
Balkans and Balkanisation: Western Perceptions of the Balkans in the Carnegie Commission's Reports on the Balkan Wars from 1914 to 1996

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Abstract

The Yugoslav Wars broke out at a time when the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Velvet Revolutions in Czechoslovakia and other countries in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc had instilled a sense of hope that Europe would become 'whole and free', and that the end of the European wars heralded a millennia of peace and democracy. The crisis and the collapse of the former Yugoslavia 're-balkanised' Southeast Europe and revived old Western stereotypes about the Balkans and 'Balkanisation'. The author attempts to determine the origin of the ideas and values that influenced Western policy towards this crisis, through a comparative analysis of two reports on the Balkan Wars by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace from 1914 and 1996, respectively. In the author's opinion, the cause of the Balkan Wars in the 1990s was not 'old hatreds' between the Balkan nations, but the remnants of the old communist regimes, which in an effort to retain power had embraced nationalism as their policies, and thus came into conflict with the new values that brought an end to the Cold War. The author concludes that the conflict between conservative ('Balkan') and liberal ('European') values was the reason for the slogan "the flight from the Balkans", and the political disputes that evolved into bitter armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Key Words

Balkans, Balkanisation, war, ethnic conflict, the European Union, the Cold War, NATO.

Introduction

The Yugoslav Wars broke out at a time when the fall of the Berlin Wall, the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc had instilled a sense of hope that Europe would be whole and free, and that the history of European wars was coming to a close, heralding a millennium of peace and democracy.¹ The crisis and the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s 're-balkanised' Southeast Europe and revived old Western stereotypes about the Balkans and Balkanisation. According to Western observers, the crisis in the Balkans had brought wars back to Europe² and, instead of Europeanising the Balkans, threatened to 'balkanise' Europe. This gave rise to a proliferation of studies in the West about the Balkans. Some, by reinterpreting or rewriting

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history, proposed or justified political and military solutions for the Balkan crisis, while others sought to elucidate the history of the Balkans and to explain the 'balkanisation' phenomenon. Among the first group, the studies by Samuel Huntington, Robert Kaplan, Noel Malcolm and Morton Abramowitz³ stand out for the influence they had on U.S. and EU policies; the most noteworthy authors of the latter group include Maria Todorova, Vesna Goldsworthy and Mark Mazower, among others.⁴

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Despite the differences in the motives and the content of their works, these authors largely agree that the Balkans at the end of the 20th century resembled the Balkans at the end of the 19th century, that it was and still is the 'powder keg' that threatened and still threatens Europe, and that the Western perception of the Balkans at the end of the 20th century resembled that at the end of the 19th century. The first group of authors considers the Balkans as a European periphery (sometimes called

as 'Savage Europe')⁵ which threatens the entire continent with its endless mutual conflicts. Therefore, according to them, the task of the great powers is to impose on the Balkans, by force if necessary, the rules of civilised behaviour, or else risk seeing the Balkan conflicts spill over into the entire continent, as was the case with World War I.⁶ Robert Kaplan, in his book *Balkan Ghosts* (1993), George Kennan, in the foreword to the book *The Other Balkan Wars* (1993), and the authors of the book *Unfinished Peace* (1996), have gone furthest in that direction. The conflicts between the Serbs and the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo gave rise to historical revisionism by the British author Noel Malcolm in his book *Kosovo: A Short History*.⁷ These books influenced strategic thinking in the United States and Europe, and the decision by NATO countries to intervene in the former Yugoslavia in 1995 and 1999. In contrast, the second group of authors considers the interests and disputes of the great powers over this area, situated on the fringe of Europe, as the very causes of the conflicts in the Balkans.

The stereotypes about the Balkans formed at the turn of the 20th century remain fundamentally unchanged even in the beginning of the 21st century. For many westerners the Balkans remain

a mysterious region on the southeast border of Europe. It is the successor of the Byzantine Empire (“opposed to the tradition of western civilisation”), the only part of the continent that had long been “a colony of an oriental power”, from which they received a set of characteristics incompatible with modern European societies (oriental despotism, violence, corruption, and so on), and which, therefore, does not belong in Europe”.⁸ In her book *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova addresses these stereotypes, taking as a starting point the works of Edward Said about the myth of Orientalism in Western culture, which establishes the ‘Orient’ as antithetical to European civilisation.⁹ Thus, for example, the EU’s reluctance to admit Turkey as a member is often explained by incompatibility of the Islamic tradition with the EU’s Christian foundations. However, some see the reasons for the EU’s rejection of Turkey in the fear that this country, a rising economic power with a growing population, may shortly become one of the EU’s leading members and shift the EU’s centre of gravity to the East.¹⁰ The financial crisis that started in the autumn of 2008 in the United States and which spread to Europe in 2009 most severely affected the southern EU countries – Greece, Spain and Portugal

– sparing Turkey, because of which there are opinions nowadays that the EU development model is not appropriate for the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The Balkans: Europe and its Other

The name Balkan¹¹ did not come into widespread use until the first half of the 19th century, when it became necessary to create a specific designation for this region: “The choice was at least partly due to the fact that in the first half of the nineteenth century the mountain range became famous as the theatre of the Russo-Turkish Wars and, until 1877, this natural bulwark formed the second and most important line for Istanbul”.¹² Until that time the region known today as the Balkans had been divided between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and referred to as a part of a broader area of the ‘Orient’, or the ‘European part of Turkey’ or ‘Turkey in Europe’, along with the use of the ancient term ‘Haemus’. The European region of the Ottoman Empire was generally referred to as Rumelia or the Roman or Christian part of the Empire.¹³

The Eastern Crisis, the conquests of the Habsburgs and the Russians in the 18th century, and national revolutions

that broke out in the Balkans in the 19th century, made the Balkans politically visible in Europe. The Age of Enlightenment and the rise of Europe made it politically incorrect to associate this part of the continent with a declining oriental power. For European travel writers in the 18th and 19th centuries, its land and its people “merely served as a kind of mirror in which they saw themselves and noticed, first and foremost, how advanced and civilised they were. In this respect, we can argue that there can be no Europe without the Balkans.”¹⁴ The earliest mention of the word ‘Balkan’ in Western Europe dates back to 1490, in a memorandum the Italian humanist and diplomat Philippus Callimachus sent to Pope Innocent VIII. It was Frederick Calvert who introduced the name ‘Balkans’ into the English language.¹⁵ This name occasionally appeared in the notes of John Moritt¹⁶ and other Europeans who travelled to the European part of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The German geographer Johan August Zeune put the term ‘Balkan Peninsula’ (*Balkanhalbinsel*) in official use in his book *Gea: Versuch Einer Wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung* in 1808 where he wrote: “In the north this Balkan Peninsula is divided from the rest of Europe by the long mountain chain of the Balkans, or

the former Albanus, Schards, Haemus, which to the northwest joins the Alps in the small Istrian Peninsula, and to the east fades away into the Black Sea in two branches”.¹⁷ The reason why Zeune defined the Balkan Peninsula as such was probably the belief, present in Europe since the Renaissance time, in the *catena mundi*, the chain of the world, a mountain range stretching from the Pyrenees in the west all the way to the Balkans in the east, with Mount Balkan (*Stara Planina* – Old Mountain in Bulgarian and Serbian) as its northeastern border of the peninsula. Two decades later in 1830, the French geographer Ami Boué offered an accurate description of this mountain. The German author Theobald Fischer in the mid-19th century proposed *Südosteuropa* (Southeast Europe) as the name for this region, but this name also acquired a political connotation during World War II. This explains why geographical boundaries of this region have not been clearly defined to date, but may include, depending on the source, the entire region of Southeast Europe, or only the region between the Danube River and the Aegean Sea, sometimes without Greece.

The European attitude towards the Orient and the oriental empires in Europe underwent a rather curious evolution during the 18th and 19th

centuries, which had a significant impact on the way European authors of that period perceived the Balkans. Supremacy of absolute monarchies in Europe and the power of oriental empires- the Ottoman and the Chinese in particular – in the 18th century were reasons for the enthusiasm for oriental societies found among a number of European thinkers (Maréchal de Vauban, Quesnay, Voltaire, Leibnitz and others).¹⁸ Later on the decline of oriental societies and the rise of European colonialism led to disdain towards ‘oriental despotism’¹⁹ and their ‘non-historic development’ (Fénelon, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel), which have persisted up to this day in the form of the ‘Orientalism’ that Edward Said elaborates upon. The classicism in European culture, the uprisings in Serbia, and the Greek War of Independence in the first half of the 19th century attracted the attention of Lord Byron, Eugène Delacroix and other European public figures of that time. Similar motives inspired romantic philhellenism in Europe and induced British and French governments to provide the support to Greek insurgents that led to the independence of Greece.²⁰

In the mid- 19th century, however, Balkanophilia was gradually replaced by Balkanophobia, and the whole region received the label of ‘European powder keg’. National revolutions resulted

in the creation of new states, whose ambitions gave rise to numerous ethnic and territorial disputes. The influence of the European ‘Belle Époque’ was felt in the Balkans as well, where cities and industry began to develop and newly liberated societies embarked on the process of Europeanisation. At the same time there appeared opinions in Europe that Europeanisation had severed the links of the Balkan nations with their history, and that the Balkans was coming to signify the ‘European other’. The exacerbation of the Eastern Crisis since 1875, the interests of the then great powers and frictions between the newly emerged Balkan states made Chancellor Bismarck say, at the time of the Congress of Berlin (1878), that “The whole of the Balkans is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier” [*Der ganze Balkan ist nicht die gesunden Knochen eines einzigen pommerschen Grenadiers wert*], and that ‘if there is ever another war in Europe, it will come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans’.²¹ The popular European fiction of that time began depicting the Balkans as a mystical region ruled by dark forces²² and melodramatic despots,²³ whose adventures entertained the readers of Paris and London’s ‘boulevard press’.²⁴

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 were the culmination of this process. They were met with contradictory reactions

by the Western public (first report of the Carnegie Endowment on the Balkans, the report by Leon Trotsky,²⁵ etc.). As Bismarck had anticipated, the 'Balkan powder keg' indeed exploded in June 1914 in Sarajevo with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. The assassination set in motion a chain of events that resulted in the outbreak of World War I. The fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the war, followed by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent emergence of new states in the Balkans, were the events that gave rise to the term 'balkanisation',²⁶ coined to denote the fragmentation of multi-ethnic states into smaller, ethnically homogeneous and mutually hostile states, but also the conflicts that are pejoratively called *Kleinstaaterei* in the German language, and 'beggar-thy-neighbour' politics' or 'Libanisation' in English. The creation of the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the aftermath of World War I (and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since 1929) brought about certain changes in the Western perception of the Balkans, as testified by Rebecca West in her book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*.²⁷

Maria Todorova therefore assigns a positive connotation to the terms

'Balkan' and 'balkanisation', related to the processes of Europeanisation of Balkan societies in the 19th and 20th centuries. A more careful reading of the history of Balkan societies of this period points to the fact that, despite the history of mutual conflicts, there existed brief periods (1911-1912, 1934, 1953-1954) when Balkan nations fostered mutual cooperation under the influence of great powers, whose interests called for strengthening of political and military relations among the Balkan nations. Seen from a longer historical perspective, the slogan 'Balkans for the Balkan people' has a tradition in almost all of the Balkan countries (Rigas Feraios in Greece, Prince Mihailo Obrenović in Serbia, Aleksandar Stamboliyski in Bulgaria, Nicolae Titulesku in Romania, etc.). However, influential sections of the Western public even today tend to define Europe by contrasting it with the East (including the Balkans), perpetuating the myth of the Balkans as being 'non-European'.²⁸

Liberal ideas and strained relations between the European powers at the end of the 19th century gave rise to the birth and spread of the peace movement in Europe and the United States.

The First Carnegie Commission Report on the Balkans (1914)

Liberal ideas and strained relations between the European powers at the end of the 19th century gave rise to the birth and spread of the peace movement in Europe and the United States, which, according to Maria Todorova, “sought to create new legal codes of international behaviour”. When the Russian Tsar Nicholas II Romanov announced his initiative for the convocation of an international conference on disarmament, the West embraced it with enthusiasm. As a result, two such conferences were held, in 1899 and 1907, both in The Hague. They spurred further codification of international law, especially international humanitarian law, as well as endeavours aimed at settling international disputes through arbitration²⁹ and conciliation.³⁰ Many of the American intellectuals and industrialists of that period endorsed these efforts. Among them was Andrew Carnegie, at whose initiative the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was founded in 1910 in the United States.³¹ Paradoxically enough, the peace movement coincided with a growing crisis and polarisation of great powers within two rival blocks- Central Powers

and Entente Countries- which led to the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

The international public attention that the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 attracted, and the reports on crimes committed by the belligerents, prompted the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to convene a group of American and European experts to investigate the causes and conducts of the Balkan Wars. Nicholas Murray Butler, one of the leaders of the Endowment and the president of Columbia University, sent a cable to the president of the Endowment, Elihu Root, on 13 June 1913 in which he wrote: “Amazing charges of Bulgarian outrages attributed to the King of Greece give us a great opportunity for prompt action. If you approve I will send notable commission at once to the Balkans to ascertain facts and to fix responsibility for prolonging hostilities and coming outrages. Please reply [...] today”.³² The response was favourable, and within less than a month a commission, comprising Josef Redlich from Austria, Justin Godart from France, Walter Schücking from Germany, Francis W. Hirst and H. N. Brailsford from Great Britain, Pavel Milyukov from Russia, and T. Dutton from the USA, and presided over by the French senator d’Estournelles de Constant, was sent to Belgrade.³³ The Second Balkan War did not last long, and immediately

after its end the commission completed its work. Their report was published in 1914 by the Endowment.

The report is divided into seven chapters, which discuss the historical causes of the Balkan Wars, civilian casualties in war operations, relations among the Bulgarians, Turks and Serbs, national issues in the Balkans, the Balkan Wars and international law, economic consequences of the Wars, moral and social consequences of the Wars, and the position of Macedonia. The President of the commission, Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, was quite clear in his introduction about the objectives of the report: "Let us repeat, for the benefit of those who accuse us of 'bleating for peace at any price', what we always maintained: war rather than slavery, arbitration rather than war, conciliation rather than arbitration. I hoped that this collective victory, heretofore considered impossible, of the allies over Turkey—which had just concluded peace with Italy and which we still believed formidable—would free Europe from the nightmare of the Eastern Question, and give her the unhopèd-for example of union and coordination which she lacks. We know how this war, after having exhausted, as it seemed, all that the belligerents could lavish, in one way or another, of heroism and blood, was only the prelude to a second fratricidal war between the allies

of the previous day, and how this second war was the more atrocious of the two".³⁴

De Constant and other commission members made a distinction between the First and the Second Balkan Wars. While the First was fought for freedom and thus was considered to be a "supreme protest against violence and generally the protest of the weak against the strong", and "glorious and popular throughout the world", the Second was a predatory war in which "both the victor and the vanquished lose materially and morally". Owing to their liberal ideas, the authors of the report were convinced, despite the heroism and casualties of the belligerent parties, that they should raise their voices against the human and material toll of these wars and the threat they posed to the future: "The real culprits in this long list of executions, assassinations, drownings, burnings, massacres and atrocities furnished by our report, are not, we repeat, the Balkan peoples. Here pity must conquer indignation. Do not let us condemn the victims [...] The real culprits are those who, by interest or inclination, declare that war is inevitable, and by making it so, assert that they are powerless to prevent it".³⁵

The logical conclusion that stemmed from the perspective of liberal internationalism was of 'humanitarian interventionism' that the 'civilised world' must resort to in order to stop

the ‘barbarism’ of the Balkan peoples. The authors of the Carnegie report therefore emphasise: “What is the duty of the civilised world in the Balkans? [...] It is clear in the first place that they should cease to exploit these nations for gain. They should encourage them to make arbitration treaties and insist upon keeping them. They should set a good example by seeking a judicial settlement of all international disputes”. The report by the Carnegie Commission was soon to be overshadowed by upcoming events; only several months after the report’s publication, World War I broke out, as the first war of the industrial era in which the use of modern weapons (tanks, submarines, aircrafts and weapons of mass destruction) changed the rules of war, with the result of approximately 15 million deaths. The ‘civilised world’ sank into the barbarism of a total war, in which Old Europe ceased to exist, and which opened the ‘short twentieth century’ (Eric Hobsbawm),³⁶ marked by numerous wars and unprecedented deaths and suffering of civilians.

The Second Carnegie Commission Report on the Balkans (1996)

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) was the subject of numerous studies at the time, two of which stand

out in particular for their influence on U.S. and EU policies.

The first is a travelogue by the American journalist Robert Kaplan- *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*³⁷-published in 1993. Kaplan’s intent was, half a century after Rebecca West, to explore Balkan history, art and politics “in the liveliest fashion possible”. Completed in 1990, the book was rejected by several American editors who believed that American readers had already lost interest in the events in Eastern Europe. Thus the book was published only after the Yugoslav Wars had broken out, and soon became, according to *The New York Times*, “the best-known book associated with the Clinton administration”. The reasons for this were provided by the author himself in the foreword to the second edition: “In 1993, just as President Clinton was contemplating forceful action to halt the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he and Mrs. Clinton were said to have read *Balkan Ghosts*. The history of the ethnic rivalry I had detailed reportedly encouraged the President’s pessimism about the region, and – so it is said – was a factor in his decision not to launch an overt military response in support of the Bosnian Muslims, who were besieged by the Bosnian Serbs”.³⁸

While the bulk of the text in this book depicts the author’s personal

experience of the Balkans, the foreword to the second edition, written after the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars, contains some of the most dramatic expressions of Western stereotypes of this region:

“The Balkans produced the century’s first terrorists. IMRO (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation) was the Palestine Liberation Organisation of the 1920s and the 1930s, with Bulgarian paymasters, dedicated to recovering the parts of Macedonia taken by Greece and Yugoslavia after the Second Balkan War. Like the present day Shiites of Beirut’s southern suburbs, the IMRO’s killers, who swore allegiance over a gun and an Orthodox Bible, came from the rootless, peasant proletariat of the Skopje, Belgrade and Sofia slums. Hostage-taking and wholesale slaughter of innocents were common. Even the fanaticism of the Iranian clergy has a Balkan precedent. During the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, a Greek bishop in Macedonia ordered the assassination of a Bulgarian politician and then had the severed head brought back to the church and photographed it. Twentieth-century history came from the Balkans. Here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming them to hate. Here politics has been reduced to a level of near anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed up the Danube into Central Europe. Nazism, for instance, can claim Balkan origins. Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously.”³⁹

The second text is the reprint of the report of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace of 1914, with a new

introduction written by the well-known American diplomat George Kennan, the author of the *Long Telegram* of 1946⁴⁰ and the doctrine of containment during the Cold War. The report was reprinted at the initiative of the president of the Carnegie Endowment, Morton Abramowitz, the undersecretary of State for intelligence and planning in the State Department in Jimmy Carter’s administration and the U.S. ambassador to Turkey (1989-1991). In the preface to this edition Abramowitz explained the motives that drove him to have the 1914 report reissued, stating that it is a document “with many stories to tell us in this twilight decade of the century, when yet again a conflict in the Balkans torments Europe and the conscience of the international community, and when our willingness to act has not been matched by our capacity for moral outrage”.⁴¹ The task to establish a link between the 1914 report and the Yugoslav Wars Abramowitz entrusted to the ‘dean of U.S. diplomacy’, George Kennan, the U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia during 1961-1963.⁴²

Kennan’s introductory essay opens with an analysis of the onset of the peace movement in the United States and Europe, from which the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace arose in 1910. The liberal

internationalism of Woodrow Wilson, to which the United States returned during its dominance over the international arena in the decades following the end of the Cold War, also originated from this movement. Since the Balkans was one of the key locations for U.S. interests both at the beginning and the end of the 20th century, Kennan asserts that “the importance of this report for the world of 1993 lies primarily on the excruciating situation prevailing today in the same Balkan world with which it dealt. The greatest value of the report is to reveal to the people of this age how much of today’s problem has deep roots and how much does not. It will be easier to think of solutions when such realities are kept in mind”.⁴³ Despite differences between the Balkan Wars at the beginning of the 20th century and those fought at its end, Kennan finds important similarities between them: none of the wars were conducted by the military alone, but by entire nations; they were all driven by grand national ideas of megalomania, and the participation of irregular armed forces resulted in numerous atrocities against the civilian population. In keeping with the traditional Western perceptions of the Balkans, Kennan sees the reasons for this in ‘ancient hatreds’, which have deep roots not only in the present but also in the past: “Those roots reach back, not only into centuries of

Turkish domination, but also into the Byzantine penetration of the Balkans even before that time”.⁴⁴

Kennan dedicates the final part of his essay to the role of the United States and Europe in the Balkans. He draws three conclusions based on the first Carnegie report. Firstly, while this Balkan situation is one to which the United States cannot be indifferent, it is primarily a problem for the Europeans. Secondly, no country or group of countries could be expected to occupy the Balkans, to subdue its agitated peoples and to hold them in order, until they are able calm down and begin to look at their problems in a more orderly way. Thirdly, there is a problem for a more distant future, once the conflicts are over, but the question will remain as to what kind of mutual relations the Balkan nations will have. His answer is that a new and clearly accepted territorial *status quo* has to be implemented, and that effective restrictions must be imposed on the states in this region, including the restrictions on their sovereignty. The West, consequently, must be ready to use force, i.e., to resort to ‘humanitarian intervention’, where diplomacy fails to produce results.

The NATO intervention of 1995 stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Peace Conference for

Bosnia opened in the autumn of the same year in Dayton (USA). While the conference was still underway, Morton Abramowitz visited the Balkans to get acquainted with the situation, and announced that the Carnegie Endowment would establish a new commission with the task of defining a framework of future arrangements for the Balkans.⁴⁵ The former Belgian prime minister Leo Tindemans was appointed the president of the commission, which consisted of respectable figures from the United States and Europe, such as Lloyd Cutler and David Anderson from the United States, Bronislaw Geremek from Poland, John Roper from Great Britain, Theo Sommer from Germany and Simone Veil from France. The first version of the commission's report had been written by Jacques Rupnik (France), Dana H. Allin and Mark Thompson (Great Britain) and James Brown (United States), even before the commission had arrived in the Balkans.⁴⁶

That only the Western Alliance, embodied by NATO, had the capacity to stop this war, and that the sole reason why this had not been done before 1995 was the reluctance of Western countries to use force in the Balkans.

In addition to the reasons stated by Abramowitz and Kennan in the reprint of the first Carnegie Endowment report, the authors of the second report spoke about the international outrage caused by the civil wars in Yugoslavia:

“It was nourished by the inability- some would say unwillingness- of the major Western powers to prevent, mitigate, or terminate the bloodshed and destruction in its initial phases. No state, statesman, or international institution responded with honour to this challenge. The European Community, proclaiming the opportunity to stop the wars of Yugoslav dissolution ‘the hour of Europe’, mediated an endless succession of truces. One by one, these were violated as the ink was still drying on the cease-fire documents. The Americans, under President Bill Clinton, as under his predecessor George Bush, were content to leave the matter to the Europeans. Both the Americans and the Europeans dithered almost to the eve of the Dayton Agreement. In the same vein, the United Nations revealed glaring deficiencies as the war widened. It also brokered one peace plan after another, only to see each torn up by one or all of the warring parties of Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as it had been agreed upon.”⁴⁷

The structure of the report reflected the views that prevailed in mid-1990s, not only with regard to the Balkans, but also with regard to U.S. and EU policies as a whole. The first chapter, titled *Balkan Predicament*, examines the causes of civil war in Yugoslavia from the perspective of three popular hypotheses: conflicting interests of the great powers, the ‘ancient

hatreds', and the 'clash of civilisations'. The authors of the report see the dual legacy of communism and nationalism, and the failed transition towards democracy, as reasons for the breakup of Yugoslavia. In the second chapter, entitled *The War and the International Response*, the authors' attention turns to the United States and the EU, where the Bosnian War incited the first serious debate on foreign policy since the Cold War.⁴⁸ Analysing the steps taken by these two countries during the first three years of the Yugoslav Wars, the authors come to the conclusion that this war caused severe tensions, at first within the EU—especially between Germany and France—and later on between the transatlantic allies ('the deepest crises after the Suez'), and brought to the surface the differences between U.S. interests in preserving NATO and EU ambitions to build its own security system. For the authors of the report there was no doubt that only the Western Alliance, embodied by NATO, had the capacity to stop this war, and that the sole reason why this had not been done before 1995 was the reluctance of Western countries to use force in the Balkans. In support of this point, the report quotes a statement made in August 1991 by Jacques Poos, President of the EC Council of Ministers, about the ambition of the EU Community to take matters into their own hands and settle

the crisis 'in their own backyard': "This is the hour of Europe. It is not the hour of Americans".⁴⁹ The failure of the EC (today's EU) to settle this crisis was the reason why the United States resumed a leading role in this matter, which led to the NATO intervention in 1995. While considering that the intervention was driven by essentially humanitarian and moral reasons, the authors admit that a more thorough analysis indicates that there also existed strategic reasons for the American military presence in the Balkans.

The second Balkan report by the Carnegie Endowment, just like the first one, is dedicated to post-conflict development in the Balkans and to the U.S. and European role therein. Its very title—*Unfinished Peace*—points to the conclusion that NATO intervention did stop the war, but did not bring lasting peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, the authors believe that the intervention came too late, and that the peace conference would have brought better results than those achieved in Dayton in 1995 had it been organised sooner. The third chapter of the report, titled *Country Conditions, Trends and Proposals*, contains a series of policy recommendations for the Balkans in the future, many of which were indeed implemented in the years that followed. The same approach was maintained

in the final chapter, titled *The Region: Conclusions and Proposals*, which contains recommendations for U.S. and EU policies towards the entire Balkan region. Thus, for example, it is recommended that the West should encourage regional economic cooperation in the Balkans, including accession of the Balkan states to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which indeed proved to be one of the biggest achievements of the past decade. The report also suggests that strong support should be given to reconstruction and development, to removal of obstacles to democratisation, and to building a civil society and a free media, but also to the control of arms and armed forces in the region.

As was the case with the first Carnegie Endowment report, the second report was overshadowed by subsequent events. While the Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an undoubted success in its military aspects, the logic of disintegration of Yugoslavia shifted the centre of crisis to Kosovo, which for tactical reasons was not included in the Dayton Peace Conference agenda. The Dayton Agreement temporarily reinforced the chief culprits of war in power, and Kosovo Albanians turned to guerrilla-style fighting aimed to trigger another NATO intervention in the Balkans. The first armed conflicts

in Kosovo broke out as early as 1996 and escalated in 1998 to a large-scale guerrilla war. In September 1998 *The New York Times* published a letter by the *International Crisis Group*, titled *Mr President, Milosevic is the Problem*.⁵⁰ The letter, signed by 30-odd American experts, called for a new military intervention in the Balkans. NATO again intervened in the Balkans from March to June 1999, with a military action in which about 2,000 civilians lost their lives.

Conclusion

Were the ethnic and religious conflicts in the Balkans, the balkanisation, the product of the ‘ancient hatreds’ or the cause and/or consequence of the ‘clash of civilisations’ and the great powers in the Balkans? Six wars were fought in the Balkans during the 20th century (the First and the Second Balkan Wars, two World Wars, the Greek Civil War and the Civil War in Yugoslavia), while its geographic centre- Belgrade- became the most-often bombarded European capital city (1914, 1915, 1941, 1944 and 1999).⁵¹ Other than that, the Balkans spent the rest of the century for the most part in peace, which was the result of the international order created after the two World Wars. Although horrific in the manner in which they were conducted and the consequences and the crimes

committed, the wars fought in the Balkans do not differ substantially from other civil or religious wars fought in Europe or elsewhere. The authors of the first Carnegie Endowment report had certain moral dilemmas when assessing these wars; the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 was largely a liberal response to the issue of balkanisation.

Strong support should be given to reconstruction and development, to removal of obstacles to democratisation, and to building a civil society and a free media, but also to the control of arms and armed forces in the region.

Peace and stability in the Balkans, a region situated on the fringe of Europe, between Eastern and Western Europe, between Europe and the 'Orient', have always been dependent on the stability of large geographic and political entities adjacent to the Balkans. The Balkans became a borderland and a stage for the 'clash of civilizations' at the time of the division of the Roman Empire, and the region retained such a character that was subsequently reinforced by rifts within the Christian world, the penetration of Islam in the Middle Ages, the conflicts between the Ottoman and

Habsburg Empires, and, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the clashes between the Central Powers and the Entente Countries in World War I and the Axis and the Allies in World War II, and finally, the rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. International arrangements for the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries were, as a rule, either the product of agreements between the great powers (the Congress of Berlin, the Treaty of Versailles and the Yalta Conference), or made under their immediate influence (the London Conference of the Ambassadors, the Treaty of Bucharest, the Dayton Accord). It was only when strained relations between the great non-Balkan powers made such arrangements impossible that the Balkans experienced turmoil and armed conflicts.

The breakdown of the bipolar world order in Europe marked the end of the international order upon which the former Yugoslavia had been founded. Such were the circumstances in which the crisis broke out, followed by the dissolution of and the civil wars in Yugoslavia. The dissolution, however, did not begin in the underdeveloped South, but in the developed North, under the slogans "the flight' from the Balkans" to "join Europe". The chain of conflicts they initiated led to the 're-balkanisation of the Balkans' and the revival of the

old western myths about this region. That fact that in both the United States and Europe at that time the prevailing Wilsonian liberalism idea that the right of a nation to self-determination should lead to the breakup of the multinational and multicultural Yugoslav Federation, the country that Woodrow Wilson created in 1918 on the basis of these very principles, seems rather paradoxical. Such a conclusion challenges the thesis, popular in the West at the beginning and the end of 20th century, that “Balkan Wars caused the wars in Europe”. The Civil

war in Yugoslavia did not spill over into neighbouring states, World War II did not start in the Balkans, and even World War I was the consequence of

frictions between two military alliances that were created before the Balkan Wars. The assassination in Sarajevo in 1914 did trigger a chain of events leading to the breakout of the World War I, but its actual causes were much deeper, as testified by numerous crises that preceded it (the first Moroccan crisis in 1905-1906, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908, the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912, the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911, and so forth).

The very use of the term ‘balkanisation’ to denote numerous conflicts in the 20th century Europe and worldwide is therefore self-revealing. It is used, as a rule, to refer to complicated conflicts involving numerous domestic and foreign actors, in which moral outrage and hysteria often serve as a pretext for ‘interventions of the civilised world’ and ‘humanitarian interventions’, which often conceal the true strategic motives, and it thus becomes another name for *proxy wars*. The Balkans have been, since this term was coined in early 19th

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century, a border area in a geopolitical sense, whose stability has depended less on the relations among the nations and states who inhabit this region, and much

more on the relations between the powers adjacent to it. Thus the disappearance of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc in 1989 disrupted the balance that had existed and enabled the long-standing crisis of the ‘second Yugoslavia’ to become a crisis of the Yugoslav idea itself, and eventually led to the breakup of the Yugoslav Federation. As a result of the intervention of the Euro-Atlantic community, the Balkan Crisis did not spill over into neighbouring states. The two interventions (in 1995 and 1999)

not only did stop the war but also gave the Euro-Atlantic alliance (NATO) a whole new sense of purpose in the post-Cold War era, as a guardian of the “West against the rest”.⁵² As was the case in late 19th century, the Balkans and balkanisation at the beginning of 21st

century still represent, for a large segment of the Western community, a part of the constitutive myth of the Occident as a separate civilisation, different from the Orient (East) which begins “on the border of Europe with the Balkans”.

Endnotes

- 1 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of a History and a Last Man*, New York, The Free Press, 1992.
- 2 Hans Stark, *Les Balkans: Retour des Guerres en Europe*, Paris, IFRI, 1993.
- 3 Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?””, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49; Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York, Vintage Press, 1993; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, New York, New York University Press, 1998.
- 4 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997; Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: Imperialism of the Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, New York, The Modern Library, 2002.
- 5 Harry de Windt, *Through Savage Europe*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1907.
- 6 Charles Gati, “From Sarajevo to Sarajevo”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Autumn 1992).
- 7 British journalist Tim Judah, writing in *The New York Review of Books*, likened Mr Malcolm’s task to “someone claiming that the Mayflower sailed from America to Britain or that Ellis Island had little to do with immigration to the United States”. Quoted in Eric Alterman, “Untangling Balkan Knots of Myth and Aftermath”, *The New York Times*, 31 July 1999.
- 8 Former Belgian Minister and Secretary-General of NATO, Willy Claes, noted in 1992: “The countries of South-Eastern Europe in the cultural sense belong to the Byzantine Empire, which collapsed; they lack democratic tradition and tradition of respect for minorities. Therefore, it would be proper that the enlargement of the (European) Community be restricted to the ‘cultural circle’ of Western countries. The enlargement of the community should be restricted to the Protestant and Catholic cultural circles of European countries”. Quoted in the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini*, 16 October 1993, p. 9.
- 9 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979.
- 10 To the question of why the EU opposes Turkey’s admission, former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim responded to this author in 2003 in the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna: “the Union does not want Iraq and Syria on its borders.”
- 11 A different interpretation may be found in the Balkan studies that derives the word Balkan from the Persian name Bala-Khana (high proud mountain), referring to the two mountain ranges east of the Caspian Sea inhabited by the Turkmens. See, Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p. 27.
- 12 “Thus, a British surgeon in the Ottoman army in the middle of the nineteenth century understood Balkans to signify ‘mountains of defence’”, Božidar Jezernik, *Europe and Its Other*, at <http://revista-redes.rediris.es/Periferia/catala/numero6/Jezernik.pdf>. [last visited 1 September 2012].

- 13 According to a well-known Turkish historian Halil İnalçık, the word Balkan was initially used in the Ottoman Empire to denote the mountainous areas of Rumelia (Emine-Balkan, Kodja-Balkan, Küçük-Balkan, Ungurus-Balkan, etc.). On this point, see, Halil İnalçık, “*Balkan*” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, Brill, 1960, pp. 998-1000.
- 14 Jezernik, *Europe and its Other*.
- 15 Frederick Calvert and Lord of Baltimore, *A Tour to the East, In the Years 1763 and 1764. With Remarks on the City of Constantinople and the Turks*, W. Richardson and S. Clark, London, 1767.
- 16 John Morritt, for instance, remarked in his journal in the 1790s: “We slept at the foot of a mountain (the Shipka Pass), which we crossed the next day, which separates Bulgaria from Romania (the ancient Thrace), and which, though now debased by the name of Bal.kan [sic], is no less a personage than the ancient Haemus”, see, John B. S. Morritt, *The Letters of John B. S. Morritt of Rokeby Descriptive of Journeys in Europe and Asia Minor in the Years 1794-1796*, London, John Murray, 1914, p. 65.
- 17 Johan August Zeune, *Gea: Versuch Einer Wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung*, Berlin, Wittich, 1808, quoted in Vesna Goldsworthy, *The Balkans in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Writing*; in Tim Youngs (ed.), *Travel Writing in the Nineteen Century: Filling the Blank*, London, Anthem Press, 2006. The Serbian anthropologist Jovan Cvijić offered this interpretation in his study *La péninsule balkanique: géographie humaine*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1919. It is today widely accepted in Balkanology.
- 18 On that point, see, Predrag Simić, *Marksizam i Kineska revolucija [Marxism and Chinese Revolution]*, Beograd, IMPP, 1986.
- 19 On that point, see, Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, Forge Village, Yale University Press, 1957.
- 20 “Under Turkish rule, Constantinople has become the most retrograde capital in Europe. Under such rule, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia, eighty years ago, were mere collections of mud huts, occupied by dejected and poverty-stricken people. Since their inhabitants got rid of Turkish oppression, these villages have rapidly grown into towns, have adopted the appliances of civilisation, and are all making good progress. The first two, which have enjoyed freedom for a longer time than the others, are now well-built and well-governed cities with bright, intelligent and progressive populations, and Sofia will soon run them close. To pass from any of these towns to Constantinople is to pass from a civilised to a barbarous city”, see, Luigi Villari (ed.), *The Balkan Question*, London, John Murray, 1905.
- 21 Otto Von Bismarck quotes, at http://thinkexist.com/quotes/otto_von_bismarck/ [last visited 31 August 2012].
- 22 On that point, see, Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986; Eric Ambler, *The Mask of Dimitrios*, London, Fontana Press 1983.
- 23 Guy Gauthier, *Les aigles et les lions, Histoire des monarchies balkaniques*, Paris, Frances Empires, 1997.

- 24 See, Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*.
- 25 See, Leon Trotsky, *The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky: The Balkan Wars 1912-13*, New York, Pathfinder 1993; see also, Maria Todorova, *War and Memory: Trotsky's War Correspondence from the Balkan Wars* in this issue.
- 26 John Lewis Garwin, editor of the London newspaper *The Observer*, is considered to be the first to use this term in 1920, writing about the Baltic states, whereas the historian Arnold Toynbee believed that the term was used by German socialists following the peace treaty between Germany and Soviet Russia in Brest-Litovsk. Maria Todorova, however, claims that the word 'balkanisation' appeared for the first time on 20 December 1918 in the text titled *Rathenau, Head of Great Industry, Predicts the Balkanization of Europe* published in *The New York Times*. The text discussed the consequences of the economic crisis in Germany after World War I., see, Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, pp. 33-34.
- 27 Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, London, Macmillan, 1942.
- 28 "Travellers on our Balkan tour may in addition notice a curious fact: while the Balkans is now making every effort to be part of Europe as it once was, Europe now defines itself on the basis of its difference from the East, the Balkans included, and claims to be what the Balkans used to be for centuries." Jezernik, *Europe and Its Other*.
- 29 One of the results of the First Hague Conference was the establishment of the International Court of Arbitration, today known as International Court of Justice, based in The Hague.
- 30 On the basis of these ideas and movements, the American president Woodrow Wilson, together with over 150 American leading experts, formulated 'Fourteen Points', a program that defined U.S. objectives in World War I, and was the basis for the Paris Peace Conference and the creation of the League of Nations. This school of thought in international relations is known as liberal internationalism, or Wilsonian liberalism.
- 31 Carnegie also financed the construction of the 'Peace Palace' in The Hague, which today houses the International Court of Justice.
- 32 Morton Abramowitz, *Preface, The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913. Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections of the Present Conflict by George Kennan*, Washington, D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993. p. 1.
- 33 The doubts expressed by Serbia and Greece regarding the objectivity of Brailsford and Milyukov were the reason why these two commission members did not participate in the entire mission of the Carnegie Commission in the Balkans. Nevertheless, Milyukov and Brailsford were the authors of the bulk of the Commission's report. On reasons why the Greek and Serbian governments distrusted these two Commission members, see the essay by George Kennan and the book by the Russian diplomat Basil Strandman, *Balkanske Uspomene [Balkans Memoirs]*, Beograd, Žagor, 2009.
- 34 *The Other Balkan Wars*, p. 1.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

- 36 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1994.
- 37 Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*.
- 38 Ibid., p. X.
- 39 Ibid., p. XXVII.
- 40 Telegram, *George Kennan to James Byrnes ["Long Telegram"]*, 22 February 1946. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1946-02-22&documentid=6-6&studycollectionid=&pagenumber=1, [last visited 1 September 2012].
- 41 *The Other Balkan Wars*, p. 1.
- 42 On that point, see, Dragan Bisenić, *Mister X; Džordž Kenan u Beogradu [Mister X: George Kennan in Belgrade 1961-1963]*, Klub Plus, Beograd 2011.
- 43 *The Other Balkan Wars*, p. 9.
- 44 Ibid., p. 13.
- 45 At the time I was the director of the Belgrade-based Institute of International Politics and Economics, some colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked me to meet Abramowitz and share with him my views on the Yugoslav Wars. Our conversation opened with a disagreement over his thesis about the 'ancient hatreds' as reasons for the wars. I was of the opinion that the causes of the wars lay in the political opportunism of ex-communists, who revived nationalist passions in an attempt to remain in power after the Cold War. Today this is a widely accepted view, but in the mid-1990s Western perception of the Balkans was still strongly shaped by the stereotypes created at the beginning of the 20th century. Abramowitz and I did eventually agree upon some of the ideas that the new Carnegie Commission needed to explore.
- 46 Part of the Commission visited Belgrade in early 1996. At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I organised a dinner, to which we invited, in addition to the Commission members, some of the leading experts of the Institute of International Politics and Economics, such as Milan Šahović, the former chairman of the Sixth Committee of the UN (international law), Ljubivoje Aćimović (the founder of the group of non-aligned and neutral countries at the Helsinki Conference of 1975), Branislava Alendar (the author of the project for the accession of Yugoslavia to the EC in 1989) among others. Although we expected the conversation to focus on the situation in the Balkans following the Dayton Peace Accord, we only had casual informal conversations, in which the topic of the Balkans was barely touched upon. That is why we were very much surprised to see our names figuring in the annex to the report, which was published later that year by the Carnegie Endowment, under the title *Unfinished Peace*. We subsequently discovered that our colleagues from other Balkan countries had a similar experience with the Commission members they had met.

- 47 Leo Tindemans et al., *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, Berlin & Washington, Aspen Institute & Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993, pp. 2-3.
- 48 “The war in Bosnia has occasioned the first significant debate over foreign policy of the post-Cold War period. It has thereby done what the War against Iraq did not do [...] In the case of Bosnia, the identity of the participants has changed. In Congress the debate over whether to pursue an interventionist course has not followed party lines. The Democrats can no longer be identified with an anti-interventionist position. The same is true of a number of public figures who had once been ‘reliably’ anti-interventionist. Indeed, some of the most insistent criticism of both the Bush and Clinton administrations for failing to give military support to the Bosnian Muslims has come from those whose anti-interventionist disposition had long been taken for granted.” Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, “America and Bosnia”, *The National Interest*, (Fall 1993), p. 14.
- 49 “The first six months of the Yugoslav crisis coincided with the final stages of the negotiations of the Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union, involving complicated trade-offs on other sovereignty issues, and an ambivalent spirit of rivalry and common interest. There were those who felt that precedents might be created by the way in which Europe acted in Yugoslavia that could affect the future institutional pattern. The problem of foreign policymaking by consensus was illustrated by Greece’s exercise of its *veto* on the question of recognition of Macedonia.” See also, Leo Tindemans et al., *Unfinished Peace*, p. 58.
- 50 Refworld, “Mr President, Milosevic is the Problem”, <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=country&category=&publisher=ICG&type=&coi=SRB&rid=&docid=3ae6a6d70&skip=0>, [last visited 27 April 2013].
- 51 It should be emphasised that the bombardment of Serbia by the Allied Force in the spring of 1944 (so-called Eastern bombardment) left more civilian casualties than the Nazi bombing of 1941.
- 52 On that point, see, *Jasminka Simić, U potrazi za novom misijom: NATO i jugoslovenska kriza 1990-2001 [In Search of the New Mission: NATO and the Yugoslav Crisis 1990-2001]*, Beograd, Službeni glasnik, 2010. Also, see, David Gress, *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents*, New York, The Free Press, 1998.