

Under the Lid of the Balkan Cauldron

An analysis of Balkanist discourse in Norwegian
newspaper narratives of (post-)Yugoslavia

1980 - 1995



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Anders Christian Norum

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Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

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Preface

Yugoslavia, or rather The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as it was known at the time, was established in 1918. During the years between its creation and the outbreak of the Second World War, Yugoslavia was in a state of constant political tension between its constituent peoples. Between 1941 and 1945, a puppet government established by the Nazi allied Croat nationalist party, *Ustashe*, led the country. The opposition to the *Ustashe* terror regime consisted mainly of Serb nationalist *Chetniks* and Communist Partisans. At the end of the war, the Partisans seized power and established their leader, Josip Broz Tito, as Yugoslav president. Over the next three and a half decades, Tito would guide Yugoslavia through the most peaceful period of its existence. In the late 1970s, however, the federation's economic state and political unity began to deteriorate. Tito died in 1980. Throughout the following decade political tensions between the Yugoslav republics increased. In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. Civil war followed. Within a matter of months armed conflict had engulfed the entire country.

Southeastern Europe occupied in the mind of 'Western' journalists a role of 'mysterious other' even before the establishment of a South Slavic state. The journalistic coverage in Western Europe and the US of the 'Balkan wars' in 1912 and 1913 established lasting narratives of the region and its peoples as plagued by a constant presence of barbarous violence. These mental images of 'the Balkans' prevailed in 'Western' journalism in the years between 1918 and 1945. With Yugoslavia's position as a leading nation in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, depictions of 'the Balkans' as an inherently violent region decreased in frequency. However; in the years following Tito's death and the outbreak of civil war, old ideas of 'the Balkans' as 'the unruly corner of Europe' were revived in 'Western' journalism. Historian Maria Todorova labelled the derogatory and essentialist images created by this discourse as Balkanism.

This essay discusses the prevalence and nature of Balkanist discourse in Norwegian newspapers between 1980 and 1995. Through a qualitative analysis of articles published in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*, it tracks the development of stereotypical and derogatory narratives of Yugoslavia in the Norwegian press. This qualitative analysis is supported by a quantitative perspective on the post-1989 increase in Balkanist rhetoric. The thesis argues that Balkanist stereotypes established rigidly negative mental images of the Yugoslav peoples and the conflict between them in the Norwegian press. It sees the rise of Balkanist discourse as a consequence of two crucial factors – the lack of knowledge of Yugoslav society among Norwegian journalists in the 1990s, and of the general need for establishing who did, and who did not, belong on the Western European 'mental map' following the end of the Cold War.

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Chapter I: Thesis presentation

1.1 Introduction – ‘If no one attacks you’

In March 1980, the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet*'s editor and journalist Jahn Otto Johansen recounted a meeting between a functionary of the Yugoslav communist party and a foreign guest. The party functionary boasted about Yugoslavia's military capabilities. "Should anyone attack us," the Yugoslav host exclaimed, "we shall stand together as if we were one man!". "Yes," replied the guest pensively, "but what will happen if no one attacks you?"¹* Six weeks later, Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito passed away. In the days following Tito's death, another Norwegian newspaper, *Aftenposten*, described how "[...] the words 'unity and brotherhood' echo in the farewell speeches for the dead president, assuring that the six Yugoslav peoples will stay together in a future without Tito."² In the decade that followed, however, a crippling economic crisis would throw Yugoslavia into political turmoil. The late 1980s saw increased political tension between its peoples and the rise to power of nationalist politicians like Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman. In the summer of 1991, the Yugoslav federation plunged into one of the bloodiest wars seen on the European continent since 1945. Over the next nine years, 140 000 people would die. Another four million people would be displaced.³

However, while dramatic, Yugoslavia's descent into chaos was far from the only major political development taking place on the European stage in the late 1980s. In 1989, Moscow's grip on Europe crumbled as opposition movements across the eastern part of the continent rose against their communist oppressors. In December 1991, the USSR ceased to exist. Cold War was over. Following independence, an influx of formerly communist countries sought political and economic cooperation with the states of the traditional 'West'. During the Cold War, the notion of a Western European 'us' and an Eastern European 'them' had been characteristic of Western mental maps of Europe. Its borders ran neatly along the political dichotomy of the Iron Curtain. In the post-1989 political context, however, this mental map needed revision. Although a non-aligned country in the Cold War context, the timing of Yugoslavia's demise would see the

¹ Jahn Otto Johansen. "Jugoslavia uten Tito". *Dagbladet*. March 19, 1980, p. 3. *The accuracy of the facts presented in Johansen's anecdote is unclear. In a 1978 recount of the exact same conversation, Johansen described the Yugoslav functionary not as a host, but as a guest in a 'friendly country'. See: Jahn Otto Johansen. "Jugoslavisk frykt". *Dagbladet*. August 5, 1978, p. 6.

² Stein Savik. "Bølgende menneskehav i sorg fulgte Tito på hans siste ferd". *Aftenposten*. May 6, 1980 (morning edition), p. 8.

³ International Center for Transitional Justice. "The Former Yugoslavia". Retrieved November 6, 2023, from <https://www.ictj.org/location/former-yugoslavia>.

country thrown straight into this process of mental map making – a process that would determine who did, and perhaps more importantly, who did not belong in the ‘European family’.

Through it all, Norwegian journalists grappled with explaining the Yugoslav descent into chaos to their audience. By the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, fifteen years after Tito’s death, the Norwegian journalistic discourse was no longer emphasizing the ‘unity and brotherhood’ of the Yugoslav peoples. Instead, both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* had taken on a rhetoric that presented ‘the Balkans’ as a region forever doomed to violence, chaos, and barbaric bloodshed. This thesis will track the development of the Norwegian journalistic discourse on Yugoslavia as it changed between Tito’s death and the end of the Bosnian war. What characterized the discourse in Norwegian journalistic coverage of *antebellum* Yugoslavia during the 1980s? Did the end of the Cold War affect the development of this discourse? If so, how did this impact the Norwegian press coverage of the wars of Yugoslav secession between 1991 and 1995?

1.2 Balkanism – theory or interpretation?

This thesis applies as its main theoretical framework the idea of ‘Balkanism’ as discussed by Maria Todorova in her book *Imagining the Balkans*.⁴ In Todorova’s comprehensive study, first published in 1997, Balkanism can be understood as a discourse that “[...] molds attitudes and actions toward the Balkans”, forming “[...] the most persistent form of ‘mental map’ in which information about the Balkans is placed [...]”.⁵ Finding its footing “[...] primarily in in journalism and quasi-journalistic literary forms”, the Balkanist image of South-Eastern Europe is one of inherent bloodshed, barbarism, and ethnic conflict.⁶

Drawing on tales of horror of the region’s Ottoman imperial history, this blood splattered mental image of ‘the Balkans’ can, however, also contain parts of nostalgic longing in Western Europe for a supposed multiethnic paradise in some vague and long gone Balkan past. In this fundamental tension, found in the struggle between a mental image of barbaric primitivism and mythical beauty, Balkanism shares key components with Orientalism as described by Edward Said.⁷ Todorova herself states explicitly that she was inspired by Said’s work when she formed her theoretical framework.⁸ Both Balkanism and Orientalism are “discursive

⁴ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). First edition published in 1997.

⁵ Todorova, op.cit., p. 192.

⁶ Todorova, op.cit., p. 19.

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Random House Inc., 1979).

⁸ Todorova, op.cit., p. 192.

formations”, with the potential to serve as powerful metaphors.⁹ There are, however, key factors that distinguish Balkanist theory from Orientalist theory.

A central difference between the two theoretical frameworks is the positioning of the ‘Balkans’ versus the ‘Orient’ in Western mental geography. The ‘Orient’ is invariably and firmly placed on the outside of Europe. By contrast, Todorova emphasizes that ‘the Balkans’ occupy a form of bridging role on the European mental map, where religious beliefs and political traditions traditionally regarded as inherently ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ meet. The dividing lines that run between Islam and Christianity, as well as through the intra-Christian divides separating the Catholic from the Orthodox faiths, form a main narrative in Balkanist discourse. Not fully ‘Western’, but not fully ‘Eastern’ either, the ‘Balkans’ retain the status of a transitory cultural-political creature on the edge of Europe. “Unlike Orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition” Todorova writes, “Balkanism is a discourse about imputed ambiguity. [...] This in-betweenness of ‘the Balkans’, its transitional character, could have made it simply an incomplete other; instead it is constructed *not as other but as incomplete self*.”¹⁰ The prefix ‘semi-’, runs like a leitmotif through Balkanist rhetoric, labelling the region as semicivilized, semioriental, semicolonial and semideveloped.¹¹

The end of the Cold War in 1989 became a watershed moment for Balkanism in ‘Western’ journalistic discourse. Todorova argues that “[t]he Balkans as a geopolitical notion and ‘Balkan’ as a derogation were conspicuously absent from the vocabulary of Western journalists and politicians [after 1945]. [...] *The new wave of utilizing ‘Balkan’ and ‘balkanization’ as derogative terms came only with the end of the cold war and the eclipse of state communism in Eastern Europe.*”¹² She stresses that Balkanism is part of a “[...] ‘nomos-building activity’ involving the process of typification which confers knowability and predictability.”¹³ As this thesis will highlight, the sense of knowability and predictability brought on by Balkanist discourse would provide for the journalists a sense of much needed clarity in the confusing and violent wars between 1991 and 1995.

However, the perceived knowability and predictability brought on by the ‘nomos-building’ Balkanist discourse also veiled the muddled nature of some basic and important concepts. One such concept was the question of what constituted ‘the Balkans’ as a geographic designator in the first place. Geographic designators such as ‘Yugoslavia’ held a more neutral

⁹ Todorova, op.cit., p. 194.

¹⁰ Todorova, op.cit., pp. 17-18. Emphasis added.

¹¹ Todorova op.cit., p. 16.

¹² Todorova, op.cit., p. 136. Emphasis added.

¹³ Todorova, op.cit., p. 116.

symbolic value as the name of a country among many others in Europe. By contrast, the designator of 'the Balkans' was not even always referring to the same region in Europe. While 'Yugoslavia' invariably referred to the six Yugoslav republics, 'the Balkans' could, depending on context, refer to either/or the Yugoslav republics, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Greece, and others. Katherine E. Fleming argues that "'Balkan,' clearly, is as much a conceptual designator as a geographic one [...]".¹⁴ Pål Kolstø ventures even further than Fleming, stressing that term 'Balkan' is not only a conceptual designator but function as a political categorization. "[T]he B-word," Kolstø writes, "could be used [during the 1990s] with good effect to 'explain' why this part of Europe did not behave in as civilized a way as the rest of the continent."¹⁵ The crucial difference between, and simultaneous interconnectedness of, terms like 'Yugoslavia' and 'the Balkans' in Balkanist discourse will be illustrated in the quantitative analysis of chapter II.

Whether Balkanism should be seen as its own theory is a complex epistemological debate. In particular, this debate has been centered around the question of whether Balkanism should be seen as part of, or separate from, Orientalist theory. On one side of this debate are researchers like Milica Bakić-Hayden, who argues that "Balkanism can indeed be viewed as a *'variation on the orientalist theme'*", as "[...] it would be difficult to understand [Balkanism] outside the overall orientalist context since it shares an underlying logic and rhetoric with orientalism".¹⁶ On the other side are researchers like Tanja Petrović, Oto Luthar, and Florian Bieber, who, like Maria Todorova, see Orientalist theory as separate from Balkanism in part due to "[t]he absence of colonialism as historical legacy [...] in the region."¹⁷ As this thesis will show, Balkanist discourse in journalism does indeed, like Bakić-Hayden argues, share rhetorical traits with orientalism. This is particularly prevalent in articles presenting the religious divides of the region and their implications for the varying 'Europeanness' of the Yugoslav peoples. Balkanist discourse also repeatedly invokes the rhetoric of theories like developmentalism, for example by stressing that the formerly Ottoman parts of 'the Balkan' need to overcome the industrial and agricultural

¹⁴ Kathrine E. Fleming, "Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography." *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (2000): 1218–33, p. 1230.

¹⁵ Pål Kolstø, "'Western Balkans' as the New Balkans: Regional Names as Tools for Stigmatisation and Exclusion." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 7 (2016): 1245-1263, p. 1246.

¹⁶ Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia" in *Slavic Review* 54, Issue 4 (1995), pp. 917 – 931, p. 920. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2501399>. Emphasis added.

¹⁷ Tanja Petrović, Oto Luthar, and Florian Bieber. "Understanding Southeastern Europe and the Former Yugoslavia in the New Millennium. Studies, Politics, and Perspectives", in *From the Highlands to Hollywood: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Southeastern Europe*, eds. Siegfried Gruber, Dominik Gutmeyr, Sabine Jesner, Elife Krasniqi, Robert Pichler, Christian Promitzer . (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2020), p. 99.

backwardness caused by their historical legacy and ‘catch up’ with the development of Western states – both in terms of politics, economy, and morals.¹⁸

Nonetheless, this thesis positions itself along with the views of Todorova, Petrović, Luthar and Bieber, who sees Balkanism as its own theory. This is in large part due to Todorova's central point that ‘the Balkans’, in contrast to ‘the Orient’, are seen not as a European external ‘other’. Another crucial difference to Orientalist theory is the lack of a colonial past in the ‘Balkans’. As anthropologist Elissa Helms has argued: “[...] while Said's orientalism was tied to (histories of) direct western colonization, balkanism was built on much more diffuse and indirect relationships of domination and subordination vis-à-vis ‘the west’.”¹⁹ The ambiguity of European belonging described by Todorova, combined with the lack of the power structures inherent to the traditional colonial historical past stressed by Petrović and Helms, provides a strong argument of seeing Balkanism as its own theoretical framework separate from Orientalism.

1.3 *State of the art*^{*20}

While there has been little research made on the prevalence of Balkanist discourse in the Norwegian media setting, many scholars have contributed to the overall study of Balkanism.

In Milica Bakić-Hayden's “Nesting Orientalism: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia” (1995)²¹, the author portrays the phenomenon of othering within ‘the Balkans’ themselves. She describes how Balkanist perceptions in Western Europe have been coopted by local populations, forming a phenomenon of “nesting Orientalism” that has taken hold in parts of the (now former) Yugoslavia. This nesting orientalism is deployed particularly in the parts of ‘the Balkans’ that were historically under Habsburg rule (such as Croatia and Slovenia) to distinguish themselves as strictly ‘Western European’. Other peoples, often Bosnian Muslims, are perceived by the proponents of ‘nesting orientalism’ to be influenced by their Ottoman heritage and are thus portrayed as an oriental other within the region.²² As this thesis will go on to discuss, the nesting orientalism within Yugoslavia was heavily reproduced in the Norwegian press as the

¹⁸ For developmentalist theory, see: Daniela Magalhães Prates, Barbara Fritz, and Luiz Fernando de Paula. “Varieties of Developmentalism: A Critical Assessment of the PT Governments”. *Latin American Perspectives* 47, no. 1 (2020), 45–64, p. 46.

¹⁹ Elissa Helms. “East and West Kiss: Gender, Orientalism, and Balkanism in Muslim-Majority Bosnia-Herzegovina.” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 1 (2008): 88–119, p. 90.

²⁰ *The introductory presentation and short summary of each book and article in this subchapter is based on the bibliographic essay delivered for the subject MITRA4040 in the autumn of 2023, as agreed with the student administration.

²¹ Bakić-Hayden, op.cit.

²² Bakić-Hayden, op.cit., p. 922.

newspapers attempted to discuss the ‘national distinctiveness’ of each republic of the unravelling Yugoslav state. This thesis builds on Bakić-Hayden’s notion of ‘nesting orientalisms’, deploying it to see how local perceptions of ‘Europeanness’ in various parts of Yugoslavia, particularly in terms of religion and economy, influenced the way Norwegian newspapers presented the Yugoslav peoples.

In “Orientalism, ‘the Balkans’ and Balkan Historiography” (2000)²³, Katherine Elizabeth Fleming discusses the role of colonialism and post-colonialism in Balkanist discourse. She argues that an important diverging component has to be dropped when discussing Balkanism as opposed to Saidian orientalist framework; namely, the discourses’ prevalence in academic debate. According to her, in contrast to a prevalent tendency of orientalism within academia, Balkanism is primarily situated outside academic circles.²⁴ The thesis adheres to Fleming’s view regarding the prevalence of Balkanism in discourses outside of academia – one of these discourses being news journalism.

In “Balkan is Beautiful: Balkanism in the Political Discourse of Tudman’s Croatia” (2004)²⁵, Bakić-Hayden’s theory of ‘nesting orientalism’ is analyzed in the politics of Croatia through the 1990s. In the article, Maple Razsa and Nicole Lindstrom shows how the notion of Croatia as being a natural part of the Western European sphere was coopted by politicians in both government and opposition parties during the Yugoslav wars. Razsa and Lindstrom argue that the ‘nesting orientalism’ of the Croatian politics was a main outlet for anti-Serb sentiment, portraying themselves as the last outpost of Western (catholic) Christianity. The ideas of the ‘last outpost of Western Christianity’ that Razsa and Lindstrom describe would be prevalent in the Norwegian news media, as this thesis will discuss in chapter IV.

In their article “At History’s Edge: The Mediterranean Question” (2022)²⁶, Iain Chambers and Marta Cariello argue that the entirety of Southern Europe, including ‘the Balkans’ specifically, have become a “[...] cartographical, colonial, and temporal category.”²⁷ Chambers and Cariello sees this as part of a ‘Western’ effort to establish themselves at the top of the European political and cultural hierarchy. “Geographically, politically, historically, and culturally,” they write, “the

²³ Fleming, op.cit.

²⁴ Fleming, op.cit., p. 1225.

²⁵ Maple Razsa and Nicole Lindstrom, “Balkan Is Beautiful: Balkanism in the Political Discourse of Tudman’s Croatia.” *East European Politics and Societies* 18, no. 4 (2004).

²⁶ Iain Chambers and Marta Cariello, “At History’s Edge: The Mediterranean Question.” *New Formations*, no. 106 (2022): 6–24.

²⁷ Chambers et al., op.cit., p. 8.

Balkans are part of Europe”.²⁸ Chambers’ and Cariello’s rejection of any essentialist view that regards ‘the Balkans’ as foreign to the rest of Europe has formed a core idea throughout the entire process of research for this thesis.

In “The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother” (2006)²⁹, Michal Buchowski highlights some core concepts in the theoretical frameworks of Balkanism and Orientalism. According to Buchowski, a central point to many of the issues raised by both Todorova and Said “[...] revolve around the issue of *alterity* and the epistemological validity of the concept of *the Other*”.³⁰ ‘The Other’, in Buchowski’s argument, “often assumes the status of [...] a universal category in the factory of social and individual identity that divides the universe into ‘us’ and ‘them’. However, it also figures as [...] an analytical concept that enables authors to construct narration [...]”.³¹ Buchowski’s arguments of the process of othering inherent to Balkanism will be juxtaposed the mental images of Yugoslavia presented in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* in the early months of 1990 in chapter III. In her book *A Long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses* (2009), Tanja Petrović discusses how the changes in the European political context following the fall of communism in 1989 created a fertile soil for the deployment of Balkanist discourse.³² Chapter III of this thesis will combine Buchowski’s arguments of Balkanist discourse as a method of othering with Petrović’ ideas of Balkanism as vital for constructing the post-1989 mental maps of Europe.

In “The Past in the Present: Time and Narrative of Balkan Wars in Media Industry and International Politics” (2017)³³, Enika Abazi and Albert Doja explore the historical continuity in presentations of ‘the Balkans’ in war time. They perform this research by analyzing accounts made in Western European and American newspapers both during the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and of the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s. Supporting the Balkanist theoretical framework of Maria Todorova, they argue that the discourse contained in Balkanist journalistic presentations of the region has “[...] constructed a distorted representation of Southeast Europe in international society, which may have resulted in potential underestimation of the pressing

²⁸ Chambers et al, op.cit., p. 18.

²⁹ Michal Buchowski, “The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (June 2006): 463–82.

³⁰ Buchowski, op.cit, p. 464. Original emphasis.

³¹ Buchowski, op.cit, p. 464.

³² Tanja Petrović, *A Long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*. (Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2009), p. 15.

³³ Enika Abazi and Albert Doja, “The Past in the Present: Time and Narrative of Balkan Wars in Media Industry and International Politics.” *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2017): 1012–42.

problems at both regional and global levels [...].”³⁴. They also establish that “[...] Southeast Europe must be considered an integral part of European history and politics,”³⁵ an argument that has been echoed by Chambers and Cariello in their article from 2022.³⁶ This thesis agrees with Abazi’s and Doja’s core argument of violence as seen as rigidly connected to the ‘Western’ image of the Balkans in the 1990s. Their view forms a core argument in this essay’s analysis presented in chapter IV.

In “‘Balkan’, ‘Europa’ og EU: Sørøst-Europas symbolske geografi i endring” (2014)³⁷, Pål Kolstø supports Todorova’s theory of a Balkanist discursive framework, and Bakić-Hayden’s theory of an existing tendency of ‘nesting orientalism’ in the region of the former Yugoslavia. In a quantitative survey, Kolstø presents evidence that the nesting orientalisms form an internal pecking order in the ‘Balkans’ (a term labelled by Kolstø as not at all a geographical term, but a political one).³⁸ In this pecking order, Slovenia and Croatia are regarded as the most ‘European’ while Bosnia and Albania are regarded to be most ‘Balkan’. Kolstø’s article is important to this master’s thesis as it backs up the theories of Todorova and Bakić-Hayden, stressing how stereotypical derogatory presentations of Southeastern Europe has placed ‘the Balkans’ on the lowest tier of the European political and cultural hierarchy.

1.4 Case study – *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*

Articles published in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* will form the primary source material used in this thesis. The two newspapers are similar in many respects. Both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* hit their historical peak in terms of publication numbers in the 1990s, at around 280 000 and 227 000, respectively.³⁹ They are both publications that in the 1980s and -90s reported on a wide range of topics, from culture and politics to sport and crime. Both newspapers have their headquarters based in Oslo, publishing for a nation-wide audience. Traditionally, however, *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* each represent different sides of the Norwegian journalistic spectrum – both in terms of political stance and tendency to sensationalist news reporting. Politically, *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten* occupy positions on the liberal left and conservative right, respectively. Established in 1869 as a

³⁴ Abazi et al., op.cit., p. 1029.

³⁵ Abazi et al., op.cit., p. 1029.

³⁶ Chambers et al., op.cit., p. 18.

³⁷ Kolstø, op.cit.

³⁸ Kolstø, op.cit., p. 11.

³⁹ Trond Smith-Meyer, Øyvind Breivik, and Olav Garvik, “Aftenposten”, *Store norske leksikon*. Retrieved September 14, 2023, from <https://snl.no/Aftenposten>; Martin Eide, “Norsk presses historie: Dagbladet”, *Store norske leksikon*. Retrieved September 14, 2023, from <https://snl.no/Dagbladet>.

radical leftist newspaper, *Dagbladet* quickly proved itself as a liberal-left newspaper that spoke truth to political power.⁴⁰ *Aftenposten* was established in 1860, acquiring from the 1880s onwards a characteristically conservative stance. This stance has remained a feature of *Aftenposten*, with the newspaper described by former editor of *Kunnskapsforlaget* Trond Smith-Meyer as “independently conservative”.⁴¹ Media historian Martin Eide has described the typical *Dagbladet* journalism as characterized by a “[...] disrespectful, devil-may-care tone. The historical *Dagbladet* style is a combination of stylistic freedom, cheekiness and freshness with journalistic independence and literary quality.”⁴² *Aftenposten*, on the other hand, has prided itself on presenting news in a more sober tone, earning itself the nickname “The Aunt” in journalistic circles for its reluctance to exaggerate and make sensational headlines.⁴³

Both due to their differing journalistic style and their political standing, the two newspapers have largely targeted different segments of the population. Media researchers Knut Lundby and Knut Arne Futsæter concluded in 1993 that people with higher income and education tended to read *Aftenposten* more often than people with lower income and education.⁴⁴ *Dagbladet*, on the other hand, searched a broader part of the population. It had as its main goal to function as a ‘national local newspaper’ – [...] looking for cases that ‘everyone’ [was] talking about in the same way that a local newspaper [was] trying to channel and play on the conversation in its coverage area.”⁴⁵ Despite these differences, however, Lundby and Futsæter stressed that a majority of people in Norway during the 1980s and -90s consumed more than one newspaper. They go on to argue that larger newspapers like *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* would typically be consumed together.⁴⁶ Thus, the readers of *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* during the 1980s and 1990s should not be regarded as two insulated groups that strictly adhered to the world view of their one chosen newspaper. Instead, they largely tended to fluctuate between both newspapers.

Between the early 1960s and the mid-1990s, newspapers were the most consumed news media in Norway.⁴⁷ According to Lundby and Futsæter, Norway had by 1991 the highest

⁴⁰ Eide, op.cit.

⁴¹ Smith-Meyer et.al., op.cit.

⁴² Eide, op.cit.

⁴³ Espen Egil Hansen. “Tanta er tilbake”. *Aftenposten*. August 19, 2014. Retrieved September 14, 2023, from <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/i/gPAR9/tanta-er-tilbake>.

⁴⁴ Knut Lundby and Knut Arne Futsæter. *Flerkanalsamfunnet: fra monopol til mangfold*. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993), p. 192.

⁴⁵ Lundby et al., op.cit., p. 199.

⁴⁶ Lundby et al., op.cit., p. 193.

⁴⁷ Lundby et al., op.cit., p. 80. See: Fig 3.1.2.

consumption of newspapers per household in the world.⁴⁸ Numbers from Statistics Norway (SSB) show that around 85% of the Norwegian population between ages 16 to 79 read at least one newspaper daily around between 1991 and 1995.⁴⁹ Newspapers were only part, however, of a larger and broadly consumed 'media diet'. Between 1980 and 1995, an average of more than 80% of Norwegians watched television daily, while more than 65% listened to the radio.⁵⁰ These numbers suggest that for a substantial amount of the newspaper readership in the early 1990s, news were consumed not exclusively through the printed press but through a varied 'media diet' consisting also of television and radio. Due to limitations in length, this master thesis analyzes only the narrative presented of Yugoslavia in Norwegian newspapers, as the printed press was the most widely consumed media type.

1.5 Methodology

All articles forming the primary sources for this essay have been found in the digital archive of the Norwegian National Library. This is a state institution which has digitalized and archived every edition of most larger newspapers in Norway published since the beginning of the last century. Using the archive's search engine, it has been possible to track and categorize the use of different words and phrases in a quick and practical manner. The methodological approach has been two-pronged. In the quantitative analysis of chapter II, all numbers have been gathered by searching the term of interest and noting the amount of search hits per year recorded between 1980 and 2000. Numbers in the graphs are presented as hits per one hundred editions rather than in absolute numbers, as *Aftenposten* consistently published at least two editions per day in the period researched, while *Dagbladet* only produced one edition each day.

In the chapters of qualitative analysis, the methodological approach has varied depending on the journalistic situation in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*. Researching *Aftenposten* in the 1980s, a first broad approach unveiled the dominant role of the newspapers' Eastern European correspondent, Stein Savik, for the way Yugoslavia was presented and discussed. As Savik's analyses appeared to have heavily influenced the general narrative presented of Yugoslavia in *Aftenposten* until 1989, the choice was made to focus primarily on his journalistic contributions. During this period in *Dagbladet*, on the other hand, there was no journalist who had Savik's level

⁴⁸ Lundby et al., op.cit., p. 87.

⁴⁹ Statistisk sentralbyrå. "Norsk mediebarometer. Tabell 04487: Andel som har brukt ulike medier en gjennomsnittsdag (prosent) 1991 – 2022)". Numbers from the period 1991 to 1995. Retrieved November 21, 2023, <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/04487/tableViewLayout1/>.

⁵⁰ See: Statistisk sentralbyrå, op.cit.; Lundby et al., op.cit., p. 80, Fig. 3.1.2.

of responsibility for covering Yugoslavia. This led the research to approach the *Dagbladet* primary sources in a broader manner, reading every article that appeared when searching term 'Yugoslavia', and using the analyses of these articles to form the impression of the newspaper's overarching approach to the region.

Researching the years between 1990 and 1995, the approach towards the two newspapers was more similar in nature. This was due to the fact that Stein Savik was no longer around to be the main contributor for *Aftenposten*, and the responsibility for covering the region had been increasingly shared between the newspaper's journalists. The research for chapters IV and V was concentrated on the works of Håkon Lund in *Dagbladet*, and Aasmund Willersrud in *Aftenposten*, as they appeared as main contributors to their respective employers. Willersrud would be replaced by Ulf Andenæs as correspondent with responsibility for Yugoslavia in 1994 - consequently, Andenæs also became a primary focus for the research. Supplementing the research on the articles produced by Lund, Willersrud and Andenæs between 1990 and 1995 was a broader sweep of articles in both newspapers using terms that would indicate tropes of Balkanist discourse, such as 'the Balkans', 'blood soaked history', 'Ottoman yoke', *et cetera*. In this way, the research could uncover tendencies in the Balkanist discourse in the journalism of both newspapers that would have gone unnoticed had the research solely focused on the three journalist. This approach of combined focus on individual journalists as well as one the overall presentation of "the Balkans" in the two newspapers provided a good balance to present how the general perspectives on the region developed. In total, 933 articles published in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* between 1980 and 1995 form the background for the qualitative analysis of this thesis.

1.6 Structure

In order to answer the presented research questions, the essay will be structured into six main chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter II provides a background for the chapters to come. It discusses two crucial factors that provide a foundation for the discussion on Balkanism in Norway – Norwegian-Yugoslav relations before 1980 and a quantitative overview of the rise in Balkanist journalistic rhetoric. Chapters III, IV and V approach Balkanist discourse in the Norwegian press through a qualitative analysis. In chapter III, analyses the nature of the coverage of Yugoslav affairs from Tito's death in May 1980 to the summer of 1990. Chapters IV and V apply a more in-depth look at the Balkanist discourse that became prevalent following the summer of 1990 until the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, with chapter IV discussing the role of religion and chapter V discussing presentations of violence and the 'Balkan psyche'. Chapter VI will consist of a concluding discussion.

Chapter II: Backdrop for analyzing Balkanism

2.1 'Friendship across borders' – Perceptions of Yugoslavia in Norway after 1945

The events of the Second World war forged a special relationship between Norway and Yugoslavia. Between June 1942 and May 1945, 4268 Yugoslav prisoners between 14 and 60 years old were sent to labor camps in Northern Norway.⁵¹ The majority of these prisoners were young Serbian men that had been convicted to death for treason by the Nazi regime in Yugoslavia, which was led by the Croatian nationalist movement known as the *Ustashe*.⁵² The prisoners suffered under grueling conditions labor on projects of road construction organized by the Norwegian Nazi regime.⁵³ In total, 2400 of the prisoners died from illnesses, torture, malnourishment and executions.⁵⁴ Norwegian members of the paramilitary Nazi organization 'Hirdvaktbataljonen' were involved in running the camps, and the Norwegian guards were notoriously brutal towards the prisoners.⁵⁵ After the war, however, it appears as though most of the Yugoslav prisoners saw these Norwegian guards as outliers and not representative of the majority of the Norwegian civil population, who were largely sympathetic towards the prisoners.⁵⁶ During the war, many Norwegian civilians went to great lengths at their own personal risk to help the Yugoslav prisoners, through acts of defiance such as smuggling food to the prisoners working on the construction projects and hiding those who were fleeing from the camps.⁵⁷

In the 1950s, the first Yugoslav prisoners who had served time in the Nazi camps in Norway began returning to commemorate their fellow inmates.⁵⁸ Norwegians also travelled to Yugoslavia in commemoration of the war years. In 1957, active contributors to the aid of Yugoslav prisoners received a special invitation from the Yugoslav leader, Marshal Tito, himself.⁵⁹ Tito had broken diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1948 after ideological and

⁵¹ Nygaard, Pål. "Jugoslaviske fanger i Norge under andre verdenskrig". *Norgeshistorie.no*. Retrieved September 12, 2023. DOI: <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/andre-verdenskrig/1766-jugoslaviske-fanger-i-norge-under-andre-verdenskrig.html>.

⁵² Svein Mønnesland, *En Kort Introduksjon Til Jugoslavia-Konflikten*. (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2021), p. 31.

⁵³ Jakobsen, Siw Ellen. "Jugoslaviske fanger ble sendt til Norge for å dø". *Forskning.no*. October 1, 2023. Retrieved November 21, 2023, from <https://www.forskning.no/andre-verdenskrig-historie/jugoslaviske-fanger-ble-sendt-til-norge-for-a-do-i-noen-norske-konsentrasjonsleirer-var-dodeligheten-pa-hoyde-med-de-verste-i-europa-sier-forsker/2252270>.

⁵⁴ Nygaard, op.cit.

⁵⁵ Jakobsen, op.cit.

⁵⁶ Nataša Mataušić, *70th anniversary of the arrival of Yugoslav prisoners to Norway during World War Two – 70-årsmarkering for ankomsten av jugoslaviske fanger til Norge under andre verdenskrig*. (Jasenovac: Jasenovac Memorial, 2012), p. 27.

⁵⁷ Elena Badanina, *Tause kvinner, ukjente historier. Fire historier om kvinner som bodde i Nord-Norge under 2. verdenskrig*. (Narvik: Narviksenteret, 2017), p. 7. DOI: <https://www.nb.no/items/08482f10076f0d7dec88682226bf67da?page=>.

⁵⁸ Andersen, Arnt Tore. "Historie – våre samband i 40 år". *Vennsøksambandet Norge-Vest-Balkan*. Retrieved September 13, 2023, from <https://njsamband.no/historie/>.

⁵⁹ Badanina, op.cit., p. 9.

territorial disputes with Joseph Stalin.⁶⁰ This created a context wherein Norway could retain good diplomatic relations to the communist leadership in Yugoslavia without having to worry about NATO allies questioning their loyalty. The early 1960s ushered in a string of mutual official decrees of friendship between the two countries. As the Yugoslav city of Skopje experienced a devastating earthquake in 1963, Norway was quick to join the rescue efforts. The Norwegian Red Cross and the Norwegian People's Aid contributed with a children's hospital to the people of Skopje.⁶¹ In 1964, King Olav V of Norway granted Josip Broz Tito one of the highest ranked orders of the Norwegian kingdom: the Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Saint Olav.⁶²

In 1966, the Association for Norwegian-Yugoslav Relations (NJS) was created, with its sister organization in the Association for Yugoslav-Norwegian Relations (JNS) being established in Niš in 1969.⁶³ The new organizations became central in the effort to connect the civil societies in Norway in Yugoslavia in early 1970s. In 1974, NJS and JNS cooperated in the publishing of a bilingual book, *Norge – Jugoslavia*, aimed at strengthening mutual understanding between peoples of both countries. Chapters discussing Yugoslav history, geography and culture were written in Norwegian, and similar chapters about Norway were written in Serbo-Croatian, making it “[...] a book about Norway for Yugoslavs, and at the same time a book about Yugoslavia for Norwegians”.⁶⁴ Among its editors was Jan Otto Johansen, a man who would become instrumental in *Dagbladet's* news coverage of Yugoslavia during the early 1980s. Marshal Tito and King Olav jointly wrote the foreword of the book. Tito stressed that “The friendship that arose in those hard times during the Second World War between the peoples of Yugoslavia and Norway, is becoming increasingly stronger”, while the Norwegian king argued that “The contact that was created between the Yugoslav prisoners of war that had been sent to Norway and the Norwegian civil population, developed into a warm and lasting friendship, not only between those persons who met during such tragic circumstances, but into a *friendship across country borders*”.⁶⁵

The positive relations continued through the late 1970s and into the 1980s. In 1976, the Norwegian state decided to send one thousand rheumatic patients to Yugoslavia yearly for four-

⁶⁰ Perović, Jeronim. “The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence”. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 32–63, p. 35; Perović, op.cit., p. 42.

⁶¹ Winger, Odd. “Jordskjelvet som knuste Skopje”. *Dagbladet*. July 25, 1988, p. 38.

⁶² Bruland, Roger Sevrin, Laila Ø. Bakken. “Her ligg restane av Jugoslavia”. NRK. November 24, 2010. Retrieved September 13, 2023, from <https://www.nrk.no/urix/her-ligg-restane-av-jugoslavia-1.7395465>.

⁶³ Andersen, op.cit..

⁶⁴ Ljubo Mladjenović et al., *Norge-Jugoslavia, Jugoslavia- Norveška*. (Beograd: Bigz, 1974), p. V.

⁶⁵ Tito and King Olav in Mladjenović, op.cit., pp. VI-VII. Emphasis added.

week treatments due to lack of capacity in Norwegian hospitals. The solution that was very well received among the Norwegian patients.⁶⁶ The practice was also appreciated from the Yugoslav side – in 1983, the decision was made to decorate a leading Norwegian organizer of the rheumatic patient project with the award of the order of ‘The Yugoslav flag with silver star’, for his contribution to “friendship of Norway and Yugoslavia”.⁶⁷ Teaching of the Norwegian language commenced at the Belgrade university in 1977.⁶⁸ In the mid-1980s, a project was initiated jointly by NJS and JNS to raise money for a so-called ‘House of Friendship’ for cultural events in the Yugoslav city of Gornij Milanovac. Among the contributors to the project were fifty municipalities, five counties and several hundred individuals from all over Norway. King Olav expressed his delight over the project, and the Norwegian national parliament contributed with economic funding.⁶⁹ The construction of the building was finalized in the fall of 1987.⁷⁰

Balkanism theory holds as a core concept that Balkanist discourse contains the image of Southeastern Europe as a foreign and dangerous element to the rest of Europe. When analyzing the bilateral contact between Norway and Yugoslavia after 1945, the two countries appear to have had a strong and cordial relationship. This relationship was based on a foundation of mutual friendship on both government and non-governmental levels, and on the idea of a shared history of World War II. Consequently, it could seem feasible to assume that a Balkanist journalistic discourse would not prevail in Norwegian newspapers. However; the international political context after 1989 combined with the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia in 1991 to trigger a Norwegian journalistic discourse that, despite the friendly post-war relationship between Norway and Yugoslavia, would divide the Yugoslav peoples on a scale of ‘Westernness’ and cast many of them as slaves of their violent past. The next pages will be dedicated to a brief quantitative analysis of this trend, in order to provide statistical context for the qualitative analysis to come.

⁶⁶ Karin Øien Forseth. “Utenlandsbehandling av pasienter med revmatisk sykdom”. *Tidsskriftet Den norske lægeforening*, vol. 127, nr. 4 (2007), pp. 449-452, p. 449; Bjerneboe, Ruth. “Slutt på revmatikerreiser?” *Dagbladet*. September 5, 1983, p. 15.

⁶⁷ *Aftenposten*. “Vaktskifte ved NSB-reisebyrå”. September 1, 1989 (morning edition), p. 10

⁶⁸ Andersen, op.cit.

⁶⁹ NRK. Interview with NJS leader Osmund Faremo. “Den blå timen”. Broadcasted on March 13, 1986. Retrieved September 13, 2023, from <https://tv.nrk.no/se?v=FUHA07000986&t=2448s>.

⁷⁰ Andersen, op.cit.

2.2 The interconnectedness between the terms 'Balkan', 'Jugoslavia', and 'Etnisk' – a brief quantitative analysis

Figure 1 shows the frequency of the term 'Balkan' and the term 'Jugoslavia' pr. one hundred editions as they were used in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* during the years between 1980 and 2000.

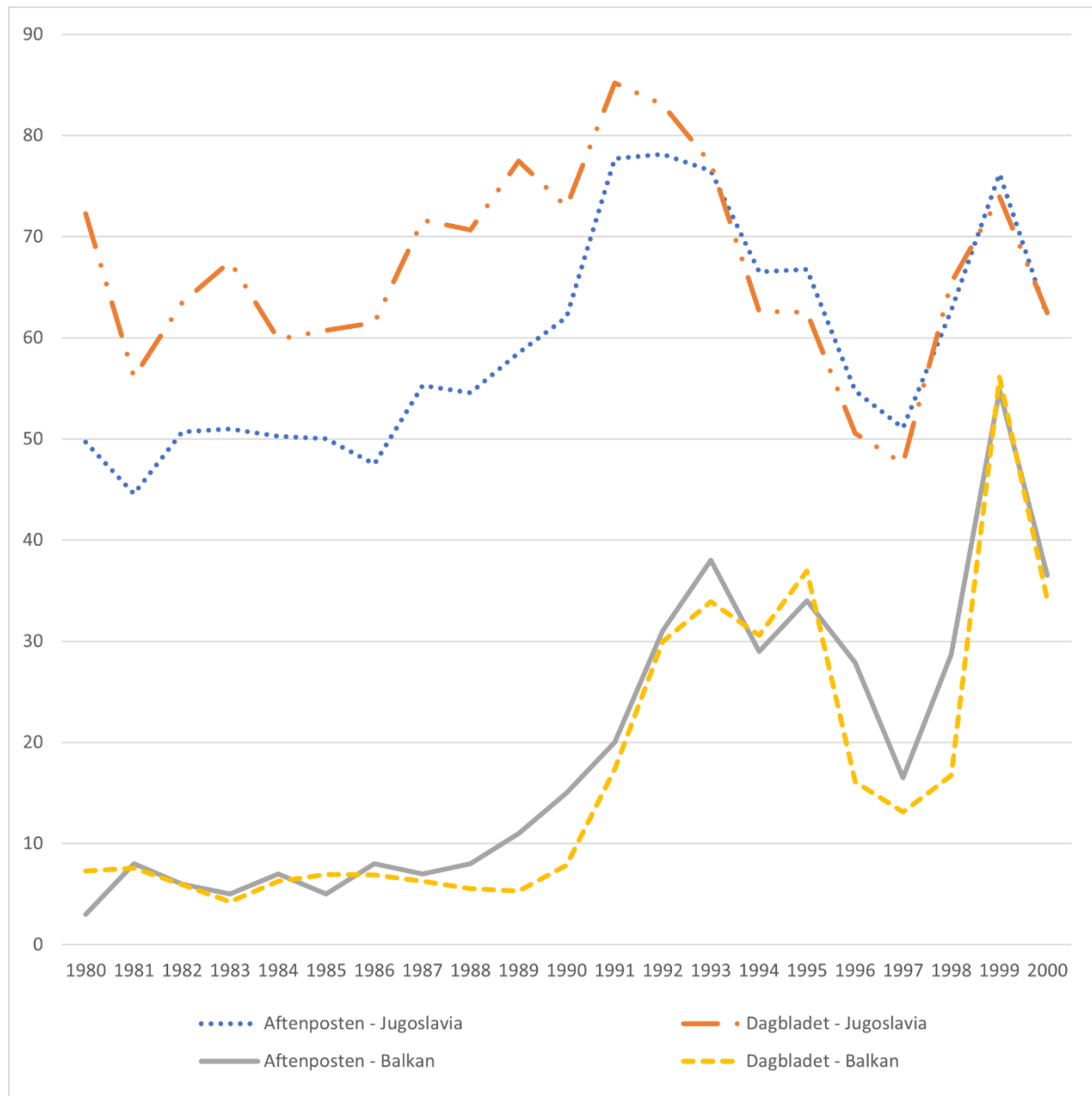


Figure 1. Frequency of the term "Balkan" and "Jugoslavia" (pr. one hundred editions) between 1980 and 2000.

A spike in frequency of both terms occurred in the late 1980s, as the Yugoslav federation plunged into civil war. After both terms reached a climax in 1991 and 1992, they followed similar decreasing patterns after the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995. In 1998, both terms spiked again as renewed hostilities flared up in Kosovo. The findings indicated by Figure 1 were crucial to the choice of time frame for this thesis. The numbers in the figure indicate two 'waves' of Balkanism in the 1990s - one beginning around the year 1990 and lasting until 1995, and the second occurring between 1998 and 1999. This thesis will focus its analysis on the development

of Balkanist discourse during the 'first wave' of Balkanism, seeing how it contrasted to the coverage of Yugoslavia in the decade that preceded it.

Figure 2 shows the frequency of the term 'etnisk' pr. one hundred editions as they were used in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* during the years between 1980 and 2000.

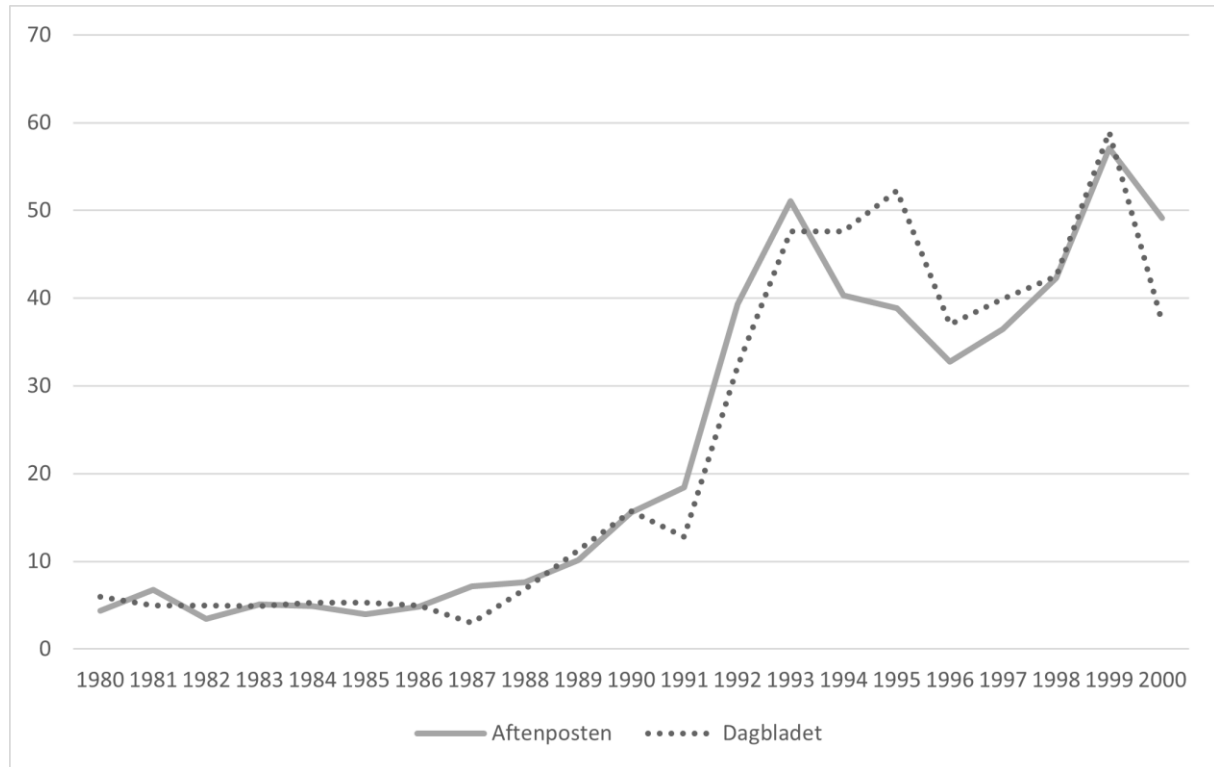


Figure 2. Frequency of the term "Etnisk" (pr. one hundred editions) between 1980 and 2000.

Comparing Figure 1 with Figure 2 one can see how the development of the term 'Etnisk' follows a largely parallel development to the term 'Balkan'. During the early 1980s, both terms appeared in less than 10 percent of editions in both newspapers. However, the frequency of both terms rose sharply as tensions in Yugoslavia rose in the late 1980s. 'Etnisk' rose slightly more than 'Balkan' did, reaching around 50% frequency in both newspapers in 1993. After a dip around the mid-1990s, with the dip in 'Etnisk' less steep than the one in 'Balkan', they both rose again in 1998-99, this time with 'Balkan' also appearing in more than half of all published editions.

The tendencies shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 have central implications for the discussion of this thesis. As discussed, Todorova, Fleming and Kolstø all argue that the term 'the Balkans' holds a primary role as an inherently derogatory political category rather than as a geographic designator. Thus, the statistical interconnectedness between 'Yugoslavia' and 'Balkan' indicated by Figure 1 might suggest that the mental images of Yugoslavia and its peoples were

closely tied to this the idea of this inherently negative 'Balkan' category in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* as war broke out in 1991. The parallel development of the term 'Etnisk' to the term 'Balkan' indicated by Figure 2 strengthens this argument, as it suggests an increase in the proclivity among journalists to see the people of 'the Balkans' after 1989 as consisting of 'ethnic groups' – a term which was open to journalistic interpretation due to its lack of prevalence in the press before 1989. As this thesis will go on to highlight, the idea of what separated the 'ethnic groups' from each other in 'the Balkans' would be explained by journalists in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* with regards to the groups' perceived degree of 'Westernness'.

Chapter III: 1980 – 1991: Balkanist incubation?

3.1 May 1980 – September 1989: 'Fraternal unity or ancient divides?'

*3.1.1 Coverage of Yugoslavia in *Aftenposten* through the 1980s*

Aftenposten's correspondent to Eastern Europe, Stein Savik, was tasked with the responsibility of covering Yugoslavia throughout the majority of the decade. His personal background set him apart from most other journalists covering the region during this period. Stein Savik was born Stanslav Savic, in Belgrade in 1924. While his parents were both killed during the Second World War, Savic himself was arrested and sent to a prison camp in the north of Norway. He learned Norwegian during his time in captivity and opted to stay in Norway after 1945. After taking on his more Nordic sound alias, Stein Savik got a job for the Norwegian news agency *Norsk Telegrambyrå* (NTB) in 1947.⁷¹ Six years later, he would be the first journalist outside of the USSR to report on the death of Joseph Stalin.⁷² After moving to *Aftenposten* in 1957, Savik spent the next three decades establishing himself as a veteran foreign correspondent.⁷³ As a speaker of English, Norwegian, German, Serbo-Croatian, Russian and Polish, Savik worked in *Aftenposten's* offices in Bonn (1962-70), Vienna (1970-72) and Washington (1972-77). In 1981, he returned to Europe as *Aftenposten's* chief correspondent on Eastern European matters, with offices in both Vienna and Warsaw.⁷⁴

Savik posited an optimistic view of Yugoslavia's future from the very beginning of the decade. While acknowledging the grave situation that the Yugoslav society faced during the declining health of Marshal Tito in the early months of 1980, *Aftenposten's* correspondent stressed that the "[...] unity [between the peoples] could hardly be stronger than in [these] dramatic days when it is needed the most."⁷⁵ Josip Broz Tito died on May 4, 1980. In an article following the leader's burial, Savik was the journalist who expressed the belief that "[...] the six Yugoslav peoples will stay together in a future without Tito."⁷⁶ Savik had a good insight into the political and economic dynamics of Yugoslavia, illustrated by the fact that he as early as February of 1980 commented with concern on the increasing economic crisis of the country.⁷⁷ By comparison, the

⁷¹ Erland Lyngve. "NTB fortalte verden at Stalin var død". *Morgenbladet*. August 27, 1992, p. 16.

⁷² Halvor Hegtun. "Da Wikileaks sprang lekk." *Aftenposten (A-magasinet)*. January 21, 2011, p. 10.

⁷³ Lyngve, op.cit., p. 16.

⁷⁴ John Crowe. "Stein Savik er død". *Aftenposten*. April 4, 1989 (morning edition), p. 3; Jørgensen, Omar. "Livet som utenrikskorrespondent: Nyhetsjakt 'døgnet rundt' for å holde oss orientert". *Nybeter fra Norge*. November 16, 1987, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Stein Savik. "Titos krise samler Jugoslavia, ingen kroatisk utbrytendens". *Aftenposten*. February 27, 1980 (morning edition), p. 9. Emphasis added.

⁷⁶ Stein Savik. "Bølgende menneskehav i sorg fulgte Tito på hans siste ferd". *Aftenposten*. May 6, 1980 (morning edition), p. 8.

⁷⁷ Stein Savik. "Jugoslavias økonomiske hodepine". *Aftenposten*. February 25, 1980 (morning edition), p. 9.

first *Dagbladet* article commenting on this issue would not appear until more than three years later.⁷⁸

During the years after Tito's death, Savik observed how tensions between the different national groups of Yugoslavia rose as the country's economic situation worsened.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, he remained convinced that the Yugoslavs had the possibility to turn the situation around and that it would continue to exist as one unified nation. In June 1986, Savik argued that the recently appointed national leadership would create a positive development for the Yugoslav society. He described the lofty expectations to the new leader Branko Mikulic: "It is expected that the experienced and energetic politician from Bosnia *will cut through the disagreements between the individual Yugoslav republics, and create a turning point in the economy*, which has through the past six years experienced a grave crisis."⁸⁰ Mikulic's government, however, did not live up to Savik's grand expectations. In November of 1987, the correspondent reported that inflation in Yugoslavia had hit 136% in less than a year.⁸¹

Savik turned his focus towards the conflict between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo as tension in the region increased through 1987. Discussing the dynamics of conflict, Savik described how complex the issue of autonomous rule in the Kosovar region was: "[...] Black-and-white depictions [of this conflict], regardless of which side gives them, cannot be used about the complex Kosovo problem."⁸² Savik reported with noticeable worry on the rise to power of party strongman and Serb nationalist Slobodan Milošević. In October 1988, he described how Milošević channeled "[...] the economic unrest in the people against party- and government officials who are being accused of incompetence."⁸³ Thus, Savik did not invoke any mental image of the political tension in Yugoslavia as caused by some vague, deep-reaching roots of historical animosity between the ethnic groups – instead, he emphasized how Milošević had cynically channeled the contemporary frustration created by the economic crisis to further his expansionist nationalistic goals.

⁷⁸ Jahn Otto Johansen. "Et nytt Polen?". *Dagbladet*. April 9, 1983, p. 12.

⁷⁹ Stein Savik. "Jugoslavia: Økonomiske problemer, men ingen nød". *Aftenposten*. June 24, 1982 (evening edition), p. 6; Stein Savik. "Hardere tider i Jugoslavia". *Aftenposten*. October 20, 1982 (morning edition), p. 8; Stein Savik. "Kamp om såpe i Jugoslavia". *Aftenposten*. February 24, 1983 (Ukens Nytt edition), p. 4.; Stein Savik. "Prishopp og prisstopp i Jugoslavia-krise". *Aftenposten*. December 29, 1983 (Ukens Nytt edition), p. 4; Savik, Stein; "Økonomialarm i Jugoslavia". *Aftenposten*. November 29, 1985 (evening edition), p. 6.

⁸⁰ Stein Savik. "Vendepunkt i Beograd". *Aftenposten*. June 28, 1986 (morning edition), p. 9.

⁸¹ Stein Savik. "Jugoslavisk hestekur møter protest". *Aftenposten*. November 18, 1987 (morning edition), p. 9.

⁸² Stein Savik. "Kosovo blir mer og mer albansk". *Aftenposten*. May 25, 1987 (morning edition), p. 9.

⁸³ Stein Savik. "Stadig nye protester i Jugoslavia". *Aftenposten*. October 11, 1988 (morning edition), p. 8. Emphasis added.

On April 4, 1989, the 64-year-old Savik collapsed and died while travelling through Belgrade. Savik was mourned by journalists both in Norway and internationally, with more than 120 colleagues showing up for his memorial service in Belgrade.⁸⁴ After his passing, the press information office in Belgrade sent a letter of condolence to *Aftenposten*. It read: “Stein Savik was one of the most prominent experts on our country, with a unique insight into Yugoslav society. He will be deeply missed.”⁸⁵ Nine days after Stein Savik’s death, *Aftenposten* named Ricard Swartz of the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* as their new correspondent in Eastern Europe.⁸⁶ Swartz’ tenure proved a bleak contrast to Savik’s consistent reporting on Yugoslavia. After a brief report on a nationalist rally held by Milošević on the six hundred year anniversary for the battle of the Kosovo field on June 29 1989,⁸⁷ Swartz would produce no articles on Yugoslavia whatsoever between July 3 and October 30.⁸⁸

Through his journalistic experience, linguistic skills, and familiarity with the political situation of his Yugoslav birth country, Savik proved to be an enormous base of knowledge available to *Aftenposten* throughout the 1980s. He gave an impression of keeping himself to principles of respect and integrity. In an interview given in 1987, he underlined that a central principle in his journalism was never to write “[...] in a derogatory way and in a sarcastic tone, although this can be popular in many cases”.⁸⁹ As seen in his coverage of the politics after Tito, Savik was eager to cast the peoples of Yugoslavia as diverse groups unified under the Yugoslav flag, with no inherent deep seated hate towards each other.

3.1.2 Coverage of Yugoslavia in *Dagbladet* through the 1980s

In the early years of the decade *Dagbladet* had, like *Aftenposten*, one prominent journalist with a high competency in Yugoslav affairs; Jahn Otto Johansen. Johansen was until his death in 2018 a leading figure in Norwegian journalism. Between 1956 and 1977, he published seven books discussing the political, economic, and social situation behind the ‘Iron Curtain’.⁹⁰ In his 1973 book *Hvor går Jugoslavia?*, he analyzed the fundamental changes that the country would face in the years to come. “There is hardly any other country in Europe today,” he wrote in the opening

⁸⁴ *Aftenposten*. “Stein Savik bisatt”. April 13, 1989 (morning edition), p. 17.

⁸⁵ *Aftenposten*. “Stein Savik ble et forbilde”. April 5, 1989 (morning edition), p. 13.

⁸⁶ Richard Swartz. “Polakkene venter på ‘rundebordsmenyen’”. *Aftenposten*. April 13, 1989 (morning edition), p. 14.

⁸⁷ Richard Swartz. “Serbisk markering.” *Aftenposten*. June 29, 1989 (morning edition), p. 8.

⁸⁸ Based on information retrieved from the digital archive of the National library of Norway.

⁸⁹ Jørgensen, Omar, op.cit.

⁹⁰ Olav Garvik. “Jahn Otto Johansen”, Store norske leksikon. Retrieved September 22, 2023, from https://snl.no/Jahn_Otto_Johansen.

lines of the book, “of which it is as difficult to analyze the political, economic, and social situation as in Yugoslavia”.⁹¹

In contrast to Savik, Johansen was eager to see the ‘post-Tito’ political tension in Yugoslavia in a historical light. In a commentary published in March 1980, Johansen argued for the importance of looking to history when discussing the future of Yugoslav politics. “*In Yugoslavia and in ‘the Balkans’ it is of particular importance to look at the deep running national, cultural, and religious moods. The modern Yugoslavia covers [...] just a brief time period in contrast to the centuries when starkly conflicting cultures influenced various parts of the country. The Danube and the Sava are one of [sic.] Europe’s most defining cultural borders. In the south – in Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and parts of Montenegro, the Turkish culture was added on top of the Slavic-Orthodox, while Croatia and Slovenia became part of the Roman-Catholic Central-Europe. Only ignorants or utopists could believe that this different and deep cultural heritage would not be decisive for political and social development in the modern age.*”⁹² As this thesis will go on to analyze in chapter IV, the focus on the religious-cultural borders within Yugoslav society, and their importance for determining the ‘Europeanness’ of the country’s different peoples, would be a foundation for understanding Yugoslavia as it fell apart in the 1990s.

After Johansen’s departure in 1984, *Dagbladet’s* Yugoslav coverage varied heavily both in frequency and theme. During the Sarajevo Olympics in early 1984, there was a small upsurge in articles on Yugoslavia. In an article series called “Yugoslavia the Olympic country”, *Dagbladet* journalist Pål Jørgensen produced several reports on the rising interrepublic tensions and economic problems facing the country. Focusing on popular unrest in Kosovo, Jørgensen did not deploy Johansen’s deep historical perspective, however, stressing instead that “There is little reason to doubt that the economic situation of the province is the main cause of the unrest”.⁹³ Following the coverage of the Sarajevo Olympics there was a noticeable lull in coverage of Yugoslavia in *Dagbladet*. Only twenty-three articles published between February 1984 and March 1987 mentioned the country at all.⁹⁴ Still, the image of a struggling Yugoslavia remained. In a 1985 interview, the Yugoslav dissenter and former Tito confidante Milovan Djilas discussed with *Dagbladet* the future of his country. “No one will dare to point out the errors with the [Yugoslav] system,” he said. “Yugoslavia is a multinational country with polarizing divisions. [...] In the

⁹¹ Jahn Otto Johansen. *Hvor går Jugoslavia?* (Oslo: J.W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1973), p. 9.

⁹² Jahn Otto Johansen. “Jugoslavia uten Tito”. *Dagbladet*. March 19, 1980, p. 3. Emphasis added.

⁹³ Pål Jørgensen. “Med terror skal Kosovo bli albansk”. *Dagbladet*. January 30, 1984, p. 15.

⁹⁴ Based on findings through searching for the term ‘Yugoslavia’ in the digital archives of the National Library of Norway.

short term it is not likely that any of the [opposition] groups can push through the changes that can lead us through the [economic crisis].”⁹⁵

As tensions rose again beginning in 1987, the rate of Yugoslav coverage was increased in *Dagbladet*. With the increase came ideas that would fit into the framework of Todorova's concept of Balkanism. These ideas echoed the ones presented by Johansen in March of 1980. In October 1988, journalist Mentz Tor Amundsen weighed in on the tense situation in Yugoslavia: “[...] *Ethnic groups that have fought each other for centuries*, plus political and economic disagreements form the background for what is currently happening in Yugoslavia”.⁹⁶ Throughout late 1988 and 1989, *Dagbladet* began a consistent coverage of the Kosovo Albanian refugees that had begun arriving in Norway. Under headlines such as “The torturers pulled out my toenails” and “– Rather death than deportation”, the brutality of the Yugoslav authorities against the Albanians was stressed.⁹⁷ In September 1989, Karl Emil Hagelund wrote a scathing commentary article on the development of the world observed in Yugoslavia. He saw Serb nationalism as the greatest threat to the unity of the federation. Hagelund stressed how Slovenes increasingly regarded themselves as more ‘Western’ than the southern peoples of Yugoslavia, arguing that: “Historically, [Slovenia] was connected to the old Austrian-Hungarian empire, and the republic still looks towards the West”. Serbs, on the other hand, had found in the nationalist Milošević “[...]’a father for the Serbian people”, and Hagelund reported how Serbs were heard singing “[...] We cannot do without Kosovo and we are willing to give our lives for Serbia”.⁹⁸

There are two key takeaways from this analysis of the 1980s that is of importance to the rest of this thesis. First, it is important to recognize the difference in Yugoslav coverage between the two newspapers – both in terms of the number of its contributors and the content of its narrative. *Aftenposten* had Stein Savik deployed as their permanent correspondent to Eastern Europe, devoting a significant amount of space in his reporting to presenting the political development of the Yugoslavia. *Dagbladet*, by contrast, had no journalist devoted solely to this region of Europe. This might be best illustrated by the fact that more than eighteen different journalists contributed with articles on Yugoslavia for the newspaper during the decade.⁹⁹ Savik’s

⁹⁵ Fossen, Øystein. “Jeg protesterer, derfor er jeg”. *Dagbladet*. September 2, 1985, p. 22.

⁹⁶ Mentz Tor Amundsen. “Dette er kruttønna Jugoslavia”. *Dagbladet*. October 20, 1988, p. 19. Emphasis added..

⁹⁷ Jan Erik Smilden. “Torturistene trakk tåneglene mine”. *Dagbladet*. September 29, 1987, p. 19; Jan-Morten Bjørnbakk and Anne Olsen. “Heller døden en utvisning”. *Dagbladet*. June 23, 1989, p. 8.

⁹⁸ Karl Emil Hagelund. “Krise uten ende?”. *Dagbladet*. September 29, 1989, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Research of every *Dagbladet* article mentioning the word ‘Yugoslavia’ between January 1980 and December 1989 in the digital archives of the National Library of Norway shows that Jahn Otto Johansen, Jørn Inge Dørum, Halvor Elvik, Jan-Erik Smilden, Fredrik Wandrup, Karl Emil Hagelund, Klas Bergman, Olav Riste, Pål Jørgensen, Hans

coverage was balanced, and reflective. While eventually acknowledging that Yugoslavia was experiencing increased tension between its republics during the mid-1980s, Savik never essentialized the situation or drew on vague notions of ‘ancient hatred’ to explain the development. Instead, he emphasized the complexity of the conflict and the devastating impact of the economic crisis. *Dagbladet’s* articles, on the other hand, tended to contain in them tropes of Balkanist discourse, such as the implied existence of a centuries-old hatred between Serbs and Croats, and the dichotomy of eastern and western religions among the Yugoslav peoples.

The second takeaway is that both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* lost their most competent journalist on Yugoslav affairs in the course 1980s. After Johansen’s departure for NRK in 1984 and the unexpected death of Savik in 1989, both newspapers tasked journalists with little experience of the region with covering Yugoslavia as it fell apart in the 1990s. In *Aftenposten* Halvor Tjønn, former correspondent to Moscow, and Per Egil Hegge, correspondent in Washington, took the reins on the Yugoslav reporting through the autumn of 1989. In September 1990 Aasmund Willersrud was appointed *Aftenposten’s* correspondent to Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁰ He arrived from Moscow, where he had stayed since 1986.¹⁰¹ Ulf Andenæs would take over after Willersrud in Yugoslavia in August 1994, with his last post abroad being correspondent in London.¹⁰² Despite being experienced journalists, neither Willersrud nor Andenæs had the same level of competency on Yugoslavia as Stein Savik had acquired through his personal life and linguistic knowledge. In *Dagbladet*, the situation was similar. Producing 196 articles on Yugoslavia between February 1990 and December 1995, Håkon Lund would become the leading journalist covering the region for *Dagbladet* during the Yugoslav wars. Despite having been working for the newspaper through most of the decade, Håkon Lund had not authored a single article about Yugoslavia between 1981 and 1989.¹⁰³

3.2 October 1989 – June 1990: ‘Back to history’ – Old mental maps for a new Europe

While the communist grip on Eastern Europe was loosening throughout the autumn of 1989, the worsening political situation in Yugoslavia was overlooked by journalists in many European

Normann Dahl, Arne Thoresen, Øystein Fossen, Frank Helgesen, Jan Tystad, Mentz Tor Amundsen, Arne Foss, Jo Randen, and Odd Winger all contributed with at least one article on the political development of Yugoslavia.

¹⁰⁰ Willersrud first appears as the correspondent of the *Aftenposten* Vienna office on the the last page in the *Aftenposten* morning edition of September 3, 1990, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ *Aftenposten*. “Aftenpostens nye korrespondenter”. September 1, 1986 (morning edition), p. 2.

¹⁰² *Aftenposten*. “Andenæs på plass i Wien”. August 26, 1994 (morning edition), p. 8.

¹⁰³ According to data retrieved from search hits in the Norwegian National Library. Lund’s very first article for *Dagbladet* was printed in the edition of January 27, 1981.

newspapers. The lack of attention given to Yugoslavia during the chaotic development of Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall was acknowledged by *Aftenposten's* Per Egil Hegge. In December 1989, Hegge stated that “Had this been a normal fall in the Warsaw pact countries, the first pages of newspapers over all of our continent would be filled with extensive reports from Yugoslavia. But no one has had space for that, [and] Yugoslavia has been placed in the shadows [...]”¹⁰⁴

After the fall of Communism in Europe it quickly became clear that journalists, along with politicians, diplomats, academics, needed a new way of dividing the European continent into categories that would help make sense of its political and cultural realities. Anthropologist Tanja Petrović argues that the search for what was truly ‘European’ “[...] became particularly intense after the end of the cold war because of the disappearance of the clear-cut boundaries between ‘Europe’, as perceived by the western part of the continent, and the former eastern bloc or ‘Other Europe’.”¹⁰⁵ Many readers of *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* had grown up in a post-1945 Europe where the bipolar political reality of ‘the liberal West’ versus ‘the communist East’ was the natural order of everyday life. Not only was the political reality bipolar – the two political poles were isolated in two geographical categories on each side of the ‘Iron Curtain’. Michal Buchowski states that “In the Cold War period, from a Western perspective, the Iron Curtain set a clearcut division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ which was reduced, in fact, to geography.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, he argues, “shifts in collective identities and the meaning of ‘the Other’ have become a part of the transformations in Europe after 1989”.¹⁰⁷ Without the neat political categories of ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Europe created by the Cold War, journalists everywhere were looking at the scrambled pieces of the European jigsaw. The notion of a ‘West’ and an ‘East’ in Europe remained, but what cultural and political signifiers should one look for to make that divide after 1989? Journalists in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* agreed on the best way of understanding post-Communist Europe going forwards. That solution, incidentally, was looking backwards – to historical lines of culture, religion, and political tradition.

Explicit examples of how Yugoslavia fit into the revised categorization of Europe began to appear in Norwegian newspapers in the spring of 1990. Making a comeback appearance, Jahn Otto Johansen shared his views on the political situation of Southeastern Europe in a *Dagbladet* article illustratively titled “Back to history”. In it, Johansen accused both sides of the Norwegian

¹⁰⁴ Per Egil Hegge. “Jugoslavias glideflukt mot stupet”. *Aftenposten*. December 9, 1989 (morning edition), p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Petrović (2009), op.cit., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Buchowski, op.cit., p. 465.

¹⁰⁷ Buchowski, op.cit., p. 464-465.

political spectrum of mistakenly understanding Eastern Europe solely in terms of political ideology. “In reality,” Johansen wrote, “these societies never became as totalitarian and Marxist as [...] we feared in the West. *Old culture and history lived its own life and exploded to the surface when the will to use force disappeared* [...] Now more than ever, it is necessary to look to the old cultural historical borders between [...] along the Danube and the Sava rivers, between the Roman Catholic Europe and the Turkish dominated, later Islamic and Orthodox Balkans.”¹⁰⁸ Similar sentiments were found in *Aftenposten*. In an editorial published in January 1990, the newspaper used the historical-cultural lens to analyze the latest developments in the unravelling of Yugoslavia. “[Through Yugoslavia] there run fundamental cultural borders,” it read, “between East and West in European tradition, between North and South in the international society, even between the West and the Orient. It spans from the republic of Slovenia, which is part of Central Europe, to the Albanian populated Kosovo which is an *underdeveloped* Islamic country.”¹⁰⁹ These views were reiterated in March, when another *Aftenposten* editorial explained that “Again, we can expect to hear a lot of Eastern Europe’s *eternal leitmotif*, the national conflicts, after the lid of Communism has been removed from several witches’ cauldrons*.”¹¹⁰

Although there was an increased focus on the importance of ethnicity, religious belonging and national history, the exact information on how these divisions looked on the ground in Yugoslavia was lacking. In January 1990, *Dagbladet* Inger Bentzrud presented the religious composition of Yugoslavia in a fact box. While comfortably placing the peoples of Slovenia and Croatia in the category of Roman-Catholic, Bosnia was presented as primarily “Greek-Orthodox, but with a growing Muslim population, [...]”¹¹¹ It is unclear where these numbers are taken from. The last Yugoslav census of Bosnia in 1991 showed that the Muslims formed the largest group with a good margin, forming 44% of the total population.¹¹² Another element of notice is the use of the religious designation ‘Greek Orthodox’, rather than merely ‘Orthodox’. It seems like journalists in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* used ‘Greek Orthodox’ interchangeably with simply ‘Orthodox’ as a designation of the form of Christianity that had its roots in the Byzantine

¹⁰⁸ Jahn Otto Johansen. “Tilbake til historien”. *Dagbladet*. March 13, 1990, p. 4. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹ *Aftenposten*. “Titos verk rakner”. January 26, 1990 (morning edition), p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁰ *Aftenposten*. “Nasjonal lidenskap”. March 22, 1990 (morning edition), p. 2. Emphasis added. *Metaphors picturing ‘the Balkans’ as a boiling cauldron ready to burst were no new feature in European journalism. One of the most famous political cartoons from the Balkan wars of 1912/13, published in the British *Punch Magazine* in October 1912, depicted the European leaders sitting astride a cauldron labelled “Balkan problems”. See: New Zealand History, “Balkan troubles cartoon”. Retrieved November 23, 2023, from <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/balkan-troubles-cartoon>.

¹¹¹ Inger Bentzrud. “Blodig for skilsmissen”. *Dagbladet*. January 25, 1990, p. 21.

¹¹² Fran Markowitz. “Census and Sensibilities in Sarajevo”. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 1 (2007): 30-73, p. 42.

empire. *Aftenposten* journalists also made errors on the ethnic composition of Yugoslavia. In April, journalist Halvor Tjønn described how the Montenegrin republic consisted of “100% Serbs”.¹¹³ Tjønn’s article was criticized by Professor Svein Mønnesland, a long time academic on Southeastern European matters. “In today’s aggravated situation,” Mønnesland argued, “[...] claiming that ‘all Montenegrins are Serbs’, as *Aftenposten* is doing, would be a clear political argument, and one that many Montenegrin would not agree with.” Mønnesland also criticized *Aftenposten*’s erroneous description of Bosnia-Hercegovina as “equally split” between Croats, Serbs and Muslims.¹¹⁴

In May Per Egil Hegge, *Aftenposten*’s temporary correspondent in Eastern Europe, presented his take on another vital component of the post-1989 historical interpretations of ‘West’ and ‘East’ in Europe: the Habsburg imperial legacy: “[The border of the Habsburg empire] towards the rest of Europe is still alive and strong. It is felt in particular in Yugoslavia, where it ran (I am tempted to say, where it goes) between the Catholic Croatia and the Greek Orthodox Serbia.”¹¹⁵ Hegge’s article presented a trait that would become increasingly prominent during the coming chapters: that the multiethnic historical legacy of the Habsburg empire not only functioned as a contrast to the perceived ‘ethnic hatred’ of “the Balkans”, but that historical imperial borders played a fundamental role in the differing right to a belonging to Western Europe after the fall of communism.

In the summer months of 1990, the mental placement of the republics in the increasingly unravelling Yugoslavia on a ‘European’, ‘Western’, and ‘Modern’ spectrum was cemented. In *Dagbladet*, it was argued that “Slovenia and Croatia orient themselves towards a modern Europe, while Serbia is headed towards a medieval system”, the quote being based on the views of an explicitly anti-Serbian Kosovar politician.¹¹⁶ In *Aftenposten*, Hegge argued a view that would be instrumental for the years to come; the religious divisions in Yugoslavia and their implications for ‘Europeanness’ of the Yugoslav peoples. Under the headline “Children of Rome and Byzantium”, he emphasized what he saw as the inherent differences in the mental rationality between peoples under Catholic and Orthodox faiths: “Organizations and institutions that fight for parts of power, but who realize they it cannot have and maybe also should not have it all, *became characteristic of the non-Byzantian societies*. In the Byzantine empire, on the other hand, and in those areas where the Greek Orthodox religion reigned, there was signals of danger as soon as

¹¹³ Halvor Tjønn. “Europas heksegryte”. *Aftenposten*. April 7, 1990 (national edition), p. 21.

¹¹⁴ Svein Mønnesland. “Feilaktig om nasjonaliteter”. *Aftenposten*. April 27, 1990 (morning edition), p. 7.

¹¹⁵ Per Egil Hegge. “Uten frykt for Brussel”. *Aftenposten*. May 31, 1990 (morning edition), p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Dag Yngland. “De frykter borgerkrig”. *Dagbladet*. July 20, 1990, p. 18.

someone disturbed the central, concentrated power. [...] Serbia is still characterized by Greek Orthodox traditions, atmospheres and even faith. With a clearly lacking will or ability to accept the premise that non-Serbians might disagree with what Serbia represents.”¹¹⁷ Hegge seemed to argue that the peoples living in the Yugoslav regions with a Catholic majority carried within them a ‘rational’ nationalism, a nationalism that saw the need for moderate power sharing. Orthodox Christianity, by contrast, was according to Hegge fundamentally unable to handle any challenge to strong central rule. The impact of religious interpretations of the nationalist claims in Yugoslavia will be explored in the next chapter.

The months between the unravelling of the Iron Curtain in the fall of 1989 and the first months of 1990 are crucial for understanding the core concept of this thesis. It is within this period that the first traces of a more outright Balkanism appeared more prominently. Within the matter of months, the bipolar world order that had divided the continent since the end of the Second World War was shattered. As shown in the analysis above, central to the argument the journalists in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* was that the system of categorization needed to explain the post-1989 situation of Europe had, in fact, been present for centuries. Hidden from ‘Western’ eyes under a veil of communist suppression, these allegedly ancient dividing lines along religious beliefs, political traditions and lingual communities were presented as causing a constant state of tension and turmoil. As Per Egil Hegge put it in *Aftenposten* in the summer of 1990: “It is as if the past year put [Eastern] Europe in the photographic development fluid of history, where the separation between the Communist and Non-Communist states has become uninteresting and prehistoric and virtually wiped away.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Per Egil Hegge. “Roma og Bysants’ barn”. *Aftenposten*. July 28, 1990 (morning edition), p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Hegge, op.cit. July 28, 1990.

Chapter IV: July 1990 – December 1995: Balkanist discourse of religion

4.1 *Balkanism and religion*

As discussed in the preceding chapter, religion appeared early as a way of categorizing the ‘Europeanness’ of the different peoples of the decaying federation. Importantly, the role of religion also plays a significant role in the phenomenon of ‘nesting orientalism’, as described by Milica Bakić-Hayden. In their article “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’”, Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden argues that the religions of Yugoslavia occupy different spaces on a complex moral hierarchy of European values: “[...] At the most general level, the division between east and west is symbolized by the distinction between the eastern churches (Orthodoxy) and the western ones. Within these two parts, hierarchy is again revealed by religion: in the east, Islam is generally less favorably viewed than Orthodox Christianity; while in the west, the Protestant tradition is generally seen more positively than is Catholicism.”¹¹⁹ The phenomenon of a nation regarding itself as the ‘defender of Western Christianity’ is referred to as the myth of the *Antemurale Christianitatis*. As Petrović writes, “the Antemurale Christianitatis discourse has a long tradition in ‘the Balkans’. The countries in the European periphery use it as a tool to emphasize that they are European, moreover, that they protect Europe and its culture from ‘the Turks’ or Islam.”¹²⁰ As Bakić-Hayden argues, the Orthodox church dismisses the notion of Catholic Christianity as the bulwark of Europe by “[...] pointing out the grandeur of Byzantine civilization [...] or by recalling the defense of European Christendom against the onslaught of Islam.”¹²¹

As seen in early instances such as Per Egil Hegge’s article “The children of Rome and Byzantium” and Jahn Otto Johansen’s “Back to history”, the division between a Western and an Eastern Christianity was regarded by journalists in Norway as both an ancient concept and a valid instrument of categorization of the Yugoslav peoples as their fell apart. Todorova, however, stresses the relative modernity of this categorization of a unified ‘Western’ Christian set of beliefs. “The notion of a general Western Christianity as opposed to a putative Eastern Orthodox entity,” she writes, “is not a theological construct but a relatively late cultural and recent political science category [...] that appropriates religious images to legitimize and obfuscate the real nature of geopolitical rivalries and boundaries.”¹²² Todorova’s argument is supported by Bakić-Hayden, who argues: “What such statements [of a general Western Christianity] imply, by projecting the

¹¹⁹ Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden. “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics.” *Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (1992): 1-15, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Petrović (2009), op.cit., p. 44.

¹²¹ Bakić-Hayden, op.cit., p. 925.

¹²² Todorova, op.cit., p. 18.

same logic that would exclude 'the Balkans', is a static Europe, one much less dynamic than it actually has been, with more than one division within European Christendom, centuries of interaction with European Jewry and, finally, centuries of Islamic presence."¹²³

4.1.1 *'The children of Rome and Byzantium': Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity*

The notion of a right to a European belonging for Croatia and Slovenia based on their Catholic heritage increased sharply in 1990. By the end of July 1990, Hegge had already presented his view that peoples of the Catholic states had acquired through history a more rational mindset of power sharing than people of Orthodox faith had, through his philosophical observation that 'non-Byzantine societies' was characterized by "organizations and institutions that fight for parts of power, but who realizes that it cannot have and maybe also should not have it all, [...]"¹²⁴. In January of 1991, *Aftenposten's* Aasmund Willersrud gave similar views on the role of cultural-religious boundaries in Yugoslavia. "Tito's Yugoslavia, the way that he shaped it after 1945," he wrote, "is irrevocably broken up, and it is hardly any coincidence that this happens after the same historical line that for centuries split Europe between Rome and Byzants. [...] In Catholic Croatia and Slovenia, the mighty defenses against the Turks are intact several places."¹²⁵ Willersrud's description of the physical remnants of the fortresses made by the Habsburgs against the Ottoman empire indicates a reference to the myth of the *Antemurale Christianitatis*.

More explicit examples of Willersrud's adherence to the view that Catholicism was a sound argument for European membership came a few months later. Discussing the growing dissent in Slovenia against the central authority in Belgrade, Willersrud reported that "The nearly two million Slovenes are *among the most Catholic peoples in Europe*." Willersrud thus seemed to stress how the Slovenes as the 'most Catholic people of Europe' should be regarded as a natural part of 'the West', in contrast to regions further south in Yugoslavia. This argument was strengthened by Willersrud later in the same article: "The main dividing lines in the crumbling Yugoslav state run between the Catholic Slovenes and Croats and the Orthodox Serbs 'down in 'the Balkans'', as they say up here below the Alps. There is no doubt that most Slovenes have mentally broken with Yugoslavia a long time ago, by identifying themselves as a European, not Balkan people".¹²⁶ Willersrud, then, explicitly draws a line between the Catholic Europeans and the Orthodox

¹²³ Bakić-Hayden, op.cit., p. 925.

¹²⁴ Hegge, op.cit., July 28, 1990.

¹²⁵ Aasmund Willersrud. "Jugoslavia mot oppløsning". *Aftenposten*. January 28, 1991 (morning edition), p. 6.

¹²⁶ Aasmund Willersrud. "Kirkeklokker varsler også fare." *Aftenposten*. July 1, 1991 (evening edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

'Balkan peoples', while also supporting the argument that 'the Balkan' is not a geographical designator, but a symbolic and moral categorization a people can 'break with'.

Dagbladet's correspondent Håkon Lund placed similar weight on the Catholic-Orthodox dividing line, drawing his historical parallels even further back in time than Willersrud. In March of 1991, he wrote: "Thus, hate and suspicion is cultivated. History is dug through. 1054, the year when the Eastern and Western Roman church split, is like it was last year." Quoting an anonymous person described vaguely as 'an intellectual Serb who has lived many years in Scandinavia', Lund writes: "– You Scandinavians come with your *Lutheran, rational world view*. You search for logic in the events and clear prognoses of what will happen. But that is not how history is created in 'the Balkans'."¹²⁷ The quote utilizes a religious argument to deliver a classic trope of Balkanist discourse – the notion of "the Balkans" as a region where logic and rationality are unable to prevent conflict. The reader is told to understand that his or her 'Lutheran, rational world view' differs from that of the common Yugoslav man or woman. Images of the 'Balkan rationale', or lack thereof, will be discussed in chapter V.

By the autumn of 1991 full war had broken out in Yugoslavia, and the Serb dominated Yugoslav National Army had invaded the Croat republic.¹²⁸ In another defense of the notion of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* in October, Willersrud drew parallels between the 1991 invasion and Croatia's strategical role part of the Habsburg empire: "Federal and Serbian forces intensified the attacks against the strategical city of Karlovac, south-west of Zagreb: the old fort that the Habsburgs established in the 1500s as a defense against the Turkish hordes. *Just as decisive as the city was for the Christian Europe's security in the Middle Ages, is it now for Croatia's independence.*"¹²⁹ Willersrud seemed to indicate that the Serbs of 1991 should be seen as carrier of the 16th Century Ottoman legacy as the invading foreign power. The mental parallels drawn by mentioning the Serbian forces together with the dreaded 'Turkish hordes' are characteristic of a Balkanist discourse that seeks to underscore the eternal presence of brutal and primitively organized violence in the region. These are notions this thesis will return to in the next chapter. Willersrud also reiterated the point that this Croat city was instrumental in safeguarding a 'Christian Europe'. As pointed out by Bakić-Hayden and Todorova, however, there can be little talk of a static and unified 'Christian Europe' in this period. By placing Croatia on the edge of the cliff towards

¹²⁷ Håkon Lund. "Hatets verdensdel". *Dagbladet*. March 26, 1991, p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹²⁸ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., pp. 69-75.

¹²⁹ Aasmund Willersrud. "Avgjørende oppgjør om Kroatia". *Aftenposten*. October 7, 1991 (morning edition), p. 7. Emphasis added.

'Eastern' religions like Orthodoxy and Islam, Willersrud simultaneously moves Croatia towards the same 'Western category' on the mental map as Slovenia.

As Ulf Andenæs began gradually covering the war in Yugoslavia for *Aftenposten* in 1992, a willingness to explain the conflict by referencing the religious differences became clear also in his reporting. On April 18, 1993, under the headline "Trapped by the past", Andenæs described the relationship between the Croats and Slovenes on one side and the Serbs on the other. "Croats and Slovenes regard themselves wholeheartedly as part of the West, while the Serbians are influenced by Eastern culture," he argued. "The division between Catholic and Orthodox religion is the divide between the Western and the Eastern Europe. Islam has been responsible for the Oriental feature. All dividing lines clashed in Yugoslavia". After marveling over the loyalty he observed from the Serbian Orthodox Christians to the Serbian royal family Karadjordjevic, Andenæs stated: "Suddenly it dawns on me what is behind all of this striking monarchism. These people long for moral leadership with historical roots. A national leader they can look up to, one they can call 'father'. Such leadership they have not had in half a century. They are starving for it [...]"¹³⁰ The Serbian Orthodox are indicated by Andenæs to inherit an almost infantilized role as incurable nationalists, in contrast to the more rational 'Western' Catholics.

In an article in the same edition, Andenæs dedicated to the Croats a rationality not granted to the Serbs. This rationality seems to be founded in their Catholic heritage. "The border between Central Europe and 'the Balkans'," Andenæs argued, "was the border between Croatia on one side and Serbia and Bosnia on the other. On the Croat side, the Western, the Catholic, the Habsburg spirit and Baroque buildings. On the opposite side: the Eastern-Orthodox, the Islamic, Turkish rule and backwardness."¹³¹ Andenæs lumped together the terms 'Western', 'Catholic' and 'the Habsburg spirit' (what this alleged 'spirit' contains or how it has impacted the region directly, was not explained). Contrasting these are Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy and 'Backwardness'. It is not difficult to see the argument inherent to this dichotomy – Croatia should be regarded by any Western European with a basic knowledge of modern culture and history as members of the Western European society, while the Orthodox are relegated to 'Balkan backwardness'. Like Hegge, Andenæs connected Roman Catholicism to an idea of a rational religion with a view towards the international world. In May 1993, he argued that: "[...] the Catholic faith of the Croat is connected to the international society that the church creates. The Orthodox faith is

¹³⁰ Ulf Andenæs. "Fanget av fortiden". *Aftenposten*. April 18, 1993 (morning edition), p. 15.

¹³¹ Ulf Andenæs. "Det selvstendige Kroatia: Vi hører til Vesten". *Aftenposten*. April 18, 1993 (morning edition), p. 16.

connected to the nation, and to the old connection to Moscow. Often one gets the impression that the Orthodox religion is primarily a worship of the nation.”¹³²

The role of the Orthodox church in relation to its ‘European’ belonging was not always consistent. In fact, it appeared to change depending on the context it is discussed within. An example of this occurred in *Dagbladet*'s special edition, called “‘the Balkans’ are burning”, published late in August 1992. Under the headline “Christianity’s bulwark towards Islam”, it is emphasized how “the Serbs have regarded themselves as the bulwark of Christianity towards the Muslim world – and as the Orthodox church’ bulwark towards Catholicism.”¹³³ This description moved the idea of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* south-east of Croatia and places the Serbs as a strictly Orthodox bulwark, not only towards Islam but also towards Roman Catholicism. Another instance diverging from the typical assignment of the ‘Eastern role’ to the Orthodox church appeared after *Aftenposten*'s Ulf Andenæs visited Skopje in April 1993. After describing the deep division between the Slavic Orthodox and the Albanian Muslim communities, Andenæs went on to state that: “The experience of Macedonia as a meeting place between two cultural spheres is underlined by the public life and by the city architecture in the capital and other cities, *in the interchange between the European and the Oriental*. This is one of the Balkan areas where the Turkish rule lasted the longest, until 1912.”¹³⁴ Only twelve days after his article equating the Orthodox to “the Balkans” and ‘backwardness’, Andenæs seemed to now appoint the Orthodox Christians of Macedonia as the representatives of Europe in their meeting with Islam.

The inconclusive role of the Orthodox people of Yugoslavia on the mental map of post-1989 Europe might seem paradoxical, particularly after we have seen how profoundly ‘other’ the Orthodox church was presented in comparison to the Slovene and Croat Catholics. The vagueness and plasticity of who is and is not European, however, is central to the Balkanist discourse. Orthodox Christians find themselves in the center of this ambiguous phenomenon. They are presented as foreign to Europe when contrasted to the peoples regarded as more ‘Western’ than them, but they inherit the role of the Europeans when they are contrasted to the Muslims of Macedonia. The result was a vague and paradoxical narrative. This also confirms the theories of Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, who argued for the existence for the religious hierarchy where Orthodoxy, while still less ‘Western’ than Catholicism, was more so than Islam.

¹³² Ulf Andenæs. “Jugoslavia var Stor-Serbia”. *Aftenposten*. May 2, 1993 (morning edition), p. 11.

¹³³ *Dagbladet* (‘Balkan brenner’-edition). “Kristendommens utpost mot Islam”. August 25, 1992.

¹³⁴ Ulf Andenæs. “Troen splitter folket”. *Aftenposten*. April 30, 1993 (morning edition), p. 7. Emphasis added.

As it turned out not even Catholicism, the perceived ‘Western’ Christianity so near and dear to the journalists in the first years of the 1990s, would be a safe bet to ensure the status of ‘European’ as the war progressed. Cultural historian Ana Foteva has argued that Croatia’s position in “the Balkans” versus ‘Europe’ was never as clear cut as the Slovenian position, despite their common Catholic religion. Foteva stresses that Croatian territories was at several points through history part of the Ottoman empire, and that the Croats share closer ties to the Orthodox Serbs than the Slovenes due to linguistic similarities in the so-called *Stokavian* dialect. Croats had also lived for centuries in the multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina, in contrast to the Slovenes, who found themselves mostly within the borders of the Slovene republic.¹³⁵ The war in Bosnia fundamentally changed general Western perceptions of Croatia. As argued by Maple Razsa and Nicole Lindstrom: “Croatia’s image as a victim of Serb aggression was soon tarnished by its involvement in the 1992 to 1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. [...] [It] assumed the a more ambivalent account in Western media as both an aggressor and victim.”¹³⁶

Signs of Croatia’s ambivalent role appeared gradually. Covering the visit of pope John Paul II to Zagreb in 1994, Andenæs stated that “[...] for the [Croat] people, the Roman church has been a consolation and a gathering spot for centuries, and a weapon in the national self-establishment.”¹³⁷ Previously stressing that the Croats were an embodiment of the ‘Western Habsburg spirit’ and that Orthodoxy by contrast was ‘a worshipping of the nation’, Andenæs now communicated that also Catholicism, not only Orthodox Christianity, could be deployed for a nationalist cause. His argument was reiterated a few weeks later, when he described the Pope’s speech to a crowd in Zagreb. “Nobody could prevent this becoming a national celebration, probably the largest in [Croatia’s] history. [...] [It was] one of those times when God, the nation, mysticism and power politics all come together in an unpredictable mix.”¹³⁸

4.1.2 ‘Yes to Allah, yes to Europe’ – ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Muslims on the European mental map

Yugoslav Islam occupies a peculiar role in the Norwegian journalistic discourse. On the one hand, it is inextricably linked to the legacy of the inherently ‘Eastern’ Ottoman empire. In the same way that the ‘Westernness’ of Roman Catholicism is linked back to the Habsburg empire, so Islamic communities in Yugoslavia are changed to notions of the ‘Turkish hordes’ and the

¹³⁵ Ana Foteva. *Do ‘the Balkans’ Begin in Vienna?: The Geopolitical and Imaginary Borders between ‘the Balkans’ and Europe.* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2014), p. 147.

¹³⁶ Razsa et al., op.cit., 633-634.

¹³⁷ Ulf Andenæs. “Gjenganger i nyhetene”. *Aftenposten*. September 4, 1994 (morning edition), p. 6.

¹³⁸ Ulf Andenæs. “Paven fordømte nasjonalismen”. *Aftenposten*. September 12, 1994 (morning edition), p. 6.

Islamization of 'the Balkans' during the Medieval period. However, an analysis of the presentation of Yugoslav Muslims in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* reveals a more complex reality.

Not initially subject to any significant degree of journalistic coverage, interest in the Bosnian Muslims increased as the war in Croatia seemed to drag Bosnia-Herzegovina into the conflict. In July 1991, *Aftenposten's* Willersrud reported on the increasing unrest in the Muslim communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. "The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are a peaceful people, but now they feel like they are backed up into a corner," he wrote. In the same article, Willersrud quoted the Bosnian deputy Prime Minister, who had remarked that: "To the West, the word 'Muslim' is synonymous with something Arabic and intolerant, while we in reality have been living without conflict for centuries". "The Muslims of this republic," Willersrud stated, "regard themselves as an ancient European people, which could function as negotiators between the Persian Islam and the West – if they were only given the chance."¹³⁹

In September 1991, Willersrud stressed that "The Muslims of Bosnia have never been militant through the unrestful history of the republic [...]"¹⁴⁰ In April of 1992, Willersrud again drew the link between Europe and the Bosnian Muslims: "The Bosnian Muslims of today trace their roots back to different Slavic, Christian tribes that adapted to the sultan rule through the centuries, also in terms of religion. But the Bosnian Muslims of today [...] *appear more like an ethnic than a religious group.*"¹⁴¹ What Willersrud means by this last statement is inherently unclear, and he does not explain it further. What might be implied is that the Bosnians are not fundamental Islamists but see their religion as an instrument of creating a collective unity, but the historian in 2023 is, like the reader of *Aftenposten* in 1992, left to speculate.

Other journalists showed similar sympathies for the Bosnian Muslims, indicating a wish to place them 'inside Europe' on the new mental map. *Dagbladet's* Peter Normann Waage labelled the Muslim refugees from Bosnia "the new Jews of Europe", referencing the Holocaust. He stressed that the Bosnian Muslims had historical roots in the heretic Bogomil church before the Ottoman invasion, "[...] a Christian movement related to the Cathars in France and Spain". The reference to the medieval Christian Cathar movement in France and Spain is interesting. Rather than seeing the Bosnian Muslims as the remnants of a 'backward' Ottoman empire, comparing their religious history to that of France and Spain places them closer to Western Europe. Waage, like Willersrud, also emphasized the peacefulness of the Muslims: "Whatever the cause [for the

¹³⁹ Aasmund Willersrud. "Ulmende frykt i Bosnia". *Aftenposten*. July 14, 1991 (morning edition), p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Aasmund Willersrud. "Bosnia-Herzegovina neste?" *Aftenposten*. September 25, 1991 (morning edition), p. 8.

¹⁴¹ Aasmund Willersrud. "Islam-frykt bak Bosnia-vold". *Aftenposten*. April 14, 1992 (morning edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

mass conversion among Bosnians to Islam], it is certain that there appeared in Bosnia-Herzegovina a society in which members of the two large Christian churches lived peacefully along with Muslims for centuries.”¹⁴² In an extensive piece on the religious loyalties of the peoples in the former Yugoslavia, Ulf Andenæs interviewed prominent personalities among the Catholic Croats, the Orthodox Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims. A Muslim author is quoted stating that: “Many believe that we are an Asiatic nation placed in Europe. But we are separated from the Middle East through our lifestyle. We practice what we might call the *European Islam*, which will be an important bridge between Europe and the Islamic cultural sphere. [...] We follow the Quaran, but without the Middle Eastern folklore.”¹⁴³

In an October 1995 article, as the war in Bosnia was headed towards a settlement in the Dayton agreement, Andenæs described the Muslim faith he observed in Bosnian cities: “It is an astonishingly liberal and tolerant version of Islam we encounter.” His observation is confirmed in a statement from a Norwegian aid worker, who declares: “– I doubt that [foreign attempts of] turning the Bosnian Muslims into fundamentalists will succeed, because the European customs are part of the culture they are trying to defend.” Andenæs also quotes the leader of the Bosnian broadcasting services, who states that: “[The] people of Europe do not need to fear our Islam. *We say yes to Allah, and yes to Europe.*” Andenæs seems impressed with the moderate Islam he has encountered, and the prospect it carries for a peaceful Islamic nation in Europe. He finished his article by arguing that “With their ‘European Islam’, founded in their own state, [the Bosnian Muslims] are on the verge of attempting a quite untested experiment.”¹⁴⁴

A moderate and peaceful people believing in a ‘European Islam’, the Muslims of Bosnia came to occupy a space on the post-1989 mental map that saw them as largely foreign to, but nonetheless compatible with, a perceived set of ‘Western values and beliefs’. The same was not so easily said, however, for the Yugoslav Muslims of Albanian descent. Already from 1990, the Albanian Muslims were cast as more primitive in both moral principles and world view. Writing in February 1990, Håkon Lund interviewed a Kosovo Albanian journalists quoted as arguing that “In reality, [the Kosovo Albanians] were Catholics, until the Turks through five hundred years of occupation forced people to convert to Islam. *Today, it is only the most backwards people who maintain their Muslim faith* [...]”.¹⁴⁵ In this instance, rather than ascribing to the Albanian Muslims the ‘Europeanness’ the Bosnian Muslims, it was stressed that most rational people do not subscribe

¹⁴² Peter Normann Waage. “Europas nye jøder”. *Dagbladet*. July 24, 1992, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Ulf Andenæs. “Religion i krig”. *Aftenposten*. May 3, 1992 (morning edition), p. 13. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ Ulf Andenæs. “Islam blir gjenreist i Bosnia”. *Aftenposten*. October 6, 1995 (morning edition), p. 7. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ Håkon Lund. “‘Stalinistene’ dreper våre barn”. *Dagbladet*. February 2, 1990, p. 19.

to the Muslim faith at all. Albanian Islam also seem to inherit a greater degree of potential violence. In 1992, *Dagbladet's* Morten Strand painted the picture of what a potential war in the Muslim dominated Kosovo could “[...] mobilize parts of the Muslim world to jihad, holy warfare. *We might have the first true religious war in Europe in several centuries.*”¹⁴⁶

In an article discussing Austria's handling of Bosnian refugees in the 1990s, Andre Gingrich described the idea of “the good and the bad Muslim”. Gingrich explains that large parts of the Austrian population were openly critical of the ‘Oriental Muslims’ in the 1990s but seemed to want to help the Bosnian Muslim refugees. Gingrich finds part of the answer for this apparent paradox in the mobilizing phrase deployed by Austrian politicians to rally support for the refugees: “These people are our neighbors, they have close historical links to Austria”. Gingrich writes from the perspective of the Austrian public: “[The refugees] are descendants of the Bosnian Muslims who then fought bravely for the imperial Austro-Hungarian army against the Serbs and Italians on Austria's southeastern battle lines until the last day of the First World War. *These are those Good Muslims who have a permanent place in the Austrian imaginary.*”¹⁴⁷ It seems like a similar logic was deployed in the Norwegian newspapers – because they could point to their part in the Habsburg empire, which journalists like Ulf Andenæs and Aasmund Willersrud eagerly cited as the post-1989 symbol of all things European, the Bosnian Muslims had by default a better claim to ‘membership in Europe’ than the Albanian Muslims.

This chapter's analysis of the presentation and discussion on religions in Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1995 has shown that a clear tendency of Balkanist discourse is traceable in Norwegian newspapers. Both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* consistently established the discourse of a moral hierarchy of religions, placing the Catholic Slovenia and Croatia closer to the notion of ‘European’ values than that of the Muslims and the Orthodox Serbs. Deploying the notions of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* and the spirit of its Habsburg heritage, both Northern republics were initially placed squarely in ‘the West’ on the post-1989 mental map. However, the analysis has also shown that this Balkanist hierarchy of the religions was not set in stone – rather, the level of ‘Europeanness’ of the different religions was context specific. While Catholic Slovenia's ‘Western’ status was never questioned, Croat Catholicism lost some of its original appeal as a genuinely Western force after the bloody and expansionist campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Islam, although mostly seen as a foreign and exotic religion, occupies the ambiguous role of being in one moment the embodiment of the Ottoman legacy in Europe and in the other a ‘European

¹⁴⁶ Morten Strand. “Serbia tenner hele Balkan”. *Dagbladet* (“*Balkan brenner*”-edition). August 25, 1992, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Andre Gingrich. “Frontier Myths of Orientalism: The Muslim World in Public and Popular Cultures of Central Europe.” *Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School, Piran/Pirano* 2 (1996): 99–123, pp. 106-107.

representative' in the Islamic world. Serbian Orthodoxy was cast as an inherently irrational, backwards and 'Eastern' religious movement – unless, that is, it was contrasted to the Albanian Muslims. As will be shown in the next chapter, the hierarchy set by the religious discourse is reflected in the way that the way that the nature of violence in 'the Balkans' is reported, described and discussed in the Norwegian press.

Chapter V: July 1990 – December 1995: Balkanist discourse of violence

5.1 *Balkanism and violence*

Three key concepts form vital parts of the presentation of 'Balkan' violence in Balkanist theory. One such concept is the idea of how the inherently irrational character of 'Balkan violence' is contrasting from the ideas and moral values of 'modern Western' society. Todorova argues that: "With all professed and sincerely felt aversion against the atrocities of World War II, especially the Holocaust, these are seen as extreme aberrations and not typical consequences of the otherwise rational, liberal, and predictable polity of the West. [...] Yugoslav atrocities, and in general Balkan atrocities, on the contrary, are the expected natural *outcomes of a warrior ethos, deeply ingrained in the psyche of Balkan populations*. Balkan violence thus is more violent because it is *archaic*, born of clan societies, whose archaic forms reveal the 'disharmonic clash between prehistory and the modern age'"¹⁴⁸ Bakić-Hayden supports Todorova's argument, stressing that "[...] violence in 'the Balkans' has been not only a description of a social condition but considered inherent in the nature of its people."¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Tanja Petrović writes that: "[...] the war and violence that followed the disintegration of former Yugoslavia were interpreted as a manifestation of the typical 'Balkan character' of peoples inhabiting this part of Europe."¹⁵⁰ The mental image of the irrational and archaic 'Balkan' warrior mentality would become prominent in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*.

Another important aspect to the notion of 'Balkan violence' was the idea of its historical legacy. As shown by the analysis in the previous chapter, the religious and historical legacies of the peoples in Yugoslavia were deployed by journalists to explain how and why the separate groups were behaving in differing ways. Contemporary political, economic, and social motivations were discarded for pseudo-historical narratives depicting centuries of constant turmoil and warfare between the peoples of Yugoslavia. Enika Abazi and Albert Doja have investigated links between the journalistic presentations of the Balkan wars of 1912/13 and the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. "[...] [A]fter Yugoslavia crumbled in the 1990s, the casual reader of the international press [...] was left in little doubt that ethno-religious hatred, wars, violence and atrocities in Southeast Europe were endemic and primordial."¹⁵¹ Abazi and Doja emphasize that there was an effort in newspapers across 'the West' to interweave the historical accounts of the 1912/13 war with the reporting of the 1990s. "In this way," Abazi and Doja argue, "Southeast

¹⁴⁸ Todorova, op.cit., p. 137. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁹ Bakić-Hayden (1995), op.cit., p. 918.

¹⁵⁰ Petrović, op.cit., p. 21.

¹⁵¹ Abazi et al., op.cit., p. 1018.

DOI: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2016.1191345>.

European populations are doomed forever by history. These narratives have enabled the construction of a primordial, timeless and unchanging ethno-religious hatred that is, paradoxically, connected in a clear and immediate way to the ever-changing present.”¹⁵²

A third factor to the idea of ‘Balkan violence’, linked to its perception in the ‘Western’ media as both irrational and inescapable, is the idea of its cultural primordiality. Cultural primordialism sees ethnicity and nationhood as a fixed marker of identity rather than a mentally constructed concept. In the words of Luis A. Vivanco: “[P]rimordialism views ethnic identities as ancient, resistant to change, and biologically inherited, as opposed to products of culture and history.”¹⁵³ Its antithesis is that of Benedict Anderson’s constructivist theory, which argues that “[...] the nation is an imagined political community that is inherently limited in scope and sovereign in nature.”¹⁵⁴ One of the most notable primordialist concepts during the Yugoslav war was the idea of the wars being caused by an ‘ancient hatred’ between the ethnicities. Popularized in journalistic works like Robert Kaplan’s 1993 book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, the theory of the ‘ancient hatred’ established an image of the wars in Yugoslavia, and in particular of the conflict between the Serbs and the Croats, as a phenomenon solely contingent on deep seated animosity that was centuries old. Historically, any objective and methodological argument for the validity of the ‘ancient hatred’ theory would hardly be worth the paper it was written on. As Svein Mønnesland argues, most Serbs and Croats had long lived in different countries and knew little of each other before entering into common statehood after the First World War. In Bosnia, they lived peacefully side by side.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the theory of interethnic ‘ancient hatreds’ in Yugoslavia came to occupy a vital role in many European newspapers in the 1990s, among them both *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten*.

5.1.1 ‘The long arm of history’ – Balkanist perceptions of violence as a historical legacy of Yugoslavia

In the spring of 1991, violent clashes in Yugoslavia intensified. Already before the outbreak of war in June 1991, the myth of ‘ancient hatred’ was established as an explaining narrative in Norwegian newspapers. In May 1991, Aasmund Willersrud depicted how Serbs had committed

¹⁵² Abazi et al., op.cit., p. 1021.

¹⁵³ Luis A. Vivanco. “Primordialism”: *A Dictionary of Cultural Anthropology*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2018. DOI: <https://www.oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.uio.no/display/10.1093/acref/9780191836688.001.0001/acref-9780191836688-e-290>.

¹⁵⁴ Ian Buchanan. “Imagined community”. *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (1. ed.). Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2010. DOI: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-347>.

¹⁵⁵ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., p. 61.

gruesome murders of police officers and soldiers in the Croatian republic. “Bestiality is on the loose [...],” he declared. “*One feels placed in another time, another world far from the modern Europe that strives for a unified, civilized society.* And that is not far from the truth. This is more than anything else ‘the Balkans’, the powder keg of Europe* for the last century, where the long arm of history has suddenly seized people and leaders once again. [...] [T]he animosity is deeply rooted in history. [...] Already [in the 17th Century], the Croats were unhappy that the Habsburg authorities let Serb refugees from the south settle in the border region.”¹⁵⁶ Willersrud presented the image of an archaic bestiality as a manifestation of ‘the Balkan’ way of violent behavior through history. *Dagbladet’s* Håkon Lund made similar arguments as he described how one Serb pictured the war to be a conspiracy between ‘the Komintern, the Vatican and Austria-Hungary’. Lund stated that: “It is like the historical year of 1054, when the Western- and Eastern Roman church were split, was yesterday.”¹⁵⁷ As seen in the analysis of Balkanism and religion, Lund used the exact same reference to the apparent proximity of the year 1054 when discussing the division between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. This illustrates how interrelated the ideas of religious traditions and the historical legacy of Balkan conflict were in the Norwegian newspapers.

Despite the proclivity to look backwards through the millennia for the roots of Balkan violence, more recent historical events remained a returning feature. Bosnia-Herzegovina, and more specifically Sarajevo, holds a special place in the popular historiography of the First World War as the scene of the 1914 assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand.¹⁵⁸ Throughout the 1980s, journalists in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* generally took care to contextualize ‘the shots of Sarajevo’, criticizing perceptions that saw it as the sole trigger for war while stressing the larger geopolitical context of 1914 as factors for starting the international conflict.¹⁵⁹ However, sober interpretations of the assassination’s role in world history seemed to fade away from both newspapers as war broke out. In September 1991, Willersrud argued that “[...] it was the Serb nationalists who set off the First World War with the shot [sic] of Sarajevo.”¹⁶⁰ In May 1992, *Dagbladet* argued in an editorial piece that “Even the youngest apprentice diplomat knows that it

¹⁵⁶ Aasmund Willersrud. “Brennende hat på Balkan”. *Aftenposten*. May 8, 1991 (morning edition), p. 7. *Like the ‘cauldron’ metaphor, the depiction of ‘the Balkans’ as a ‘powder keg’ had deep roots in journalism, harking back to the days before World War One. In a study on the use of the ‘powder keg’ metaphor in German media, researchers Vjosa Hamiti and Milote Sadiku stress that such explosive metaphors of the region were prevalent in journalism throughout the 20th Century. See: Vjosa Hamiti and Milote Sadiku. “Wahrnehmung und Evaluierung des Balkan als Pulverfass im deutschsprachigen Pressediskurs.” *Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, vol. 43 (2020): 39-67, p. 42.

¹⁵⁷ Håkon Lund. “Rapport fra en kruttønne”. *Dagbladet*. March 10, 1991, p. 23.

¹⁵⁸ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., p. 26.

¹⁵⁹ See: Thor Ellingsen. “Drama om skuddene i Sarajevo”. *Dagbladet*. May 31, 1980, p. 30; Bernt Hagtvedt. “August 1914”. *Dagbladet*. September 1, 1984, p. 4; Per Vassbotn. “Stortinget på sitt verste”. *Dagbladet*. June 14, 1989, p. 2; Bjarne Jensen. *Aftenposten (A-magasinet)*. January 29, 1983, front page.

¹⁶⁰ Aasmund Willersrud. “Bosnia-Herzegovina neste?” *Aftenposten*. September 25, 1991 (morning edition), p. 8.

was the shots in Sarajevo that set off the First World War.”¹⁶¹ In *Aftenposten*, Ulf Andenæs went a step further: “The shots [of Sarajevo] on June 28, 1914, was what brought this haunted city into every schoolbook. The assassination triggered *two world wars, the second a continuation of the first*.”¹⁶² In Andenæs’ account, then, the shots of Sarajevo and historical role of violence in the ‘Balkans’ were not only given the blame for one, but *two* world wars.

The Second World War also occupied a significant role in the journalistic narrative of the wars of the 1990s. As discussed in chapter II, the history of the Second World War had been an important binding factor for the relationship between Norway and Yugoslavia following 1945. Within Yugoslavia, however, the collective memory of the brutal Croat domination during Nazi *Ustashe* regime and its persecution of Serbs remained a severe national trauma. Croats and Muslims in particular also remembered with dread the mass atrocities committed by the Serb nationalist-royalist *Chetnik* movement during the war.¹⁶³ Historian Svein Mønnesland has argued that “The wars of the 1990s were in many ways the continuation of the Second World War. [...] The terms *Ustashe* and *Chetnik* were reactivated during the 1990s. [...] The Second World War lived on in the propaganda.”¹⁶⁴ Some Norwegian journalists were eager to adopt the references to World War II that were produced by the propaganda machinery of both the Serb and the Croat side during the war. Others appeared more hesitant. An indication of such varying willingness can be found in the proclivity to deploy language that would actively draw the mind to the Second World War. For instance: both *Aftenposten*’s Willersrud and *Dagbladet*’s Lund extensively used the historically loaded term ‘Führer’ [no: ‘Fører’] to describe the leader of the revitalized modern *Chetnik* movement, Vojislav Seselj.¹⁶⁵ *Aftenposten*’s Ulf Andenæs, on the other hand, never once used the term ‘Führer’ when discussing Seselj, despite producing articles about him within the same period as Lund and Willersrud. Instead, Andenæs used characterizations like ‘Serbian extremist leader’,¹⁶⁶ ‘Paramilitary leader’,¹⁶⁷ and ‘Leader of the extreme nationalist party’.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ *Dagbladet*. “Straffetiltak”. May 30, 1992, p. 3.

¹⁶² Ulf Andenæs. “Sporene etter attentatet slettes”. *Aftenposten*. February 21, 1994 (evening edition), p. 6.

¹⁶³ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., p. 31.

¹⁶⁴ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., pp. 31-34.

¹⁶⁵ See for example: Aasmund Willersrud. “Serbisk massakre i Dalj?”. *Aftenposten*. August 9, 1991 (morning edition), p. 7.; Aasmund Willersrud. “USA velger side i Bosnia”. *Aftenposten*. April 21, 1992 (morning edition), p. 8; Aasmund Willersrud. “Opprør mot eliten i Beograd”. *Aftenposten*. June 2, 1993 (evening edition), p. 8; Håkon Lund. “Nedteiling til blodbad”. *Dagbladet*. July 18, 1991, p. 11; Håkon Lund. “Etnisk reingjøring”. *Dagbladet*. May 14, 1992, p. 2; Håkon Lund. “Serbias slakter”. *Dagbladet*. June 16, 1993, p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ Ulf Andenæs. “Sort og hvitt om Serbia”. *Aftenposten*. November 7, 1994 (morning edition), p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Ulf Andenæs. “Rødt regime blir svart”. *Aftenposten*. April 19, 1993 (morning edition), p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ Ulf Andenæs. “Kroatenes hevnaksjon i Krajina verre enn antatt”. *Aftenposten*. August 19, 1995 (morning edition), p. 7.

'Balkan' history was seen in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* as an uninterrupted and blood soaked affair. At times, interethnic conflict and violence in 'the Balkans' even seemed to the journalists to transcend time itself. Peter Normann Waage observed in *Dagbladet* how "When the last emperor of the Roman empire, Theodosius the Great, died in year 395, his kingdom was divided between his two sons. *One became a Croat, and the other a Serb.*"¹⁶⁹. Waage's statement appears absurd when contrasted to the fact that the first ancestral tribes of today's South Slavic peoples arrived in the region more than two centuries after 395.¹⁷⁰ *Dagbladet's* Morten Strand scrapped all together the notion than one needed establish the starting point for conflict and violence in the Balkans – he stated instead that "[t]he Balkans have been at war through all time".¹⁷¹ *Aftenposten* reported on similar notions of 'eternal' violence, as in February 1993, when Willersrud stated that "A form of ethnic self-cleansing has always been going on here in 'the Balkans', more or less quietly."¹⁷² These blanket statements, indicating the idea of an ever-present violence in 'the Balkans', back up Abazi's and Doja's argument of the region as 'doomed forever by history'.

Although historical references were deployed to describe the background for the Yugoslav conflict, many journalists argued that historical factors in themselves did not sufficiently explain how and why the war began. In late 1994, Ulf Andenæs argued: "We can get a thousand historic reasons for why it has gone the way it has in ex-Yugoslavia. We will still never understand how it was possible for European compatriots in the 1990s – *of the same ethnicity and heritage and the same language to act so barbarous, so destructive, and so stupendously foolish against each other.*"¹⁷³ In many instances, weight was put on an explanatory factor closely related to the historical legacy of violence: the notion of the 'Balkan' psyche as particularly irrational and bloodthirsty.

5.1.2 'This is the Balkans' – images of the 'Balkan' irrational psyche and the rise of microlevel Balkanism

Rigidly connected to the idea of the historical legacy of the 'Balkan' violence was the image of the irrational nature of the 'Balkan' peoples and their conflicts. Indications of this notion occurred already during the war in Croatia. In July 1991, Willersrud took stock of the situation by

¹⁶⁹ Peter Normann Waage. "Fortidas uløste problem". *Dagbladet* ('Balkan brenner'-edition). August 25, 1992, p. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., p. 20.

¹⁷¹ Morten Strand. "Serbia tenner hele Balkan". *Dagbladet* ('Balkan brenner'-edition). August 25, 1992, p. 10.

¹⁷² Aasmund Willersrud. "Makedonia er truet innenfra". *Aftenposten*. February 6, 1993 (morning edition), p. 7. Emphasis added.

¹⁷³ Ulf Andenæs. "En reise gjennom ruiner". *Aftenposten*. November 19, 1994 (morning edition), p. 14. Emphasis added.

describing how all sense of logic seemed to have left the Yugoslav people. “Yugoslavia, the country that hates itself, is not really sure if it still exists. Armed to the teeth, blinded by hate, arrogance, inferiority complexes and religious division, the peoples here are headed for self-destruction.”¹⁷⁴ With the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992, however, such depictions of the ‘Balkan’ irrational psyche intensified. Any diplomatic route to conflict resolution between the parties in Bosnia seemed to journalists to be non-existent, leaving the use of force as the only viable political instrument.

Writing in April 1992, Willersrud stressed the futility of Western recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state by arguing that “[*Bosnia abides by*] *‘the Balkans’ own playing rules, not Europe’s*. “The right’ belongs to the one who has power, and the ability to act on that power.”¹⁷⁵ The next day, Willersrud reiterated his views when reporting on a speech given by the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic. He described how “The Serbian leader Karadzic said [...] that he has received threatening letters that every killed Muslim will be avenged with the lives of a hundred Serbs. *That might well be propaganda, but this is ‘the Balkans’*.”¹⁷⁶ It is not inherently clear what Willersrud was trying to indicate by adding the last sentence. One interpretation is that the term ‘but this is ‘the Balkans’” worked as a blanket statement for even the most outrageous claims of violence in the region. No statement of bloodshed or atrocity could be too farfetched because after all – ‘this is the Balkans’. The notion of the inherent barbarity of ‘the Balkans’ were present also in August 1992, as Willersrud argued that: “The unique thing about ‘the Balkans’ is the concentration of *irrational forces, to which there exists no known strategy against*. [It is] a mixture of blind hate, beastly revenge, ethnic policies, religious fanaticism, and regular crime.”¹⁷⁷ Willersrud would return to the phrase ‘this is the Balkans’ in an article discussing rising political tension in Macedonia in 1994: “[T]his is the Balkans, where the powers adopts their own rules political rationality, regardless of how medieval it may be perceived further north in Europe.”¹⁷⁸

Images of the unstable psyche of the ‘Balkan’ peoples were routinely cast as contrasting the civilized and modern ‘Western Europe’. In an edition of *Dagbladet* solely devoted to the wars in Yugoslavia, it was described how “The pictures of the murders in ‘the Balkans’ cast their grim shadows *over the entire ‘civilized’ Europe*.”¹⁷⁹ In January 1993, Willersrud reported on how the peace

¹⁷⁴ Aasmund Willersrud. “Nytt Libanon tar form”. *Aftenposten*. July 7, 1991 (morning edition), p. 7

¹⁷⁵ Aasmund Willersrud. “Hva nå med Bosnia?”. *Aftenposten*. April 10, 1992 (morning edition), p. 7. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁶ Aasmund Willersrud. “Bosnia nytt Kroatia”. *Aftenposten*. April 11, 1992 (morning edition), p. 9. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁷ Aasmund Willersrud. “Vanskelig ‘Operasjon Balkanstorm’”. *Aftenposten*. August 10, 1992 (morning edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁸ Aasmund Willersrud. “Gresk strupetak på Makedonia”. *Aftenposten*. February 18, 1994 (morning edition), p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ *Dagbladet*. August 25, 1992 (‘Balkan brenner’-edition), p. 57. Emphasis added.

negotiator Lord Carrington had requested legal proceedings after the murder of the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister. “With [the request for a legal trial],” Willersrud wrote, “[Lord Carrington] assumes that the individual parties are capable of, or willing to, follow *the normal, ethical norms of every civilized legal society*. Bosnia is far from that today; it is instead *an inferno where a word is no longer a word, and a promise not a promise*.”¹⁸⁰ On occasion, nationalist leaders themselves highlighted the futility of the international efforts to negotiate peace due to ‘Balkan irrationality’. Willersrud quoted Karadzic as stating: “Lord Carrington would probably do very well with normal humans, *but sadly, we are not such normal humans*.”¹⁸¹ This quote was directly reproduced by Willersrud and left undisputed, without any comment on the motive Karadzic might have had for giving such a statement. In posterity, it does not appear inconceivable that Karadzic wanted the international community to regard the parties of the conflict as abnormally irrational in order to ward off outside intervention that could hinder his way to domination of Bosnia.

At times, journalists seemed to want to personally engage with this ‘Balkan irrationality’. Willersrud described his encounter with the authorities on the border between Greece and Yugoslav Macedonia. The *Aftenposten* correspondent, by his own admission, then decided to actively provoke the Greek person controlling his passport by saying that he was arriving from ‘the Republic of Macedonia’ – a statement he knew would trigger a negative response, as Greece and Macedonia at the time were locked in a dispute over the name of the former Yugoslav republic. Willersrud appeared amused by the following reprimand he received from the passport controller about how ‘Macedonia is Greek’. After depicting yet another pro-Greek reprimand, this time from a tax free cashier, Willersrud commented: “What these trivial experiences [...] boil down to is that this bitter name war *is beyond a Northern European’s rational mind. It is the explosive temperament of ‘the Balkans’* and its complex history that yet again bubbles to the surface.”¹⁸²

The war in Bosnia in 1992 also significantly altered the Croats’ collective status as ‘Western’ they were given by journalists in 1990 and 1991. In 1993, Lund described in *Dagbladet* how “Serbs and Croats are raping Bosnia”, observing how the two former enemies from the war of 1991 had gone together to launch a “[...] coordinated, diabolical operation to tear Bosnia-Hercegovina to shreds and divide the republic between themselves”.¹⁸³ By 1994, Andenæs still wrote articles highlighting that the Croats of the Croatian republic could conceivably ‘break free

¹⁸⁰ Aasmund Willersrud. “Drapet er en utfordring mot FN”. *Aftenposten*. January 10, 1993 (morning edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ Aasmund Willersrud. «Serbernes dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde». *Aftenposten*. August 23, 1992 (morning edition), p. 9.

¹⁸² Aasmund Willersrud. “Makedonia spøker man ikke med...”. *Aftenposten*. February 4, 1993 (evening edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

¹⁸³ Håkon Lund. “Serbere og kroater voldtar Bosnia”. *Dagbladet*. April 21, 1993, p. 16.

from ‘the Balkans’ and ‘enter Europe’. However, he stressed how “*in order to join the West, the government of Croatia has to act the way that Western governments act*, meaning among other things to protect the right of a free press. [...] Western politicians are hesitant to let Croatia into the *European family*.”¹⁸⁴ The last notions of the Croats as carriers of what Andenæs in 1993 had described as the ‘Habsburg spirit’ seemed to disappear as he depicted the brutal expulsion of Serbs from the *Krajina*-territories in August of 1995. Describing how drunken Croat soldiers set Serbian settlements on fire, Andenæs argued that “The declarations from the Croat leaders stating that the Serbs will be welcomed back are losing their credibility. It is confirmed to the Serb that they were right in the choice to escape.”¹⁸⁵ The next day, Andenæs wrote of the Serbs chased out by the Croats: “We cannot get used to this sight. Four hundred years of history of a European people has ended along the ditches in Serbia.”¹⁸⁶

The emergence of Croat atrocities in Bosnia and Hercegovina led to a new tendency of Balkanism on a microlevel. With this development, the Croats would no longer be seen as a monolith. Instead, they were to be reshuffled and divided into mental subcategories of ‘Western’ and ‘Balkan’ Croats. On the Western end of this spectrum were the inhabitants of the Croatian region of Istria. Highlighting their ties to Habsburg Austria and Italy, Willersrud wrote in 1993 that “[The Istrians] are Croats, but they have a unique culture and history, which makes them *more Western oriented and perhaps different from Croats in other parts of the country*.”¹⁸⁷ On the other side of microlevel Balkanist spectrum were the Croats of Hercegovina. Andenæs wrote in 1994 that “[...] among other Croats, indeed across the entire Yugoslavia, *[the Croats of] Hercegovina has had an old reputation for lawlessness and ruthlessness*.”¹⁸⁸

Like with the Croats, the opening of the new war theatre in Bosnia led to a microlevel Balkanism of the Serbs. While the restricted mental spectrum for the Serbs ensured that none of them could ever reach ‘the Western’ end in the way that the Istrian Croats seemed to achieve, the spectrum categorized the Serbian populations into subcategories in terms of violent tendencies. In April 1992, Willersrud characterized both the Serbs and the Croats of Bosnia as governed by ideas of nationalistic militarism, stressing how “It was no coincidence that both the Croat Ustashe and the Serbian Chetniks recruited its most blood thirsty bands of murderers from this

¹⁸⁴ Ulf Andenæs. “Kroatia – Vestens frontlinjestat?”. *Aftenposten*. April 29, 1994 (morning edition), p. 9. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁵ Ulf Andenæs. “Kroatenes hevnaksjon i Krajina verre enn antatt”. *Aftenposten*. August 19, 1995 (morning edition), p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Ulf Andenæs. “De fattigste sist i køen”. *Aftenposten*. August 20, 1995 (morning edition), p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ Aasmund Willersrud. “Istria vil ha utvidet selvstyre”. *Aftenposten*. September 16, 1993 (morning edition), p. 9. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁸ Ulf Andenæs. “Hatets og ruinenes by”. *Aftenposten*. November 22, 1994 (morning edition), p. 15. Emphasis added.

area during World War II.”¹⁸⁹ In 1994, Andenæs argued similarly, claiming that the Serbs of Hercegovina, like the Croats of the same region, were particularly ruthless.¹⁹⁰

The microlevel Balkanism of the Serbs extended outside of Bosnia, however. The Serbs of the *Krajina* region had been instrumental for nationalist forces in Belgrade to launch the war against Croatia in 1991.¹⁹¹ After their brutal expulsion in 1994, Andenæs described in August 1995 how their lack of resistance towards the Croat forces had surprised observers. “If there was something one was certain of, it was that the Krajina Serbs would fight. *They had the strongest warrior tradition of all in the Balkans.* Their ancestors had been placed in the Krajina by the Austrian emperors in what was once the border region towards the Turks, to defend Christian Europe”.¹⁹² Thus, the notion of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* was deployed, this time to explain the warrior role of the Krajina Serbs. The centuries that had passed since this role had been given to the Serbs in the Krajina were not mentioned.

¹⁸⁹ Aasmund Willersrud. “Flykter i panikk fra Bosnia”. *Aftenposten*. April 13, 1992 (morning edition), p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ Ulf Andenæs. “Hatets og ruinenes by”. *Aftenposten*. November 22, 1994 (morning edition), p. 15.

¹⁹¹ Mønnesland (2021), op.cit., pp. 73-75.

¹⁹² Andenæs, Ulf “Serbisk selvransakelse etter valgnederlaget”. *Aftenposten*. August 21, 1995 (morning edition), p. 6. Emphasis added.

Chapter VI: Constituent others and peripheral visions

6.1 Concluding discussion

This thesis has shown the implications that a lack of knowledge of ‘the Balkans’ has for the prevalence of Balkanist discourse in the media. A native speaker of Serbo-Croatian and a born Yugoslav citizen, Stein Savik displayed a profound knowledge of Yugoslav politics and society in his reporting for *Aftenposten* throughout the 1980s. Tracing their journalistic backgrounds to Moscow and Washington, Savik’s successors in the 1990s had no similar competency. Additionally, the nature of the Yugoslav civil wars created a journalistic working environment where objective and verifiable truths about the developing conflict were hard to come by. This was acknowledged by Willersrud in an interview given in 2018, as he reflected on his time in Kosovo and the rest of the former Yugoslavia. Willersrud emphasized the lack of credible sources that could give a clear picture of the events unfolding around him. “[The creation of a network of sources] was a massive challenge,” he stated, “It was exceedingly difficult to separate the reliable from the unreliable sources, and it is far from certain that we managed to do that. [...] Journalistically speaking, it was a tricky situation.”¹⁹³ The findings of this thesis indicates that Balkanist discourse appeared to prevail in the 1990s when Norwegian journalists needed to fill a vacuum of information in order to present a coherent narrative to their audiences. However, as Abazi and Doja have shown, Norwegian journalists were far from the only foreign observers who deployed Balkanist rhetorical tropes in the 1990s. Rather, it was a returning phenomenon in journalism in most countries of the traditional ‘West’, including the USA.¹⁹⁴

Nevertheless, lack of knowledge of ‘the Balkans’ can only partially explain the prevalence of Balkanism as a media discourse. The phenomenon of ‘nesting orientalism’ shows that Balkanist rhetoric can also be deployed by peoples within the region itself – by people who were born and raised in direct connection with those to whom they assign the derogatory label of ‘Balkan’. Rather than merely a consequence of a vacuum of knowledge, Balkanism should be seen as a powerful instrument for constructing and establishing the sense of an ‘Other’. Collectives, be they of people or countries, need not only an answer to the question ‘who are we?’ – arguably, they also require an answer to the question ‘who are we *not*?’. Between 1945 and 1989, the collective European ‘us’ was defined in ‘the West’ by the political allegiance to the liberal side of the bipolar Cold War. As the thesis has shown, the end of the Cold War and the new political

¹⁹³ Sondre Lindhagen Nilsen. “Tidligere utenrikskorrespondent: - Vi ble nok fanget i et propagandaapparat”. *Sornett.no*. December 5, 2018. Retrieved November 13, 2023, from <https://sornett.no/tidligere-utenrikskorrespondent-vi-ble-nok-fanget-i-et-propagandaapparat/19.2152>.

¹⁹⁴ Abazi et al., *op.cit.*, p. 1019.

maps of Europe following it complicated the answer to the question ‘who are we, the Europeans?’. For the nations formerly under Communist rule, the chaotic war of ‘the Balkans’ in the 1990s created Yugoslavia as a ‘constituent other’ – an answer to the question ‘who are *not* the Europeans?’, and a region that these nations could contrast themselves to. The post-communist countries’ effort to contrast themselves with ‘the Balkans’ was apparent also in Norwegian newspapers. In December 1993, *Aftenposten* printed a feature article written by Vaclav Havel. The Czech president argued for the inclusion of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Austria into NATO. Havel emphasized that these countries were “[...] obviously connected to the area of Western civilization,” and that they were establishing a “[...] *border between this area [of Western civilization] and the traditionally unruly Balkans*, and towards the East’s great Euro Asiatic area.”¹⁹⁵

It was not only the newly liberated post-communist countries who deployed Balkanism to establish Yugoslavia as a ‘constituent other’. Norway’s orientation towards NATO and the political ‘West’ in the Cold War dichotomy had done much to ensure its position on the ‘Western’ European mental map in the 1990s. This position was, however, not self-evident to its entire population. Writing in 1992, Norwegian historian Stein Tønnesson argued that “[t]he concept of being European is traditionally and also currently quite weak in Norway. [...] Norway should therefore not be considered as a European country if we demand of such a country that its population attributes a strong and positive meaning to the idea of a European culture.”¹⁹⁶ If one applies Tønnesson’s perspective of the Norwegian ambivalence to the phenomenon he calls ‘European culture’, the prevalence of Balkanist discourse could be seen as a similar process of establishing Yugoslavia as a constituent peripheral other in a European context. The notion of Norway and the Nordic countries as forming a peaceful European periphery was established in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* repeatedly between 1980 and 1995.¹⁹⁷ This image was at times presented in direct contrast to depictions of ‘the Balkans’ as a violent center of unrest.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the journalistic narrative of the conflict in Yugoslavia acquired in Norway a similar tint as it did in the liberated post-communist countries. It established Norway and the other Nordic countries as Europe’s peaceful periphery, contrasting the continent’s violent ‘Balkan’ southern periphery.

¹⁹⁵ Vaclav Havel. “Fra Warszawapakten til NATO.” *Aftenposten*. December 8, 1993 (morning edition), p. 15.

¹⁹⁶ Stein Tønnesson. “Is Norway a European Country?” in *Europa, Eine Kulturelle Herausforderung Für Die Nordischen Länder*, 43–59. (Copenhagen/Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992), p. 57.

¹⁹⁷ See for example: Per Haddal. “Økende usikkerhet”. *Aftenposten*. September 13, 1986 (national edition), p. 6; Knut Bøckmann. “Et lenge ventet jordskjelv”. *Aftenposten*. September 19, 1991 (evening edition), p. 4; Anne Olsen. “Kjærlighetsflukten”. *Dagbladet*. November 23, 1989, p. 13; Harald Flor. “Samstemt Norden og britisk tyngde”. *Dagbladet*. June 1, 1990, p. 35.

¹⁹⁸ Jahn Otto Johansen. “Europas urolige hjørne”. *Dagbladet*. May 7, 1983, p. 2.

While this thesis has focused its analysis on Balkanism in the Norwegian journalistic context between 1980 and 1995, there are concepts discussed in this essay that could form the basis for research in future projects. One related research project could build on the findings of this essay to study what the figures presented in subchapter 2.2 indicate to be a 'second wave' of Balkanism following the outbreak of war in Kosovo in 1998. A discussion of a 'second wave' Balkanism could, through a comparative approach to the findings of this thesis, uncover the developments in Norwegian Balkanist discourse as it evolved following the end of the Bosnian war. Another research project could discuss how Norwegian journalistic coverage of the wars in Yugoslavia influenced, and was influenced by, coverage of interethnic hostility elsewhere, like the Rwandan genocide. Such a project would not only give an idea of the role of Balkanism as a discourse in journalism but would see it compared and contrasted to the images presented of violence and conflict in Africa.

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