

# Territory and Boundaries of States

In order to understand the foreign policy of the states and nations of the region, and to identify the roots of ethnic and religious conflicts, it is essential to examine regional history, the maturity and stability of the state borders along with the duration for which individual nations have been independent.

Of the nations in today's South Eastern Europe, the Bulgarians attained statehood the earliest (680), followed by the Croats (870) and the Serbs (892). The era of state foundation and independence came much later for the Romanians (1324), the Albanians (1443) and the Montenegrins (1799). In various periods of their history, the small regional nations came directly or indirectly under the rule of neighbouring powers such as the Frankish Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman (Turkish), Hapsburg (Austrian) and the Russian empires, and – except for a period of independence in the Middle Ages, varying in duration for different nations – the majority of nations gained or regained their independence either only in the second half, or at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of the four largest peoples in the region, the Bulgarians boast a total of 675 years of independence, the Serbs 462 years and the Romanians 224 years. The Croats, with 251 years of independence only had the opportunity to re-establish an independent state in World War II, though a short-lived one. The Macedonians and the Muslims of Bosnia (the Boshniaks) proclaimed their independent republics in 1991 and 1992, respectively.

The majority of these peoples look back on a time – or a brief period – of prosperity in their history when their nation had a much greater territory than today. For the Serbs, these "grand periods" were between 1345 and 1355, 1918 and 1941, 1944 and 1990; for the Bulgarians, between 893 and 927, 1187 and 1256, and 1941–1944; for the Croats, between 870 and 1102, and 1941 and 1945; for the Romanians, between 1918 and 1944, and for the Albanians, between 1941 and 1944 (*Figure 7*).

As *Figure 7* demonstrates, the borders of states in the Balkans were highly variable. The size and the location of states, especially

in the case of Bulgaria and Romania, changed substantially throughout their history. The most stable borders during the previous millennium were the western borders of Croatia (1100 years), the border of historical Hungary along the crest of the Carpathians (800–900 years) and the Romanian–Bulgarian border along the river Danube (some 800 years), primarily as a result of their geographical features.

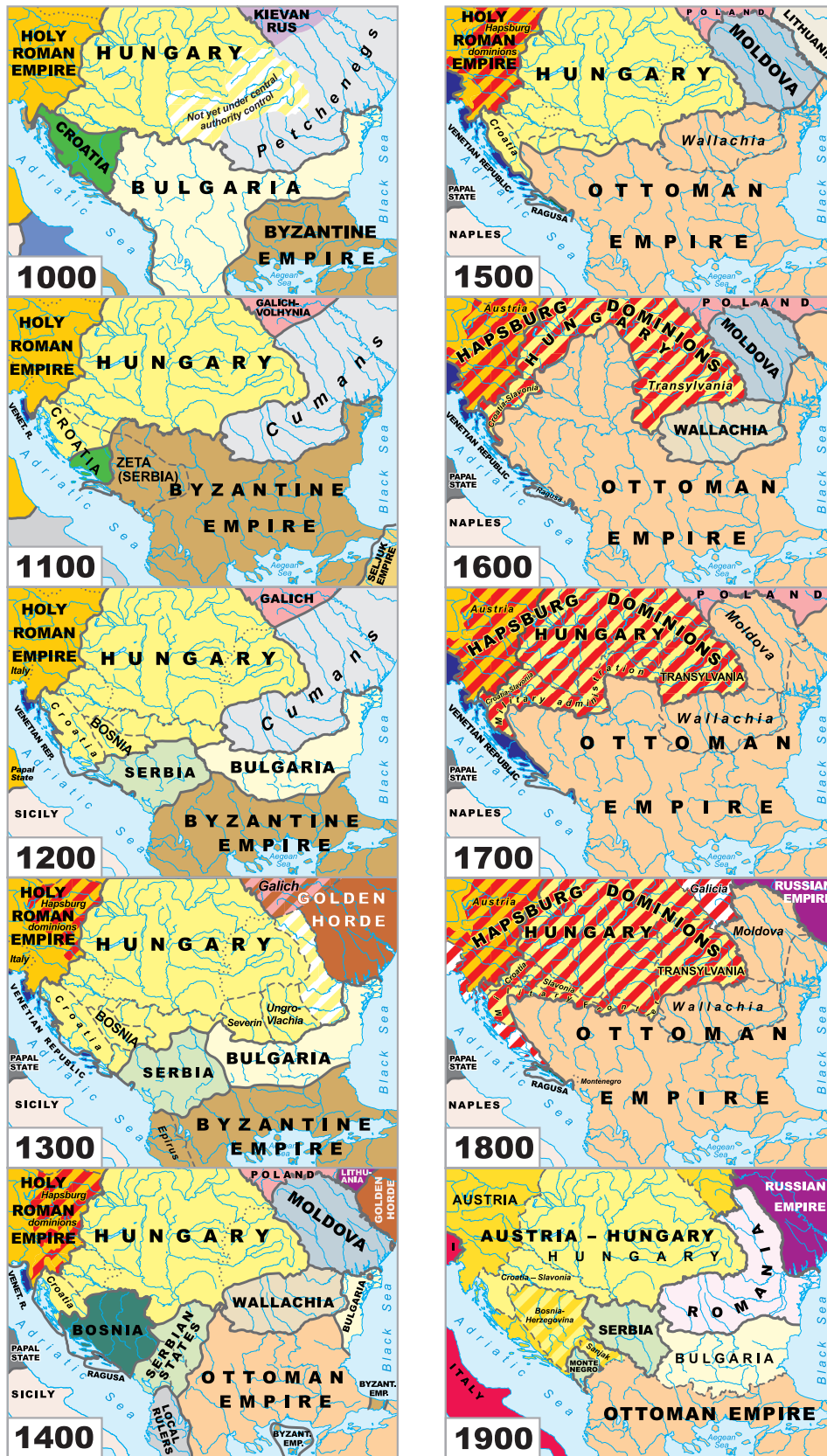
The gradual, yet unstoppable expansion of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire put an end to the sovereignty of the peoples of the Balkans in the Middle Ages. Between the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a period of more than 100–150 years, almost the whole of South Eastern Europe came under the Ottoman Empire.

The first people to shrug off Turkish rule and have their independence recognised were the Montenegrins in 1799, forming a tiny state with an area of 4,600 km<sup>2</sup>, becoming the only independent Slavic state of the time (apart from Russia).

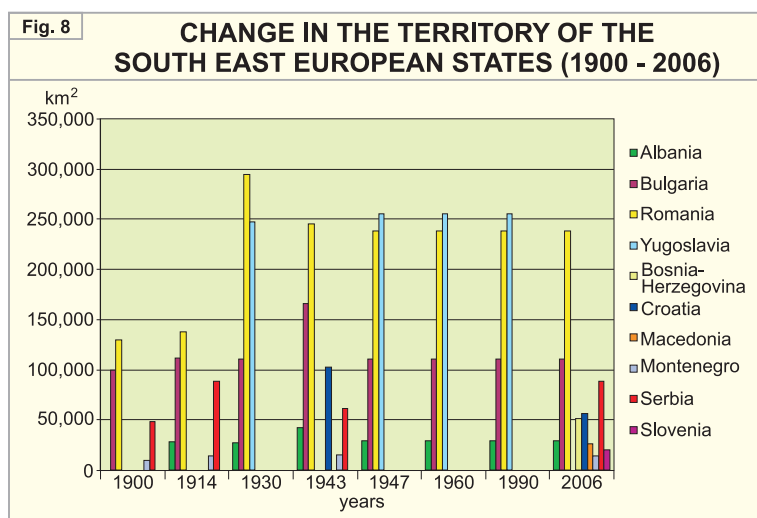
After the Russo–Turkish war of 1806 to 1812, through the annexation of the eastern part of Moldavia (Bessarabia), the Russian Empire became a decisive power in the region, as well as the primary supporter of the small Balkan peoples of the Orthodox Christian faith struggling for their freedom. With the help of Russia, Serbia and Romania (the latter created through the unification of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1861) gained their independence in 1878. However, the western powers did not approve of the creation of Greater Bulgaria, a pro-Russian state with 5 million inhabitants, covering an area of 164,000 km<sup>2</sup> extending from the Danube to the Aegean Sea and Lake Ohrid (as envisaged in the treaty of San Stefano – today Yeşilköy, Turkey – imposed by the Russians to close the war of 1877–1878). What is more, Bulgaria had to be content with autonomous status within the Turkish Empire (Behm 1878). Only the southern parts of the Balkans, where conversion to Islam had taken place to the greatest extent, remained under direct Turkish rule, such as Thrace, Macedonia and Kosovo, or were occupied by Austria–Hungary, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak

Fig. 7

## STATES IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (1000–1900)



Author: Károly Kocsis Cartography: Lívia Kaiser  
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of Novi Pazar. As a result of the decisions taken at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the European territory of the Ottoman Empire was reduced to 272,400 km<sup>2</sup> (568,600 km<sup>2</sup> in 1815 and 365,700 km<sup>2</sup> in 1850). The 1885 Bulgarian uprising led to the annexing of Eastern Rumelia by the autonomous Bulgaria, whose independence was recognised in 1908, the same year when Bosnia and Herzegovina became annexed by Austria-Hungary. However, the St. Elijah's day uprising by the Macedonians in 1903, an attempt to create an independent Macedonia, was suppressed.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three independent states existed in the Balkans: Romania (130,178 km<sup>2</sup>), Serbia (48,589 km<sup>2</sup>) and Montenegro (9,668 km<sup>2</sup>), while Bulgaria (99,276 km<sup>2</sup>) was a semi-independent principality (Table 5, Figures 8 and 9). In the two Balkan wars (1912 and 1913), Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria partitioned almost all the remaining European

territories of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the first three of these countries – with the help of Romania and Turkey – prevented Bulgaria from taking Macedonia and thus becoming too powerful. Through the treaty of Bucharest (1913), which formally ended the war, South Dobruja was ceded from Bulgaria to Romania, East Thrace remained under Turkish control, and Bulgaria obtained the land inhabited by the Pomaks, as well as West Thrace, which secured it a corridor to the Aegean Sea. Meanwhile, Serbia obtained Kosovo and Metohija was ceded

to Montenegro. The ethnically Macedonian area of approximately 34,200 km<sup>2</sup> was shared between Serbia (38.6%, Vardar Macedonia), Greece (51.2%, Aegean Macedonia) and Bulgaria (10.2%, Pirin Macedonia), (Figure 10) (Pándi 1995). The Albanian National Congress, fearing the division of ethnically Albanian areas and expecting support from powerful European countries, notably from Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy, proclaimed the independence of Albania in Vlorë on 28 November 1912. This was finally recognised by the conference of ambassadors in London eight months later, on 29 July 1913. Seeking a compromise between Albanians and their Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek neighbours, the London conference established the borders of Albania in a manner that left 45% of the region's Albanians outside of the new, independent Albania (Baldacci, A. 1913, Puto, A. 1978, Report... 1914). This division of the Balkans, fol-

Table 5. Change in the Territory of the South East European States (1900–2006, km<sup>2</sup>)

Countries	1900	1914	1930	1943	1947	1960	1990	2006
Albania		28,500	27,539	42,462	28,748	28,748	28,748	28,748
Bosnia and Herzegovina								51,129
Bulgaria	99,276	111,837	110,755	165,852	110,928	110,928	110,928	110,928
Croatia				102,960				56,538
Macedonia								25,713
Montenegro	9,668	14,456		15,219				13,812
Romania	130,178	137,903	295,049	245,337	238,391	238,391	238,391	238,391
Serbia	48,589	88,605		60,876				88,361
Slovenia								20,253
Yugoslavia			247,542		255,282	255,810	255,810	
South Eastern Europe								633,873





lowing the collapse of Turkish rule, paved the way for numerous, century-long conflicts, particularly regarding the possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Thrace.

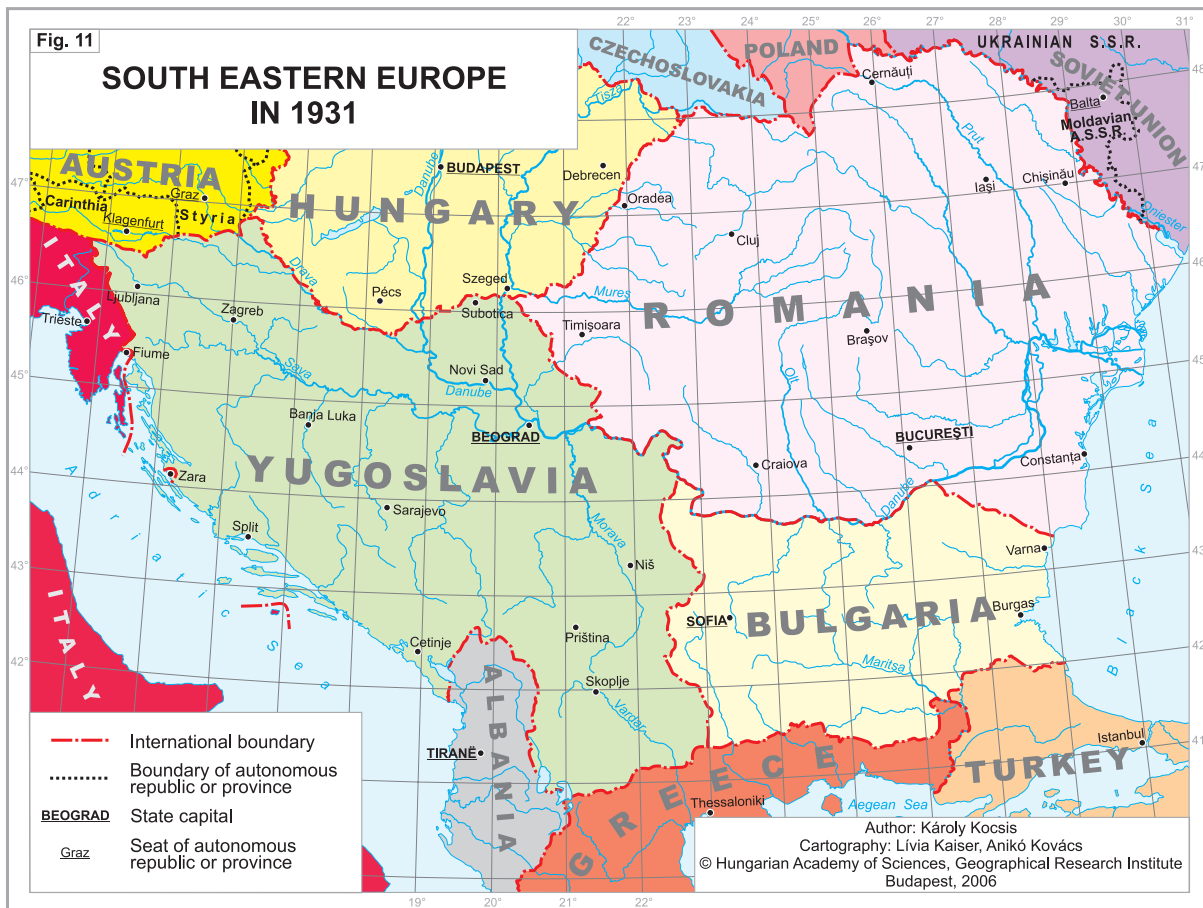
Liberated from Turkish rule, the states of the Balkans, small in size and ethnically diverse, along with the Croats and Serbs, claimed territories from each other as well as those under Austro-Hungarian rule and inhabited by Slavs and Romanians. They based their claims either on their presumed historical rights or on the principle of self-determination on ethnic grounds. The irredentist claims of the Serbs and Romanians were more or less fully satisfied at the close of World War I. In 1918–1919, taking advantage of the favourable conditions and their momentary military superiority, Serbian and Romanian troops occupied the south-eastern half of Austria-Hungary, partly with French help. This opened the way for the Serbian and Romanian states to absorb territories on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

The peace treaties around Paris, which formally ended World War I, resulted in an enormous gain in power for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes created in 1918 (SHS Kingdom, Yugoslavia from 1931) and Romania (Figure 11). Under the treaty of Saint-Germain (10 September 1919), an area of 29,078 km<sup>2</sup> (Slovenia, Dalmatia) taken from Austria was annexed by the SHS Kingdom, while 10,442 km<sup>2</sup> (Bukovina) was annexed by Romania. Through the treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (27 November 1919), Bulgaria had to surrender an area of 3,845 km<sup>2</sup> (Timok, Pirot, Bosilgrad region) to the SHS Kingdom, and 8,712 km<sup>2</sup> (Western Thrace) was granted to Greece. As a result of the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920), Hungary lost 63,011 km<sup>2</sup> (Croatia and Slavonia, the Bačka, Western Banat, South Baranya, Međimurje and Prekmurje) to the SHS Kingdom, and 103,093 km<sup>2</sup> (Transylvania) to Romania. Moreover, Romania was able to annex Bessarabia (44,442 km<sup>2</sup>), the territory taken from the former ally, Russia, in 1918 (Rónai 1945). Due to this rearrangement, South Eastern Europe was divided overwhelmingly between two countries: Romania, with a territory of 295,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and the SHS Kingdom (247,000 km<sup>2</sup>).

The borders of these new "nation states", founded on the ruins of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, which collapsed between 1912 and 1918, and of the Hapsburg Empire (Austria-Hungary)

– often mainly in response to external pressure – were formed in accordance with the positions of power at the time and created to satisfy the interests of the victorious alliance. Accordingly, the new borders were not drawn along the boundaries between ethnic groups or contact zones, but on the basis of the strategic, economic and ethnic interests of the winners, and of their presumed historical rights. This rearrangement was humiliating for the Bulgarians, Albanians and Hungarians, and compelled them to demand restitution, thus giving rise to a source of irredentist threat in the region. The status quo that emerged between 1918 and 1920 started to collapse on the eve of World War II. Notwithstanding the defence pacts of Tirana concluded between Italy and Albania in 1926 and 1927, the Italian army invaded Albania between 7 and 11 April 1939, and Mussolini regarded the country as a recovered province of the Roman Empire, along with it being the most important foothold for Italian expansion in the Balkans. In 1940, Romania had to surrender territories with a total area of 100,500 km<sup>2</sup>. As a result of the ultimatum issued by the Soviet Union (28 June 1940), the second Vienna Award (30 August 1940) and the treaty of Craiova (7 September 1940), Romania lost 49,700 km<sup>2</sup> (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina) to the Soviet Union, 43,100 km<sup>2</sup> (Northern Transylvania) to Hungary and 7,726 km<sup>2</sup> (Southern Dobruja) to Bulgaria (Pándi 1995).

The Balkans campaign launched by Hitler's Germany on 6 April 1941, with the aim of occupying Yugoslavia and Greece, ended with the surrender of Yugoslavia (the Serbs) on 17 April and of Greece on 24 April. By applying the policy of "divide et impera" (divide and rule), the Axis powers, in order to achieve their own ends, were ingenious in exploiting the ethnic tensions and problems that had been left unresolved by the Paris peace settlement, along with the despair of the humiliated and subdued nations, e.g. the Albanians, Bulgarians and Croats in the Balkans and the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. The defeated Serbia was confined to her core territory of 64,900 km<sup>2</sup>, in other words Belgrade, its environs and the Morava Valley, while the Slovene territories were partitioned between Germany and Italy. Greece had to cede Western Thrace and the eastern part of Aegean Macedonia to Bulgaria (Magocsi 1993). Croatia regained her "independence" after 850 years, and even an-



nexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. The independent Croatian state, proclaimed on 10 April 1941, had a territory of almost 103,000 km<sup>2</sup>. However, 32% of its population of 5.6 million was Serbian and 13% Muslim Bosnian. Bulgaria regained the territories it had lost to Serbia in 1919, and even obtained Vardar Macedonia, thus forming the Greater Bulgaria for the second time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The territory of Albania, already in Italian hands, was increased by 14,900 km<sup>2</sup> with areas overwhelmingly inhabited by Albanians. Thus, the centuries-old dream of Albanians came true: a Great Albania encompassing nearly all ethnic Albanian areas (Figure 12). Of the Albanian-inhabited areas, Great Albania now included the region of Ulcinj, Metohija, the majority of Kosovo, present-day Western Macedonia, the region of the Lake Prespa and the Epiros coast formerly owned by Greece, up to the port of Parga. Similarly, Montenegro, which was also under Italian occupation, achieved the peak of its territorial extension (15,219 km<sup>2</sup>) in this period due to the annexation of the Sanjak, which was mainly inhabited by Muslims. The same

year, in August and September, in the course of the German offensive against the Soviet Union, Romania recaptured Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, thus increasing her territory to 245,337 km<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the port of Odessa, and Transnistria (the area beyond the river Dniester, between the Dniester and Bug rivers) were seized. Following Italy's surrender in 1943, Albania came under German occupation, and the regions of Kosovska Mitrovica and Gnjilane were annexed to it. Consequently, the territory of Albania, now independent from Italy, grew to 42,462 km<sup>2</sup>. It was also after the Italian surrender that Croatia was able to annex Dalmatian territories hitherto occupied by Italy.

After World War II, the Treaty of Paris (10 February 1947) effectively restored the status quo of 1937, with the following exceptions: Romania ceded Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, but regained Northern Transylvania from Hungary, giving it today's territory of 238,391 km<sup>2</sup> (Figure 13). Bulgaria was able to retain Southern Dobruja, regained from Romania in 1940. On the whole, Bulgaria's





territorial losses were slight, with its territory reduced to 110,928 km<sup>2</sup>. In return for the loss of territories with an Albanian ethnic majority, such as Kosovo and Western Macedonia, which it had retained between 1941 and 1944, Albania received only scarce compensation, namely, the region of Klobocishtë (Počesti) in the Black Drim Valley, thus reducing it to its present-day territory of 28,748 km<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, Yugoslavia was mainly restored to its pre-war state, and became a federation of 6 republics (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 1946. The only significant differences between its pre-war and post-war borders were that it now also included the areas that is today's Western Slovenia, the Istrian peninsula, the islands of Cres (Cherso) and Lošinj (Lussino) and the city of Zadar (Zara). The debate between Italy and Yugoslavia over Trieste, which used to be Austria's most important port, was resolved by the establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste in 1947, divided into two zones. Of these, zone "A" had an area of 222 km<sup>2</sup>, 90% of its population was Italian, and it was under American and British control. Zone "B" covered a territory of 528 km<sup>2</sup>, 45–88% of its population was Italian and it was under Yugoslavian control. This temporary situation was terminated by the London Memorandum of 5 October 1954, which awarded zone "A" to Italy, and zone "B" to Yugoslavia. The frontier debate between Italy and Yugoslavia was ended formally in Osimo, on 1 October 1975. Under the 1954 settlement, the territory of Yugoslavia increased to 255,810 km<sup>2</sup>, and one of her member states, Slovenia, gained access to the sea at Koper (Capodistria) and Piran (Pirano).

In the period between 1954 and 1990, the external borders of the states in South Eastern Europe did not change, merely their internal administrative divisions were modified (*Figures 14 and 15*). Of these, it is particularly worth examining the autonomous territories that were formed on the basis of their ethnic relations and historical traditions. In Yugoslavia, such territories were established by the first constitution of the Federal Republic in 1946. One of the so-called autonomous provinces was Kosovo, or "Kosmet" (Kosovo–Metohija), as it was called at that time, which was inhabited mainly by Albanian Muslims. The other was Voivodina in the north, a territory of mixed population having belonged to Hungary until 1918. These

autonomous provinces, both located within the territory of Serbia, were granted a high level of freedom in their internal affairs in 1974. However, this freedom was terminated by the Serbian constitution of 28 March 1989. A similar ethnically based autonomous province was created in Romania (for tactical reasons) on 27 September 1952. This province, known as the Hungarian Autonomous Province, in the eastern part of Transylvania had an area of 13,500 km<sup>2</sup>, and 77.3 of its population was Hungarian. On 19 December 1960, its territory was reduced to 12,300 km<sup>2</sup>, and the proportion of Hungarian inhabitants also decreased to 62.2%, as Romanian-inhabited territories were attached to it and other Hungarian-inhabited ones detached. Even its name was modified to Mureș (Maros)–Magyar Autonomous Province. During the final decade of its existence, the autonomy was only formal, and was officially terminated on 17 February 1968 with the introduction of the county system (Lipcsey 1987).

In South Eastern Europe, as a result of the political and socio-economic changes in 1990 and 1991, new state borders were drawn and it was only in the single remaining federal state of the region, Yugoslavia, that new "state-like entities" with ambiguous status came into existence. The changes of regime, which started first in the most developed of the member republics, Slovenia and Croatia; the nationalist–communist shift under the federal leadership of S. Milošević; the intensification of separatist movements and struggle for independence, and a variety of ethnic and religious conflicts soon led to the disintegration of Greater Yugoslavia. Within the member republics, which themselves became increasingly factious and began to consider separation, the various minorities formed a series of their own "republics," such as the Serbian Republic of Krayina (28 February 1991, Knin), the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (31 October 1992, Pale), the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosna (Mostar) and the Albanian Republic of Kosovo (26 September 1991). Relying on the outcome of preliminary referendums, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence on 25 June 1991, which was recognised by the member states of the European Community on 15 January 1992 (Klemenčić 1997). However, in order to protect Serbian minorities and the unity of Yugoslavia, the predominantly Serbian leaders of the Yugoslavian state responded to the





declaration of independence by waging a war against Slovenia (between 27 June 1991 and 7 July 1991) and Croatia (from 7 July 1991). During the war with Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina also separated from Yugoslavia, on 21 November 1991 and 1 March 1992 respectively. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an extremely heterogeneous population, both in terms of its religion and ethnicity, the declaration of independence gave rise to a particularly cruel war between the Orthodox Christian Serbs, Muslim Bosnians and Catholic Croats populating the area. Upon the remnants of the former Yugoslavia, a "new" Yugoslavian federation was established on 27 April 1992 by Serbia and Montenegro, the latter securing a corridor to the sea for the newly born country. After a series of unsuccessful peace-keeping attempts and settlement plans by international organisations, and a long period of passivity, Croatia started a counter-offensive in 1995, relying on considerable external help. They recaptured Western Slavonia on 2 May and Krajina between 4 and 7 August, then, in cooperation with the Bosnians, expelled the Serbian forces from 20% of Bosnian terri-

tory. The war of Bosnia and Croatia, which had a death toll of approximately 350,000, was ended by the peace agreement initiated in Dayton on 21 November 1995 and signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. As a result of the agreement, reached under international pressure and owing to the fatigue of the fighting parties, the territorial integrity of Croatia was restored, and Bosnia-Herzegovina was organised as a federal republic along ethnic lines. This state with an area of 51,129 km<sup>2</sup>, held together by external forces, was divided into two entities along (near) the front lines and new ethnic borders fixed in 1995: a Serbian Republic (with a territory of 25,019 km<sup>2</sup>) and a Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, dominated by Bosnians and Croats (26,110 km<sup>2</sup>) emerged (Figure 16) (Der Fischer... 2004).

During the war between the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, the Albanians of Kosovo, who were deprived of their autonomy in 1989 by the Belgrade government, created their own "shadow-state" in the territory of their former autonomous province by 1992, which existed alongside the Yugoslav state without serious



conflicts until the Dayton agreement on 21 November 1995 (Troebst 1998). However, the Dayton settlement and the previous events prompted both the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs to become more active. The Albanians, disappointed and desperate, recognised that the "Western" decision-makers had once again neglected the Albanian question, and emphasised the importance of the integrity of international borders and the territory of the third Yugoslav state. As for the Serbs, they judged that – in the light of the ousting of several hundreds of thousands of Serbs from Krayina in 1995 – the issue of the Kosovar Albanians could be resolved by more drastic and bloody means than those used hitherto, and that acceptance of such a solution could be achieved, even at an international level. In an attempt to stop the ethnic cleansing, mass murders and the ousting of the Albanian population, NATO started bombing Yugoslavia on 24 March 1999. The intervention lasted until 9 June 1999, by which time nearly 50 per cent of the Kosovar Albanians (862,979 people) had been driven out to the neighbouring countries.

From June 1999, the overwhelming majority of these people returned to Kosovo with the help of UNHCR and other international organisations. By that time Kosovo was being policed by KFOR troops, 50,000-strong (comprising mainly British, Russian, German, American, French and Italian forces), and the Yugoslavian armed forces had already been forced to leave. This was the third time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Serbian army had to withdraw from the mainly Albanian-populated Kosovo (the first occasion was in 1915–1916, the second one in 1941). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular in 1998 and 1999, the Serbian (Yugoslav) state, which had already tried various means of settling the Albanian issue, resorted to large-scale and bloody ethnic cleansing in its quest to retain Kosovo, which it considered to be a cradle of Serbian statehood. As a result of NATO's intervention to protect the Albanian population, Serbia lost the province of Kosovo *de facto* and it has become a UN protectorate, populated mainly by Albanians, but still belonging to Serbia *de jure*, that is, under international administration.