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THE BALKAN: ESTABLISHING THE NEW TIES?

Summary: The paper explores some historical aspects of the bridging and the bonding social and cultural ties among the Balkan societies. The imperial and other forms of centralized rule over the local societies were integrative and divisional at the same time. Thereby, the nationalist rhetoric and policies of the new-nation states are interpreted as an intermezzo in terms of the transition to the integration into new imperial, geopolitical or geocultural, realm(s). The paper analyses an apparently paradoxical (counter)tendency in the contemporary Balkans, esp. in the post-Yugoslav societies, namely a "counter-identification" tendency (Kiossev) within the contemporary cultural landscapes of the Balkans. These cultural expressions shed a positive light, instead of a traditionally negative (Balkanist, self-derogative) adumbrations, as regards the typically Balkan mores and habits. Therefore, some examples of the new cultural expressions in high, popular and alternative cultural production(s) are presented. In conclusion, the author explains some possible causes of the cultural revival in terms of the renewed bridging ties, primarily favourable conditions for a growing of a culture of peace and femininity (Hofstede), as well as the interactions across traditional boundaries, which all correspond to a further distancing from the time of the wars which gave rise to a culture of violence and masculinity in all contending parties in the former Yugoslavia.

Key words: Balkan, cultural production, bridging ties, post-Yugoslav societies

THE SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: THE BALKANS AND THE BALKANISM

> *Balkan should become the world laboratory of a culture of peace.*
>
> Frederico Mayor, the former Director General of UNESCO and the inventor of the *peace culture* concept

Bonding and bridging are two expressions denoting the presence and, respectively, the lack of social ties, and cultural interests alike, cutting

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across traditional boundaries (Putnam, 2006; cf. Varshney, 2002).[2] Bonding, as the major shape of social capital, means prevalence of the in-group ties based on ethnocentrism and xenophobia. The bridging social capital, on the other hand, provides a society with civic ties transcending the traditional group boundaries and prejudices, alike. Nevertheless, there is a chronic shortage of the bridging ties in the contemporary world, amid the growth of commercial, industrial, political, media and other globalization agencies that expand their activities across borders & boundaries. Still, even in the most developed countries, with the highest proportion of multi-ethnic population (mostly due to the 20th century immigration waves), the level of societal integration, including ethnic tolerance and social proximity between various nations, is still underdeveloped. Such tolerance seems to be more a pretended than a sincere one (Sennett, 1994). Meanwhile, many efforts have been undertaken, especially within the EU, to bridge the gaps, mostly in the areas of education, culture and sports (see: *Sharing Diversity*, 2008). Yet, broader effects of these efforts are still precarious. For example, the notorious statement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, according to which multiculturalism in Germany had experienced a failure, where she foremost had in mind the difficulties concerning the integration of the Turks, certainly the "most Balkan diaspora", into the German society (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed), can also serve as a memento to the old Turkish *millet*-system, the one which was concurrent to the Western liberal pluralism, whereby the former, more than the latter (taken by the Wars of Religion), secured a relative stability of the old Turkish plural society in terms of "parallel worlds" (cf. Kimlicka, 1996).

It is also curious that cultural diplomacy, which is a branding phrase of the contemporary foreign policy of many European states, was originally designed to foster a nationalized notion of culture in France, Germany and England (Alting van Gensau, 1994). Nevertheless, the Balkans, and not the Western Europe, is continually screened as the (South European) seed of social and cultural bonding that elicits political and cultural divisions, civic strife, and parochialism, which are combined with the incapability of creating links across borders&boundaries using self initiative. Although such understanding of the Balkans is stereotypical rather than comparatively historical (on collective violence in different regions of Europe during the modern European history see more in: Tilly, 1993), it plays an important role in informing the relations between the West and the Balkans. The Balkan politicians and academicians, alike must defend themselves against the one-sided representation of the Balkans and prove that the contexts of the Balkan societies and cultures are rather complex and varied. However, such arguments are, more often than not, futile, for it is difficult to deny, especially outside expert communities, that there is not at least a "grain of truth" in any prejudice (cf. McLemore, 1980). The quandary in this case is known as the *Balkanism*. The notion itself is derived from Edward Said's *Orientalism*, although these two do not overlap. The West has projected

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2 An earlier version of this paper was presented in 4th International Balkans Forum Profram "Cultural Diplomacy" in April 21–23, 2011, held in Edirne, Turkey.

mainly negative images on the East, including the Balkans; however, these were proclaimed as the European, and not the (Arabian or Asian) Orient. Thus, the Balkans is recognized both as a transitional zone between the West and the (Middle or Far) East and as a parochial society with strong bonding and weak or easily destroyable bridging ties. Actually, nowhere else, except perhaps in the case of Africa, was the parochialism, incapable of establishing communication and cooperation with neighbouring societies, as strongly apprehended as in the case of the Balkans.

Maria Todorova, Milica Bakic Hayden, Alexandar Kiossev and other prominent authors on this topic, which depart from the post-colonial perspective, indicate that the Balkans is a European invention rather than an insider's perspective. For Todorova, for example, the tendency among the Balkan nations to create ethnically pure nation-states, should be understood as a result of their wish to emancipate themselves from the empires – the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empire, respectively, by taking over the Western nation-state as a "normal" form of the modern state (Todorova, 2004: 14). Similarly, Bakic Hayden points out that the Balkans is endowed with probably the worst among the cultural stereotypes distributed in the contemporary world. She says that "eastern Europe has been commonly associated with 'backwardness', the Balkans with 'violence', India with 'idealism' or 'mysticism', while the west has identified itself consistently with the 'civilized world'" (Bakic Hayden, 1995: 917). In addition, the author cites Rebecca West (a British journalist active in the Balkans between the two world wars, who authored the book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*), who said that "/v/iolence was, indeed, all I knew of the Balkans: all I knew of the South Slavs" (ibidem, 918). For Kiossev, the Balkans has inherited a controversial cultural landscape abundant with the remnants of the Ottoman *millet* system, which was by itself incapable of building bridges between different communities:

> "It is well known that the Ottoman Empire, although a strong imperial state, allowed some cultural, religious, and administrative autonomy to its vassal communities. As a consequence, these local communities (especially in their predominant, rural variant) became hermetic, autarchic, self-reproducing, and isolated from one another. (Non-intensive trade and bad infrastructure also contributed to that isolation.) Their strong, internal, patriarchal orders subjected the individual to a fixed religious identity. The strength and rigidity of those identities can be illustrated by the fact that in Medieval Ottoman cities, ethnic groups and religious communities lived in close proximity for centuries without mixing or fusing their identities. They lived in different neighborhoods, celebrated different holidays, performed different rituals, wore different clothes, and often – in spite of the everyday communication - labeled one another in a pejorative way and even hated one another (Kiossev, 2003: 7)".

Yet, the vision of the Balkan neighbours, entirely separated along ethnic or religious lines, is not entirely authentic. In Bosnia, for example, from the medieval times up to the 1990s, the *komshiluk* (the good neighbourhood) was a social norm. It included, among other things, a regular exchange of gifts and also felicitations between Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox on the occasions of religious holidays.

On the other hand, Kiossev illustrates a "counter-identification" force among the Balkan nations (and this is an aspect of the contemporary Balkan cultural landscape, which will be discussed in a greater detail in the next section of the paper):

> "Popular music and its various metamorphoses are especially interesting: turbo folk and Yugo-rock in Yugoslavia, chalga and folk music in Bulgaria, 'manale' in Romania. In Bulgarian cities and villages, chalga music not only killed the old socialist popular amusements but also successfully replaced English and American rock and disco music in clubs and pubs. It represented a culture of enjoyment that opposed both the 'post-protestant', globalist ethos of entering capitalism and the hollow slogans of official nationalism. It took elements from traditional "orgiastic" Balkan festivities, from obscene folklore, from Turkish and Gypsy music, and from the new-born semi-criminal subculture and combined them with postmodern electronic synthesizers and rhythm-boxes. The result is less a music of protest and trauma (although some parallels to Afro-American rap music are here possible) than a trickster-like, comic, and aggressive transformation. It turns the lowermost picture of the Balkans upside down and converts the stigma into a joyful consumption of pleasures forbidden by European norms and taste. Contrary to the traditional dark image, this popular culture arrogantly celebrates the Balkans as they are: backward and Oriental, corporeal and semi-rural, rude, funny, but intimate. As an act of counter-identification, it scandalizes what Norbert Elias called the 'civilization standards' and the 'borders of taste, shame, and uneasiness', combining into a controversial structure warmth, familiarity, and "Oriental" epatage. It is a kind of willing regression into a great, scandalous, Balkan 'neighbourhood', away from both Europe and the annoying official homelands.
> Surprisingly enough, nostalgia for such counter-models of identification (they are not only musical, of course) is especially strong where the familiar 'sarmale', 'mousaka' and other quasi-Oriental amusements are missing, such as in the sterility of the Dutch or German cultural landscapes. The Balkan cultural diaspora is worth studying from that point of view – for its nostalgic and intimate cooking, celebrating, and chatting (Kiossev, 2003: 16)".

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Thus, the Balkans is largely represented, mostly due to the alleged violent nature and the parochial political mentality, as a region of the bonding nations incapable of building peer-to-peer links, though they share some common cultural traits, whether in terms of cultural artifacts (such as traditional dishes), or in terms of behavioural patterns (e.g. the preponderance of collectivism, hierarchical distance, and anxiety, i.e., the lack of relaxedness – cf. Hofstede, 2005). Moreover, the Balkan nations seem incapable of cooperating with their (Balkan) neighbours outside an imperial realm and its mechanisms of central control and coordination.

Essentially, this belief is an updated narrative of Balkanism. Although the authors mentioned above refer to the 19th and early 20th century traces of the Balkanism, they have been mostly impressed by the momentum of the emissions of stereotypes in the 1990s, produced due to the wars in the former Yugoslavia. This period was also replete with identity-breakdowns, both in the former Yugoslavia and in other Balkan countries, which belonged to the already disintegrated Eastern Europe. Such context was favourable to re-emergence of the repulsive images by the Balkans on the Balkan "others". For instance, the Slovene nationalists see the Balkans as all those peoples who inhabit territories south of the river *Sutla*. Similarly, in the manner of pushing the boundary of the Balkans as more southward as possible, the Croatian nationalists saw the Balkans as people who traditionally, in terms of religious affiliation, belonged to Orthodox Christianity and Islam, alike (cf. Zizek, 1999). Concurrently, an inverted image of Balkanism or Orientalism, which is Occidentalism, was resurrected by the nationalist propaganda in Serbia at that time (cf. Katunarić, 2000). I say resurrected, because Occidentalism appeared in the Serbian nationalistic agenda already in the 19th century, along with Russophilia. At that time, a rather similar occurrence, in terms of the Romantic Nationalistic messianism, took place in Croatia, as well. According to these assumptions, the Serbs and Croats are God-chosen Slavic peoples with a mission of creating a civilization of peace, based on spiritual values, in contrast to the Western civilization, especially the United States, based on materialism, war and hostility between peoples (Prpa, 1999).

Balkanism, as disdain toward Balkan peoples and their mores and habits, fitted the image which was particularly dominant in Croatia in the 1990s, according to which Croatia is by no means a Balkan country. The shift toward an exclusivist national self-image occurred in the second half of the 19th century, when the Romantic cultural nationalism, which emanated a radiant feeling of belonging to the South Slavs, was replaced by a politically realistic and utterly antagonistic nationalism aimed at establishing the ethnically purified Croatian nation-state. This tendency was resurrected and reinforced, amounting to racism, in the Second World War, featuring the pro-Nazi ideology of the regime of the Independent State of Croatia. Accordingly, the Croats were represented not as a Slavic, but as a Gothic people, i.e., close to the German race. En echo of this attempt at "aristocratising" of the Croatian nation was reverberated in the 1990s, when a part

of, mainly amateur, yet very enthusiastic, historians and linguists claimed that the Croats originated from Iran. In other words, they had nothing to do with the South Slavs (read: the Serbs). Obviously, such myths of origins served the contemporary political purpose, which is to dissociate the "aristocratic" nation from the neighbouring "plebeian" nations.

Eventually, in the 1990s, the views of the others by the former Yugoslavs were split into two major groups, based on culturalist assumptions, i.e., Orientalism and Occidentalism. For example, for the Croatian nationalists, the contemporary Serbian politics represented an offspring of the old Byzantium deceitfulness. In return, for the Serbian nationalists, the Croatian politics represented a continuation of Fascism backed by Vatican, this time joined by the Western alliance.

At the same time, both Croatian and Serbian nationalists labelled Muslims/Bosnians as "Balije", which is a mocking name for domestic collaborators with the Ottoman authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the time.

A CULTURAL RAPPROACHMENT AMONG THE BALKANS?

This section of the paper focuses on some contemporary cultural processes which partly remind of Kiossev's description of the "counter-identification" tendencies among the Balkan nations. The examples that will be presented indicate a reversal of negative into positive images of the Balkans and the Balkan cultures, whereas the rising popularity of the contemporary Balkan cultural production in the countries of the former Yugoslavia will be explained in the final section of the paper, as a result of differential dynamics of social representations in the war and the peace contexts, respectively.

In stark contrast to the mainstream political discourse in the 1990s, a good part of the cultural production in the post-Yugoslav countries was not carried out in terms of Balkanism. In such unfavourable political conditions for sending messages of tolerance, at least a part of cultural products were bridging, rather than bonding. This primarily concerns the cultural activities of a variety NGOs in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia. Actually, the cultural NGOs provided a template for the later, the expansion of the bridging cultural messages (cf. Katunarić, 2001). Nevertheless, even some parts of the pop-culture, including the controversial *turbo-folk* scene (proclaimed by some ex-Yugoslav rock adherents as the source of all cultural evil in the former Yugoslavia, co-responsible for the horrors of the wars), elicited "strange" affinities among respective populations. For example, Svetlana Ceca Ražnatovic, the widow of the war criminal Željko Ražnatović Arkan from Serbia, was one of the most popular folk-singers in Croatia in 1990s. Yet, her music was performed in bars and clubs, away from the mainstream Croatian broadcasters.[3]

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3 Amid the fact that the *turbo-folk* is a Serbian genre, which is largely associated with Serbian nationalism, Croatian rock-critic Aleksandar Dragaš says that it is going more and

Also, different forms of cultural exchange from pop- and rock-concerts to movies, especially between Serbia and Croatia, became vibrant.[4] It seems that in this case the cultural streaming worked as a kind of Freudian subconsciousness, as it repaired, like a dream-work, the lines of communication which were broken down by the conscious level, i.e., the political action in terms of nationalism.

Today, we are witnessing an inversion of Balkanism on many counts. What used to be denoted as a permanent resentment on the ethnic basis, an image of patriarchal peoples continually fighting each other, has turned into something else, which is more affiliate, more romantic and, as such, more attractive for various audiences in the whole region. The contents of cultural industries are currently replete with narratives of love, harmony, intrigues, and other spicy ingredients that characterize soap-operas. The main figures in the popular setups are usually young lovers implicated in the controversies between their families, sometimes also in controversial businesses of modern corporations. In this cultural production, the boom of the popularity of the Turkish TV-series is an absolute champion on TV scene. They have taken the lead in TV broadcastings in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia ("1001 nights", "Kismet", "Azi", "Tears of Bosporus", "Gümüş", "Bitter Life"...). In many Croatian cities, due to the craze caused by the popularity of the Turkish TV-series, esp. "1001 nights", bus-lines and airlines to Istanbul are sold out for months.

The rise of the popularity of cultural contents from the former Yugoslavia in the area of the former Yugoslavia is remarkable, as well. A number of stars, primarily singers, from popular to folk music, are attractive for large audiences and their concerts are often sold-out. To mention some of them: Đorđe Balašević, a pop-singer from Vojvodina in Serbia, who is very popular in Croatia and Slovenia both among older and among younger generations; it is similar with Toše Proeski, the late pop-singer from Macedonia, then Halid Bešlić from Bosnia, the most prominent among the singers of *sevdah*; Momčilo Bajagić-Bajaga, the rock singer from Serbia; Goran Bregović, the pop-folk composer and performer from Bosnia; Toni Cetinski, a pop-singer from Croatia, who often performs in Belgrade, etc.[5]

more popular in Croatia. Daily newspaper *Jutarnji List* carried out a survey on this topic, showing that 43 percent out of 1,000 examinees listen to the *turbo-folk* (www.balkan24. com/.../2309-glazba-lijei-rane-u-bivoj-jugoslaviji.html*)*.

4 First echelons of the pop-cultural "ambassadors" from Croatia and Serbia, respectively, were made of popular singers who have not been engaged in the rhetoric of hatred in the 1990s (e.g. singers Djordje Balasevic from Serbia and Alka Vuica from Croatia). Later on, in the first decade of the 2000s, and nowadays, these echelons have been joined by a number of other pop-stars from Croatia and Serbia, respectively.

5 A more detailed account of the rebirth of the former Yugoslav cultural space of is given in Konjikusic, 2010. Here is one of the numerous stories about people who suceeded to keep up their transnational ties due to their committment to rock music: "Friends are forever, and I was getting friends primarily through music… Nationality has no importance when music is concerned" (Branislav Babić-Kebra, singer of the Serbian rock-group "Obojeni program" (Colored Program)/. In 1991 Kebra happened to be in a situation when nationality meant virtually everything. As a Serb, he served army at that time in Vinkovci, Croatia, when armed conflicts just begun. He saved his life largely thanks to his music contacts. One day, while watching some angry Croatian civilians and police shouting over the fence of the

Certainly, one cannot deny the extraordinary role of rock-culture in (re)creation of intercultural links in the former Yugoslavia. As some researchers demonstrate (cf. Mišina, 2011), literature on the conflict transformation has for long pointed out that the process of peace-building requires the creation of a new shared cultural identity through which a mutual motivation to negotiate for a transformation of the conflict could take place. Nevertheless, it has been only relatively recently discovered that music is a powerful resource on the basis of which shared cultural identities could be built. In part, the finding reflects a novel insight according to which building a post-conflict identity is not only a rational or cognitive, but also an "emotional work" that requires behavioural change, addressing both feelings and thoughts, and thus improving communication.

In this context, music has come to be understood as having the power to exercise an important impact on individuals' psychic state. Such a creative process can help foster change within individuals as well as between conflicted groups, thus facilitating their moral transformation in terms of increasing tolerance and enabling imagination of a common peaceful world (Mišina, 2011).

Nevertheless, it is not only rock-music, or as it is called "the Yugoslav post-conflict hip-hop", that provides the privileged means of moral and emotional rehabilitation of populations traumatized with war and propaganda of prejudices and hatreds against the others. Likewise, it is not that only the Balkan hip-hop is capable of 'building bridges' in the face of ethno-nationalist parochialism and xenophobia, and of creating possibilities for a common cultural identity grounded on the values and principles of openness, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Some other art-forms have contributed to the collective recovery, as well. For example, film has become increasingly attractive for different ethnic audiences. Belgrade's actor and producer Zoran Cvijanović, explains this phenomenon as a result of similarity in aesthetics and linguistics: "In these countries we understand each other, and this is crucial", he said (www.balkan24.com/.../2309-glazba-lijei-rane-u-bivoj-jugoslaviji.html).

However, several years ago, a circulation of actors between Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia was unthinkable. Today, they are engaged to play in soap-operas and movies produced in neighbouring countries. There is a great exchange among theatres going on, as well, especially among smaller and alternative ensembles.

Also, a coproduction of films is a real hit among film-makers of the former Yugoslavia. "All have promptly been involved into Slovenian-Croatian, Macedonian-Croatian, and Croatian-Serbian coproduction, so

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army barracks, he saw a friendly face in the crowd, his colleague Goran Bare, from the Croatian rock-group *Majke*. With Bare's assistance, Kebra dressed up civilian suit and then took away by walk even to Hungary... Today, Kebra and his rock-band perform again their music in Croatia... Kebra says: "If ordinary people were asked, everything would be OK. Nevertheless, if culture would be left to politicians only, they will always find a reason for obstructing the cultural exchange". Albeit this is an overstatement, because many "ordinary people" are far from being innocent in the overall production of cultural prejudices and violent conflicts. Yet, the positive impact of the rock-music of the (former) Yugoslav scene is doubtless, which I will discuss in the next.

that funds for these projects were collected from everywhere", remembers Vinko Brešan, a reputed Croatian film-director. He adds: "Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia have a great advantage: translations are not necessary for distribution of our movies in our markets... In a way, this is a common market for the film industry, and what is logical has eventually happened" (www.balkan24.com/.../2309-glazba-lijei-rane-u-bivoj-jugoslaviji.html).

One must also add to the list the rising popularity of the Balkan cuisine as represented on television. One of the most popular TV-shows in this area is "Hrana i vino" (Food and Wine),[6] produced in the Republic of Macedonia and frequently broadcast in Slovenia and Croatia, although on private TV-channels only (even in such trivial matters, the public national TV-channels seem to take the protective stance on behalf of both the high-brow culture and the nationalized meaning of culture).

Nevertheless, some high-brow cultural production has also joined the Balkan cultural revival. For instance, the theatre play *District Hospital* by a contemporary Bulgarian writer Hristo Boytchev, was a hit-maker among the theatre goers in Zagreb a couple of years ago. However, unlike soap operas, the popularity of the theatre play is mostly due to the worldwide tour de force of the Boytchev's pieces. Thus, like national public TV-channels, the mainstream theatres would hardly play *va banque* when the international repertoire is concerned.

Next, in the prominent theatre "Atelje 212" in Belgrade, the play "Gospoda Glembajevi" (*Gentle Folks of the Glembajevs*) by a famous Croatian author Miroslav Krleža, was performed last year. In a similar vein, various festivals, conferences and other gatherings of writers from the former Yugoslavia take place on yearly basis (cf. Ilić, 2009).

Last, but not least, the new cultural trend in the Balkans is accompanied by cultural policies' activities. For instance, in 2011 the Council of ministers of culture from the countries of Southeast Europe, joined by the Slovenian ministry, held its seventh meeting in a row, while the presiding over the meetings is rotated from country to country. In addition, several common projects are set up, including the Regional Centre of cultural heritage established in Cetinje, Montenegro; next, the Regional Centre for endangered cultural heritage established in Leposavić, Serbia, and the Regional Centre for younger museum custodians established in Bulgaria, etc.

The whole spectrum of the post-conflict cultural tendencies in the Balkans does not certainly provide a conclusive evidence in the sense that the bridging ties have eventually engulfed the bonding ties, that nationalistic camps in the Balkan cultures have been culturally defeated. This only means that the bonding cultural ties are not the main nor the only actors on the cultural centre-stage anymore.[7]

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6 In this case too one can remind to a widely shared saying that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." (in Croatian and Serbian: "ljubav ide kroz želudac")

7 For example, in present-day Croatia (and similar situation seems to be in Serbia), the political center-stage is preoccupied with right-wing rhetoric brandishing nationalism and hatred (against Serbs and "non-loyal" Croats alike, and condemnations of the International Hague Tribunal which converted national heroes into war criminals. Nevertheless, the

Also, although the revival of the mutual interests among the former Yugoslavs may be geopolitically distinguished from the boom of interests for the Turkish soap-operas, for example, these must not necessarily be the two entirely different cultural phenomena. This is so in the first place because, until recently, the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans on the whole were "enveloped" in Balkanism accompanied with resentments against the closest neighbours. Nowadays, Balkanism of the 1990s is apparently losing its political and also economic grounds (eventually, as previously cited filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia said, the cultural co-productions among former Yugoslavs become a good business opportunity as well).

HOW TO EXPLAIN THE CULTURAL COUNTER-STREAMING IN THE BALKAN?

My first answer to this question would be that the Balkan context, especially the Western Balkan, has changed from the warlike to the peaceful one, whereby the latter is accompanied with some elements of a peace culture. Also, the cultural context that corresponds to peace conditions has been altered from nationalistic and parochial to a post-colonial and peer-to-peer relationship. In other words, the Balkan nations are not anymore, or not only, the dopes of external imperialism or the victims of their own incapacitation for creating lateral or regional relations not only in culture and society, but also in politics and economy.

The inversion of the Balkanism may be explained with the remarkable fictional figures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, used as illustrations. Today, Cervantes' hero and anti-hero, respectively, represent a key chapter of the contemporary theory of social representations (cf. Abric, 1995; Moscovici, 2003). The two figures designate central and peripheral social representations, respectively. The central field, i.e., the Quixotic, is "heroic". The central field consists of the *communal truths*, i.e., a dogmatic core of collective beliefs. The peripheral field, that of Sancho, is "antiheroic". It consists of pragmatic and open-ended attitudes based on everyday experience and an interest in survival rather than zero-sum, either-or and similar lethal games. Generally, ethnic and international conflicts alike give rise to the expansion of the central or dogmatic field at the expense of peripheral or pragmatic field of the social or collective representations. Conversely, in peace times, the pragmatic reason comes to the fore mostly by the means of cultural production which relaxes the central code, i.e., the rigid posture of the hero(s). This also touches the meaning of *Lethe*, the "river of oblivion" in the old Greek myth of the afterlife. This is probably the best aspect of the mass culture and its superficial, episodic collective memory, which is often the object of contempt on the part of high-brow culture (which contains,

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battle on the cultural scene (in both countries) seems to be lost for extreme nationalists. Their favorite performers, like Marko Perković-Thompson in Croatia, whose patriotic and fascistoid songs were very much popular until a couple of years ago, cannot compete in the expansion of the popularity, especially among the younger generation, with rock- and pop-singers whose performances are intrinsically musical and mainly universalistic in terms of textual messages.

more than pop-culture, the elements of the central, Quixotic field). Thanks to the superficiality, mass culture easily forgets both good and bad experiences. Eventually, the post-conflict mentality establishes the necessary point-of-balance in collective memory, where too much remembrance, and too much forgetfulness alike, equally incapacitates a modern nation for living in a family of modern nations (for the issues of habits of historical memories among Europe nations see: Judt, 2006).[8]

Likewise, the whole issue of the varying cultural tastes among the Balkan mainstreams has to do with what some cultural researchers describe as the "masculine" and the "feminine" Balkan (cf. Cvitanovic, 2009). For example, the current secular debate in Turkey sparked by the TV-series *Magnificent Century*, which trivializes the life of Sultan the Magnificent, represents the case of cleavage between masculine and feminine part of the (Turkish) culture (cf. www.setimes.com/.../feature-03).[9]

A typical Balkan man, as presented, for example, in the contemporary popular songs (from pop- to hip-hop and rap), is a macho-man. He is aggressive, physically strong, dominant over the women, reputed lover, wears a golden necklace, and "feels ashamed when crying". Still, in some songs, the Balkan man is also depicted mockingly, with an auto-ironic edge, as a grotesque beast responsible for all the wars and other bad things in the Balkan histories.

In contrast, the "Balkan woman" is depicted as an utterly positive figure. She is "strong and proud", seductive and extremely beautiful so that men cannot resist her, "she never quits or gives up"... Nevertheless, women in the Balkan history play a secondary role. They are passive vis-à-vis the historical events – so that one can conclude that the Balkans is exclusively a space for conflicting males. Yet, the Balkans, as a space for a less historical and bellicose, and more mundane, everyday and peaceful life, is not a male space anymore or is not exclusively such. It becomes more humane in the sense that violence is not anymore the major or the only vehicle of important events.

Hence, the rising popularity of the Balkan cultural contents right in the Balkan area has to do with a withdrawal of History and its Grand Narratives in favour of an ephemeral and peaceful history. In any case, for a peace culture to be established both balances are necessary, i.e., that between Quixotic and Sancho-elements and that between male and female elements, yet with some preponderance of the latter. A peace culture is

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8 For example, in present-day Croatia (and similar situation seems to be in Serbia), the political center-stage is preoccupied with right-wing rhetoric brandishing nationalism and hatred (against Serbs and "non-loyal" Croats alike, and condemnations of the International Hague Tribunal which converted national heroes into war criminals. Nevertheless, the battle on the cultural scene (in both countries) seems to be lost for extreme nationalists. Their favorite performers, like Marko Perković-Thompson in Croatia, whose patriotic and fascistoid songs were very much popular until a couple of years ago, cannot compete in the expansion of the popularity, especially among the younger generation, with rock- and pop-singers whose performances are intrinsically musical and mainly universalistic in terms of textual messages.

9 8 It should be mentioned here that the screen-player of the TV-series is Mrs Meral Okay, the contemporary Turkish actress and film historian.

based primarily on feminine values and sympathy for the weak rather than masculine values and sympathy for the strong. In such a context, cultural contents accrue the themes of love, joy, family matters, endless intrigues and other "non-heroic" themes. For some men, this transformation of History into ephemeral everyday life may bring an infinite tediousness;[10] yet, for some other (both men and women), it may become the major source of a productive life in the culture that connects creativity with tenderness rather than violence.

Notably, the current peace among the former Yugoslavs has not only improved the relations between them, but also the perceptions of the Balkans, in general, including the perceptions of numerous Croats as regards the Turks, primarily due to the Turkish TV-series which triggered their interest in the Turkish history and contemporary society. Apparently, peace is not the only thing, to paraphrase a popular song of John Lennon, which should be given a chance. Peace itself gives a chance, a big chance, actually. It contributes to the growth of cultural contents acceptable for different people(s) and tastes as much as it stimulates personal and collective tolerance toward the others. In such context, the growing and diversified cultural production becomes the key element of an expanding culture of peace. Finally, we can conclude with the famous sentence that Humphrey Bogart said at the end of the movie *Casablanca*. The current issues of cultural interests and productions in the Balkans appear to be the beginning of a renewed friendship.

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10 This reminds of the old Chinese saying, which is actually a curse speared against the History and in favour of the (boring) history: "May you live in interesting times!"

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BALKAN: USPOSTAVLJANJE NOVIH VEZA?

Rezime: U radu se proučavaju neki istorijski aspekti društvenih i kulturnih veza između balkanskih društava. Imperijalni i drugi oblici centralizovane vladavine dovodili su u isto vreme i do integracije i do podela. Zato se nacionalistička retorika i politika novih nacionalnih država interpretira kao intemeco pred integraciju u novi imperijalni, geopolitički i geokulturni poredak. U radu se analizira na prvi pogled paradokslana tendencija „kontra-identifikacije" (Kiossev) u oblasti kulture na Balkanu, a posebno u postjugoslovenskim društvima. Ovo se posmatra kao pozitivna činjenica, posebno u svetlu negativnih stvari koje se tipično vezuju za balkanske običaje i načine ponašanja. U tom smislu, rad daje nekoliko primera novog izraza u visokoj, popularnoj i alternativnoj kulturnoj produkciji. Na kraju, autor razmatra moguće razloge oživljavanja kulture u smislu uspostavljanja novih veza, povoljnih uslova za razvoj kulture mira i ženskog principa (Hofstede), kao i veza koje nadilaze tradicionalne granice, čemu doprinosi i udaljavanje od vremena ratova u bivšoj Jugoslaviji koji su doveli do širenja kulture nasilja i muškog principa kod svih strana u sukobu.

Ključne reči: Balkan, kultura, premošćavanje granica, postjugoslovenska društva