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*Preferred Citation:* Dungaciu, Dan, *East and West and the "Mirror of Nature". Nationalism in West and East Europe - Essentially Different?* in: *A Decade of Transformation*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 8: Vienna 1999



## **East and West and the "Mirror of Nature" Nationalism in West and East Europe - Essentially Different?**

Dan Dungaciu

*"Habit of seeing opposites - The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature opposites (as, for example, 'warm and cold') where there are, not opposites, but differences in degree. This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyze the inner world, too, the spiritual-moral world, in terms of such opposites. An unspeakable amount of pain, arrogance, harshness, estrangement, frigidity has entered into human feelings because we think to see opposites instead of transitions."*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, § 67, 1880

There are many ways in which the examination of the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe could be made. But a broader comparative analysis is not the purpose of the present paper; it would be impossible here even to enumerate the

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\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *Junior Fellows' Conference* organized by *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*, Vienna, May, 19, 1999. I am grateful to my discussant Don Kalb for his very useful comments and suggestions and to Klaus Nellen and János Kovács for their interest and comments.

possible comparative grids for an examination of the relationships between these two areas. This paper is just an introduction, a starting point, and what I intend to do here is more modest and circumscribed. The purpose of this paper is to offer a few methodological preliminaries to speak about some problems that appear - that have actually appeared - when *nationalisms* of these areas are compared. The supposition of this article is that no few theories, perspectives or concepts - implicitly or explicitly - essentialize the nationalisms of these two areas. Without a critical analysis, without a previous *deconstruction*<sup>1</sup> of those essentialist theories and concepts, any comparison between the East and the West is a risk to perpetuate them. To outline the relevance of so-called "Eastern nationalism" and "Western nationalism," of the relationship between them - as far as these concepts or relations induce, produce or perpetuate *essentialism* - is the aim of my article.

### *Again About Differences: How Are We Talking About Them?*

The subtitle of my paper could be: how can we talk about the differences? As I mentioned before, I will emphasize in my presentation the *essentialist* authors and theories, namely those theories that suggest that nationalism in the West is *essentially* different from that in the East,<sup>2</sup> which means that these areas from this point of view *are what they are of necessity*. In a more technical language the *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* talks about essentialism in these terms: "The distinctive mark of essentialism...lies in its suppression of temporality: it assumes or attributes an unchanging, primordial ontology to what are the historically contingent products of human or other forms of agency. It is also a denial of the relevance of agency itself."<sup>3</sup> This kind of essentialism, which culminates with the description of the Balkan area, has major effects in almost any comparative analysis of Western and Eastern areas. Hence, the reason for this discussion.

It has been said that *historiae est magistra vitae*. And there is no problem with this statement as long as we are sure to know *what* history is. For history seems to teach us what *we* want it to teach us; it seems to be less *magister* than *teaching aid*. This

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<sup>1</sup> The term is applied here much more loosely than in Derrida's sense to refer to the taking apart or unpacking of a particular term, concept or theory.

<sup>2</sup> The discovery - the "invention" - of these two areas is dated by Larry Wolff in the eighteenth century. The process of *discovery* and *separation* (partition) were simultaneous and, from the beginning, ambiguity and inferiority characterized Eastern Europe. See Wolff (1994: 6-7).

<sup>3</sup> Herzfeld (1988: 188).

assertion is true for most realms of reality, and it is pressing when it comes to the analysis of nation and nationalism.

Furthermore, I do not intend to write about wrong sociological analyses, about research mistakes or information errors. It would not be of much interest, and it would not be enough anyway since there are many ways in which we can make mistakes. From the theory of Louis Hautecoeur, who thought that the Enlightenment began among ladies in France and was due to the effect of the consumption of too much tea and coffee upon the nerves, of corsets which were too tight, of cosmetics which were poisonous and of other means of self-beautification which had physically deleterious results. From this so-called theory onward, many such mistakes have been made in the social sciences. But there are two levels at which one can make a mistake. The first level is represented by Hautecoeur; the second one, by an author who would have said that the French ladies did what they did - consuming too much tea and coffee and wearing corsets - because they were French. And this kind of mistake is very different from the first one.

The issue here is this second level - the existence and persistence of a way of thinking, the existence of some kind of mental *apriorisms*, of some frameworks within which the research is being developed, especially when we talk about nationalism in these two areas; in other words, an essentialism, but a new sort of essentialism - an essentialism that I would call neo-essentialism, or *sociological essentialism* since none of the authors who promotes it declares himself/herself a follower of the Herderian "*Volksgeist*." It is a *neo-essentialism*, a sociological or historical essentialism because the authors speak of historical and social conditions, not about essences which transcend social life, although the consequences are almost the same; for these "conditions," for this "history" seem to be so powerful that, for instance, the Eastern peoples cannot escape it. It is fatal. It is predestined. The promoters of this neo-essentialism are selected from both areas, East and West with the differences consisting in the style of essentialization and in the values that are attributed.

This approach to the analysis of nation and nationalism - some of the reference points of which I will attempt to select - is not a mistake since it talks about *differences* in a *particular way*; for there are many ways to speak about differences as the post-modernists and the feminists well know. In my opinion, this neo-essentialism is sufficiently strong and present in many scientifically approaches, such as the so-called "popular sociology," in our everyday lives and in the media, so as to be worthy of attention.

I now want to offer just two examples to suggest the existence of two patterns of thinking, two perspectives, two standpoints, when we talk or write about these two areas. First, almost every time when nationalist or religious resurrections and ethnic or national conflicts are happening in the Balkans or Eastern Europe, we refer to the *historic* explanation. We try to find *historical* patterns. On the other hand, when it comes to the West, we look for concrete and present-day causes, for sociological explanations and for cultural, political, social or economical reasons. *History* is not the first explanatory argument for the Western nationalism, but it is for the Eastern one. (Neither the Dreyfus Affair nor the Vichy government explain Jean-Marie Le Pen, but the Balkan Wars explain the 1993 war in Bosnia.) In other words, if we accept that the West can escape its own history - and especially its accidents: racism, fascism, nazism and religious fundamentalism - this is hardly ever accepted for the East. "History as a burden" seems to be the formula offered today to the East, which has become an area doomed to history. The mark of "fatality," of something "essential," is the problem; since the distance from here to an *axiological* or moral statement, with certain influences in policy-making, takes no more than a single step.

The second example is a very concrete one: the Kosovo crisis. Of course, I am not going to suggest that the existence of these two patterns of thought is the cause of what is happening now in Yugoslavia. But, just as a mental exercise, let us suppose a massive resurrection of the crisis in Northern Ireland, such as the famous crisis of the 1970s when British tanks opposed Irish demonstrators. In this circumstance, try to imagine that, for instance, Madam Albright - the person and the name are not important - would say: "I found the solution for the Northern Ireland conflict! NATO will go there and bomb royalist or separatist bases!" That would certainly be an unthinkable solution, an inconceivable thing even from a theoretical point of view! And not because Great Britain is a powerful sovereign state, but because not even one reasonable person could believe that such an old and complex ethno-religious conflict could be resolved in this way. But what is reasonable and normal in the West seems not to be reasonable and normal in the East, especially in the Balkans. Here, an ethnic and religious conflict *can* be resolved in this way - theoretically, at least! Let me now discuss some elements, some steps in what could be considered the history of the essentialist perspective which I suggested at the outset.

### *Nationalism in West and East - Essentially Different?*

#### *The Starting Point: Hans Kohn - Western Nationalism versus Eastern Nationalism*

The starting point of an essentialist perspective can be identified in Hans Kohn's famous distinction between "Western and Eastern nationalism": "While Western nationalism was, in its origin, connected with the concepts of individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism current in the eighteenth century, the later nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia, early tended towards a contrary development."<sup>4</sup> Here, in his 1945 book, *The Idea of Nation*, Kohn made the distinction between "Western" and "non-Western" nationalism, and later in his subsequent books, between "good" nationalism and "evil" nationalism. He does this by constructing a "dichotomy between a normal and a special type. The normal is the classical, the orthodox, the pure type."<sup>5</sup> It is, of course, the Western sort. Essentially, the Western type is a "voluntarist" type of nationalism which regards the nation as a free association of rational human beings entered into voluntarily on an individual basis, while the Eastern is an "organic" type which views the nation as an organism, as a fixed and indelible character which was "stamped" on its members at birth and from which they can never free themselves. Kohn's approach and perspective are an attempt to separate the good from the bad, the normal type from the deviant type, by using *geographical* criteria. His *geographical* distinction is very clear and very well marked: the first type of ideology was characteristic for the area west of the Rhine, the West minus Germany, whereas the second kind of ideology was typical for nationalist movements east of the Rhine. Because of their history, these latter societies and peoples were ill-prepared and unsuited, from a cultural, social and political point of view, to receive and use properly the national ideas brought by the Eastern intellectuals from the West of Europe. This, at least, is Hans Kohn's statement.

This distinction in all its variants - Western nationalism versus Eastern nationalism, civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism, voluntaristic nationalism versus organic nationalism - was well-entrenched in post-World War II literature, and made quite a climb again in the 1990s. The distinction was not, even in the beginning, only an analytical distinction; it was also a normative one. And this last aspect was emphasized and has become prevalent today. From a hypothesis, it gradually

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<sup>4</sup> For the "classical" justification of this widespread dichotomy, see Kohn (1945: 329, 331).

<sup>5</sup> Chatterjee (1986: 2-3).

turned into a premise, into an axiom; it became a starting point for the research, not - possibly - a conclusion.

*Re-drawing the East: Plamenatz and the "Two Types of Nationalism"*

The second step was made in circumstances very different from those in 1945. We are in 1973 now. Germany is Western, democratic and strong enough not to be counted as an Eastern country anymore, even when regarded from the vantage point of its nationalism. At this point, the correction of Kohn's theory will be made by John Plamenatz in a famous study called "Two Types of Nationalism." This correction is extremely subtle, almost imperceptible since Plamenatz retains the distinction between Eastern nationalism and Western nationalism: "I shall confine myself to arguing that nationalism has taken two markedly different forms. One form I shall call Western and the other Eastern."

What is modified here is *the geography of the East* with the frontier being moved more to the East so that Germany and its nationalism can be subsumed into the Western column. What Plamenatz calls Eastern nationalism has flourished among "the Slavs as well as in Africa and Asia, and is to be found also in Latin America." He calls it "Eastern" because it first appeared to the east of "Western Europe." His distinction between "the West and the rest" is more radical, and so is the distinction between Western Europe and Eastern Europe. The differences appear at the beginning: if the Europeans - the Germans included - have been "well equipped culturally,"<sup>6</sup> the case with the Easterners, and later with the Africans and the Asians, "has been quite different." This has made their nationalism "profoundly different from that of the Germans, the Italians and other Western peoples."<sup>7</sup> "As good an example as any of the political nationalism in the West is Mazzini," says Plamenatz. "Why not Mussolini?" one could ask, but the answer to this question is not available, for Plamenatz does not mention this name, or Hitler's name either.

In conclusion, we have "two kinds of nationalism." We have the nationalism, for instance, of the Germans and the Italians, which Plamenatz calls "Western," and the nationalism of the "non-Western world."<sup>8</sup> The adjectives used by Plamenatz to characterize this latter nationalism resemble those used by Kohn: "hostile," "imitative," "illiberal," "disturbed," "ambivalent," "oppressive" and "dangerous." It would

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<sup>6</sup> Plamenatz (1973: 29).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 33-34.

not be hard to recall a number of cases in the history of Western Europe where these epithets would fit perfectly. But Plamenatz is not interested in such comparisons. These adjectives belong to the Eastern nationalism, and they must stay there.<sup>9</sup>

*Perpetuating the Dichotomy: Eric Hobsbawm - "Political Nationalism" versus "Ethno-linguistic" Nationalism*

After 1989, nation and nationalism have become prominent themes of the agendas of sociology, political science and geopolitics. Special reviews dedicated to these issues were founded; there is even an association for the study of nation and nationalism, and the number of books, articles and conferences on this subject has increased. In spite of some nuances which have been added, the distinction between Eastern/Western, bad/good, ethnic/civic nationalism has remained in use.

In 1990, for instance, the famous British historian Eric Hobsbawm amplified this view in his very influential book, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. Here, Hobsbawm distinguishes two types of nationalism and two kinds of analysis of nations and nationalism. The distinction is not only chronological, but also geographical. The first type is that of "mass, civic and democratic political nationalism," shaped on the kind of citizen nation created by the French Revolution: "The original, revolutionary-popular, idea of patriotism was state-based rather than nationalist, since it related to the sovereign people itself, i.e. to the state exercising power in its name. Ethnicity or other elements of historic continuity were irrelevant to 'the nation' in this sense, and language was relevant only or chiefly on pragmatic grounds."<sup>10</sup> This type developed and flourished in Europe, especially in Germany and Italy, from about 1830 to 1870. It was followed<sup>11</sup> by a second type of "ethno-linguistic" nationalism - "...late the ethnic-linguistic criterion for defining a nation actually became dominant"<sup>12</sup> - in which smaller groups asserted their right to separate from large empires and create their own states on the basis of ethnic and/or linguistic ties. "Moreover, it is during this period that we find nationalist movements multiplying in regions where they had been previously unknown, or among peoples hitherto only of interest to folklorists, and even for the first time, nationally, in the non-western world...As already suggested most of these movements now stressed

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<sup>9</sup> The same idea of two kinds of nationalism was asserted in 1969 by a book concerning "the nationalism of the numerous peoples living" in Eastern Europe. See Sugar (1994: 45)

<sup>10</sup> Hobsbawm (1990: 87).

<sup>11</sup> See, especially, chapter 4: "The transformation of nationalism, 1870-1918."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102.

the linguistic and/or ethnic element."<sup>13</sup> This type of nationalism prevailed in Eastern Europe and resurfaced in the 1970s and 1980s after the anti-colonial, civic political nationalism in Asia and Africa had spent its force.

*Preserving the Distinction: Michael Ignatieff*

After 1990, one of the favorite approaches of the nation and nationalism theme, which relates to my subject, was that of "the return of the repressed." Michael Ignatieff, for instance, opens his influential book *Blood and Belonging* (1994) with this sentence: "The repressed has returned and its name is nationalism."<sup>14</sup>

The observation which could be made at this point is that there is something misleading about this almost unanimously accepted perspective. As Michel Billig observed, "The claim that nationalism is returning implies that it has been away."<sup>15</sup> The "civic nationalism" of Western Europe that had developed in the nineteenth century suddenly has disappeared in the twentieth century, at least in his second part. In such comments, the world of settled nations - the Western nations - appears as "the point-zero of nationalism." The wars waged by Western states, the Vietnam or Falkland Wars and the U.S. campaigns in Korea, Panama and Grenada, are not labelled nationalist in contrast to the wars waged by rebel forces in the Eastern area.<sup>16</sup>

But the main reason why I have chosen Ignatieff's book here is that it uses the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism in a very subtle, very instructive way which manages to keep the distinction intact despite the realities in Western Europe today. This book, as Billig observed, expresses "a common-sense view of nationalism which straddles the boundaries between academic and more general thinking." *Blood and Belonging* accompanied a television series, produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, whose rights were sold worldwide. It also was serialized in a British Sunday newspaper, the *Independent on Sunday*.

At the beginning, Ignatieff distinguishes between "ethnic" and "civic" nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is the "hot," surplus and dangerous variety based on the sentiment of "blood loyalty." It is "more authoritarian than democratic." "Civic nationalism," according to Ignatieff, but also to Kohn and Plamenatz, is a political

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 105-6.

<sup>14</sup> Ignatieff (1994: 13).

<sup>15</sup> Billig (1995: 47).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47. This *slide away* of the nationalism of Western nations could be a topic in its own right.



creed defining common citizenship, which emerged from the universalistic philosophies of the Enlightenment.<sup>17</sup> It is, he writes, the nationalism of established European democracies at their best because it is "necessarily democratic." The "civic nationalism," as a conclusion, is synonymous with "Western nationalism" or "good nationalism." The "nationalism" which was repressed, but which has now returned is, of course, the dangerous variety, and the place par excellence of this nationalism is Eastern Europe.

But there is a problem here: to make such rigorous distinctions after 1989 is not that easy. Throughout Europe in the 1990s, the impulses of "ethnic nationalism" - even fascism - have been stirring again in the form of parties which declare a political agenda of national regeneration. And fascism is returning not on the margins of politics, but in the historical heartland of Europe with the French National Front, The Vlaams Bloch and the Italian Social Movement. Ignatieff admits that this ethnic nationalism "is gaining ground in states like Britain, Italy, France, Germany, and Spain with ample, if varying, degrees of democratic experience." He also discusses in his books three "non Eastern-European cases: Germany, Quebec, Northern Ireland."

But there are a few problems with this strategy. First, his mentioning that "the ethnic nationalism" in states like Britain, Italy, France, Germany and Spain "...is a revolt against civic nationalism itself, against the very idea of a nation based on citizenship rather than ethnicity." What comes out of this is that the "ethnic nationalism" would be something unnatural for the West: it is a reaction, a historical accident, a momentarily abnormality, something non-particular, non-organic. This idea is underlined by *the very strategy of the author*: the theoretical part of his book starts with the distinction between ethnic/civic nationalism, following Kohn and Plamenatz. No criticism appears at this point. Afterwards, it seems like Ignatieff had just looked at the world and discovered - with astonishment - that the contemporary world does not read the books of the two authors, and that the area Kohn and Plamenatz have declared to be characterized by civic nationalism is actually haunted by ethnic nationalism. Without adjusting the initial theoretical distinction, Ignatieff inserts these corrections, namely the "exceptions" of Germany, Quebec and Northern Ireland. (Actually, the number of such "exceptions" is much larger.) Despite some nuances, this approach, illustrated by Ignatieff, leaves the old distinction untouched. The rule is the same. The "civic nationalism" is "Western national-

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<sup>17</sup> For a comment on Ignatieff's perspective, see Billig (1995: 47-48).

ism." The "ethnic nationalism" is not "Western nationalism;" here it is just an accident, an exception, a temporal and unfortunate deviation.

*"Eastern nationalism" as an Independent Variable. The "Original Sin" of Eastern European Politics*

The examples could continue. How influential this framework of "Western nationalism" versus "Eastern nationalism" is, how uncritical this perspective is taken over especially when the Balkans are involved,<sup>18</sup> we also can see today from recent influential books. For instance, Robert Bideleux's and Jan Jeffries's *A History of Eastern Europe*, published this year by Routledge, announces this framework right from the beginning. The "Eastern nationalism" here became *an independent variable*. The history of the European East - where not only the Balkans are included, but also Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic states - "was conducive to the emergence of exclusive and illiberal [ethnic] conceptions and definitions of [the nation] rather than more inclusive and liberal ones." This helps us explain, the authors assume, everything: "the terrible [ethnic purification] or [ethnic cleansing] undertaken in parts of the Balkans during and immediately after the two world wars and again in the first half of the 1990s can be seen as the logical culmination of the exclusive and illiberal conceptions and definitions of nationhood."<sup>19</sup> At this moment, the conclusion cannot be anything other than this: "illiberal 'ethnic' nationalism" is responsible for the development of Eastern European politics in this century;" it becomes almost an *independent variable*: "If exclusive and frequently illiberal 'ethnic' nationalism has not been the 'original sin' or the 'root of all evil' in twentieth-century Eastern European politics, then it has come pretty close to that. It has poisoned the wells of liberation and democracy in the region for as long as independent nation-states have existed there. It also distorted and impeded the rule of law, equality of opportunity and the neutral operation of market economies." Put in more conspicuous and unequivocal terms, the distinction between the nationalisms of these two areas is the most important and relevant for them: "This seemingly innocuous divergence has been responsible for the most fundamental and

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<sup>18</sup> In general, the books or articles which deal with nation and nationalism in the Eastern area use almost without criticism Hans Kohn's "classical" distinction. See, for instance, Pilon (1992: 39-40).

<sup>19</sup> Bideleux (1999: 3).

damaging differences between Western and Eastern polities and societies in the twentieth century."<sup>20</sup>

This is not the conclusion of the book; it is its starting point, its framework. The distinction used here by the two authors is a perfect Kohnian one, but the name of Hans Kohn is not invoked. The distinction has surpassed his author and has become autonomous. It is now an ordinary and standard perspective, an uncritical framework and an axiomatic starting point. Who could contest such a "classical" distinction?<sup>21</sup>

### *The Balkans - The Highest Peak of the Essentialization*

The place where the essentialization of East-West relations reaches its highest peak - a genuine climax - is the analyses of the Southeastern area - in one word, the Balkans. A specter is haunting Western culture in this century - the specter of the Balkans. "By the beginning of the twentieth century Europe had added to its repertoire of *Schimpfwörter* a new word, that turned out to be more persistent over time than others with centuries-old tradition,"<sup>22</sup> writes Maria Todorova at the beginning of her excellent book about the *invention* of the Balkans. Every man and woman with

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

<sup>21</sup> A more "benign" strategy for the essentialization of Eastern area could be the use of the phrase "*homo sovieticus*." Frequent present-day discussions about Eastern Europe, which invoke this phrase, seem to be merely reiterations of the old and irrelevant debates of the 1950s and 1960s about the "authoritarian personality" (Th. Adorno) of the German people. Although it is a truism today that the so-called "national character" is a useless concept - at least because nobody knows what it means - many Eastern intellectuals nonchalantly talk about a *regional character*. It is really surprisingly to see Western intellectuals, otherwise very careful with any sociological or anthropological concept, such as "culture," which could induce essentialization nonchalantly using Zinoviev's famous phrase when they talk about the Eastern area. The truth is that the attitudes of the Eastern peoples before and after 1989 were and are so different, even contradictory (i.e., democrat or anti-democrat, secular or religious nationalist, dissident or collaborationist, communist nostalgic or radical anti-communist and religious mind or secular mind), and that the differences between societies before and after 1989 were and are so well marked, that a "totalitarian" phrase like Zinoviev's is valueless for anyone who strives to understand the Eastern societies. Perhaps the "*homo sovieticus*" exists; but because nobody can define it, using this "concept" creates more problems than it resolves. (On the other hand, it is true that the essentialist attitudes, such as Adorno's perspective, currently have been resuscitated in Western cultural space. The most distinguished case is David J. Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, published in 1996. Here, the older "authoritarian personality" was replaced by the "eliminationist mindset" of common Germans.)

<sup>22</sup> Todorova (1997: 3).

an average education knows that the Balkans is the powder keg of Europe;<sup>23</sup> everybody knows that the Balkans is a very dangerous region. Furthermore, "Balkanization" not only had come to denote "the parcelization of large and viable political units," but also had become "a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian."

Everybody knows these things. And they know them so well that almost nobody needs arguments. In her significant book *History of the Balkans*, Barbara Jelavich, for instance, deplored the lack of attention from which this area "benefited": "Although the Balkan peninsula has played a major role in history, the area has been subject to less intensive study than any other European region."<sup>24</sup> The ignorance or the lack of attention given to the region can also be proved otherwise. The important readers on nation and nationalism ignore almost systematically the texts of Balkan authors and the texts concerning these questions in Eastern Europe.

From the above-listed considerations and those that will follow, I would not like anyone to understand that the discourse describing the relationship of Eastern Europe in general, and the Balkans in particular, with a putative West is a structural variant of *orientalism*. Not at all. As Todorova points out in her book, the answer to "easternization" or "balkanisation" cannot be *occidentalism*. Or, as Michael Herzfeld warned: "Essentialism can become a decontextualized device for, ironically, essentializing those against whom one claims to defend agency and subjectivity."<sup>25</sup> The strategy of *occidentalization* would be only a new essentialization, "an essentialization of the West as the hegemonic pair" in the East/West dichotomy. But this is false for two reasons. First, the Western discourse is not at all homogenous; and if I write here about the distinction between Eastern and Western nationalism is not because there is a kind of *unique* discourse, but because, unfortunately, its spread and use are strong enough to generate such kinds of essentializations. And second, what I have called the essentialization of the East is not just a Western characteristic. Especially for the Balkans, self-essentialization is a local phenomenon, almost not investigated today, and which I will address later.

The discussion about the "essentialization" of the Balkans probably should begin with the most benign strategy that illustrates it - the use of the phrase "Balkan

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<sup>23</sup> Very few serious historians, however, would claim that Sarajevo was the cause of World War I.

<sup>24</sup> Jelavich (1983: IX).

<sup>25</sup> Herzfeld (1998: 190).

war."<sup>26</sup> The 1993 Bosnian war was called this, although it was nothing like that; the Kosovo war is again called a "Balkan war," although no other Balkan state except Yugoslavia is involved in it. In this recent case, too, the question put by Todorova in 1997 is perfect valid: "Why does the war need to be Balkan? The Spanish civil war was Spanish, not Iberian, or Southwest European; the Greek civil war was never Balkan; the problem of Northern Ireland is fittingly localized - it is called neither Irish, nor British, nor even English, which it precisely is."<sup>27</sup>

This attentive specification suggests a comparison taken from the medical field: for a healthy organism - the Occident - the sick part must very well specified, well localized. It is an abnormality, an accident, something unnatural that passes. For an unhealthy organism - the Balkans - the position of a sick spot is almost irrelevant. For it can be anywhere. It is only the sign of a deeper disease, of an essentially sick organism. Today it is, accidentally, in one spot, tomorrow in an other, after tomorrow in a different one. For such an organism, the signs of the sickness - not their absence - are the *normality*.

From a historical perspective, the starting point of the "invention of the Balkans" could be the beginning of the century. The "civilized world," was first seriously perturbed by the Balkans at the time of the Balkan wars (1912-1913).<sup>28</sup> The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, founded in 1910, established an international commission "to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan Wars." The report of the commission, which consisted of well-known public figures from France, the United States, Great Britain, Russia and Germany, was published in 1914. The results and the conclusions were these: "At the end, the commission asked: 'What that is the duty of the civilized world in the Balkans?'" And the report concluded: to maintain peace. Because "The real culprits are those who by interest or inclination, declaring that war is inevitable, end by making it so, asserting that they are powerless to prevent it." Todorova comments that at the time the report was written it seemed that with little effort *La Belle Epoque* would endure forever. From this point of view, it is interesting to consider what the English anthropologist Mary Edith Durham wrote about her observations of the Balkan wars: "The war was over. All through I used to say to myself: 'War is so obscene, so degrading, so devoid of one redeeming spark, that it is quite impossible there can ever be a war

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<sup>26</sup> Another strategy could be the use of the idiom "Balkan mentality." Against such an approach, see Kitromilides (1996: 187).

<sup>27</sup> Todorova (1997: 186).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 3-5.

in West Europe.' This was the one thing that consoled me in the whole bestial experience..."<sup>29</sup> But, unfortunately, she was consoled only for one year since both the original report and Durham's book were written in 1913, only a year before the outbreak of World War I.

So after eighty years, during the Bosnia war in 1993, "instead of launching a fact-finding mission, the Carnegie Endowment was satisfied with reprinting the 1913 report, preceding its title with the gratuitous caption "The Other Balkan Wars." Also added was an introduction by George Kennan, ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1952 and to Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1963. This introduction was entitled "The Balkan Crises: 1913-1993." Confirming the maxim *historiae est magistra vitae*, Kennan's introduction "analyzed analogies with the past and the lessons of those analogies." He stressed that the strongest motivating factor in the Balkan wars "was not religion but aggressive nationalism. But that nationalism, as it manifested itself on the field of battle, drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably, from a distant tribal past...And so it remains today."

Here it is a perfect essentialized perspective: a so-called "organic" growth of violence in Eastern Europe. As Todorova observed, Kennan had essentialized the Balkans, virtually transforming Herder's Balkan *Volksgeist* into Kaplan's *Balkan ghosts*.

*Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* is the title of a famous book published by American writer Robert Kaplan in 1993. The book has an important place in this matter. Neither more nor less, Kaplan moves the roots of fascism to the Balkans: "Nazism, for instance, can claim Balkan origins. Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously." Within such a perspective, one can say that the process of the positive essentialization of the West and the negative essentialization of the East is taken to the limit. The roots of evil are located in the Balkans. Even nazism was born there.

And, of course, the examples could continue. Even the most prominent and representative authors who have written about the Balkans uncritically perpetuate an essentialist perspective. In his excellent volume *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe*, Traian Stoianovich, for instance, uses without any precautions the distinction of Plamenatz.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, some authors use the concept "ethnic nationalism" when they write about the Eastern area or the Balkans without any specification or

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<sup>29</sup> Apud. *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Stoianovich (1994: 296).

even without any adequate definition of the term. The suggested ideas are that nationalism in this area *is* "ethnic nationalism," that "ethnic nationalism" belongs to the Balkan area, and that "ethnic nationalism" is something natural and fatally connected with it. But, because it is a term with negative connotations ("ethnic nationalism" *is* bad nationalism), this strategy becomes a "soft" strategy of the "satanization" of the area.<sup>31</sup> Every ethnic and national conflict now becomes easy to explain since the "cause" is "ethnic nationalism." In many cases, the title of the books or articles dealing with this subject offer the "solution."<sup>32</sup>

### *Self-essentialization of the Balkans*

I previously stated that this so-called essentialization of the Balkan area is not only a Western story, but also an Eastern perception. One of the main routes of the essentialization of the West/East relationship stresses religious distinctions.<sup>33</sup> Maybe one of the most influential authors who illustrates this tendency is the Greek philosopher and theologian Christos Yannaras<sup>34</sup> who tries to develop in his books a systematic comparison of two *ways of life*, the Western and Eastern Orthodox mentalities which are outlined within the frames of a theological scope.<sup>35</sup> But, as I have mentioned earlier, my interest here is not in discussing East/West as *religious* areas. I am interested in discussions about nationalism in these areas, as far as the distinctions between them can and could induce essentialism. From this point of view, I would suggest that self-essentialization is a normal result of Balkan historiography, a result of Balkan national historiography. The main element that generates and furnishes this primordialist and essentialist perspective is related to the approach of

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<sup>31</sup> Again, the point here is *not* that there are not actual differences between Eastern and Western areas, but that the terms which are used to characterize one of these areas are not at least "innocent" from a moral point of view.

<sup>32</sup> See Danforth 1995 and Denitch 1994.

<sup>33</sup> There are, without a doubt, differences between these two religious areas or between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The problem is the way in *which* we talk about these differences. (See the first part of this paper.)

<sup>34</sup> Ορθοδοξία και Δύση. Η Θεολογία στην Ελλάδα σήμερα (Orthodoxy and the West. Theology in Greece Today), Athens 1972; Ορθοδοξία και Δύση στη νεότερη Ελλάδα (Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece), Athens, Εκδοσεις Δομος, 1992.

<sup>35</sup> The most representative *western* author from this standpoint is certainly Peter Sherrard. See Sherrard (1995:VII). In the 1980s, the most prestigious writer who articulated the "divide between Catholic Central Europe and the Orthodox Balkans" was Jaques Rupnik in his book *The Other Europe*, 1988. After 1990, the most famous and discussed author was Samuel Huntington and his controversial work *The Clash of Civilizations*, 1996.

the relation *between nationalism and Orthodox religion*, the dominant religious doctrine of Eastern Europe. The essentialism is induced and perpetuated by the assertion that nationalism and Orthodoxy *were* and *are* ineluctably connected.

The best analysis of self-essentialization of the Balkan area - without naming the process in this way - was made by Paschalis Kitromilides in one of the most seminal articles ever published about nations and nationalism in the Balkans. The main problem here is this: "A whole tradition of Balkan national historiography nevertheless is premised on the assumption that Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox Church played a major role in nation-building by preserving collective identity under the Ottomans and by preparing the advent of independence."<sup>36</sup> What results from this perspective is "the view of Orthodoxy as the champion of nationalism." As Kitromilides put it: "According to the assumption, the Orthodox Church played a major role in preserving and cultivating the ethnic identity of the nations of south-eastern Europe under Ottoman rule and in guiding their national 'awakening.' An explicit claim of this assumption is the identification of Orthodoxy with nationality, while an unstated implication points to recognition of the Orthodox Church as a vanguard of nationalism."<sup>37</sup> This hidden hypothesis which can be detected in too many more or less official books and studies about Balkan history is, I would say, the main route of the self-essentialization of the Balkan area.<sup>38</sup>

### *Eastern and Western Nationalism Revisited*

Even though not complete, the first part of my presentation suggests a routinized and well-ingrained way of thinking, speaking and writing about these two areas as far as the relationship between Eastern and Western nationalism is concerned. In the second part of my paper I will comment on the pictures sketched above - the first one regarding the geographical distinction of Western versus Eastern nationalism, the second one regarding the distinction between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism, and finally, the third one regarding the phenomenon which I call the self-essentialization of the Balkans.

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<sup>36</sup> Kitromilides (1990: 52).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 24-25.

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps one of the most tenacious western authors who sustains this fatal and essentialist connection between Orthodox religion and nationalism is the French geopolitician François Thual. See Thual (1994: 125).



*Against the Distinction Western versus Eastern Nationalism. Methodological Essentialism*

Though I did not intend to contest any validity of the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, I chiefly wanted to warn against the danger of using it uncritically and of equalizing it with the distinction between Western and Eastern nationalism - namely the danger of producing ideology rather than knowledge, of essentializing the differences between West and East in general, and between the West and the Balkans in particular. The perspectives of Kohn, Plamenatz, Hobsbawm and Ignatieff carry such a risk.

In its *geographic* alternative - and this is the most problematic use of it - the Western/Eastern nationalism distinction suggests a certain historic perspective which is at least suspicious. As an example, it is clear that liberalism is a natural Western invention brought to the East by Eastern intellectuals returning from their studies in Western capitals. But what about racism? Almost no one has written anything about this because Ernst Moritz Arndt, Joseph Arthur Gobineau and Neville Chamberlain were German, French and British respectively, and they were not singular in nineteenth-century Europe. About this Europe, Gerard Delanty wrote in his book: "It was race, not language and religion, that unified Europe in the nineteenth century."<sup>39</sup> The logic of this distinction suggests that Eastern intellectuals have been liberals because they have learned the doctrine in the West, but that they have been racists because they were born in the East, namely in an area with a certain history and a certain social structure. Of course, I am not asserting that the easterners became racists because they have been to the West, but it is certain that they have learned how to argue their own idiosyncrasies in a more modernistic and European way.

The main problem here is this: If we accept that civic nationalism was born as a consequence of certain natural and normal developments in Western Europe, such as secularization, the separation of state powers, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, how then can we explain that the ideologies of racism, fascism and nazism were born in the West? What is the relationship of these phenomena with "civic nationalism?" When you read books like those discussed here, you get the impression that Hitler was born in Bulgaria or Serbia, not in a country which could be considered exactly the opposite of the Balkans. The authors quoted above have suggested an answer: the abnormal character of this phenomena. But there is something misleading about this so-called explanation; and connected to this prob-

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<sup>39</sup> Delanty (1995).

lem, another appears - the problem of the *methodological perspective* with which we analyze nationalism. The methodological perspective is generated by and itself generates *essentialism*.

Let me explain myself. As historian Gordon Brook-Shepherd writes about the events of April 14, 1938, "Where there was not enthusiasm for Hitler, there was passivity over his presence." He continues: "Hitler had entered the capital standing upright in his open car, the right hand locked stiffly in the Nazi salute...The spectacle of those 250,000 citizens of that 'youngest bulwark' cheering and waving below has troubled the Austrian conscience ever since."<sup>40</sup> What is the significance of this event in the history of Austria? It was important, but how important and significant was it for the previous and future events? How important was it, for instance, in understanding the rising of Jörg Haider or the evolution of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)?

Here we come across the methodological perspective problem, the problem of the *methodological essentialization*. It is one thing to explain the appeal of current developments in Austria to sociology and another to invoke obsessively the past or the "historical handbook." And this is a general problem in the field of nation and nationalism. In the present day when manifestations of "civic nationalism" are analyzed in the West - for instance, as parties which run in elections under the labels of the "National Front" in France, Britain and Wallonia, the "Progress Party" in Denmark and Norway, the "Republicans" and "German's People's Union" in Germany, the "Center Party" in the Netherlands, the "Freedom Party" in Austria, or regional self-identifications, such as the 'Flemish Block' in Flanders and the "Northern League" in Italy - a wide range of hypotheses, theories and perspectives is used along with sophisticated sociological and statistical methodologies. The past is there, but it is not decisive or crucial or on any account predestined. For instance, in the chapters dealing with "the radical right" in Germany and Austria in the remarkable book *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, you do not find the name of Hitler quoted!<sup>41</sup> And I do not want to imply that this is a bad thing; not at all. What I want to suggest is that the authors did not consider that *the past* as the most

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<sup>40</sup> Brook-Shepherd (1997: 328).

<sup>41</sup> See Kitschelt 1997: 159-240. From a sociological perspective, the book is an achievement. Sophisticated tables, complicated statistical analyses and ingenious correlations are used to depict the phenomena which are researched.

important explanatory factor.<sup>42</sup> The same strategy has been chosen by the editors of more recent books, such as *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies* which deal with the same subject. The past is not considered "an important question" or a valid explanatory factor.<sup>43</sup>

But such a sociological perspective seems to be a receipt only for the Western area. In comparison, the latest book that analyzes the ethnic and national problems in Yugoslavia, I would say, uses a normal methodology for this area in accordance with our own perceptions and prejudices. The title says everything: *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (1999). Everything is clear; everything is easy to explain because isn't it *historia est magistra vitae*?<sup>44</sup> When you finish the book, you ask yourself how can someone blame the Serbs for their mistakes if their history was so fatal, so predestined and so inevitable.

Before reading this book, one already knows that Slobodan Milosevic is a profoundly negative character, a national-communist politician harmful to Serbia, who is outrun by history and unable to find his place in today's Europe - exactly what Vuk Draskovic and the opposition used to say about him during the Belgrade anti-government manifestations. After reading such a book, you can no longer be sure who is the negative character - President Milosevic or the history itself. The first one seems to be a fatal product of the Turks victory in Kosovo in the 1389 battle. This logic suggests that history explains the Milosevic of today, not that Milosevic himself explains a good deal of the current history. And if this logic is taken a step further, then at the end of the conflict on the accusation bench in a possible trial should sit not Slobodan Milosevic, but the 500-year-old history of the Balkans, which admittedly would make the eventful trial very difficult.

This phenomenon that I call *methodological essentialism* is unfortunately widespread in books, magazines and newspaper articles. In essence, what is at stake is the specific character of the perpetrated violence. Maria Todorova has summarized this double-standard attitude:

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<sup>42</sup> Kitschelt (1997: 45). This tendency is not new. For instance, *New Nationalisms of the Developed West. Toward Explanation* (edited by E.A. Tiryakian and R. Rogowski), published in 1985, deals with "new nationalisms" in the West and is characterized by the same unhistorical perspective.

<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, Betz (1998: 2) and the last chapter of the book "Conclusion: The Neo-Populist Agenda." *Ibid.* pp. 249-261.

<sup>44</sup> See Anzulovic (1999: 23, 31, 33, 38, 45, 51).

*With all the professed and sincerely felt aversion against fascism or nazism, against the atrocities of World War II, especially the Holocaust, these are seen as extreme aberrations and not typical consequences of the (otherwise) rational, liberal and predictable polity of the West. On the other hand, many books about the present Yugoslav atrocities, and in general Balkan atrocities, assert or at least suggest that these are the expected natural outcomes of a warrior ethos, a tribal past, an ancestral capacity to hate, deeply ingrained in the psyche of Balkan populations.<sup>45</sup>*

*Civic versus Ethnic Nationalism? "Banal nationalism" or Banal Ethnic Nationalism?*

I mentioned before that the problem is not the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism as such; the problem is its ideological potential, its capacity of essentialization when this distinction is used *geographically*. There are many authors who contest the abusive and dangerous geographical use of this dichotomy, but continue to preserve the distinction ethnic and civic nationalism intact. One of them is Norman Davies.<sup>46</sup> Similar positions are presented by Gerasimos Augustinos in his useful work *The National Idea in Eastern Europe. The Politics of Ethnic and Civic Community*.<sup>47</sup>

But it is more than this. The recent commentaries of Clifford Geertz are pertinent and useful in suggesting the problems that appear even when distinction between civic versus ethnic nationalism and "patriotism" versus "nationalism"<sup>48</sup> is

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<sup>45</sup> Todorova (1997: 137).

<sup>46</sup> Davies (1997: 812-823).

<sup>47</sup> Augustinos: (1996: xlviii-xlix). If we accept and use the distinction civic nationalism/ethnic nationalism in a non-geographical sense, it is not difficult to prove that nationalism in the East was not so *ethnic* as Kohn, Plamenatz or Hobsbawm asserted, and, on the other hand that the nationalism in the Western area was not so *civic* as the same authors suggested. There are many possibilities to prove this: one of them, according to Brubaker (1992), is to examine the bounds of citizenship in the Eastern nations. It is certain, for example, that after 1990 all the Constitutions of the Eastern states did not suggest an "ethnic" conception of nation. What Gheorghita Geana said about two Romanian intellectuals of the interwar period is adequate for many Eastern intellectuals in the nineteenth century or before and after World War II: "In the works of the two authors, however, the affective impulse appeared mainly as a faithful attachment to the advancement of their fatherland...At the same time, both of the scholars did not cease to promote a large humanism. They felt locally and thought globally" Geana (1999: 37).

<sup>48</sup> About the inconsistency of the distinction between "nationalism" and "patriotism," see Billig (1995).

used in a non-geographical sense. The reality is more complex than such a dichotomy could indicate. Therefore, the main risk is to impose a Manichaean and oversimplified picture which "sets jealous provincialism and sanguineous xenophobia on the one side against honest pride and relaxed self-confidence on the other."<sup>49</sup>

Actually, as Geertz implied, we cannot distinguish quite so readily between the civic and ethnic nationalism that many political scientists or historians - among whom the most influential were discussed above - use to characterize the development of the nations in Europe. For even the most "civic" and "political" nationalism on closer inspection, as Anthony Smith noted, often turns out "to be also 'ethnic' and 'linguistic;' this is certainly the case, for instance, with the appeals to '*nos ancêtres Gaulois*,' and a single French people, and the suppression of regional languages in favor of Parisian French...Sometimes these civic and ethnic elements are aligned as has occurred in Czechoslovakia, Scotland and Switzerland; at other times they come into conflict, as they did in the Dreyfus Affair in France, or as they do in India and Israel today. It is impossible to trace a clear overall pattern of historical development with these concepts, even in Western Europe."<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, to suggest that "civic nationalism" is "good" nationalism and "ethnic nationalism" is "bad" nationalism would be to overlook the problems associated with "civic nationalism." Ernest Renan, civic nationalist par excellence, was not so "civic" because, for example, in 1882 he remarked that the nation is "*un plébiscite de tous les jours*," but yet not a plebiscite for the Algerians.<sup>51</sup>

As Anthony Smith observed, the most important point is that "the common view fails to grasp the nature of civic nationalism." From the standpoint of the affected minorities, "this kind of nationalism is not as tolerant as its self-images suggest. In fact, it can be every bit as severe and uncompromising as ethnic nationalism. As the price for receiving citizenship and its benefits, civic nationalism often demands the surrender of ethnic community and individuality and the privatization and marginalization of ethnic culture and the religion of minorities within the borders of the nation-state. That was how black elites and Jews were treated by French civic nationalism: their cultures and heritages were depreciated, their tradi-

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<sup>49</sup> Geertz (1998: 101-102).

<sup>50</sup> Smith (1998: 126-127).

<sup>51</sup> "L'existence d'une nation est (pardonnez-moi cette métaphore) un plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie." (*Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?*, conférence fait en Sorbonne en 1882). For a critic of Renan's standpoint, see Lacoste 1997.

tional religions were despised and privatized or suppressed and their ethnicity was stripped away from them. To become citizens of France, they were compelled to become black or Jewish Frenchmen."<sup>52</sup> In fact, the solution to this artificial dilemma is not a dichotomy - civic *versus* ethnic nationalism - because modern nations were and are "*simultaneously and necessarily civic and ethnic*."<sup>53</sup>

In his seminal book *Banal Nationalism*, Michel Billig proposes the term "banal nationalism" - different from the "hot nationalism" - in order to suggest and indicate that even in nation-states where civic ideals are well established, as in Western countries, there is also an "every day nationalism," a nationalism of the "unwaved flags," a soft nationalism - in Billig's words, a "banal nationalism."<sup>54</sup> In these countries, Billig also argues that national sentiments are widely diffused, and the assumptions of nationalism are deeply entrenched. The "national project" is so deeply ingrained and "inhabited" in the West that they became normal, "banal," something nobody talks about. Furthermore, there is a strong institutionalized nationalism in the Western countries that systematically is ignored by articles or books which deal with nation and nationalism. This, at least, is Billig's most significant conclusion.

In the context of the controversy about the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, the question as to which nationalism became "routinized" in the Western countries can be raised. Billig discusses "banal nationalism" without specifications. In reality, as Billig suggests in his book, it is not difficult to prove that this "banal nationalism" is not a de-ethnicized form of nationalism or a civic or "constitutional nationalism" (to use the naive formulas of Juergen Habermas). This nationalism very well-entrenched and routinized in Western societies and political, juridical, cultural and social institutions is in truth an *ethnic nationalism*. The *institutional network* of Western societies is not only a *civic* project, but also, and perhaps preponderantly, an *ethnic* project. This is the reason that it seems to me more adequate to speak of *banal ethnic nationalism* rather than "banal nationalism."

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<sup>52</sup> Smith (1995: 186).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> In Western Europe nationalism has never "been away," argued Billig; only the "hot nationalism" was replaced by the "banal nationalism." This is the reason why the "national project" was, and is, very enduring, very resistant and very difficult to surpass. On the other hand, "banal nationalism" could easily be turned into "hot nationalism" since there are no qualitative differences between them.

*Nationalism and Religion in Eastern Europe Re-examined*

As I have mentioned before, as far as the self-essentialization of the Balkan area is concerned, a first assumption that should be re-examined is "the view of Orthodoxy as the champion of nationalism." Orthodoxy as an inherent nationalist religion is an essentialist presupposition as well as the political thesis of present-day nationalists. But it is false. The assumption of the "Orthodox Church as a vanguard of nationalism" it is not very old; actually, it is as old as the nation-state. Paschalis Kitromilides, from this perspective a very deconstructivist author,<sup>55</sup> was right in his claim that the intellectual origins of this assumption "are easily traceable to the second half of the nineteenth century."<sup>56</sup> The falsification here is the confusion between *religious and national identities*. The historical role of the Orthodox Church was indisputable in this area. This is obvious. This Church preserved "collective identities" under Ottoman rule "by institutionalizing and safeguarding the distinction of the Christian subjects from their Muslim rulers." But, as Kitromilides pointed out: "The distinction was religious, not national, in content."<sup>57</sup> The perspective has to be changed, or, at least, shaded: "One of the greatest anachronisms of Balkan, and for that matter European, historiography has been the injection of national content into that traditional religious distinction." It was the eventual abandonment of the ecumenicism of Orthodoxy<sup>58</sup> and the "nationalization" of the churches - a series of processes homologous to the Western ones - that "nurtured the assumption concerning the affinity between Orthodoxy and nationality"<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See also Kitromilides 1998.

<sup>56</sup> Kitromilides (1990: 25).

<sup>57</sup> Kitromilides (1990: 52); also Kitromilides (1992).

<sup>58</sup> For this matter, see Kitromilides (1990: 53-59); also Kitromilides (1992), (1996).

<sup>59</sup> As I mentioned before, Kitromilide's article offers an original and important perspective on the relationships between religion and nationalism in Eastern Europe. But, of course, he did not aim to exhaust the entire problematic relationship between nationalism and the Orthodox Church, which is too complex to be analyzed using just one paradigm or theory. This is the reason why we need complementary perspectives and approaches. There are two fundamental questions concerning nationalism and religion in the Balkans for which a *political* theory of nationalism whose analysis focuses on the "state power" and the role of the modern state in the process of "national definition" (in imposing and perpetuating the national project, respectively) cannot offer a satisfying answer. The first one is this: such an approach cannot explain *the nationalism before the state*, respective of the nationalism of the nationalists or leaders of nationalist movement who were to "create" and impose the nation-state project; and second: by focusing the analyses only on the "official" reaction of the Orthodox Church it would be impossible to catch and explain the attitude of many clerics,

### *Final Remarks*

I would like to finish this paper with an idea I have already suggested. In the dialogue between the East and the West, so necessary today, but also rendered more difficult by the powerful religious and nationalist resurrections, not only the answers should bother us, but also, indeed, our *questions*, our starting points, our *apriorisms* and especially our "certainties." Taken separately, the statistics or the accusations will not tell us a great deal. They always can be answered with other statistics or counter-accusations. If one dispenses accusations of genocide in Bosnia, where the reported casualty figures vary anywhere between 25,000 and 250,000, then how would somebody designate the more than three million dead Vietnamese (1,000 noncombatants per week killed or seriously injured)? While it is true, as some journalists have suggested, that only in the Balkans they were killing each other over something that happened 500 years ago, it is also true that in Western Europe, with a longer span of civilized memory, they were killing over something that happened 2,000 years ago.<sup>60</sup> It is true that there were many wars and intolerant times in the Balkans, but there were also long periods of peace and tolerance when the Occident was clearly intolerant (for example, the Jews who were expelled from the Western states have taken shelter here).<sup>61</sup>

Which sequence will be chosen as representative? Alone, the figures do not tell us much; put into theories, perspectives and points of view that were previously constructed, they easily turn into ideologies. The figures very often do not serve any other purpose than to rationalize previous perspectives. *These* previous perspectives, these conceptions, must be scrutinized from time to time since they are the roots of our essentializations.

If this process will not take place, if the essentializations coming from the West or from the East will not be deconstructed, the risk of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" in the West/East dialogue will be a great one. The West will see the East, and the Balkans in particular, as something essentially different, and the retort will be an essentialism with a different vector. No one will win out of this, except intolerance, fundamentalism and exclusivism.

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priests or monks who vigorously sustained or took part in the national movement, in spite of the active opposition of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

<sup>60</sup> Todorova (1997: 6-7).

<sup>61</sup> As Todorova makes clear: "Whether the Balkans are non-European or not is mostly a matter of academic and political debate, but they certainly have no monopoly over barbarity." Todorova (1997: 7).



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