

Ethnic-Pyschological Dimensions of the Balkan Security

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The Balkans. The Balkan people (instead of a preface)

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There are things and situations that assert the definition "Anything you say is true." But is the Balkan theme among them? One is about to say not, having in mind the approach and the arguments, negative for their most, when "Europe," "The World," "America," "The Others" or "The Great Powers" are interpreting the "Balkan problems." But the answer would be rather yes, since closer scrutiny reveals the mosaic-like variety of lands, economies, policies and standpoints...

A unique diversity among any of the peoples living on the broadest Balkan area "this definition is being often used when trying to think over the Balkans." And it could be explained with the centrifugal forces that had been active on this "tortuous" peninsula over the centuries. "But as a whole, despite the very colorful picture of their beings, they are unified by something that is still unknown and could be called "The Balkan way." "A way of developing, of thinking and of life."

The very specific conditions of their geographic pattern, history and ethnic composition have largely contributed to create this combination of traits determining the character of the people from this part of the world.

Such a phenomenon wouldn't be a unique one "it can be seen within many relatively limited cultural communities and in some larger cultural groups as well. But the specific shape and the dynamics of the historical processes on the Balkans have led to a very complex mutual intersection among the peoples living there and their national characteristics. Thus, when observed more generally, several common traits can be found there, and some differences too. All those features are supposed to form the general shape of what is called "The Balkan people."

But what is much more important for us, the people who live and dwell together on this land, is to understand well our common (and community) features. Our "otherness" and the "otherness" of the others. The common way that brings us together. And we are certainly interested in knowing the others so that we know ourselves better.

The Balkans. The Balkan people. "The Otherness" (is not a vice)

In their history the Balkan peoples have known a number of periods, when the relations between them have been very brittle and contradictory in many ways. They have been both "on the same side of the barricade" and "on opposite sides" more often. Such kind of relations have normally led to form some traditional types of mental ways and attitudes towards the image of "The Other" and "The Others" on the Balkans and towards the rest of the world as well.

The Balkans are the crossroad of many different cultures. The geopolitical situation of this peninsula opens the door for the penetration and the influence of many external economic, political and social factors. All these influences are being reflected through the ways of life and viewpoints of so many different ethnic groups.

¥ For example, the southern part of the Balkans, the Aegean region, had been under the influence of the Levantian (East Mediterranean) cultural area with its typical mixture between

the traditional South European and oriental (Arabic) style of living.

- ✧ The Central part of the Balkans was largely exposed to the influence of the main trade roads between Europe and the Middle East.
- ✧ All of the Balkan peoples had more or less been under the subordination of two global powers – the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires. While they were very different from each other, their character was a mixture between the European and Middle Eastern cultural traditions.
- ✧ The opposition between Catholicism and the Orthodox religion, on the one hand, and between Christianity and the Islam, on the other, had a crucial impact for the formation of certain types of thinking.
- ✧ During the last two centuries the Great Powers’ cultural expansion on the Balkans has been very mighty. These influences are nothing but just an expression of the geopolitical interests that Russia and the West were taking in their relations with the Ottoman Empire.
- ✧ The influence of the Austrian-Hungarian empire was mainly over the remote North Western regions of the Balkans¹.
- ✧ The Russian influence has always been active over the large Slavic communities and among some other Christian communities (e.g. the Greeks and the Romanians).
- ✧ The influence of Western Europe was not concentrated at all, but it first captured Greece, the ancient Greek civilization being used as a basic factor².

Some other minor influences, as well as the unique mixture and mutual penetration of local and foreign traditions, portray the contemporary image of this peninsula.

The general ethnic composition of the Balkan population was formed circa the 6th century AD, when the Slavs had settled down in the European part of the Byzantine Empire. Around that time the Balkans were facing the massive invasion of several Turk and Mongolian tribes, coming from the North East, that occupied mainly the lower Northern regions along the Danube river. At that time the most important ethnic components of the Balkan peoples were already present: Romanised and Hellenised Thracians, Illyrians and Dacogethians; Greeks, that until the 14th century felt themselves as deeply integrated in the Byzantine Empire, commonly named as ‘Romeys’ Slavs, that were mostly living within the Bulgarian and Serbian States; some other smaller tribes

1 This influence would be considered as being ‘Central European’

2 Due to different economic, political and geostrategical reasons, this influence is nowadays very present and mighty.

and peoples-mainly to the North of Central Asia and from the Arabic world on the Aegean islands (Crete).

It is very difficult now to find what has remained of the most ancient inhabitants of the Balkans – the Thracians and the Illyrians, as they were influenced by the powerful Greek and Roman civilizations at a rather early stage of their development.

Since the 3rd century BC the Greeks lived in giant states on both European and Asian (the Anadol) territory. This is where their East awareness goes back to (during the centuries this feeling was changing however). The "All-the-world-is-our-home" belief that the Greeks have, dates back to those times, i.e. the spirit they have got is a very open and cosmopolitan one. In that way the Greeks felt cognate and equal to the other nations in the world and always followed a dynamic and public-spirited way of life.

The Slavic character is somewhat different. The Slavs are usually settled and more steadfast people. The world for them is a "Deja-vu" – This is obviously not motivating them to learn more about it. The Slavs will be also closely attached to a place or milieu and have a very traditional way of thinking.

The establishment of closer ties and in the mutual penetration of the mentioned ethnic elements contributed to the constant co-habitation on one and the same land and the adoption of Christianity as a common religion. Some State structures occurred meanwhile, that during the Middle Age were consequently fragmented. The frequent changes of dominating powers and influences provoked the emergence of a kind of local (indigenous or regional) self-consciousness³. These tendencies were reinforced during the 15th century, when the Balkan nations joined the Ottoman Empire.

The osmanisation was the key factor to shape the Balkan people's profile. The inhabitants of this peninsula were submitted to a giant state for the second time in their history. But while in the Byzantine Empire all the population was monotheist, the Ottoman Empire, while imposing quite new social structures and religion, allowed the formation of a new type of self-consciousness and self-awareness.

With imposing the Islam on the Balkans, the road was free for the massive penetration of different cultural stereotypes from the East. What is more, the severe survival struggle is still one of the basic postulates of the Islam. This principle entered into a deep contradiction with the atmosphere on the Balkans and afterwards caused several very sharp and painful deviations in the psychosocial profile of the Balkan peoples. The conflict between conquerors and conquered, between Muslims and Christians provided for coming into being of new forms of identification and dis-

³ This would be showable about the combination of ethnic and territorial self-consciousness.

sociation. In that way the process of self-enclosing into capsule and integrating received dimensions that were quite new and unknown until that time.

The Islamization practices and the integration of the conquered Balkan nations within the turnover of Osman Turkey largely contributed to the emergence of some new features of the Balkan character, such as the inferiority complex and the isolation sentiment. During the Renaissance era both features appeared again in a conspicuous and often grotesque form (as megalomania for example).

During the 17th-18th centuries the major discrepancies in the development of the peoples under the Ottoman Empire were mostly due to their unequal status and involvement in the economic life. These discrepancies inevitably infected the attitude towards each other and their national self-confidence.

- ¥ The Greeks were trading by sea having contacts with the other European nations. A pronounced (European) interest in their ancient culture was very present.
- ¥ The Serbs, the Vlasiacs and the Croats were living on territories that were rather peripheral to the Empire and closer to its enemies. This contributed to establish mutual contacts and to speed up their economic development, as well as to enhance their national self-awareness and promote the national liberation ideology and fight.
- ¥ The Bulgarians, who at that time lived in the internal parts of the Empire, were put in a much more unfavourable position. The Turkish economic system had its very roots there and was much impeding their economic progress. In these regions many Muslims were settled too. A total islamization of the indigenous people was in process⁴. The Bulgarians were the last to start fighting for their liberation. All this had been oppressing our national self-confidence. And sometimes had brought us to actions which were quite ill timed and thoughtless (having fatal consequences too).

The advantages that Greece had with the earlier development of its national liberation ideology, nourish the superiority feeling of the Greeks and their megalomania. Since the beginning of the 19th century, much more than during the 15th, the Greeks consider themselves closer to their ancient predecessors. And of course much more European than under the Byzantine Empire.

At that time Serbia had a powerful ally – the Austrian-Hungarian State. Nonetheless Serbia never rejected the Russian support for the Slavs brought into bondage.

⁴ The local population's islamization practices included a wide range of instruments – economic, political and social.

The Vlassian State, which was rejoicing at the highest level of independence, was also compelled to make its choice among the Great Powers.

In that way the newly liberated Balkan nations in the 19th century were compelled to bind themselves to a new Patron. This, of course, was very sad for their national self-reliance. The situation favored the further development of some characteristic spirits that had first arisen under slavery, such as self-seeking, power strife, servility and treachery proneness. After the Liberation these features were characteristic of all the Balkan peoples, namely an antithesis of heroism, self-devotion and the patriotic blast of the national liberation movement.

This was also the time when the Balkan nations became aware of their economic, social and cultural backwardness Ð a source of bad inferiority complex and a challenge to recover.

That phenomenon left a deep imprint on the Balkan character. The Medieval "micro-society" was over⁵. The new societies were developing and establishing contacts very dynamically. Suddenly the world became much larger and more attractive (but somewhat frightful). The broadening of the horizons stirred up the curiosity and it was enthusiastic (but caused some scepticism too). The Balkan spirit was permeated with specific meaning (or value) in everything that was coming in from the Great World.

After the Liberation era the Balkan peoples were as a rule prone to reject anything, bringing back to them the shadow of the ex-conqueror and being therefore thought as something retrograde and frustrating. The need to defend the hurt self-confidence urged for new virtues that were specific and strongly national, such as industriousness, trading flair, hospitality, amusement skills, etc. These were indeed brought to the fore since the times of slavery.

An interesting phenomenon was about to happen Ð a nation could be proud with some qualities that the other Balkan peoples would see as negative ones. And vice versa. This was mostly true for some features and customs (negative in their idea), associated with the Turkish (or oriental) mentality. For example the passive approach towards the environment, the less active behaviour are still being commonly described as "orientalism" i.e. to move slowly, "just mucking about all the time"⁶.

Such kind of passive approach towards the real things of life is often going hand-in-hand with a very vivid tendency to politicise on every occasion. This phenomenon can be interpreted at different levels. But it would virtually mean to avoid working, to postpone the real solution of practical problems by feeling the

5 This is the conservative patriarchal family with its traditional customs and values.

6 When wishing to express this on a positive way, one is talking about the "abyet" something is done "abyet-like" i.e. in a slow and calm way, just like a ritual.

urge to take part in political affairs (This is a job too) with the only intention to reach quick profits. Another, more life-bound sense of it would be the desire to speak more about things, than make real efforts to cope with them. This social-psychological type can be seen with all of the Balkan peoples.

The contradictory atmosphere of the post-liberation development of the Balkan countries provoked the occurrence of some other phenomena, as the self-admiration and the aggressive chauvinism. But those were only attempts to enhance their own self-confidence and self-respect, resulting in some ridiculous ways and often just contrary to the desired ones.

All attempts to portray the Balkan character would have to tackle a great number of limitations. Even when finally set, the puzzle will continue to look fragmentary-like, rather than fully completed. To define some common characteristics and components would be a better performance, than just try to describe the general profile of the Balkan people.

To better learn a foreign language, one is to know not only the rules, but (all) the exceptions to them as well. But sometimes the exceptions are so many that they (often) make the rules senseless.

Turkey

Turkey⁷ is a Republic. The Great National Assembly (the Meclis), the President of the Republic, the Government and the Constitution Court are the major institutions in this country.

The population of Turkey is circa 61 million. (1994). 98% are Muslims. More than 25 other ethnic groups and communities live in the country, in addition to the Turks⁸ (Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Lazians, Jews, Bulgarians). The largest among them is the Kurdish minority (around 12.6% of the total population).

At present the Bulgarians in Turkey are about 500-800 people only. They are mostly living in Istanbul⁹.

The problem for the Bulgarian expatriates to Turkey is far more different. During the 1878-1912 period some 350 000 Muslims left Bulgaria to settle down in Turkey; in the period 1913-1934 they were 10-20 000 per year; during the WW 2 (1940-1944) - circa 15 000; in 1950-1951 - more than 150 000 people; in 1968 - over 70 000; in 1989 - more than 360

7 The surface area of Turkey is 814 578 sq. km. 790 200 of them are reaching the Asia and only 24 378 are in Europe. Turkey's neighbours are the CIS, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Greece and Bulgaria.

8 Turkey claims itself being a mono-national state.

9 The official data are for 33 000 Bulgarian speaking people in 1935; in 1955 they were less than 21 000; the statistics for the year 1965 don't consider such a group anymore.

000 (some of them came back later); during the period 1990-1996 some 300 000 people left the country each year. The largest Bulgarian colonies are in Edirne, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Ankara, Konya, etc.

The economic potential of Turkey is very substantial and fast developing. The country has been quickly industrialising. The national income per capita was USD 2 605 in 1999. Large investments are being made in agriculture, tourism and in other industrial sectors such as mining and public services. To stimulate the foreign investments Turkey is promoting free economic zones.

The main foreign trade partners of Turkey are the EU countries, the US, Switzerland, Austria and Japan. Turkey's balance of trade with these countries is unfavourable. At the same time the exports for the region countries (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates) are growing. Intense economic ties are being established with the CIS countries and China.

Great impact over the Turkish economy and over the Europeization of the country has been realised by the Gastarbeiters. After the WW2 many Turks left their country and headed for Western Europe, trying to earn their living. On the beginning treated unequally, living in the ghettos, not educated in their mother tongue, they have consequently won their own positions, built their own subculture to become at the end not only tolerated, but largely sought as manpower. This is due to the fact that they have always been so well entrenched by the Islam to respect labour and to be modest in life, as well as to strictly abide by the hierarchy and to isolate themselves in small uniform communities. Mostly born in Germany from the genuine Turkish Gastarbeiters their second generation already feels completely integrated in the European society. They have a local citizenship and often are highly educated; a new circle of intellectuals of Turkish descent is about to appear, but European by nature. The contacts of the Gastarbeiters with their Turkish relatives add to the country's economic prosperity.

The traditions and the customs of the Turks are mainly based on their religion. The ritual of the washing up, the regular prayers, keeping the fast, the rejection of pork meat and alcohol have become an integral part of the Turkish stereotype. They may not be active believers, but the home made Islam is a very steadfast one and the modern man is also supposed to bear the traits inherited from the Islamic tradition.

¥ Cleanliness (the ritual of the cleaning) is a cult.

¥ As tradition demands, believers are preaching to Allah five times a day.

¥ The Muslims keep fast for 30 days during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (the Ramazan).



- ✚ The Kurban Bayram is the major Muslim holiday (the Day of the Sacrifice).
- ✚ The Muslim religion forbids pork meat and alcohol.
- ✚ The circumcision of the boys (the sunnet). This goes back to the old pagan times and is mainly associated with the inauguration of the boys in fully matured men. This is one of the biggest family holidays in Turkey.
- ✚ The Law forbids polygamy itself, while the Islam is permissive of the polygamous life in general. Nevertheless, there exist some polygamy cases (mainly among the wealthy Muslim families in the rural regions).

The modern times with their dynamics have inevitably brought the European standards and culture to the large Turkish territory. It can be seen everywhere but mostly in the major cities, in the external look of the buildings, in the shops, in the style of dressing, in the day-to-day life, etc. It exists at the same time together with the marks of the traditional Islamic culture (more often in the villages and in the small towns of the East and South East regions).

The Turkish *cuisine* is well known with the abundance of choice of seafood (especially in the coastal areas). Included in the menu predominantly are the shish kebab and the other kinds of roast meat (among them the dunner kebab is most popular – slices of meat, put on a vertically rotated pick). Rice is something typical for the Turkish cuisine, served as a garnish or with the main dish (the pilaf for example). Rice is the ingredient in some sweet dishes too. Other typical meals are the filled peppers, the sarmi and the patladjans, as well as many kinds of soups (the patcha, the tripe soup, the kurban, etc.), the mezes, the pasta and the sweets, the dried fruits and the nuts. Coffee and tea are favourite too.

The Turks in Bulgaria

The vast majority of the Bulgarians consider now the Turks as being either the legacy of a distant and tragic past or today – compatriots from an ethnic religious minority that has often been a source of troubles and political tension¹⁰.

The religion. The Islam on the Balkans and particularly in Bulgaria has always been a syncretic one, different from the other pure forms of this school of thought. Adapting itself to the Bulgarian soil, the Islam has bit by bit created some specific religious forms, making it to be not too hostile and alien to the local Christian people. The Turks in Bulgaria bear a century-old cul-

¹⁰ Contemporary some 1 200 000 Muslims (Turks, Bulgarian Muslims and gypsies) are living in Bulgaria. The very last data shows them to be 800 000. They are mostly Sunnis from the Khanifath fraction and some 84 000 people are Muslim-Shiites – so called Kazalbashians.



tural tradition. They consider themselves as being mostly European Muslims and are alien to every form of religious fanaticism.

As the Muslim faith prescribes, the Turks in Bulgaria are abiding by the strict traditions, customs and day-to-day rituals¹¹.

The Turkish community has a very clear and uniform understanding about its ethnic origin and religious integrity . . . If a different identificational approach still exists . . . it refers to the civil (*patriotic*) identity¹².

Those are people basically calm and somewhat sluggish. They are a Qavash (inactive, slow) people. Restlessness is not inherent characteristic of theirs. This could be due mostly to the closed character of their ethnic societies, which keeps unchanged their traditional style of living.

At the same time they are hospitable and love having guests. On such occasions they will show an explicit warmth and cordiality. When seated around a table they love eating, drinking or just chatting.

They are very hard working and greatly respect their work. They will be always grateful if their labour is appreciated.

The Turks in Bulgaria are strongly bound to and very much love their families. They will enjoy talking about the troubles and problems their families have. They will be glad to speak about their children. They love kids and have two, three or more children as a rule. The higher rates of birth are certainly due to some backward living standard.

The Turks in Bulgaria have in general a strong feeling for family affiliation. This is most characteristic in the small villages. Everyone will see when a family member is missing. Family relations and relatives are there very close. Among the members of the different families there is a great mutual respect. Such feelings might be sometimes a motivation for a vendetta.

In their lifestyle the Turks in Bulgaria are mostly conservative. Some of them are still less educated. This is most typical of the women, who as a rule must be primarily bound to set up home (women will get married early). After they can feel better and comfortably, as tradition prescribes.

Those people have a strong sense of honour and dignity. The friendship for them is very important, but they will prefer to keep

11 Such as the ritual of the washing up, the regular priests, the fasts, the refusal from pork meat and alcohol, etc. the namaz (the priest); the fasts (for 30 days during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar); the Sacrifice Day, which is a major Muslim holiday (the Kurban Bayram); the circumcision of the boys (the sunnet); the special marital and burial rituals and so forth.

12 Some of the people believe Turkey is their genuine Motherland and define their attitude towards Bulgaria as a temporary land of residence. There are others that accept Bulgaria as their ancient native land, Turkey being considered as an alternative Patria.



their close contacts and bosom friends inside their own community.

In their relationships they are sensitive and sentimental and could become very touchy to a hostile tone or to an arrogant or rude attitude.

What are the Greeks like? The Greeks in Bulgaria

Just like every other people from the South and by the Sea, the Greeks have a flaming and jovial temper. But they will be quick-tempered and very easily burst into anger. They are self-respecting.

The Greeks are prone to part quickly with the old-fashioned ideas, leaving the door open for the new coming things. They are alien to conservatism, but will respect the traditional values of their families. There are some among them that still believe a humiliation can be washed by blood only.

The Greeks enjoy talking about politics and are very opinionated thereof. This quality of theirs is as popular as their firm belief that every Greek was born to be a trader.

Career and glory seekers. Everyone is fighting for better positions within their own political party. Party leaders look for ministerial seats every time. Being a Minister for just a day, one will be addressed to as *Mister Minister* until the end of their days¹³.

They hanker after the quick rise in the job hierarchy. They love feeling *important* and being respected more than their social status really deserves¹⁴. They will not stay indifferent towards the praises towards them, their families and relatives.

In general the Greeks know the ancient Hellenic culture and will never miss a chance to show their knowledge about¹⁵. They welcome every interest that one might have in their own history. But they get angry, if one's ideas are better than their own.

They have a national feeling that is well developed and could even turn into chauvinism sometimes. This is mostly valid for the Athenians & they claim Athens is the most beautiful city in the world.

They can rarely be persuaded.

The Greeks are outgoing. They are very easy to make contact with and only a couple of days later they will come to you calling you *an old friend of mine* in the most familiar way. But they

13 This is typical for the other Mediterranean countries also (Spain, France, Italy). It goes back to the Middle ages, when these countries had a developed nobility hierarchy with the relevant traditions that are still alive.

14 Whoever will dislike that? *Just call me Mr. O to make me happy O*

15 This knowledge being not very thorough.



know what the price of friendship is. If a Greek really trusts a friend, he would be ready to do anything for him.

The Peacock complex is something in their blood and they feel quite normal when bragging about their close acquaintances and high connections, Ministers, MPs or prominent intellectuals. Very often nothing is behind such phony phrases.

The Greeks can easily promise something and just forget about on the next day. They will after that only try to justify the things promised and undone. They are more honest in their business contacts.

They are great money-lovers. The frequent economic crashes made them disillusioned with their own national currency. That is why they always try to invest their savings in gold. They can make their bills very well and are very pragmatic in their day-to-day expenses.

Corruption is omnipresent, with all walks of life in this country. Everybody is taking bribes or *bakshish*.

When endangered, they react emotionally, rather than rationally.

Very big attention is being paid to one's appearance. Greek women would enjoy wearing smart, but stuffy clothes. Their houses are tastefully furnished and clean, but with some commonness too.

Getting married in Greece is a serious problem. The dot is very popular and even obligatory in some places, as being a sign of decency and nobleness. In some cases the young girls are doomed to stay unmarried or get married older because of failure to provide the dot demanded. This would be the reason why there are betrothals that last for years there. Many unequal (difference of age) marriages could be seen there¹⁶.

In such cases many of them tend to transform the girls' dot in good education studies, preferably abroad.

The mother will often be the strongest arm of the family and she deals presumably with the problems and is the policy maker of the family. Nevertheless, the head of it is formally the man.

There is not a large Greek community in Bulgaria at present. The December 1992 census data show some 8 000 people stating Greek as their mother tongue. In Bulgaria the Greeks were and still are predominantly urban people, mainly oriented to business and mediation activities. Today there are still regions in Bulgaria, where the Greek communities and elites unbeatably hold the dominating position, which only develops in the Bulgarian Renaissance society the reaction to reject anything that until recently was called the Greek yoke.

¹⁶ The traditional material aspects of the marriage are considered as a main reason for that.

In their history the Bulgarians often associated the word "Greek" with the word "Galeman" or "Gavant, literate" But for some of the contemporary Bulgarians the word "Greek" is associated with "Byzantine" synonym for perfidy and treacherousness.

The Bulgarians

Shaping the social-psychological characteristics of the genuine Bulgarian is a tough job. If accomplished correctly, one will have to take into consideration the specific interpretations of the different history periods.

Attempts to draw the Bulgarian's profile are often supposed to point out the specific periods of the Bulgarian history. One of the most often used categories thereto is "before the Ottoman domination and after that" The period "after that" still remains incompletely surveyed. Especially when talking about the time after the year 1944.

In the period before the Ottoman invasion there had been times of great upsurge in the country's development, time of highest national spirits and social impulses. This period was marked with many brilliant examples of political boldness and statecraft. Most of these patterns of the national character degraded or vanished forever after the country fell under the Ottoman domination. Many new negative traits appeared instead that are still alive in the Bulgarian character. However, there's one thing that was most typical of the whole history of our people - the great amount of troubles and the tough will of the Bulgarians to fight and overcome them.

Among the qualities, acquired during the second major period of our history, there could be asserted features as the lack of historical audacity and courage. During those times fear filled the Bulgarian national character. The Bulgarian policies were penetrated by a kind of acquiescing sentiment that was in no way the result of some racial or genetic malformation, but was molded as a sustainable national quality by the historical fate, by the blood itself, the pain and the lack of other historical chances.

By strange caprice of history, it was namely the inferiority complex and the adaptive reactions which saved the Bulgarians from the total extermination and secured their long lasting historical presence on the Balkans. These features are a kind of specific and relevant reaction of every single individual and of the social communities as well. The survival of our people depended on their capacity to comply with the realities of life and to adequately face the objective processes.

The survival and the self-conservation go well together with the industriousness, which is another important trait of the Bulgarian character.

The lack of chances in history has largely contributed to the appearance of other specific qualities of the Bulgarian character as nihilism and its queer antithesis – megalomania. Both happen to be the roots of the philia and the phobia that put their mark on large periods of the Bulgarian political history.

The Bulgarian national nihilism appears to be the legacy of the grave historical hardships and tragedies lived by our people, of the painful slavery, of the missed chances to recover the losses. The megalomania is rooted in our history, being mostly bound to the bright hope for the new Renaissance era of the Bulgarian existence and expectations. Nihilism has a persistent and stable place in our souls, while megalomania breaks out sometimes as a brief and spontaneous reaction to different negative social-psychological factors.

A deep imprint on the psychology of the Bulgarians was made by the collision between the tradition and the modern trends. The traditions had always been an expression of the century-old developed patriarchal conservatism, based mostly on the specific conditions of life. The new trends of the world development, coming in from the West in the late 19th and during the first years of the 20th century, led to the Bulgarization of many new ideas and achievements, when interpreted through the Bulgarian traditional ways. These were times when the Bulgarians were trying to join the European progress and prosperity. They were copying and imitating, but this copying left sustainable marks in their character. One of them is that the Bulgarians, are still lagging behind. For that reason the lack of national self-reliance was very noticeable at many moments of our history. But once again, just like out of spite, our predecessors proved themselves as widely open to the forthcoming future. Because of that we are always eager to learn and understand what other people's achievements are.

The favourable geographical position of the Bulgarian lands and their fertility are often considered as impeding factors to the industrial development of the country. Thus the economic underdevelopment could be explained as mostly due to the delayed awareness of the modern times' sign as well as to the lack of serious historical experience.

Tracing the social class dissociation could help to further explain the social-psychological characteristics of the different class representatives. For example, the moral image of the capitalist is characterised as emptied from every humaneness. It turned just into a dry book keeper, an emanation of pure greed. Egoism became a dominating moral feature, still present in the psychology of the Bulgarians.

On the other hand, the Bulgarians are compassionate and always ready to help¹⁷. This nourished the responsiveness, which

¹⁷ Someone said it was shown when many Bulgarians took part in the liberation fights of the other peoples (Internationalism).

is too typical for the Bulgarian character (whilst being sometimes spoiled by the influence of some specific events).

Are the Bulgarians hospitable? The traditional studies say rather YES. This quality is being allegedly valid until now. It could be assessed as one of the signs of compassion and readiness to help.

The privations, insufficiency and poverty made the Bulgarians very thrifty ones. This was mostly due to their traditional life styles and morality. In some cases this quality could degrade to a parsimony.

The Bulgarians were often compelled to economize on their food. This has made them possessive and miserly-like to some extent. But they were brought to that by the long years of hard working and poverty and they suffered their own little wealth. This evoked (in several historical periods) a phenomenon when a single human personality was likely to represent one separate economic and moral unit.

This would be the only underlying reason for the individualism of the Bulgarians. As a moral phenomenon it occurs every time, when a single unit determines the course of the social development, only driven by its private interests.

Individualism as a moral feature has been largely commented in the Bulgarian social-psychological studies. But its evaluation and interpretations are not uniform. The differences appeared first with disputing the thesis (Are in fact the Bulgarians individualists?) by enumerating different group forms of social behaviour and of mutual aid), through defining different (positive and negative) effects (e.g. Good men are individualists versus How come that we are so good, but we can never walk all together . . . just look at the Germans. . .) to provide at the end some advice to the current educational practices.

It is being also pointed out that under the specific conditions of history individualism can lead to complacency, strife for acknowledgement and lust for glory as well. But it would also awake the ingenuity and the energy (too typical for the Bulgarian spirit!?).

Romania

Romania¹⁸ is a Republic. The country is being administratively divided into 41 districts (Bucharest inclusive). There are 262 cities. Major centers are Bucharest, Konstanza, Yash, Timishoara, Galaz, Breshov, Kluj Napoka, Kraijova, etc.

¹⁸ Surface area 238 391 sq. m. Borders: East Republic of Moldavia, the Ukraine, the Black Sea; West Hungary; South West Yugoslavia; South Bulgaria; North the Ukraine.



According to the 1992 census data, Romania has 22 760 449 *inhabitants*. The urban population is 2 million bigger than the rural one. The ethnic composition is as follows: Romanians \approx more than 89%; Hungarians \approx over 7%; over 1.5% gypsies; 1.5% \approx other (among them Bulgarians).

The active workers in the country are circa 10 m. Among them 3.5 m are agricultural and around 3 m are industrial workers¹⁹.

The most effective branches of the economy are the industry (mainly oil and car industries (and the agriculture (field farming and cattle breeding)). Great is the country's potential to develop tourism.

Orthodox faith is the mostly spread *religion* in Romania. According to the 1992 census data, circa 87% of the Romanians claimed themselves as Orthodox, 6% as Catholics and less than 4% as adepts of other religions.

The customs and beliefs of the Romanians are a mixture between the archaic traditions, some Latin inherited traits and several later acquired mainly Slavic components.

Among the calendar customs noteworthy are the following:

- ¥ *winter holidays* December 24 till January 7 \approx Christmas, the New Year, the ancient Plough's Day (a kind of local Christmas feast); some other Christmas festivities, similar to these in Bulgaria (the Kukers parade, etc.), the Annunciation Day, etc.;
- ¥ *spring customs* \approx St. Triphon's Day, St. Kharalam-pius's Day, the Day of the Vlasi²⁰; the Martenitza's buckling (in Romania the legends are for Grand Mother Dokya and rarely for Grand Mother Martha); the Ploughsman Day \approx related to the beginning of farming; St. George's Day, the Flowers Day, the Easter, the Little Horse's Day or the *Alushari*
- ¥ *summer and autumn customs* are mostly related to the agricultural work-these are ritual practices to protect the crops (from drought), such as the *Parapuda* the *Caloianul*²¹ very important are the customs related to the harvest, as the *Dragaica* and the *Unina* (the wreath).

Practiced are also several family customs, mostly related to birth, marriage and death.

The Romanians are warm and hospitable people, which is basic in their lives. A great custom I found there, the greatest I saw in all countries I have ever been. The people at this place. . . like elsewhere in the country, are accustomed to grant free of

19 More than 550 000 people are employed in the construction industry; same number in the trade industry; circa half a million in the transports; 432 000 in the education system; 308 000 in the public health system and so forth.

20 This type of holidays is different by nature and ritual practices from its Bulgarian homologues.

21 This type of holidays is different by nature and ritual practices from its Bulgarian homologues.



charge food and bed to all strangers. On the whole world there are no men that are more hospitable.

For a Romanian being hospitable means to meet their guests with the best they ever have to eat and drink. The best of their bread and wine, the always present *amalgia* (just like our *atchamak*, known all over the country, as well as everything delicious, kept in the house for a special occasion.

Albania. The Albanians

Albania has a relatively small territory of 28 748 sq. km. Its borders length is only 720 km. The Adriatic and the Ionic Sea, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro are surrounding the country.

The Albanians are of Indian-European type and wouldn't be distinguished among the other Europeans, if dressed accordingly.

The economy. Albania has a comparatively backward economy, from the industrial point of view. The lowest level of the economic development and the very conservative spirit of the Albanians set the pattern for their²² standard of living, which is a poor one.

The family. The family model is mainly determined by the tribal, ethnic and religious affiliation.

The language. The Albanian language belongs to the Indian-European group, but has no relation to any other European language and is relatively independent. It contains many foreign words and expressions, mainly from Italian and Turkish origin. Two main dialects are predominant in the spoken language – the gega and the toska. The gega is more popular and has been acknowledged as the official language at a national level, due to the fact that this dialect was Enver Hodja's mother tongue.

The religions. Three main cults are mostly spread in this country – Islam, the Orthodox Christian religion and Catholicism. Muslims are circa 60% of the population, while 30% are Orthodox and 10% are Catholics. Orthodox are mostly the members of some Greek, Bulgarian and Macedonian minorities from Southern Albania. Should it be noted here that in spite of the closest neighbourhood and powerful influence of Italy, Catholicism is relatively less popular than the other religions. The Albanians are still being hard believers, despite the suppression of the religious cults under the communist regime.

The character. The genuine Albanian is basically reticent and conservative. He is reserved towards foreigners and will fear being cheated. He is definitely suspicious, which is based on some historical reasons.

²² These customs have their analogy in Bulgaria too, while the *arapuda* is popular on all the whole peninsula.

Hospitality is one of the most typical traits of the Albanian national character. Even the most hated enemies would be dearest guests while at home, but might be stabbed in the back, right after they leave. The Albanians as a rule are very vindictive and would often act on a 'eye-for-eye' basis.

But they may also be driven by another idea 'faith-for-faith'. Their trust being once won, they will stay friends forever.

The Albanians have a very strong national feeling, which is historically rooted in the century old fight to safeguard their community.

Ethnic societies and their future

If looking back at the multi-coloured ethnic picture of the Balkan nations, a very curious phenomenon appears. In every one of them there are people, determining themselves as *different* from the prevalent ethnic population; at the same time, they are all citizens of one and the same country. In other words, the ethnic minorities are present in every Balkan country²³.

And here we come across another feature that is a very special and important one. The ethnic minorities of the Balkan countries are much more different from the rest of the world. In the Balkans case the *ethnic minorities live next to countries*, where their own ethnic ancestors have already accomplished their national identity, besides the ethnic one. This fact is very important and predestines the striving of the ethnic communities that are a majority (in the neighbouring country), to urge their ethnic brothers who are a minority (in the next country) towards the achievement of their national identity too.

A thesis could be further developed, arguing that the behaviour of the Balkan ethnic communities is mostly determined by three major psychological and historical general phenomena, named as 'complexes'.

¥ *The survival complex* The reasons for its existence can be found in the history of the Balkan nations and in their geographical situation as well, which has always been a crossing point for so many and different ethnic minorities. It first appeared as a complex for physical survival. Later, when the ethnic self-awareness was in place already, it became a complex for ethnical and cultural survival too. This complex is a psychological and constant prerequisite for the ethnical defiance. On the Balkans 'we-vs-them' is thought of rather as a confrontation than as a difference.

¥ *The retrospection complex* It is also rooted in the historical development and as to its formation it is closely tied to the sur-

23 Should it be conventional or not.

vival complex (physical and ethnical). It reflects the commitment to the past, which is too typical of the Balkan ethnic communities, the past being at the same time a source and guidebook to the future. The retrospection complex appears in two different and controversial ways. On the one hand, sought in the past will be both arguments for the exclusiveness of a given ethnic element and positive examples that could be helpful to solve some present-day problems. In this sense, the past predetermines the present and the future. On the other hand, this sentiment may have more hidden and oppressive-like character and may appear mainly as inferiority complex. Finally the retrospection complex with its both sides could easily become one more precondition for the ethnic confrontation among the Balkan peoples.

✧ *The liberty complex* The liberty complex is being expressed by two main trends on the Balkans. The first of them is the inclination towards authoritarian models of political government, examples of which can be found in all of the Balkan States. The second trend concerns the comparative approach towards the other non-Balkan ethnic communities, which makes the so-called *European syndrome*. It goes back to the Balkans' Renaissance Age and to the time after the dissolution of the Turkish Empire. The *European syndrome* is still being active by way of seeking the patronage of Europe when trying to solve the problems, peculiar to every single Balkan State.

Which are the main strategies, followed by the Balkan politicians? According the above mentioned author, these political strategies could be defined as mostly guided by three general principles:

✧ *The political cooperation principle*. This principle is a basic one for every political strategy, but what is noteworthy here is the way it is being revealed on the Balkans, where the ethnic element is fundamental. It had several times resulted in the formation of temporary political unions between countries that have no ethnic controversies and because of that could feel jeopardized by third countries. This would ostensibly lead to the creation of other reciprocal unions to neutralize (or balance) the influence of the first ones.

✧ *The belligerent patriotism principle*. Patriotism normally makes an integral part to every political strategy. But the ethnic element as well as the influence of the ethnic-psychological complexes, widely determine its specific manifestation in the Balkans. An important pattern of the belligerent patriotism will be ignoring some own ethnic problems and raising ethnic claims against the neighbouring countries instead. It normal-



ly paves the way for chauvinism and nationalism and thus making it a routine political practice is near at hand. Sadly enough, this principle still exists in the political guidelines of most (if not of all) of the Balkan countries.

¥ *The Great protectors* principle. It showed first after the liberation from the Turkish yoke and was mainly based on the assumption that by a support from outwards there could be guaranteed not only the internal ethnic stability, but also some ethnic claims concerning the other countries could be put forward. Before and during the WW1, the Balkan nations were divided between the two global political pacts. During the post-war period, when the boundaries were reset on the Balkans, the ethnic problems of the winning countries were settled to the detriment of the losers, which obviously created the prerequisites for the Balkan countries to be split off for the second time during the WW2. After the dissolution of the communist system this principle received some new dimensions by reinforcing the influence of the European syndrome.

For many non-Balkan politicians, scientists or analysts, the existence of several different pacts, axes, arcs and so on (among the Balkan countries), would be a good way to explain the Balkan problems, as well as an effective remedy to cure them. On the grounds of that many different theories, viewpoints and concepts are being developed. But whilst providing some more or less plausible explanation thereof, no firm solution can be found so that it can be positive enough. As the whole Balkan history shows, to set the Balkan countries against each other could only provoke respectively the emergence of new groups or alliances to fight and would just deepen the conflicts, instead of settling them. In the Balkans the alliances can be anything but temporary. The allies of today are tomorrow's enemies, as it has always been.

As a rule, the Great Powers can't understand what the Balkan problems really are. Only driven by their own selfish interests, they have often imposed on the Balkans many political concepts and schemes that have repeatedly renewed and further reproduced the existing conflicts.

These conflicts have been making their impact on Western Europe and US too, their interests being also provoked in most of the cases. While they both are presumed interested in the Balkan stability, their actions bear an ostensibly different accent.

¥ For Western Europe these are Slovenia and Croatia that are Catholic;

¥ For the US this is the South Balkans line (Tirana-Eskopje-Sofia-Ankara).



The European countries show an explicit interest to stay apart from the Balkans and are most reluctant to admit that the Balkan people could be genuinely European. For the West Europeans Europe ends as a rule where Western Christianity ends (as it is for most of the Europeans or for the Western researchers as a whole). In the most cheerless predictions the EU's enlargement would also come to its end right at the moment, when the outer boundaries of the Western civilization are reached. Most of the Balkan peoples have a vision for their future, mostly related to Europe. But we are not ready for that. And Europe is not ready to let us in.

It might be ironic by history that the Balkan countries always turn to the West, when looking for an arbiter in their problem solving efforts. But due to many reasons, objective and prejudicial at the same time, this couldn't be a place, where help would come from. This might become ever clearer, when one will have to listen to the condescending and mentor-like tone the Great Powers use towards the Balkans, but we are the only ones to blame.

One last known tendency of the Western policies is taking into consideration the fact there would not be any chance to impose an overall democracy model, whatever it might be. Just like after the crash of communism, when researchers understood that it was impossible to promote a social structure model, valid for everyone. In the light of this, all attempts to impose some 'common ethnic models' as it is the case with the European Minorities Protection Convention, could be assessed as purely ungrounded.

The right settlement into shape of the Balkan problems will become only possible, when all Balkan countries join their own efforts thereto. This might be a long process (but it has to start anyhow). With a view to the solution it could be more efficient to pull ourselves together and settle the problems here, on the Balkans, rather than in Brussels or Dayton.

It should be possible to apply some political techniques to overcome the distrust and the neglect, as well as to learn more about the common Balkan interests. The conflict solving theory would be able to propose many concrete steps to set this process in action. The national egoism can be easily transformed into a Balkan one, because the illusion we could save ourselves individually, is of the most dangerous ones.

The more we try to believe we are 'European' and continue to neglect our Balkan identity, the more the others will think about us as 'Balkan'. But as far as 'Balkan' means something odd and negative (no matter if true or not), it would be very hard for us to wipe out that image. And if we are only ashamed and trying 'to get away' how could others be supposed to accept us?

Unfortunately the political elites of the Balkan countries are not ready yet to lead their peoples towards such a goal.

If it is possible to disentangle the Balkan puzzle we might do it by ourselves. To reject the help of the Great Powers would be good enough to start.