

Writing and Rewriting History in the Context of Balkan Nationalisms

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"The Balkan peoples are loaded with more history than they can bear"
Winston Churchill

On the nationalist writing of history

In reality, Churchill's famous quote needs to be amended to "the Balkan peoples have loaded themselves with more history than they can bear." Indeed, history as we know it today, just like nationalisms and nations, is a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To mold national consciousness, historians and other intellectuals in each modern European nation-state have composed an official history that insisted on the historical continuity of the corresponding nation since 'time immemorial', meaning at least the Middle Ages if not antiquity. In that way, "*new nationalisms almost immediately began to imagine themselves as 'awakening from sleep', a trope wholly foreign to the Americas*" writes Benedict Anderson in his seminal work on nationalisms (1991:195).

Such an approach was necessary to define the confines of each new nation, as opposed to all other ones, as (Danforth, 1995:20):

"Nationalist movements, therefore, are twofold in nature. First they define and reject a national other, then they define and create a national self."

Each new nation's main delimiting characteristic from all other nations was its -usually newly established at the time- literary language, a codification and sometimes partial purification of one of the local vernaculars. The latter had until then usually being despised by the nobility and/or the literate people who had been preferring to speak some 'language of civilization' like Latin, French, English, Spanish, German, Church Slavonic, Ottoman or Greek: linguists, lexicographers and historians had the task to convince these elites that these former vernaculars had in fact been in the past the historical *lingua franca* of their nations and had merely 'fallen asleep' for centuries, only to be now 'rediscovered' and 'rehabilitated.'

Anderson mentions twice the example of the 'awakening' of the Greek nation in the early nineteenth century. The proliferation of scholarly work on the Greek classics and the glorification of the ancient Hellenic civilization led to a philhellenism which (Anderson, 1991:72):

"exalted (...) a small number of young Greek-speaking Christian intellectuals, most of whom had studied or traveled outside the confines of the Ottoman Empire, (...) [who]

undertook the ‘debarbarizing’ of the modern Greeks, i.e., their transformation into beings worthy of Pericles and Socrates.”

Official histories in each nation-state had thus to be ‘censored’ if not outright distorted versions of often unpleasant reality. As Ernest Renan put it in 1882 (quoted in Anderson, 1991:199), there were even events people learnt that they should ‘forget’ as undignifying to their nation’s history:

“Or, l’ essence d’ une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun et aussi que tous aient oublié bien de choses ... Tout citoyen français doit avoir oublié la Saint-Barthélémy, les massacres du Midi au XIII^e siècle”¹

Likewise, English history venerates William the Conqueror -who couldn’t utter a word of English- as a great Founding Father, while Americans learn that in 1861-5 a ‘fratricide civil war’ -and not a conflict between at that moment two sovereign entities- ravaged their country (Anderson, 1991:201).

There was nothing peculiar to the Balkans, therefore, that official history was ‘inspired’ and ‘distorted’. However, there was an even more pressing need to develop ‘nationally solid’ histories for the emerging nations in that peninsula, as the people living there -and especially at its heart, the geographical area later (re)named Macedonia- were of an unprecedented linguistic mix (Hobsbawn, 1992:63-64):

The precise mixture of the pre-Roman Illyrians, Romans, Greeks, immigrant Slavs of various kinds and various waves of central Asian invaders from the Avars to the Ottoman Turks, which make up the ethnicity of any people in southeastern Europe, is an eternal matter of debate (especially in Romania)

Moreover, in the Ottoman period, there were collective identities in the Balkans but without any national content. All Orthodox Christians were called Rum and belonged to the ‘Rum millet’ [millet means nation in Turkish but at the time it really defined a religious group]. Within it, the Bulgars were the peasants, the Serbs the intellectuals, the Greeks the merchants, the Vlachs the shepherds: social mobility was then necessarily followed by ethnic mobility (Danforth, 1995:59; and Ancel, 1992:135).

When nationalists, and national(ist) historians, set out to appropriate for their nations as large a section of that culturally mixed population as possible, they tried to turn the above ‘ethnic cultural’ affiliations into national ones. The Greeks, who were at the head of the Rum millet, not only appealed to the mercantile Greeks but tried to attract to their nation as many Rums as possible, attempting to convert the religious-cultural Rum identity of millions of Orthodox Christians into a national Greek one -exploiting the fact that Greek was the ‘civilized’ language of the Orthodox Church. Likewise, Bulgarian nationalists sought the allegiance of as many Bulgars as possible.

Moreover, each nation was granted a ‘collective memory’ as glorious as it was feasible, and learnt that it had been put to ‘sleep’ during the (from that time on only -and not in the preceding four centuries- called) ‘Ottoman/Turkish yoke’. The ‘awaken’ Bulgarians, Croats, and Serbs have been supposed to take pride in their ‘ancestors’ medieval states, just like Romanians must have made reference to the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities and the Slovenes to the

¹ The essence of a nation is that all the individuals have a lot in common and also that all forgot some things... All French citizens have to forget the St. Bartholomew’s Night, the massacres in the Midi in the 13th century.

Carinthian one of the same period. Montenegrans could have referred to medieval Doclea, Albanians to the XIV and XV century states that extended southwards to today's Western Greece. Later on, in search of a distinct identity, Bosnians claimed the heritage of the sectarian Church of Bosnia and of the Bosnian rulers of autonomous provinces in the XIV century. In fact, even the Aromanians (Vlachs) of Southern Balkans -who never acceded to a nation-state- when attempting in vain to create a Vlach nationalism, claimed the heritage of the principalities of their ancestors on what is today Greek territory, or, even more, of the Kingdom of Vlachs and Bulgarians (1185-1260), more often referred to as Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

Two other peoples went further back in history for their 'collective memory': Greeks, because of their language and territory, learnt to be the proud heirs of ancient Hellenism. While Macedonians, condemned to argue with the Bulgarians over the common heritage of the medieval empire of Samuel, and of so many other common cultural traits, decided, so as to distinguish themselves from the Bulgarians, to base their distinctness on the inheritance of ancient Macedonians and Alexander the Great. This led to their major conflict with the Greeks who have considered themselves the exclusive heirs of all ancient civilizations which developed in the territory in which their modern state lies.

But this nationalist bias has not been limited to each nation's (imagined) roots. From the early years of 'nation-building' history books were also insistent on the image of the enemy(ies), which was thought to help mold national consciousness. For example,

"[T]he Bulgarians conceived an antipode image -that of the Greek. He was sly, perfidious, expert in politics and trade, cleverly taking advantage of his adversary's weak spots, erudite, pretentious, conceited" (Mutaſchieva, c.1995:15).

Conversely, Bulgarians have been portrayed as the main enemy in Greek texts, along with Turks (Danova, c.1995:123) -who have also been presented as an enemy in Bulgarian and Serb texts (Pesic, 1994:65)- to such an extent that even in the last quarter of the century, when Bulgaria has been the neighbor with which Greece has had the fewest problems, sports fans of Southern Greek teams continue to insult their Northern counterparts by calling them 'Bulgarians.'

More generally, what Mutaſchieva (c.1995:29) writes for Bulgarian textbooks is valid for most textbooks in the region's countries: they have tended to mention the neighbors only as adversaries in times of war and have hardly ever referred to much longer periods of peace when bilateral economic and cultural relations with these very same neighbors were good (see Stojanovic, 1994:100, for Serbia; and Frangoudaki, 1978:106, for Greece). In fact, from Greek textbooks emanates the concept that Greek culture, as part of the European civilization, is globally 'superior'; hence, the other cultures of the broad geographical region Greece is located in (the Balkans and the Middle East) must be 'inferior,' an approach that *"masks highly ethnocentric and xenophobic attitudes. Becoming 'powerful' in this unreal way was found to be greatly dependent on the need to destroy the unsettling difference represented by the 'other'"* (Dragonas et al., 1996b:20).

Furthermore, even more recent events are up to this day the subject of very distorted historical writing:

"Dans les Balkans, les historiographies chauvines s' affrontent. Quand on lit des oeuvres sur un même sujet (par exemple les guerres balkaniques ou la seconde guerre mondiale) mais d' auteurs de différents pays, on est surpris de voir que les mêmes faits peuvent avoir des interprétations aussi différentes, toujours subjectives et partielles, glorifiantes pour

soi-même et déprécatives voire insultantes pour l' autre. C' est pour cela que les blessures dans la mémoire historique des peuples balkaniques cicatrisent difficilement. On rappelle des défaites et des injustices subies, il y a parfois plusieurs siècles, et on cultive la vengeance sans pardon” (Jordanovski, 1994).²

Moreover, “*patriotically oriented ‘historians’*” are in these countries more popular and more influential than the scientific scholars whose much more objective historical writings have only a marginal impact (*op.cit.*).

In most Balkan countries, the guidelines for history teaching are hardly different from those spelled out in Serbia:

“We cannot educate children in the spirit of cosmopolitanism, but in the spirit of patriotism and love of the homeland. We must plant this great ideology in those little heads” (Minister of Education Danilo Z. Markovic quoted in Borba, 19/3/1993; the quote is taken from Pesic, 1994:77),

though in that country, with an educational system stirring up “*bellicose socialization*” (Stojanovic, c.1996) this approach reaches exaggeration as texts are:

“brimm[ed] with xenophobia, contempt and hatred for the neighboring nations, European and the world community (...) and offering a remarkable example of how to disseminate religious intolerance” (Stojanovic, 1994:109).

So, although the nationalist writing of history is not a phenomenon peculiar to the Balkans, the insistence on the medieval if not ancient roots is more pronounced there than elsewhere. More important, the use of this nationalist history and its consequences on the development of the region and, especially, its contribution to the conflicts therein explain why such history weighs even in the end of the twentieth century so much on public opinion and helps reproduce the hostile stereotypes if not outright hatreds among the Balkan peoples. The latter can easily turn a minor disagreement into a passionate if not warm conflict, and are thus hindering the development and modernization of the region’s states. To understand the specificity of the weight of history, it is necessary to turn to the specificities of Balkan nationalisms which explain too why this area of Europe has been so conflict- and war-prone in this century. We will also examine the role of religion in the development of these nationalisms and of Balkan civil societies (or rather lack thereof) in general.

The specificities of Balkan nationalisms

Balkan nationalisms certainly belonged to the second wave of nationalisms, the romantic and linguistic, mostly nineteenth-century European, nationalisms. At the heart of each such nationalism was the elevation of a usually vernacular to the status of a literary language-of-(actual or potential) state by (Anderson, 1991:79):

² In the Balkans chauvinistic historiographies confront each other. If one reads works on the same subject (for example on the Balkan Wars or the Second World War), but by authors from different countries, one is surprised to see that the same facts can have such different interpretations, always subjective and partial, self-glorifying and depreciating the others to the point of insult. It is for this reason that the wounds in the historical memory of the Balkan people heal with difficulty. One reminds of defeat and injustices, sometimes several centuries ago, and cultivates revenge without mercy.

“a coalition of lesser gentries, academics, professionals, and businessmen, in which the first often provided leaders of ‘standing,’ the second and third myths, poetry, newspapers, and ideological formulations, and the last money and marketing facilities.”

So, from the multitude of -nevertheless linguistically similar- Southern Slavic dialects and the archaic Church Slavonic emerged the (internationally but not locally considered today) common Serbo-Croat literary language, based on the neostokavian (ijekavian or ekavian) dialects; Slovenian, based on the Ljubljana dialect; Bulgarian based on the Northern Bulgarian dialect; and Macedonian, based on the Bitola dialect. It should be mentioned that the differences among the various Southern Slav languages are smaller than among the various Italian dialects or those between French and the Occitan dialects (Garde, 1992:125-141).

In the same period, emerged the other Balkan literary languages-of-state: ‘purified’ Greek, based mainly on the Alexandrian ancient Greek; Romanian, based on the Daco-Romanian dialects but with the replacement of the Cyrillic by the Latin alphabet to distance Romanians from Slavs; Albanian, based on the Southern, Tosk, dialects; and, finally, as was the pattern at the time, modern Turkish, different from the official Ottoman language, which was a mixture of Turkish, Persian and Arabic (Anderson, 1991:72-5). Moreover (Plasseraud, 1991:49):

“The ‘founding intellectuals’ of the various dormant people of Europe will rediscover -or sometimes fully invent- national epic literatures bearing founding myths. One after the other, the nations rediscover heroic and unfortunate ancestors.”

Today, it is considered commonplace that there have therefore been three stages in the development of that national consciousness (Hroch, 1968:24-5, as summarized in Banac, 1992:28):

“In the first stage a group of ‘awakened’ intellectuals starts studying the language, culture, and history of a subjugated people. In the second stage, which corresponds to the heyday of national revivals, the scholars’ ideas are transmitted by a group of ‘patriots,’ that is the carriers of national ideologies, who take it upon themselves to convey national thought to the wider strata. In the last stage the national movement reaches its mass apogee.”

Moreover (Banac, 1992:30):

“The ideology of nationalism [...] found its fulfillment in national self-rule and invariably promoted state independence either through a separation of national territory from a larger multinational state (secessionism) or through incorporation of kindred territory within the already established matrix-state (irredentism).”

Irredentism is also known as ‘piedmontization’ after the model of the Italian unification, built around the Piedmont state.

The first specificity of Balkan nationalisms, and the most crucial to understand the historical evolution of the area to this day, is that, in most cases, national self-rule was the product of both secessionism and irredentism, unlike in all other non-Balkan countries. If one looks at the maps of the first, initially autonomous and then independent, Montenegrin (respectively 1516 and 1878), Serbian (1829, 1878), Greek (1829, 1830), Bulgarian (1878, 1908) and Romanian (1861,

1880) states, and compares them to their maps in the 1990's, s/he will immediately notice that the first states included no more than half the territory these states rule over today. All of them were the product of secessions from the Ottoman Empire, first in the form of autonomy then as independent states. From the very beginning, they perceived themselves as matrix-states with an irredentist mission to conquer all as yet 'unredeemed' territories (Sellier & Sellier, 1991): the related struggles lasted sometimes for one century. No other European state has lived through a similar experience, as the current 'external' West European frontiers are very similar to the 1815 or the 1885 ones, while the non-Balkan Central and East European frontiers are very similar to the post-World War I 1924 ones, which were their initial borders when they first became independent states.

The fact that the early modern Balkan states had to adopt an irredentist attitude would not by itself have inevitably led to the serious ethnic conflicts which have plagued the region in the last two centuries: witness the irredentist formation of Italy and Germany. However, in the Balkans, the unredeemed territories targeted by each new nation-state conflicted with those targeted by other(s) state(s), because of the mixed populations and, usually, their lack of a clear national consciousness in these territories. This specific Balkan situation resulted in:

one century of diplomatic and armed conflicts in the area (1810's-1920's), often accompanied by ethnic cleansing;

official policies of assimilation of the minorities which were not eliminated or expelled; this characteristic was absent from the other romantic or linguistic nationalisms but present in the third wave of 'official nationalisms', which were the belated reaction of the native speakers of the official vernacular of the imperial states (England, Russia, Turkey, etc.) to the emergence of the second wave or romantic nationalisms (Banac, 1992:28; Anderson, 1991:78-111);

development of historical revisionism in the popular culture and, often, the official policies of the Balkan states, as in almost all cases the dream of a large state including all irredenta was materialized for a short period to be shattered soon after: Great Bulgaria (in 1878 and between 1941-1944), Great Romania (1918-1940), Great Serbia (Yugoslavia between 1918-1941 and 1945-1991), Great Greece (1918-1922), Great Albania (1941-1944), Great Croatia (1941-1944); as for Great Macedonia, its creation was envisaged during the post-World War I negotiations, but the idea was in the end rejected by a combined British-French effort (Wilkinson, 1951:233). This led to the emergence of the concept of 'lost fatherlands' (the frustrated irredenta) which explains why large majorities of the citizens of the Balkan countries today consider that their countries' frontiers are bad, although they are not ready to fight wars to change them;

repression of the remaining minorities, which survived ethnic cleansing, population exchanges or expulsion, and assimilation, more than in other European countries; this often means the refusal to recognize the presence of such minorities, just like the competing Balkan nationalisms had in the past refused to acknowledge each other's legitimacy.

The role of religion. Does awakening of nationalism mean awakening of religion?

"The second cultural obstacle to democracy has to do with religion. Like nationalism, there is no inherent conflict between religion and liberal democracy, except at the point where religion ceases to be tolerant or egalitarian. (...) Christianity in a certain sense had to abolish itself through secularization of its goals before liberalism could emerge. The generally accepted agent for this secularization in the West was Protestantism" (Fukuyama, 1992:216).

On the other hand, Catholicism has undergone its 'self-abolition' through secularization:

"The prior causes of change in Catholic consciousness would seem to be (1) the general legitimacy of democratic ideas that infected Catholic thought (...); (...) (3) the long-term 'secularization' of the Catholic Church, following the steps of Martin Luther 400 years later" (Fukuyama, 1992:374).

But the Balkans' dominant religion is neither Protestantism nor Catholicism; it is Orthodoxy, followed by Islam:

"[F]undamentalist Islam, by contrast, [is a] totalistic religion which seek[s] to regulate every aspect of human life, both public and private, including the realm of politics. [It] may be compatible with democracy -Islam, in particular, establishes no less than Christianity the principle of universal human equality- but [it is] very hard to reconcile with liberalism and the recognition of universal rights, particularly freedom of conscience or religion" (Fukuyama: 1992:217).

Orthodox Christianity is a religion largely ignored in such generally comparative studies. As neither it has 'abolished itself through secularization' its relation with liberal democracy is similar to that of Islam rather than to that of the other Christian doctrines.

"The great movements, which constitute the cornerstone of modernity, namely the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, were foreign to the Orthodox Church although they did affect it obliquely. Industrialization also, to the extent that it did, came to Orthodox countries (Russia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece) rather late in the 19th century and capitalism as a dominant economic force never developed in these countries in the way it did in the West. For all these and other historical reasons Orthodoxy was and remains culturally and theologically different from both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. For the same reasons the relationship of Orthodoxy to modernity and to secularization is specific and ambivalent. Orthodoxy is premodern not only in a historical sense but also in the sense that it transcends Western rationalism and rationalization" (Kokosolakis, 1994:127).

So, Orthodoxy and human rights are fundamentally incompatible, as Orthodoxy has yet to adapt itself to (in fact, like Catholicism, lose out to) secularization (Pollis, 1993; for similar arguments see also Lipovatz, 1993):

"The historical origins of contemporary individual human rights lie in the natural law which (...) has been alien to Orthodoxy. (...) The implication for human rights of these sharp discrepancies between Catholicism and Protestantism on the one hand, each of which, in its own way, values the diversity and recognizes the Church as temporal, and Orthodoxy which dissolves the individualized person into the spiritual organic whole of Ekklesia, are profound. (...) Of crucial importance for the discussion that follows on Orthodoxy, the state and rights, is the contrast between the West where separation of Church and state prevails, even in states such as England where there is an established church, and Orthodox societies in which such a separation is alien. (...) In Western Europe the new nation-states (...) were an affirmation of secularism and liberalism. In sharp contrast in the Balkans and Eastern Europe nationalism and religion, particularly

Orthodoxy, became intertwined. The construction of national identities among Orthodox Christians in the dismembered Empires invariably incorporated religion as a crucial component of the newly constructed nationality. The ethnos (nation) and Orthodoxy became a unity. (...) By contrast, in Western Europe nationality and religion are delinked; religion is not a crucial element of national identity. (...) The inexorable conclusion which flows from the above analysis is that individual human rights cannot be derived from Orthodox theology. The entire complex of civil and political rights -freedom of religion, freedom of speech and press, freedom of association, due process of law, among others- cannot be grounded in Orthodoxy -they stem from a radically different world view."

Such is the influence of the Orthodox tradition even on widely considered 'progressive' legal scholars in Greece that (Pollis, 1993):

"It is in fact striking that Greece's eminent scholar, Aristovoulos Manesis, and a staunch defender of rights, forcefully rejects natural law and its derivative natural rights as constituting the origin of the contemporary theory of rights. It is the state that is the source of individual rights for Manesis and not natural law."

The consequence of such thinking is that (Pagoulatos, 1992:48):

"If though individual rights are not natural but are granted by the state (...) does this mean that the state (...) has the right to take these rights back? The answer of (...) profoundly antitotalitarian and genuine European intellectual (...) Constantine Tsatsos is - implicitly but clearly-affirmative"

So (Varga, 1994:145):

"The identification of religion and nation, however, inevitably engenders some serious problems. First of all, here is a possibility of developing an exclusionist (and eventually even a supremacist) view."

In most Orthodox countries, it is considered that the (dominant) nation cannot coexist without Orthodoxy (for Serbia see Vrcan, 1994:150; for Greece see opinion poll results in **Ikones** 29/4/1994 and Diamandouros, 1983:57). But: *"Orthodoxy (...) rejects modern individualism and modern society"* (Lipovatz, 1993:40). Instead it primes communal life and, as a consequence, communal nationalism: as a result, Orthodox societies have weak or non-existent civil societies (Lipovatz, 1993:46). However, *"a final factor affecting the prospects for stable democracy has to do with a society's ability to autonomously create a healthy civil society"* (Fukuyama, 1992:18).

In the non-secular, non-cosmopolitan Balkan societies, therefore, nationalism has a religious component. Neither Orthodoxy, nor Islam (the dominant religions in the Balkans) have yet become compatible with cosmopolitan liberalism, hence secular societies do not exist in these countries. These characteristics are independent of whether these societies have had a supposedly democratic tradition like Greece, or a totalitarian one like the post-communist countries. They also characterize all sectors of society, not merely the Orthodox or Muslim majorities: in fact, in the Balkans, Catholics, Protestants and even Jews tend to exhibit values more similar if not identical to the ones shared by the Orthodox or Muslims they live with than by their fellow

believers in the secularized Western societies. This helps interpret for example the Croatian drift towards an undemocratic, intolerant society: it may have a Catholic majority but it had nevertheless developed until recently in an intolerant Orthodox-dominated Yugoslav world.

To better understand the current impact of religion one must look at the two dimensions of religiosity -spiritual and cultural - as well as at the two types of its manifestation - private and public. When we say that nationalism has a religious dimension it is the cultural aspect of religion which we have in mind, i.e. when people perceive religion as a *sine qua non* of their national culture. Now, with the return of primitive nationalism, there is a greater impact of religion in its cultural form, both in its private and in its public manifestation.

On the one hand, individuals believe more today than a few years ago that religion is important for their national culture; on the other hand, society, authorities and media send the same 'official' and 'public' message; moreover, and as a consequence, they tend to exhibit more intensely a 'public spirituality' (e.g., in June 1995, Karadjic was seen on TV making the sign of the cross in his Pale Parliament after the 'historical' decision for unification with Krajina). At the same time there is no evidence that today there are more people who believe in God or feel the need to go to church regularly, when compared with a few years ago. All this is evident in a recent opinion poll in Greece which showed that the already high image of Orthodoxy has increased even more together with an increase of intolerance towards religious minorities, while the already low percentage of people attending church and the already low evaluation of the church itself did not change at all.

The return of history

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has led to the reappearance of nationalism as strong as ever and the consequent return of history (Plasseraud, 1991:13-4; see also Garde, 1992:344):

"There is a point on which the nations of Central and Eastern Europe differ substantially from us; it concerns their relation to time and history. Contrary to the Westerners who hardly have an historical memory and today gladly place themselves in the instant, the people in the East often forget to live in the present as a result of an acute historicist consciousness. Their thought and their instinctive reactions are usually located in an historical perspective even if that reference handed down from parents to children is often largely mythical."

In the Balkans, with their specific brand of language-based nationalism and the role of religion as a crucial cultural dimension that has hindered the development of civil societies, nationalism has reemerged in its most primitive form, while this return to -almost always rewritten- history weighs more than elsewhere. Nationalistic rhetoric was, moreover, decisive for the different 'evolution' of the former communists in Central Europe on the one hand and in the Balkans on the other -the latter's communists mostly turned nationalists while among the former's almost all transformed themselves into social democrats.

Of course, there is no doubt that the return of nationalism is present in the West too. Julia Kristeva has convincingly stated (**Le Monde des Débats**, Oct. 1992) that all societies in crisis often seek refuge in nationalism:

"The depressed individual covers himself with a kind of shell drawing upon archaic identity values: land, blood, cult of language; whatever is most familiar, most maternal,

most hot. For the nations, depression resulting from a fragmentation of the social fiber often leads to an apology of national origins which is fundamentally a discourse of hatred, a discourse unacceptable in Europe after the nevertheless prestigious history of our civilization."

This is a return to primitive nationalism (Dimitras & Lenkova, 1995) in the West, as well as in the East, and hate culture is an unavoidable component. Nationalism today is not necessarily an evil, at least when it is not primitive; but when it is, it becomes aggressive and dangerous. It is in fact the different weight of history which limits the danger of nationalism in the West as compared to the East. And in many countries politicians and intellectuals have played nationalist fears up rather than down thus inflaming rather than appeasing the public.

One reason for the persistent invocation of, usually factually inaccurate or merely distorted, historical memory in the Balkans is the presence of an, often imaginary, feeling among citizens and especially leaders that their societies lack internal cohesion. In that case (Lekkas, 1992:140):

"It is self-evident that national education becomes even more important when the main carriers of the nationalist ideology (i.e. the intellectuals) and the national political leaderships believe that the nation-state lacks a strong national cohesion: they believe then that the essential condition to achieve the national homogeneity, if not guarantee the very survival of the nation, is to put forward and stress the national character."

It is necessary therefore, as Ivaylo Ditchev has urged, to *"il faudrait tout d'abord reconnaître le caractère traumatique de la mémoire et en particulier de celle des Balkans"*³ (**Libération**, 4/11/1994). In this region, the insistent invocation of memory causes not only open conflicts, that become better known outside the region, but also internal 'memory wars' that fascinate her peoples (Ditchev, *ibid*):

*"Les guerres de la mémoire dans les Balkans oscillent entre le tragique et le ridicule. Macédoniens et Grecs se disputent Alexandre le Grand avec son étoile; Serbes, Croates et Bosniaques d'une part, Macédoniens et Bulgares d'une autre, se partagent les langues et les littératures; Bulgares, Grecs et Macédoniens revendiquent les frères Cyrille et Méthode, concepteurs de l'alphabet cyrillique; Albanais, Croates et Slovènes se veulent descendants du peuple semi-mythique des Illyriens ... Les jeunes Etats-nations en voie de consolidation souffriraient-ils d'un complexe des ancêtres?"*⁴

Why though public opinion in these countries is such an easy prey to these 'memory games' in which the leaderships are engaged, when in every country large majorities favor their country's integration of the European Union, an area that is in the process of lowering if not abolishing borders? Ditchev offers as an explanation the 'Balkanization of memory' (*ibid*):

³ The Balkanization of memory can be defined as an attempt by those whom history has used as a toy, to take revenge on the past in symbolic battles, which easily spill over into reality.

⁴ The wars of memory in the Balkans oscillate between the tragic and the ridiculous. Macedonians and Greeks dispute over Alexander the Great with his star; Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks on one side, Macedonians and Bulgarians on the other share their language and literature; Bulgarians, Greeks and Macedonians claim the brothers Cyril and Methodius, the inventors of the Cyrillic alphabet for themselves; Albanians, Croats and Slovenes see themselves as descendents of the semi-mythical people of Illyrians... Do the young nation states on their path to consolidation suffer from a complex of ancestry?

“La balkanisation de la mémoire peut être définie comme la tentative, par ceux dont l’histoire avait fait le jouet, de prendre une revanche sur le passé dans les luttes symboliques qui facilement débordent dans le réel.”

In such a context, revisionism, irredentism and intolerance in Balkan public opinion are almost unavoidable phenomena, just as the persistent recurrence of ‘hate speech’ in the media but also among politicians; we will provide ample evidence from opinion polls and excerpts from the Balkan press below.

Another consequence of the ‘Balkanization’ of memory is the ‘memoricide’ in which Balkan states have been engaged. For a long time, some Balkan nations denied the right to a distinct existence to other nations, especially those which ‘awoke’ in the second half of the XIX or the first half of the XX century. From the early days of modern nation formation in the region (early 19th century) to this very day, there has been ‘an almost systematic will to refuse the existence of the neighbor’ nation (Raufer & Haut, 1992:11) in the Balkan peninsula. The Illyrianist movement in its Pan-Croatian form (19th century) considered all Southern Slavs as Croats (Banac, 1992:71-6); it was reciprocated (in the 20th century) by a denial of the existence of separate Croat and Slovene identities by Pan-Serbian nationalists like the interwar Radicals (Banac, 1992:161-2). Likewise, the Bulgarian distinct nation was challenged by Croats (Banac, 1992:71-6), Serbs (Ancel, 1992:164) and Greeks (Jelavich, 1991:41). Serbian nationalism also considered Albanians ‘lost Serbs’, who had become ‘savages’, and ‘their nationalism was the product of Austrian and Italian intrigue’ (Banac, 1992:293-5); the latter view was shared by Greek nationalists too, who contested the existence of a separate, non-Greek Albanian nation (Lazarou & Lazarou, 1993:171; Vakalopoulos, 1994:246). Naturally, the irredentist Croat and, especially, Serbian nationalisms had no room for the Bosnians, demeaned as ‘Asians, unstable, perverted’ etc. (Banac, 1992:371-7).

Likewise, Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks have never come to terms with the presence of culturally distinct Macedonians and Vlachs in the area: the Macedonians have been considered as ‘Southern Serbs’ by the Serbs, ‘Western Bulgarians’ by the Bulgarians, and ‘Slavophone Greeks’ by the Greeks (Raufer & Haut, 1992:11), who have regularly demeaningly called in the 1990’s the Republic of Macedonia ‘Skopjan statelet’ and its inhabitants ‘Gypsy-Skopjans’, ‘Balkan Gypsies’, ‘Skopjan Vlachs’ (Elefantis, 1992:39). On the other hand, the word ‘Vlach’ has often had a pejorative meaning among Croats and Albanians (derogatory for Serbs) (Banac, 1992:257 & 300-2) and Greeks (meaning ‘coarse’) (Tegopoulos & Fytrakis, 1993:152).

Moreover, this effort has gone hand in hand with decisions aiming at eradicating all signs of the presence of such ‘questionable’ ethnic groups as minorities within another country’s territory. The stress on homogeneity of each Balkan nation-state made its authorities impose name changes both to toponyms and to family names.

For example, in Greece, during the first half of the XX century, most places that had Turkish or Slavic names saw them change, usually ‘reverting’ to their ‘ancient Greek’ name, often without the agreement of the population living in these places; besides, the icons with Slavic characters were removed from the churches, while sometimes such churches were completely destroyed: these practices continued, in a much smaller scale, into the end of the century. Worse, in the same earlier part of the century, all Macedonian-speakers were forced to change their family names -and sometimes their first names too- into Greek ones: even today, recovering a non-Greek toponym or family name, or even naming a newly-born with such a name is for all practical purposes impossible. Besides, citizens who use the old toponyms may get into trouble with the authorities, while former citizens who now live in other countries cannot enter Greece and visit the places they were born in, if their passports mention their birth places with the old

names. It is better known internationally of course that, in the 1980's, Bulgaria engaged in a similar 'de-Turkification' of the names of its sizable Turkish minority, a policy canceled in the 1990s.

Characteristic of this memoricide is the fate of the family names of the Slav speakers in Ottoman Macedonia, after its annexation by Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. One named simply Petrov or Markov in the early twentieth century, became a Petropoulos or Markopoulos in Greek Macedonia, Petrovich or Markovich in Serbian Macedonia, Petroff or Markoff in Bulgaria. If he lived in Greek or Serbian Macedonia, during its occupation by the Bulgarians in the Second World War, he was forced to change his name into Petroff or Markoff. After the war, in Greece he had just to recover his Hellenized name; in what became a federal Macedonian entity within Yugoslavia (the current independent state), though, he did not recover his Serbian name but acquired a -modern-day- Macedonian version of it: Petrovski or Markovski.

In the vast majority of cases, such changes were compulsory; but sometimes they were conscientious decisions, just as it has happened with some people from that ethnic group after they migrated to Australia or North America and decided to de-Hellenize or de-Serbize their family names: the ones opted for the old family names (eg. Petrov/Markov) others for the more consistent modern-day Macedonian names (eg. Petrovski/Markovski) in order to 'make a statement' of their -often long suppressed- Macedonian identity. There were others too who equally freely opted to keep their Hellenized names Petropoulos/Markopoulos.

As many of the examples mentioned above came from Greece, they indicate that this country, despite its long formally democratic tradition and its membership in Western liberal institutions like the EU or the Council of Europe, has characteristics more akin to those of the other Balkan rather than of the other West European states. This has been almost unavoidable, though, when one looks at the education and the prevailing climate in this country throughout the XX century. Even today, Greek education is -as even the Minister of Education publically admitted in 1995- very ethnocentric and thus intolerant (see also Dragonas *et al.*, 1996a). Greek pupils and students learn about the supremacy of the almost 'pure' since ancient times 'Greek race'; the complex 'multicultural' elements of the otherwise celebrated Alexandrian and Byzantine Empires are never mentioned (eg. that most Byzantine Emperors -especially of the first millenary of that empire- were not Greeks, and that, for centuries, that empire's official language was Latin); the *millet* structure of the Ottoman Empire with the corresponding relative autonomy of each *millet* is occulted, and so is the Orthodox Church's opposition to the uprising against the Ottoman Empire that led to Independence in the 1820's; finally, the country's devastating civil war in the late 1940's has seen its official description change from 'bandit war' after the defeat of the communist forces, to 'civil war' at the height of reconciliation in the 1980's to a 'secessionist struggle' for the creation of a Greater Macedonia in the 1990s'.

In such a context, it is considered 'normal' to state -like Official Opposition Leader Miltiadis Evert (New Democracy)- that Asia Minor, Constantinople, Northern Epirus [i.e. Southern Albania] should be called 'unredeemed fatherlands', implying a continuing claim, and not merely 'lost fatherlands' (November 1995); or like Speaker of the Parliament Apostolos Kaklamanis (PASOK) that *'Europe's Eastern borders of Europe are where civilization ends; and our Eastern neighbors [i.e. the Turks] have with their practices opted for their exclusion from the civilized world.'* Neither statement led to any serious reaction or debate in Greece.

Threat perception, revisionism, irredentism and intolerance in Balkan public opinion

We will now turn to the grave consequences of this 'Balkanization' of memory and of the nationalist history on today's Balkans: the presence of a rather revisionist, irredentist and

intolerant public opinion; and the constant reproduction of stereotypes and of hate speech against the ‘other’, be them minorities within the countries or neighbors across borders: these two elements are intertwined and the one strengthens the other.

A 1992 five-country survey in the Southern Balkan countries [*Coordinated by the Bulgarian Gallup affiliate, BBSS, the survey used random probability samples covering adult (18+) population, and was conducted in June 1992 in Bulgaria (1,082 interviews), in September 1992 in Albania (1,027 interviews) and Macedonia (1,478 interviews), and in October 1992 in Greece (998 interviews) and Turkey (1,013 interviews)*] indicated how pervasive revisionism has been among Balkan peoples: in the post-communist countries, less than half believed that their country’s borders were acceptable in their current form: 35% in Albania, 34% in Bulgaria, and 49% in Macedonia; in the NATO members, majorities -but not very large ones- considered borders acceptable: 55% in Greece and 65% in Turkey. Nevertheless, very few believed that, on the contrary, the time was ripe for the border issue to be re-examined: 3% of Bulgarians, 7% of Turks, 14% of Greeks, 19% of Macedonians, and 29% of Albanians. Of those who were not satisfied with current borders, most believed that nothing could be done any more or that something could be done to change them but only in the future: 50% in Bulgaria, 31% in Albania, 26% in Greece, 25% in Macedonia, and 22% in Turkey. At the same time, though, in another question, substantial minorities of Turks (42%) and Greeks (37%) felt that, if there was no other way, territories historically belonging to their country should be taken back by means of military force; in the post-communist countries, perhaps because of the weakness of their military forces today, the respective percentages were low: 11% in Albania, 8% in Macedonia, and 5% in Bulgaria.

The existence of such feelings and frequent discussion about ‘frustrated irredenta’ had made the Balkan peoples feel threatened by their neighbors. Greeks believed that their country’s national security was endangered by Turkey (81%), Macedonia (69%), and -for significant minorities- Albania (25%) and Bulgaria (12%); Turks felt likewise for Greece (51%), Cyprus (27%), and Bulgaria (19%); Bulgarians perceived threats from Serbia (39%), Turkey (27%) and Rumania (14%); Macedonians stated that their national security was threatened by Greece (80%), Serbia (53%), Albania (43%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (18%), and Bulgaria (14%); finally, Albanians had a similar opinion for many countries: Greece (58%), Turkey (46%), Serbia (38%), Montenegro (36%), Bulgaria (26%), Macedonia (26%), Rumania (22%), Croatia (16%), Slovenia (15%), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (14%).

Primitive nationalism, revisionism and irredentism go hand in hand with intolerance for the ‘other’ be it the neighbor nation or the minority within the country. Two sets of surveys confirm that few minorities or neighbor nations are not unpopular among the peoples of the Balkans and no one is really popular (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

Table 1. Feelings of Balkan peoples for neighboring nations and minorities

	Sympathy %	Indifference %	Aversion %
1. FEELINGS FOR ALBANIANS FROM:			
Greeks	8	13	75
Macedonians	3	8	87
2. FEELINGS FOR AROMANIANS (VLACHS IN THE QUESTION) FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	15	29	52
Albanians of Macedonia	11	30	44

Macedonians	22	32	44
3. FEELINGS FOR BULGARIANS FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	22	22	47
Albanians of Macedonia	4	22	61
Macedonians	4	15	78
Romanians	41	20	23
4. FEELINGS FOR BULGARIAN MUSLIMS (POMAKS) FROM:			
Bulgarians	22	42	15
5. FEELINGS FOR JEWS FROM:			
Albanians of Macedonia	2	8	91
Macedonians	7	20	60
Bulgarians	24	34	6
Greeks	15	21	57
Romanians	40	19	31
6. FEELINGS FOR GREEKS FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	24	15	59
7. FEELINGS FOR MACEDONIANS FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	13	20	58
Albanians of Macedonia	14	29	53
8. FEELINGS FOR WESTERN THRACE MUSLIMS FROM:			
Greeks	11	16	62
9. FEELINGS FOR HUNGARIANS FROM:			
Romanians	25	12	56
10. FEELINGS FOR SERBS FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	7	3	86
Albanians of Macedonia	0	0	98
Macedonians	25	25	47
11. FEELINGS FOR SLAVS FROM:			
Greeks	16	27	38
12. FEELINGS FOR TURKS FROM:			
Albanians of Macedonia	58	16	24
Macedonians	12	23	62
Bulgarians	23	47	23
Greeks	5	11	80
13. FEELINGS FOR ROMA FROM:			
Albanians of Albania	6	19	73
Albanians of Macedonia	12	22	65
Macedonians	12	28	59
Bulgarians	12	31	51
Greeks	20	21	55
Romanians	4	7	84

Source: Surveys conducted by Opinion for the Lambrakis Research Foundation (1,200 interviews 20/1-20/2/1993) in Greece; by Marketing Consult (1,161 interviews in Bulgaria) and BBSS (906 interviews in Albania, 1,002 in Macedonia, and 1,133 in Romania) for the Bulgarian International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations in spring 1994. We are grateful to Antonina Zhelyaskova and Krassimir Kanev for having made the results available to us.

Table 2. Opinion of Minority Group by Majority Group in Balkan countries

	Favorable %	Unfavorable %
1. OPINION OF CROATS FOR:		
Krajna Serbs	6	94
Urban Serbs	48	52
2. OPINION OF SERBS FOR:		
Albanians	11	83
3. OPINION OF MACEDONIANS FOR:		
Albanians	28	65
4. OPINION OF ALBANIANS FOR:		
Greeks	47	49
5. OPINION OF BULGARIANS FOR:		
Turks	52	39
6. OPINION OF ROMANIANS FOR:		
Hungarians	50	40

Source: Surveys conducted for the USIA by the Albanian Independent Center of Sociological Studies in Albania (1,000 interviews in July 1993); the Center for the Study of Democracy in Bulgaria (1,090 interviews in April 1994); CEMA in Croatia (1,000 interviews in June 1994); BBSS in Macedonia (1,102 interviews in October 1993); SOCIOBIT in Romania (1,015 interviews in May 1993); and Medium, Belgrade (1,596 interviews in June 1994).

Negative stereotypes and hate speech in the media

The wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslav republics shook European public opinion: it was thought that, since World War II, only 'third world' countries and/or authoritarian regimes were barbaric enough to resort to violence so as to solve their problems; European countries were thought to be exempt from such savagery. Then came the Yugoslav crisis, for the West to wake up to an even worse reality.

Not only was war used to (re)define the post-Yugoslav configuration of that part of Southeastern Europe; it was supplemented by all sorts of atrocities against non-combatants (rape, ethnic cleansing, etc.), that the arrogant 'civilized' West thought were no longer possible. The bewildered public opinions had forgotten -to be more accurate the opinion makers had chosen to make the publics forget- that all these excesses had been the 'trade mark' of the 'other Balkan wars' of the early 1910s, fought with a similar aim -the definition of the post-Ottoman configuration in the region. In fact, in an interesting comparison with the recent Balkan crisis, the ethnic cleansing at the time was precipitated, if not outright motivated, by the Great Powers' ill-conceived scheme to 'manage' the Macedonian problem following the Ilinden uprising: through it they had called for ethnically homogeneous administrative regions to be drawn within the ailing Ottoman Empire: as a result, the competing Balkan states did everything possible to secure that homogeneity -naturally each in her favor.

Atrocities at the mass level, though, cannot happen unless the masses are appropriately motivated. For a Bulgarian to butcher a Greek, or for a Greek to rape a Turk -while both felt that they were thus carrying out their 'national duty'- these peoples had to be indoctrinated to 'love to hate and hate to love' their enemies, which in most cases meant all their neighbor nations or competing ethnic groups. Stereotypes implied or outright taught at school had to be brought back to memory repeatedly for that purpose.

Only when the wars in former Yugoslavia reached their height did many people discover that similar systematic deprecation of the (potential) enemy had been in the workings of the mass media of the -still supposedly coexisting- Croatian and Serbian federal republics. So, the Croats and the Serbs, were conditioned to 'remember' what they had been told to 'forget' under Tito, i.e. the Ustasha and Chetnik atrocities in World War II; they had then been 'informed' that such actions started being repeated; they were thus ready for the first 'hot war' in post-World War II Europe.

The problem has not been confined though to these two countries. Throughout the Balkan region, many mainstream media have been producing such 'hate speech', that the publics are being conditioned to support any new conflict that may arise. We will present here some highlights from the related media monitoring that has been carried out since 1994 by multinational research teams in many Balkan countries and coordinated by two Non-Governmental Organizations, the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the Sofia-based ACCESS (for more details see Dimitras *et al.* (1996); and *Balkan Neighbours* 1996/4).

It is not unusual, therefore, that one whole nation can be the victim of, sometimes blunt, prejudice. A very illustrative case is that of a Croat publication in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that even admits to stereotyping:

"How often could one bring a judgment concerning a whole nation. It wouldn't be serious. But, where the lies and the Serbs are concerned, there is no possible mistake. They are all liars. From the child to the old man. From the primitive peasant to the Patriarch Pavle and his Synod. They are all liars... The more they lie, the more they are Serbs... The bigger the lie, the better the Serb..". (the **Hrvatska Rilech** weekly magazine, 19/08/1995, p.12).

Conversely, the Bosnian Serbian radio (Srpski Radio) feels free to dub all Croats "*Ustasha*" (August 1995) and broadcast threats like "*there will be no Croatia, no Turkey* [term used by Serbs for the Bosniaks as it identifies them with the Serbs' century-long 'oppressors', the Ottoman Turks] *but only the Republic of Srpska*" (September 1995). In Kosovo, Albanian media dub all Serbs '*Chetniks*' (**Bujku** Kosovo daily, 29/12/1995).

Even in non-war prone countries, though, such highly inflammatory 'hate speech' can be found. In Romania, Hungarians are the target: "*Hungarianism - a bag of venom on Europe's body*" (the **Totusi Iberia** weekly paper, 23/08).

Another method to deprecate neighboring people or internal minorities is the use of demeaning, pejorative terms, which are perceived as insulting by the peoples concerned. So, Albanians are frequently called by Slavs "*Siptarske*" or "*Arnauti*" (**Jedinstvo** Kosovo daily, 2/8/1995 and 17/9/1995 respectively), or "*Shiptars*" (**Delo** Macedonian paper, 20/10/1995). Conversely, Albanians call Serbs "*Shkja*" (**Bujku** Kosovo daily, 19/8/1995; and **E Djathta** Albanian weekly, 4/8/1995).

Macedonians, with their distinct identity challenged by Bulgarians and their name by Greeks, are the target of abundant hate speech in both countries:

"Thieves of History in Skopje Also Become Thieves of Territory" (**Trud** Bulgarian daily, 9/4/1994); *"A whole state is built on falsifications of history and stolen foreign national symbols"* (**Duma** Bulgarian daily, 9/4/1994). *"Bare-footed; professionals of servitude"* (**Ethnos** Greek daily, 15/4/1994); *"Usurpers of names; smugglers of heroin"* (**Eleftherotypia** Greek daily, 17/5/1994); *"Ruthless falsifiers and forgers of glorious Greek history ; impudent neighbors"* (**Kathimerini** Greek daily, 4/8/1994); *"Chauvinists*

and anti-Hellenes; small, weak and penniless people” (Kathimerini, 15/9/1994); “A statelet with doubtful ethnic cohesion and even more doubtful existence as state” (Kathimerini, 11/9/1994).

This is sometimes reciprocated: the Macedonian daily **Nova Makedonija** has written of “*paranoia*” for both Bulgaria (28/7/1994) and Greece (8/5/1994); while Radio Skopje has referred to Greeks as “*liars; dishonest merchants*” (September 1995).

In fact, even between countries that do not have any major conflicts today, but have had serious ones in the past, venom is still pouring. “*No nation is as deceitful as the Greek*” reads the Bulgarian daily **Standart** (1/2/1996), while its counterpart **24 Chasa** states that “*A Romanian is not a nationality, it is a trade*” (20/4/1994).

In Greece, moreover, the presence of some 300,000 mostly illegal Albanian immigrants has turned them into a scapegoat of society and given rise to extensive Albanophobia (see Neofotistos, 1996). It is very frequent that, with no shred of evidence, murders are reported to have been committed by Albanians let alone some ‘convenient’ ‘Albanian mafia’, so that often the image is given that “*Greece is about to come under Albanian occupation*” (**Eleftheros Typos**, 14/12/1995).

But the main target of Greek media hate speech is Turkey and the Turks. They can be portrayed as “*an incorrigible Asian people which for some 500 years had given the worst example of a conqueror in the Balkans*” (**Nea**, 22/7/1994); “*The international champions of slaughtering and persecuting peoples*” (**Nea**, 8/4/1994); “*The Turks are the only Muslim race that has never contributed to progress and civilization and has never created anything that the world would like to keep. They have always been destructive, not creative*” (**Nea**, 25/11/1994).

Conclusion

The various military conflicts that have ravaged the Balkans in the last two centuries may have been partly unavoidable, given the specific historical development of the region’s nationalisms, with so many competing claims. On the other hand, the fact that one of these wars happened in the end of the twentieth century, when in the rest of Europe military confrontations have become unthinkable; and that there is ample evidence of intolerance among Balkan nations or, even worse, towards internal minorities is unacceptable. The way history is written and rewritten and then taught, along with the fact that the media repeat and reinforce the related negative stereotypes towards the neighboring nations and the minorities is a principal cause of this problem.

It may have been understandable that in the formative years of each nation, history was written in ways to strengthen the at the time weak national feeling, thus putting the stress on irredentist claims, rivalries with neighboring nations, and even the superiority of one’s own nation and her ‘glorious past’. However, at the end of the twentieth century, when all states officially have no territorial claims, and strive at joining the broad European family, it is intolerable that they mold national consciousness along more or less the same lines. As a result, their citizens grow up impregnated with dreams of unredeemed territories and feelings of injustice, usually towards the Great -mostly European- Powers held accountable for the ‘lost fatherlands.’ They are also intolerant towards internal minorities and neighboring peoples, which makes democracy in their countries weak and bilateral relations actually or potentially tense.

It can only enhance regional security and open up the road to a real integration of Europe by the Balkan countries if their governments, certainly with the help of International Intergovernmental Organizations like the OSCE and the Council of Europe, move towards a

radical reevaluation of the prevailing 'national' values in ways that will help the Balkan peoples learn that, on the eve of the Twenty First Century, they should think of the 'other' as a welcome complement in a 'We' vs. 'You' relation, rather than as an adversary, in the traditional 'Us' vs. 'Them' antithesis.

This means that history needs be rewritten once again, but this time in ways that will become almost common to all these nations, and will dwell also on the so many positive elements of coexistence among the Balkan nations in peaceful times. Moreover, the media will have to undertake the role of reeducating the publics in the same constructive way, rather than fuel hatred. Only in this way will these countries develop civil societies worthy of their names and the Balkan peoples can hope to move, in the next century, towards a neighborliness comparable to the one enjoyed by West Europeans in this end of the century.

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