

INFLUENCE OF ETHNIC STEREOTYPES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL RELATIONS IN THE BALKANS

Vira Burdiak,

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine

Rezumat: Având în vedere caracterul multiethnic al statelor balcanice, aspectele naționale reprezintă un interes deosebit atât pentru elitele politice și științifice, cât și pentru populațiile țărilor din sud-estul Europei. Istoria politică a popoarelor din această parte a continentului, din momentul apariției și afirmării națiunilor și până în prezent, este alcătuită din numeroase episoade de luptă pentru emanciparea națională, pentru dezvoltarea și consolidarea statelor independente, respectarea drepturilor minorităților etnice și depășirea tensiunilor interetnice. Prejudecățile și stereotipurile etnice afectează relațiile politice dintre statele balcanice, întrucât primele sunt adeseori modelate de politicile promovate la nivel guvernamental. De asemenea, ele sunt în relație directă cu frontierele și cu relațiile atât între statele sud-est europene, cât și dintre acestea și așa-numitele marile puteri. Autorul trage concluzia potrivit căreia stereotipurile etnice reprezintă și în prezent, pentru numeroasele grupuri majoritare și minoritare din această mică peninsulă, serioase obstacole pe calea apropierii, respectului și toleranței reciproce.

Abstract: In the article author points out that Balkan states are multiethnic that is why ethnic problems have always been in the limelight of governments, citizens and never lost their topicality. Political history of Balkan people, from their origin and consolidation of certain nations until present, has been filled with struggle for the national emancipation, creation and strengthening of their national states, observation of ethnic minorities' rights, solution of inter-ethnic conflicts. Part of ethnic stereotypes, which were formed as a result of existing state policy, was investigated in the development of political relations in the Balkans. These stereotypes were connected with the borders and interrelations of Balkan states with each other and with other countries, the so called great powers. We believe that ethnic stereotypes still hinder many nations and ethnicities on this rather small peninsula from ensuring mutual acknowledgement, respect and tolerant attitude as standard of conduct for everyone.

Résumé: Tout en tenant compte du caractère multiethnique des Etats balkaniques, les aspects nationaux présentent un intérêt tout à fait particulier pour les élites politiques et scientifiques, mais aussi pour les populations des pays du sud-est de l'Europe. L'histoire politique des peuples de cette partie du continent, du moment de l'apparition et l'affirmation des nations et jusqu'à présent, est composée de nombreux épisodes de lutte pour l'émancipation nationale, pour le développement et la consolidation des Etats indépendants, le respect des droits des minorités ethniques et le dépassement des tensions interethniques. Les préjugés et les stéréotypes ethniques affectent les relations politiques entre les Etats balkaniques parce que, le plus souvent, les premiers sont modelés par les politiques promues au niveau gouvernemental. Elles sont en relation directe, aussi, avec les frontières et avec les relations entre les Etats sud-est européens, ainsi que d'entre ceux-ci et les grandes

puissances. L'auteur tire la conclusion que les stéréotypes ethniques représentent même de nos jours, pour les nombreux groupes majoritaires et minoritaires de cette petite péninsule, des obstacles sérieux sur le chemin de l'approchement, du respect et de la tolérance réciproque.

Keywords: *Balkans, ethnic problems, ethnic stereotypes, national consolidation processes, national idea, national states, isolation, self-isolation.*

There are hardly any monoethnic states in the modern world, which is why ethnic problems are always in the limelight of governments, citizens and unfortunately cannot lose their topicality. Political history of Balkan people, from the origin and consolidation of certain nations until present, has been filled with struggle for the national emancipation, creation and strengthening of own national states, observation of ethnic minorities' rights, overcoming of ethnic conflicts. In the article we investigate the role of ethnic stereotypes in the development of political relations in the Balkans which have always been specific and were formed as a result of existing state policy. They are connected with the boundaries and interrelations of Balkan states with each other and with other countries, the so called great forces. In our opinion, ethnic stereotypes still prevent many nations and ethnicities of this rather small peninsula from affirming mutual acknowledgement, respect and tolerant attitude as accepted standard of conduct for everyone.

A lot of foreign and Ukrainian scientists have paid attention to the issues connected with ethnic political studies. In Ukraine the research is conducted by the following prominent scientists: I. Burkut¹, V. Yevtukh², I. Kresina³, O. Lanovenko⁴, L. Nagorna⁵, M. Obushnyi⁶. Among scientists in the western and Balkan states who have been studying national issue through political, economic, legal, ideological and

¹ I. Буркут, *Югославія: перша спроба трансформації*, in *Політологічні та соціологічні студії. Збірник наукових праць* [I. Burkut, *Yugoslavia: First Transformation Effort*, in *Studies in Political Science and Sociology. Collection of scientific works*], Т. II, Чернівці, Прут, 2002, с. 130-139.

² В. Євтух, *Етнополітика в Україні: правничий та культурологічний аспекти* [V. Yevtukh, *Ethnic Policy in Ukraine: Legal and Cultural Aspects*], Київ, Видавництво УАННП „Фенікс”, 1997, 215 с.

³ І. Кресіна, *Українська національна свідомість і сучасні політичні процеси (етнополітологічний аналіз)* [I. Kresina, *Ukrainian National Awareness and Modern Political Processes (ethnic political analysis)*], Київ, 1998, 392 с.

⁴ О. Лановенко, *Вихід один – етносоціокультурна інтеграція* [O. Lanovenko, *Ethnic Sociocultural Integration is the Only Way*], in “Віче”, 1998, № 12, с. 74-84.

⁵ Л. Нагорна, *Українська політична нація; лінії розламу і консолідації* [L. Nagorna, *Ukrainian Political Nation; Breaking Lines and Consolidation*], in “Віче”, 2000, № 1, с. 132-146.

⁶ М. Обушний, *Етнос і нація: проблеми ідентичності* [M. Obyshnyi, *Ethnicity and Nation: Identification Problems*], Київ, Центр духовної культури, 1998, 204 с.

religious perspective we can name G. Balakrishnan⁷, E. Doichinova⁸, St. Grncharov⁹, M. Kalitsyn¹⁰, K. Manchev¹¹, L. Paleshutski¹², G. Panaiotov¹³, I. Tomova¹⁴, M. Hroch¹⁵, A. Khristakudis¹⁶. However, complexity of the problem which is proven by

⁷ Г. Балакришнан, *Национальное воображение*, in Б. Андерсон, О. Бауэр, М. Хрох и др., *Нации и национализм* [G. Balakrishnan, *National Imagination*, in B. Anderson, V. Bauer, M. Hroch and others, *Nations and Nationalism*], Пер. с англ. и нем. Л.Е. Переяславцевой, М.С. Панина, Москва, Праксис, 2002, с. 264-282.

⁸ К. Манчев, Е. Дойчинова, *Мюсюлманското население от Североизточна България в българската и турската политика (1919-1939)* [K. Manchev, E. Doichinova, *Muslim Population of Northern-Eastern Bulgaria in Bulgarian and Turkish Politics (1919-1939)*], in "Исторически преглед", 1991, № 5, с. 66-72.

⁹ Ст. Грънчаров, *Към въпроса за отношенията между България и балканските страни (1900-1903)*, in *Великите сили и балканските взаимоотношения в края на XIX и началото на XX век* [St. Grncharov, *On the Issue of Relations between Bulgaria and Balkan States (1900-1903)*, in *Great Powers and Balkan Interrelations in the End of the 19 – Beginning of the 20 century*], София, 1992, с. 191-219.

¹⁰ М. Калицин, *Образът на „другия“ в османската нарративна литература от XV-XVIII в.*, in *Представата за „другия“ на Балканите* [M. Kalitsyn, *Image of "Others" in the Ottoman Fiction in 15-18 Centuries*, in *Perception of "Others" in the Balkans*], София, 1995, с. 41-55.

¹¹ К. Манчев, *Мюсюлманските малцинства и групи в политиката на балканските страни*, in *Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България* [K. Manchev, *Muslim Minority and Groups in Politics in the Balkan Countries*, in *Aspects of Ethnic Cultural Situation in Bulgaria*], София, 1992, с. 20-34; К. Манчев, *Националният въпрос на Балканите* [K. Manchev, *National Issue in the Balkans*], София, Академично издателство "Проф. Марин Дринов", 1999, 364 с..

¹² К. Палешутски, *Националният въпрос в Югославската федерация*, in *Национални проблеми на Балканите: История и съвременност* [K. Paleshutski, *National Issues in the Yugoslavian Federation*, in *National Problems in the Balkans: History and Modernity*], София, 1992, с. 95-137.

¹³ Г. Панайотов, *Съвременни аспекти на националния проблеми в Румъния*, in *Национални проблеми на Балканите: История и съвременност* [G. Panaiotov, *Modern Aspects of National Issues in Romania*, in *National Problems in the Balkans: History and Modernity*], София, 1992, с. 262-276.

¹⁴ И. Томова, *Етнически стереотипи и предразсъдъци у българите*, in *Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България* [I. Tomova, *Ethnic Stereotypes and Superstitions Among Bulgarians*, in *Aspects of Ethnic Cultural Situation in Bulgaria*], София, 1992, с. 77-90.

¹⁵ М. Хрох, *От националните движения к полностью сформировавшейся нации: процесс строительства наций в Европе*, in Б. Андерсон, О. Бауэр, М. Хрох и др., *Нации и национализм* [M. Hroch, *From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe*, in B. Anderson, V. Bauer, M. Hroch and others, *Nations and Nationalism*], Пер. с англ. и нем. Л.Е. Переяславцевой, М.С. Панина, Москва, Праксис, 2002, с. 121-145.

¹⁶ А. Христакудис, *Мюсюлманското малцинство в Гърция*, in *Национални проблеми на Балканите: История и съвременност* [A. Khristakudis, *Muslim Minority in Greece*, in *National Problems in the Balkans: History and Modernity*], София, 1992, с. 245-261.

constant ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world stipulates the necessity of further profound investigation of the political phenomenon in order to develop suitable approaches for its understanding and accumulate the experience during the establishment of the new democracies such as Ukraine and Balkan states.

Before the creation of the modern ethnicity and multinationalism there were consequently several great empires in the Balkans – Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Habsburg. Romans and Byzantines were characterized as arrogant treating others as barbarians. Population of the Ottoman Empire viewed itself as faithful and others as *giaoours*. In modern age differences between nations changed to the ethnic ground – ethnic origin, history, language, national conscience and identity became equally important with religion and church¹⁷.

Certain nations were formed in the Balkans in different times. National-consolidation process in this part of the world began under the conditions of foreign rule (Ottoman, Habsburg) and evolved after the collapse of both Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Diversity in political order, historical traditions, religious relations, social, economic, political and culture development, relations with Europe, etc. are factors which stipulated different development of national consolidation processes of some Balkan nations. European enlightenment, evolution of science, intellectual elite, national propaganda and national state with its policy had particularly important part in the appearance and further development of national idea.

During the analysis of ethnic policy in the Balkans and other regions it should be taken into consideration that nation isn't eternal category but a product of lengthy and complicated process of historical development in Europe. According to the objective of our paper we can define nation as a big social group which was formed not by one but by many combinations of several types of impartial relations (economic, political, linguistic, culture, religious, geographic, historical, etc.) and their subjective reflection in the collective mind. M. Hroch rightly believes that majority of these connections could change places being particularly important in some countries during the national formation and not important in others. Though there are three constant components: historical memory of common past which is considered to be “destiny” of the group or at least some of its key elements; density and frequency of linguistic or cultural connections which ensure higher level of social communication within the group; equality concept for all group members that are joined in civil society¹⁸.

In the Balkans ethnic usually appeared and established itself in the struggle with foreign which was perceived as something negative and was subjectively reflected in collective mind. In this way were created ethnic stereotypes, myths, superstitions, which were an important part of public opinion and objective factor in the state policy¹⁹.

¹⁷ К. Манчев, *Националният въпрос на Балканите*, с. 338.

¹⁸ М. Хрох, *От национальных движений к полностью сформированной нации: процесс строительства наций в Европе*, с. 122.

¹⁹ И. Томова, *Етнически стереотипи и предразсъдъци у българите*, с. 81.

Ethnic stereotypes cannot appear out of nothing, they have direct connection with the historical reality. In the history of Balkan politics appeared Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Albanians, Turks, Muslims (Bosnia) and Macedonians. In the course of their evolution all nations were looking for possibilities of national manifestation, emancipation, freedom and national state as a result. Expected division of Ottoman and Habsburg Balkan heritage forced every nation to form the program for the solution of territorial demands. However, every program like this had simultaneously national emancipative and invasive hegemonic elements; all the nations tried to get bigger part from the Balkan pie. And as the most persuasive argument of the modern age was ethnic, every nation was trying to prove its national right which began with self-affirmation at the neighbor's expense. This opinion won and has been dominant ever since for several centuries. Politicians contributed to this fact as historical events were usually seen through national point of view – Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek, Romanian, etc. Mass media and political literature have seconded this opinion. Created in the countries atmosphere of self-aggrandizement and bringing patriotic flare to the people's resistance became favorable ground for the formation of ethnic stereotypes, myths and superstitions²⁰.

In our opinion, among factors which caused the formation of ethnic stereotypes should be mentioned internal exclusivity, lack of information about others, isolation of nations. National idea discarded multinational empires, conglomerate of people and lands, states which despised others; it became the main force that caused Ottoman and Habsburg Empires to collapse. This idea brought to life Balkan national states – Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and eventually Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia. Principle “a state for every nation” didn't work out in the Balkans and it couldn't be achieved as it is, so that there was a concurrence between nation, territory and state. Each newly-made Balkan national state conducted a liberator's mission and united the nation, at the same time aiming at the fulfillment of certain invasive hegemonic objectives. National emancipation, unification and territorial expansion were the goals which instead of unification, divided the nations and states and set them against each other. After destruction of great empires, national idea caused chauvinism, nationalism and extremism as political thinking, state policy and propaganda. Thus another extremity was formed, reanimation of the principle – the number of nations (and even ethnicities) equals the number of states, set against each other, closed and conflicting. I. Burkut writes that, “Power ethnicization in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia made federation collapse inevitable”²¹.

Discrepancies lead to isolation, limitation of contacts, objective information about others, their history, literature, economics, politics, etc. Information is either given in parts or distorted. This is how the environment is created which feeds ethnic stereotypes, hatred, superstitions accumulated through centuries, strengthens them and promotes. Thus, self-isolation, lack of impartial information are the main

²⁰ Ст. Грънчаров, *Към вопроса за отношенията между България и балканските страни (1900-1903)*, с. 192-196.

²¹ I. Буркут, *Югославия: перша спроба трансформации*, с. 136.

conditions with ensure the tenacity of ethnic stereotypes: empires fall apart, royal heads roll and governments collapse, political parties and ideologies are created and then disbanded, but ethnic stereotypes exist and occasionally destroy everything positive in people's relations²².

In the ethnic stereotypes of the Balkans the historical reality is reflected which created them but it isn't objective. For instance, Bulgarian-Turkish tandem. Perception spread orally in Bulgarian literature and folklore, shows Bulgarians as hard-working, hospitable, brave, with good intentions, fighters for justice, freedom and independence, modest and aspiring for education. Bulgarians have high national self-awareness, their country has interesting history, great kings and patriarchs and it contributed a lot to the world's civilization and culture. At the same time this literature, including the modern one, often points out that Bulgarian national idea has always been fair, that the wars conducted by Bulgaria were justified from its point of view – in the name of national emancipation and unification. There are certainly some self-critical moments – conformity, nihilism, submission before foreigners, etc. In comparison with Turks, Bulgarians consider themselves to be higher, as Turks' image is very negative. Bulgarians believe that the Turks are lazy, apathetic, tardy, uneducated, fanatic, superstitious, cruel and bloodthirsty. And vice versa Turks' image in the Muslim or Turkish interpretation is absolutely different: Muslims are faithful, strong, heroic, apt to power, war for the expansion of Islam is sacred and other people are not faithful, rioters and wretches, Satanists, etc²³.

In connection with the aforementioned tandem, we should also analyze another one – Turkey-Balkans, Muslims-Christians. In the foreground there is a question about the Muslims' destiny in the Balkans after the exile of Ottoman Empire from Europe²⁴. It can be usually stated that policy of Balkan national states regarding their Muslim population is similar and consists of exile, eviction and assimilation. In spite of this fact there is numerous Muslim populations in the Balkans. Thus, new territories in the South-Eastern direction with numerous Muslim populations were joined to Serbia as a result of 1912-1913 war (Vardar Macedonia, Kosovo and Metohija). Government in Belgrade didn't acknowledge any minorities and proclaimed that all people on the annexed territory were southern Serbians. After the WORLD WAR1 and collapse of the Habsburg Empire, dense Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also included to the newly created state –Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – Yugoslavia, where they weren't considered as national or religious minority²⁵. Until 1929 Yugoslavian government viewed Muslims as a part of three-named nation – Serbians, Croatians and Slovenians, and from 1929 to 1941 they were considered to be Yugoslavians, which corresponded the Unitarian plans of the king Alexander. After the WORLD WAR2 in the J. Broz-Tito's federation they

²² М. Калицин, *Образът на „другия“ в османската наративна литература от XV-XVIII в.*, с. 44.

²³ И. Томова, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²⁴ К. Манчев, *Мюсюлманските малцинства и групи в политиката на балканските страни*, с. 22-23.

²⁵ К. Палешутски, *Националният въпрос в Югославската федерация*, с. 96-98.

were seen as undefined Yugoslavians or as Muslims in a cleverer nation. Therefore several decades in a row Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims were between Serbians and Croats, which reinforced the ambiguity of their present condition – neither Serbians, nor Croats, but separate Muslim nation in the Balkans²⁶.

Numerous Muslim populations also remain in Bulgaria. There are two kinds of Muslims here: Bulgarian speaking and Turkish speaking; former are Bulgarian Muslims, that live in Rodop region, Loveshko and Pirin district, and latter are Turks in the Northern-Eastern Bulgaria and Kirjal²⁷. Despite the good neighborhood between Christians and Muslims, they have lived as closed communities, isolated from each other for over a century. There are a lot of reasons for the precautions, distrust, dislike and sometimes hatred between them, which have existed for a long time, and there are also new ones multiplied by the official policy of Bulgaria and Turkey²⁸. The same findings can appear during the analysis of history, national psychology, state policy regarding the ethnic minorities in Greece – almost everything is displayed negatively, aimed not at the integration of different ethnic and religious communities but at support of their internal exclusivity, self-isolation, mutual distrust, animosity²⁹.

Similar things can be observed in the west of Bulgaria during the analysis of the tandem Bulgarian-Serbs, Serbs-Albanian, and Serbs-Croats. Serbian ethnic image is “every Serb is a hero”³⁰. There are a lot of reasons for that: powerful medieval Serbian state (Dushanov kingdom); heroic resistance against the Turkish invasion of Balkans (battle in the Kosov field in 1389); own church and patriarchy during the Turkish rule (Ipek patriarchy, 1557-1767); military boundary and religious and educational autonomy in Prechansk during the Austrian rule; two big riots in the first part of the 19 century; creation of own state with specific national program (1844). As a new national state Serbia had always won in all the conflicts and wars – in 1914-1915 Serbs won the war with Austro-Hungary, in 1941 they started bloody war with Hitler and won in 1948, they challenged Stalin and won again. The only exception was Serbian-Bulgarian war in 1885, but Serbs couldn't be blamed for their defeat as it was their king's government which was too partial towards Austria³¹.

All these facts surely promoted the creation of united national image for the Serbs as a freedom-loving nation which has state-building abilities and never bends down in front of anyone. This leaves only one step towards the chauvinistic national idea. It constantly struggles with neighbors' ethnicity and is diligently developed in the folklore, literature, propaganda and politics displaying neighboring nations negatively. Thus, for instance, in 1913 after the Balkan War I, when Serbia invaded Vardar valley and its relations with Bulgaria were so full of tension that it could only

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 101-103.

²⁷ К. Манчев, *Мюсюлманските малцинства...*, с. 20-24.

²⁸ К. Манчев, *Националният въпрос...*, с. 75-77.

²⁹ Г. Панайотов, *Съвременни аспекти на националния проблеми в Румъния*, с. 262-263; А. Христакудис, *Мюсюлманското малцинство в Гърция*, с. 257-259.

³⁰ К. Манчев, *Националният въпрос...*, с. 342.

³¹ К. Палешутски, *Националният въпрос...*, с. 98-111.

mean an upcoming war, a brochure “Serbs and Bulgarians in the past and present” was published in Belgrade. It contained very negative description of Bulgarians as servile nation of Tatar descent, inclined towards cruelty, slyness, treachery, the one that had won only because of Russia and Serbia etc. Simultaneously Serbs were pictured as pureblood Slavs who fall and get up again and again, but never bend down; they saved their faith, nationality, pride during the German and Turkish invasion; they were born to be free and live in the center of Europe; their language could be heard from Subotica to the Iskra river and Sofia; Bulgarian was distorted Serbian language³².

There is surely a lot of literature which contains positive perception of Bulgarian brothers; there is certainly support of Serbian public opinion in favor of Bulgarian unification; but in all the cases national idea of great Serbian nation possesses Serbian society, and government in Belgrade is always trying to implement it. In the southern-eastern and eastern direction this concerns Macedonia and Western Bulgaria, including Vidin, Pernik, Radomir, Kiustendil, etc. Obviously this program causes Bulgarian resistance, which also dreams about Bulgarian Pomoravi expanding to the mouth of the river Morava on Danube. It is understandable that distrust and setting of one state against the other is permanently growing, and self-promotion and chauvinism at the expense of others, praising of native and criticism of foreign things are spreading. However, this can be defined according to G. Balakrishnan as return to the non-ethnic prerequisites of the Ancient world, where natural connections between families and ethnicity created sufficient grounds for political union³³.

The same can be observed during the examination of Serbian-Albanian relations. During the Balkan wars Serbian society was against the idea of creation independent state and at that time publications appeared proving that Albanians were not Serbs, that they weren't ready for the sovereign state and that Albania should belong to Serbia. In fact Serbian politicians didn't manage to prevent the creation of Albanian state, but they managed to annex densely populated by Albanians Kosovo and Metohija, by calling those people (together with Macedonian population) southern Serbs until 1941. Serbian and republican Yugoslavian policy regarding Albania during the World War 2 and after it had invasive hegemonic essence; it was particularly strong about the fact that Albanian union with Yugoslavia was seen as a latent unclear perspective for the creation of Balkan communist federation with the domination of Serbian Yugoslavian republic. In the present time Serbia tried to force Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija give up their autonomous rights and keep the state political status of this province as Serbian.

Besides the problems in the East and Southern-East, Serbia has a serious problem with Croats in the West. In the 19 century Croat nationalist concept was born which implied unification of all southern Slavs (as it was put the heirs of former Ilirs) in Great Croatia. Ideas of great Croatian state were hindered by the Serbian propaganda which viewed Serbs as the state-building element and favored territorial

³² К. Манчев, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

³³ Г. Балакришнан, *Национальное воображение*, с. 274.

expansion which didn't exist in reality but threatened sovereignty of other people, including Croats. It caused a conflict between the supporters of the nationalist ideas in Serbia and Croatia, as they excluded each other in theory. There were no positive forecasts for the victory. Yugoslavism was conceived as an alternative for the confrontation – in the beginning of 20 century idea that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are one nation was particularly popular. On this ground in 1918 a common state, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was created³⁴. Nevertheless, it didn't bring the expected tranquility. The idea didn't prove to be durable and national hegemonic stereotypes became popular again. In 1928 Serbian nationalist shot Croatian deputy in the People's Council in Belgrade, in 1939 Croatian autonomous district was created and Serbs and Croats renewed their struggle with Bosnia, it is now well known that such actions are typical for the relations between Kraina, Slovenia, Bosnia. And everyone considers themselves to be right, positive hero, everyone has national rights, and others, neighbors-rivals are pictured in the negative light³⁵.

This is also typical for the analysis of national stereotypes, myths and beliefs regarding Greece and its neighbors, viz. tandems Greeks-Turks, Greeks-Bulgarians, Greeks-Albanians. Greek national stereotype contains well-developed arrogance – Greece is a country with past grandeur, immediate heir of ancient Hellas and medieval Byzantium, in the Ottoman period it had its own patriarchy in Tsarigrad, and it was the first independent national state in the Balkans which created its great-power ideological program. It should be observed that in Greek ethnic stereotypes two components can always be found: Turkish factor as a threat and competition (Tsarigrad, Smirnen region, Eastern Trackia, Cyprus) on the one hand, and Slavic threat from the North, on the other. That is why it seems natural that contacts and relations with others are mostly negative (distrust, arguments, conflicts and wars – both hot and cold, mythical, etc.)³⁶.

At the same time it should be pointed out that the idea of great power, confrontation, conflicts and megalomania sometimes recoil before the idea of understanding, cooperation and global unification. Two world wars, for example, brought the Yugoslavian society to the union path: the first one did it through the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the second one – through the J. Broz Tito's communist federation. Aspiration for the unification, economic, political and even international integration was rather strong long time after the World War 2, it proved to be strong enough to conquer certain national separatism. Against all odds the moment came when ethnic rioted against extreme centralism, all to achieve in our times confrontation, meaningless wars and ethnic cleansing³⁷.

While Bulgarian national issue had been in the center of Balkan problems before the wars in 1912-1918, after the World War 1 Yugoslavia became the most argumentative one. Besides ethnic problems and conflicts with neighboring countries,

³⁴ К. Манчев, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 313.

³⁶ А. Христукудис, *Мюсюлманското малцинство в Гърция*, с. 245-250.

³⁷ I. Буркут, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

it had its domestic national issue which affected the development of united country. Yugoslavian society gradually reached different decisions: unification as one state with was based on the concept of three-named nation; Serbian hegemony based on the Yugoslavian Unitarianism, which was developed enough in the Serbian point of view; communist federation based on the national equality of certain nations and minorities. However, not single one of these decisions proved to be long-lasting. As mini-empire, conglomeration of nations and minorities gathered in one country, Yugoslavia collapsed under the pressure of national idea, nationalism, separatism and extremism of some nations, republics, districts and regions. In the meantime possibilities for the new experiments aren't exhausted – both hegemony and communist federation are in the past now, confederation as state (or international) commonwealth of different nations hasn't been tried yet. Though resistance of the old system, which was trying to preserve itself with the help of power, hindered the development of this option³⁸. At present it is most likely that former Yugoslavs won't go back to the confederation. So they are left in this case with the principle "the number of minorities equals the number of states" which are separated from each other and closed and which mostly have strained relations between them.

History of the national question in the Balkans proves that national idea caused the formation of nationalism on the certain stage of its development. Nationalism being provoked by national propaganda and state policy turned into separatism and extremism. Arguments between ethnic nationalism and extremism on the multinational territory led not only to confrontation of some nations but to the meaningless wars, ethnic cleansings and mutual destruction. This could be observed in the development of Yugoslavian issue in the modern period as well as during the evolution of Cypriot issue after the World War 2.

History proves that nationalism, which changes into national extremism and causes interethnic wars and cleansings, is a product of society underdeveloped in the spheres of economics, politics and culture. In this case we can draw a parallel with communism, which was easily forced on backward countries. Transformation changes, which have been going on in the Central Europe, defeated communism, and democracy isn't strong enough yet. Certain vacuum was created as a result of these events and it is filled with modern nationalism and extremism. International community represented by the UN deals only with the consequences. It has been a mediator for the suspension of hostilities, passed resolutions, imposed sanctions, sent its forces to the hot-points, but it hasn't been able to prevent wars, cleansings and mutual destruction.

Thus, ethnic stereotypes are very important for the development of political relations in the Balkans. People from all nations and ethnic minorities, who live in the Balkans, have their chauvinistic national stereotypes, myths and superstitions which cancel each other out. Each ethnicity believes that it is great and Balkan Peninsula is small and there isn't room enough for everyone. History shows that the time of multinational empires, ruled by one nation, is gone. At the same time history has

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

discarded chauvinism, hegemonic ideas, nationalism and extremism in the state policy, propaganda, thinking and behavior. Another extremity that the number of nations (and even minorities) equals the number of states with closed borders and confrontation also cannot be considered perfect. So the solution should be sought in the integration, freedom and democracy, in the common right to freely identify themselves, in the mutual acknowledgement, respect as accepted codes of conduct. The way for the acceptable co-existence of separate nations in the Balkans without tension, ethnic cleansings and animosity of different states should be seen in this direction.