



JURNALOS JASRI

BALKANS, PENINSULA OF CRISIS *-FAILURE OF DIPLOMATIC MANAGEMENT*

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Abstract

The main theses we are going to analyze in my own research is related with Balkan Political History on the broad context of international developments from 1500 until the beginning of WWI. The main hypotheses is that the geography and the powers, including Ottoman, Habsburgs and later on all European Powers of the Concert of Europe (1815) were not able to prevent and later on to manage the Eastern Crisis and the rise of Balkan nationalism from the Balkan Wars and even WWI. My efforts we focus on Powers rivalries at the end of XIX Century instead of cooperation and crisis resolution, arguing that Nineteenth Century diplomacy was top-down, conspiracy, aristocratic and therefore did not even understand the three main revolutionary movements: nationalism, liberalism and imperial rivalries. As consequences the Concert of Europe concluded as the funeral producing contradictory and unrealistic solution for the Balkans. The most abrasive consequence was the economic slowdown of the now called countries of the Western Balkans that cannot politically and economically successfully integrate into European Union.

Keywords: Ballkans, Peninsula of Crisis, Diplomactic, Political, failure, Management, Western, Europa.

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Introduction

Geography and ethnic geography of the Balkans to 1500

The Balkans political history starts by understanding its ethnic groups and their history without knowing the influence of the region's geography.

The geographic extent of the "Balkan" region is a matter of controversy. Many scholars, have included only the Communist states and linked them with Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany, while avoiding Turkey and Greece and the Ottoman era as well.

Some other historians exclude Hungary, Croatia and other Habsburg lands, considering them as "central" European characters, contrary to Balkan themes. But the presence of contradictory themes is itself characteristically Balkan.

In historical concept, the Balkan area includes Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania and Hungary. Most of this area was under Ottoman rule. The rest under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Our model will not deal with all of the Ottoman Empire, extended into Asia and Africa, or other former Habsburg lands such as Czechoslovakia and parts of Poland.

1.1. Physical geography

Balkan geography includes three features: the area's situation as a peninsula, its mountains, and its rivers. The influence of geography on Balkan history is quite a lot.

Three features:

1. Peninsula situation
2. Mountains
3. Rivers

The Balkan region is a triangular peninsula with a wide northern border, narrowing to a tip as it extends to the south. The Black, the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Seas surround it. The Seas have served as both barriers and entry points. The Balkan area has not been physically isolated from nearby regions.

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In the northeast, Romania is exposed to the steppe regions of the Ukraine an easy invasion route from prehistoric times to the present.

In the northwest, the valley of the Danube and the flat Hungarian plain are easy points of entry.

Most of the ethnic groups in the region entered by one of these paths.

Surrounded on three sides by water, the peninsula is not cut off from neighboring regions to the east, west or south.

To the east, the narrow straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are a natural pathway between the Balkans and Anatolia and Asia beyond.

To the west, the Italian peninsula is only forty miles away across the Adriatic from Albania and influence from that direction has been another constant.

To the South, the Aegean and Mediterranean islands are stepping stones to the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt.

The Balkan region has been a crossroads for traffic passing to and from all these destinations. The mountains divide the region. They are internal physical characteristic. The region takes its name from the "Balkan" mountain range in Bulgaria (in a Turkish word meaning "a chain of wooded mountains"). On a larger scale, a long continuous chain of mountains crosses the region in the form of a reversed letter S.

From the Carpathians South Mountains located to the Balkan extends to the East into Anatolian Turkey. On the west coast, the Dinaric Alps follows the coast south through Dalmatia and Albania, crosses Greece and continues into the sea in the form of various islands.

1.2. Geographical effects

Mountains

The first effect of these mountains is to divide the region into small units within which distinct ethnic groups have been able to sustain themselves. This area, a little smaller in size than France and Germany or the states of Texas and Oklahoma, is home to more than dozen prominent ethnic groups.



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Second, the mountains have been physical obstacles, for better at regional combination, whether political, economic or cultural. The ethnic groups have tended toward distinct national cultures, local economies and political autonomy.

Third, the mountains have subdivided every district into vertical ecological zones, from more valuable lowland farming areas to less valuable wooded or rocky uplands. This variety of ecological system supports various cultures in traders, farmers, fisheries and different inherited or home-made productions.

The higher up the zone are the less productive the land. So the upper regions of the mountains act as places of exile and refuge for defeated ethnic groups expelled from more desirable coast and valley lands.

Generally the mountain features of the Balkans have contributed to the continued fragmentation of human groups in the area.

The rivers of the region are short and some of them seasoned. Their influence is usually local, with one exception. The small rivers of the area typically rise in coastal mountains and drop into the nearest sea after a short course. They are too small to carry seasoned water. Instead they run vertically that block travel along the coasts. The great exception is the Danube. It enters from the northwest, passes through the Hungarian plain, through the south Slavic states and exits through Romania into the Black Sea on the east. Despite its size, the Danube also fails to be a source of regional integration. Several factors prevent easy use of the Danube for regular communication and trade. These are as follows: low water in the summer, marshes obstructing access to the river bank, the narrow passage of the Iron Gates between Serbia and Romania (fully opened to shipping by modern engineering techniques only in 1896), and the tendency of the Black Sea delta to silt up. Instead, the Danube acts to introduce outside influences.

The western reaches of the river point to the German world; the eastern reaches lead to a dead end in the Black Sea, and leave travel at the mercy of Russia and Turkey. The Danube serves the needs of powerful external forces far more than it helps the internal needs of the Balkan peoples. Like the mountains, the Balkan rivers have done little to foster unity in the area.

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1.3. Ethnic geography

The Balkans Peninsula has been inhabited since prehistoric times. But today's ethnic groups descend from Indo-European migrants or ethnic groups that arrived in historical times. The pre-Indo-European inhabitants left little behind except the archeological sites and a few place names. Knowledge of the area's national and ethnic groups is fundamental to Balkan history. They are the periodic table of elements. This means recognizing a dozen major ethnic groups, where they live, now and in the past, and how their religions, languages and cultures compare and inter-connect.

Placing these ethnic groups on the map in the order in which they came to the region is a simple way to introduce them. It has the chronological character in order to help explain how some later arrivals affected their neighbors. The early history of some groups is controversial. The question of who has lived where, when and for how long is critical for several modern political and territorial disputes.

1.4 The Albanians

The Albanians, or more accurately their ancestors the Illyrians, "appeared" in the western Balkans around 1200 Before Christian Era.² Around 1200 BC the archaeological record shows a "discontinuity," a significant break in material culture during a short period of time. Objects left in graves and the structure of grave sites changed.³ Nineteenth century writers explained this by describing supposed waves of Indo-European invaders: men, women and children travelling in

² E. Qabej, Buletini i Universitetit Shtetrorë Tiranës, Seria e Shkencave Shoqërore, Nr. 2. F. 56)

³ A. Zheliasova, Albania and Albanian Identity, IMIR, Sofia, 2000 page 9



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wagons out of the steppes, driving their forces and pushing out the existing population. Modern scholars argue for scenarios with less drama. Alterations in burials can mean a lot of change in population. They can also mean that an existing population adopted some new customs with the arrival of large numbers of new people. The trade and culture of new comers effected the Balkan prehistory. In 1200 BC, people in the Western Balkans took up the cultural practices that we call "Illyrian". Some new people probably entered the area and some of the old population probably remained.⁴

After 1200 BC, classical Greek records describe the Illyrians as a non-Greek people to the north and west. The Illyrians missed "historic" or written records of their own. So the scholars use linguistic and archaeological evidence to trace their story. Based on linguistic and archaeological evidence the scholars are of the view that the Illyrians inhabited the region which today makes up Albania and the former Yugoslavia. Their descendants have remained in the mountains of present-day Albania continuously since 1200 BC. Today's Albanians are in fact linked to the Illyrians. In the rest of former Illyria, other peoples took their place.⁵

Albanian is an Indo-European language, but one without relatives. It is believed to be the only surviving language descended from ancient Illyrian. Modern Albanian is obviously very different from the language of its neighbors, but they have few written documents in the language before the year 1555 of the Christian era. The linguistic evidence here relies on fields like "onomastics", the study of place names and the names for everyday objects. Archaeology is the second source for Albanian prehistory. Scholars have seen a continuous evolution of burial goods, ornamentation on costumes, and cultural practices from material remains since 1200 BC up to the historic the Middle Ages. Based on these Archaeology is the second source and on the lack of recorded migration to the area by other groups, scholars believe the Illyrians became the modern Albanians.⁶

⁴ A.Zheliaskova, Albania and Albanian Identity, IMIR, Sofia, 2000 page 13)

⁵ A. Stipcevic, "Cdotregim per Ballkaninfillon me iliret", Bota e Re, Prishtine, 1985.

⁶ M. Shufllaj, SerbetdheShqiptaret, Prishtine, fq. 29.



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The Albanians today number about 6.5 millions. Three and a half million live within Albania, another 2 million in the Kosovo newly established state, about 800 thousands lives in the new state known as the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." And the rest in Preshevo Valley, Montenegro, Greece and in scattered areas. The religion of Albanians is mixed up. Most Albanians have been Muslim since the time of the Ottoman conquest. But there are Eastern Orthodox and smaller Catholic minorities as well. Kosovo is part of Albanian identity.

Kosovo was a competing historical claim to Balkan lands. Kosovo is a region of great cultural significance for Albanian and some Serbs evidences from medieval events. Kosovo has a majority Albanian population today, and the Illyrian evidence says that proto-Albanians were there long before the Serbs. In the case of Kosovo, scholarship is mixed with nationalist politics: that is why controversy accompanies history here.

1.5 The Greeks

Historically the Greeks areas ancient as the Albanians in their Balkan ties. The 19th century model for Greek entry to the area involved three "waves" of invaders overwhelming the pre-Indo-European inhabitants.⁷ Each wave was associated with historic sites and a later dialect group -- Achaeans, Ionians and Dorians. The current view is simpler. Scholars see a single immigration with the dialects evolving later. The "invasion" consisted of individuals, families and small groups blending into the indigenous population. The second wave of "invasion" sees a small of well-armed conquerors which defeated and displaced the existing rulers. The old Greeks simply took the new culture, adopting new tools and new religions creating the mixed which is classical "Greek" culture.

Ancient Greece encompassed on today's Greek state, also in the Aegean islands. Greek colonies appeared all around the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean and followed Alexander the Great all over the Middle East. There are historic records about Greece. The most mysterious episode in Greek national history takes place at the end of the Roman period. The Greek world was part of Rome, but Greek culture survived under Roman rule. Greek was the language of the earliest Christian practice. The eastern half of the Roman Empire was culturally Greek and survived as the Byzantine Empire until 1453 AD (or CE, Christian Era). Between 600 and 800 AD, Slavic invaders

⁷ L. Bashkurti, "Shqiptaret ne rrjedhat e diplomacise", ADSh, GEER, Tirane, 2003, faqe 36)



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come up over Greece as far south as the Peloponessus. These "barbarians" created a "dark age" in the Balkans during which written Greek records cease.

In 800 AD Greek written culture reappears. Apparently these "invasions" damaged Greek civilization. But there are survived small cities. Some the newly arrived Slavs became Hellenized. Are we then dealing with the same Greek identity?

It persists in a cultural sense, but the 19th century notion of "blood" might say that these are not quite the same people. ⁸In 1453, the Byzantine Empire fell under Ottoman rule, but Greek culture and language once again survived. Today there are over ten million Greeks in Europe. Most Greeks live in the Greek state.

However, until the 1920s there were some Greek populations in Anatolia. Today the minority populations outside the borders of Greece are in Istanbul, on Cyprus and in southern Albania.

The Greeks are overwhelmingly Eastern Orthodox, under the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople. There are a dozen independent branches of the Eastern Orthodox church, identified with separate Balkan and East European ethnic groups. Just as the Roman Catholic Pope in Rome and the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople split over issues of doctrinal authority in 1054 AD, the other national Orthodox churches have often rejected the authority of the Greek patriarch. The Greek Orthodox Church has to be distinguished from the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Church, and so on. The Greek language has continued to evolve since classical times. Today it includes a formal written version, a less formal spoken version and an archaic version used in church services. Until this century, notable Greek communities elsewhere in the Balkans or in Anatolia spoke other languages (such as Turkish) but this is not common today.

1.6 The Romanians

The Romanians have origins in the classical era. Their history is complicated and controversial. Romanian and Hungarian nationalists disagree fundamentally about the origin of the

⁸ L.Bashkurti, "Shqiptaret ne rrjedhat e diplomacise", ADSh, GEER, Tirane, 2003, f. 36



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modern Romanians.⁹The Romanian position is this. In 106 New Era Rome conquered the kingdom in what is today Transylvania. The Roman settlers, administrators and merchants mixed to form a new Latin-speaking Dacian ethnic group. In 271 New Era, Dacia was evacuated in the face of barbarian invasions. Soldiers, townspeople, merchants and administrators fled south. Peasants and country folk probably did not leave, but moved to safety in the wooded Carpathians during the barbarian invasions.

During this period the Magyars (Hungarians) settled in parts of Transylvania. In a document of 1247 New Era Romanians reappear in historical records, both in Transylvania and in Moldavia and Wallachia. Romanian nationalists say that this shows the descent of the original Daco-Roman population from the Carpathians.¹⁰Hungarian nationalists say instead that the Romanians of 1247 are remnant Dacians who fled south and survived for a millenium as in Serbia and northern Greece before migrating north again. A Romanian-speaking Vlach ethnic group does live in the southern Balkans. The Magyar view claim to Transylvania.

Western scholars tend to accept the Romanian interpretation. The linguistic evidence supports the Romanian position: Romanian lacks Greek influence and words for religious or pastoral terms, because Romanians spent such a long time in a Balkan exile. Romanian includes many Turkish and Slavic words, but its basic grammar and vocabulary are recognizable as based on Latin.

There are twenty million ethnic Romanians live in the Romanian state. Outside the state, there are nearly 3 million "Moldova. Romania in turn has substantial minorities within its own borders: some one and a half million Hungarians in Transylvania and at least half a million Gypsies. There is a distinct Romanian Orthodox Church, but there are other religions present, especially in Transylvania.

1.7 The Slavs

Historically, migrating Slavs reached the Balkans during the waves of "barbarian" invasions at the end of the Roman Empire. Many groups entering at that time left no mark..¹¹The South Slavs,

⁹ L.Bashkurti, DiplomaciaShqiptare, ADSh, GEER, Tirane, 2005

¹⁰ L.Bashkurti, DiplomaciaShqiptare, ADSh, GEER, Tirane, f. 23-24.

¹¹ L.Bashkurti, DiplomaciaShqiptare, ADSh, GEER, Tirane, f.26-27)



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as well as the non-Slavic Magyars, concern history here. The South Slav (Yugo-Slav) groups that became the Slovenes, Croatians, Serbians and Bulgarians entered the Balkans from the north between 500 and 700 New Era. They settled in an area from the head of the Adriatic in the north, southward and eastward to the Black Sea. These groups were divided into tribes before they arrived. There was little variation between one group and its neighbors. The hard and fast distinctions among them, especially in languages, are largely a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ethnic maps that draw neat lines around these groups tend to oversimplify.

The Slovenes arrived first, in the 500s AD. Slovene included Slovak in some ways, and is quite distinct from Serbo-Croatian. Some 1.7 million Slovenes live in the northwest corner of the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Language is basically Slavic. Austrian and Italian influences have created a Central European culture and Slovenes are chiefly Roman Catholic. The other south Slavic peoples arrived in the 600s New Era. The south Slavic Croatians reached the Balkans in the late 500s and early 600s New Era arriving at the same time as the Serbs. In the 800s, they came under Western Frankish control and adopted catholic religion. Croatia became a Catholic country.

In 879 New Era a Croatian state was recognized by the Pope. The acceptance of Christianity by the Balkan nations tends to follow similar patterns, worth pointing out here. South Slav tribes lacked anything like a strong king: they were organized into smaller units under warlords or village chiefs, who evolved into a nobility. A strong central figure like a king generally arose when the tribe united in response to some outside military threat. The early kings adopted Christianity because in return for leading mass conversions, the pope (or the patriarch) would grant a stamp of religious authority to the monarch of the country. Croatia reached its medieval time under Tomislav in the 900s, but the kings were still weak relative to the nobility.

In 1102 AD a coalition of nobles made a deal with the Hungarian king, whose remote power was more attractive than the nearby king's authority. In return for Magyar recognition of their control of local administrative and judicial affairs, the nobles pledged their military service, and the Hungarian king also gained the right to approve all the laws of the Croatian of nobles. Thereafter Croatia existed as a feudal state under the kings of Hungary.

Today, some three and a half million Croatians or Croats live within the traditional borders of the Croatian state, with perhaps 700,000 others in nearby Slovenia and Bosnia.

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The Croatian language, made up of several distinct dialects, overlaps with Serbian; in the former Yugoslavia a combined Serbo-Croatian was an official language. The most obvious difference is the use of the Roman alphabet for Croatian, and the Cyrillic for Serbian.

The other south Slavic Serbians arrived at the same time as the Croats, at 500 to earlier time of 600's with an essentially identical culture and language. The Serbs were closer to Byzantium. Thus Serbian culture took on Byzantine features just as Croatian culture came to the Franks. Serbian adopted Eastern Orthodox with missionaries at work and a central state modeled on Byzantine forms. Serbian feudalism also followed Byzantine patterns. All land was owned by the ruler, parceled for the support of feudal vassals, churches and monasteries.

The state-building was protection from the Bulgarians. The Serbian medieval state peaked in the 1300s under Stefan Dusan. When Serbia was conquered by the Turks in the 1400s, the impact of the Ottoman conquest was reduced for most peasants because the Ottomans had already accepted and preserved the same Byzantine practices being used by the Serbs. Serbs were able to preserve much of their culture as well as their lives.

There are about 9 million Serbs, some 7 million of them concentrated in the Serbian Republic and Montenegro, but with important communities in Bosnia and Croatia. Many of them subsequently displaced by civil war during the 1990s. There is a separate Serbian Orthodox Church which has always helped define Serbian ethnic identity.

Bosnians are another south Slavic people in Balkans. Medieval Bosnia was a border zone between Croatia and Serbia, just as it is today. The ethnic marker of Bosnians today is their Islamic faith. This came about only later. In terms of language the modern Bosnians are of the same origin as Croats and Serbs.

The south Slavs who became the Bulgarians also reached the Balkans in the early 600s New Era. In 886 the missionary saints Methodius and Cyril (for whom the Cyrillic alphabet is named) converted Tsar Boris to Orthodox Christianity. In the 900s, Tsar Symeon's First Bulgarian Empire defeated Byzantine and Serbian armies. The Second Bulgarian Empire was a rival of Byzantium around 1200 New Era. Bulgaria absorbed and adopted Byzantine culture, law, land use patterns and political organization. Today some six and a half million Bulgarians live in the Bulgarian state. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been a leading factor in national identity.

South Slavs reached Macedonia in the 600s New Era. There are 1.4 million Macedonians now in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which achieved independence after the collapse of

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Yugoslavia in 1989. Citing historical, cultural or linguistic grounds, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria often have advanced claims to Macedonia in terms of both territory and ethnic affiliation with the population. Macedonian history illustrates the complicated relationship between ethnic identity, language and national independence.

1.8 The Hungarians

The Hungarians or Magyars came to Europe in 895 New Era. They took place crossing the Carpathians from the Ukraine and conquering the Slavs who lived in the Pannonian basin dividing the south Slavs from the Czechs, Slovaks and Poles. Hungarian is a Finno-Ugric language, the only one in the Balkans, with connections to Turkish and the languages of Central Asia. For many years, the Magyar cavalry raided Europe but in 955 it was decisively defeated. So Magyar rulers accepted Christian missionaries and in 1000 New Era King Stephen converted to Catholicism. In return, the Pope recognized Hungarian rule over the so-called "lands of the Crown of St. Stephen". This term now stands for the maximum geographic possessions of the Hungarian state, including Slovakia, Transylvania and Croatia. More than 10 million people live in Hungary. Hungary has a smaller proportion of ethnic minorities than most of the Balkan states with over 90% of the population consisting of ethnic Magyars. There are also the largest minority is half a million Roma or Gypsies. One and a half million Magyars live in Romanian Transylvania, with eight hundred thousand in Slovakia and less hundred thousand in the Vojvodina region of Serbia. Hungary shares in much of Central European culture.

Two thirds of Hungarians are Roman Catholic, the other third mostly Protestant.¹²

1.9 Other nationalities

A few other groups have had a presence since medieval times which has not lead to enduring political entities. They are nevertheless important. The "Gypsies" or Roma, a nomadic people traditionally employed as entertainers and metalworkers. They entered the Balkans in the 1300s New Era spreading from Asia Minor west into Europe. Scholars identify their language as related to Indian languages like Sanskrit. They are scattered in the most Balkan states. Poor and discriminated

¹² Hoensch, Jörg K., and Kim Traynor. A History of Modern Hungary, 1867-1994 (1996)



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for a long time. There are total of three million or more. No Gypsies census so far.¹³ There are Jewish in Balkans, but there was never a Jewish state in the Balkans. The area had a large Jewish population until the Second World War.¹⁴ There have been Jewish communities in the Balkans since Roman times. The Ottoman conquest of the area actually made the region more attractive than Western Europe for Jews, because of Ottoman policies of religious toleration. From 1200-1500 New Era many Jews expelled from Western European countries made their way to the Turkish Balkans. The Spanish expelled from Spain in 1492, about 200,000 Jews, most of whom went to Salonika and Istanbul. The Jewish population of Hungary and Romania dates from the 1700s, mostly consisting of Jews who moved south from Poland. On the eve of the Holocaust, there were over one and a half million Jews in the Balkan countries, mostly in Romania and Hungary.¹⁵ About half were murdered and most of the survivors emigrated after 1945. The present Jewish population of the Balkans is about 100,000, mostly living in Hungary. The Jewish populations of the Balkans typically spoke the languages of the country in which they lived, although the Sephardic Jews of Greece spoke Ladino, a dialect of Spanish.

2. Turks

The Turks now have possession of only a small corner of the Balkans, but at one time ruled much of it, and there were large Turkish populations in many areas, especially the cities. The Turks entered Anatolia from Central Asia around 1240 as tribal nomads converted to Islam.¹⁶

Turkish were granted possession of any land that they could conquer as "ghazis" along the borders of the growing Islamic world. The Ottomans, named for their leader Osman, were the most successful of many tribal groups. The Byzantines hired them as soldiers for pay but soon lost control over them. The Ottoman Turks crossed into Europe in 1352 New Era as mercenaries hired to defend a Byzantine fortress on the Western side of the Straits of the Dardanelles. But they never left and the place became a land for conquest. The Ottomans soon overran Thrace and Bulgaria. In 1389 at the battlefield of Kosovo they destroyed the Serbian army, an event of legendary importance in Serbian

¹³ Hoensch, Jörg K., and Kim Traynor. A History of Modern Hungary, 1867-1994 (1996)

¹⁴ Hanak, Peter et al. A History of Hungary (1994)

¹⁵ Kossev, D., H. Hristov and D. Angelov; Short history of Bulgaria (1963).

¹⁶ L.Bashkurti, DiplomaciaShqiptare, ADSH, GEER, Tirane, 2005,f. 27-28



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national memory.¹⁷ The Turks were able to capture Constantinople in 1453 New Era, attacking a Byzantine state weakened by injuries inflicted by its Christian rivals.

There was little or no Western aid when the Ottoman challenge appeared and the Byzantine Orthodox Greeks regarded the Western Catholic Franks with hatred, further preventing any cooperation against the Ottomans. In 1453 the Turks took Constantinople. In 1526 at Mohacs they destroyed the Hungarian army. The Ottoman trend for occupations on the central Europe ended to Vienna in 1683. The story of their gradual withdrawal from "Rumeli" or Europe is a major part of this course. In 1831, about a third of the population of the Balkans was "Muslim," including Turks and Albanians. The present population of Turkey is over Seventy million, but only about seven million Turks live in European Turkey, around Istanbul. 700,000 Turks form a prominent minority in Bulgaria, despite efforts since the early 1980s to Slavicize their names and pressure them to leave the country. Turks have historically been Sunni Muslims.¹⁸ In the 20th century the modern Turkish Republic is secular. Turkish is a Turkic language, and thus related to other Altaic languages of central Asia.

2.1 Economical Effects

The troubling history of the Balkan Peninsula in regards to various military conquests and centuries-long colonization has produced significant decline in the economic development compared to the rest of the European countries. In particular, the countries from the West Balkans¹⁹ (Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia) were almost lagging behind Croatia and Slovenia for instance. Even in former Yugoslavia, whose internal constitution was based on the idea of "brotherhood and unity", where all the constituents should get the equal share of the cake, there was a huge disparity in the economic developments between Slovenia and Kosovo for instance: even after almost 50 years of life in prosperity, former Yugoslavia could not produce the equal distribution of wealth to all the parts of the country. As a result, in 1991, the country suddenly

¹⁷ Jelavich, Barbara. History of the Balkans (1983)

¹⁸ L.Bashkurti, Shqiptaret ne rrjedhat e diplomacise, ADSh, GEER, Tirane, 2003, f39

¹⁹ Branko Milanovic, *Why are the western Balkans lagging behind?* Economist, 24 April 2015



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started collapsing, with Slovenia the first to go, selfishly protecting its industrial power and business connections with the rest of the world. The bloodiest conflict (in Bosnia, parts of Croatia and subsequently in Kosovo) was notably affecting the poorest regions of what once used to be the country with the highest development rate in Europe.

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