Bal.Kan

Europe’s Demonized Other

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At first we were confused. The East thought we were the West, while the West considered us to be the East. Some of us misunderstood our place in this clash of currents, so they cried that we belong to neither side, and others that we belong exclusively to one side or the other. But I tell you, Irinej, we are doomed by fate to be the East on the West, and the west on the East, to acknowledge only heavenly Jerusalem beyond us, and here on earth-no more

-St. Sava to Irnej, 13\textsuperscript{th} century

**Introduction and background**

What is the first thing that comes into mind when you hear the word Balkan?

It is now more than a decade ago when the wars in former Yugoslavia erupted and they lasted almost a decade until its official ending in 1999 with the NATO intervention in Kosovo. Ironically one could say it all started in 1989 with Milosevic’s notorious speech in Kosovo where it also ended in 1999. The wars will be remembered as a humanitarian catastrophe marked by brutal and horrible killings, rapes and with an overall human tragedy. One cannot stress enough how devastating these wars were. Indisputably, the victims here were the civilian population.

In the aftermath valuable wisdom and knowledge has been learned from the violent brake up of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavian wars, or the Balkan wars as it is generally referred as, have given many scholars, politicians, intellectuals and others large quantities of data to process and analyse. Research papers have been written about the Balkan wars dealing with everything from nationalism, ethnicity, economics, and politics and so on. The fields of International Relations such as Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) and human rights are areas where one can find gigantic portions of information from the time of the wars. Scholars and intellectuals have received numerous case studies to analyze and gratifying topics to discuss and debate. Various international organisations have learned much about ethnic conflicts,
peace resolutions and about their own efficiency as organization. Unfortunately, much of these writings and researches often only comprise case studies which are only relevant at the time of the wars, which on the other hand is understandable as one is actually analyzing different events that took/take place. But why is there not any further or previous study on the Balkans which extends the case studies and war time? Politicians of all sorts had more or less something to say about the conflicts, some more outspoken and some less. But surprisingly, there is not much emphasis put on philosophical, historical and literate background issues, which I believe give a fuller context of the problem one wishes to analyze. The focus is on what has happened instead of why it happened. If we don’t understand why it happened, what will keep it from happening again. We can analyze case studies and discuss current events as much as we want but we will not reach the root of the problem by doing so. The fact is that the Balkans is studied in a typical realist/rationalist tradition (applying theory on what you see, ie the world), which amongst else dominates the field of International Relations, and it is therefore not being analyzed as it could be. I want to show that the Balkans can and should extendedly be studied with different theoretical tools, tools where theory is used to explain not what we see but how we see.

Disturbingly, during and after the War in Yugoslavia a lot of different people from different disciplines came out on TV and in other media and started talking about the Balkans, proclaiming themselves as experts. These “experts” were at the time pretty much anyone with only some or no knowledge at all about the Balkans and not only journalists, writers and former inhabitants from the Balkans. At the beginning of the wars not many people new enough about the Balkans and therefore people wanted simple answers to why former neighbours suddenly started to kill and hate each other. Thus anyone who had simple explanations was welcomed to present it. The public demanded it and the media delivered it.
We have to remember that prior to the Balkan wars, ethnic violence of such magnitude and the unimaginable hatred between former friendly neighbours, visualized on TV, was something we westerners (West Europe, North Europe and North America) had not previously experienced since the Second World War if ever. We could not understand that it was happening in our own “backyard” and it seemed to us as if the situation was too cryptic to understand. Cryptic because we had no adequate knowledge and previous interest in the Balkans, which we also generally consider as natural place of instability as I will show further on. Therefore, the so called “experts” became very successful in masking them as experts using our ignorance and therefore also managed to reach a large unaware audience which assumed that what these “experts” said was true.

The Balkans is a victim of false and unfair representation in history. We have over a long period been creating a certain image of the Balkans and it has been a process that has developed slowly during the course of time, through historians, travel literature, imperialist and racist ideologies but more recently by media, false experts and other means as I will show. I will show how the Balkans is ironically simplified and chunked together by the West and how the Balkans themselves try harder to distinguish themselves from each other. Ask yourself why it is that the Yugoslavian civil war is referred as the Balkan war in the media and in general? The Spanish civil war was Spanish and not Iberian or South West European; the Greek civil war was never Balkan; the problems in Northern Ireland are neither called Irish, nor British or English (Todorova 1997:186). The Balkans is probably the only area in Europe that has been left outside the common European notion for centuries by various reasons. It has always been considered as the “black sheep” of Europe or not even as a part of Europe and one can not ignore that the Balkans strongly connotes mysticism and exoticism more than any other geographical area in Europe. It is the European version of Joseph
Conrad’s 1902 Heart of Darkness (English imperial and colonial story about a travel into middle Africa). We will see that the Balkan history is negatively simplified and stereotyped in many historical texts and it has led many to believe that there is an essential core of violence and primitivism throughout the Balkans and its people. This has made the Balkans a favorite subject for cultural essentialists. Samuel Huntington (Harvard professor known for his controversial Clashes of Civilizations 1993) and Robert Kaplan (known American journalist and academic in international affairs and writer of Balkan Ghosts 1993 and other travel literature) are some examples of people who have a very essential and universal take on cultural issues and who have used the Balkans as example to prove their theories. Their claims are simplifying matters and universalizing issues, not considering the individual and the different effects of his immediate surroundings. Many people share their thoughts and their theories, especially in North America where Realism rules the field of International Relations. Generally, they are providing an inaccurate image of the Balkans both historically and presently which only inflicts more damage to the region and how it is perceived. The EU supported organization The International Network recognizes the importance that representation of history has and has come to the conclusion:

…history must be recast as a useful tool for understanding the complexity of the past and the evolution of mentalities, political and socio-economic systems, and identities. Furthermore, history needs to be analyzed in a broad, European framework in order to overcome a misperception of the historical isolation of the Balkan region and a sense of exclusion based on the assumption that the Balkans do not really belong to European culture and tradition (Bianchini and Dogo 1998:15-16).

The immediate question is how can we in the west start analyzing and viewing the Balkans differently, or should I say positively, that is also the underlying theme in this essay? Well
first of all we must reconsider the whole Balkan discourse (everything related to the Balkans, i.e. writings, media, knowledge, information and etc) that we have acquired so far. Much needs to be re-invented and re-imagined as the images we have today of the Balkans and by which we still apply our beliefs were constructed during an era where racist and imperialist ideologies were normal, only to be exchanged by other simplistic explanatory theories today. We must deconstruct the negative images, stereotypes and the essential theories applied on the Balkans in order to make a change. We need to change the way we study the Balkans as the explanatory theories of realism is no longer suitable. The Balkans needs a second chance. Once we start establishing the Balkans as a field of study from a constitutive and a modern perspective, we will understand the Balkans better and thus become accustomed to the fact that the Balkans is a part of Europe and belongs to Europe as it should. We will be able to analyze the Balkans without being predominantly shadowed by negative stereotypical conceptions as we are today.

**Research Question**

There are few scholars that have emerged in Balkan studies which have been more or less unknown to the academic world of social science and International Relations. I hope that I will help to re-evaluate and re-imagine the Balkans and explain how we have managed to obtain a certain perception of the Balkans. *My research question is: to look at the Balkan discourse and explore why the Balkans are perceived by the West the way they are.*

I hope that I will with this essay clarify how we in the West have over the years come to develop a certain stereotypical idea of the Balkans and how the West interacts with the Balkans. I hope to, among else, show that the discourse surrounding the Balkans is created by nonacademics (people without philosophical or theoretical awareness and theoretical methodology) that produce much of the writings on the Balkans during periods of war. This
has led to the fact that much of the discourse on the Balkans today is automatically connected to war, instability and complexity. This notion is hard to depart from and it is not helpful when realist politicians and nonacademics incorporate essentialist ideas, although academic, such as Huntington’s *Clashes of Civilization* on the Balkans.

I want to show how the Balkans are chunked together by the West and how paradoxly, the Balkans themselves try harder to distinguish themselves from each other. With influences from Edward Said’s *Orientalism* I want to show that the Balkans is surrounded by a discourse and perceptions similar to the Saidian Orientalism (Edward W Said, professor at Columbia University and renowned literary and cultural critic most know for his book *Orientalism* 1978). I want to highlight the fact how there are no academic traditions and history on the Balkans in contrast to the Orientalist discourse and that this leads to less knowledge and unfulfilling perceptions of the Balkans. I hope I can highlight how there were problems when Western countries interacted/interact on the Balkans and how wrong decisions can be taken because of the fact that we do not have the complete picture of the Balkans because of stereotypical perceptions here in the West.

**Method**

This essay is influenced by “new” theories such as Post-colonialism and Post-modernism in order to clarify our conceptions of the Balkans (these will be discussed further down). Until recently, constitutive and anti-foundational theories like these were not likely to be part of the social science. It was instead influenced by positivist explanatory and foundational theories such as Realism, Liberalism and Marxism (Baylis, Smith 2005:273-274). In the last fifteen years these new “alternative” approaches to international theory have come to gain more
recognition but although on the rise they are still widely seen with scepticism. But as I will show the use of “alternate” theories can be very insightful.

It will almost utterly be a literal essay in the sense that the information used in this essay is from other literature. But important focus on Huntington’s theory in *Clashes of Civilization* is also going to be brought up and put in relation to the Balkans. The Balkans from a literary perspective will also be mentioned in order to understand how the concept building process looks like and how it affects us. I will show how the concepts have visualised themselves inform of West’s literature on the Balkans.

Edward Said wrote about the West’s conception of the orient and he called that field of study Orientalism. In a similar way I will conduct a study of Balkanism. As mentioned before, I will adopt and use the same theories that one can find in Said’s *Orientalism* and apply them on the Balkans. There is now a raise of academic research on the Balkans and slowly one can see that there is a field of study being established. To apply Said’s theories and Post-colonial theories in general on the Balkans has only briefly been conducted by a handful of scholars and writers and this way of studying the Balkans has as I said, not yet achieved widespread recognition and legitimacy worldwide although it is gaining some recognition lately. To study the Balkans in this way highlights new conceptions and knowledge which has not been focused upon before. By studying the Balkans in this way we do not limit ourselves to only facts and statistics which we get during periods of war or to the general negative image we share of the Balkans. We must focus at the entire context and thus explain how we have come to view the Balkans as the “other” of Europe. We must bring forward the reasons and processes involved in the creation of the negative images that we share. We must analyze ourselves. We must analyze the analyzers.
Material and Source Criticism

The materials for this essay will mainly be gathered from other empirical writings but I will also draw upon my previous essay about the Balkans and other studies that I have done. I will expand further on previous works. Although, Balkanism is a relatively unknown field of study, I hope I will manage to combine materials from both fields (Humanities and Social science) successfully. It can seem difficult to comprehensively connect or put Post-colonial and Post-modern theories in practice within the field of International Relations as social science tends to foremost look at facts and figures instead of philosophical theories and philosophically theoretical arguments. Nevertheless, the idea to combine these two relatively different fields of study is intriguing and, according to me, giving us the best from two worlds.

My previous essay dealt with Emir Kusturica’s film *Underground* (1995) which received a reward at the internationally known film festival in Cannes, France. In that essay I touched upon Balkanism and West’s relation towards the Balkans. I found it intriguing and wanted to elaborate further on it. I specifically wanted to incorporate theories from both Post-colonialism and Post-modernism without deconstructing too much. I found during my previous essay many useful secondary materials which I will and am using in this one. I want to comment on some writers and books that I have included here.

*Balkan as a Metaphor* (2002) by Bjelic and Savic is a volume with 16 writers which are predominantly Balkan born and educated. They apply western academic tools of Post-modernism, Post-structuralism, Deconstruction and etc to various topics regarding the Balkan discourse. “This book explores the idea of Balkan as metaphor and the meaning of Balkan identity in the context of contemporary culture…this book does for the Balkans what Edward Said’s Orientalism did for “the Orient” (Bjelic, Savic 2002:cover).
**Masters of the Universe** (2000) by Tariq Ali is another volume which includes amongst else Peter Gowan. This book deals predominantly with the NATO intervention on Kosovo. It is critical to NATO’s intervention and most of the writers have “left/liberal” opinions and they are strong supporters of democracy and human rights issues. Other writers such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Said can be found in this volume.

**The Warrior's Honour** (1999) by Michael Ignatieff who is the Carr Professor and Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University wrote this book after his travels in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan. His research examines four primary themes: the moral connection created by modern culture with distant victims of war, the architects of Post-modern war, the impact of ethnic war abroad on our thinking about ethnic accommodations at home (the "seductive temptation of misanthropy"), and the function of memory and social healing.

**Imagining the Balkans** (1997) by Maria Todorova (Professor of Balkan and East European Studies at the University of Florida) is probably the first and best book, according to me, which deals with Balkanism. “If the Balkans hadn't existed, they would have been invented” was the verdict of Count Hermann Keyserling in his famous 1928 publication, Europe. This book traces the relationship between the reality and the invention. Based on a rich selection of travelogues, diplomatic accounts, academic surveys, journalism, and belles-lettres in many languages, Imagining the Balkans explores almost every literature related to the Balkans from the eighteenth century to the present day, uncovering the ways in which an insidious intellectual tradition was constructed, became mythologized, and is still being transmitted as discourse (www.amazon.com).

**Edward W Said** is University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. His most famous book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, strongly criticizes Western social, historical and religious studies of the Middle East and North Africa. He accuses the
West of reducing Oriental cultures and religions thus criticizing Western disposition to paint the Orient as exotic, different, traditional sensual and fanatic. His work has led to the creation of a new field of study called *Orientalism*.

These writers and books, that I choose to mention out of many more, offer me validation and encouragement to pursue the research that I have outlined. They form a comfort knowing that others have also touched upon Balkanism and Balkan studies in this form. I believe that in order to stay true to my self and this topic I have to evaluate the sources from where I gather my information. In order to show how the Balkans have been portrayed and created over the years in media, politics, literature and history, I must penetrate through stereotypical notions and unambiguous ideas. A great number of writings are inadequately portraying the Balkans and it is here that the Post-colonial theory can help me become aware of such writings. Writers as Said, Flemming, Todorova, Irdanova, Ignatieff and many more are all familiar with this kind of research method and are therefore able to penetrate through stereotypical arguments and notions. Writers like these are helping us to recreate the image of the Balkans. But it is also important to bring forward writers who do not share same values as Said but are instead having a much different approach. Theories will be put against each other; essentialist and realist ideas will be discussed as they all play a part and are significant in this essay.

**Theoretical frame**

Here follows a very short frame and explanation of the most prevailing theories I am influenced by and will be using in this essay. I am aware that the theories can seem confusing for those who have never encountered them but summarizing difficult theories is impossible and they really need to be seen in context. Unfortunately, if I would explicitly explain the theories it would take a lot of space and time away from my main focus and purpose of this
essay. Hopefully this will bring at least some sense to the people unfamiliar with these theories. I think one should definitely acquire some knowledge in the “alternate” approaches to international theory.

Theories of Deconstruction is a development of Post-structuralism which began in France. Post-structuralism is a continuation and development of structuralism. Post-structuralism unlike structuralism which derives from linguistics, derives from philosophy. Structuralism and post-structuralism shares the theory that things cannot be understood in isolation, they must be seen in the context of the larger structures they are a part of hence the name structuralism (Barry 1995:39). The theory derives from linguistics and the supporters believe that the world is constructed through language, in the sense that we do not have access to reality other than through linguistics/language. Deconstruction is the applied form of Post-structuralism thus Deconstruction takes this idea further and focuses on language as not only the medium that reflects and records the world but it rather shapes it. In other words, how we see is what we see (1995:61). Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida are probably the two most known structuralists.

Post-modernism doesn’t actually differ much from Modernism. Modernism has been around longer while Post-modernism is a phenomena since the 1980s. Modernism is best understood and seen in arts since the 1890s when it broke the arrangement of how arts was previously conducted and valued. It was the rise of movements like cubism, surrealism and futurism (1995:81). It was also a movement that overall changed the way we produced literature, music, and our general thinking. Post-modernism is thus the same but it has reawaken and it carries a different tone or attitude. The Post-modernist celebrates fragmentations as it liberates Post-modernists from “the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief” (1995:84). Post-
modernism reached international theory in the 1980s where it focuses on the power-knowledge relationship, the nature of identity and various textual strategies (Baylis, Smith 2005: 285). Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard are some known Post-modernists.

Post-modernism and Post-structuralism overlap each other quite significantly and it is not easy to see the differences. One clear difference is that Post-structuralism is a theory of knowledge, philosophy and language, whereas Post-modernism is a theory of society, culture, and history. Furthermore, while Post-structuralism is a position in philosophy, encompassing views on human beings, language, body, society, and many other issues, it is not a name of an era. Post-modernism, on the other hand, is closely associated with the “post-modern” era, a period in the history coming after the modern age.

Post-colonialism is a theory which established itself during the 1990s (Barry 1995:191). It derives from the colonial era where colonized people had no voice and identities, making them think that before the colonizers came there was “nothing”. People were being thought that culture, history and life began with the arrival of the Europeans. It was from the general notion of European superiority over the “inferior” and the Eurocentric universalism that Post-colonialism came to be. Today is Post-colonialism so much more and is developing in many disciplines. It is establishing itself as a discourse regarding the social, political, economic, and cultural practices which arise in response and resistance to colonialism but it is also the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity itself are represented in the modern era. Post-colonialism is also used as a term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. But Post-colonialism can also be seen from a slightly different perspective which is more relevant to me. In Post-colonial criticism one studies the relation between the “superior” and the “inferior”. In other words
one studies the representations of the “Other”, non-Europeans and the exotic. Post-colonialism has only recently been introduced in international relations although it has a history dating back to the first oral stories of freed African slaves in the United States (Baylis, Smith 2005:288). Post-colonialism explains the fact that global hierarchies of subordination and control are made possible through social construction of race, gender and class (2005:289). Famous Post-colonial scholars are, amongst others, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha.

Finally, I want to underline that these theories are not the only ones used in this essay. I have been influenced from other theories as well, but as said previously these are the ones that are most interesting to my essay and on which my essay rests upon. I am afraid that I am restating my purpose again but I just want to mention briefly before the next chapter that these theories are helping me explain my purpose of this essay. The focus of this essay is not emphasized on HOW things should be, although I do indirectly state this, but instead it is focused on WHY. By stating why thing are the way they are I am hoping that the new information and knowledge one hopefully receives here will bring wisdom and better understanding to future interactions and commitments with the Balkans. The Balkans has a certain “mystique” surrounding them and it must be unraveled why it is there before we can talk about “how” to change it.

**Delimitation**

Even to this day people can not come to a conclusion regarding the boundaries of the Balkans. According to the French *Le Petit Larousse Illustre* from 1993 the Balkans include: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and former Yugoslavia. In the English *Encyclopaedia Britannica* CD from 1998 the following countries are included: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova,
Romania and former Yugoslavia. As we can see the French are including Turkey but exclude Romania while the English are excluding Turkey but include Romania and Moldova. The American *Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia* CD from 1998 includes all the above mentioned countries except from Moldova (Bjelic, Savic 2002:210).

I will not delimitate myself and name the specific countries that I include in this essay because I find it not necessary to specify them because it is the Balkans as the “Idea” I write about and the “Idea” has no self evident boarders on the Balkans that we can point at. As we will see the Balkan “idea” and the countries involved is changeable. The Balkans is not a fixed entity. Nevertheless, I do tend to write about former Yugoslavia foremost because it is the best known “Balkan” country which we associate to the Balkans and which has become to represent the Balkans. This essay is about the general connotations about the Balkans and about the stereotypes and perceptions that we have. As it is not easy to determine what the Balkans is, it therefore makes my essay so much more important because the perceptions we share about the Balkans is arbitrary and have no specific geographical boundaries attached to them. The Balkans thus becomes one. Ask yourself what is the Balkans to you?
Historical Background and Balkan Origin

The Balkans is stereotyped and we have come to create presupposed conceptions of the Balkans. One contributor to this is the simplistic essentialist explanations journalists and politicians have given us and which we constantly hear about the Balkans. I will deal with these further upfront. It is significant to describe the historical process leading up to former Yugoslavia and its break up but even more important is the literary historical process and how the Balkan discourse has developed. This is crucial in order to understand the “otherness” the Balkans has come to be associated with. I have kept the historical background as brief, simplistic and chronological as possible in order not to expand too much. Even though this historical background cannot cope with all the Balkan history, it is important to show the deepness or seriousness of the complexity in this region that has come to represent it. It gives us a deeper understanding why Yugoslavia broke out in such violent wars (1991-1999) and lets us know that it was not because of the “ancient hatreds” and their” violent nature” as essentialists wants us to think. In fact the native ethnic groups who lived on the Balkans prior to the 19th century were generally isolated from each other and those who were intermingled coexisted constructively. Furthermore, the medieval states created by Serbs, Croats and Bosnians did not disappear because they fought each other, as they did not, but because of internal weaknesses and other external factors (Lampe 2000:9).

During the sixth and seventh century the Slavs emigrated from the east to the west together with the Germanic migration waves at this time. The Slavs settled down between the Carpathian Mountains (Romania) in the south and the Baltic Sea in the north, from the river Oder (Germany) in the west to the river Dnieper (Ukraine) in the east. Eventually, these Slavs divided into three groups, Western Slavs, Eastern Slavs and South Slavs and they spread accordingly and by 620 the south Slavs were spread across the Balkans. From the 10th to 13th
century the Slavs started to form ethnic groupings because of the increasing influences from the neighbouring empires of Germany, Hungary and Italy but also the different Christian churches, Catholicism (Slovenes and Croats) and Orthodoxy (Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bulgarians). This was to be the start and the developing of the ethnic Slavic nations on the Balkans (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:6).

Although not independent, these new ethnic groups first existed as feudal states but were later in the ninth century forced to emerge into the different empires that were surrounding them such as the German Empire, the Hungarian Kingdom, Venice and the Ottoman Empire. These empires were also religiously different (Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam) and therefore the once similar Slavs were now further distinguished apart by their new religions. By the 14th century the Turks conquered the majority of Balkans and it was not until 1683 that the Austrian Imperial Army defeated the Turks outside Vienna. Macedonia of former Yugoslavia had been under Turkish rule for more than 500 years. Serbia and Bosnia was for 400 years under their rule while Slovenia and larger parts of Croatia managed to stay under the Austrian, Habsburg and German rule. Religious difference became firmly established during this era and as the religion was of great significance in at this time the Slavs could no longer be considered as ethnically and culturally similar. The Croat and the Slovenian cultural development were mostly shaped by the German state, Hungary and the Venetian Republic and the Catholic Church. The Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians were on the other hand influenced by the Byzantium culture and the Orthodox Church. During the Turkish colonization many Christians from Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia fled north to the military borders and were given land in exchange for military duties. The Serbs mainly settled in southern Hungary and western Croatia where they remained until the 1990s and which is going to be of significance during the 1991-1995 war in Croatia. The Austrians went on to
conquer the rest of the Balkans from the Turks and once again the ethnic map was altered because of the migration flows. The greatest change occurred in Vojvodina (northern part of today’s Serbia) which was heavily ravaged by the wars. This area was resettled by Serbs, Hungarians and Romanians but during the Austrian empire Germans, Czechs and Ukrainians also settled here, making it the most ethnically mixed areas in Europe at this time (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:9-29).

At the beginning of the 19th century the Enlightenment spread across Europe and on the Balkans it inspired ideas for national unification. The small feudal states wanted to be independent nations, independent from their feudal lords and masters. It was also during this era that the first idea of a greater unified South Slav nation was born. Although nothing concrete happened. The Balkans saw only new rulers exchanging each other, from the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, the Republic of Dubrovnik, the Republic of Venice to Napoleon I Bonaparte and back to the Habsburgs again. This eventually caused the Croatian and Serbian bourgeoisie to develop their own idea of a united South Slavic state as they thought they would be better of that way. By now Croatia, Slovenia, Vojvodina and Bosnia belonged to the Austria-Hungary Empire. Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia belonged to the Ottoman Empire and the people identified themselves with their historic regions but as the development of capitalism and the birth of the modern national identity they started more increasingly to identify themselves as ethnic nations (2004:44-46).

Interestingly from a literary analytical point, the Balkans is named after a geographical detail and has come to represent the whole peninsula. The word “Balkan” means mountain. It is believed that the word came with the arrival of the Ottoman Turks because there is no documented mentioning of the word before their arrival. It is in most Ottoman and Turkish
dictionaries referred as mountain or mountain range and more specific as wooded or rocky mountain (Todorova 1997:26-27). One of the first documented encounters with the name “Balkan” in travel literature came in 1794 when a British traveller John Morritt wrote about his travels from London to Constantinople. From Bucharest to Constantinople he crossed the Balkan Mountains which range from southeast Europe extending about 563 km from eastern Yugoslavia through central Bulgaria to the Black Sea. But the exact size of these mountains were not known back then and therefore the mountains were only known as the Haemus which derive from the ancient Greek mythology and which actually means the son of King Boreas of Thrace. The story is that in his vanity Haemus compared himself and his wife Rhodope with Zeus and Hera. Zeus punished them by turning them into a mountain with the same name. Nevertheless, the British traveller named it for some unknown reasons as Bal.Kan (Balkan), probably because he heard it from the locals. On the other hand there is mentioning of “Balkans” much earlier than that. In the 15th century an Italian diplomat and writer encountered the Haemus on his diplomatic travels to the Ottoman capital and learned that the locals used the word Balkan for mountain which he recorded (1997:22). Thus, how did the name Haemus change to Balkan? In 1608 during the Turkish rule another German diplomat, Salomon Schweigger, got his travel journals published and in them it was written about the Haemus. He documented not only the geographical aspects of the mountain but also that the Turks call the Haemus for Balkan, the Italians call it the Silver Mountain and the Bulgarian Slavic name is Comonitza (1997:24). The name Balkan was now firmly documented and it began increasingly and more frequently to be used to refer to the Haemus. By the 18th century both Haemus and Balkans were used interchangeably and it continued like that in to the 19th century when suddenly the Balkan became the preferred term especially among British and Russian travellers. We have to remember that so far the name Balkan was only attached to the Mountain chain and not to the Balkan Peninsula. It was not until 1827 that the first collective
term Balkan for the whole peninsula was used by a British traveller in his description about the bishops in this region. But the first one to coin the term Balkan Peninsula was the German geographer August Zeune in 1808 who had the mountains as a northern boarder for the peninsula or as a divider between the Balkans and Europe (Todorova 1997:25-26).

As the ideas of new ethnic nations were emerging in the 19th century, nationalist’s movements blossomed and people thought that national unification and liberation would be the ultimate symbol of success. In order to best achieve this liberation people thought that if the South Slavs united they could better resist other larger empires. So in other words they thought it was better to have a common Slav empire than a non-Slav empire ruling over them, although the ultimate choice for many was to have their own ethnical nation state. The Croats dreamt of their Greater Croatia and the Serbs dreamt of their Greater Serbia but in order to have a chance against the other great empires surrounding them they had to join up (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:66).

As a protest to the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Habsburg crown prince and successor to the Austrian throne, Francis Ferdinand and the empire declared war on Serbia. Serbia and Montenegro joined forces against the empire and this strengthened the idea of a unification of Slavs. Soon after other countries joined the war and WW I was born. In Croatia and Slovenia some political parties kept their loyalty to the Empire but by 1917 many switched in favour for the idea of a unified South (Yugo) Slav nation. In the same year at the Island of Corfu Serbs, Croats and Slovenes agreed to establish the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes under the rule of the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty and it was declared amongst else that it would have one flag with emblems from each nation, two alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin), equality between the different
religions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Muslim), equality of all citizens and a common calendar. In the following year the new State was proclaimed and although it was meant to be an equal state amongst its ethnic groups the Serbs dominated the new state and incorporated their dream of a greater Serbia (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:82-94).

The new state was very poor after the WW I and it was the least developed in Europe and had a record high unemployment. It was not recognized internationally and the politicians had no friendly relations with the neighbouring countries except from Greece and Romania. The political parties in Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia were ethnically based and their aims were to gain more independence such as their own parliament and autonomy while the Serbs advocated for more centralization and more control for the King. It was only the Communist party that was not ethnically based and worked for a common cause. The new state was also one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Europe. Although not included in the name, the new State also included Bosnia and Macedonia as well as minorities such as Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Bulgarians, Turks, Italians, Albanians, Greeks and Germans. The dominating Serbs ignored this ethnical variety and governed as if there was a Serb majority, dominating the government, administrations and the army and this escalated the ethnic tensions in the country (2004:99-109). Only 4 percent Croats were represented in the government although they constituted one fourth of the population. Of 18 legislative ministers only 3 were Croat, of 127 secretaries and counsellors only 18 were Croat and only 3 were Slovenes. Serb universities received more money and Serb Orthodox priest were favorized by the government over the Catholic clergies (2004:24). During the 1920s and 1930s the dissatisfaction towards the kingdom by various ethnic groups was so strong that nationalist parties were created which conspired against the king and strived for independence. One such party was the Croat Ustasa who also eventually assassinated the king Alexander in 1934.
With the growing ethnical tensions and the rise of Nazism in Europe the Serbs eventually allowed the Croats some recognition. The Croats were allowed to form an ethnically defined Croatia with its own parliament and governor (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:119-121).

At the beginning of the 20th century the Balkan discourse became more and more filled with political connotations. In Bucharest 1936 in the Institute of Balkan Studies, Victor Papacostea couldn’t understand how this geographical area where the music, theatre and thoughts of ancient Greece were nourished could be named with a Turkish word after an insignificant mountain (Todorova 1997:29). But the word Balkan would persist and it would come to develop even more connotations. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and Bulgaria the word “balkanization” emerged. After the WWI new states emerged across the whole Europe but in the Balkans only Albania were added to the already existing map. Nevertheless, balkanization was ascribed to the Balkans and it inherited a negative connotation. In many dictionaries and encyclopaedias it is written that it denotes nationalist fragmentation or the breaking up of a geographic area into small and often hostile units and they specifically write, as in the Balkans after the WWI although all the states except from Albania already existed long before the WWI. It is even written to be synonyms for counterrevolutions, guerrilla warfare and assassinations, frequently found in the Balkan countries (ibid). In the American Chicago Daily News, Paul Scott Mowrer wrote in 1921 that balkanization is “the creation, in a region of hopelessly mixed races, of a medley of small states with more or less backward populations, economically and financially weak, covetous, intriguing, afraid, a continual pray to the machinations of the great powers, and to the violent promptings of their own passions (1997:34)”. The picture that was taking form was not very positive and it would only get worse. By The 20th century balkanization entered journalist and political lexicons and the
disintegration of the Hapsburg and Romanov empires into small states were all referred as “balkanization” although the balkanization process connected to the Balkans, occurred much earlier. By WWII the word “balkanization” gained more academic attention and, among others, Du Bois gave the word attention and showed how it perpetuates a sense “of disgrace and dishonour among the luckless people of the earth (Todorova 1997:35)”. Balkanization was also used for other purposes as well and no longer just for international relations. In 1960s one could read *The Balkanization of Austria* by Alexander Vodopivec who expressed his dissatisfaction with the Austrian institutions and in America one can find the urge “to discard social policies that encourage Balkanization of our society” and in John Steinbeck’s *Travels with Charlie* Steinbeck complains that his country was balkanized because two states rarely have the same gasoline tax. In academia Harold Bloom introduced balkanization to mourn everything he detested, the balkanization of literary studies which he believes destroys all intellectual and aesthetic standards in the humanities and social science thus making balkanization synonymous with dehumanization and destruction of civilization (1997:36).

**Discovering the Balkans 1800-1990**

In the 18th century travel literature boomed all over Europe but especially in Britain. From here numbers of writings on the Balkans emerged. Almost all significant writers produced some sort of travel literature during this time. One of the more important books of this time dealing with the Balkans is *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* by Georgina Mackenzie and Adelina Irby and it deals with their travels in the “Ottoman” Balkans between 1861 and 1863. This was probably the first book that discovers the Balkans for the unaware English public who until now thought that all the inhabitants there were either Greek or Turks. Mackenzie and Irby helped bring forward awareness that there were not only Muslims living there but also Christian Slavs which would later be classed as “non-Muslims”.


But although Mackenzie and Irby succeeded in making the Christians known to the public they never forgot their superior class over the “semi-barbarians” who had an inability to work hard (Todorova 1997:97-98).

By the turn of the century a collective image of the Balkans had been established in European Literature but it would be further elaborated in the name Balkan. In 1903 the murder and removal of the Serbian king Alexander and his wife Draga woke an outrage in the western public. The New York Times wrote that the removal was “a racial characteristic attributed to a primitive Slavic strain (1997:118)”. Furthermore, H.N. Brailsford, active in the British Relief Fund spelled his disgust as:

I have tried...to judge both Christians and Turks as tolerantly as possible, remembering the divergence which exists between the standards of the Balkans and of Europe. In a land where the peasant ploughs with a rifle on his back, where the rulers govern by virtue of their ability to massacre upon occasion, where Christian bishops are commonly supposed to organise political murders, life has but a relative value and assassination no more than a relative guilt. There is little to choose in bloody-mindedness between any of the Balkan races – they are all what centuries of Asiatic rule have made them (Todorova 1997:118).

One can wonder if Brailsford gave any thought about his own country’s colonial involvement in South Africa, the Indian continent and Ireland when he wrote this. As we can see, to reference the Balkans with the East has taken its form and it will continue to worsen. To compare with the East (Asia) enforces the feeling of alienness and it emphasizes the oriental nature of the Balkans (ibid). After the shots in Sarajevo and the outbreak of WWI the demonizing and bashing of the Balkans was free for all. “Evilness” was rooted in the Balkans according to the West and its image has prevailed until our days. Well known reporter Robert
Kaplan even claims that “Nazism” has Balkan origins. He claims that among the flophouses in Vienna, close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously (Kaplan 1994:Prologue xxiii).

After Hitler’s attack on Poland and after the outbreak of WWII the Kingdom was asked by Hitler to join the Nazis. After some hesitation The Kingdom finally felt obliged to accept the offer as its neighbours (Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania) already joined the Nazis and having them as enemies would not be good. But the decision was not welcomed by the people and protests erupted, angering Hitler who therefore went on to attack the Kingdom in 1941 as a punishment for the people’s reactions, although they had signed the pact. The Kingdom fell after just 11 days and surrendered to the Germans who divided the kingdom amongst its axis friends. The royal family and its government fled the Kingdom. The Croats who had been unsatisfied with their previous situation saw their opportunity and declared the Independent State of Croatia ruled by the Ustasa party. But this independence was just an illusion while in fact the real rulers were the axis occupiers. With the help of the axis forces the Ustasa went on and murdered large amount of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Muslims and any Croats opposing the Ustasa in order to create an ethnically purer Croatia. Concentrations camps were set up (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:154). I would like to highlight the fact that up till now there has not been any violence or war between the different ethnical Slav groups which is important to remember as it proofs that there is not any “ancient hatred” which is “deeply rooted” in the Balkan people as we have been led to believe and which I will show. Until now the Yugoslav people lived in peace amongst each other and only fought against their occupiers. As soon as the Yugoslavian Kingdom was occupied armed resistance was mobilised by the communist party, led by Jozip Broz Tito. This unit had a majority of Serbian members but Slovenes and Croats were also represented. Another unit was also mobilised by Serbs who were still loyal
to the King and monarchy, called the Cetniks. This unit was predominantly Serbian. In other words the major players at this time were the Germans and their axes forces, the Ustasa, Tito’s Communists Partisans and the Cetniks. The Cetniks swore to take revenge on the Croat Ustasa for its crimes against the Serbs and they had support from the exile government. Thousands of Croats died. But the Cetniks also fought against the Partisans while the Partisans fought the Ustasa and the Cetniks too. The Ustasa also fought both the Partisans and the Cetniks. All in all everyone fought against everyone and it was indeed a civil war as well but the partisans also fought against the Axis forces thus having the heavier task. Both the Ustasa and the Cetniks collaborated with the Axis forces in order to destroy each other. At first the Cetniks, loyalist to the King, enjoyed the support of the Allied Forces but after discovering that the Cetniks collaborated with the Axis forces it stopped. Instead the Allied forces had no choice but to support the Communist Partisans. As the war progressed the Partisans became more and more successful and more people from all over the Yugoslav Kingdom began to join them. The Cetniks and the Ustasa lost many of its members and many started to sympathise with the Partisans. At the same time Tito planned a socialist revolution and his dream to create a Yugoslav Federation of equal nations. By 1942 Tito’s partisans had enough power and control to proclaim them as the supreme political authority of the new Yugoslav Federation. Tito was declared President and the Marshal of Yugoslavia. The allied forces recognized Tito’s Yugoslavia in 1944. Tito had by now liberated the whole territory of the former kingdom but also Slovenian and Croatian areas that had belonged to Italy after WWI. By 1945 the axis forces were defeated and the partisans proclaimed the new Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945 and deprived the former Karadjordjevic’s dynasty of all its rights (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:156-196)
Finally before I start analysing the Balkan discourse and continue exploring why the Balkans are perceived by the West the way they are, I will finish this historical background with some post war (WWII) information and conceptions.

Tito came to rule Yugoslavia until his death in 1980. During this time he managed to build up a communist Yugoslavia from scratch. With his communist rule he unified the south Slavs again, diminishing any nationalist movements that existed after the war either by killing or imprisoning anyone who opposed his vision. Critics say all he did was to postpone the nationalist movement to erupt even more violently later on. It was a time of ideological change in Europe and it is not wrong to say that the Balkans “otherness” became reinforced in the West during the postwar era as the capitalistic West stood against the totalitarian, communist east. The geographical/cultural “other” is replaced by an ideological one, although the symbolic geography of eastern inferiority still remains (Bakic, Hayden 1992:4). Nevertheless, Tito remarkably industrialized Yugoslavia and increased the living standards tremendously. Yugoslavia’s economic growth was one of the fastest in the world. But he came to be better known internationally with his “break” with the communist Soviet Union and Stalin and not by his home achievements although impressive. The Soviet Union with its Slavic and Orthodox majority felt a connection with the Slavs on the Balkans but it was from a political perspective where the real interest lied. Tito had been Stalin’s ally during the war and was now expected to be one of Stalin’s satellites in Eastern Europe. But Tito had a different socialist vision for his Yugoslavia which Stalin opposed. Stalin demanded the Yugoslav people to overthrow Tito as a last desperate attempt but Yugoslavia broke away from the Soviet control while at the same time maintaining a friendly tone in their relationship with the Soviet Union. This proved successful and Stalin did not use any violence to stop Tito but instead “only” imposed political and economic isolation. The western powers welcomed
this and Tito enjoyed generous loans from the West but unfortunately, I think Tito’s remarkable socialist revolution against the Soviet Union only created a sense of more mystical perceptions around the already “complex” Balkan people. (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:194-203).

Even though Tito managed to control the most of the nationalism and independence thoughts in Yugoslavia some states still wanted less centralized power and more autonomy and after increasing demands new federation laws were established giving the individual republics more autonomy and self management which gave the nationalists hope. States like Slovenia and Croatia had better economies and development than the rest of the country. High loans which went to these undeveloped republics and bad economic plans made Yugoslavia very indebted and by the 1980s the inflation and unemployment rose dramatically and the living standard declined. This was another postwar development, the increasing difference between the rich north and the poor underdeveloped south and which also carries the notion of old European political geography where the southern people are considered undisciplined and passionate in contrast to the rational and industrious people of the north (Bakic, Hayden 1992:4). Up till now the people of Yugoslavia had been happy enjoying the rise in standards both socially and privately. They had enjoyed living in peace but as soon as Tito died nationalist demands that were previously suppressed came to rise once more and this time stronger than ever.

With a new rotary presidency system and almost bankrupted, Yugoslavia experienced after 50 years ethnic unrest for the first time in the poor Kosovo and the beginning of clashes between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. Differences and nationalism together with bad economy amongst the republics escalated during the 80s. Eventually in 1990 the socialist regime
collapsed and political clashes escalated regarding the political and economical situation in Yugoslavia as well as ethnic violence. The Yugoslav army led by Serbs mixed into the political conflict stirring up even more problems. The nationalist differences and political interests were so strong that nationalist parties took leading positions in the various republics and in 1990 and 1991 the majority of the people of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia opted for independence which in turn scared the historical Serb populations in Bosnia and Croatia and the nationalist rhetoric by leaders like Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic did not improve things. Fear of mistreatment and isolation from the Serb Republic the Serb minorities reacted by declaring themselves independent from Croatia and Bosnia leading to armed clashes. Although Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia became recognized as independent states in 1992 by the International Community, the “Civil” War was a fact when the Yugoslav Army led by Serbs went to assist the Serbian minority and launching an attack on Slovenia and Croatia. (Klemencic, Zagar 2000:287-293).

Having this intense historical review of the Balkans and its discourse fresh in our mind, I will now proceed and start analysing the Balkan discourse in depth.
Stereotypes and Evil and Balkan Men

Balkanization, which was coined by the beginning of the twentieth century as we have seen, has become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian and lately it has in the American academia, schools and institutions become completely decontextualized and paradigmatically linked to a variety of problems (Todorova 1997:3). Therefore when people think of the Balkans they have no clue what is what and who is who. Instead they automatically link it to what they see on TV, which is war, misery and barbarianism. Therefore, the Balkans becomes the “other” of Europe. A popular image used by cultural essentialists is “ancient hatreds” as one can find in Kaplan’s Balkan Ghost. This is widely accepted and used to describe the Balkans. The British army colonel Bob Stewart once said “Historically, relations between Serbs, Croats and Muslims had been appalling for centuries…The place has always been a powder keg” (Bjelic, Savic 2002:27). The prevailing view on the Balkans is as a natural source of instability, violence and a place too mystical and complex to comprehend. Thus, over and over again we are fed with a negative perceptions and images of the Balkans, which more and more make us dissociated with it. The stereotyped and cold image of the Balkans from WWI has been reproduced over the decades and it now operates as a discourse (Todorova 1997:184). One can also find that after WWI the stereotypes of the Balkans many times manifested itself in pure racial terms. In 1921 two Englishmen pondered over the “hybrid race” of the Macedonians and came to the conclusion that the “cross-bred” women of Macedonia with their thick lips, broad flat noses and high cheek bones are not as beautiful as the “less crossed” Turkish women which is clearly a remark to Negroid characteristics thus being at the bottom of the referential scale during this period. And being racially impure went hand in hand with savagery, unintelligence and immaturity (1997:124). Six years later Swedish Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis expressed his disgust over his co passenger to the “holy” land when passing the Balkans. He said that their
conduct is eccentric, too sudden and eager. They are odd individuals with low foreheads, sodden eyes, protruding ears and thick under lips, truly a bad combination of Westerner and Easterner, unreliable, materialistic and without tradition (Todorova 1997:125).

During the 1920s there was a mass emigration from all over the Europe to the United States across the Atlantic and many people from The Balkans went there too. But the mistrust towards the “oriental” Slavs was vivid there too. The Immigration Restrictive League advocated for a restriction of Balkan immigrants because they thought they would commit suicide to the American race and therefore, all assimilation should be avoided with the culturally inferior and “oriental” Slavs. The “Hunkies” (Huns) as they were called became hated and very badly treated (1997:126).

K. E. Fleming, Assistant Professor of History and Hellenic Studies at New York University, who I briefly mentioned before, writes about Balkan perceptions and stereotypes of the Balkans from a literary perspective. The Balkans seems to be a perfect place to use in fiction writings and therefore has Western fiction writing used the Balkans extensively and it has helped spreading the general complex perceptions and connotations we have on the Balkans. Fleming points out how different authors have used the Balkans in their books as a place of confusion and inscrutable politics. Many times the names have been changed to sound as real places. For example, Agatha Christie named her villains homeland as “Herzoslovakia” and Tintin, the famous Belgian boy detective, finds himself in one episode in “Syldavia” next to “Borduria” (Fleming 2000:1218). A more typical example is seen in Christie’s Murder on the Orient Express where the reader is expected to project their own images of horror onto the “wild Balkans” (Bjelic, Savic 2002:33). The Balkan violence inspired Agatha Christie. In 1925 she created an evil character with Slavic features such as being fairly tall, having high
cheekbones and very deep-set eyes. In a scene the man expresses his desires to avenge his newly murdered master:

This I say to you, English policeman…my eyes shall not know sleep, or my heart rest, until I have avenged him. Like a dog will I nose out his murderer and when I have discovered him – Ah!” His eyes lit up. Suddenly he drew an immense knife from beneath his coat and brandished it aloft. “Not all at once will I kill him – oh, no” – first I will slit his nose, and cut off his ears, and put out his eyes, and then – then, into his black heart I will thrust this knife”. The shocked Englishman muttered in response: “Pure bred Herzoslovakian, of course. Most uncivilized people. A race of brigands” (Todorova 1997:122).

Herzoslovakia, being of course the creation of Herzegovina and Slovakia by Christie and the pure bred Herzoslovakian is just another good example of a reproduced collective image of the Balkans and the lack of differentiation between the Balkan nations. These are just some examples but there are many more just like these. Fleming’s point is that all these fictional countries are sort of Balkan “everycountries” which thus means that they are more or less interchangeable with and indistinguishable from one another and the assumption that there is a common history and politics throughout the Balkans (Fleming 2000:1218). It is as if the Balkans is so confusing that there is hardly any point to differentiate its nations and people apart. The Balkans, according to Fleming need to be invented even though they already exist because the Balkans are at the same time fully known and wholly unknown and this is the paradox of how they are represented, perceived and studied (2000:1219). West Europe and North America tends to lump all Balkan people together and overlook any differences that might exist between them, thus if it is hard to the outside world to distinguish the Balkan people apart then the Balkan people themselves have to work even harder to distinguish them from each other and as Ignatieff says, this leads to more aggressive violence and senseless
killings as we have seen during the Yugoslav wars 1991-1999 which I will soon elaborate further on.
“Experts” on the Balkans

As I wrote in my previous essay *Underground: unfolding the controversy* where I deal with the controversy around Emir Kusturica’s film *Underground*, I found that so called “experts” have no claim for a philosophical basis of their stereotyped arguments and yet these are the ones that the majority of us get to hear and interestingly enough, only during periods of war when the topic is relevant which frequently leads us to believe that the Balkans is violent, bad and a mystical place. Otherwise the topic is rest of the time pretty much ignored. We have all seen for example on TV during the Balkan Wars how journalists, writers, military people and politicians sit in the studio saying this and that of recent events without any actual philosophically rational basis or academic criteria. Much of the information we get of the Balkans is via journalists, politicians and other “academic” people that have no claim for a philosophical basis of their stereotyped arguments. Here is an example of this: an Associated Press journalist wrote a month before the NATO intervention against Serbia on the agency’s website:

> What has consumed the Balkans over the course of generations is the hatred of Serbs for Croats. Croats for Slovenes. Slovenes for Montenegrins. Montenegrins for Muslims. Muslims for Macedonians. Macedonians for Albanians. All these ethnic groups (who look identical to the outside world) share one thing in common: The Balkan Peninsula. Finding anything else in common is a challenge (Bjelic and Savic 2002:26).

It seems that in this context the precise relationship between the Balkan nations is irrelevant and if the correspondent is unsure who exactly hates who then one can, as we see, always improvises. (Cenaki 2003:23).

It is during moments of crisis in the Balkans that most scholarly, or semi-scholarly, work on the Balkans has been written and many scholars including K.E Fleming argues that this has
historically been the case as well which enforces the fact that Balkan studies are only relevant to us during periods of wars and conflicts (Fleming 2000:1226). Most writings are done so because contemporary conflict makes it appropriate to write about. It is of course practical and reasonable to conduct such an approach on the issue of Balkan but it is also the one that has shaped the academic study of the Balkans. The outcome is that the academic perception of the Balkans is negative, a place that is dangerous and unstable (ibid). But when Fleming speaks of “academic”, we have to be cautious because the majority of the writings produced by “academic” people are in fact not true academics but as I mentioned before, so called Balkan “experts” who have acquired their “expertise” through previous work as, for example, a journalists, travelers or political strategists (ibid). This is particularly important because the academic perception shapes the perception of the west as well and it is therefore crucial to separate and distinguish real academic perceptions from “expert” unacademic ones since these affect us greatly.

These groups of “experts” have achieved great validity in North America and Western Europe and their specialty is to target main non-specialist, non-academic audience in order to explain and unravel the complex history of the Balkans. They have outnumbered real “academics” such as historians, scholars of literature, political scientists and other people who hold doctorates in the topic. Robert Kaplan and his Balkan Ghost is according to Fleming the most successful example of unacademic readings, made to inform the lay readers in a simple manner (ibid). For example, Robert Kaplan argues, amongst else, in Balkan Ghost that the Balkan people are so deeply immersed in their bloody history that it is barely comprehensible to an outsider (Bjelic, Savic 2002:27). He describes the Balkans and its people in a very simplifying manner, reducing them to their forever-cursed bloody history of violence and death. Journalists like Kaplan gives us a notion that we as civilized westerners, we as the
outsiders can not be able to understand them, them the “other”, the ones that are not like us. Further on, one other reason why this group has grown stronger than “real” academics is that the “real” academics are fewer and not always updated with current events but instead are focused on the deeper issues such as history and literature and also many of these academics have an origin from the Balkans which in many cases is perceived as a disadvantage because it is easy to discard them as biased or unable to be objective. The two groups have also very little contact with each other of obvious reasons; they write for different audiences and all this sums up to the fact that the field of Balkan studies becomes even smaller and less visible to the already unknown field of Balkanism (Fleming 2000: 1227).
Cultural Theorists and North American Media

As I have mentioned we can see that “unacademic” people produce much of the writings on the Balkans during periods of war which makes the Balkan discourse on the Balkans be automatically connected to war, instability and complexity. But it become worse when politicians and nonacademics are incorporating essentialist ideas and discourse such as Huntington’s “Clashes of civilization” or as we have seen Robert Kaplan’s “Balkan Ghost” on the Balkans. Samuel Huntington dismisses politics, economy and other causes as grounds for future world conflicts but instead declares clashes between civilizations (culture and religion) as the major source of conflict in the future. Therefore, the Balkans are often defined by their location on the “fault line” and not by their identity traits as we can see in Huntington’s claims that the collision of religious ideologies Orthodoxy, Western Christianity and Islam are all factors in creating the latest cultural fault line that is the Balkan region (Irdanova 2001:42). Former American president Bill Clinton said in his speech, when he urged the American public to justify the NATO bombing against Yugoslavia:

Take a look at this map...Kosovo is a small place, but it sits on a major fault line between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, at the meeting place of Islam and both the Western and Orthodox branches of Christianity…To the south are our allies, Greece and Turkey; to the north, our new democratic allies in Central Europe. And all around Kosovo there are other small countries…. (Bjelic and Savic 2002:25).

By using a seismological metaphor Clinton described in this presidential mini lecture the Balkans as a fractured zone, a clash point of religions and civilizations. He describes Montenegro, Macedonia Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Albania as “other small countries” separating his allied friends from each other. The “other small countries” are clearly not of importance to him. What is important is the underpinned influences by essentialist and by
Huntington’s idea “Clashes of Civilization” which not only Clinton but many of the North Americans and other Western leaders share, the view of the world as a place of colliding cultural and religious blocks just waiting to explode (Cenaki 2003:23). During the NATO assault on Serbia in 1999 the Huntington theory was put to work. In an article in Financial Times it was explained that the massive opposition in Greece against the NATO intervention is religiously motivated. It claimed that both the Serbs and the Greeks share the same Orthodox religion and are therefore automatically bonded and “anti” Western in their essence (Ali 2000:180). But what the article leaves out is the more apparent explanation of Greece’s hostility toward NATO which is the bitter historical experiences of Western Interventions in Greece. Greece has experienced interventions and Western interference during the British occupation of Athens in 1944, during the Greek Civil War 1946-49, during the colonels’ putsch in 1967 and during the Cyprus conflict in 1974 (ibid).

Huntington’s theory has established a notion of superiority of the Western culture over others. Scholars like Edward Said dismisses theories which claim that the Western culture is independent from other cultures as nonsense and on the issue that cultures are so different that they will clash he say’s “the history of cultures, if you take along view of them, suggest that cultures really are not impermeable, they are open to every other culture (Viswanathan 2001:271). The problem with Huntington’s theory is that when changing the humanity into civilizations as Huntington does it conflicts with the ideology of multiculturalism which is a significant part of any liberal democracy today (i.e. USA). This is contradictionally dismissed by Huntington’s followers, claiming for example that the millions of ethnical and racial groups in USA “are not randomly drawn from the large populations that bear or are characterized by a culture” and are therefore not significant but at the same time they claim “off course they have cultures-everyone does (2000:222-223)”. Furthermore, Huntington’s
theory clearly has a problem with its generalization of issues. It seems as if the generalization is necessary in order to make Huntington’s cultural theory acceptable and workable. A realist influenced by Huntington once said “Does generalization about African culture as a whole make any sense at all? I believe it does (Harrison, Huntington 2000:67)”.

The Balkans is differentiated from the West by its religions and religion plays an important role in the sense that it has become to act as a hierarchical indicator which divides the regions accordingly. Islam is, in the east, less positively viewed than the Orthodox Christianity while in the West the protestant church is seen more positively than the Catholic (Irdanova 2001:42). Thus both Protestants and Catholics are “better” than the Orthodox and Islam. From a symbolic geography perspective this can be seen as a hierarchy between the north-west and the south-east which has lower value and which is also considered primitive than the north-east (Ibid).

Western media and especially American media write in a Huntington like manner regarding the Balkans. Before the Slovenian elections one could read in New York Times an article referring to the Slovenes by Celestine Bohlen as “industrious Roman Catholic Slavs whose culture was shaped by centuries spent under Austrian rule” and to whom “southern Yugoslavia, where the religion is either Muslim or Eastern Orthodox, is a foreign country, strange and threatening (Bakic, Hayden 1992:10)”. In an other editorial one could read that Yugoslavia’s Roman Catholic republics, who are the country’s most advanced and politically enlightened region, face bullying from the bloc of Orthodox Christian republics and in an article in Washington Post another reporter stated that the authoritarian traditions of the dominant Orthodox Church have helped creating intense nationalism and that it has not promoted participatory democracy (Bakic, Hayden 1992:11). Disturbingly these reporters
and articles are nothing but examples of the Balkans being demonized and stigmatized in western media. Unquestioningly, these writings associate industriousness with Roman Catholicism although great social scientist such as Max Weber argued differently pointing on the Catholic Church as “non-industrious” and why is the Orthodox Church always excessively associated with the state when we know for a fact a number of occasions where the Catholic Church is directly linked with the state, for example Mussolini’s Italy offered much support to the Catholic Church and what about the Church’s power in contemporary Ireland or Croatia’s Independent Catholic State during the WWII.

The fact that The Orthodox Church is more authoritarian, backward and development-hindering is not at all self evident. What is evident is that partial knowledge and simplistic representations are often used as arguments and explanations (Bakic, Hayden 1992:11). This is evident throughout all the Balkan discourse. One must remember that the Balkans must be permitted to represent themselves instead of being represented by others and what is also important is that the decadent self image of “Europe” and the “west” could very well be altered by the people on its periphery because “the marginal observer is often the most acute one. Those who are within Europe, yet repeatedly told that they are not really “European” may be better placed to evaluate the meaning of the (north and west) European construction of itself (1992:13)”.
Balkan Dilemma and Identity Crisis

Michael Ignatieff writes about how the Balkan people want to differentiate themselves from each other, but at the same time being chunked together by the west in his Warrior’s Honor and he uses Sigmund Freud’s The narcissism of minor differences 1930 to elaborate further on the Balkan issue. For Ignatieff the Balkan people have minor differences that distinguish them apart from each other and it is precisely the minor differences in people that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them (Ignatieff 1999:48). The common elements that we share as humans seem less important to their perception of their own identities than the trivial “minor” elements that share them. Because the differences between groups are minor they have to be expressed more aggressively in order to validate them as a group. The less the differences between them the more they struggle to show the differences (1999:51). Then automatically the discourse on the Balkans is ironically one of sameness and otherness, the West lumps them together and the Balkans struggle to differentiate them.

The individual states in the Balkans are having two problems to deal with in order to become “accepted” by the West. The first one is how to fit in and become a part of the West and the other is how to differentiate themselves from the other Balkan states and become independently viewed or in other words, how to sell oneself internationally since there is nothing more international than national identities (Bjelic, Savic 2002:236). To become this one does not only need institutions like schools, armies and parliaments but also one needs to have imaginary productions like myths of origin, literary heritage and folklores and so forth. Furthermore, the most important identity building characteristics in our modern world is the dimension of imitation because identification runs on two levels.
The first level of the imaginary, you identify with a specific object you want to be, whereas on the level of the symbolic, you also identify with the gaze, creating the field in which identification takes place. On the second level, which we might call the level of meta- or framework identity, the group identifies with the (international) field itself where national identities are produced, and with the rules of the game that characterize it (Bjelic, Savic 2002:236-237).

Thus, on the first level the group or in our case the Balkan state identifies itself with the object of their desire (the West) and this desire is only there because others desire it too and not because of its own qualities. Therefore, the identity building under these circumstances will involve fierce fighting over minor differences in order to promote one’s own features more than the others (ibid).

The Balkans is defined by their exclusion and inclusion with the rest of Europe and it is most visible in the political discourse regarding former Yugoslavia since the late 80s. There is a great emphasis by some groups (Slovenians and Croatians) who claim that they are more “European” than the rest (Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians) who they consider are “Byzantine”. Interestingly they use the very same distinctions between each other as the ones the West puts on the Balkans and used by Huntington, northern republics vs. southern, western republics vs. eastern and Protestant/Catholic religions vs. Orthodox/Islamic religions (Bakic, Hayden 1992:5). In order to be European, although they already exist in Europe, one has to differentiate oneself from the “Other”. Slaven Letica, Slovene medical sociologist and advisor to former Croatian president Franjo Tudjman stated:

We Slovenes have difficulty identifying ourselves with the pro-Asian or pro-African Yugoslavia. We cannot identify with such a Yugoslavia so long as we have the character that we have acquired in a thousand years of history. The symbolic fact that
the rulers of the Slovenes were Charlemagne, Charles V, and Napoleon is less important: it is more important that we embodied the way of life that was created in central western Europe (Bakic, Hayden 1992:8).

His belief is that they are culturally different and thus linking Slovenia to the west. Obviously, there is a strong need to belong to the West and to be acknowledged as Western. The question is therefore, since former Yugoslavia is physically in Europe, how can some parts be excluded from the symbolic continent by its own people. The answer lies simply in the fact that “Europe” seems not to consider the Orthodox Church, “Byzantine” culture and the Balkans in general as “European” (1992:9). Therefore it becomes legitimate for some “western” groups in former Yugoslavia to differentiate themselves from those who are considered “Byzantine”.


**Clashes of Civilization vs. Clashes of Nationalists**

As stated before, according to essentialist theorist like Samuel Huntington there is a fault line passing through former Yugoslavia and the Balkans, a line separating the Catholic Roman West (Croats and Slovenes) and the Byzantine and Orthodox East (Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians). This theory is according to Huntington and his followers a legit explanatory reason why once friendly neighbours suddenly start to hate and kill each other. But there are better explanations than that.

There are different ways of determining a group’s identity and the most common used by theorist like Huntington, Kaplan and other cultural essentialists is to claim that there is a cultural and political entity localized within a certain territory. It can be common religion, language, pattern of behaviour, rituals, political traditions art and literature and so on. But determining collective identity like this is a logical mistake because it excludes non essential qualities; it pretends that everything has an essential core which it does not. Alexander Kiossev, Associate Professor of the History of Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University, Bulgaria says that the label “the Balkans” connotes an automatic essentialism, “a geographic metonym that presupposes the existence of a non-geographical referent (Bjelic, Savic 2002:165)”. This is seen in much of the discourse regarding the Balkans and it indicates that there is a certain identity established by common features. Weather this features is political, historical, cultural or geographical seems unanswerable. The point is that presumptions of clichés are connected to the label “the Balkans”. “A Serb”, although we know has self-evident internal differences such as geographical, political and cultural is seen as a fixed core to which we ascribe a special meaning, or in other words, we assume that they are all the same (2002:168). Therefore to determine the Balkans by its cultural identity as Huntington and Kaplan do is not only wrong but also misleading.
Michael Ignatieff went to the front line during the War in former Yugoslavia and he met up with soldiers on the Serbian side. When asking a middle aged soldier what differentiates the Croats and Serbs the man looks at him scornfully while taking out a pack of cigarettes and says:

See this? These are Serbian cigarettes. Over there,” he says, gesturing out the window, “they smoke Croatian cigarettes.”

“But they are both cigarettes, right?”

“Foreigners don’t understand anything.” He shrugs and resumes cleaning his Zastavo Machine pistol. But the question I’ve (Ignatieff) asked bothers him, so a couple of minutes later he tosses the weapon on the bunk between us and says,

“Look here’s how it is. Those Croats, they think they’re better than us. They want to be the gentlemen. Think they’re fancy Europeans. I’ll tell you something. We’re all just Balkan shit (Ignatieff 1999:36).

Interestingly, the solider first says how everything is different about them, down to the very own cigarettes. Minutes later he says that the real problem is with the Croats who think they are better and finally he decides that they are actually the same. What does this say about the fundamental fault lines described by Huntington? According to Ignatieff this is instead a case of different consciousness planes, the political and the personal (1999:37). Obviously the soldier has a bit of doubt that might lead him to question or even refuse what he is doing but there is no media such as TV and newspapers and alternative language in which he can structure his doubts and discover that others have doubts just like him. Now all his contradictions are kept to himself (ibid). This mans identity is noting essential, formed by either history or tradition as realists like Huntington might want us to think. The identity for this soldier is simply a notion put in relation to a Croat (othering process). A Serb is someone
who is not a Croat. Therefore, as soon as this notion is put in a relational sense it becomes an empty tautology (Ignatieff 1999:37).

The war in former Yugoslavia is better understood and explained from an identity and nationalistic perspective and not from its cultural and religious fault lines. Nationalist ideology tries to create a national identity and dissolve the personal and in order to believe in nationalistic fictions one needs to forget certain realities. In our case the Serb soldier needs to forget that he was once friends with the Croats. We must remember that the Serbs and the Croats did live together from 1941-1991 under the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” and before that they lived peacefully next to each other for centuries. The brotherly love between them worked fine and people put aside their differences and accusations of all the atrocities they committed against each others during WWII. Both Serbs and Croats intermarried and nobody asked about people’s nationality. Any nationalistic voices that did exist were repressed by Tito. As said previously, after his death in 1980 the former central power began to ebb out to the communist elites in the republics and soon nationalistic voices began to grow stronger. When Communism finally collapsed the “heroes of the hour were those who had suffered under Communism, which in Yugoslavia’s case were the nationalists like Tudjman in Croatia (1999:41)”. The Serbs began to dream of a Greater Serbia and the Croats of their own independent state. And to use Ignatieff’s words “what is wrong with nationalism is not the desire to be master in your own house, but the conviction that only people like yourself deserve to be in the house (1999: 59)”. Nationalism creates fear and marginalized groups find comfort in sticking together as a group and thus secure themselves. But this does not come without a price. According to Freud, individuals pay a psychic price for group belonging. In order for the Serb solider to blend in his identity into Serbdom, he must first hold back his own individuality and any memories of common ties with former Croatian friends. He must
violate himself before fitting the mask of hate. He can then take minor differences which exist between them and turn it into major differences (Ignatieff 1999:51).

Does this mean then that different ethnic people cannot live together as Huntington’s theory wants us to believe? No, what the case of former Yugoslavia shows us is that people with different language, tradition, culture and history can live together as long as there is a political settlement between them which guarantees security and protection for the individual groups. There is no natural genetic code that makes different ethnicities, races and genders intolerant to each other. But as soon as the state collapses and cannot provide security for its inhabitants then the Hobbeisan fear occurs followed by nationalist paranoia and finally warfare (1999:45). But theorists like Huntington do not agree with this. Huntington strongly believes that ethnicity is build upon religious or confessional differences and to believe that the differences in former Yugoslavia where minor is "secular myopia, which can be described as an inability to see, much less understand, the role of religion in human life. According to him, “religion is…the most profound difference that can exist between people. The frequency, intensity and violence of fault line wars are greatly enhanced by beliefs in different gods (1999:54)". However, the fact that during at last fifty years in former Yugoslavia, economic modernization made religious differences unimportant is not “secular myopia”. It was not until the fall of communism and Tito’s death that nationalists used religious symbols in order to validate themselves stronger as a group and what is striking is “the inauthenticity, shallowness, and fraudulence of their religious convictions (ibid)”. The use of religion became a way of triggering inauthentic feelings in order to help unleash the tumult of violent self-righteousness (1999:55). When Ignatieff talked to the militiamen they all said that they were fighting in order to defend their families and not once did they say that it was for their religion. Therefore, when Huntington uses former Yugoslavia to proof that the religious
differences are major and fundamental, it only shows how wrong he is. It was “precisely because the religious differences were fading away that they triggered such an exaggerated defense (Ignatieff 1999:55)”.
The “Other”

Writer, psychoanalyst and philosopher Slavoj Zizek once wrote about the internationally known film *Underground* by Emir Kusturica which deals with the break up of Yugoslavia:

Together with Milche Manchevski’s *Before the Rain*, *Underground* is thus the ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism: what these two films offer to the Western liberal gaze is precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war—the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anaemic Western life (Zizek 1997:38).

Zizek points out here that the spectacle of this film, but also the Balkans in general and the Balkan Wars, are an example of “Balkanism” which is functioning in a similar way as Edward Said’s Orientalism, a timeless space onto which the West projects its phantasmatic content (ibid).

Slavoj Zizek is adopting a Saidian analysis on the Balkans. He claims that the Balkans constitutes the “outsider within” and thus Said’s Orientalism and Orientalist attitudes are applicable to the Balkans although many people would argue differently. “Orientalism refers to pervasive patterns of representation of cultures and societies that privilege a self-confidently “progressive,” “modern” and “rational” Europe over the putatively “stagnant,” “backward,” “traditional” and “mystical” societies of the Orient (Bakic, Hayden 1992:1)”. Said’s work originates from the representations and claimed knowledge of “eastern peoples” that grew in Europe during colonialism. He shows how Europe ruled, not only over their territory but also over their languages, religions and their way of thinking. The Orientalist knowledge was used as a tool of justification of culture and as political power in order to both presume and restate the inferiority of eastern races, religions and societies to those of the west
In the Post-colonial world, Orientalism is more often also applied as a tool on other stigmatized non-Western societies. But it is also applicable within Europe itself, between the “appropriate” Europe and the former Ottoman Balkan Peninsula.

Said’s Orientalism includes many similarities that are applicable on the Balkans but there are also arguments saying that they are not. The problem comes when one draws straight parallels between Orientalism and the Balkans. Doing that one will of course find flaws and issues that don’t match thus saying it is not applicable. One of the problems involved according to some people is the one of Western colonialism and its exploration of natural resources and economic exploitation in the Orient, which does not exist in the Balkans. I also agree that there is no exploration of natural resources but there is another form of exploitation. Vesna Goldsworthy, lecturer in English literature at Birkbeck College, University of London, and at the London Centre of St. Lawrence University, New York, has shown how a different kind of colonization exists in the Balkans, colonization through the “imperialism of the imagination” saying how Britain exploited other forms of resources from the Balkans to supply its literary and entertainment industries and that it has brought as much lucre as minerals or oil but this has not gained any serious attention so far and is therefore considered as much too overblown (Flemming 2000:1221). Another problem when making a parallel Saidian analysis is the tradition of West European academic literary production, which is one of Said’s essential criteria’s on the Orientalist discourse (2000:1224). There exists an influential academic tradition on the Orient but not on the Balkans. In other words, there is no academic tradition on “Balkanism” and the term itself is hardly established as an academic field and therefore, the Balkans would not be qualified to be analyzed in a Saidian sense. The literary and academic production on the Balkans is normally divided in two categories: adventure fiction and travelogue. Orientalist literature on the other hand rests on long and respected academic
traditions dealing with issues like philology, text analysis, history and the study of religion. Thus, Balkanism as a field of study and category is very distant to the one of Orientalism in this sense. According to Fleming and others, Balkanism does not exist for the simple reason that there just is not one (Fleming 2000:1226). Other issues that some say make Orientalism not technically applicable on the Balkans are such as: the perception of the geopolitical importance of the Balkans relative to the Orient, the largely Christian makeup of the Balkans versus the overwhelmingly Muslim Orient and the fact that the “modern Orientalism” was discovered as a discourse already in the early 18th century with a vast literature already inherited from the European past, versus the late 18th century Balkan “discovery” thus making the Balkans even more separated from the Saidian analysis (2000:1225). When we look at the geographical aspect of Said’s Orientalism we can see that when analyzing the Balkans from an Orientalism perspective the Balkans become problematized in the sense that the Balkans have been regarded as both a Western and Eastern entity during history. The important issue here is of course the sense of “distance” and “nearness”. These two aspects are crucial in Said’s “intimate estrangement” which characterizes the West’s relationship to the Orient. In other words, the alienness of the Orient derives from the distance it has from the West or as Fleming puts it “the intimacy of its estrangement from the West derives from Western academic and political knowledge of and mastery over an alien other, not from any perceived sense of deep similarity to it (2000:1229)”. Therefore, when the Balkans, who were considered “oriental in the 17th century, slowly morphed into Europe the definition could suddenly no longer be made from its distance but rather from its proximity. Intimacy is therefore in this case derived from the perception of similarity while the estrangement comes from the discomfort with how that similarity is welcomed. Fleming ends his argumentation by saying that “Orientalism” and “Balkanism” is definitely not the same thing, though they certainly are mutually illuminating categories. While it is Said who has made it possible for us
to even consider such a discourse as “Balkanism,” Said’s model alone cannot show us what it is. In the absence of engagement with post-Saidian cultural-historical concerns, the Balkans, and their study, will, like Tintin’s Syldavia, remain “remote,” “inaccessible,” and largely based on fantasy. With such engagement, however, the Balkans may emerge as more central than we ever had imagined” (Fleming 2000:1233).

But although one can be critical when it comes to analyze Balkan through a Saidian model or as Fleming, saying that it doesn’t exist one can not ignore and exclude the fact that both the Orient and Balkan have similar discourse which deals with how our perception is influenced by them and how this perception defines them. There might be differences when doing a parallel historical and technical comparison but the Saidian analysis does include a discourse, which can be found in the Balkan context too. This is a fact that might not be found in a parallel comparison but is nevertheless there and thus one can not disregard the Balkans as a study worthy of Saidian magnitude. Needless to say, what this comparison does tell us is that the Saidian discourse when compared to the Balkans bring forward the fact how little the Balkans actually have been a part of the West’s academic tradition thus showing how little we know about the Balkans and how it has influenced our perception of the Balkans.
**International Dispute over the Balkans**

Are western leaders at all interested in the “other small countries” or are they actually more interested in the power struggle over the Eastern parts of Europe and the former allies to Russia. Peter Gowan says in his *The Euro-Atlantic origins of NATO’s attack on Yugoslavia* that all the stories of the 1990s in Europe (the collapse of Yugoslavia, the bow outs in Albania, crisis and impoverishment in other parts of East Europe) have been little more than sub-plots or spin-offs of one big central plot: the maneuvers of the Western powers in the battles over Europe after the Soviet breakdown (Ali 2000:21). Therefore, how essential is the perception of the Balkans playing a part in these struggles over east Europe or is there a hidden agenda in the West’s actions regardless perceptions. The International Network “Europe and the Balkans” says that even if the international community has managed to stop the actual fighting in former Yugoslavia, much more needs to be done. It says “although the Daytona agreement has brought an end to the fighting in the area, a framework for stability is far from having been achieved, and the road to such a framework for stability is not clear (Bianchini and Dogo 1998:13). Why is the framework not clear? Is it because the international community does not know how to begin creating a framework in this “complex” region or is it because the western powers only think of themselves and the influence they can achieve in East Europe and the Balkans? The intervening focus is put on immediate actions that have a cause and affect on present issues which deal with what is important right now, such as the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia in order to make Milosevic withdraw from Kosovo. Prior to the NATO intervention the Serbian leader Milosevic was systematically compared to Hitler by the leading NATO leaders in order to justify a intervention (Ali 2000:348) Although he was indeed a brutal leader he did not outshine other violent and somewhat “racist” demagogues like Israel’s Netanyahu or Croatia’s Tudjman because they were considered “the
good guy’s” (Ali 2000:348). Unfortunately, Milosevic has come to personify the stereotypical connotations that the Balkans has been acquiring since the 1700th century.

There was a clear division in the international community regarding the Balkan wars during the 1990’s but it was not until the NATO intervention in 1999 that the extent of this division became completely apparent. As some nations stood undecided regarding the intervention others took a firm stand for the NATO intervention while some took a stand against it. The different sides seem to have different takes on the Balkan and how to approach the problems there. The most important nations opposing the intervention were Russia, India and China as they hold important positions in the UN and in the Security Council. The argument Russia, India and China used most vigorously against NATO’s intervention is that it violates Yugoslavia’s sovereignty and the United Nations Charter. Although they are right, their claims must be seen with some scrutiny. India, China, and Russia have all one thing in common with former Yugoslavia and that is that they have unstable boundaries, unresolved territorial questions, and ethnic nationalism. Therefore, it is not surprising that these countries criticize the breach of sovereignty rules as they themselves might end up in this situation one day. Nevertheless, there were also other countries opposing the intervention and one of the most vocal was Greece. As I have mentioned before, Greece opposition was quickly explained as a cultural phenomena by essential culturalist such as Huntington although the Greek history which carries many interventions from foreign powers gives a better explanation to why they opposed. What about their near proximity to Yugoslavia? Doesn’t Greece’s geographical closeness and history with Yugoslavia (fighting the Turks) make Greece involved with the Balkan context in a way which the West cannot? They would not let themselves be influenced by stereotypes and negative perceptions as the “distant” West is and
therefore understandably make them reluctant to support the haste and “illegal” NATO intervention?

Russia’s support is also generally explained in Cultural terms. It is generally considered and said that because Russia shares the same religion, same Slavic heritage and the same Communist legacy with Yugoslavia it automatically makes them bonded. Although it is impossible to say that Yugoslavia and Russia don’t have anything in common and that they do not consider them as allies, we have to look at the facts. Historically, Yugoslavia’s relation with Russia and former Soviet Union was actually not that pleasant and close. The Communist Soviet had during the WWII helped Tito just enough for him to take control of Yugoslavia. The Soviets left in 1944 leaving Tito alone (Klemencic, Zagar 2004:175). By doing so Tito had free hands shaping his new nation without Soviet interferences unlike many other eastern states. Therefore, by 1948 Tito broke away with Stalin and his Communist plan for east Europe and made an independent socialist nation leaving him politically and economically isolated from the Soviet Empire (2004:201). As the political relations improved slightly during the following decades by 1989 the communist era and the Soviet control in Europe was virtually gone. Therefore, one could say that it is neither the communist culture nor the allied-like interrelations that they have in common but instead the similarity in the simultaneous disintegration of their Nations.

They began as the élite’s competition over the appropriation and redistribution of scarce resources, then took the form of ethnic homogenisation and differentiation whose outcome was mass political mobilisation and confrontation, leading to clashes between exclusive ethnonationalist projects, political violence, ethnic cleansing and wars for territories (Schierup 1999:62-63).
Thus, sharing such similarities as Serbia and Russia does in form of once having been a “greater” nation causes a better understanding of their support for one other than the popular cultural explanation. Furthermore, politics played a major role regarding the support for NATO during the intervention. As the former Soviet empire and the Warsaw Pact no longer existed it was now free for the Western powers to move in and secure former allies to the Soviet. These ex communist countries had now the possibility to become increasingly “Western” and free from their “negative” Eastern heritage. Many of these former Soviet satellites were included or were being planned to be included into the NATO union and many of these new applicants found themselves in difficult position during the intervention. For example the Slavic people of the Czech Republic and a fresh member of NATO became split in their decision whether or not to support the bombing of Serbia but they eventually did support NATO (Fawn 2004:220). Yugoslavia’s neighbours Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria also helped NATO even though Bulgaria and Romania were not even members. Though hoping to eventually become members with this gesture, their actions were motivated by the slight possibility of becoming more “Western” and disassociated with “the Balkan” context which nobody wants to be associated with as it has negative connotations. To be considered Western instead of Balkan which is by now a Schimpfwort is a much more important need even though many of these nations have minorities living in Serbia who also served in the Serbian army which they now opposed and helped defeating. Nevertheless, on orders from NATO they denied airspace to Russian aviation with military hardware and other supplies which Milosevic needed. In other words it was a political manoeuvre from NATO and a brutal “reminder to Russia that its former satellites zones of Central and Eastern Europe have changed sides and are now aligned with the West (Ali 2000:58)”. Nevertheless, more importantly it was also a reminder to the West that the Balkans is not all the same.
Conclusion

The Balkans has tons of negative perceptions and connotations attached to it and these came already long time ago. Being located on a “fault line” as the Balkans was considered to be, it has all the characteristics needed to become stigmatized, stereotyped and demonized. Long before the Balkans came to be “discovered” it had already achieved a status as the “other”, a place very mysterious and “oriental”. The borders were shady and therefore when the word “Balkan” came to include the whole peninsula by western travellers and in their travel literature it imposed and strengthened the sense of similarity in the West regarding the Balkan people. Thanks to racist attitudes and class significance the “non-Muslim” population of the Balkans became synonymous with the primitive and barbarian which have prevailed until our days. The Balkan people were looked down upon and considered as racially impure and thus unwanted. Being indifferent with the exact knowledge of the different populations on the Balkans, it became a perfect place for fiction writings in the West as nobody knew anything about the Balkans anyway. Nobody would protest that this would greatly set back the Balkans and the way we view it. Instead we are led to believe that the Balkans is full of “Evil Men”. Being blamed for starting the WWI, pushes the Balkans further into the wrong direction and by the postwar communist era the Balkans is fully decontextualized and completely isolated. By applying Said’s *Orientalism* on the Balkans one understands the isolation the Balkans have come to experience. It was not until the late 18th century that the Balkans started to be “discovered”

During the turbulent 1980s and onward Yugoslavia and other eastern states in Europe became increasingly studied and a lot of studies were made. Unfortunately these studies describe the Balkans only during turbulent and violent moments and thus the outcome automatically creates a negative image of the Balkans which further nourishes our negative beliefs of the
Balkans. During wars and misery journalists and realists make profits selling simplistic books and making simplistic arguments in media explaining the situation on the Balkan to the large unaware audiences who assume that these know what they are talking about while in fact they only add more fuel to our stereotypical perceptions.

Politicians are incorporating stereotypical notions on the Balkans which are greatly affected by the realist rhetoric found in Huntington’s theory *Clashes of Civilizations*. Unfortunately, this theory has achieved great validity around the world and especially in the West where it now functions as a legit discourse in foreign policy. One of its loudest advisories is North America where Huntington’s theory is accepted and used in the political discourse. Nevertheless, when Huntington’s theory is deconstructed and put in context one quickly finds apparent flaws but more significantly on finds how misleading it represents the Balkans and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is not a result of colliding cultures. It is a result of colliding nationalism and desires of belonging to the West. What Yugoslavia proves is not what Huntington wants us to think but instead that a strong state, which guarantees security and stability to every member in its nation, can cope with multiculturalism and ethnic diversity without disintegration. Yugoslavia had since its formation in 1945, 50 years of incredible history were people lived happily in an ongoing increase in living standards and a blooming tourist business which made citizens from all over Europe flock to visit Yugoslavia and have a first person encounter with this stereotyped country. How come this aspect of former Yugoslavia is not highlighted in the history books and in conventional Balkan studies? Instead this era is generally described from a socio-political point of view where Communism and Tito’s dictatorship is focused upon and linked to its disintegration in the 1990s. Furthermore, in the Balkans, politics prevail over cultural bonds opposed to what Huntington beliefs. Former allies and friends are on opposite sides during the NATO
intervention. The cultural bonds are less important than the political and the ideological in form of belonging or not belonging to NATO and the West. The countries located on the Balkan periphery take every chance they get to become disassociated with the Balkan context and this is not because the “West” is better in any sense but because belonging to the “West”, one is no longer demonized and considered barbarian.

Ambiguous historical literature mixed with xenophobic views from Western powers has had its toll in the Balkans as it has in Asia and Africa too. The difference is that the Balkans is situated in Europe but has nevertheless come to be its heart of darkness, the “other”. Hopefully this will change in the future as we come to study the Balkans in a new way, with new “alternative” approaches to international theory and relations without the stereotypical and negative perceptions that have prevailed since the 18th century. We have to re-evaluate the Balkans and incorporate this knowledge in future interactions with the Balkans on all levels. Realism is no longer sufficient for studying the Balkans without incorporating essential claims to it. One needs to look at the whole picture, the whole context in which the Balkans is situated in order to fully comprehend what is going on, such as nationalism, history, psychology, individuality, racism and so on, and only then can we start stepping in the right direction. As new international theories such as Post-modernism and Post-colonialism gains additional recognition in social science the importance of Balkanism will emerge but also a new self evaluation as we start analyzing the analyzers. We will realize that one can not rely on simplistic explanations and assume that there a certain fixed truths as there are none. We can also no longer hide from our own responsibility. The Balkans is what we have created it to be and what we wanted it to be. It was us who first labelled the Balkans and its people, who first de-individualized and de-contextualised them. It was us who saw them inferior and unworthy to be European. Indirectly, it was nobody else but us who created the powerful
desire of wanting to belong to Europe and the feeling of being inferior for those stuck in the Balkans thus giving legitimacy and reason to the warring parties. Indirectly, we share the responsibility on what has happened on the Balkans.

Having this said, I see two possible continuations of future work dealing with this. One is to continuing researching the Balkans from an “alternative” perspective and help re-evaluate and establish it as a new field of study where one focuses on issues I have brought up here. As I have tried to include the whole Balkan discourse in order to present how the Balkans can be studied within International Relations with “alternative” theories, my work becomes quite broad in the sense that it does not go in depth on any of my presented sub-issues. Therefore, much more focus can be put on some aspects and thus make a more extensive research on it.

The other possible continuation is with the “alternative” theories it self. As this relatively new approach to international theory is still under process of becoming legitimized one could help spreading its legacy by adopting its theories on other issues within the International Relations. There a number of areas where these theories will give a quite different aspect on many issues and would cause a quite interesting debate. But nevertheless which way one chooses to continue, one has to remember that it is not what we see that we should analyze, it is how we see.
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