

BALKAN STUDIES: SELECTED GENERAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
ISSUES

Introduction

It is a characteristic feature of Balkan studies, as, indeed, of the regional studies in general, that they are lacking both a coherent and uniform theory and satisfying methods of inquiry. From among a whole range of unsettled topics two seem to occupy the prominent place, i.e., an adequate way of defining what a region really is as a subject of research, and its mode of existence. What is more, a region cannot, by any means, be discussed exclusively in the categories of space and time; it is, in the first place, an area inhabited by people. Therefore, the most important and, at the same time, the most difficult task is taking into account the human factor.

The regional studies, it seems, should be based on a three-dimensional approach, one considering the spatial, temporal and human factors.

This paper discusses these problems on the example of Balkan studies.

Subject of research

Any discussion of the very notion of a region as the subject of scientific research must inevitably involve seeing the problem from the epistemological-ontological perspective. This lends precision to the drawing up of methodological assumptions on which regional studies should be founded. The adoption of definite methodological foundations largely determines the final effects of research. Contemporary social sciences are methodologically greatly diversified, and so are the results of their research.

The notion of a region perceived by various disciplines (such as geography, ecology, history, political sciences, sociology, international law, etc.) is to a large measure indistinct as a consequence of the adoption of variegated methodological approaches characteristic for each scientific discipline. This state of affairs also facilitates this notion being used in various meanings, again in conformity with the specificity of each discipline. Therefore an attempt

at a critical analysis of its usages must lead to considerations of a somewhat more general nature.

The epistemological assumptions are of a momentous significance for constructing a theory which, on the basis of the adopted methodological foundations, is used to examine a given problem. This is, in the first place, the question concerning the relation between the cognitive subject and the object of cognition. This also concerns the possibilities of cognition of reality as well as producing adequate, knowledge about it. The entire set of notions which are being made use of by various branches of science should be warranted by a possibly full correspondence between methods of research and the subject of research. Vagueness of notions and a lack of correlation between them and the examined reality gives in effect theories which do not conform to the criterion of truth.

However, is it at all possible to ensure a full correlation between terminology of various sciences and the true reality? Do these notions have any existential foundations in reality or else are they only mental constructions arrived at in the process of constructing the methodological foundations of a given science?

A rejection of such an approach ultimately leads to favouring formal analysis frequently devoid of any connection with the reality. This can be clearly observed in contemporary social sciences and especially those ones which are founded on neopositivist-scientist assumptions (e.g., behaviourism is a specific case here). The outcome of such an approach is "the increasing experimental impoverishment of social reality as presented in behavioural writings which are accompanied by the growing abstractness of theorizing and conceptualization"¹. In such a case clearly demonstrated is the one-sidedness of quantitative methods which are based on formal constructs (models) used to describe and interpret the reality. Ultimately, the subject of investigation is subsequently being split into individual units, i.e., factors, which renders impossible an approach in categories of a whole. What can be observed is "the tendency of behaviouralism to divide the world into antinomies and thus to split facts or moments of continuous dimensions or process of human existence from one another..."².

An alternative approach may be the one which takes as its starting point

1. H. G. Reid, E. J. Yanarella: "Political Science and the Post-Modern Critique of Scientism and Domination" in: *The Review of Politics*, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, vol. 37, no. 3, 1975, p. 290.

2. *ibidem*.

the ontological analysis which differs from that founded on the scientist assumptions. As an example we can give the phenomenological approach. The eminent Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden distinguishes three basic groups of ontological questions:

1) existential-ontological questions relating to the existence of a given object and to the mode of its existence;

2) formal-ontological problems concerning the question of whether an object "Is a thing (has a form of a thing) or is it a process or a relation, etc."³.

3) material-ontological problems concerning the question whether a given object is discussed from the point of view of its "material" (qualitative) distinguishing moments. According to Ingarden "an exhaustive knowledge of a thing must be achieved on metaphysical as well as ontological planes in every one of its directions. As it is only the form, the material features and existence of an object constitute in a specific way the entirety of its beings"⁴.

Of particular importance from the point of view of the object of interest of this paper are those assumptions which relate to existential-ontological issues. Ingarden introduces two fundamental notions. The first one regards the mode of existence (*modus existentiae*), and the second one refers to the existential moment (*momentum existentiae*). He states: "The reality of something (factuality, real existence, ideal existence of something, potentiality of something)—these are some of the modes of existence"⁵. In both cases we are faced with a description of objects from the point of view of their mode of existence. Reality or potentiality define the existential nature of the object. It is not easy to become aware of the existential nature of a thing. Ingarden writes "we are beginning to grow aware of the fact that what in everyday life and even within the exact sciences seems *obvious* and *clearly understood* i.e., that we know what the *reality* of a real thing is or what is the *idealness* of the existence of a mathematical object, is in point of fact not all that clear. On the contrary, it is immensely difficult to realize what is *reality*, *potentiality* in an empirical sense or in a sense of pure possibility, the *idealness of existence* etc."⁶.

In order to be able to specify this problem more precisely, Ingarden uses the notion of an existential moment. "The modes of existence are contrasted

3. Roman Ingarden: *Spór o istnienie świata* (Dispute over the Existence of the World), vol. 1., Kraków 1947, p. 68. There also exists a German version of this work: *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*, vols. 1-3, Tübingen 1964-1975.

4. *ibid.*, p. 69.

5. *ibid.*, p. 80.

6. *ibid.*, p. 88.

with moments of being as something that can be extracted in an abstract way from individual modes of existence of an object., something that, however, cannot of its nature be separated from its mode of existence in which it was distinguished. The perception of a moment of being in the mode of existence of a thing is a second-degree abstraction... the moments of being occur only within the limits of individual modes of existence”⁷.

In his analysis Ingarden distinguishes four pairs of opposite moments of existence:

- 1) existential autonomy (self-being) - existential heteronomy (non-self-being);
- 2) existential primariness - existential derivativeness;
- 3) existential self-dependence - existential non-self-dependence;
- 4) existential independence - existential dependence⁸.

A question now arises as to the applicability of the above distinctions to methodological foundations of regional studies. It seems that they may prove helpful in two aspects i.e., one, in an attempt to define the bases related to the subject of research itself, and, two, in an analysis of the content of the notion of a region from the viewpoint of discernible existential moments.

Ethymologically the notion of a region derives from the Latin *regio-onis* which basically means a direction, line, location, and, in the second instance, a border-line, part of the world, neighbourhood, area, range. Other meanings include: a land, a small administrative district, a town quarter. Thus it refers to spatial relations. It defines a process of delimitation, of setting the boundaries. From the epistemological point of view the notion of a region is directly related to the process of distinguishing something on the basis of data obtained from a perception of specific parts to which a certain mode of independence is ascribed. This in turn leads to an ontological problem of a relationship between a part and a whole.

However, the basic problem is of an existential nature. In what sense can we speak of a region as a definite object from the point of view of its mode of existence? Is it an object with real existence or a possible (ideal) thing? No definite answer can be provided here. The object called a “region” remains a singularly complex aggregate the mode of existence of which cannot be explicitly defined. We cannot consider here a situation of a “transition” from one mode of existence to another. Ingarden writes, “One and the same thing

7. *ibid.*, p. 89.

8. *ibid.*, p. 90.

cannot first exist in one mode of existence and than in another. Or, to put it in other way, the diversity of a mode of existence does not preclude the identity of this subject"⁹. This means that a real existence of a region does not preclude its possible existence i.e., one, which occurs in case of individual branches of science which approach the region in a selective way in accordance with their metodological assumptions and scope of research. However, such an approach to the region i.e., in conformity with the specificity of a given branch of science does not correspond to the real existence of a region. Neither can this problem be solved by way of an apriori assumption of an existence of a real region. The existential-ontological analysis (i.e., in terms of existential moments) may in effect give a more precise definition of the content of the notion of a region. The question is in what sense can we distinguish a region as an autonomous unit; in what sense can we speak of its existential primariness, self-dependence, independence (or to discern opposite moments). In case of such a complex aggregate as the region it is indispensable to define also its form as well as its material defining moments. Such an analysis proves exteremely difficult if not dubious (in a sense of its feasibility). On the other hand, a demonstration of a need for such an analysis brings into sharp relief the vagueness of the notion of a region, as it is used in everyday conversation as well as in scientific discussion.

Without undertalking such an analysis here, some general implications relevant for regional studies should be pointed out in this place. In a regional analysis one can discern three (mutually conditioning) planes which constitute a basis for its existential-formal-material-ontological characteristic. These are:

- 1) Natural conditions of a given area including all the elements connected with its physical configuration as well as its ecological-biological features (i.e., environment-faune-flora). All these are discussed mainly in spatial categories which, in turn, form the basic features of a given area distinguishing it from other territories. Natural configuration of a given area constitutes its principal existential foundation (i.e., in a material sense).

- 2) Temporal conditions connected with the fact that a given area is subject to change which can be stated in categories of development. As regards the existential basis of a given area it is subject to relatively small change it discussed in historical categories. They become only more visible in geological categories. This explains why the natural conditions are the most stable elements of a region.

9. *ibid.*, p. 84.

3) Social conditions are connected with the emergence of the human factor. It is built in the temporal-spatial conditionings, which constitute a central point of reference. The activity of man is chiefly connected with the historical dimension measured against a specific time-scale related to the development of interpersonal relations in the value-creating process. The historical dimension is of principal significance for regional studies, which cannot be undertaken without it. It is also the most subtle and the most complex level in the functioning of a given area. The omission of the human factor in historical categories deprives the regional studies of their sense: as a region can only exist for man and through him.

As far as the social conditionings of the region are concerned, there can be discerned three groups of problems:

- political problems connected with the shaping of state institutions and structures;
- economic-social problems encompassing the economic activity and the resultant forms of social life;
- axiological problems connected with the shaping of systems of values.

The above groups of problems should be dealt with in spatial-temporal categories. The spatial-temporal conditionings constitute for them the existential basis. This means that social relations remain to a certain degree a function of spatial-temporal conditionings.

It seems that such an approach to regional studies provides a real foundation for an over-all discussion of the problem. It also helps to avoid dangers connected with the current trends in the social sciences and especially with the formal analyses which are chiefly based on quantitative methods and focussing on description and interpretation of current events (the so-called "presentism") with no consideration being given to a broader historical background. The latter cannot be overlooked if the regional studies are to yield any substantial results.

The methodological outline presented here mainly stresses a possibility to bring qualitative results understood as an attempt to capture the essence of reality (i.e., in this case of a region). This goal is to be achieved through analyses based on individual branches of science and their results should next be used to work out a comprehensive picture.

The Balkans as a Region

Proceeding from the above assumptions one must ask the fundamental question: in what way may the Balkans be defined as a region? The answer

is very complex and depends on the adoption of initial assumptions and methodological foundations. Using the principles of factor analysis, individual groups of subjects can be discerned as the basis for further considerations. The simplest rule of division gives the following four groups of factors: 1) natural factors; 2) political factors seen in the historical development; 3) socio-economic factors; 4) the value system including factors connected with cultural religious and moral elements. The adoption of such a model entails an analysis of individual groups of factors to be followed by an attempt at a synthesis. This, in turn, involves taking into account results worked out by various branches of science connected with a given area. Without it any analysis of this type would not be deep enough to reach the core of each of the elements constituting the subject of research treated as an integral, i.e., interdisciplinary, whole. In the case of Balkan studies, there exists a broad and widely recognized foundation which uses the individual branches of science¹⁰.

The assumptions presented here are only of a very general nature and make no claim to become a springboard for more detailed considerations.

1. The natural determinants remain in close connection with the geographical location of that part of Europe. The same regards its name. Numerous difficulties arise right from the beginning. The first one concerns the name of the area, and the second one is connected with the delimitation of its natural boundaries.

The name *Balkans* may be directly traced to the Ottoman conquest and is of Turkish origin. H. L. Kostanick observes in "The word Balkan means mountain in Turkish. The name is well chosen, because the peninsula is dominated by massive mountain chains and knots from the Dinaric Alps of the northwest and S-curved Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps of the northeast to the Pindus chains of Greece"¹¹. In the narrow meaning the name refers to a massive mountain range situated in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula. One may even come across a supposition that this narrow meaning corresponds with the ancient *ὁ Αἷμος* (latin: Haemus) found in Herodotus's writings. However, the opinions are divided¹².

10. The Balkan Studies (Balkanistic, Balkanology) is understood here as a multidisciplinary field of research. The principle research unit is a definite geographical and socio-historical area.

11. H. L. Kostanic, "The Geopolitics of the Balkans", in: Ch. and B. Jelavich: *The Balkan in Transition; Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century*, Berkely 1963, p. 2.

12. There is however no correspondence between the name of the Ancient *ὁ Αἷμος* and

The area is also called the Balkan Peninsula, but here, too, opinions vary especially with regard to its northern border¹³. The more so that the geographical criteria are not identical with the political ones¹⁴. For example, some authors include Hungary into the Balkans, others exclude Romania. It is similar with Turkey. Only a small part of its territory is situated on the Balkan Peninsula and it is an open question whether Turkey should be considered a European, and by the same token, Balkan Country. Here, the geographical aspect of the problem should be separated from a political-historical one. The historical context provides ample evidence for the ties of Turkey with the Balkans (from the formal point of view Turkey is still considered as Balkan state).

It is evident that the geographical configuration of the Balkan remains a stable element. However, the problem can be discussed from a different angle i.e., in what sense a perception of natural conditionings evolved in the historical process. The influence of the natural factor on the perception of the social processes in that area is still a matter of great significance. The prerequisites characteristic for geopolitical thinking take into consideration the natural location of the Balkans and they form a basis for the definition of the strategic significance of the Balkans in both regional and transregional meaning¹⁵.

Nevertheless, the factors related to the natural configuration of the Balkans remain to be one of the most permanent elements. On the other

the name of the Balkans in the narrow sense i.e., Old Planina (Stara Planina). This opinion was first expressed by Th. Fischer (Die Südeuropäische-Balkan-Halbinsel) in: *Länderkunde von Europa* Bd. 2, vol. 2, Vienna 1893 and confirmed by J. Cvijić in: *Balkansko Poluostrvo*, knj. 1, Zagreb 1922.

13. The geographical name Balkan Peninsula was introduced in the 19th c. by the German geographer A. Zeune (Versuch einer Wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung, Berlin 1809). The previous names for this area were: Turkish Europe, Greek Peninsula, Byzantine Peninsula, Illyrian Peninsula.

14. The differences mainly concern the northern boundaries of the Balkan Peninsula. Usually, the rivers Danube and Sava are considered the natural northern borders. According to A. Melnik a river cannot be considered a natural boundary at all. (Cf. A. Melnik: Meja med Balkanskim plotokonim evropskim trupom, *Glasnik Geogr. društva* no. 14, 1928). The area of the Balkan Peninsula varies depending on the northern border. If the borders are delimited by the rivers Danube and Sava then the area amount to 500 thousand square kilometers; if, however, the territories north of the Danube and Sava as well as northern Dobruja and the Aegean Archipelago are included the area will amount to 546,411 square kilometers. In both counts the territory of Romania remains excluded from the Balkan Peninsula.

15. F. W. Carter: *An Historical Geography of the Balkans*, New York 1977.

hand, the delimitation of the boundaries of this region is still a controversial matter which generates numerous other disputable problems. The natural configuration has a bearing on the sphere of social relations which are dealt with by a number of branches of science.

2. The current division of the Balkans can only be grasped fully on the historical grounds. Political factors are in strict connection with the changes in the historical process spanning dozens of years and centuries. In this sense the name *Balkans* is closely connected with factors of a dynamic nature.

This brings in effect a number of serious difficulties and lies at bottom of varying approaches to the Balkan studies. The term *Balkans* is commonly associated with the existence of six independent nation-states. But it must be remembered that the present state of affairs is the fruit of a not-so-long chain of events which started with the national awakening in the Balkans and the fight against the Ottoman yoke. The process was conditioned in equal measure by external and internal factors. In this sense the modern history of the Balkan nations is connected with the notion of national consciousness (taking into consideration the Western tradition of thinking about the process of construction of nation-states in the modern history of Europe). But this process took place under circumstances completely different from those which occurred in Western Europe, i.e., specific elements were responsible for the different course that this process took in the Balkans.

Moreover, this process was often disturbed by internal tensions between the Balkan nations as well as by external influence, i.e., the policy of European powers which sought to safeguard their interests in that part of Europe. In this sense the Balkans were often the object of political and diplomatic play between European powers resulting from the controversies between them. This limited the possibilities of the Balkan countries to meet their national aspirations. In the process of awakening of national consciousness among the Balkan countries an important role was played by their historical heritage and the endeavours to confirm their national identity¹⁶. The Greeks were

16. The notion of the Balkans in the political terms has a very specific nature and is linked with the aspects of the internal and external relations. In this sense, the political scope of the Balkans has undergone many crucial changes. This opinion was expressed by the leading Polish Balkanist Henryk Batowski. Analyzing the development of the political contents of the Balkans in the inter-war period (following the conclusion of the Balkan Alliance in 1934) he considered the Balkan territory to be 1,430,000 sq. kilometers (including Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia and excluding Albania and Bulgaria). In this case the notion of the Balkans had a trans-European meaning. The outbreak of World War Two and the failure

interested in their ancient origins on the one hand, and in the Byzantine tradition, on the other. The Romanians exposed their Gheto-Dacian descent, the Slavs linked their history with the beginnings of their own statehood (both Bulgarian and Serbian) dating back to the Middle Ages. The past was the source for drawing up tasks and aims and, in the first instance, it was used to justify such territorial shape of the modern state which should conform to historical reasons. National aspirations lay at the root of such concepts as the Grecian "Great Idea" (Μεγάλη Ιδέα), Romanian "Great România" (România Mare), Serbian "Great Serbia" or Bulgarian "Great Bulgaria". None of these has ever been fully put to life, while each gave rise to conflicts and contradicted the ambitions of other states of the region. Nonetheless, all these conceptions have played a significant role in the construction of modern states and contributed to the final political division in the Balkans¹⁷.

Many specialists express the view that the emergence of the Balkan national states started in the beginning of the 19th c. and ended with the Paris Peace Conference which made the final political divisions in the post-World War One Europe while the decisions about the political shape of the Balkans were completed by 1923¹⁸. The subsequent changes after World War Two were less significant but the question remains whether the correction in the territorial divisions of the Balkans after World War Two had managed to eradicate conflicts in that part of Europe. The answer is complex, while, doubtless, certain hotbeds of tension between the Balkan states still linger on, their weight is different, and they do not pose a threat to the status quo in the region¹⁹.

of the Balkan Alliance changed completely this political vision. See: H. Batowski: *Państwa Bałkańskie 1800-1923, Zarys historii dyplomatycznej i rozwoju terytorialnego* (The Balkan States 1800-1923, An Outline of History of Diplomacy and Teritorial Development), Kraków 1938, and his article: *Balkany. Kraje i Narody Bałkańskie. O zmianach w treści tych pojęć. The Balkans. Countries and Nations. On Changes in the Content of these Notions*, in: *Etnoğrafia Polska*, vol. 10, 1966, pp. 117-126.

17. There is a quite often shared opinion among the Western scholars that nationalism is a particular element in the development of the nations in the South-East Europe. See: "External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism", in: P. F. Sugar, I. J. Lederer (ed.): *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, London 1969.

18. H. Batowski expressed a view which confirms this statement. For him the crucial period in the process of creation of the modern state structure in the Balkans occurred between 1800 and 1923 (cf. footnote 16). Similar view may be found in Ch. and B. Jelavich: *The Establishment of the Balkan Nation States: 1804-1920*. Washington 1977.

19. H. L. Kostanick: in his analysis of the conflict situation on the Balkans formulated a thesis that "...problem area amount to more than a third of the land area of the Balkans and

Another problem is connected with the development of historiography of the Balkan area. Two orientations can be distinctly observed. The first one refers to a national-oriented approach. It is rooted in the very process of the emergence of independent states in the region and it finds its expression in the "national" schools of history, the principal goals of which were seeking grounds for national aspirations, establishing institutions of public life and attaining an adequate territorial status. This national-oriented approach animated the political activity of the newly established élites in the Balkans. But it would be a mistake to maintain that that orientation was solely based on subjective premises. The efforts of national-oriented historians valuably contributed to the knowledge of the historical development of the whole region as well as to the history of the particular nations. Besides, each nation has the right to its own history and can interpret its past in the way which satisfies its national ambitions²⁰.

The second orientation may be called "independent" or "objectivist". It is connected with the activity of local research centers both on the Balkans and outside. However, those foreign centers dealing with the Balkans were not free from a specific if not subjectivist bias as their results quite often served certain political goals connected with the particular interests of their states²¹.

It is, for that matter, a characteristic thing that the Balkan studies begun in the 19th c. in Austro-Hungary which were directly interested in that part of Europe. This interest on the part of Austro-Hungary and the other European powers was the chief driving force of research work centered on the Balkan region. The internal tensions, on the one hand, and, on the other, the importance of the external factor seem to point to a highly destabilized character

affect a fourth of the people. Every state of the Balkans is directly involved in territorial or ethnic problems, either with other Balkan neighbours or with non-Balkan nations", *op.cit.*, pp. 48-49.

20. Analysing the problem of Balkan historiography one may put a question if modern history is regional or national-oriented. It is evident that the second orientation prevails. The modern history of the Balkan area is based on the history of the Balkan nations, understood as the necessary ground for further research. On the Balkan historiography see: G. L. Soulis: Historical Studies in the Balkans in Modern Times, in: J. and B. Jelavich, *The Balkans in Transition...*, pp. 421-438.

21. The interest in the Balkan area studies is apparent in the non-Balkan countries too. The Balkan studies are very often linked with the Slavic studies (what is characteristic especially in non-Balkan East-European countries). The growth of the Balkan studies was marked in Germany, Great Britain and France in Western Europe and, following World War Two, in the United States, too. There exist no well-established centers of Balkan studies on many non-Balkan countries. See: *Slavianovedenye i Balkanistika za rubyehom*, Moscow 1980.

of the policy of the region. It was only with the period after World War Two that some stabilizing elements were introduced which have sprung from the over-all alignment of forces in Europe and the world at large. The Balkans have ceased to be a synonym of the permanent lack of stability or Europe's "powder keg". However, the situation today is far from being adequate to the requirements of the principles of regional security, nor does it provide for a total elimination of the intra-regional friction²².

The political factor cannot be taken in the abstract but has to be strictly connected with the real social processes taking place in that part of Europe, and must be viewed against the background of other factors. Only an integral approach seems to be capable of creating a proper perspective in which to understand the role and place of political factors in the process of constituting a given region (in this case the Balkans).

The analysis of political factors leads to a commonly shared opinion that the main lines of division of the Balkan region run along political and social (system) criteria which in effect give two groups of states. Such a division takes no account of all the subtle differences between individual states which are strictly connected with the autonomous trends adopted by individual states with regard to internal and external policy. Moreover, two contradictory tendencies should be considered here, the one connected with the existence of a certain tension between the Balkan states, and the other associated with the endeavours to create conditions conducive for natural cooperation and guarantees for regional security.

In this context, the role of great powers (the US and the Soviet Union) and the influence of the global and European conditionings (growth or decrease of tensions in the world) as well as regional and trans-regional situation (the existing tension in the Mediterranean region and in the Middle East which have a bearing on the Balkans) must be considered. The process of constructing of the European system of security on the basis of CSCE have a direct bearing on the Balkan region. Five Balkan states are signatories of the Helsinki Final Act and participate in the Belgrade and Madrid conferences.

The unstable and fluid character of the political factors does not eliminate a possibility to consider the Balkans as a semi-autonomous region. Taking

22. The most commonly shared opinions concerning the stability of the situation on the Balkans in our times point to the transitory character of the relations in that part of Europe. The stability depends, as many authors think, on the general European and global equilibrium. The changes in the stability structure may produce a growth of tension on the Balkans. See: *int.al.*, R. Petković: *Balkan, ni bure baruta ni zona mira*, Zagreb 1975.

into account the development of the historical processes in that part of Europe and the existence of other than political factors, it is possible to adopt a hypothesis (which is not founded on purely formal criteria) which assumes that the Balkans may be regarded as a region.

3. The socio-economic factors play a decisive role in the process of shaping (constituting) a semi-autonomous region. The homogeneity of the socio-economic factors can be already observed in case of the Balkans²³. There are many common traits characteristic in the sphere of natural conditionings which have influenced the economic development of the area, and the agricultural character of the Balkans in the past. The Ottoman rule created additional negative conditions for the development of modern socio-economic structures; on the contrary it was working against any kind of development. The process of liberation from the Ottoman rule was paralleled by a process of emergence of the middle class in the Balkans and embarking upon efforts to adopt modern means of production (industrialization). This process was however slow and hampered by both internal and external factors. The Balkans became a synonym of socio-economic underdevelopment and political lack of stability. A. Blanc mentions five basic elements responsible for the underdevelopment of that part of Europe: 1) the absolute preponderance of the agricultural sector of economy; 2) the archaic character of the Balkan agriculture; 3) the structure of the industrial sector of economy (i.e., the low stage of its development); 4) the deficit of the balance of foreign trade; 5) the absence of productive investments²⁴.

Prospects for a transformation of living conditions remained limited, while the process of more profound change in the socio-economic structure was too slow. The political independence of individual Balkan states created favourable but insufficient conditions for the implementation of objectives connected with the socio-economic re-structuring. Despite these unfavourable conditions the process of change continued in the Balkan states. It was only after World War Two that the qualitative change in the process of modernization became clearly visible²⁵. It proceeded in differentiated conditions in a sense of socio-political systems.

23. On homogeneity c.f.: G. W. Hoffman: *Regional Development in Southeast Europe. A Comparative Analysis of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia*, New York 1972.

24. A. Blanc: *L'Economie de Balkans*, Paris 1965, pp. 29-32.

25. E. Pournarakis makes a following statement: "By the usual conventional criteria the four Balkan economies although not mature enough to be classified as advanced or

The analysis of the economic structures of the Balkans points to a persisting and quite large degree of complementariness as far as the resources and energy is concerned. On the other hand, there are no sufficient multilateral instruments creative for all-Balkan cooperation. There exists a number of subjective and objective reasons which limit a more dynamic progress in this field, but despite this fact a network of mutual economic ties is expanding. Changes in the world economy, dwindling resources, inflation and the other negative phenomena should stimulate regional cooperation. This involves especially such fields as expansion of power supply systems, exploitation of natural resources and streamlining of transport systems, etc.

The analysis of socio-economic factors points to a number of common traits in the development of that part of Europe in the past. Similarly, at present clearly observable are factors conducive to the development of regional cooperation (on the grounds of resource-power-transport complementariness)²⁶. Political divisions, autarkic tendencies, expansion of a network of economic ties with the other parts of Europe (CMEA and EEC) limit the effectiveness of regional cooperation. Prospects for an invigoration of regional economic dealings and various forms of cooperation is still the question of the coming years and may prove quite successful. It also is important from the point of view of easing internal tensions and the construction of a regional structure of security.

4. The most complex situation can be observed in the field of value system. In the course of the historical transformations that system had undergone a number of changes. These were the effect of internal processes connected with the emergence of autonomous cultural patterns and with the external influence. Man's activity in the Balkan region reaches well back to the pre-historical period and is the subject of archeological investigation. The influence of both local and foreign cultures in the ancient times was of singular importance for the evolution of the system of values. Pre-Hellenic, Hellenic and Roman

industrialized they certainly do not belong in the Third World any longer". (The author includes into the Balkans the following countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia). Cf. E. Pournarakis: Development Integration in the Balkans in: *Balkan Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1978, p. 293.

26. The two Romanian scholars maintain that in the first half of the 70ties of this century there has occurred an evident growth of economic dependence between the Balkan nations. The effects of their research was demonstrated on a special scale of dependence. See: Prezenta Romanies in Circuitul Economic International și țările in Sud-Estul Europei, in: *România in Sud-Estul Europei*, Bucharest 1979, p. 211.

systems of values played a decisive role in the evolution of cultural life and civilization of the region. The emergence of the Byzantine Empire gave a new impetus, while the Ottoman conquest brought a total change of the situation and drastically curbed the process of creation of autonomous cultural entities. Under such circumstances, religion became the essential depository of independent local values. The Western influence in the modern era stimulated more radical changes and created conditions for national awakening of the Balkan nations. This process indicates the role and place of the national (ethnic) factor which was strictly connected with the old system of values. The mixture of universal and particular elements was characteristic for the period of awakening of national consciousness in the modern times. Differences which arose on ethnical grounds played a principal role in the creation of new values in the sphere of cultural life of that part of Europe. Nonetheless, the present structure of values which is visible in the individual aspects of life reveals also some common traits. These concern the spheres of language, common heritage of customs, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, the way of thinking etc. Mutual cultural contacts were very lively in the Balkans. The same may be said of the religious life and, in particular, of the position of orthodoxy in the history of the Balkan nations. The process of modernization proved conducive for the formation of universalistic, trans-national attitudes but, on the other hand, was incapable of shaking the existing cultural conditions²⁷.

The most important problem concerns the influence of those two groups of elements which remain strictly connected with the outcome of the modernization process and which bear on the changes in the social consciousness. What are the main prerequisites stimulating the awareness of a common heritage and being a part of a given region (being a part of a relatively autonomous whole). The question remains which elements win the upper hand: those solely connected with the national goals and trans-national alliances and ties, or those connected with the common past of the region and a need for a reciprocal (bi- and multilateral) cooperation. The question is still open and the answer depends on a number of factors which cannot be considered in the abstract but on the grounds of integral approach including the entire complexity of the value systems in the Balkan area.

27. The question concerning the autonomy of the local value system and the influence of the foreign patterns is very difficult. There is undoubtedly mutual convergence of those two groups of value systems (i.e., local and foreign) which produced peculiar mixture. This process must be considered in the historical dimension.

Conclusions

The problem of approaching the Balkans as a region should be connected with the subject of research. There are no methodological principles capable of forming a foundation for such a research. Particular branches of science have their autonomous methodological bases. Moreover, there can be clearly seen a tendency toward creating further divisions and even emergence of new sub-disciplines. This enables the working out a more general approach toward the subject of research. In this situation it is not possible to consider a given area—in this case the Balkans—as an independent entity. A tendency to analyse particular factors or groups of factors seems to prevail. This is an extensive-quantitative orientation, and such an approach offers no evidence on the existence of a region nor does it create methodological instruments for regional studies.

An opposite view adopts a qualitative-synthetic approach which takes account of a wholistic interpretation. This does not mean a negation of quantitative methods but puts stress on an integrative approach (inter- and trans-disciplinary methodology). In such comprehension, the main goal is directed toward the examination of those elements which constitute the regional identity. This approach opens a proper way towards regional studies.