

Imagining the Serbs Revisionism in the Recent Historiography of Nineteenth-century Serbian History

Abstract: The end of the Cold War has brought about a complete change of the political and social context in the world. Consequently, history, as a scholarly discipline, has also undergone a significant transformation. In this broader context, with the destruction of Yugoslavia, the interpretations of the Serbian nineteenth century have been experiencing a far-reaching revision. It is necessary, therefore, to scrutinize the main topics of the debate on nineteenth-century Serbian history in recent world historiography, as well as to examine the main causes of this academic revision.

Keywords: historiography, nineteenth century, Serbs, Balkans, Yugoslavia, modernization, radicalism

I

Writing on Balkan historiographies in the “Introduction” to his history of the Balkans, Mark Mazower remarks that “national histories, until very recently, presented the past as the inevitable and entirely deserved triumph of the Nation over its enemies”.¹ Yet, he also observes that “more recently, a disillusionment with nationalism has bred nostalgia for the days of empire”, which is why many historians have come to describe the Ottoman Empire as a “multicultural paradise”.² Mazower describes such an approach to the past as “normative history”. In this context, he is particularly critical of the type of normative history that seeks to understand the history of the Balkans through the theoretical model of “modernization”:

Normative history sets up one pattern of historical evolution as standard and then explains deviations from that. The nineteenth-century mind took it for granted that history worked in this way, and that what one was describing was the success or failure of any given society in climbing the path of progress from backwardness and barbarism to civilization. In preferring to talk about the path from tradition to modernity, twentieth-century scholars have changed the terms but retained much of the same linear view.³

¹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Random House Inc., 2000), xlii.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

However, history can be both deceptive and seductive. “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there,” writes Leslie Poles Hartley in the famous, oft-quoted opening sentence of the novel *The Go-Between*. All too often, we tend to forget that people in the past were very different from us. The closer they are to our time or our social group, the more easily we tend to believe that they shared our own concerns or our own ideological convictions.

A distorted picture of the past is not based simply on errors or misconceptions. The wise Jacob Burckhardt drew some explicit distinctions when discussing *knowledge* and *intent*. According to him, behind a thirst for *knowledge* is the desire to understand the past; behind *intent*, however, is the desire to use it. This is a fine dividing line which, in his opinion, distinguishes history from journalism. A historian seeks to explain, whereas a journalist, having no wish to crack the shell of his own times and self-interest, makes value judgements.⁴ Of course, Burckhardt was well aware that it is impossible to rid oneself from intent completely, just as he knew that many of the greatest historians did not hesitate to assume the role of historical judges. Even so, this distinction, as well as Mazower’s definition of “normative history”, undoubtedly leads us to a clearer profiling and preservation of the integrity of historiography as an academic discipline.

Temptation becomes much stronger if historians seek to understand the history of distant countries and cultures. It is not easy to sit in London, Moscow, Berlin, Paris or New York, and write a rational, unbiased history of the Serbs on the tails of a decade of bloody wars (1991–99) which, to put it mildly, have left no one indifferent.⁵ In her influential and insightful book *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova has shown what sorts of prejudices and abuses can nest in the writings of foreign travellers throughout the history of the Balkans. After the “Orientalist discourse” which, according to Edward Said, leads from intellectual underestimation to colonial subjugation, now we also have a “Balkanist discourse”, similar in content and purpose.⁶

⁴ Jacob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (Berlin/Stuttgart: Verlag von Speemann, 1905), 10–12, 253–273.

⁵ See *Yugoslavia and its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, eds. Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and therein particularly Dušan M. Djordjević, “Clio amid the Ruins: Yugoslavia and its Predecessors in Recent Historiography”, 3–21; *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars’ Initiative*, eds. Charles W. Ingrao and Thomas A. Emmert (Washington/West Lafayette: United States Institute of Peace Press and Purdue University Press, 2009). See also Aleksandar Timofejev, “Savremena ruska istoriografija o Srbiji”, *Tokovi istorije* 3 (2006), 200–213.

⁶ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–20; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 1–28. For

The purpose of this article is to sketch out a picture of the nineteenth-century history of the Serbs as portrayed in recent world historiography, though with no pretensions to presenting an exhaustive analysis. Its focus is on works which have appeared since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which is to say that they were written in a new political context, determined above all else by the Yugoslav wars between 1991 and 1999. Even the most cautious of historians will admit that their choice of topics is influenced by the present; the Balkan conflicts of today, it is thought, were conceived precisely in the turbulent changes of the nineteenth century. The limited length of this article necessarily narrows its focus to books and monographs, to academic historiography produced at major universities and research institutes with the longest tradition of engaging with the history of the Serbs and the Balkans. An analysis of the current revision of Serbian history in the work of Serbian historians should be the subject of a special article, since it has its own causes and inner logic.

II

To say that the wars of 1991–1999 have produced a flood of speedily written histories to cater to current political trends and political contexts is common wisdom. It is perhaps better to say that the rationale for the vast majority of such works comes down to passing value judgements on the basis of the existing literature, frequently without being familiar with primary source materials or the Serbian language, and in almost all cases in line with the prevailing political trends of the time.

Context provides many answers. In the First World War, the Serbs found themselves on the side of the victors. Consequently, the works emanating from the most influential interwar academic centres (i.e. those of the victorious side) viewed their history, from the First Serbian Uprising to the creation of Yugoslavia, in a generally favourable manner; needless to say, the historiography of the defeated, and later totalitarian, academic centres saw nineteenth-century Serbian history differently. Although a similar stance was largely retained after the Second World War, the discourse on “Greater

“Balkanism”, see also Eli Skopetea, “Orijentalizam i Balkan”, *Istorijski časopis* 38 (1991), 131–143; Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics”, *Slavic Review* 51 (Spring 1992), 1–15; Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1998); Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, “Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography”, *American Historical Review* 105/4 (2000), 1218–1233; Bogoljub Šijaković, *A Critique of the Balkanistic Discourse: Contribution to the Phenomenology of Balkan Otherness* (Toronto: Serbian Literary Company, 2004).

Serbian” hegemony in interwar Yugoslavia, in the spirit of the official Titoist regime, began to make its way into world historiography. In the wars of the 1990s, the Serbs, once again viewed from the victorious and dominant academic centres, now found themselves on the “wrong” side. As a result, a wider revision of earlier interpretations of Serbian history, coupled with a search for the roots of “Serbian misconceptions”, was initiated. It seems that there are few nations in Europe whose history has been, in the last twenty years, subjected to so many value-based revisions and reinterpretations.

In this process of historical revisionism, several influential and oft-quoted books are of particular importance. The discourse on Greater Serbian nationalism has been very eloquently transposed into a new, post-Cold War era through Ivo Banac’s *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, where nineteenth-century Serbian history is covered by a long and biased introductory section.⁷ However, the books that conspicuously stand out in terms of how widely read and influential they have been, and how hostile they are towards the Serbs, are those of Noel Malcolm, a columnist of the *Daily Telegraph* and fellow of All Souls College in Oxford.⁸ This “new Edward Gibbon”, as an overexcited reviewer⁹ describes him on the cover of Malcolm’s *Kosovo*, does, it is true, use diverse sources, including Albanian and, much less, Serbian. Even so, his books are ill-intentioned journalism cloaked in academic gowns more than real history. However, compared to Branimir Anzulovic’s *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, Malcolm’s works look like a bright example of honest research and flawless objectivity.¹⁰ Anzulovic’s writing, closer to propaganda than to anything else, has not been nearly as influential as that of Banac and Malcolm, but it also deserves attention inasmuch as it all too frequently features in the literature referenced even by serious historians.

In order to understand the motives of these authors, let us turn to Burckhardt once more. According to him, the usual driving force behind *intent* is “patriotism”, which “often is nothing more than arrogance towards other nations” and “often consists in offending others. This kind of history is journalism”.¹¹

⁷ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 21–140.

⁸ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1994), as well as his *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

⁹ Michael Foot, publicist and former Labour Party leader.

¹⁰ Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London: Hurst & Co., 1999).

¹¹ Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 11. There is no doubt that what we are dealing with in Banac and Anzulovic is their Croat patriotic intent. As regards the

On the other hand, it has to be said that among the books which, judging by how frequently they are quoted, have had a particularly important impact in shaping the contemporary image of the nineteenth-century Serbs, there are some very valuable works, to mention but the histories of the Balkans that provide an overall survey such as those by Leften Stavrianos, Stevan Pavlowitch, Barbara Jelavich and, especially, the exceptional *Balkan Worlds* of Traian Stoianovich.¹²

It is also encouraging that there still are a considerable number of very well-researched monographs looking at individual themes relating to the history of the Serbs in the nineteenth century. This group primarily includes published doctoral theses, such as Robin Okey's *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878–1914*; Marie-Janine Calic's *Sozialgeschichte Serbiens 1815–1941: Der aufhaltsame Fortschritt während der Industrialisierung*; the intellectual biography of Nikola Pašić by Andrei Shemiakin; or the research undertaken by James Evans on the role of Great Britain in the creation of Yugoslavia.¹³ The category of commendable examples also includes the study of Gale Stokes on the beginnings of political parties in Serbia; the book by Georges Castellan on the history of Serbia at the time of Karadjordje and Miloš Obrenović; Svetlana Danchenko's analysis of Russo-Serbian relations between 1878 and 1903; the books of David MacKenzie, and a number of others.¹⁴

imperialistic, patriotic and other intent of Noel Malcolm, see Jovo Bakić, *Jugoslavija: Razaranje i njegovi tumači* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik and Filozofski fakultet, 2011), 343–385; *Response to Noel Malcolm's Book 'Kosovo: A Short History'*, ed. Slavenko Terzić (Belgrade: Institute of History, 2000); Aleksa Djilas, "Imagining Kosovo. A Biased New Account Fans Western Confusion", *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1998), 124–131.

¹² Leften S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Co., 2000); Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans I–II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans 1804–1945* (London/New York: Longman, 1999); Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe* (New York/London: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

¹³ Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007) (significantly expanded PhD thesis, defended in 1972); Marie-Janine Calic, *Sozialgeschichte Serbiens 1815–1941: Der aufhaltsame Fortschritt während der Industrialisierung* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1994) (Serb. ed. 2004); Andrei L. Shemiakin, *Ideologija Nikoly Pashicha. Formirovanie i evolutsiia (1868–1891)* (Moscow: Indrik, 1998); James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008).

¹⁴ Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development: The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990); Georges Castellan, *Serbes d'autrefois: Aux origines de la Serbie moderne* (Brest: Armeline, 2005); Svetlana

III

The recent historiography of Serbia and Serbs in the nineteenth century confirms the old truth that the history of a nation cannot be understood without using a comparative approach and situating it in a broader context. That the European context is the most fruitful context for Serbian history was shown long ago by Leopold Ranke in his *Serbian Revolution*.¹⁵ After 1918, and particularly after 1945, Serbian history was usually placed in the broader framework of the history of the Yugoslav peoples. Yugoslavia was an attempt by the Serbian elites to escape from the Balkans into Central Europe; following the break-up of this state, historiography has begun to return Serbia into a Balkan context. But, historiography can only benefit from this “return to the Balkans”. There is no doubt that the Balkans, particularly if the countries of the former Yugoslavia are subsumed under the term, is the smallest cultural and geographic whole within the framework of which, through comparison, Serbian history can be understood.

A survey of the history of the Serbs in the nineteenth century within the context of more recent histories of Europe is a matter for a separate article. It is clear, however, that today Serbian history is very often placed in an East-European setting. A good standard for this type of comparative approach was set by Robin Okey's *Eastern Europe*.¹⁶ Originality, independent judgement and a critical approach being the characteristics of *The Making of Eastern Europe* by Philip Longworth,¹⁷ the reader can only regret that the author has not paid more attention to the history of Serbia. However, more often cited in the literature is the much broader, and yet, when it comes to the history of Serbs in the nineteenth century, unreliable *History of Eastern Europe* written by Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries.¹⁸ In their brief survey of

I. Danchenko, *Razvitie serbskoi gosudarstvennosti i Rossiia 1878–1903* (Moscow: Institut slavianovedenia i balkanistiki, 1996); David MacKenzie, *Jovan Ristic: Outstanding Serbian Statesman* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2006), as well as his *Milovan Milovanovic: Talented and Peace-loving Diplomat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ For an English translation see Leopold Ranke, *A History of Servia and the Servian Revolution* (London: John Murray, 1848).

¹⁶ Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740–1985: Feudalism to communism* (London/New York: Routledge, 1991; 1st ed. 1982).

¹⁷ Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe: From Prehistory to Postcommunism* (London: Macmillan, 1997; 1st ed. 1994; Serb. ed. 2002).

¹⁸ Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007; 1st ed. 1998), 5–7, 110–124.

nineteenth-century Serbian history in *The Balkans: A Post-communist History*, *knowledge* retreats before *intent*.¹⁹

In the more recent literature on the two Yugoslavias, the nineteenth century, if mentioned at all, is touched upon in just a few introductory pages. John Lampe's *Yugoslavia as History* is one of the exceptions in that it gives a somewhat more detailed explanation of the rise of the Yugoslav idea prior to 1918. This placement of pre-1918 Serbian history in the Yugoslav context is reminiscent of the literature that originated in the time of Yugoslavia.²⁰ John Allcock's *Explaining Yugoslavia* also stands out in terms of attention paid to the pre-1918 period.²¹

Among the most recent histories of the Balkans, Traian Stoianovich's *Balkan Worlds* holds an especially important place. Considering the innovativeness of his approach, the breadth of his views, the independence of judgement, and the new questions he raises, it would probably not be an overstatement to say that it is one of the best histories of the Balkans written over the last few decades. Stoianovich's other great contribution is the four-volume collection of his articles published under the title *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds*.²² Among the best works of a more recent date are Stevan Pavlowitch's detailed and reliable *History of the Balkans 1804–1945*, written in the style of Stavrianos's *The Balkans since 1453*, and Barbara Jelavich's *History of the Balkans* (1983). Another very solid work is Georges Castellan's *History of the Balkans* from the fourteenth to the twentieth century.²³ The domination of both the English language and Anglo-Saxon academic centres being yet another important feature of the changed post-1989 context, the citedness of this book, as well as of Ed-

¹⁹ Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *The Balkans: A Post-communist History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 233–237.

²⁰ John H. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History. Twice there was a country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 39–98 (expanded ed. 2000). Lampe tried his hand at a history of the Balkans under a similarly inventive title, but it deals with the twentieth century, with only a summary overview of the previous period. John H. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11–40. For a critical assessment of Lampe's work, see Aleksa Djilas, "The academic West and the Balkan test", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 9/3 (2007), 328–332, as well as Lampe's, *Response*, in the same journal, 10/1 (2008), 113–115.

²¹ John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

²² Traian Stoianovich, *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds*, 4 vols. (New Rochelle/New York: A. D. Caratzas, 1992–1995).

²³ Georges Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans (XIV^e–XX^e siècle)* (Paris: Fayard, 1991) (2nd ed. 1999; English ed. 1992).

gar Hösch's slightly earlier *History of the Balkans*,²⁴ has not been as high as that of, for instance, Denis Hupchik's *The Balkans from Communism to Constantinople*.²⁵ When it comes to the history of the Serbs in the nineteenth century, Hupchik's book is much less reliable than Castellan's, both factually and interpretatively. While being very well-informed on certain matters, Hupchik offers a presentation of the 1903–1914 period which is replete with factual errors and unconvincing arguments, particularly as regards the Yugoslav movement.²⁶

Much like Noel Malcolm and Denis Hupchick, Tom Gallagher, in his book on the history of the Balkans from 1789 to 1989, expresses his dissatisfaction with the standoffish stance of the Western powers, particularly the British government of John Major, towards the demand that the Yugoslav crisis be settled through a confrontation with the Serbs.²⁷ While Hupchik even goes so far as to compare the stance of the West to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy towards Hitler, Gallagher, it has to be said, concedes that there was systematic violence on the part of not only Serbian, but also Croatian nationalists.²⁸ For Hupchik, the bombing of Serbia in 1999 was a "half measure", while Gallagher commends the newly-discovered resoluteness of Western governments.²⁹ Gallagher's book promises a great deal, the author being above all else interested in the role of the Great Powers in the Balkan conflicts; this, however, makes the reader's disappointment all the greater. When it comes to the Serbs in the nineteenth century, Gallagher the researcher is far less credible than Hupchick.³⁰

Mark Mazower, in his *Balkans*, also relies on media-generated truths about the wars of the 1990s and the history of two Yugoslavias. However, when writing on the nineteenth century, Mazower uses more serious sources and literature, relying in particular on the work of Stavrianos, Stoianovich, Castellan and Jelavich. Indeed, there are in Mazower some original interpretations and observations concerning the nineteenth-century Balkans.

²⁴ Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer: von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck Wissen, 2008) (1st ed. 1968; English ed. 1972).

²⁵ Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism* (New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; 1st ed. 2002).

²⁶ *Ibid.* 302–320.

²⁷ Tom Gallagher, *Outcast Europe: From Ottomans to Milošević* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), vi–vii (1st ed. 2001).

²⁸ *Ibid.* vi; Hupchick, *Balkans*, xi. See also Noel Malcolm, *Povijest Bosne: Kratki pregled* (Zagreb/Sarajevo: Novi Liber/Dani, 1995), IX–XIV, XXI–XXV.

²⁹ *Ibid.* xiii; Gallagher, *Outcast Europe*, 15–17.

³⁰ See, e.g., his comparison between Miloš Obrenović and Slobodan Milošević, or Petar Petrović Njegoš and Željko Ražnjatović Arkan (*ibid.*, 37–38, 53–54).

Particularly important is his understanding of the dynamic relationship between the imperialism of the Great Powers and the nationalism of the Balkan nations.³¹

The series of edited volumes under the title *Chelovek na Balkanakh*, published in St. Petersburg since 2002,³² support the impression that this trend of accommodating the nineteenth-century history of the Serbs to the picture generated by the mass media has not taken place in Russian historiography. It is interesting, however, that, in unravelling the causes of the tragic departure of the Balkan peoples from the redeeming path of modernization, Russian historiography, at least judging by these volumes, also nurtures the kind of “normative historiography” that Mazower writes about, and nurtures it in its starkest form.

IV

Theories of modernization predominate in many of the most important new studies concerned with the nineteenth-century history of Serbia. Andrei Shemiakin's *Ideology of Nikola Pašić*, based on a vast number of primary sources and bringing many new facts and findings, is an example of a well-researched topic. However, the theoretical framework of this book is the “challenge of modernization”. It stresses in particular the conflict between the “economic and cultural primitivism” of the traditional, backward, collectivist Serbian peasant society represented, according to the author, by the People's Radical Party, and the Serbian Progressive Party's modernizing, Europeanizing, ruling elite, which, relying on the “powerful state apparatus”, sought to impose “reforms from above”.³³ Pašić's populism and pragmatic references to Orthodoxy and Slavdom during his youthful years, at the time he was an émigré trying to secure Russia's support in his struggle against King Milan Obrenović, are taken as a proof of his anti-Western and

³¹ Mazower, *Balkans*, 86–88, 101–103, 111–112.

³² *Chelovek na Balkanakh v epohu krizisov i etnopoliticheskikh stolkovenii XX v*, eds. G. G. Litavrin and P. R. Grishina (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2002); *Chelovek na Balkanakh i protsessy modernizatsii. Sindrom otiagoshchennoi nasledstvennosti (poslednaia tret' XIX – pervaiia polovina XX v)*, eds. A. M. Vasil'ev and N. R. Ignat'ev (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2004); *Chelovek na Balkanakh i protsessy modernizatsii. Gosudarstvo i ego instituty: grimasy politicheskoi modernizatsii (poslednaia chetvrt' XIX – nachalo XX v)*, ed. P. R. Grishina (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2006); *Chelovek na Balkanakh: Sotsiokul'turnye izmereniia protsessa modernizatsii na Balkanakh (seredina XIX – seredina XX vv.)*, ed. P. R. Grishina (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2007); *Chelovek na Balkanakh. Vlast' i opshchestvo: opyt vzaimodeistviia (konets XIX – nachalo XX v)*, ed. P. R. Grishina (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2009); *Chelovek na Balkanakh glazami russkikh*, eds. P. R. Grishina and A. L. Shemiakin (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2011).

³³ Shemiakin, *Ideologiya Nikol'y Pashicha*, 21–37.

anti-modern beliefs. Such interpretation of Pašić's ideas is then projected onto the ideology of the People's Radical Party as a whole. The broader European, or even Balkan, context of the emergence of Serbian Radicalism is completely neglected in favour of an exclusively Russian, Slavic context. Even the basic introductory literature about the history of nineteenth-century Europe shows, however, that an ambivalent attitude towards modernity, and reliance on the peasantry in resisting rulers and their governments was actually characteristic of *European Radicalism*.³⁴ The general literature also makes it clear that it was precisely in the 1880s, the period covered by Shemiakin's book — i.e. at the beginning of the “age of the masses” — that mass, radical, democratic parties were emerging on the liberal left from Norway to Italy, and from France to Serbia and Bulgaria.³⁵ The vast existing literature on European radicalism as well as nationalism — which, judging precisely by the material assembled by Shemiakin, was the basis of Nikola Pašić's ideology — remains unused. What it shows is that nineteenth-century nationalism in all its diverse forms, particularly in “developing societies”, essentially was a modernizing, European ideology.³⁶

The manichean division of nineteenth-century Serbian society into patriarchal, primitive, traditional, “segmented”, pro-Russian rural communities, represented by the all-powerful Radicals, and the enlightened, pro-Western, Progressive bureaucracy in the service of the modernizing state, is taken to extremes in Holm Sundhaussen's *History of Serbia from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century*.³⁷ According to this author, the supremacy of the “anti-modernizing” Radicals in Serbia in the crucial transitional period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is not merely typical of the chronic late-running of Serbian modernization, but is also related to the conquests and ethnic cleansing that the Serbs engaged in during the twentieth century, since 1912. Traditional Serbian society, stubborn and

³⁴ See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution. Europe 1789–1848* (London: Abacus, 2001), 155–157, 299–305.

³⁵ Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders, Europe 1800–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 311–314; Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed 1878–1919* (Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1984), 42–73; Michael D. Biddis, *The Age of Masses. Ideas and Society in Europe since 1870* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 29–40; Pavlowitch, *History of the Balkans*, 130–131, 138–139.

³⁶ See Andrej Mitrović, “Karakteristična crta današnjeg veka'. Jedan izvor o modernom mentalitetu u Srbiji – analiza dopisa Nikole Pašića od 8/20. marta 1872”, *Istorijski časopis* 42–43 (1995–96), 117–118. For an overview of theories of nations and nationalism, see *Nationalism*, eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁷ Holm Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens: 19.–21. Jahrhundert* (Viena etc.: Böhlau, 2007) (Serb. ed. 2008).

unmoving like a rock, resisted the tide of modernization, while its intellectuals, from Vuk Karadžić and Njegoš to Jovan Cvijić, promoted the damaging myth of Kosovo, the *hayduk* ethic, collectivism and violence. Combined together, this purportedly created a dangerous mixture which during the twentieth century, with some brief breaks, such as the period of Tito's Communist rule, consistently threatened neighbouring peoples and nations.³⁸

Sundhaussen's book resembles an indictment in many respects, as it finds the roots of the crimes of the 1990s in the depths of Serbian history, as far back as the Battle of Kosovo (1389) and the epic poetry of the pre-modern period. Sundhaussen states in the introduction that he has no wish to act as prosecutor, judge or defence lawyer, but hastens to add that he sees himself as a "court expert or investigative judge, as someone who provides leads, collects evidence, interrogates and metes out..."³⁹

In nineteenth-century Serbia, according to some parameters, industry, agriculture, transport and education were indeed underdeveloped, even by Balkan standards. This can be seen particularly clearly from the comparative statistics relating to Serbia for the period between 1834 and 1914, a truly precious work Sundhaussen published in 1989.⁴⁰ The appearance of this book was an important event, as it opened up a series of new research questions revolving around the theme of Serbia's "delayed progress". However, Sundhaussen's *History of the Serbs* offers few inspiring answers or rational interpretations of this phenomenon; it is rather Marie-Janine Calic's *Social History of Serbia 1815–1941* that does this. Among a number of factors, she stresses several laws passed in Serbia in the 1830s, which, in her opinion, hindered economic competition and preserved the traditional social structure.⁴¹

In his *History of Serbia*, Sundhaussen offers his own explanation of Serbia's "delay". What is contentious, however, is the contemporary political context within which he places her "delayed progress". The view that the Serbs, precisely in the nineteenth century, turned away from modernity as the path to universal salvation, only to find themselves at the historical dead-end of the twentieth century, enslaving and murdering members of other nations in the process, beginning in 1912, is one of key premises of the current revision of Serbia's history. Sundhaussen obviously borrows this kind of explanation from German *Sonderweg* theories, which interpret the existence and crimes of the Third Reich as the result of delayed modern-

³⁸ Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije*, 108–127, 206–230.

³⁹ Ibid. 28.

⁴⁰ Holm Sundhaussen, *Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834–1914. Mit europäischen Vergleichsdaten* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989).

⁴¹ Čalić, *Socijalna istorija Srbije*, 417–429.

ization in nineteenth-century Germany. What is particularly interesting is that Sundhaussen has been able to find such strange comparisons and interpretations even in Serbian historiography. This, however, is an altogether different topic going beyond the scope of this article.

Mark Mazower, on the other hand, finds an explanation for the misfortunes of the Balkans precisely in the phenomenon of “modernity”. His explanation appears quite convincing, and deserves to be quoted:

They [historians] have drawn on supposedly universal models of economic development and political democratization in order to understand why Balkan states and societies have remained poor and unstable and have not turned out as they should have done. But it is questionable whether relative poverty in southeastern Europe—or indeed the politics of ethnic violence—can really be explained as marks of backwardness. Since the ethnic mix of the Balkans has remained remarkably unchanged for centuries—during most of which there was no ethnic conflict at all—why is it only in the last one or two centuries that the cocktail became politically volatile? Contemporary contingencies of mass politics and urban, industrial life, the rise of new state structures and the spread of literacy and technology may well turn out to be as important in the Balkans as the supposed eternal verities of religious fracture, peasant rootedness and ethnic cleavage.⁴²

Even less than well-informed social scientists consider “modernization theories” to be rather archaic and only occasionally usable relics of the 1950s and 1960s; judging the quality of the democratic “superstructure” through the state of the economic and social “base” (no industry and no strong middle class, no democracy) belongs to even older times. Immanuel Wallerstein, Edward Said and many others warn that theories of modernization are regularly used as an ideological tool of Western imperial and colonial interests. According to them, modernization is another name for Westernization, the process which aims to impose Western dominance and destroy indigenous cultures.⁴³ Historians of twentieth-century totalitarianism and mass atrocities also increasingly stress their modern roots. Thus, Mazower notes that the Nazis in their destruction of the Jews relied on modern, quasi-scientific racial theories, modern technology and education rather than on medieval, pre-modern ideas. According to him, the root of

⁴² Mazower, *Balkans*, xliii.

⁴³ See Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (New York/London: The New Press, 2006), 33–34, 46–47, 75–76; Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books and Random House, 1981), 29–35; Bill Aschroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2001), 126–127; John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 140–172.

the evil lies in the modern state and its authoritarian, professional bureaucracy⁴⁴ — precisely those actors among which Sundhaussen and Shemiakin identify the driving force of modernizing, pro-European change when it comes to Serbia.⁴⁵ This focus on the role of the modern state and bureaucracy in the mass atrocities of the twentieth century brings Mazower's ideas closer to the conclusions drawn by the influential sociologist and historian Michael Mann who, in his book *The Dark Side of Democracy*, goes even further and claims that ethnic cleansing can be linked to democracy and civil society, as well as that it “has been a part of our modernity and civilisation”.⁴⁶ It is not only Nazism and Bolshevism that reveal the dangers of “modernity”; the destruction of whole populations were projects undertaken by ideal-type modern, liberal states of the nineteenth century such as Britain, Holland, France, America or Australia in their colonial wars. In *Hitler's Empire*, Mazower compares the attitude of Hitler's Empire towards European peoples, especially the Slavs, to the treatment that native, non-European peoples were subjected to in America and in modern, liberal colonial empires. According to Mazower, in Slavic Eastern Europe Hitler was eager to use the experience of America and the British Empire in colonizing lands of the American and Asiatic “inferior races”.⁴⁷

V

As we have seen, delayed modernization and the ideological origins of Serbian Radicalism figure among the key themes in the contemporary reassessment of Serbian nineteenth-century history. Historiography has, however, long ceased to lay claim to final truth; hence a divergence of opinion on these issues.

In examining the causes of Serbia's “delayed development”, Traian Stoianovich, as a student of Fernand Braudel, is closer to the former director of *Fernand Braudel Center* at Binghamton University, Immanuel Wallerstein, and his theories regarding the “world system” and global economic

⁴⁴ Mark A. Mazower, “Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century”, *The American Historical Review* 104/7 (2002), 1147–1151.

⁴⁵ It is from there that the praise for the Serbian Constitutionalists and Progressives comes from: Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije*, 79–80; Shemiakin, *Ideologija Nikoly Pashicha*, 33, 35–36. Sundhaussen (*Istorija Srbije*, 89) even describes the rule of the Constitutionalists (1839–1858) as “dictatorship of modernity”.

⁴⁶ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18–23.

⁴⁷ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire. Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin Books) 2009 (1st ed. 2008), 556–561, 581–590.

interdependence. Apart from internal obstacles to modernization, Wallerstein also stresses the influence of external actors, through unequal terms of exchange and the colonial control of the “core” over the “periphery”.⁴⁸ In Stoianovich’s view, among the factors that delayed Serbia’s industrialization were the consequences of wars, beginning with the wars of 1804–1815, a fear of competition from the Habsburg Empire, but also the monopolies the neighbouring Empire sought to establish over the Serbian economy.⁴⁹

Gale Stokes, in his book focused on the role of the People’s Radical Party in the emergence of political party life in Serbia, uses this Balkan principality as a case in point for the political system that is not necessarily a reflection of the social and economic situation in the country. Keeping to the limits of modernization theories, Stokes argues that “by most standards Serbia in the nineteenth century was a backward country”, but also that it had established a political system which “had every appearance of being modern”.⁵⁰ The system, of course, “did not work perfectly”; yet, “the fact remains that this almost completely peasant nation, without the complex socioeconomic structure that we associate with functioning democracies, had built a relatively sophisticated political structure based on the best models of the nineteenth-century liberal state.”⁵¹ Stokes also notes that all three major political parties in Serbia were pro-Western and pro-modernization; in their struggle to monopolize the interpretation of the national idea, the Radicals merely went further than the Liberals and Progressives, basing their theories of popular sovereignty on the inclusion of the broadest possible cross-section of society in politics as well as on the new, mass emotional nationalism of the 1880s.⁵² In his conclusion, Gale Stokes stresses that the main sphere in which modernization occurred in Serbia in the nineteenth-century was not society or industry, but politics.⁵³

John Lampe embraces the conclusions put forward by Stokes, observing that the Serbian Radicals quickly abandoned their utopian peasant socialism, in order to adapt their programme to that of the French Radicals. However, according to Lampe, the struggle for national unification prevented the Radicals and Progressives from pursuing internal modernization; instead, they built the institutions of government on weak foundations dependent on a backward, rural economy.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ This is also noted by Čalić, *Socijalna istorija Srbije*, 13.

⁴⁹ On these and other causes, see Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, 100–103 and 288–293.

⁵⁰ Stokes, *Politics as Development*, 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 2.

⁵² *Ibid.* 296 and 299–306.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 306.

⁵⁴ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 54.

Dennis Hupchick also sees the Radicals, along with the Progressives, as “Western-leaning” and “espousing liberal-democratic ideals”, while Tom Gallagher on the other hand sees Radicals as “isolationists” and “nationalists” with explicit territorial ambitions.⁵⁵ Interestingly, Georges Castellan is also among those who stress the Russian, populist, socialist origins of their ideas.⁵⁶ In his *History of the Balkans*, Stevan Pavlowitch presents the evolution of the Radicals from Russian populism to French leftist republicanism and Swiss radicalism, while also noting that their “role in the modernization of Serbia is subject to controversy”.⁵⁷ In his *Serbia: the History behind the Name*, Pavlowitch no longer mentions this controversy; instead, apart from the French and Swiss models as obviously inspiring for the Radicals, he also highlights the indirect influence of British parliamentary practices and procedures.⁵⁸

VI

There are several other topics which are considered important in international historiography within the ongoing revision of nineteenth-century Serbian history. The First and Second Serbian Uprisings have, for the most part, not been subjected to revisionism but, much like events from more recent Serbian history, they continue to attract the attention of historians. Sundhassen remains relatively isolated in questioning the use of the term *Serbian Revolution*, forged early on by Ranke, to refer to these events. He argues that it is more appropriate to speak of peasant uprisings than of a revolution.⁵⁹ Phillip Longworth, for his part, does not believe that nationalism played a significant role in these events.⁶⁰ However, Traian Stoianovich stresses that, as in the case of Bulgaria and Greece, what actually took place was also a national and social revolution which swept away the existing class structures in order to replace them with institutions modelled on those that were being established in Western Europe. In his opinion, the Balkan revolutions remained incomplete inasmuch as they failed to create a social basis, in particular a middle class, which would have been able to guarantee

⁵⁵ Hupchick, *Balkans*, 282; Gallagher, *Outcast Europe*, 57.

⁵⁶ Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans*, 327.

⁵⁷ Pavlowitch, *History of the Balkans*, 126, 127.

⁵⁸ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Serbia: The History behind the Name* (London Hurst & Co., 2002), 69 (Serb. ed. 2004).

⁵⁹ Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije*, 76.

⁶⁰ Longworth, *Making of Eastern Europe*, 176–177.

the stability of the new system in the face of wars and other difficulties.⁶¹ Stoianovich's original contribution is also in his linking the beginning of the Serbian Revolution with the millenarian expectations of messianic liberation which, as he observes, had spread among the Serbs in the second half of the eighteenth century;⁶² this argument is accepted by Pavlowitch and Lampe.⁶³

The role of Kosovo, epic folk poetry, Vuk Karadžić reforms, Njegoš's *Mountain Wreath* and Garašanin's *Draft* in shaping Serbian national ideology are pet topics in the revision of Serbian history that is currently under way. In short, some of the most recent studies belonging to this category seek to prove that the traditions of the Serbian people and the cultural heritage stemming from them, such as the poem *Mountain Wreath*, set the stage for the persecution of Muslims in the twentieth century, and that Vuk Karadžić and Ilija Garašanin provided a political blueprint for the conquest of non-Serbian territories and the creation of "Greater Serbia". Blaming individuals from past centuries for present-day events is clearly an anachronism; yet, the inapplicability of such a view is not proportional to its actual influence. The works of Michael Sells and Branimir Anzulovic, experts on the "genocidal tradition" in Serbian history, are quoted particularly often.⁶⁴ Their key arguments are accepted, for instance, by Holm Sundhaussen and Tom Gallagher.⁶⁵ John Lampe is also among those who condemn Njegoš for dedicating himself, in his *Mountain Wreath*, to avenging Kosovo and expelling the local Turks rather than to the ideas of the Enlightenment.⁶⁶ Perhaps as a result of this, Elizabeth Roberts, the writer of the latest history of Montenegro, touches upon *Mountain Wreath* only very briefly, avoiding any deeper discussion of this poem. However, not even she shies away from mentioning the interpretations that place the responsibility for the crimes perpetrated in the late twentieth century on Njegoš, and from expressing bemusement at his voluntary submission to Serbia's policies, personified in Ilija Garašanin.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, 175–178.

⁶² Ibid. 168–170.

⁶³ Pavlowitch, *Serbia*, 28; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 48.

⁶⁴ Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁶⁵ Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije*, 108–127; Gallagher, *Outcast Europe*, 57–59.

⁶⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 57.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain: A History of Montenegro* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 186–189, 134–135 and 214–215.

As for Garašanin's *Draft*, there have been some serious monographs. Konstantin Nikiforov's book, which critically examines the extent to which Garašanin's ideas were suited to the reality of his time and how successful his plans were, is a case in point.⁶⁸ Traian Stoianovich and Stevan Pavlowitch are among those who stress the economic aspect of the *Draft*, particularly its demand for access to the sea in order to wrest Serbia from her trade dependence on the Habsburg Empire.⁶⁹

When it comes to Serbia's involvement in the Balkan Wars, there is very little divergence of opinion. With some honest exceptions, the examination of the Balkan Wars boils down to the view that what was at work was the Serbian occupation of non-Serb areas and systematic destruction of the Albanian people. What has become the most frequently quoted contemporary source is the pro-Bulgarian *Report* of the Carnegie Endowment which places most of the blame for the expulsions that took place in Macedonia on the Greeks and Serbs.⁷⁰ The Serbian army's repression against Albanian civilians has been a long-known fact, and it constitutes an important and legitimate research topic. What is surprising, however, is the silence about Albanian violence against the Serbs in Kosovo, particularly the systematic mass expulsion carried out in 1878–1912. Where such events are mentioned at all, as in Noel Malcolm's *Kosovo*, they are mentioned in order to deny that the Serbs experienced any real suffering⁷¹ or, as in Sundhussen, a few words on the matter are slipped into a long and detailed description of the suffering of Albanians at the hands of Serbs.⁷² In both cases, what is stressed is that everything that happened to the Serbs was the consequence of the Serbian persecution of the Albanians which had begun in 1878, and that the misfortunes of the Serbs in Kosovo, if there were any at all, cannot compare with the mass crimes of Serbs against Albanians in 1878.⁷³

⁶⁸ Konstantin V. Nikiforov, *Serbia v seredine XIX v. (nachalo deiatel'nosti po ob"edineniiu serbskikh zemel')* (Moscow: Institut slavianovedenia i balkanistiki, 1995). See also Nikiforov's text in the volume relating to this period *Mezhdunarodnyie otnosheniia na Balkanakh 1830–1856 gg.*, ed. Vladlen N. Vinogradov (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 132–147.

⁶⁹ Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, 103; Pavlowitch, *Serbia*, 44–46.

⁷⁰ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914) (reprinted ed. 1993), 148–207. See also Ivan Ilchev, "Karnegievata enketa prez 1913 g. Obstanovka, izvrshvane i mezhdunaroden otzvuk", *Istoricheski pregled* 45/10 (1989), 15–28.

⁷¹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 228–238.

⁷² Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije*, 237–243.

⁷³ For this approach to Serbia's role in the Balkan wars, see also Mazower, *Balkans*, 118; Gallagher, *Outcast Europe* 66; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 94–95.

In his monograph on the Balkan Wars, Richard Hall carefully analyzes the military operations. Yet, quite in the spirit of the current trend of elevating empires above nations, he presents the successes of the Balkan allies as satisfying nationalist appetites at the expense of a multinational, Ottoman, empire. Although this author is not familiar with the violence perpetrated by Albanians against Serbs after 1878, he at least does not look at the Serbian repression of Albanians outside the context of mutual violence and recrimination among Balkan peoples.⁷⁴ In his *Balkan Worlds*, Traian Stoianovich places the mutual expulsions of 1912–13, as well as those that took place later in the twentieth century, within the context of forced relocations of different ethnic and religious groups that different empires, from the Roman and Byzantine to Ottoman, had been carrying out in the Balkans for centuries.⁷⁵ *The Balkan Wars* of André Gerolymatos, which covers much more than the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, is a good example of a historian's desire to understand rather than to use the past.⁷⁶

Surprisingly, neither the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand nor the beginning of the First World War is subjected to the same deep-going revision as the Balkan Wars. A rising star of Anglo-Saxon historiography, Niall Ferguson, ever favourably inclined towards powerful empires and disparaging of small troublemakers, argues in his history of the First World War that Serbia's foreign policy of the time deliberately sought to provoke conflict, and describes it as a nationalist version of Lenin's "the worse the better" principle. However, not even he claims that the Serbian government was aware of the preparations for the Sarajevo assassination.⁷⁷ In principle, most historians of the Balkans are more cautious than Ferguson when it comes to attributing the blame for the First World War. There is a clear stress on, but little glorification of, the "modernizing" successes of the Habsburg regime in Bosnia.⁷⁸ Robin Okey, in *The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878–1914*, places Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia within the context of the "age of empires" and points to its colonial nature.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 136–138.

⁷⁵ Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, 199–200.

⁷⁶ André Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Conquest, Revolution and Retribution from the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

⁷⁷ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914–1918* (London: Basic Books, 1999), 146–147.

⁷⁸ Mazower, *Balkans*, 107; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 64–68, 79–81; Gallagher, *Outcast Europe*, 68–69. Malcolm, *Povijest Bosne*, 187–209, paints a positive picture of Austro-Hungarian rule, as well as Hupchick, *Balkans*, 316–317.

⁷⁹ Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism*, vii–viii, 220. The colonial nature of Habsburg rule in Bosnia is noted by Mazower, *Balkans*, 103; Pawlowitch, *Serbia*, 76.

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Scientific advances are impossible without re-examining long-accepted views. Yet, the re-evaluation of nineteenth-century Serbian history which is currently under way has little to do with the advancement of knowledge. What is at work is not a desire to understand the past, but rather the intent to accommodate the past to the present. The victors do write history, but not forever; their interpretations last only as long as their power.

One of the major causes of the declining quality of historical studies on Serbia's nineteenth-century history lies in the fact that, over the last two decades, a generation of historians whose contribution to global knowledge is undisputable has been departing from this world: Michael Boro Petrovich, Wayne Vucinich, Traian Stoianovich, Dimitrije Djordjevic. However, good academic work continues to be published in the face of temptation. In times such as these, it becomes clearer than ever that the basic method of historians, with all perfected techniques and increased knowledge, is the audacity to confront one's own *intent*; that, coupled with honesty, prevents us from making unfounded claims.

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