

Giulia Crisanti, “‘Balkanism’ and ‘Balkanization’ in Western Media during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s

The main goal of this work is to understand how and to what extent Western media’s reporting on the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia was shaped and influenced by the discourse of "Balkanism" and the trope of Balkanization. The paper is structured in three different parts. The first section analyzes balkanism as a “stigmatized discourse”, mostly discussed by scholars of Balkan origin. In particular, the term was first coined by Maria Todorova and has been employed to deconstruct the derogative stereotypes and false assumptions that have informed Western image of the Balkans throughout the last century. The second part of the work deals instead with methodological considerations on how to effectively approach media as sources of historical analysis. It thus examines studies on news discourse and news analysis and, at the same time, provides an explanation of how and through which tools the research has been conducted. To conclude, the last section proceeds to analyze few illustrative articles, selected from two Italian and two American newspapers: *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and *La Repubblica* and *L’Unità*. I will look for differences among them and demonstrate how certain stereotypes have indeed deeply informed and influenced the representation(s), the understanding and the perception(s) of the conflicts. Nonetheless, the research also unveils how these same derogative platitudes have, at times, been problematized and questioned.