

The Process of Pacification in Southeastern Europe: Challenges and Issues from a Cultural Point of View

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Abstract: This paper examines the contextual factors and dynamics framing the contemporary situation in Southeastern Europe, reviews some strategies for addressing conflicts in the region, and considers some of the major challenges that societies in the region are currently facing. Two major features structure the larger context for the challenges and issues facing the region: first, the prevailing centre-semiperiphery-periphery theory, which is influencing the process of European integration, and, second, the proliferation of supra-national regional groupings in Europe. These form the general setting for, and influence the content of, current public debates on cultural values and identification.

Résumé: Cet article examine les facteurs et dynamiques contextuels entourant la situation contemporaine en Europe du Sud-Est, passe en revue des stratégies pour adresser les conflits dans cette région, et considère quelques-uns des grands défis auxquels font face les sociétés vivant là. Deux facteurs majeurs structurent le contexte plus large des défis et des questions touchant la région: d'abord, la théorie dominante sur le centre, la semi-périphérie et la périphérie qui influence le processus d'intégration européenne; puis, la prolifération de regroupements régionaux supranationaux en Europe. Ces deux facteurs forment le cadre pour des débats publics actuels sur les valeurs et l'identification culturelles et influencent le contenu de ces débats.

Violence and crimes over cultural diversity: Mutations of crisis and suffering
European history, from antiquity to the present day, remembers many crimes against cultural diversity. One of the relatively oldest of such crimes happened around 1492 on the Iberian Peninsula when first the Moors and then the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal. Decades of struggle amongst Catholics and Protestants led to one of the bloodiest finales one Bartholomean night in 1572 in which more than 30,000 people were killed. The twentieth century, probably the most horrifying in the whole history of humankind, will also be characterized by crimes against humanity, committed in the racist killing of Jews, Roma, Slavic, and other nationalities.

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Three theoretical frameworks are used to attempt to explain these actions. Some theoreticians (such as Émile Durkheim and Ernest Gellner) explain such pathological social behaviour as a discordance between the process of social fragmentation (heterogenization) and social integration (homogenization), which are both integral parts of the process of modernization. According to this view, if fragmentation is not accompanied by a process of integration, then a cultural and developmental gap in society will be created which often produces violent social behaviour aimed at reducing cultural, ethnic, and political diversity. The integration process (if it acts as a constructive counterbalancing force) is needed to produce a new quality of social development, behaviour, and communication that is acceptable to the different social actors and groups involved. This cultural and developmental gap has occurred in the case of the former Yugoslavia: the disintegration of the county was not followed by the possibility for its constitutive parts—now mostly independent countries—to join European integration processes on the basis of free access and co-operation, which is guaranteed within the international community. Such an obstacle, accompanied by aggressive Serbian nationalism, caused long-lasting and cruel wars within the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Other theoreticians (like Edward Shills) advocate the idea of so-called unstable territories. According to this view, regions that combine different cultural, ethnic, political, and developmental identities and influences are not able to develop a high level of internal stability. Very often they are forced to act as mediatory zones with semi-peripheral developmental positions. This means that their internal dynamics are usually highly, or completely, dependent upon global power divisions and developmental trends. The regions most often noted to illustrate this approach are, of course, Southeastern European (the Balkans)¹, but the same could be said of Central European regions. In other words, any new global trend or interregional division of power could lead to the process of disintegration or even brutal conflicts in these regions.

Finally, the Frankfurt School has developed insights into the manipulative power of some social systems on individuals and stresses that our societies are built on two myths: a myth about a neutral or even positive role of social systems as well as a myth about efficient, isolated, independent, and critical individualism. Leading representatives consider these myths a fertile playground for the emergence of pathological social behaviour embodied in the form of authoritarian political regimes. Such regimes regularly tend to reduce social and cultural diversity by the most brutal means of repression and violence. This school of thought also stresses the role of the media in abetting possible overconcentration of power, a negative factor in the rebuilding of societies.

These theoretical frameworks could equally apply to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as the crisis in Kosovo and Macedonia. However, these theoretical frameworks are seen as having one very dangerous characteristic in common: growing cultural, ethnic, social, and political diversity is implicitly regarded as a (possibly) negative tendency. On the contrary, such tendencies can

be seen as mostly emancipating in character. In other words, fragmentation tendencies ought to require integration tendencies on a completely new qualitative level—achieved, for example, by the European Union. At the same time, the responsibility of the international community to monitor, support, and efficiently protect cultural and other diversities cannot be avoided or neglected, as they represent some of its main duties. The problem lies not in the growing cultural diversification of the world, but in our abilities to manage it in a constructive and productive way.

Cultural values and processes of cultural identification

During the 1990s, on a pan-European scale, the issue of preservation, transmission, and transformation of cultural values became central. This process was also perceived to be a process of cultural identification or of defining a particular cultural identity. Two different approaches characterized this debate: integralist versus essentialist. The integralist approach, embodied, for example, by the writer and thinker Salman Rushdie (1999), argues that the process of identification should be open to all traditions and values whose interconnection can be fruitful for social, cultural, and artistic achievements and synthesis.

The essentialist approach argues its position along two main lines or streams: open and closed. The open stream, expounded by the French philosopher Alain Finkelkraut (2000), presupposes that our world of notions is defined with some basic values and ideas which form the core of our mental universe and which cannot be substituted or replaced but which can be transformed or rebuilt under the influence of new ideas and values. The closed stream, evident in the writings of, for example, the followers of Ernst Jünger, argues that our cultural values are already built and defined and the only acceptable approach is preservation and reactualization.

In Southeastern Europe, this discussion takes the form of a debate between the so-called traditionalists (or folklorists) and modernists (cosmopolitans), with the first group advocating cultural protection (sometimes even isolation) and the second group very much in favour of participation and the exchange of cultural values (see Katunarić, 1999). Internal political circumstances in each particular country determine which stream or group will be dominant and more influential in cultural life.

This ongoing discussion is not without its wider social consequences. Until now it has been shown that so-called cultural elites belonging to the modernist group, whenever political circumstances forced them to play their role, have helped to open up their country faster and to improve its international image. Recent political changes in Croatia, for example, have once again proved this modernist approach to be very advantageous. After the change of political power in 2000, those in power helped to achieve wide international support for further democratization and stabilization of the country.

It is important to recognize that these debates have developed in various sub-European contexts under the influence of broader contexts of cultural identity formation. These broader identity formation contexts, in turn, have been in large

part framed by two important features of the European political context: the centre-semiperiphery-periphery theory and the proliferation of supra-national regional groupings.

The centre-semiperiphery-periphery theory and European integration processes

One of the most influential theories explaining European dynamics is the theoretical pattern in which European countries are mostly viewed as countries in transition, from the European centre (Western Europe), through the European semi-periphery (mostly Central Europe, the Baltic countries), to the countries on Europe's periphery (Eastern Europe, as well as Southeastern Europe). In many respects, the European integration processes have re-actualized the theory in a particular way.

On the one hand, the European Union has set a series of parameters to be achieved by Central and Eastern European countries if they want to become full members. On the other hand, the European Union has not assigned to these countries the status which would give them the financial, legislative, administrative, and social backing for their transitional processes, despite their developmental standpoint positions. Thus, paradoxically, the European Union (contrary to the early expectations of the countries that want to join it) has, in a way, strengthened the triple European division, causing a significant degree of developmental and transitional frustration which, to date, has not been analyzed nor sufficiently explored.

Supra-national regional proliferation of Europe

After a ten-year transitional period, a deep division between the two dominant regions, Central and Eastern Europe, has evolved. This same period has established the need for the involvement of more detailed sub-regional and interregional divisions to serve as tools to understand particular social and cultural dynamics within each particular region or within countries in different regions. The best known example of the first case are the countries of Southeastern Europe; for the second case, the examples are the Baltic countries. Those who may be cynical will tell us that, in the first case, the new name of Southeastern Europe, which is a substitute for "The Balkans," has been invented to position old social, political, and cultural dynamics into new circumstances. In the second case, the old regional name "Baltic" is used to revive successful experiences from the past but also to interconnect successful transitional processes within the Central European and Baltic countries.

The situation is not simply one of adopting *an* identity, but is much more complex. Four points are important to note to more fully understand the situations of these regions. First, quite understandably, most of the countries have double, or even triple, regional identities: Croatia with its Central European, Mediterranean, and Southeastern (not to say Balkan) identities is just one, very complex, instance.

Second, it is important to note that a regionally defined identity is only one among many possible ways in which communities or societies can observe them-

selves or be observed from outside. Equally important, individual or group identity can be internally or externally viewed from national, ethnic, linguistic, or other perspectives.

Third, belonging to a given regional or subregional division is not neutral in its consequences. Once diagnosed and confirmed, it can determine most of the future developmental prospects, parameters, and attitudes. This can be observed in a very instructive way in the Slovak Republic and, particularly, in Slovenia. Both countries insisted on retaining their Central European identity, rightly assuming that such a regional belonging would facilitate their chances to become full members of the European Union. As a final result, two types of transitional interrelated exclusivities have been established: integrational and regional (Dragojevic, 1998). From the integrational exclusivity perspective, all European countries are sorted into circles: the circle of European Union member-states, the circle of countries possibly successful in joining the Union, and the circle of countries which still have to wait—possibly for a long period—to be accepted. From the perspective of regional exclusivity, such divisions are almost completely correlated with the regional division of Europe: from the Western European countries, through the Central European countries, and finally Eastern European countries.

Fourth, as cultural identities are always multiplied, it is evident that a functional hierarchy is possible among them according to some social, political, economic, or cultural factors, circumstances, and conditions. The hierarchy changes according to some wider political and social context and dynamics. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the regional belonging of different nations, ethnic groups, cultures, or territories has changed many times. Sometimes complete regions have disappeared, such as Central Europe between 1945 and 1989 (Kundera, 1983). Consequently, some countries invest substantial effort on international and national levels to strengthen their regional position and their position regarding international co-operation, with two basic aims: (1) to concentrate co-ordinational, infrastructural, and operational regional functions within their national space, and (2) to stabilize their international position(s) in order to facilitate and improve their position and their performance in international co-operation and overall development.²

The problem of conflict identity and the implementation of the process of pacification

A complicating factor in these evolving situations is that the outside view of the identity of some supra- or subnational regions, countries, or towns in Europe is to a high degree coloured by the image of ethnic, religious, or cultural animosity and open or latent conditions of conflict. Such an attitude is particularly frequently applied to the Balkans, Northern Ireland, Basque Provinces, Corsica, Cyprus, Belfast, Sarajevo, etc. How to resolve such a negative and often globally spread identity remains a problem. Based on the European experience after the Second World War, the answer may be found through the process of so-called radical pacification, with two different strategies: either externally imposed or internally devel-

oped. However, according to the European experience, only externally imposed radical pacification is successful over a long term (Galtung, 1995). Whenever such a process has been left to local actors, the overall conflict conditions in different periods have been transformed but they have never disappeared. In fact, the conflict/oppression pattern of behaviour becomes the focus of the so-called core identity of all communities in contact within a particular area.

What are the reasons why domestic and particularly international subjects often decide not to intervene, despite such a clear message based on experience, in a particular conflict zone? The most frequent reasons stated are: an unwillingness to interfere in the so-called internal political affairs of a particular country (when such conflicts have been diagnosed as a matter of national sovereignty), the lack of a common European foreign and security policy, and/or an absence of clear political will/interest on the part of the main political powers (particularly the United States) in a certain conflict area.

Of course, the core motivation for non-intervention is to be found elsewhere, namely, in the high cost and risk, which is connected with externally imposed radical pacification processes. External powers must provide the territory under conflict with all the necessary prerequisites (social, political, financial) to help resolve the conflict in the first place, help support reconstruction caused by the violence, and, finally, introduce a process of reconciliation for whatever time frame is needed. Where Southeastern Europe is concerned, we are finally witnessing the assumption of overall responsibility for the externally imposed radical pacification process in the region by the international community, guided by the United States. That very fact, accompanied with an internal political will to stop conflict behaviour, opens the prospect for the countries in the region to achieve long-lasting peace, and to be directed towards slow but hopefully steady prosperity.

Possible strategies: Implementation of the European approaches to the management of cultural diversity

The Western European countries have developed four main approaches to cultural diversity.³ The first and most influential approach is known as *multiculturalism*. Since the 1960s, the term has indicated that particular cultural and educational authorities should define policies, measures, actions, and initiatives to enable different cultures to develop equally with other cultures within one country.

From the second half of the 1970s and during the 1980s, when the integration processes in Europe became more dynamic, the term *interculturalism* began to gain ground. Interculturalism defines the potential dynamic interrelationship and mutual influence of different cultures, primarily (but not exclusively) within one country.

The third term, *transculturalism*, was introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the time period predominantly influenced by the process of globalization. The use of *transculturalism* in the European context has provoked two main discussions. The first discussion deals with the definition of a European identity and its values that transcend the national level. In the second discussion, the term tends to be linked to the emergence of so-called transnational cultures or transna-

tional cultural orientations, also understood as cultures or cultural agents oriented beyond national boundaries, particularly to European or global cultural markets.

Finally, the term *cultural pluralism* (pluriculturalism, pluriculturality) has been widely used since the beginning of the transition period in Central and Eastern Europe (i.e., from 1989). The approach is meant to respect and support all the possible cultural needs and ways of living, not only of ethnic, linguistic, or cultural minorities but also of gays and lesbians, rural subcultures, feminists, disabled persons, and others.

These four main concepts deal with the management of cultural diversity in the European context and sometimes overlap or contradict each other. At the same time, all of them have been developed as a critical response to the practices previously carried out in this field. Consequently, new practices have been defined by new terms whose meanings were neither stable nor static. Although such concepts can easily be construed as divergent, they are in fact complementary, having proved their importance in addressing particular problems or issues connected with cultural diversity.

The countries belonging to Southeastern Europe generally have a very low level of consciousness of the importance of cultural diversity. Some countries have introduced specific elements and policy measures characteristic of multiculturalism as a general approach while others are mostly neglected. Defining an overall policy of support for cultural diversity in each particular country, as well as in the region generally, still remains one of the most urgent tasks for internal and external actors.

Model of the state

The possible actions of governments in managing conflict over cultural diversity and identity are, of course, also shaped by the evolving model of the state and prevailing notions as to its appropriate realm of activities, involvements, and responsibilities.

After the Second World War, two dominant concepts of the state were established: a welfare state (characteristic of the West of Europe) and a planned economy state (imposed in Eastern Europe). Since the 1980s, with the crisis of the model of the welfare state, two alternative models have tried to find their place in Western Europe: the model of the ultraminimal state and the model of the service state. The concept of the ultraminimal state (based on the economics of Reaganism) has proved unapplicable to the European political and economic practice because of the long European tradition of protecting the wide social rights of citizens. The concept of the service state, which focuses mainly on the facilitating and co-ordinating role of the state, remains influential, but it presupposes transnational monitoring systems which observe the level and quality of respect of human rights, and facilitate the overall European integration processes.

On the other side, many Central and Eastern European countries are not willing to transform the traditional nation-state model (characterized by the public's request for a high level of social and political unison, balanced by publicly guaranteed social security), which was adopted while Western Europe was con-

tending with the crisis of its welfare state, into a model which would to a significant degree reduce the power of central governmental authorities. This has resulted in a constant crisis situation in most of these countries. The implementation of a coherent model of state operation like that of the service state—which has more recently been named the enabling state, sometimes even the “smart state” (Ilczuk, 2001)—remains an unknown and undefined political and social task. This situation makes it much more difficult for the state to effectively manage the processes of decentralization (to delegate power to regional and municipal levels) that are currently required.⁴

The question of decentralization

How to undertake wide measures of decentralization in decision-making, financial decentralization, decentralization of infrastructure, and decentralization of overall social and cultural life and activities—all at the same time—remains an unsolved problem for most countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It is known, however, that success in these four types of decentralization greatly depends upon four preconditions.

The first one is sustainability of decentralization measures. This presupposes a scenario which will raise the efficiency of the entire social or cultural system without causing a drop in the level of social and cultural life, productivity, or creativity. The second precondition is related to constant co-ordinating activities that aim functionally to interconnect all levels of operation within a country (central, regional, and local).

The third precondition is that of the intersectorial approach, one that will gather together all necessary community resources required for its overall development or the development of a particular activity. The fourth precondition is the stimulation of co-operation between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Because of the complexity of decentralization measures, the process itself is very slow and it is seen as inefficient, often causing ongoing tensions among political, social, cultural, and economic levels and actors operating in both Central and Eastern European countries.

The real and in-depth process of decentralization, made in a widely socially acceptable way, is undoubtedly a crucial requirement facing the whole of South-eastern Europe. Whether that process will be made in a chaotic and socially unproductive way, as in Bulgaria and Romania, or whether we will witness the emergence of the first successful examples in the near future remains an open question.

Concluding remarks

The approach taken in this paper has been of a normative, rather than a descriptive, nature. I have tried to identify the main backgrounds/conditions, which, at the moment, deeply influence the social and cultural context of the transitional process in Southeastern Europe. Constant coping with these background conditions, in a politically and socially conscious or unconscious way, places all countries in the region in a position to observe them as goals and priorities. At the same

time, these conditions already act, from the standpoint of the international community and particularly from the perspective of the European Union, as evaluation parameters for observing and measuring the developmental achievements of the region as a whole as well as of each particular country and its international prospects and chances.

The term Southeastern Europe is now widely used, showing that the international community, perhaps more than the crucial political and social actors in the countries in the region, believes in the future prospects of this part of Europe. The challenges and tasks discussed previously, fulfilled or unfulfilled, will prove whether this region is able to exist in a developmentally functional and pragmatic way. In other words, Southeastern Europe is, at the moment, a regional construct—viewed historically for the first time—with open possibilities to overcome this stage and become a visible supra-national region with its own dynamics, bringing new qualities into the overall European integration processes.

Notes

1. It is increasingly common to use the term *Southeastern Europe* for the region because of the negative connotations which are attributed to the terms *the Balkans* and *balkanization*.
2. These types of national efforts also reflect the prevailing situation that, although the supra-national regional level has proven to be most dynamic in response to global tendencies, Central and Eastern European countries have generally had a very limited experience with regional development and, even now, it is often, or predominantly, regarded as a factor of destabilization or disintegration of particular countries. The dominant governmental pattern is still related to the concept of a strong nation-state, with relatively little stress on local or regional initiatives.
3. For more about this issue, see Dragojevic (1999, 2000).
4. Decentralization may help resolve the crises that Central and Eastern Europe face through, for example, bringing more local initiative into overall social and political dynamics, creating more awareness of ethnic and political tensions, and improving the preconditions for sub-national regional development through better use of internal resources.

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