

## **BALKAN MEDIA AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES**

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### **Abstract**

In terms of modern globalization integration processes between countries are constantly conducted, willingly or unwillingly. European integrations are just one of the regional sub-globalization forms, economic and political modernity. As such, these processes, and many others of local character, represent the challenge for the development of new productive forces and general social development of each country. The special place in understanding and activation of cooperation processes, in addition to ruling elite, take media. However, changes that happened in the years of transition, in Balkan media, first of all the coming of mega corporations, turning to "light issues", sensationalism, neglecting of ethic profession standards made the audience imposed to issues from the suburbs of human interest. Light entertainment, variety of contents, blood and crime overran the press and electronic media which after the period when they were for decades the extended arm of mono - party states, suddenly are in the position to become " the new missionaries of corporal capitalism". Such a position prevented traditional media to contribute the development of regional cooperation on Balkan. Instead of serious transition and culture contents which would point to similarity of the problems that people who live in the regions traditionally called "powder keg" are facing, transformed media imposed the value models, behavior and habits of western world that created the culture of dependence. In this article the author specially focuses on the importance and citizen expectations of press and electronic media which are in the transformation phase, that is transition. It is not easy, but, according to the author, there is no alternative. None of the countries may be the "island" for itself, nor may confront the globalization wave. The essence of media engagement is, in fact in everyday following of what is happening in the world, and also the constant battle for incitement of states and nation from this region to mutual cooperation as well as preservation of differences that are present and make the richness of the world.

**Keywords:** *globalization, Balkan, media, Euro integrations, differences*

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Balkans, as the region of “ethnic cocktail” has powerful social ontology and complex and long time ago tangled conflictology. There interlace different families of conflicts – civilization, religious, ethnic, social- class, political, identitation, developing, internal and international. Here, both love and hate are expressed more passionate and last longer. In this region, at least two wars, either religious or world, were waged in each of the centuries. One waded in blood up to the knees; devastated and set fire. Numerous armies and barbarian hordes passed by. There passed more warriors than traders and tourists. All that left deep traces, scars, traumas and frustrations, devastation in the space, human heart and soul. Only graveyards brandished, expanded from century to century. In a word, more were killed or died than born.

Consequently, instead of spreading peace values and work cult, here was nourished the cult of a hero and a victim, warrior and death culture. Internal and external masters of power have always, in crisis situation, counted on ethno-political differences and disruption, manipulating with masses and producing conflicts, instrumentalizing them for their aims. Here, for centuries life has been on razor’s edge, with “head in a bag”, and peace was only a short break between two wars. From the history of Balkan people and epic ethics very well known messages from the battle remained: *for honorable cross and golden freedom; with the shield or on it*. The order of that warrior ethics was- proudly to fight or die, in order to eternally live! Those who know how to die would always win. Modern Balkans as well, especially the part connected to former area of Yugoslavia still live in the shadow of post-conflict syndrome - neither war nor peace, to be exact in the state of *unfinished peace*.<sup>2</sup> Here, the Latin Machiavellian doctrine “divide and conquer” was applied the longest.

In this sense, media on Balkan regularly and significantly contribute such atmosphere. They are in the frontline of those that prepare the terrain and fan the flame of conflicts, and later impose the conclusion. Media, of course, are not almighty in imposing of conclusions, but are important in forcing of certain issues that urge the public opinion on action. Likable message always finds way to the target, so the campaign is the result of precisely directed information and channeled (conducted) media energy. On purpose creating the communication relation in the strategic layer of public, they profile the public in assuming certain attitudes, opinions, behavior in the given time frame.

## **Aim of study/research**

The aim of the paper: the need for changing media discourse on the Balkans, the task of media in reporting world’s events and encouraging mutual cooperation of the nations from the Balkans, the efforts of media in preserving the differences of nations from this region.

## **Research topics and questions**

The significant change has happened in most of Balkan media in recent decades. Mass media, in conditions of real-socialism on Balkans were extended arm of the state in mono -

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<sup>2</sup> Nakarada Radmila: *Region of Unfinished Peace*, Politika, Belgrade, 04/02/2009, pg.14

party system, and it was not surprising that they often were a flagships of conflicts between hither nations. Today, when, assuredly, there has been democratization of Balkan states, when many-party replaced mono-party system, they, however, through privatization and commercialization, have become “new missionaries of corporal capital”.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, we are trying to answer to what extent present globalized media manage to contribute increased understanding between Balkan nations and states, with special attention to current regional and wider globalizing cooperation processes.

The starting hypothesis: the globalization of Balkan media has not contributed to greater understanding among Balkan nations.

### **Scientific methods**

During research work applied methods and techniques have been adopted to the subject and aims of the article. The most common method was the *analysis of published media contents*, by which it was tried to point to the relations of media of Balkan nations and states cooperation, and by *corporal method* we compared the media practice in several Balkan states. Our research, that is our work is in fact the pioneering attempt to, such an important topic- cooperation of Balkan nations and states, perceive from the perspective of the media contribution and so we applied some other methodological activities: from speculation towards experienced research to introspection towards social behavior observation, from statistical research on people and state cooperation to analysis and synthesis of contents. Using of comparative, empirical, statistical, historical, normative and analytic methods, answered the question on media contribution to greater understanding of Balkan nations and states and their both regional and wider globalization cooperation. By the synthesis method we formulated the conclusions and on this basis determined the recommendations we think are important for realization of cooperation on Balkans.

### **Data analysis**

We specially analysed the data obtained during empirical sociological research titled “Cultural Orientations, Ethnic Distance and Peace Culture in Serbia and on Balkans” done by Center for Sociological Research of Faculty of Philosophy in Nis, 2007 on the sample of 1650 examinees in the area of South East of Serbia (Nis), North West Macedonia (Skopje) and Central and Western Bulgaria (Plovdiv), and also the results of the complex empirical research titled “Media Influence, Political Elites and Social Power in Serbia at the Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century conducted in 2009 by one of the authors of this article for the needs of his doctoral thesis (ass.prof Zoran Aracki) on the sample of 573 examinees in 10 Serbian towns.

### **Findings**

#### **Integrations between Myth and Reality**

Modern Balkans, for the last two decades have experienced a radical geopolitical transition. Parallel with process of military-political regrouping of former socialist states, at present, the process of Euro-integrations has been going on (though much slower), that is joining to European Union of Balkan countries.

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<sup>3</sup> More in the book by Herman, S.E.& Mekcesni V.R.: *Global Media*, Clio, Belgrade, 2004

However, it is interesting, that today, all over the world there is an ambivalent relation towards Euro-integrations – from apologetic to extremely critical. We will not in this article deal with the analysis of different authors' opinions, because it would take a lot of space, but will point to former Czech prime minister Václav Klaus's warning that *instead of creation of false myths, fetishization of European Union and Euro skepticism, we need Euro-realism*. Klaus threw out the etiquette of Euro-skeptic. He is the supporter of Europe, but not its unification.<sup>4</sup> This is the way of democratic integrations that Europe leads to community of equal nations and citizens. Otherwise, it will, regardless of the speech about "open society", turn into new fortress, cage and also liberal empire, new Leviathan, in the service of usurious International of capital and new forms of servitude.<sup>5</sup>

It seems to us that this caution during euro-integrations is more than necessary. Because, it is the fact that regardless the great majority of Balkan countries joined the EU their economic positions have not significantly improved, nor soon will. In the world division of work and systems, Balkans has become the new zone of European and world suburbs. By Balkan Euro-integrations, from the comparative perspective point of view, only some of the issues may be resolved, but not all problems in this region, and also new issues/problem may be opened. Joining of Balkan countries in EU, first of all, will be important from the point of pacification of conflicts and strengthening of the political stability processes in the region. From the strategic development point of view (in the sense of modern way of production development), Balkans will for long (at least regarding its countries) represent the zone of European half-periphery, highly conflicting and risky.<sup>6</sup> Euro-integration processes for Balkan nations and citizens should not mean losing of their sovereignty and identity, new block grouping, but the way of rationalization, democratization and modernization, *finding of the place in global work division and non peripheral Balkan*. On this way, Balkan elites, first have to develop sound interregional relations of cooperation and integrations if they want to be respectable partners in EU.

The twenty year long transformation of Balkans balance shows that it has experienced radical geopolitical transition: from the East to the West, from Sovietization to NAT-ization. In sociological sense - neoliberal model practicing of dependant modernization, by ruling elite, led to peripherization of economy, society and culture on Balkans.<sup>7</sup>

Today we are faced with re-colonization and protect oration of this geo-space by forming of dependant societies of peripheral capitalism. Radical, neoliberal transition destroyed Balkan societies, de-industrialized their economic basis and degenerate numerous inheritances. We are confronted with the phenomenon of "*scattered*" and *dependant societies on Balkans*, characterized with: high level of atomization and division, enormous exploitation, economy, social and political fracture of this geo-space, insufficient cooperation and mutual distrust between states and nations. Namely, Balkan countries cooperate more with the countries out of the region than with each other. All this makes the region vulnerable, noncompetitive in

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<sup>4</sup> See in : V. Klaus, Europe and EU, Official Gazette, Belgrade, 2010, pg 247

<sup>5</sup> On appropriateness of Euro-illusion EU understanding, K. Kosik in his book *Bridges Over European Rivers and Other Writings*, among other things writes: " we do not join Europe, but from one cave go into another: from the cage gray, barrack, surrounded with wire, into the cave overloaded by comfort, lit by advertisements that outshine stars and the Sun", (Kosik. 2008:78)

<sup>6</sup> See: Lj. Mitrovic, *Balkan Crossroads and Alternatives*., Center for Balkan Studies, Sven, 2006

<sup>7</sup> See in Lj. Mitrovic study, "*Transition and Peripheral Capitalism*", Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, 2009

relation to others. Thus fragmented Balkans do not represent serious economic and political partner in international relationships.

Also, Balkan elites are today divided and immature for serious political venture. They rather perform dirty businesses for foreigners than protect interests of own people. Hence, there is the low level of cooperation, real connecting and integration on Balkans. In a word, the Balkans has been atomized both inside and outside, divided and colonized geo-space. As such, it has been blocked for development and sub-regional association. Its elite, by exalted aspiration for EU joining (under slogan “The Europe has no alternative”) hides own inability for inter Balkans association.

Data in the Table 1 show that Balkan countries mutually cooperate less then with the rest of the world. Such a low level of inter Balkan economy cooperation discovers neo-colonial economy structure. Especially data on (no) cooperation of former Yugoslav republics express that.

Table 1: *Investments among former SFRY states*

Slovenian investments	Croatian investments	B and H investments	Serbian investments	Macedonian investments
In Serbia 1,500 mil. EUR	In Serbia 500 mil. EUR	In Serbia 100 mil. EUR	In Slovenia 40 mil. EUR	In Serbia 600,000 EUR
In B&H 395,000 EUR	In Slovenia 500 mil. EUR	In Croatia 20 mil. EUR	In B and H 800 mil. EUR	
In Croatia 1,090 mil. EUR			In Montenegro 280 mil. EUR	
			In Macedonia 30 mil. EUR	

Source: *Politika, Belgrade, 29<sup>th</sup> august, 2011, pg.12*

From this it is quite obvious that the cooperation balance between former Yugoslav Republics for the time being, has been poor, but in spite of this it should be noted that gradual pacification from ethnic conflicts on this geographical space may in perspective predispose new forms of cooperation and association. Similar processes should be expected among other of the Balkan states. It is probable to expect that, for now, these forms of opening and connecting, first of all, will be in economy and culture, while processes of political integration will be blocked for long. Regardless the EU recommendations – on the need of fulfilling the standards for good mutual relations, the real situation on the terrain has still been burdened by distrust, tension and phenomenon of the “frozen conflict”. However, it is completely clear that disconnected, separated Balkan states, at present, cannot be reputable partner in political and economic processes in the modern world. That is why the message from the First Balkan Conference, held in Athens in 1930, has been over updated – *Balkans, to Balkan nations*.

### **Conflicts Dearer than Cooperation**

Conflicts on Balkans are not the destiny but product of cross-activity of numerous factors: geo-politics and actual ethno - political orientation of numerous actors (especially political elite), together with geo - strategic manipulation and instrumentalization of the crisis by big foreign powers. The multi –ethnic cocktail on the Balkans, often used by internal and external factors led, not only to the strengthening of ethnic distance, but also to the explosion of ethno-political conflicts. It further caused civil armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia

with the brutality of every kind (from killing to ethnic cleansing, firing, destruction...) which produced new dwarf European countries.

In this sense, sociological researches point that, no matter how much inter ethnic conflicts have had autonomous role, they are in the social practice interlacing with other conflicts (economic, political, cultural). It is the most often case in multi-ethnic societies, with politically imperfect boundaries, as *Huntington* would say, due to unequal economic development, social segregation of social groups and blockages in the process of political democratization (hypertrophied centralism and unitary state concept), the conditions for interethnic conflicts are created. These conflicts are specially revealed in the epochs of social crisis and historic restoration, when ruling groups do not find rational strategy for democratic political conflict resolution. In such situation, the obvious is the decrease in ethno-policy as a method of populist activity and ethnocentrism, nationalism and racism in ideological sphere, which represents the form of rationalization and mystification, and does not ease the finding of productive answer, i.e. the right way out from existing controversies. At the same time the tendency for patronage of big powers is noticeable, that instead of the help to concrete nations on the terrain perform, first of all their own objectives revealed in the tendency for world domination and use of natural resources of the countries they "help."

Further, the empiric research of the Center for Sociological Research of the Faculty for Philosophy in Nis, revealed that citizens of three countries: Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia think that conflicts are caused by, first of all the interference of big powers (46,5% of examinees), and then differences in religious affiliation (20,4%) and on the third place is difference in wealth between countries and nations (12,2%).<sup>8</sup> Also, according to this extensive research the interference of foreign powers is "accused" for Balkan conflicts (80,1%), then come the interests of political elites (76,2%), nationalism of Balkan states (61,6%) while the conflicts of different religions is on the forth place (57,8).

Finally, this research was the attempt to find out the attitudes of the examinees, their perception of possible factors, about what groups, institutions or organizations abet or inhibit the cooperation of Balkan countries.

Table 2: Do the given institutions incite or inhibit the cooperation of Balkan nations?

	Incite	Stop cooperation	No attitude	Total
Governments and politicians	27.3	58.7	14.0	100.0
Businessman	64.9	13.6	21.6	100.0
Representatives of religious org.	25.3	49.2	25.5	100.0
Athletes	69.5	4.1	26.4	100.0
NGO	44.3	22.2	33.5	100.0
Media	38.9	32.9	28.3	100.0
Educational organizations	65.5	5.4	29.1	100.0
Culture institutions	73.3	3.5	23.2	100.0
Scientific institutions	62.7	4.9	32.5	100.0

<sup>8</sup> Read more about it in: Mirtovic, Lj. : "Development and Euro-integration of Balkans as Presupposition for the Improvement of the Inter - ethnic Relation Quality and Peace Culture Affirmation", Proceedings Quality of Inter Ethnic Relations on the Balkans , Faculty of Philosophy in Nis, 2008

When it comes to actors of possible cooperation incitement on the Balkans, the greatest number of the examinees think that institutions of culture are on the first place (73,3%), then athletes (69,5%) and businessman (64,9%). Actors that inhibit the cooperation between the Balkans, according to examinees are: first- government and politicians (58,7%) and then big communities representatives (49,2%). It is interesting that, in this research only 38,9% of examinees claimed that media incite the Balkan countries and nations cooperation, while 32,9% alleged that they inhibit the cooperation, and 28,3% did not have any attitude about this issue.

It is also interesting that the public in Serbia was very much critical about media contribution to cooperation on Balkan. In our extensive and complex research, under title of “Media influence, political elites and social power in Serbia at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century”, which included politicians, media owners, editors, journalists and citizens, on the question how much attention media pay to this issue, only 33,3% of total number of examinees thought to be enough.<sup>9</sup>

Table 3. *How much attention media in Serbia pay to Balkan countries?*

Type of answer		General distribution		Category of examinee									
				Politicians		Owners or managers		Editors		Journalists		Citizens	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	Too much	10	1,8	3	3,0	0	0,0	5	5,4	1	1,0	1	0,5
2	Totally enough	57	10,5	9	9,0	16	32,0	9	9,7	13	13,0	10	5,0
3	Enough	181	33,3	36	36,0	14	28,0	28	30,1	31	31,1	72	36,0
4	Not enough	265	48,8	48	48,0	20	40,0	47	50,5	52	52,0	98	49,0
5	Do not think about that	15	2,8	4	4,0	0	0,0	4	4,3	2	2,0	5	2,5
6	Do not know	15	2,8	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	1,0	14	7,0
Total		543	100,0	100	100,0	50	100,0	93	100,0	100	100,0	200	100,0

Then, if we analyze the examinees’ attitudes regarding the preference of the questions, issues and problems that media are supposed to write about on the Balkans, we perceived the demand to be transition topic dominated (61.7 %), then culture (19,7 %) although the transition problem was on the first place with all categories of examinees.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Table 3.

<sup>10</sup> See Table 4

Table 4: Which topics, writing about Balkan, media should pay more attention to?

Type of answer		General distribution		Category of examinee									
				Politicians		Owners or managers		Editors		Journalists		Citizens	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	Historic	85	15,7	22	22,0	6	12,0	16	17,2	9	9,0	32	16,0
2	Transitional	335	61,7	57	57,0	38	76,0	64	68,8	68	68,0	108	54
3	Folklore	16	2,9	2	2,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	2,0	12	6,0
4	Cultural	107	19,7	19	19,0	6	12,0	13	14,0	21	21,0	48	24,0
Total		543	100,0	100	100,0	50	100,0	93	100,0	100	100,0	200	100,0

In the situation of globalization, the role of media is important in preserving and affirmation of national cultural tradition values and nations and ethnic groups' identity. This role may be played by national and local media if they are enabled for this and if there is the clearly defined model of cultural policy in society, which directs and unites the action of numerous actors (government and non government institutions, media...) in engaging towards the unique aim. In this way organized action in the field of cultural policy represents the responsible role of mass-media. Otherwise, the country may fall under hegemonic influence of colonialism cultural forces.

Modern cultural policy represents, besides protection of national cultural identity also the affirmation of multiculturalism, ethnic tolerance and achievement of national minorities' rights. Our research showed that 51,4 % of the examinees think that media contribute national minorities cultural development in Serbia. It is necessary to say that research results show that examinees have divided perception and attitudes regarding this- whether information in media gives real picture on ethnic minorities, so, according to this also on inter ethnic relations in Serbia. In fact, only 44,8 % of the examinees think that media give real picture on ethnic minorities position in society, whereas 42,5 % think that this picture is unreal. If we add the percentage of the examinees who said that they did not think about that (12,7 %), then over 50 % of the examinees consider that media picture on minorities' position is unreal, or to be exact not real enough. All this requires of media and other society actors to be more engaged in order to change real position of minorities in society, and also the picture about them.

### **Media Incitement to Dependant Culture**

Indubitably, today, on the Balkans we have been attending the reaffirmation of democracy and multiparty that has replaced one party system. However, even in these circumstances media do not achieve the role of the factor that increase apprehension among different social groups or nations but turn, as we have already said, into "new missionaries of corporate capitalism", which, among other things help the neo-imperial expansion and power in the world. Thus it clearly should be pointed that there are neither true democracy with good understanding between neighbors without free media, nor free media without authentic democratic society.

Press, electronic media, publishers, movie companies, agencies for public relations, telecommunications and computer industry of the Balkans, make firm and universal



information ring, diffusely sending ready-made processed ideological symbols. Media chains of uniform messages, in this way, unify poor Balkan marketplace of ideas, offering the replacement for real life. Power of fictive turns into the power of factual, and reality outside mass-media does not exist. The picture rules minds and souls of the greatest part of Balkan inhabitants, so instead of the truth, the confidence is given to instant-information gathered in digitalized, modern workshops of illusions by the help of excellently trained media manipulators.

Therefore, elusively seduced audience does not realize that others think instead, creating the new models of values, behavior and habits. There has been spreading the culture of dependency (ideas, patterns, influences and public opinion, and so on) leading to the form of cultural neo-imperialism. In modernity we have the revival of colonial relations, because through models of dependant modernization in culture, and dominant influence of global media, influence, not only business and politics, but also education and socialization of young, i.e. achieve what we call the culture of dependence. Through model waves of acculturation and domination of global media the influence on ethnic and cultural identities of small nations is accomplished.

Creation and development of economic and political power corporal monopolies, information domination of the most developed metropolis, exhaustion of the vast underdeveloped world areas with accompanying ideological media corruption in the service of world centers, are only the part of the process that led to the newest phase of opened abuse of public and public opinion for one sided political aims of the “new world order” (Aracki, 2011:181-185). In developed countries with longer liberal tradition, for some time is active the suppression process of autonomous and counterweight democratic and critical resistance powers to increasing influence of techno-bureaucratic and criminalized authority centers. Their aims, just because of nondemocratic contents have to be justified either by concealment or (which is more often) by opened fabrication, deformation and destruction of democratic public and “public opinion”.<sup>11</sup> *Artificial production and launching of public opinion upon models of industrial, serial production of social awareness, redirecting and conducting of the critical opinion remnants, controlling and neutralizing of autonomous counterweight former centers to techno- bureaucratic ruling, are typical symptoms of turning liberal tradition into pseudo democratic modernity* (Matic 2007:431).

## Conclusions:

Modern Balkan, after many decades being proclaimed as a “ powder keg” got the chance to turn into the zone of peace and prosperity for all of its nations. To make this really happen it is necessary to allow historic compromise of labor and capital and all social actors, their mutual responsibility and participation in social changes. The economic development of united Balkan states, in time would become the base for different position of the Balkans in European and global labor division, i.e. world economic flows. From vassal, Balkan countries – united in the new forms of asymmetric democratic community, possible confederation, would become free and advanced, part of the free European society. Such democratically constructed and in a new way integrated Balkan countries would help this region to become

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<sup>11</sup> On this non democratic instrumentalization of public for the benefit of powerful political monopolies in the world, enough comprehensive theoretical statements were issued in the works of H.Marcuse, J.Habermas, and of Serbian authors in studies of Lj. Tadic.

the factor of peace and culture and multi polar development of Europe and world and not the factor of instability.

It is time to understand that the Balkans future is not in autarky, turning of the past, redrawing of boundaries, but in turning to challenges of modernization and development in modernity, in connecting, networking with the world. The future of the Balkans is in the healthy competition on the global market, in permanent innovation of its material and spiritual powers, in strengthening of own social capital and all other potential for associating and constructive creative competition. In this context, re-actualization of importance and values intentions in the message from the First Pan Balkans Conference (Balkans, to Balkan nations, Athens, Greece, 1930) has its instructive value.

Anyway, we are sure that the new, young generation on the Balkans will find democratic formula for new association of Balkan nations with the world. It will with its imaginations open the space of development and emancipation. For in creation, association and freedom is its future, not in new slavery forms which spin doctors “of spectacle society” present as “brave new word”.

### **Recommendations:**

Are traditional and new media able, despite all the changes that happened to them, contribute development through necessary regional cooperation? The impression is that they can, but for this it is necessary to develop common media strategy, which has not been present for centuries.

So, it is necessary that workers of the public word, owners and media editors, also the most prominent journalists sit at the table and identify basic targets of the future work. It is not possible to totally exclude politics and the past, nor they are to be ignored, but it is necessary to neutralize their bad sides and maximally use positive experiences from the past of other European nations. Myths respected in the past may not be leading stars for the future, nor should media be allowed to offer the illusion of welfare, while in reality fragmented and shattered economies are present, limited sovereignties of new countries, escape to promise countries of the West, political elites in the embrace of the Church, army or locally networked Mafia.

Finally, media have to influence the forming of such public opinion which will have the awareness on what the Balkans today is and what will be in the future, to represent the leading idea in everyday activities of all society structures that exist here. The first step and by the help of media that may change the image of claustrophobic Balkan nations, is the growing number of texts on transition events in this region. It is certain that greater number of texts on tourism influence members of different nations to start visiting interesting destinations in the countries in which, normally, they do not live. Encounter with local inhabitants, and also the texts about their lives, certainly would change the attitude of regional cooperation, which would become, for sure far more complete, with more content.

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