FEDERALISM IN THE BALKANS: PROJECTS AND REALITIES

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Rezumat: *Federalismul in Balcani: proiecte și realități*

Balcanii sunt cunoscuți, de-a lungul istoriei și mai ales în timpurile moderne, datorită dezbinării lor, conflictelor și războaielor. A existat, însă, o altă latură a poveștii – încă de la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea, când au fost lansate diferite proiecte menite să înfăptuiască unitatea lor politică, sub forma de con/federație. Astfel de proiecte au fost propuse de liderii naționali din Balcani și sugerate de politicieni străini și observatori ai stării de lucruri din regiune. Măsurile luate pentru realizarea acest lucru, de regulă, nu au depășit faza de pregătire și planificare. Principala defecțiune a mișcărilor în această direcție a constat în încercarea dobândirii, de către una sau alta dintre națiuni, a unei poziții dominante în cadrul unei eventuale uniuni balcanice. Ea a fost mai mult sau mai puțin prezentă în singura materializare practică și parțială a ideii de uniune, cazul fostei Iugoslavii, și de asemenea a fost unul dintre motivele pentru care, în cele din urmă, această federație s-a prăbușit. Dar este ideea de unitate regională o simplă utopie, acum moartă și îngropată o dată pentru totdeauna? Oamenii care încă doresc încetarea eternelor conflicte și realizarea unității își leagă acum speranțele de Europa integrată și unită.

Abstract: *The Balkans are known, throughout their history and especially in modern times, for their divisiveness, conflicts and wars. There was, however, another side to the story – since the late 18th Century different projects were launched to achieve their political unity in some form of con/federation. Such projects were proposed by the Balkan national leaders, and suggested by foreign politicians and observers of the region affairs. A number of steps had been made to achieve that, which, as a rule, did not go beyond preparation and planning phase. The principal flaw of the moves in that direction was that they envisaged dominant position of one or another nation in an eventual Balkan union. That was more or less present in the only practical, and partial, implementation of that idea in the case with former Yugoslavia, and that also was one of the reasons why that this federation had finally collapsed. But is the idea of regional unity a mere utopia now dead and buried once and for all? People who still wish cessation of eternal conflicts and achieving unity now pin their hopes on integrated and unified Europe.*

Résumé: Le fédéralisme dans les Balkans: projets et réalités

On connait les Balkans, le long de l'histoire, mais surtout à l'époque moderne, grâce à leur désunion, aux conflits et aux guerres. Il y en eut, aussi, un autre coté de l'histoire – dès la fin du XVIII-ème siècle, lorsqu'on lança de divers projets qui devaient réaliser leur unité politique, sous forme de con/fédération. Les leaders nationaux des Balkans, les politiciens étrangers et les observateurs de la situation de cette région-là proposèrent ou suggérèrent de tels projets. Les mesures prises pour son mise en place ne dépassèrent, d'habitude, la phase de préparation et planification. La principale défection de ces mouvements consista dans l'essai de l'une ou de l'autre des nations d'acquérir une position dominante dans le cadre d'une éventuelle union balkanique. Cela fut plus ou moins présente dans l'unique matérialisation pratique et partielle de l'idée d'union, le cas de l'ancienne Yougoslavie, mais représenta aussi un des motifs de l'écroulement final de cette fédération-là. Mais est-ce l'idée d'unité régionale une simple utopie, morte et enterré pour toujours? Les gens qui désirent encore la fin des conflits éternels et la réalisation de l'unité mettent de nos jours leurs espoirs de l'Europe intégrée et unie.

Keywords: *Balkans, history of conflicts, federal projects, Balkan Union, failures of*

Introduction

The Balkan Peninsula became notorious with its ethnic conflicts and almost incessant wars between the states in the region, alternated with short periods of peace between them, sometimes pathetically called "eternal" to the irony of history. The conflicts and wars, especially in the late 19th and 20th century, had earned the Balkans negative reputation, from relatively neutral "storm center" to sharp ones of "great battleground of history" and "powder keg of Europe".

"Balkanization", as a geopolitical term highly negative connotations, as it is used to denote a process of fragmentation of a region or state into smaller territories or states at conflict with each other, was derived from the experience of the peninsula, and is widely used to describe developments in countries as different as Nigeria and the United States. The image of the inhabitants of the Balkans is so heavily laden with negative stereotypes and clichés of primitive, wild and demoniac people in popular culture and politics.[1]

The history of the Balkans can be perceived as endless waves of migrations and invasions, from the coming of Indo-European tribes' ca. 2000 B.CE. to the Soviet army in 1944. As a result the population became so mixed that 'Bal-

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[1] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

kan Babel' is quite apt an expression referring not only to former Yugoslavia but to other states, too, despite of consistent policy of ethnic homogenization in the 20th century.[2]

The historical experience of the nations of the Balkan Peninsula is so divisive and traumatic that the ready adjective that comes to mind is tragic. It is often present in the titles of books dealing with the past and problems in the 19th and 20th century of the region as a whole or some of its parts (from 'Tragic Peninsula' of a little known author Christ Anastasoff of the 1930s,[3] to 'Balkan Tragedy' of the Brookings Institution's expert Susan L. Woodward.[4] The easiest explanation for that state of affairs, for setting ethnic groups and nations one against another, and for all the bloodshed and cruelties, offered by casual visitors and observes again did not change much, it is the "ancient hatred" among those wretched peoples, its "legacies" and constant re-emergence (from John Gunther's 'Inside Europe' to Robert Kaplan's 'Balkan Ghosts').

British historian Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892), a prolific author, and the second Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, used to lecture on 'Unity of History', that also meant unity of European history. Freeman was quite popular in his times on both sides of the Atlantic, and even in Eastern Europe (a number of his books were translated into Russian in the 1880s and 1890s).[5] He was also an enthusiast of federalism, considering it the best form of government, and he intended to write a comprehensive history of federalism in Europe, which remained unfinished due to his premature death. From today's point of view Freeman is not the best advocate of the ideas of European unity (and unification), being a narrow political historian, and champion of racialism (though a cultural-historical, and not of biological or "scientific" one; to him only the peoples which were able to set up parliamentary and democratic institutions, that is the Germanic, more precisely Anglo-Saxon branch of the Aryans,

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[2] Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, Boulder, Westview Press, 2002.

[3] Christ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula: A History of the Macedonian Movement for Indpendence since 1878*, St Louis, Blackwell Wielandy, 1938.

[4] Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington, Brookings Institution, 1995.

[5] See E. A. Freeman, *Comparative Politics: Six Lectures read before the Royal Institution in Jan. and Feb., 1873, with the Unity of history, the Rede Lecture read before the University of Cambridge, May 29, 1872*, London, Macmillan, 1873.

could claim to have had history per se). Besides that, he viewed Europe as exclusively Christian, and he was in his political campaigns virulently anti-Islamic or rather anti-Turkish (political opponents used to compare him sarcastically with St. Bernard of Clairvaux). Nevertheless, Freeman's idea of underlying unity of history, of Europe in particular, definitely possesses potential and sounds quite immediate and topical.

Colin Kidd holds the view that "early modern Europeans were not intellectually programmed for ethnic hatred", because Christianity as their common faith stressed an underlying human unity,[6] and some scholars believe that is true of the Balkans. Paschalis Kitromilides, well known for his publications on modern Balkan/South-East European history, tends to believe that during the period prior to coming of modern nationalism and establishment of national states there was an unified Balkan community sharing common mentality, based on Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as represented in the face of Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. To him, there was no ethnic division and confrontation within the Balkan Christian community until the 19th century.[7]

Can the Balkans be perceived as an entity despite the divisiveness and eternal conflicts between states and ethno-nationalist ideologies?

In fact, the Balkan region was historically unified (though by means of conquest, coercion and dictate), within the successive empires (the Macedonian, the Roman, the Eastern Roman, the Ottoman ones), and the ethnic groups had to accommodate to coexistence imposed by the absolutist rulers. The situation changed in the 18th and 19th century when the Balkans saw emergence of modern ethno-nationalism, self-identification and differentiation of modern Balkan nations. And it became radically different under the historical realities of the 20th century, when fully fledged national states were confronting each other. It is our intention to see and explain the antithesis of well-known divisiveness and bitter and cruel conflicts presumably resulting from belated, post-Romantic nationalism, that is, the aspirations (sincere or ostensible), for Balkan "unitarism."

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[6] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[7] Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of Southeastern Europe*, Hampshire, 1994; Idem. *An Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe*, Aldershot, 2007.

Ideological designs and political attitudes in Balkans
(14th -18th centuries)

The schemes Balkan unity were manifested in different modes: of military union, of federation of the Christian nations leveled against the Ottoman Empire or another European power, of rapprochement between South-East European states, and the Ottoman Empire directed against other powers in the region.[8]

But initially, in most cases they were directed against the Ottoman Empire, which considerably weakened, remained a formidable power facing the Balkan Christian nations. That is not surprising having in mind the fact that the earliest projects of "European union" were intended as a barrier to Ottoman expansion (the plan of union of European states of the Hussite King of Bohemia Jiří or George of Poděbrady, or the "Grand Design" of the French statesman Maximilien de Béthune, Duke of Sully, in the 15th and 17th century respectively).

The idea of union or federation was in some cases political product of the Balkan historical realities and projects, in other was an "imported" one. One of the first "imported" plans for unified Balkans was the Catherine II notorious "Greek design", restoration of the Byzantine Empire, under a Russian ruler, an idea with which her favorite Prince Grigory Potyomkin used to toy, and one of her grand-sons was conveniently name Constantine.

So far as modern period is concerned, we have to deal first of all with the situation of the Balkans under Ottoman domination that lasted half a millennium, or with "Pax Ottomana".

The Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantium was in a state of gradual decline for centuries. It started with the signal defeat in battle of Manzikert in 1071 against the Seljuk Turks, continued with the taking Constantinople in 1204, by the would be deliverers of the Holy Land, after which the empire never regained its integrity. Meanwhile, at the background of fragmentation and dynastic rivalries, a new menace was looming from the East, the Ottoman Turks, and the Balkan Christian states deeply divided and antagonized could not meet it adequately. After driving the Byzantine power from Anatolia the Ottomans continued with their expansion in Europe. In 1354 Galipoli became their first possession on European soil, in 1361 Adrianople was taken to be-

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[8] H. Batowski, *Le mouvement panbalkanique et les differents aspects des relations interbalkanique dans le passè*, in "Revue internationale des études balkaniques", Belgrade, tome II, 1938.

come their capital, the next year the Byzantine emperor John V Palaiologos became a vassal of Murad I. The Eastern Roman empire was reduced city-state, its boundaries limited by the walls of Constantinople, alongside with Despotate of the Morea and Empire of Trebizond. Nevertheless, the last Byzantine and Bulgarian rulers continued their wars in the face of the Ottoman peril (the last one of 1364 waged using Turkish mercenaries).

The disunity of the Balkan Christians was strengthened by the dynastic policy of the rulers and aristocracy. In Bulgaria, for instance, Tsar Ivan Alexander breaking precedence made his younger son, Ivan Shishman, heir and tsar of Tarnovo (Central Bulgaria), while the elder son, Ivan Sratsimir, was given the north-western part of the country, which eventually became an independent kingdom of Vidin (but he soon became vassal of the Hungarian king Lajos I, or Louis the Great). The north-eastern part (Dobrudzha) became independent under despot Dobrotitsa. "Great Serbia" after reaching its peak under King Stephen Uroš IV Dušan (c. 1308–1355), self-proclaimed "Emperor of Serbs and Greeks", started to crumble, and regional princely families increased their power.

The Balkan rulers could oppose the new invaders only shaky coalitions of states, often in conflicts between themselves. Their attempts to halt the Turkish conquest of the Balkans ended in catastrophes (the Battle of Maritsa, or Chernomen in 1371, of the Kosovo Polje near modern-day Pristina in 1389). The last Bulgarian tsar Ivan Shishman became vassal of Sultan Murad I in the early 1370s, but started a war with the Wallachian Voivode Dan I (1384-86). In 1393 the Turks took Shishman's capital Tarnovo, and two years later he was beheaded on order of Bayezid I. His brother Ivan Sratsimir joined the crusade of combined armies of Christendom against the Turks under Sigismund of Luxemburg (king of Hungary, of Croatia, of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor from 1433 until 1437), and after the disaster at Nicopolis in September 1396, was taken to Bursa where died in captivity. That was practically the end of Bulgaria. By the end of the 14th century most of the Balkans was under Ottoman rule, though the Serbs, Bosnians and Albanians retained for some time a degree of sovereignty, and Walachia and Moldavia their independence. The final blow to the to the Eastern Roman Empire, that survived the western part by 1,000 years, was taking of Constantinople (renamed Istanbul) in 1453 by Sultan Mohamed II Fatih (Conqueror).

The advance of the Ottoman empire was explosive and in two centuries it spread on three continents. It reached its peak in the 17th century when sultans' armies got to the "heart of Europe". The armies of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent were at the gates of Vienna in 1529, and only the second unsuccessful siege

in 1683 marked the check of the expansion in that direction, and the Ottoman Empire became a lesser threat to the European Christian civilization.

The Ottoman conquest was disaster, from the viewpoint of European-style economic and cultural development. It was a sharp and tragic turn of fate of the Balkan peoples, their states collapsed, the elites were wiped out, most of the people of the thin literate strata, mostly clergy, had to flee to Western Europe, to the Danubian principalities or to Moscow Russia, but the life of common people did not change radically. The Ottoman economic system was amalgamation of Asiatic and Byzantine elements, the new rulers accepted certain aspects of the existing system as heirs of the Balkan-Byzantine world. Though oppressive the Ottoman regime in the Balkans was compared with the situation in other parts of Europe was tolerant in religious terms and established a multicultural and multi-religious system of cohabitation of ethno-religious entities.

The Ottoman rulers borrowed the system of pronoia, where army officers in the, instead of regular salary got part of the tax revenue from the territory granted. Under the Ottoman sultans a version of pronoia developed, called the timar system between the 14th and 16th centuries, where revenues from tempo-rary land grants of different size was appropriated by timariots (Sipahis and other members of the military class) for their service.

The land, the chief source of wealth, as ever before, was state property, and the sultans who were supreme rulers and caliphs (spiritual leaders of the Sunni Muslims) could freely dispose of it. Only small portion of it was in private possession, in the form of mulk, and another part outside of state was Waqf (or vakif in Turkish), religious endowment established to finance mosques, religious institutions or charities. It can be assumed that Christian peasants hold property alongside Muslims, they were tenants, paying rent to the timariots (sipahi caval-rymen who were granted land for their military service), and could inherit their plots. However the non-Muslims had to pay other taxes, like the jizya (cizye in Turkish), head or poll tax levied on able bodied adult males of military age. One of the most negative aspect was the devshirmeh system, abduction of Christian youths from their families, to convert them to Islam and train them soldiers (the brightest of them could become administrators and reach the highest posts), be-coming members of the Janissary corps (Turkish Yeni-cheri), the standing army of the empire (between 1380 and 1826). Devshirmeh or blood tax (abolished in 1683 by Sultan Mehmet IV), was deplored in Balkan folklore and later in national histories as utmost form of oppression, but on the other hand it was an oppor-tunity to join the dominant ethno-religious group and the ruling elite of the em-

pire. There were other forms of discrimination of the non-Muslims regarding their legal position, and even the form and color of their dress.

Another aspect of inter-religious situation was the process of Islamization. During the period of Ottoman domination comparatively large groups of local population was converted, esp. in the Rhodope Mountains and North Western Bulgaria, in Bosnia, in Macedonia. Those new Muslims speaking their native languages are known under different names (Pomatzi in Bulgaria, Pomakoi in Greece, Torbeshi in Macedonia, Poturice in Serbia, or simply Muslims in Bosnia). The methods of Islamization is subject of disputes, the nationalist Balkan historians claiming that it was forcible conversion, while some of their Turkish colleagues even claim, that the group consists of the Turks who in the course of time were Slavized adopting local dialect. The process on the whole seems to have been prolonged and voluntary, not at least because of economic reasons, exemption from heavy taxes. On the other hand the Ottoman rulers did not aim at total Islamization because of economic and fiscal considerations again, and it was a "creeping" process, rather than permanent violent pressure.[9]

The Ottoman Empire has been often favorably compared with Western Europe in modern history for its relative religious toleration, so far as a form of coexistence between the ethno-religious communities had always existed there despite the dominant position of Islam. Upon the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 the Eastern Orthodox Christians were organized by Sultan Mehmet II, like other religious groups, as Roum millet (millet-i Rûm).[10] They were placed under the civil-ecclesiastical authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as their millet-bashi, the highest religious and political leader. The millet

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[9] Evgeny Radushev, *Hristiyanstvo i islyam v Zapadnite Rodopi s dolinata na reka Mesta, XV – 30-te godini na XVIII vek*, [Christianity and Islam in the Western Rhodopes and the Mesta Valley, the 15th Century-the 1730s.], 1-2, Sofia, National Library "Sts. Cyril and Methodius", 2005; Antonina Zhelyazkova, Alexiev Bojidar Georgeta Nazarska, *Sŭdbata na miʊsiʊlmanskite obshtnosti na Balkanite* [The Fate of Muslim Communities in the Balkans], vol. 1: *Miʊsiʊlmanskite obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bŭlgariia* [The Muslim Communities in the Balkans and in Bulgaria], Sofia, IMIR, 1997 (in Bulgarian); Antonina Zhelyazkova, Jorgen Nielsen, Giles Kepel (eds.) *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims: A Collection of Articles*, Sofia, IMIR, 1995.

[10] Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis (eds.) *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society.*, vol. 1-2, New York -London, 1982.

system permitted them not only to practice their faith, but to enjoy a measure of communal autonomy, though they were treated as second-class subjects being *ghiaours* or infidels in the eyes of their Moslem rulers. The Armenians were also organized as a millet, and in the 19th century new millets were organized for the Uniate Christians (the Eastern Orthodox believers recognizing the authority of the Pope), and Protestant Christian communities. In 1870 the Eastern Orthodox Bulgarians were recognized as millet, and their Exarchate instituted by a sultan's firman.[11]

The repulse of the Turks in 1683 when they were for second time at the gates of Vienna was the first sign of the relative decline of their power. It became more marked in the 18th-first half of the 19th century. Since the early 18th century signs of decline became visible, the Ottoman Empire showed marked and increasing backwardness in technological and institutional terms vis-à-vis Western, and even parts of Eastern Europe (Russia). The process was intensified by inherent weaknesses, the corruption and squandering of resources, the ineffective fiscal system, and weakening of central government The Janissaries became a praetorian guard, ineffective as soldiers, but their power was used to dictate the deposing and enthronement of sultans.

Attempts to reform the imperial structures, initially aimed at creation of modern army, continued during the reform period or Tanzimat (starting with Sultan Abdul Mejid's decree, the Hat-i-sherif of Gulhane of 1836, reaffirmed by the Hat-i-humayun of 1856), had limited success in stabilizing and strengthening the empire, and checking the centrifugal tendencies. The reform acts promised equality of all subjects, irrespective of their religion, guarantees of their property and honor, removal of tax farming, and different abuses, but remained mostly on paper because of opposition of local functionaries and the Muslim population. Nevertheless they were used by the subject peoples as a legal base for their demands for extension of their local government. By that time the sultan had practically lost Egypt then Greece, and Serbia and Romania became autonomous. Modernization, reforms and infrastructure project required borrowing of capital, and the empire amassed huge debts, esp. after the Crimean War.

As a whole, "Pax Ottomana" guaranteed a greater degree of stability and unity (though enforced) in the Balkans than the regimes in the previous periods. One of its effects was, however, a comparative retardation of the process of for-

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[11] Richard von Mach, *Der Machtbereich des bulgarischen Exarchats in der Türkei*, Leipzig - Neuchatel, 1906.

mation and consolidation of the Balkan nations. Nevertheless, the decline of the empire, the attempts at its modernization or "westernization", the intensification of economic activities within, and the trade with Western Europe, the influence the ideology of modern nationalism, stimulated the construction of national identities and formulation of respective national programs.[12]

Projects of Balkan Unity of the 19th century

Since the late 18th century, the Balkans became a focal point of the notorious "Eastern Question". The latter concerned the existence of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire (and its inevitable demise), and the perspectives of its non-Turkish parts, the inheritance of the empire, so to say. The development of the Eastern Question included a series of crises affecting South-Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. The character of the Eastern Question, and its successive crises were caused by the infiltration of Western ideas, culture, and finance first of all, and the inability and ineffectiveness of the Ottoman rulers and elites to adapt to the changes. The Western ideas of self-determination and national state were gradually accepted by the different ethnic groups in the Balkans, but the attempts to carry them into effect by the peoples of the region, by setting up national states with clearly defined borders, led to multiple conflicts and the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and between themselves, on the other. The European Great Powers became increasingly involved in those processes pursuing their strategic, economic, and imperial interests. Their aspirations to control and gain advantages from the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire resulted in rivalries and conflicts between them, and interference in the Balkan countries. Their meddling only intensified the inter-Balkan quarrels and bitter conflicts.

Of all the Great Powers Russia became the most dangerous adversary of the Ottoman Empire waging about dozen wars against her, and tearing off new chunks from its territory. The most decisive of all the Russo-Turkish wars was the one of 1877-78, when the Russian army reached the outskirts of Istanbul. They imposed on the defeated Turks the Treaty of San Stefano, creating among the other things a "Great Bulgaria". Despite of the fact that her territory coincided more or less with the boundaries of the two Bulgarian provinces envisaged by

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[12] Peter Sugar, *"External and Domestic Roots Eastern European Nationalism"*, in Peter Sugar, Ivo Lederer (eds.) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle, 1969.

the project of the Constantinople conference of ambassadors of the Great Powers (December 1876-January 1877), and with the territory of the Bulgarian Exarchate, voted by the population itself, everyone, except Russia and Bulgaria, was discontented, both the Great Powers and Bulgaria's neighbors. The former were alarmed of the perspective of "Great Bulgaria" becoming outpost of further Russian expansion, the latter deemed it an infringement of their ethnic and territorial interests. As a result, Russia had to agree to a radical revision of the San Stefano Treaty at Congress of Berlin.

The results of the war of 1877-78 changed radically the situation in the Balkans. "Turkey in Europe", as it was styled then, was reduced to a narrow strip stretching from the Black to Adriatic Seas, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro finally became fully independent and enlarged their territory, though not to the full of their aspirations. On their part, the Bulgarians felt being robbed by the Treaty of Berlin. "San Stefano Bulgaria" had been turn to five pieces, the territory of the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria was reduced from 62 777 to 170 221 square kilometers. Not surprisingly the "San Stefano Bulgaria" became a "national ideal", and its achievement the central point of Bulgarian foreign policy until 1944, leading to the disaster of the Second Balkan (or Inter-Allied) War, and to participation in World War I and World War II on the "wrong" side.

The "ancient hatreds" and conflicts between the Balkan states are but only one of the side of their complex relations. No doubt, they have been ever troubled, but there was another side of them, namely, the tendencies and attempts to achieve one form or another of unity between them.

The first "native" project for Balkan unity was launched by the Greek revolutionary, poet and founder of the first patriotic society Hetaireia, Rigas Velestinlis or Pheraios (1757-1798), who was influenced by the political philosophy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In his "*Constitution of the Inhabitants of Rumeli, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Aegean, and the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia*", and the poem *"Thourios",* Rigas called to the Balkan peoples for joint struggle against the Ottoman power which could crush them individually, and to form a republic whose "sovereign nation will consist of all the citizens of that state, no matter what their religion and language, that is, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Wallachians, Armenians, Turks". Not using the word "federation" Rigas meant a federative republic. Under the influence of nationalist zeal Rigas called that state "Greek", and believed the principal language would be

Greek.[13] That circumstance gave ground of some scholars to claim that Rigas had laid the foundation-stone of the later "Megali Idea", the restoration of the Byzantine Empire, and of Greek preponderance in the Balkans and the Near East.

In 1806 another Russian plan for a federation of the Christian peoples of Southeastern Europe was launched by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770-1861), a Pole, who served as foreign minister of Alexander I. As can be expected such a state, though retaining all the "internal forms of independence", had to be under Russian protection and aegis.[14] His successor at the same post, Count Ioannis Capodistrias, a Greek, came out in 1816 with another anti-Ottoman plan of confederation of Wallachia, Moldavia and Serbia. Put forward during the second Serbian uprising such an alliance could be the first step towards an all-Balkan state including the other nations (Greeks, Bulgarians). In 1828 Capodistrias, then Kyvernetes, that is president of the Greece, put forward a new project of Balkan federation with Constantinople as administrative centre, and under princes from European dynasties for every of the constituent states (kingdoms of the Hellenes, Epirus, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Dacia), Russian protectorate not being mentioned this time.

Similar plan all-Balkan federation was proposed by one of the leaders and ideologues of the first Russian revolutionaries – the Decembrists, Col. Pavel Pestel. Being in touch with the Greek patriotic society, Philiki Etaireia, operating in South Russia, Pestel used the name "Greek empire" for such a formation, as a synonym of federal Balkan state consisting of seven autonomous provinces.[15]

In the 1830s –1840s the Illyrian movement of Croatian intellectuals called not only for a national revival to counter the process of Magyarization in the Hapsburg Empire, but also for linguistic, ethnic and political unity of all South Slavs, who were seen as one nation, descending from the autochthonous population of ancient Illyria. Central idea of the movement was the creation of "Great Illyria" comprising all Slavic and non-Slavic lands in the Balkans.[16]

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[13] Yannis Kordatos, *Rigas Feraios and Balkan Federation*, Athens, 1974.

[14] L. Stavrianos, *Balkan Federation: A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times*, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 34-38.

[15] Anatole G. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825*, Stanford, 1937.

[16] Jaroslav Šidak et al., *Hrvatski narodni preporod - ilirski pokret* [Croatian National Revival-Illyrian Movement], Zagreb, 1990; Elinor Murray Despalatović, *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement*, Boulder-New York-London, 1975.

The idea of South Slav or Yugoslav federation in the 1840s was strongly influenced by French scholars and intellectuals, like Jerome-Adolph Blanqui, Cyprien Robert, and by Polish émigrés circle around Prince Czartoryski residing in Paris (Hotel Lambert). Ilija Garasanin

Prince Mihailo Obrenović (1823-1868), after succeeding his father in 1860, aimed at the final liberation of his country from the sultan. His military preparations were accompanied with attempts to form alliances against the Ottoman Empire, and agreements were signed with other Balkan nations – Greece, Montenegro, Romania and Bulgarian representatives in 1866-68, so as Serbia to become the centre of a Balkan alliance. Realization of the plans was prevented by Mihailo's assassination in June 1868.

His prime minister, Ilija Garašanin, as minister of the interior in 1840s, wrote a secret memorandum in 1844, known as the "Načertanije" ("Draft Plan"), outlining the principles the foreign policy of Serbia, as focus of South Slav unity, or "Piedmont in the Balkans". The project was initially suggested by the Czartoryski circle in Paris, namely bi its emissary, the Czech Franjo Zach, and the intention was eliminate Russian protectorship by creating a large state. Garašanin himself was ready to use any diplomatic combination in order to unify the South Slavs under a Serbian dynasty.[17] Clearly hegemonistic motives made the "Načertanije" harbinger of Great Serbian policy of unification. In 1867 Garašanin entered into negotiations with the leaders of "Dobrodetelna Druzhina" (Philanthropic Society), organization of wealthy and conservative Bulgarians living in Wallachia, who followed the line of Russian Balkan policy, to form a "dualist Serb-Bulgarian or Bulgarian-Serb Yugoslav (South-Slavic) kingdom" under Serb dynasty. It was supposed to have a parliament with representation on the basis of numerical strength of ethnic elements. An agreement was drafted in that respect but never signed by the Serbian side, partly because the crisis in the Serb-Ottoman relations in the late 1860s dissolved, partly because of apprehension that Bulgarians being more numerous could prevail. The Croatian Catholic bishop of Djakovo Josip Strossmayer, great enthusiast of South-Slav unity also got into touch with Garašanin to find that behind his plans was only Serbian hegemonism.[18]

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[17] David MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin: Balkan Bismarck*, Boulder, 1985.

[18] Josip Juraj Strossmayer, *Izabrani književni i politički spisi* [Selected literary and political writings], Zagreb, 2005; *Episkop Ĭosip Shtrosmaĭer i bŭlgarite: khŭrvatskiĭat*

Federal ideas were espoused consistently by Svetozar Marković (1846-1875), a radical leader of the Omladina (Youth), a democratic and revolutionary organization, who was also the first Serbian socialist. Marković was critical of the official doctrine of "Greater Serbia", and opposed to it the alternative of Balkan unity and democratic federalism.

A number of Romanian political leaders were in favour of federalism: Ion Ghica (1816–1897), aristocrat and revolutionary, and twice Prime Minister, Ion Bratianu (1821–1891), Prime Minister, were in favor of some form of federation in Southeastern Europe. Nicolae Balcescu (1819-1852), a historian and leader of the revolution of 1848 in Wallachia favoured establishment of "United States of the Danube" (Danubian federation).[19]

The idea of federation became popular among the leaders Bulgarian revolutionary movement of liberation in the 1860s and 1870s, as a means to achieve independence, and then as a way to integrate Bulgaria in the European state system and contemporary processes. Georgi S. Rakovski (1821-1867), father of the organized liberation struggle, journalist and historian, was the first to speak about Balkan unity, not specifying the form of future federation. He became emissary of Prince Mihailo Obrenovic in his attempts to set up the so called First Balkan Union. The most enthusiastic champion of federalism was Lyuben Karavelov (1834-1879), the most significant Bulgarian writer of the pre-Liberation period, and president of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Secret Committee in the early 1870s. Karavelov was in touch with Serbian political figures, and with the Omladina (Youth) democratic and revolutionary organization. Karavelov's ideal was a federal republic modeled after Switzerland or the United States, a "federation of free Balkan countries" that would be the first stage to setting up of United States of Europe. Vasil Levski (1837-1873), the Apostle of Freedom, who like Giuseppe Mazzini urged on reliance on the nation itself, wrote about a Balkan Republic. Hristo Botev (1848-1876), a poet of genius, the last president of the BRSC, who died in the April Rising, combined federalism with socialism, a union of ideas that continued after him and until the mid-20th century).[20]

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intelektualen elit i Sofii͡a [Bishop Josip Strossmayer and the Bulgarians: The Croatian Intellectual Elite and Sofia], Sofia, 2009.

[19] Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians 1774-1866*, Oxford University Press, 1996; Idem. *România 1866-1947*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2004.

[20] Hristo Kabakchiev, *Bŭlgarskite revolyutsioneri - Rakovski, Karavelov, Levski, Botĭov - za Balkanskata federatsiya* [The Bulgarian Revolutionaries Rakovsky, Karavelov, Botyov

Balkan federation found a number of sympathizers and upholders among leading European political figures, ranging from the epitome of the 19th century revolutionist Giuseppe Mazzini to the British Liberal politician and extravagant republican (which did not impede him being a close friend of future Edward VII) Charles Dilke. Mazzini, though not a federalist, so far as Italy was concerned, in his "Letters to the Slavs" and in direct contacts with Balkan revolutionaries, recommended federation as the most suitable solution to the problems of liberation, state building and territorial conflicts.

After the Berlin Congress of 1878 which imposed a solution of the Eastern Question to last, with certain modifications, to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the federal idea had had three main aspects: firstly, to achieve more stable international status of the newly liberated small Balkan nations; secondly, to solve in a peaceful way the numerous tricky relations, and thirdly, to offer a solution to pressing social problems of the constituent states, according to radical and socialist thinkers and activists.

After the (partial) Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the idea of Balkan unity and of federation in one form or another was part of number of political parties of different ideological hues (Liberals, Democrats, Radicals, Social-Democrats, Agrarians, proto-Fascists, Communists). Social-Democrats were especially zealous federalists, their leaders Dimitar Blagoev and Hristo Kabakchiev were prominent ideologues of federalism.[21]

The idea of South-Slav federation as a kernel of larger Balkan or Eastern federation was shared by a number of Serb academic and Liberal political figures at the end of the century, the scholars Stojan Novaković, a historian, president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and twice prime-minister of Serbia, Jovan Skerlić, professor of Serbian literature at the University of Belgrade and member of parliament, Jovan Cvijić, a geographer and president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences. Nikola Pasić, a dominant figure in Serbian politics for about half a century, leader of the People's Radical Party, five times prime-minister of Serbia, and three times of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after 1918, also offered a variant of federalism, more or less copying the Garašanin's one.

Different forms of federation were proposed between 1878 and 1918 as solution of the Macedonian question that came to the fore after the Berlin Con-

about the Balkan Federation], Sofia, 1917; Ivan Ormandjiev, *Federatsiya na balkan-skite narodi* [Federation of the Balkan Slavs], Sofia, 1947.

[21] Hristo Kabakchiev, *Kûm Balkanska Federatsiya* [Towards a Balkan Federation], in Hristo Kabakchiev, *Izbrani sŭchineniya* [Selected Writings], Sofia, 1947.

gress. The population of Macedonia was mixed, every Balkan state (Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, even Romania), claimed ethnic and historical rights in the province, the neighbors tried to prove predominance of the respective element (so called "war of statistics").

In Greece among the others especially prominent was Leonidas Vulgaris, who not only espoused the ideas of federalism but founded in 1880 a Provisional Government of Macedonia, consisting of Bulgarians, Greeks, Turks, Albanians, and Serbs.[22] The Greek Association founded in 1884 propagated an "Eastern Confederation" as a means to "untie the Macedonian tangle". Later Eleftherios Venizelos, the dominant figure in Greek politics in the Greek politics, had suggested at the moment when the Ottoman Empire was practically driven out of the Europe, at the London peace conference of 1913, suggested a confederation of all the Balkan states. It was intended not as realization of the "Megali Idea", rather than as consolidation of the realities created by the war.

The authoritarian Bulgarian Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov, formerly a fighter against the Ottoman domination, found it proper to offer a project of Bulgarian-Turkish union, of federative nature, to Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1891. Stambolov's project corresponded with the idea put forward by Ahmed Izzet Pasha, a general and one of the the last grand viziers of the Ottoman Empire, himself a native of Macedonia, of a Balkan League under the aegis of the Empire, in order to halt the expansion of the Great Powers in the region.

At the end of the 19th century the Macedonian Question became the focal point of inter-Balkan rivalries, and the policy to win the Christian population by the ecclesiastical and educational activities gave way to "armed" propaganda by respective nationalist bands. Under these conditions the Internal Macedonian and Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (founded in 1893), orientated towards federation or confederation based on recognition of the principle of nationality, to secure absolute equality of rights of each one. That solution could turn Macedonia from apple of discord into a centre of attraction around which the small Balkan states would be made to group themselves.

Federalism took a prominent place in the programmatic documents of the Balkan social-democratic parties during the period prior to World War. They interpreted it as a revolutionary means of exit from the tangled national question in the Balkan. Vaso Pelagić (1833-1899), one of the first Serbian socialists,

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[22] Vărban N. Todorov, *Greek Federalism during the Nineteenth Century: Ideas and Projects*, Boulder, 1995, p. 99.

saw the future of the Balkans and part of South-Eastern Europe as a Balkan-Carpathian Federation consisting of 19 member-states. The leaders of the left-wing (or "narrow") Bulgarian Social-Democrats Dimitar Blagoev, and of Dimitrije Tucović, founder and leader of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia, propagated republican federalism. It was to them, on the hand, a fair and democratic way to solve the Macedonia question, which would dissolve after forming of federal union, on the other, an instrument to check the imperialist penetration in the Balkans. The idea of federalism became so popular among the Balkan socialists, that at the beginning of the 20th century it was given organizational forms. In 1915 the Social-Democratic parties of Bulgaria (the "narrow" socialist of Blagoev), Greece and Romania, founded in Bucharest a Balkan Social-Democratic Federation. Their slogan was: "Balkan Federative Republic – the only solution to the national question".

The close of the 19th century saw the emergence in the countries of Eastern Europe, with their agrarian economy, of peasants' parties. In 1901 the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union was formed as a political party espousing a specific form of "corporatism", they believed the peasants in predominantly agrarian countries, organized as an estate, were to be the dominating factor, and their party to occupy the centre of politics. Unlike some of their counterparts the Balkans, the BANU leaders, Alexander Stambolisky, Stoyan Omarchevsky, were staunch proponents of "integral federalism" of the South-Slav countries, and of Balkan Federation (even including Turkey), as a means to resolve national problems, secure peace and economic progress.[23]

The period between 1878 and 1918 abounded with projects and improvised plans of federation in the Balkans, of different organizations and parties or individuals, but none of their authors made efforts to give them practical realization.

Unity and disunity during the 20th Century

At the end of World War I definite steps were taken leading towards forming a South-Slav or Yugo-Slav state. In July 1917 the Serbian government-in-exile and the Yugoslav Committee (a group of distinguished South-Slav political fig-

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[23] John Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stambolisky and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1879-1923*, Princeton, 1977.

ures from Austria-Hungary formed in London), signed in the island of Corfu a declaration for a unified and democratic South-Slav state under a constitutional monarchy. At a conference held in November 1918 in Geneva of the Yugoslav Committee, the National Council, and the Serb political parties of adopted a declaration in favour of unified South-Slav state.

After the war, the process of unification and state building was accelerated. On November 25, the Assembly of Vojvodina voted to join the region to Serbia, the next day the Montenegrin national assembly declared union with Serbia, on December 1, 1918 the Croatian Sabor (Assembly) did the same, and finally, on December 5, 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (KSHS), was proclaimed under the Karadjordjević dynasty

However, from the very beginning a conflict loomed large between the general concepts based on historical experience and state traditions. The Serb leaders insisted on a strong, centralized unitary state, while Croat and Slovene ones' aspirations were for autonomy within the KSHS. The Greater Serbian concept of centralized power prevailed which meant defeat of the principle of federalism professed for decades by different political and intellectual circles. Croatian parties went into persistent opposition and withdrew from parliament, the principal Serb parties, helped by the Muslims adopted on June 28, 1921, Vidovdan (the feast day of St. Vitus occupying a central place in the Serbian national mythology as the day of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389), a constitution establishing centralized state based on the pre-war Serbian model. Serb-dominated governments of Prime Minister Nikola Pasic in the 1920s used political repressive methods to crush the opposition parties, especially the Croatian Peasants Party, whose leader Stjepan Radić was arrested a number of times. The confrontation of concepts and policies led to deep crisis which culminated in shooting of opposition deputies and the assassination of Stjepan Radić in the very building of the Skupstina. The death of Radić deepened the ethnic rift and made him an icon of Croatian patriotism and independence. Autocratic Alexander I took advantage of the crisis to carry coup d'état in 1929, and established a royal dictatorship. The constitution was suspended, national political parties banned, and policy of suppression of nationalist tendencies and "Serbianization" followed. The name of the state was changed from KSHS to Yugoslavia. The 1930s witnessed intensification of ethnic confrontation and government repressions. King Alexander I himself was assassinated in 1934 by the Ustase (Croat separatist and fascist movement, the actual killer being an IMRO hitman). Only on the eve of World

War II the successor of Radić, Vladko Maček, managed to wrest from the Belgrade government a degree of autonomy by creation of Banovina of Croatia (August 1939), but it was too little, too late.

Despite of the failure of "internal" federalism in the first, monarchic Yugoslavia, some of the opposition parties did not give up the idea, and even proposed "external" federation with Bulgaria. In the first half of the 1930s four Balkans conferences were organized to discuss the federation ideas, and had even set up an Institute of Balkan Cooperation at the League of Nations. The results of those efforts were, however, the same as the Bulgarian-Yugoslav rapprochement as expressed in the "Pact of Peace and Eternal Friendship" of 1935, which in a few years ended in the next armed conflict.

The Communist parties in the Balkan countries formed after 1919 followed the traditions of their Social-Democratic predecessors regarding federalism. In 1920 they set up the Balkan Communist Federation, headed three years later by Georgi Dimitrov (to become later a leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Secretary General of the Communist International, and finally, prime minister of Bulgaria in 1946-49). As an organizational offshoot of the Comintern, the BCF appealed for "unification of the democratic forces in the peninsula in the struggle against the capitalist exploitation and imperialist penetration in South-Eastern Europe", and envisaged the future federation as a union of "workers-peasants' republics". That concept was conformed to the strategies of the Comintern and encouraged by its Executive Committee. The BCF was supplemented in 1922 with Balkan Communist Youth Federation.

The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), which had become after World War I a fearsome terrorist organization, also promoted a form of federalism. Its leader after 1924 Ivan (Vanche) Mihailov wrote of Macedonia as "Switzerland in the Balkans", which he saw as a link of possible unification of South-Eastern Europe.

As it was with the developments during World War I practical steps towards federation were made during the next wartime period. In November 1942 the Communist resistance headed by Josip Broz Tito, Secretary-General of Communist PartyYugoslavia, and functionary of the Comintern, convened two sessions of the Anti-Fascist Veće (Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in Bihać in November 1942, and a year later in Jajce, which established the basis for post-war organization of a federation of the six constituent republics.

The concepts of federalism were revived during World War II, both in all-European and local frame, and by both leftist and rightist groups and governments. The Ventotene Manifesto of 1941 written by Altiero Spinelli and by Ernesto Rossi was seen as the birth of European federalism.[24] At the end of 1941 the Greek and Yugoslav governments-in-exile in London negotiated and signed agreement until the end of 1941 for a Greek-Yugoslav (con) federation or Balkan Union. It was sponsored by Great Britain as the first step in realization of the "Eden Plan" (named after the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden). The "Eden Plan" had as final aim was to create a central-eastern union friendly to the Western powers, by linking the Balkan Union (to include also Albania, Bulgaria and Romania) with a Central European federation (Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland).[25]

The Greek-Yugoslav federation to be realized after the war never went planning phase, due Stalin's opposition to a strong and independent federation which could threaten his designs for expansion the Soviet sphere of influence to East and Central Europe, and to shift of British support to the partisan forces of Josip Broz Tito who had of alternative plans for a Balkan confederation, while Churchill and Stalin had agreed that Greece would be in the Western sphere of influence and thus excluded from such a federation.

After the war, Tito, who enjoyed mass popular support, as party leader and prime minister, was complete master of the situation. Monarchy was abolished and Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) was proclaimed (later to be renamed into Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, SFRY in 1963). The situation immediately after the war was favorable for the creation of a larger federation in the Balkans. The two neighboring countries, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, were under the control of respective Communist parties, with their leaders Tito and Dimitrov, long time supporters of federalism. Negotiations began to this end culminating in the Bled Agreement between them of August 1, 1947, which took the two states on the threshold of federative integration. But it was not to come because of the intervention of external factor in the face of the Soviet dictator

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[24] Bertrand Vayssière, *Le Manifeste de Ventotene (1941): Acte de Naissance du Federalisme Europeen*, in **"Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains"**, vol. 55, issue 217, (Jan 2005), p. 69-76.

[25] Jonathan Levy, *The Intermarium: Wilson, Madison, & East Central European Federalism*, Boca Raton, FLA: Universal-Publishers, 2007, p. 203–205.

Joseph Stalin. He was initially favorably disposed to forming of a Balkan federation, but as virtual master of Eastern Europe he did tolerate any leaders who enjoyed authority of their own, like Tito, or allowed themselves any move not sanctioned by Moscow. The Stalin-Tito rift not only made federation irrelevant, but set the rest of the "Socialist camp" against schismatic Yugoslavia. Second Yugoslavia continued much longer than the monarchic one, due to combination of factors, domestic and international. It was, however, plagued with innate weaknesses, like ethnic tensions, economic disparity between different republics, and bureaucratic domination of Belgrade. For a time discontent was kept under the heavy lid of one party, Communist regime, though more liberal and open to the world as compared with any other one, and any manifestations of nationalism were suppressed.

After the death of Tito the inherent contradictions of the second Yugoslavia began to come into open, the country confronted deep economic and institutional crisis. In 1991 the disintegration of Yugoslavia began in earnest, soon degenerating into series of bloody wars. The former federation broke down to its constituent republics, the final blow on the last-Yugoslavia (of Serbia and Montenegro), being dealt in 2006 with the independence of the latter.

There are different views as to the reasons why Yugoslavia as federation failed, because of the great divergence in economic development of the former Yugoslav republics and the degree of their preparedness to integrate into the globalized market,[26] or to the destruction of the very concept of a Yugoslav nation.[27]

Conclusions

At present the ideas of Balkan unity and federalism, such as were known before, seem completely and irreparably compromised. The Balkan peoples and leaders now place their hopes mostly on the process of European integration and its furtherance. After accession of all Balkan states into the European Union, they

[26] Stephen Schwartz, *Beyond "Ancient Hatreds": What really happened to Yugoslavia?*, in *"Policy Review"*, no. 97, October 1, 1999 (http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/7780).

[27] Andrew B. Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stanford University Press, 1998.

believe the boundaries would disappear, together with territorial and ethnic tensions; economic development would be accelerated lead to raising and equalizing of the living standards, etc. At the same time, despite the fact that they had carefully avoided any mention of federalism in the text of the ill-fated Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe which remained un-ratified, there is still a possibility that the European Union may move in the future towards a more coherent political structure.