international involvement in the Balkans will most likely cease to be driven by the pressing need to confront - often in an *ad hoc* manner - an important armed conflict or a massive humanitarian crisis. New developments, indeed, create opportunities for comprehensive and long-term planning, although David Hume has warned against "supine complaisance"[9], often exhibited by the advanced liberal democracies of the Western world. At any rate, the primary challenge for the international



*At the tripartite meeting of the Foreign Ministers G. Papandreou, N. Michaelova and J. Cem.*

community and the Balkan states will be to create a specific, action-oriented agenda and timeframe that will address the future of the region, aiming at democratic peace, economic prosperity and military security.

#### **New Threats to Balkan Stability.**

It would be an error for us to assume that Southeastern Europe has crossed the threshold of peace and lasting co-operation. Stability in the Balkans is still threatened by the uncertain constitutional and territorial status of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro, Kosovo and FYROM. These entities are experiencing a provisional situation under the general guidance and oversight of the international community. FYROM is seeking to implement the Ochrid Agreement that is being politically challenged by both ethnic Albanians and Slav-Macedonians. Serbia and Montenegro have agreed to create a new Republic, this marriage of convenience being the result of international pressure and enjoying a guaranteed life of at least three years. Bosnia-Herzegovina is also in transition, exhibiting a slow and tortuous process of integration between its constituent parts. Although the evolution to a comprehensive post-Dayton arrangement is necessary, consensus on a host of crucial issues and areas currently does not exist. Kosovo is moving gradually toward the building of viable administrative structures under a UN/NATO umbrella but its final status is far from determined.

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in particular, have recently faced circumstances that underline their status as *de facto* UN protectorates. Bosnia's international High Representative, Lord (Paddy) Ashdown, forced the resignation of the country's elected Deputy Prime Minister not for demonstrated wrongdoing, but for refusing to "accept final political responsibility for the actions or inactions of his ministry and step down from this position" [10]. In Kosovo, a Resolution that passed 85-0 by its Assembly challenging - perhaps unwisely - a border agreement between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and FYROM, was almost immediately declared null and void by Michael Steiner, the chief UN Administrator [11]. Needless to explain, such instances would have been deemed utterly unacceptable by any well-established sovereign entity.

Stability in the Balkans is still threatened by the uncertain constitutional and territorial status of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro, Kosovo and FYROM.

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It should be stressed at this point that the re-negotiation or re-interpretation of the Ochrid Agreement and the Dayton Accords that pacified FYROM and Bosnia respectively, as well as the debates concerning the final status and relationship between Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, cannot and should not be viewed in isolation. They are inter-connected in a fundamental manner. Failure by the international community to recognize this important linkage may prove a serious source of instability for the region.

An early decision leading to Montenegro's independence would greatly increase pressures for a prematurely independent Kosovo, regardless of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Also, any decision to grant Kosovo independence, after annexing Mitrovica and some adjacent areas to Serbia, could have detrimental effects for FYROM's territorial integrity. Albanian extremist forces would probably interpret the international community's unambiguous endorsement of a Kosovo statehood as a signal that some of the serious restrictions that have been imposed on their demands and strategy by the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> international situation would be abandoned. Furthermore, radical or swift alteration of either Dayton or Ochrid may provide justification and incentives for the quick unraveling of the "sister" agreement.

The fluid status of a number of Balkan states and territories has created a state of affairs with deep and strong inter-connections that has the potential of causing renewed political friction in the region, and some armed clashes. However, there is no indication or expectation that serious and massive military campaigns could be undertaken again. The only states with the capacity to pursue such campaigns - at least in the Western Balkans - are Serbia and Croatia, both of which are deeply involved in an inward-looking and often tortuous process of reform that eschews the nationalist priorities and practices of the past and involves co-operation with the Hague International Tribunal [12]. Various guerilla groups may prove troublesome or occasionally lethal, but do not at this time constitute a potential source of War.

Another and perhaps most serious threat to regional security is connected to crime and corruption. Non-compliance with the Law has a long tradition in the Balkans, and is partly connected with the region's Ottoman legacy. During the centuries of Ottoman control, as part of a survival strategy, "subservience was [coupled with] cleverness, expressed in attempts to get around obstacles, including those erected by authority, by using none-too-ethical...or even illegal means. The notion persists that it is perfectly permissible to cheat and steal from the government" [13]. Similar notions in the last two centuries were exploited by irredentist forces which often financed their movements through crime [14]. The currently reduced dynamic of such forces does not negate the threat to regional stability posed by crime and corruption. This is partly because criminal activities result in significant monetary losses for Balkan governments. Although it is impossible to know exact figures (the nature of the enterprises being illegal), the Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, Erhard Busek, recently estimated that lost revenues amount to some 600 million

euros annually [15]. This is an unfortunate situation for regional states, since it must be kept in mind that they involve societies in transition, which even "under the best of circumstances...are likely to face economically hard times for many years to come" [16].

Crime is normally coupled with corruption, a pervasive phenomenon in the contemporary Balkans. According to a Council of Foreign Relations report, "corruption is prevalent throughout the region in both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, requirements for multiple approvals, lack of transparency, particularly in the privatization process, and the lack of reliable enforcement of laws and regulations have created an environment in which corruption has flourished and deterred investment. As the region's private sector grows, corruption (e.g., in enterprises' procurement decisions) is becoming increasingly embedded in the region's business culture as well" [17]. The combination of societies experiencing transition, losing revenues to crime and facing extensive corruption (and often being able to mount in their defense only a weak legal system), results to a series of weak states. These states cannot adequately provide a host of essential public and social services to their citizens in crucial areas such as education, health, pensions, safety, etc. At the same time, the Rule of Law, Democracy and even Human Rights are undermined, while necessary economic reforms are abandoned or substantially delayed.

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One of the most substantive stabilizing factors, is the goal of most Balkan states and entities to join the zone of Euro-Atlantic peace and co-operation.

This situation may eventually cause the loss of legitimacy for many governments in the Balkans. Such an occurrence would probably doom transition efforts, further weaken state functions and reinforce patterns of crime and corruption. However, even such weakened states would probably not create circumstances conducive to a renewal of War activities. The restrictions imposed by the new international environment, the discrediting of violent nationalism given the events of the past decade, and exhausted domestic societies, greatly reduce the likelihood of War, though this might be little consolation for the citizens of declining and struggling regional states. Looking at the brighter side of the story, one of the most substantive stabilizing factors, is the goal of most Balkan states and entities to join the zone of Euro-Atlantic peace and co-operation. Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey are busily focusing on internal reforms to match EU

Military power presupposes conditional sanctions and attendant interventions, while economic power employs conditional rewards, linking trade, aid and investment policies to the co-operative behavior of recipient states and entities.

admission criteria, while Greece is primarily pursuing a strategy that aims at modernization and ever-increasing harmonization with the norms and performance of its fellow EU member states. In other words, Balkan states are less prone to adopt revisionist, nationalistic and irredentist dreams and strategies that had characterized their foreign policies and international relations during the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not to speak of the Wars of Yugoslavia's succession in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [18]. Based on all of the above, it emerges that contemporary threats to Balkan stability do not entail a return to War, but are nevertheless potentially destabilizing for their respective societies. Furthermore, it must be stressed that the uncertain constitutional status of some states and territories, undefined and often controversial political processes, crime and corruption are all problems that are fundamentally domestic in nature. Their successful resolution will ultimately require efforts at both the international and domestic levels.

### **A New Role for "Civilian Power" in the Balkan Region**

Our central proposition is that one (definitely not the sole) of the key-contributing factors to the Wars of Yugoslav succession was the end of the Cold War which removed the Soviet bloc as a balancing and intervening variable affecting the Balkan puzzle. With the Warsaw Pact's dissolution, the chances that Soviet power would take advantage of a Yugoslav partition to gain an exit to the Adriatic Sea were reduced to a minimum. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to assume that autonomist and pro-independence movements in the Balkans proceeded to escalate their separatist efforts hoping that disproportionate Serbian responses (and here, Slobodan Milosevic rushed to oblige), would lead the West and especially the United States to intervene militarily, thus freezing a new *status quo* on the ground.

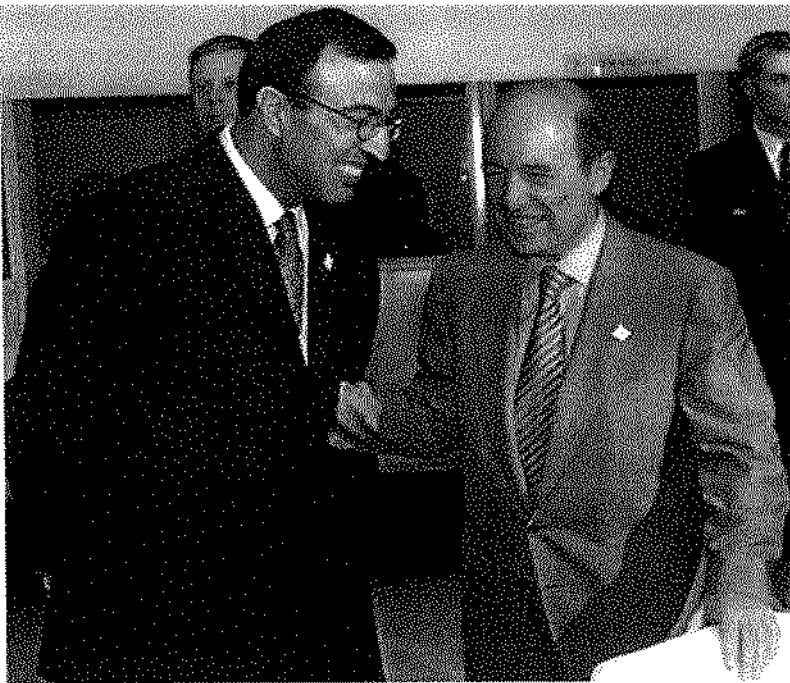
With the shifting of American attention, following September 11<sup>th</sup>, to Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East and Central Asia, revisionist elements in the Balkans will probably revise their premises. Absent the United States which stands for ready and mobile military power, the gap will be filled by the European Union whose comparative advantage is economic and diplomatic power. Military power presupposes conditional sanctions and attendant interventions, while economic power employs conditional rewards, linking trade, aid and investment policies to the co-operative behavior of recipient states and entities.

Andrew Moravcsik, in a short and thought-provoking article, has argued that analysts should not underestimate the European Union's capacity to influence world events [19]. He calls Europe's capacity to influence outcomes "civilian power", and he agrees with Dominique Moisi's ironic statement to the effect that "the US fights, the Europeans fund and the UN feeds" [20].

Among Moravcsik's arguments to support his thesis are the following:

- a) Serbia-Montenegro are holding together because of Javier Solana's (the EU's) position that accession to the EU and partition are just incompatible;

Military power presupposes conditional sanctions and attendant interventions.



*Prime Minister  
K. Simitis with his  
Bulgarian  
counterpart  
I. Kostov at the  
Getenborg Summit.*

- b) the EU's development assistance in toto is four times greater than that of the United States;
- c) at the request of the US, the EU has provided over \$3.5 billion in aid to the Palestinian Authority;
- d) EU members contribute ten times as many troops in peacekeeping operations throughout the globe compared to the US, including a share of 84% in Kosovo and just over 50% in Afghanistan. In short, the Moravcsik argument is that "half a century from now, We may find that Europe's brand of "soft" leadership tramped America's military dominance" [21].

If one accepts, and We do, the Moravcsik thesis, a number of new implications for the Balkan region can be projected: Accession to the EU and NATO will be earned through a long-term process of adjustments and reforms. However, of particular significance would be the announcement of a specific timetable concerning accession prospects. A definite and public presentation of the needed reforms, stages and time-frames leading to EU and NATO membership would arm the forces advocating reform and modernization with a potent combination of credibility and incentives, thus accelerating transition efforts in the entire region.

The remaining great political questions in the Balkans should also be addressed sequentially, if not concurrently. The international community's (hopefully not the EU's) current attitude of letting "sleeping dogs lie", is unsustainable in the long-run, although the current regional situation is probably not sufficiently mature to require immediate and drastic actions. Needed, as We just suggested, is a strategy reinforcing transitions to democracy and accessions to the EU and NATO. In such an endeavor, the peoples of the Balkans and their elected representatives must be consulted actively and constantly. Otherwise, resentment and disagreements that will ensue could prove counter-productive, if not catastrophic.

Decisions on the final status of Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and FYROM ought to take into consideration historical rivalries, recent traumatic conflicts and the sheer inter-connectedness of most Balkan problems. Any forceful change of borders will likely result in increasing

**Any forceful change of borders will likely result in increasing instability and policy failure.**





*Foreign minister  
G. Papandreou  
with his  
Romanian  
counterpart  
J. Mirchea*

instability and policy failure. This contingency, however, still leaves open to doubt the status of certain Balkan territories. A clearer indication of the international community's intentions concerning when and under what provisions any change in status (especially in the case of Kosovo) would be supported, could reduce uncertainties, discourage irredentist forces and strengthen reforms.

The clarification of provisional constitutional situations will also assist efforts to combat local criminal activities that are often transnational in nature, and effectively exploit political uncertainties and the existence of legal "grey zones". It is a given that crime derives most of its potency from the very weakness of Balkan states. Hence, this weakness must also be addressed.

In the final analysis, the international community, even given the most sincere and altruistic intentions, cannot permanently and comprehensively solve the problems in the Balkans. This task belongs to the region's peoples and to their elected governments. In their attempts to consolidate democracy, peace and prosperity, the people of our peninsula need to adopt a new definition of the meaning of "greatness".

"Greater Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and Turkey" have fueled the irredentist actions of leaders and citizens alike.

### **Redefining the Concept of "the Greater" in the Balkans.**

Writing in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after having traveled extensively in the Balkans, the British journalist H. N. Brailsford concluded that "no changes in the East is a commonplace which threatens to become tyrannical. There is something in the spirit of the East which is singularly kindly to survivals and anachronisms. The centuries do not follow one another. They co-exist. There is no lopping of withered customs, no burial of dead ideas [22]".

It is true that for long, We have been plagued in the Balkans by the syndrome of "the Greater": "Greater Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and Turkey" have fueled the irredentist actions of leaders and citizens alike. In each

The diminished prospects of War will assist efforts by the international community to incorporate the region into the Euro-Atlantic structures

case, these visions of "greatness" were defined territorially and competitively, resulting in bloody Wars and what game theorists refer to as "zero-sum relationships". It is high time, following the pattern of post-World War II West European integration, to redefine "greatness" in terms of quality of governance and quality of life criteria. Greater in the Balkans can be redefined as a country that enjoys about 3% or less inflation, 3% or less of GDP budget deficit, 60% or less of GDP public debt, consolidated democracy, respect for the environment women and minorities, and a safety net against poverty, homelessness, disease and alienation.

Today, perhaps for the first time in the long history of the Balkans, a good opportunity exists to break free from an oppressive historical stranglehold. The diminished prospects of War will assist efforts by the international community to incorporate the region into the Euro-Atlantic structures on the basis of a credible and precise timetable. More importantly, the peoples and their leaderships in the Balkans will be free to pursue policies and to support decisions that will consolidate and sustain democratic peace and prosperity.



## Notes

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Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour. Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*, (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001); Dimitris Triantaphyllou, *The Albanian Factor*, (Athens: ELIAMEP, 2000); Aristotle Tziampiris, *Greece, European Political Co-operation and the Macedonian Question*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000); Thanos Veremis, *Action Without Foresight. Western Involvement in Yugoslavia*, (Athens: ELIAMEP and YALCO, 2002); Thanos Veremis and Evangelos Kofos (eds), *Kosovo: Avoiding Another Balkan War*, (Athens: ELIAMEP and University of Athens, 1998); Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, (Washington D.C.:The Brookings Institution, 1995).

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2. See Michael Cox, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne ▶

# Notes

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5. See for example, Kurt M. Campbell and Michele A. Flournoy, *To Prevail. An American Strategy For the Campaign Against Terrorism*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001), and Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda, *op. cit.*
6. See Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton. The Making of America's Bosnia Policy*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), and Richard Holbrooke, *To End A War*, (New York: Random House, 1998).
7. See Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Scanlon, *Winning Ugly. NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).
8. See James Dao, "One Nation Plays the Great Game Alone", *The New York Times*, July 6, 2002, and Serge Schemann, "US Peacekeepers Given Year's Immunity From New Court", *The New York Times*, July 13, 2002.
- For an elegant and sophisticated argument against a unilateral US foreign policy, See Joseph S. Nye Jr, *The Paradox of American Power. Why the World's Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
9. See Hume's essay, "Of the Balance of Power", in David Hume, *Essays Moral Political and Literary*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987). See also Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and International Relations", in Robert Beiner and William James Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy. The Contemporary Legacy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 181-182.
10. David Chandler, "The King of Bosnia", *The Spectator*, June 22, 2002. The quotation belongs to the chief spokesman of the Office of the High Representative, Julian Braithwaite.
11. See "UN Vetoes Kosovo Border Resolution", *BBC NEWS*, May 23, 2002.
12. The proper title of The Hague Tribunal is the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia since 1991.
13. Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 105.
14. For an example related to the KLA. See Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, (New Haven, Yale University Press), p. 70.
15. See *Eleftherotyfia*, May 22, 2002 [in Greek].
16. Task Force Report, *Promoting Sustainable Economies in the Balkans*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2000), p. 8.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
18. See for example Andre Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars. Conquest, Revolution and Retribution From the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), pp. 159-232, and Misha Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-544.
19. See Andrew Moravcsik, "The Quiet Superpower", *Newsweek*, June 17, 2002.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. H. N. Brailsford, *Macedonia. Its Races and Their Future*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1906), p.1. ■