



Eastern Europe
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Throughout the mid 1990s [1990s], Croatian independence from Yugoslavia turned out to be a long and bitter battle. When Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, it took four years of spontaneous fighting before Serb armies were almost completely cleared from Croatian lands. As the text points out on pg. 344, Croatia has a very difficult strategic shape, which was left vulnerable by civil war. According to the website listed above, it will take many years to restore the destruction and economic downfall which Croatia endured during that period.



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Based on the text, pages 343-345, the tensions among ethnic groups are obvious features among the Balkan European countries. The former Yugoslavia was a mixture of varied cultural groups with Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslim being the basis of historic hostility and maltreatment of rivals by political groups of each religious head. According to Jeffrey Smith of the Washington Post, <http://www.msnbc.com/news/545076.asp>, the republics of the former Yugoslavia have been in a civil war since 1990 and recently Albanian guerrillas opened fire on police claiming to be protecting local Albanians from government abuses. Some also believe that the rebels are trying to revive old visions of a "Greater Albania" that would unite all member of the group in a single state. Ethnic issues have been causing complications for many years and they will undoubtedly continue to occur for many more to come.

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Based on the text (p. 342) the Balkan countries are a long-standing zone of international tension on the human fault-line. The text also mentioned there are tensions among ethnic groups within the fragmented political environment of the Balkan countries. According to the article *Micromanaging Malignant Optimism* by Sam Vaknin [<http://www.balkanlands.com/article1042.html>], it mentions how the West is trying to force unwanted peace upon an unwilling population. The article states that the West should assist the Balkan countries to try to find a common government rather than force them to do so. With this decision only ethnically-homogeneous states can survive peacefully in the Balkan. The web site also has other article that pertain to the Balkan countries.

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According to the text (p.297) European countries decided to work together in economic and for some, political activities by forming the EU (European Union). Because of this, NATO was formed to strengthen the European forces and resolve against any possible aggression from the Soviet Union and other military conflicts. In the article <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2001/0319/e0319a.htm> it talks about ethnic Albanian extremists that have brought about fighting within the territory of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the determination of NATO to put and end to the fighting.

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Based on the text (p299) NATO has played a valuable role in making countries feel secure and helping militarily and politically. NATO is continuing their strong point of protecting by accepting Yugoslavia and helping them fight Albanians in their expansion of the buffer zone according to the Washington Post. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A20661-2001Mar17.html> This acceptance will hopefully further the peace in Kosovo and Bosnia.

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According to the text (P.347) the country of Albania is the poorest country in the Balkins. Up until 1992 the country was in total isolation due to repressive dictatorship. According to an economic profile on Albania (<http://www.albania.co.uk/business/economic.html>) the country has the lowest income level in Europe at \$560 per capita. This site also tells about how being isolated under dictatorship ruined the economy. Between 1990 and 1992 the GDP fell 41%, Industrial production fell by 74% and inflation rose 237% in 1992. Over the past two years Albania has economically become better and achieved the highest growth of any European country, from a low base.

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In the text on page 340 it talks about the population of Eastern Europe. It says that they have very low fertility rates, birth rates, and death rates. Therefore, the expected population growth will only increase from 62 million in 1998 to 63 million in 2025. In an article from Britannica.com (<http://www.britannica.com/bcom/reuters/article/0,5744,140975,00.html>) it says that falling population is a huge issue that they are trying to fix in Europe. This problem is posing a problem for it's continent's leaders. "Given the present development of an aging population and lower birth rates, we must create better opportunities for men and women to combine work with a family life with children," Swedish pime minister, Goran Persson said in a speech this week in Malmo, southern Sweden.

The Next GEONote is on Latin America