



The political settlement in the former Yugoslavia is unraveling. In Bosnia, the weakest state in the region, both Serbs and Croats are mounting a concerted challenge to the Dayton peace accords, the delicate set of compromises that hold the country together. In Macedonia, political figures from the large Albanian minority are calling for the federalization of the state along ethnic lines. In Kosovo, the Serb minority is insisting on the creation of a network of self-governing enclaves with effective independence from the central government. In Serbia's Presevo Valley, Albanians are agitating for greater autonomy. In Montenegro, Albanians have demanded a self-governing entity. And in Kosovo and Albania, where Albanians have their independence, nationalists are pushing for a unified Albanian state.

It is easy to dismiss all this as simply sound and fury, whipped up by opportunistic politicians. But it would be a mistake to ignore the will of the electorates, which have persistently shown their dissatisfaction with the multiethnic status quo and are demanding change. The choice facing Western policymakers is either to recognize the legitimacy of these demands and radically change their approach or to continue with the current policy and risk renewed conflict.

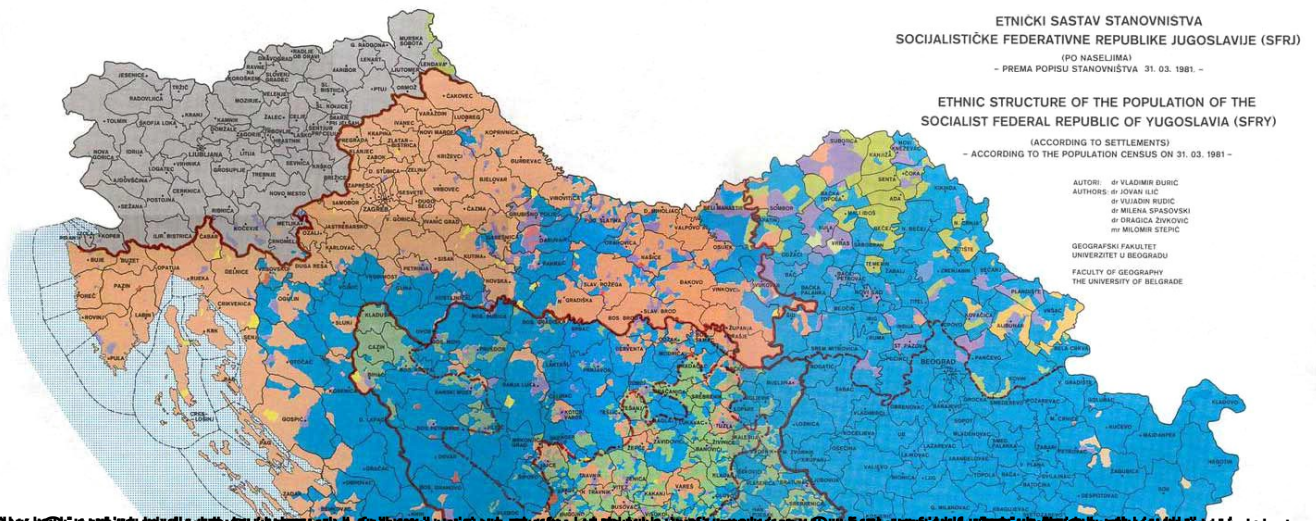
A beautiful idea

When Yugoslavia collapsed at the start of 1990s, there was nothing predetermined about what followed. One possibility was the emergence of nation-states, comparable to those elsewhere in Europe; another was multiethnic states based on internal administrative boundaries. In the end, the West determined the nature of the post-Yugoslav settlement by recognizing the independence of the old Yugoslav republics within their existing borders. In doing so, they were guided not only by a belief that this would promote justice and security but also by an ideological conviction that nationalism was the source of instability in Europe. Multiethnicity was seen as a viable, even desirable, organizing principle.

Dysfunction in the Balkans - Can the Post-Yugoslav Settlement Survive?

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