

THE BALKAN MINORITIES: DIVIDED STATES, PEOPLES AND SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT: THE POTENTIAL FOR HISTORY TO EXPLAIN CONTEMPORARY BALKAN EVENTS LOOKS EXHAUSTED (IF NOT COMPROMISED) BY THE ATTEMPT TO CONSTRUCT MODELS OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PLAUSIBILITY BASED UPON A SIMPLISTIC CONCEPTION OF THE PRESENT BEING MERELY A CONTINUATION OF THE PAST, OF A DEEPLY ROOTED TRADITION OF CONFLICT, BY ALL THE PARTICIPANTS AS WELL AS BY THE OBSERVERS OF THE SETTLED, PARTIALLY SETTLED AND STILL ONGOING BALKAN ETHNIC CONFLICTS. THE MAIN SIGNIFICANCE OF A PROFESSIONAL AND NON-ENGAGED HISTORICAL RESEARCH FOR COMPLEX (OR INTERDISCIPLINARY) APPLIED STUDIES OF THE CURRENT ETHNOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BALKANS IS TO FURNISH CONTEMPORARY ANALYSTS AND DECISION MAKERS WITH CLEAR VISIONS BASED UPON AUTHENTIC HISTORICAL SOURCES REGARDING WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE BALKAN CONFLICTS KNOW OR THINK THEY KNOW ABOUT THEIR HISTORY AND WHAT CONCLUSIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS BASED UPON THIS KNOWLEDGE COULD INFLUENCE CONTEMPORARY SITUATIONS.

KEY WORDS: BALKAN ETHNIC POLITICS, CONFLICT, MODERN NATIONAL IDENTITIES, GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES, ETHNOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, MINORITY, CONCEPT OF A MINORITY, ETHNIC MINORITIES, BALKAN MINORITIES, ROMA PEOPLE, ROMA PROBLEM, DIVIDED STATES, DIVIDED PEOPLE, DIVIDED SOCIETIES, CIVIC NATIONALISM

I. INTRODUCTION

CONTEMPORARY Balkan ethnic politics, still turbulent and stirred up, but no longer bloody as they were in the 1990s, now attract the attention mainly of scholars specializing in legal and political studies. At least at first sight, the potential for history to explain contemporary Balkan events looks exhausted (if not compromised) by the attempt to construct models of different levels of plausibility based upon a simplistic conception of the present being merely a continuation of the past, of a deeply rooted tradition of conflict, by all the participants as well as by the observers of the settled, partially settled and still ongoing Balkan ethnic conflicts.¹ When now a historian tries to intervene into the traditionally taboo fields of current political changes and uncompleted developments, the main objection he or she meets concerns the impossibility of making any practical conclusions on the basis of historical observations. Any historical argument looks use-less and improper when compared with solid political or juridical research dealing with the contemporary situation and the perspectives of the southeastern periphery of the enlarging European Union.

THE opinion expressed above is neither a lamentation nor an appeal for justice.

¹ See Sergey Romanenko. *Istoriya i istoriki v mezhetnicheskix konfliktax v konce XX veka. Pochemu vozrozhdaetsya soznanie "zakrytogo obshchestva"?* (Open Society Institute, Moscow, (1997).

Historical discourse as the main source for the construction of modern national identities has evidently demonstrated both its numerous weak points as well as its practical significance to research. Often papering over alternative explanations, it usually intends to represent contemporary developments as being inevitably predicted by 'eternal', mostly geopolitical, realities, by some 'objective' long-time process, by 'age-old' contra-dictions or by 'traditional' rivalry and 'inherited' hatred, etc. Moreover, some historians try to forecast (if not to prophesy) rather than carefully collecting, classifying and interpreting the factual evidence. In such cases, their weakness is that they know too much and are inclined to see any change or alternative as a repetition of the past.

To my mind, the main significance of a professional and non-engaged historical research for complex (or interdisciplinary) applied studies of the current ethno-political developments in the Balkans is to furnish contemporary analysts and decision makers with clear visions based upon authentic historical sources regarding what the participants of the Balkan conflicts know or think they know about their history and what conclusions and constructions based upon this knowledge could influence contemporary situations. On the other hand, the professional vision of a historian, built upon an indepth monitoring of long-lasting processes, is able to make clear distinctions between more permanent and rapidly changing objects and between repeating and unique particularities. Such observations are possible only when the objects are not removed from their multidimensional context, which usually includes, together with a chronological dimension, close and distant environments of different essence and origin.

I do not think that many historians would really be concerned about another distinction—continuously created by the European historians of the last two centuries,² the idea of the Balkan region as the potential 'powder keg' of Europe itself has undergone changes. At first, this conception referred to almost the entire territory of the Ottoman possessions in southeast Europe, a conceptualization that applied to the period between the Berlin Treaty of 1878 and the Bucharest Treaty of 1913.³ Presently, the 'powder-keg' idea has shrunk to the Central-Western Balkans (often called just Western), with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (including, as a formal possession of the latter, Kosovo, but excluding Vojvodina) now being the literal referent of the expression.

THE reasons for this shrinkage lie not only in the cessation of military clashes and in the strong internationally prescribed frameworks that mark current Balkan developments but also in the decline of the very Balkan identity. Belonging to the Balkans is now strongly rejected not only by the successful 'European'⁴ Slovenes but also by the Croats, recalling as

² I must mention here the excellent book by my dear Bulgarian colleague Maria Todorova, which became a starting point for an agenda of really profound and more understanding than interpreting research on the contemporary Balkans. See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991); and *id.* (ed.), *Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory* (Hurst & Co, London, 2004).

³ Vladimir Vinogradov and Victor Kosik (eds.), *V porokhovom pogrebe Evropy [In Europe's Powder Cellar] 1878–1914* (Indika, Moscow, 2004).

⁴ Not a misprint! The author does not insist on his priority in using this term in the academic discourse but seriously offers it as a distinction between the scholarly tradition and the way of thinking that equates Europe to the European Union. For example, a recently published monograph by a number of EU experts uses the term "EU-ization", differing it from "Europeanization". See Bruno Coppetiers *et al.*, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies from the European Periphery* (Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Brussels, 2004). To date, this has been the only attempt to invent an antonym to the term 'Balkanization, which could be, using Todorova's words, "its complementing and ennobling antiparticle". See Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, at 189.

they do their Habsburg legacy much more frequently than their Yugoslav origins.⁵ Accession to the European Union looks like the sole alternative to being part of the still unstable and unpredictable Balkan political landscape for the states of the whole of southeastern Europe. Still waiting for their promised EU accession, Bulgarians and Romanians support a historically untenable division of the Balkans into the eastern Balkans (in fact, pro-Western) and the western Balkans. This division is quite different from Theodosius' border of 395 and paradoxically turns upside down the East–West paradigm for the Balkans.⁶ The Greek and the Turkish contemporary 'Balkanity' in each case has different meanings, motivations and expressions, but both nations see the Balkans as a zone of their interests and influence, no longer as their 'common home'.

II. DEFINING THE PARAMETERS OF THE TERM 'MINORITY'

THIS introduction adds some notes to the margins of the lasting debates about the current situation and future of Balkan ethnic minorities. For a historian, the term 'ethnic group', used from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, looks more independent and more rooted in historical than political discourse.⁷ It can be connected with a widespread definition of 'ethnic nationalism', as of "the sense of national identity and loyalty shared by a group of people united among themselves and distinguished from others by one or more of the following factors: language, religion, culture and, most important, a belief in the common genetic or biological descent of the group".⁸ This definition may be illustrated using the conception formulated by Fredrik Barth, who argued that an ethnic group can be considered only in its interaction with others. It is this interaction that forms identities and delineates ethnic boundaries, which are understood more in a cultural than a spatial sense.⁹ The same interaction defines 'minority' or 'majority' as secondary attributes of the ethnic group. The group may be relatively big in size but restricted in its access to political or civil rights, to certain economic activities, etc.

THE problem of minorities first appeared with the formation of the first modern Balkan states—Greece and Serbia—in the first half of the nineteenth century and remains a permanent part of Balkan developments. Actualized in the beginning of the twentieth century by the consequences of the two Balkan Wars and the First World War, the problem had by this time also extended into the European context. Despite the fact that historical analysis had concerned itself with a wide range of case studies on ethnic minorities through these two

⁵ See Franjo Tudžman, *Istoricheskata sudba na narodite. Izbrani trudove* (Akademichno izdatelstvo "Marin Drinov", Sofia, 1997).

⁶ Being the Roman East, the Balkans in the Middle Ages became the Byzantine then the Ottoman West (Δυσίς, Rumeli), then the European (South)-East, then the Western periphery of the Soviet Block, to finally be divided into the more or less stable East (Bulgaria) and the stabilizing West (the former Yugoslavia). Incidentally, after Bulgaria's fall under Ottoman supremacy, Serbia was considered to be the West for Bulgarians, too. See Dmitriy Polyvanniy, *Kulturnoe svoeobrazie srednevekovoj Bolgarii v kontekste vizantijsko-slavjanskoj obshchnosti IX-XV vekov* (Izdatel'stvo Ivanovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Ivanovo, (2000).

⁷ Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences*. (Little and Brown, Boston, 1969). Here I am using the Russian translation of this work, which quotes R. Narrol, "On Ethnic Unit Classification", 5(4) *Current Anthropology* (1964), 283–312.

⁸ J. McPherson, *Is Blood Thicker than Water? Crisis of Nationalism in the Modern World* (Vintage Books, New York, 1998). Cited in Miodrag Jovanovic, "Territorial Autonomy in Eastern Europe – Legacies of the Past", 4 *JEMIE* (2002), 1–16, at 3.

⁹ Barth (ed.), *op. cit.* Barth's ideas resemble some of the conclusions of the Russian ethnographer P. Kushner, *Etnicheskie territorii i etnicheskie granicy. Trudy Instituta etnografii. Nova series. V. XV* (Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, Moscow, 1951).

centuries, the subject matter itself had not yet been clearly defined.¹⁰ Thus, in taking the floor in these considerations, I find it necessary to explain my understanding of 'ethnic minority'. With the deepest respect for the juridical stream of the debates, I would therefore underline that both the descriptive and normative attempts to elaborate a comprehensive and clear definition of ethnic minority look external to the subject.¹¹ Such externality leads, for instance, to the quasihistorically founded division of minorities into autochthonous and 'newly' formed, such as is found in Slovenian scholarly and political discourse. On the other hand, refugees and internally displaced persons, whose settlement in another state is temporary due to their status, may permeate the respective minorities and impact on their political behaviour.

ATTEMPTS to define the concept of a minority from the inside are not as prominent. Such an attempt was made by Tomuschat, who defined a minority as "groups, which feel their differences to such an extent, that they try to be at least partially responsible for their future".¹² In 1993, the leader of the Bulgarian Movement for Rights and Freedoms (considered to be the party of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria) Ahmed Dogan established a modest award of 1000 Bulgarian leva for anyone who could provide such a definition. The award has never been claimed.¹³ The idea of the "responsibility for their future" looks fruitful, if not as a definition then as a description of contemporary Balkan ethnic minorities. Looking at the public manifestations of Balkan (and not only Balkan) ethnic minority discourse, it is immediately apparent that slogans in English predominate over those in Albanian, Serbian or Turkish. Thus, addressing their demands to the 'international community' rather than to their compatriots, the participants expect to be heard and recognized as political representatives of their groups more in the international environment than in their direct milieu.

THE last observation, widely noted in the juridical literature, is that the main part of the definition of "minority" relates to its ethnic features but that these are not the only features that may define minority status, which may also include linguistic, religious (as mentioned in the UN Covenant on Political and Civil Rights), cultural, racial, gender or sexual features.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Zlata Ploštajner, "Autochthonous and Newly-Formed Minorities: Two Different Approaches", in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (ed.), *National Minorities in South-East Europe. Legal and Social Status at Local Level* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb, 2002), 84–93.

¹¹ On the notion of national minority and related terms see Tim Potier, "Regionally Nondominant Titular Peoples: the Next Phase in Minority Rights?", *JEMIE* (2001), at <<http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/JEMIE06Potier11-07-01.pdf>>.

¹² Tomuschat C., "Status of Minorities under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", in Bernhardt *et al.* (eds.), *Minorities in National and International Laws* (Springer, Berlin, 1983), at 960.

¹³ Maria Todorova, "Identity (Trans)formation Among Bulgarian Muslims", in Beverly Crawford and Ronnie Lipschutz (eds.), *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict: Politics, Economics and "Cultural Violence"*, University of California International and Area Studies Digital Collection, Research Series #98 (1998), at <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/uciaspubs/research/98>>.

¹⁴ Young Belorussian scholar Natalya Kat'ko offers the following definition of minority "This is a group of citizens of the state, which is numerically smaller than the main part of the population and / or engage in non-dominant position, has persistent ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural characteristics, and having a desire to preserve their identity [This is the group of state citizens that is less in number than the main part of the population and does not occupy a dominant position, possessing sustainable ethnic, language, religious and cultural characteristics as well as an intention to save its identity]" and notes: "Moreover, it is advisable to be understood as a minority ethnic and religious, linguistic and cultural minorities and obedinitih general term 'minority' [It is reasonable to understand a minority as ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural minorities, including them all in the definition of 'minority']". Natalya Katko, "Kriterii opredelenija men'shinstva", at <<http://www.beljournal.by.ru/2001/2/6.shtml>>. Another young scholar, Adina Preda from Manchester University, comes to the controversial conclusion that, in practice, national minorities are those ethnic groups that are suspected to aspire to sovereignty and, thus, to secession. See Adina Preda, "The Principle of Self-Determination and National Minorities", *27 Dialectical Anthropology*, 205–226, at 214.

In Yugoslav and Russian political discourse from the Communist era, ethnic minorities used to be called ‘nationalities’ (*narodnosti* in Yugoslavia) if they had appropriate referent nations outside the federative state. As the term ‘minority’ points to some major entity, the term ‘nationality’ is both secondary to and dependent upon the notion of the ‘nation’ (*narod* according to the Soviet or Yugoslav classification; in Yugoslavia “*narody*” were defined as “possessing nation-forming functions”).¹⁵

So the notion of ‘ethnic minority’ has sense only when defined in relation to the relevant ‘majority’ and within the boundaries of a concrete state. Some such cases examined by Tim Potier led him to arrive at a definition in terms of “regionally non-dominant titular peoples”,¹⁶ which may cover two of the Balkan ethnic minorities: the Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro; and the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. On the other hand, the Balkan Vlachs (Aromani) can hardly be represented as “regionally non-dominant Romanians”, despite the fact that the Romanian state used this argument to justify its territorial demands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the other minorities like Roma¹⁷ or Muslims¹⁸ fall outwith the remits of this definition due to their lack of ‘titular’ status. Such ethnic groups, according to Anna Moltchanova, can be treated as “stateless national groups” and even be granted “the Modified Right to Self-Determination”.¹⁹

III. DIVIDED STATES, DIVIDED PEOPLE, DIVIDED SOCIETIES

A group of EU experts (the Balkan chapter is written by Gergana Noutcheva and Michel Huysseune) in a recently published monograph on conflict settlement in Abkhazia, Cyprus, Serbia-Montenegro and Transdniestria within the context of Europeanization, widely use the notion of “divided states” (*razdelyonnye gosudarstva*).²⁰ The Balkan example of the “divided state” in the book looks a bit artificial. Being “*resta restantum*” of the socialist Yugoslav Federation, the Serbia-Montenegro state formation (never acknowledged by the US under the name of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and as the successor state of the former Yugoslavia), at least from two viewpoints—that of the ruling Montenegrin elite and of the US government—was just a transitive project aimed at the gradual and peaceful division of the two post-Yugoslav republics, delayed mostly because of the pending Kosovo problem and the persistence of the Milosevic presidency in Serbia.

POTIER’S definition stands next to another notion: that of “divided peoples”. The very word ‘people’ was widely used as an ethnic definition in the nineteenth century and in the interwar period but after the Second World War was more connected to colonial discourse. More often applied by the western literature to the cases of post-war China and Korea, sometimes to the Kurds, recently it has frequently been used by Russian scholars to describe

¹⁵ Marina Martynova, *Balkanskiy krizis: narody i politika* (Staryj Sad, Moscow, 1999), 16–17. Another definition says that a “people is a collectivity conceived as such in virtue of its geographical, religious and linguistic characteristics and its political aspirations”. See Adina Preda, *op. cit.*, at 212.

¹⁶ Potier, *op. cit.*.

¹⁷ Actually, the ethnic name “Roma” appeared in the fifteenth century when part of this population, still new to the Balkans, claimed that they were refugees from the fallen “second Rome”: Constantinople.

¹⁸ See Florian Bieber, “Muslim Identity in the Balkans before the Establishment of Nation States”, 28(1) *Nationalities Papers* (2000), 13–28.

¹⁹ Anna Moltchanova, “Stateless National Groups, International Justice and Assymetrical Warfare”, 13(2) *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2005), 194–215.

²⁰ Bruno Coppetiers *et al.*, *op. cit.*.

post-Soviet ethnic situations.²¹ More identity than state-oriented, this notion meanwhile looks rather spacious and flexible in its applicability to the contemporary Balkan situation. Really, a historian, when looking at the diminishing zone of Balkan conflicts, tends to see, first of all, peoples divided by state boundaries and, only then, minorities as a subgroup of these divided peoples, albeit an important subgroup, in that they may be seen to be either helpless and seeking international protection or militant and eager to secede.²²

ANOTHER term marking the division, “divided societies”, is used, for instance, by a prominent expert on the Balkans, Florian Bieber, in his review of contemporary ethnic policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia.²³ Stressing social rather than state-centric values, Bieber underlines an impressive set of effective decisions reached at this level and within this approach and considers the refusal of territorial change to be one of the prerequisites for the successful work of civil institutions within multiethnic societies. There is only one point in this profound analysis that evokes questions: while the author is strongly against the repetition of internationally-enforced institutional reforms such as the Dayton agreement, all the cases that he considered in fact featured changes reinforced from outside or, to be more exact, by the US.

So, minorities in some cases may be the reasons for or the results of the division of the state, the people (understood in the ethnic sense as opposed to the state population) or the society.

THE division of people, state or society cannot be imagined without certain division lines. Generations of ethnologists and linguists left us hundreds of maps, the only result of the revision of which may be a conclusion as to the impossibility of devising just state borders, which in the Balkans never coincided with linguistic ones. The existing Balkan state boundaries do not differ much from any others in the past of this turbulent region, those drawn up by geopolitical ambitions or resulting from wars of conquests, after which the borders between the newly formed or expanded states almost never followed any historically established ethnic division lines.²⁴ Though contemporary interstate boundaries have been declared untouchable, the same principle seems not to concern the (relatively) new ones. We may currently see how the revived state border between Serbia and Montenegro, voluntarily agreed to between the two governments in 1913, divides the historical region of Sandzak and, with it, the ethnic group of Sandjak Muslims. Despite changes in recent years to the composition of this ethnic group, both in size, due to forced and attracted migration to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in mind, through a partial readoption of Bosnian identity, this new division may have unexpected consequences.²⁵ The same type border is about to be officially reestablished between Serbia and Kosovo, adding *de jure* one more Serbian minority to the existing ones.

²¹ See Kamalutdin Gadziev and Eduard Solovjev (eds.), *Diaspory i razdelennye narody na postsovetkom prostranstve* (IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2006).

²² See Bruno Coppetiers *et al.*, *op. cit.*.

²³ Florian Bieber, “Institutionalizing Ethnicity in the Western Balkans. Managing Change in Deeply Divided Societies”, ECMI Working Papers No. 19, ECMI, February 2002, 1–28.

²⁴ See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans ...*, at 169.

²⁵ In fact, these unexpected things began with the vote of the Muslim minority for a “divorce”. By voting for independence for Montenegro in the recent referendum, this minority divided itself across the “new” (actually renewed from 1912) state border between Serbia and Montenegro. See David Vujanovic, “Montenegro Independence Vote Splits Old Muslim Region”, *Agence France Press*, 18 May 2006.

IV. CIVIC NATIONALISM

UNTIL the new or renewed Balkan borders support in practice the ethnic nationalism widely shared by the populations of the Balkan states (in the 'narrow' sense), none of which really reflect the practices of the 'core' European states, according to Bieber, Noutzeva, Huysseune and many other experts, the EU should support the emerging of western-style 'civic nationalism', usually defined as "the collective identity of a group of people born or living in a specified territory with a shared history, and owing allegiance to a sovereign government whose powers are defined and delimited by laws enacted and enforced through institutions such as parliament or Congress that evoke common loyalty to powerful symbols and myth of nationality".²⁶ Despite the "myth of nationality" being strongly embedded into the definitions of both types of nationalism, the transition from the first to the second type is considered by many European experts to be the universal way to solve the current ethnic conflicts in the Balkans.

THE above quoted collective monograph on the "EU-zation" of the Balkan and post-Soviet conflicts using the term "divided states" in fact prioritizes the state as the object of secessionist conflicts. Bieber's notion of "divided societies" stresses the humanitarian aspects of the problem, especially the active part of human rights protection in the Balkan states. A wide range of normative options considered as possible ways to solve the problem of divided states are offered to demonstrate the possibilities of EUization. There have only been two examples in the contemporary history of the Balkans over the last fifteen years in which the concept of 'civic nationalism' has been put into practice. The first example is Croatia, where the Serbian minority was forced to escape, dispersed and demoralized, as a result of the military conflict between 1991 and 1995; only then was national legislation adjusted to meet the regulations of the Framework Convention on National Minorities and of other acts built upon 'civic nationalism' principles. Paying full respect to the impressive results of this stabilization and taking into account its human costs, I would not expect this experience to be repeated and do hope that the time when this kind of action (which amounts to ethnic cleansing) could take place has already passed.

THE second way in which this happened entailed the relevant minority being granted the rights of the titular nation within the state territory and having its new status reinforced from outside by an externally imposed constitutional framework, as was achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Bosniacs and probably may be repeated soon in Kosovo. It is, however, not yet possible to conclude whether the result will be closer to the European model of a democratic multicultural state or a distorted reflection of the late Yugoslav Federation. The EU itself does not possess the necessary institutions, resources and political will to effectively control these explosive processes, nor can the current situation in this divided state with its massive international and internal bureaucracy, as well as helpless economy, really represent a model for further development.²⁷

THE Kosovo example suggests that the EUization process, which is seen as a panacea for the region's ethnic contradictions, is understood quite differently by some Balkan actors as opposed to Brussels and Strasbourg decision makers. As Albanian President Alfred Moisiu mentioned in his public lecture in the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute in May 2006: "The Albanians do not see their future in the Greater Albania, but in their and [the] entire region's

²⁶ J. McPherson, *op. cit.*, at 48.

²⁷ Natalya Lukina, "Bosnija i Hercegovina posle Dejtona", 2 *Svobodnaya mysl* (2006), 125–138.

integration in[to] the European Union, in the liberalization of the borders, [the] enhancement of trade, cultural and political exchanges and also in the promotion of the values of democracy, dialogue and understanding.”²⁸ Unfortunately, by now there is a strong suspicion that if any trade across “liberated” borders between the Albanian-populated areas in Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro is enhanced, it will include trafficking in women, drugs and weapons, and if any “common areas” between Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (the sovereignty of which will be necessary for EUization to take place) are formed, they will hardly have much in common with the appropriate European imaginary constructions but may resemble more closely the appropriate ‘areas’ formed there by Albanian militants in the late 1990s.²⁹ If we compare the historical experience of the ‘greater’ and ‘smaller’ Balkan nations’ manipulation of the European great powers with the experience (especially that which is positive and completed) of the EU in the regulation of the Balkan conflicts, the result would hardly lean in Brussels’ favour.

THE Serbian elite, busy with the “management of the disintegration consequences”³⁰ (Madeleine Albright’s definition concerning the former USSR), may be some way away from making a reality of the proud ‘Design’ for a Greater Serbia of Ilija Garašanin; however, until the inner borders between the Serbian Republic and the Federation of Bosniacs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are more evident than those between the Serbian Republic and the Republica Srpska, the ‘common areas’ will be more conducive to the endless search for Karadjic and Mladic than to free and legal trade and other contacts. High-level Albanian or Serbian officials may deny that their states will ever pursue the ‘Greater’ projects of the nineteenth century but these very statements prove that the projects themselves or their updated versions are alive and thus they can successfully compete with the proposed European alternatives, which are still rather problematic or too pale and indefinite to be realistic.

IT appears that the fear of the Albanian and Serbian ‘Greater Projects’ remains the main obstacle to the international community rendering any real support to these core states so as to move them towards economic development, democracy and effective policies, able to wield ‘soft power’ for the purpose of attracting the appropriate minorities to a gradual and peaceful cultural integration with the titular nations. European integration was originally built by and with stabilized and regular states, not hastily erected state-like constructions. Plans for a “new Berlin Treaty” or a “new London Treaty”³¹ may be resurrected again if the reality of divided peoples is not taken into account in the current Balkan transformations. However, to my mind, the solution is not in proper ‘mapping’, which is in most cases geographically impossible. The political elites of the Albanians and the Serbs, both in their major titular parts and in their minor ethnic groups, clearly feel the equality of the two peoples in their numbers, historical experience and contemporary significance for the Balkans. What they do not feel is that they both share responsibility for the future of the ‘powder keg’ and will either have to

²⁸ See <<http://www.diplomatic-bg.com/c2/content/view/1111/47/>>.

²⁹ Ekaterina Stepanova, “Albanskij faktor v makedonskom konflikte”, in Elena Gus’kova and Jury Igritsky (eds.), *Albanskij faktor krizisa na Balkanax* (INION RAN, Moscow, 2003), 87–103, at 92–94.

³⁰ Madeleine Albright, “Zadacha SShA—Upralenie Posledstviyami Raspada Sovetskoj Imperii”, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 October 1998.

³¹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, “Redraw the Map, Stop the Killing”, *The New York Times*, 19 April 2000. Since the arguments for the immobility of the borders are mostly historical, I must state that any configuration or elimination of any border in the above mentioned region can be “historically founded”. Nevertheless the appeal to redraw the maps is highly realistic if the borders have to be reconstructed, not just changed in the same sense of the division lines.

become trustworthy partners in supporting true stability in the Balkans or go on being 'regulated' from outside as divided remnants of the "managed disintegration".

IF, as may be the case with the Albanian and Serb 'minorities', the historical approach indicates that two still forming great Balkan nations are able both to bring stability to the rest of the 'powder keg' or to go on producing bad or very bad news for the world media, the situation with the numerous and dispersed Muslim populations of the Balkans looks very different. The majority of the Balkan Muslims are found in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sandzhak,³² the latter being recently divided between Serbia and Montenegro.

HISTORICALLY, the Muslim minority in Bosna and Sandzak originated from the same Slavic population as the Serbs and Croats and their identities here were originally based upon religious distinctions. Due to the late Ottoman and early Austrian practices in this remote province, Orthodox subjects were considered to be Serbs (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were more often referred to as Vlachs) and the Catholics to be Croats.³³ The Muslims, on the contrary, called themselves Turks (this ethnic nomination was offensive to the genuine *Osmanli*) and were called Bosnians (*Boshniaci*) by the Christian population of Bosnia, although they were sometimes also called Turks (*Turci*). Since 1971, when the Muslims were officially recognized as one of the Yugoslav nations, their identity has mainly been based upon secular, cultural and local foundations.³⁴ With the formation of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, an attempt was made to add to this local, cultural and religious identity the linguistic identity of the official Bosnian language, which differs from the Latin alphabet-using Serbian language on account of the inclusion of numerous local words of Turkish origin.

THE identity of the Islamized minorities all over the Balkans looks rather flexible. Pomaks and Turks in Bulgaria and Macedonia are different by their origin, culture and language, but, at the political level, some Pomak political leaders in Bulgaria will sometimes emphasize their Turkish identity due to the stable and high political positions of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, the Turkish-minority based parliamentary party, which occupies the so-called 'pendulum position', giving its votes to the ruling majority or to the opposition in accordance with its interests. Another controversial decision underlining this flexibility was the attempt in 1993 to reconvert *en masse* the Bulgarian Pomaks to Christianity. The *Boshniak* identity shared by the Sandjak Muslims before the Austrian occupation of 1878 could continue to represent a contemporary perspective for them now, too, if the future of the 'core titular state' in Bosnia and Herzegovina were more definite and the return of numerous refugees and migrants more or less predictable.

SOME other Balkan minorities have been known since the Middle Ages and in times of stability are not mentioned much. A full compendium of their attributes is not our task, so I will mention only the main two: the Vlachs (*Aromuni*, *Tsintsari*) and Roma (*Gypsies*, *Tsigani*), both first mentioned here around a millennium ago, long before the very name of the Balkans appeared on maps. Jean-Francois Gossiaux quotes in the epigraph to his *Poivoirs ethniques dans les Balkans* former Yugoslav Minister for National and Ethnic Communities

³² See Francine Friedman, "The Muslim Slavs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with Reference to the Sandjak of Novi Pazar): Islam as National Identity", 28(1) *Nationalities Papers* (2000), 165–180.

³³ The borders of the contemporary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina are not the same as in 1878, when it was occupied by Austria-Hungary and do not follow the divisions of 1939 and of 1941: some districts of Bosnia are considered "historically Croatian". The same concerns Montenegro (Boka) and Vojvodina (Northern Bachka). See Tudzman, *op. cit.*, at 284–285.

³⁴ Francine Friedman, *op. cit.*, 165–180.

(a *Musliman* from Sandjak) Rasim Ljažić: “After the democratic elections (of 2000) some minorities appear, which we had never known before”.³⁵ A Rom from Kosovo in 2005 seems to repeat his former Yugoslav compatriot’s idea: “Now it is all mixed. Some Roma declare as Ashkalies, others as Egyptians. We did not have that before the war. We were all Roma people.” Given the elections as the reason to notice the ‘new’ minorities, our approach should follow the slip of the minister’s tongue and consider the relations of these two minorities with the power-holders of the respective states.

BOTH Vlachs and Roma have nomadic roots, which remain more or less expressed in their current ways of life and identity. Mobile against the background of the similarly mobile Balkan state boundaries, these ‘absolute’ minorities tend to view and treat state boundaries in a different way to other groups in the region. Invisible from a geopolitical perspective or, as the abovementioned example shows, even from a minister’s chair, they have lived their own life through the centuries by building their own models of political behaviour. Traditional historical instruments can hardly help us to investigate these models, which are more objects of ethnography, as we used to say in Russia, or of cultural anthropology. Excellent observations of the “Vlach model” by Gossiaux and his Bulgarian disciple Ekaterina Anastasova show the dimensions of the adaptability of the “invisible” minorities within the Balkan nations.³⁶

BY origin, the Vlach model has Byzantine roots: to be ‘half-Vlach’ was considered prestigious and useful in the higher circles of the Byzantine Empire not only because of the mystic qualities ascribed to Vlachs by legend but also because of the real network of Vlach-related Byzantine aristocracy, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and later, after the restoration of the empire in the late thirteenth century. The Vlach presence was evident in the Second Bulgarian Tzardom in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.³⁷ In our times, two contemporary Balkan states—Bulgaria in 1954-89 and Macedonia in 1991-99—have been headed by ‘half-Vlachs’ by their mothers: Todor Zhivkov and Kiro Gligorov. Vlach community-based networks had always worked and still work at different levels, allowing the whole ethnic group to exist and adapt to the changing environment. The censuses of the second half of the twentieth century in Balkan states clearly reflect the imitative abilities of the Vlach (Arumanian) minority, which was dispersed, having very few definite ethnic areas or centres but able to construct their own model of survival and to follow it for ages. Another trait clearly seen from the historical distance of at least a century and a half is the clear unwillingness of the Vlachs-Arumanians to be connected to the state of Romania and to be considered, as the latter many times has claimed, to be a Romanian national minority. Having in mind the dispersed situation of the Vlach communities in many Balkan states, the advocacy and information networks they have elaborated, together with their ethnic, social and political mimicry, make them an excellent model for arriving at transborder decisions rather than changing border ones.

CONCERNING the Roma problem, a historian will hardly take seriously the idea of their full integration into the democratized Balkan societies, having in mind, first, that the Romany communities in practice are integrated into Balkan realities in a specific way and go on

³⁵ Quoted in Jean-Francois Gossiaux, *Pouvoirs Ethniques dans les Balkans* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2002).

³⁶ Gossiaux, *Vlast i Etnos ...*, 202–229; and Ekaterina Anastasova, *Etnichnost, tradicija, vlast. Etudi za prexoda* (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Marin Drinov”, 2006), at 19–51.

³⁷ Tom J. Winniffrith, *The Vlachs: The History of a Balkan People* (Duckworth, London, 1987), at 110–122.

perfecting this integration. Deeply divided into a ruling elite and a majority living in misery, the Romany communities nevertheless bridge these internal divides with a high level of network integration between them. State boundaries have never been problematic for the Roma communication networks and even for migrations, as well as a wide range of transborder activities, including illegal ones. It is enough to compare the palaces of the Bulgarian, Romanian, Moldavian or Macedonian Romany elite in the border regions of the mentioned states with the suburban *favellas* (including those inherited from the socialist period) in bigger cities or even in the capitals³⁸ to understand that the question of Roma integration cannot be solved without profound consideration of the complicated interrelations between Romany communities, not only in each of the Balkan states but in all of them, as well as the mechanisms supporting the Romany transnational advocacy networks, including those aspects of them that include illegal economic activities and transborder criminality. Giving full respect to the issues of political correctness and having in mind the inhuman practices that have been based upon the thesis of 'Gypsy-Sinti criminality', I would nevertheless insist on the high significance of this theme for the current situation in regard to Roma minorities across the Balkans in the wide sense of the word. One task is to withstand the stereotypes of 'Gypsy criminality' or the appeals of the nationalists not to allow themselves 'to be ruled by Gypsies', another is to engage in scholarly analysis of why such stereotypes appear in the first place. It is one thing to note that Roma origin is ascribed by popular opinion to political leaders (in Bulgaria, for instance, three post-communist Presidents were labelled as Roma), another to take into consideration the real Roma shadow leaders with their political influence and involvement in the corruption/common illness of all the Balkan states and of transnational criminality.

SOME years ago, Will Kymlicka formulated "three interrelated assumptions which are now widely accepted by the East-Central Europe countries": the disloyalty of minorities to "their" states; that relations between the minorities and the appropriate states are a "zero-sum" game; and that the treatment of minorities is considered in terms of national security.³⁹ Sharing in general his observations, I will finish these notes with some assumptions that, to my mind, affect the bulk of contemporary, mostly western, literature on the Balkan minorities. First, leaving aside the question of the concrete institutional organization of the post-Yugoslav legacy in the 'shrinking conflict area', the problem of the Albanian and Serbian "divided peoples" remains in the shadow of the numerous problems concerning minorities and the minorities are usually represented as more solid and real communities than the 'big' nations, which are often considered to be 'imagined' or 'constructed' (although networking minorities could be more effective than divided majorities too). Second, the principle of the 'presumption of goodwill', usually granted by the literature to minorities, is mostly not applied to the 'big' nations and the measures of the international community to provide a future for the minorities seem designed in opposition to the presumed will of the 'big' nations to swallow them, which does not always respond to reality. Third, the approach to national problems in general is mostly based upon traditional definitions of security, while contemporary approaches stress non-military challenges such as organized criminality, trafficking in drugs, arms and people, illegal migrations, etc. Unfortunately, the shadow organizers of these illegal activities learned to involve some minorities in them much earlier than the legal institutions found ways to prevent it.

³⁸ Anastasova, *op. cit.*, 21–27.

³⁹ Will Kymlicka, "Multiculturalism and Minority Rights", 4 *JEMIE* (2002).

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