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THE POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION AND THE SACRALIZED BALKAN NATIONS REGARDING BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

Ethnic, national, and confessional affiliation in ex-Yugoslavia add to political radicalization. As a form of political power, politicized religions are, psychologically speaking, unconscious non-faith. Due to new national-state theoretical inadequacy, (i.e., nationalism as an ideology), religion is used as an instrument of socialization and legitimization of new national-political state subjects. When nation and religion become "controversial" identification and mark others as potentially dangerous, through a policy that allegedly aims to "affirm" and "protect" its people and their faith, then in local historical and current circumstances, it essentially implies antagonism in the most dramatic conflicts. The historical revisionism and the memory of the "evil" developed into a behavioral practice.

Keywords: politicized religions, sacralized nations, ethnopolitics, ex-Yugoslavia, ethnonational identity, religious identity, "evil" memory

Introduction

In the former Yugoslavia, or to use a more neutral name, the Balkans, the ambitions of some, especially under the influence of overemphasized ethnic nationalisms, the aspiration of many was to unite the whole area under a single nation and denomination. This would then lead to war, ethnic cleansing, and destruction. We can say that nationalists in the former Yugoslavia were prone to claim the historical soil of their ancestors, who long ago established a flourishing state[1]—a defined area to which members could identify and to whom they felt they belong. Ideologies of internal discord and destruction would be given a chance in extreme historical turbulence when there was not much time for discussion and

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[1] Emile Durkheim, *Durkheim on Politics and the State*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 81.

search for reasonable solutions. These became natural allies of imperialism which was imposed by force from outside. The Second World War and the Nazi-Fascist occupation were such, in which domestic forces were also engaged in a fratricidal war, aided by theological rhetoric and traditional mythologies.[2] This is not the subject of this study but there is a vital link of the observed phenomena,[3] such as the insistence that Serbian Orthodoxy is the core of Serbian national identity and pride. Religious officials blessed weapons in the First and Second World Wars, in the post-Yugoslav wars, "consolidating the position on the justification of killing in the name of God."[4] Let us recall that none of the religious communities in Yugoslavia protested (except the Jewish one) for wearing religious symbols on military uniforms, and vehicles during the Second World War.

Samuel P. Huntington proposed the thesis that religion "gained in importance and political influence," including in the essay, "God is here again." Considering the relationship between religion (church and mosque) and politics in the former Yugoslavia, it is impossible to bypass the relationship between the religious (church and mosque) political parties. It is not easy to say when a religion/religious community uses politics, and when a political party uses religion/religious community. Most likely it is a reciprocal process.

The historical moment of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism opened a path for the renewal of the ideologies of internal discord and destruction in the former Yugoslavia. Externally imposed ethnonational elements were present during the communist era; however, religious identities were not expressed in public and political life. The religiously conditioned constructs of "Croats-Serbs-Bosniaks" became political programs

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[2] The battle of Kosovo field took place in 1389 between an army led by the Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and an invading army of the Ottoman Empire under the command of Sultan Murad Hüdavendigâr in today Kosovo. Reliable historical accounts of the battle are scarce. The myth about Kosovo was created for the stimulation of the First Serbian uprising in 1804 made by the Habsburg intelligence service. Later legends about the continuity of Serbian and Montenegrin heroism against "Turkish oppression," were fabricated by folk singers about Serbian heroes who were, in my opinion, mostly common robbers, a glorification of banditry and robbery. This continued in the literary works of Ivo Andrić and Miloš Crnjanski in which ancient "Turkish" crimes against Serbs were invented and Serbs portrayed in national "romantic narratives, to the point of kitsch, all amid terrible Chetnik crimes against Bosniaks during the Second World War. https://stav.ba/junastvo-ubica-i-razbojnika-standardni-obrazac-srpske-mitologije/, (2019), The Kosovo myth or Kosovo cult is one of the critical Serbian political myths, which forms the basis of Serbian national identity and the "atomic core" of Serbian nationalism. http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/kosovski-mit-i-srpski-nacionalni-identitet.html, (2009)

[3] A former commander of the Army of the Republic of Srpska, Ratko Mladić (ICTY convict), on July 11, 1995, in Srebrenica, literally announced genocide against civilians in front of the cameras in Srebrenica's "Safe zone" of the United Nations. "Here we are in Serbian Srebrenica. On the eve of another great Serbian holiday, we are giving this city to the Serbian people." "Finally, the moment has come for us to take revenge on the Turks in this area." said Mladić. https://www.dw.com/sr/dugo-očekivana-presuda/a-41448520.

[4] Iztok Simonitit, *Tri boga, dvije kulture, jedna civilizacija, [Three gods, two cultures, one civilization*].(Zagreb: "Naklada Pavičić," 2014), 92.

in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo (capitals of Serbia, Croatia and BiH[5]), and religious hierarchies became again the most faithful allies of ethnopolitics. Thus, political unrest and struggles for ethnically pure Balkan communities sparked the above mentioned reactionary ideological rhetoric in the 1990s. All Croats became "Ustašas,"[6] all Serbs "Četniks,"[7] and all Muslims "Turks"[8] or "Balije."[9] The cult of the "sacred" past[10] is a compelling destructive paradigm of the Balkans. It has the function of preserving the exclusivity and purity of ethnic identity and "returning to the roots," to which normative significance has been assigned, to emphasize the primacy of collectivism over individualism and pluralism. The basis of such a collectivist pattern is the identification of cultural-ethnic and institutional-political identity, in which the political community fully identifies with the national or ethnic community.

In the South Slavic area (with special reference to the former Yugoslavia), religions have always played an important role in the ethnonational formation. However, this does not mean that nationalists have an affinity for religion, nor that they are true believers, as was clearly shown in Eastern and Southeastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall when national leaders very quickly "crossed the path" from Communist Party membership to religion. Simultaneously, the increase in religiosity mostly coincided with the transition from one quasi-religious (communist) ideology to another system (nationalist ideologies). The worst phase in Sarajevo began immediately after the recognition of B&H's independence in 1992, which was the most critical area of ex-Yugoslavia multiethnic discourse.[11] The fact is

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[5] BiH and B&H are the usual abbreviations for Bosnia and Herzegovina

[6] Ustaša is a term colloquially used to describe members of the Croatian fascist movement founded in 1929 by Ante Pavelić under the name Ustaša-Croatian Revolutionary Organization (UHRO), which Nazi Germany appointed the ruling party in 1941 after the founding of the Independent State of Croatia. Another name of the Ustaša organization is Croatian Liberation Movement (UHOP)

[7] Četniks are members of a Serbian military organization with a distinctly nationalist chauvinistic Greater Serbia goal. (Croatian Encyclopedia, 2000).

[8] The vow of revenge for enslavement under the Turks was passed down through the mother's milk from generation to generation. That is why we heard about Turks during the entire war of the 1990s, and rarely about Bosniaks.

[9] Balija is a term used today in the Balkans as a derogatory term for Muslims. The etymology of the term Balija came to the Balkans from the Turkish language, although the word originally comes from the Greek language, more precisely from the word (Βάλιος), which meant the immortal horse of Achilles. The Turkish dictionary states that this term is used positively, i.e., that it means older adults, worthy of respect and brave.

[10] In this sense, there is probably a no better example than Kosovo, which is considered the holy land of Serbian Orthodoxy, an actual museum of symbols and a living past of centuries of conflict between Christians and Muslims. It is not surprising, then, that the first spark of unrest in the former Yugoslavia ignited precisely where the past was most accessible: the memory of betrayal, holy wars, mythical heroism, and unrequited defeats. And then at one point that memory suddenly burst into the present, brutal and unstoppable. Then the bigger war could begin. See Jakov Jukić, "*Političke religije i memorija zla"*[*Political Religions and the Memory of Evil*], UDC 316: 2,(1996): 1.

[11] The most common comparison and description of B&H, i.e., Sarajevo, is to see it like a European Jerusalem, with a mosque, a cathedral, a church, and a synagogue in one block. However, in essence, B&H's multiculturalism is a very controversial and complex concept, both in discussions within B&H and in the representation of B&H in the world. For centuries, the multiculturalism and multiethnicity of B&H have been

that the 1990s witnessed a systematic political mobilization of a significant portion of existing religious traditions and available significant religious resources and political mobilization of the religious symbolism of all three major religions present in the area. Also, on a symbolic level, this was evident in the early stages of political conflicts and some of their critical moments, but, of course, with very significant differences between particular religions. Another critical fact is that in the dramatic events of the early 1990s, all three religious communities, which treated religion as an essential source of political legitimacy and acting as national, politically legitimizing instances of the first order, provided and supplied appropriate nationalist political strategies with additional legitimacy. In this way, all dominant nationalist strategies practically operated under a special "sacred canopy."[12]

The term "political religion" appeared in 1938 in Erich Voegelin's text. Political religions are nothing but a response to the crisis of modernity,[13] and religious institutions are most often the form through which political religion develops. In the former Yugoslavia, followers of three monotheistic religions, Orthodoxy, Islam, and Catholicism, often live intermingled.

One should also make a distinction between the concepts of religion and faith. It suffices to say that the term "faith" is considerably broader.[14] Hence the necessity of the following question: what is religion? Logically, religion would be just a specific external expression of faith. As an outward expression of faith, religion is viewed as a path to God. It can be said that "only the faith that is unequivocally apolitical is original." [15] The politicization of these two mutual concepts creates numerous troubles and religiously colored conflicts that further complicate the already complex and nationalist-burdened social and public scene.

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affirmed and challenged both externally and internally. It is argued and challenged ideologically, historically, politically, by coexistence, wars, conflicts, and urbanism. At the same time, with its thousand-year coexistence, tolerance, and multiethnicity, B&H is a model for survival in Europe. It confirms this with its survival centuries before the declarations of human rights by both the EU and its institutions. A.Hasanović,,http://avdijahasanovic.blogger.ba/arhiva/2018/12/07/4124757,2018.

[12] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1990).

[13] Žarko Paić, "The triumph of political religions identity policy and the twilight of culture" *Europske studije – European Studies*,(2015): 218.

[14] Faith is expressed in various forms, such as faith in oneself, faith in a leader, faith in a nation, faith in a class, faith in science, faith in progress, faith in chance. None of these forms of faith have anything to do with religious faith which is the belief in something mystical and absolute. Hence, the notions of faith and religion cannot be equated in scope or content, because faith, as we know, is a broader notion than religious faith. See Đuro Šušnjić, "*Special Editions* of ANUBiH CLXXXVI", ODN 13, (2009): 18.

[15] Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkanski idoli. Religija i nacionalizam u jugoslovenskim državama, [Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States],* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 204.

Thus, in the late 1980s and 1990s (still relevant today), there was a significant activation of some contents of religious tradition, religious culture, and religious symbolism for political purposes. Special conditions enabled religious communities to occupy an important position in society and gain influence. At the same time, the fear of losing identity within multinational communities, such as Yugoslavia, after its disintegration led to the sudden "emergence" of antagonistic individual national identities, has led to claims of being indivisible, belligerent, and exclusive. In this regard, the connection between ethnonational policies, violence, and religion is visible in the wars of the 1990s, where the war in all national religions (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam) found proponents of personal sacrifice for the good of nations. Belonging to a certain army and wearing religious symbols (rosary and cross), giving certain signs (raising two or three fingers in the air), or shouting messages of religious content (*Allahu Akbar*) did not presuppose that soldiers and their commanders should know religious truths and dogmas. However, that made belonging to a certain denomination a pure-blooded national affiliation. In this sense, the responsibility of religious communities in the Yugoslav disintegration is unquestionable, because no less beloved, they have contributed to the development of trivial ideologies that have outgrown mere respect for the material and spiritual goods of their people. The ideologies of the complete removal of others and the careful labeling of members of one's ethnic group, the "tribes," returned to the stage in the 1990s. Thus, in the political circumstances and troubles of the former Yugoslavia, religion became an ethnically instrumentalized expression of religion more important than itself. Although for some analysts, it was a religious conflict in which all religious communities played an active role, it is more likely in this case that the religious and political dimensions of the conflict could not be separated.

I suggest that religion is the foundation of society and the source of every good, even politics. I also suggest that religion belongs to the universal and eternal realm, the sublime; it "deals" with the highest and most stable values. Politics deals—no matter how pretentious—with the definite and the temporary, the almost instantaneous. It is unreliable, because usually, most occupations are pragmatic and profitable, for the realization of which necessarily positions, orientations, and inclinations change. At the same time, politics is a skill of maneuvering while faith is an attachment to enduringly stable values and principles. In today's modern Europe, religious identity has become a matter of personal choice, best illustrated by the phrase "belief without belonging." The "happy paradox" of secularism,

according to Mardešić,[16] lies in the fact that it weakens the political nature of religion, opening the space for strengthening the religiosity of religion in or outside religious institutions themselves. However, the emergence of religion in public space is also defined as deprivation, and this process is considered crucial from the 1980s to the present day. According to J. Casanova,[17] this deprivation means above all the fact that religious traditions around the world refuse to accept the marginal and private role reserved for them by theories of secularism. All states of the former Yugoslavia are constitutionally and legally defined as secular states. It implies separating political issues from those concerning religion, but at the same time it does not mean—as modern proponents of negative secularization want—to ignore, degrade or expel religion, religious institutions, and theologians from society. However, the objections coming from these circles are justified, given the constant inclinations by religious communities and their leaders toward theocratic society, to gain for their religious-dogmatic beliefs social and political (and even legal, constitutional) confirmation. This is the label of all newly formed states in the former Yugoslavia in which public life is increasingly "clericalized."

It is a fact that religion and religious community's social positions are stronger if they help to establish identity. This is the case in the post-Yugoslav space. The stronger their influence on identity creation, the greater their influence on political life. In the former Yugoslavia, political polarization is carried out on a confessional/nationalist basis. Muslims support Bosniak candidates, Catholics support Croats, and Orthodox candidates support Serbs. In contrast, when they are in the other two areas, they have found themselves in a "minority" position, with the majority of the population making no critical distinction (even today) between ethnic/confessional/national identities. Religions are thus reduced first to the nation, and then to power.

Thus, a specific (extremely negative) characteristic of the post-Yugoslav space is that religions are identified with nations (majority). In this way, the confession is accepted as a political doctrine, so that the national interest of ex-Yugoslav ethnopolitics can be subordinated to the confessional one. We had situations during the dramatic disintegration of the former Yugoslavia where some religious communities/clergy encouraged the sacral-national government to devastate, kill, and rape by sending hordes to criminal exploitation with their religious blessings; the ideology of the complete removal of others, by supreme

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[16] Željko Mardešić, "Religija u postmodernitetu: nestanak ili povrat svetoga?"[Religion in postmodernity: the disappearance or return of the sacred], *Zbornik. Muke sa svetim,* (Niš: "Niški kulturni centar," 2007).

[17] Jose Casanova,"Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," *The Hedgehog Review* 8, (2006): 7-22.

authorities. The main role of the ruling elites, and the acquisition and consolidation of power, was the construction of national identity that was accompanied by great violence based on the most terrible, aggressive expression of the rebirth of nationality. Finally, such elitist and politics further encouraged religions to become nationally ideologized religions, i.e., intolerant religious ideologies.[18] The result is the undisguised exclusivity of such self-selected religious ideologies, precluding the dialogue between them. It is up to rational thinking to prevent or reduce, together with "Faith," the ideological-pragmatic manipulation by which nationalized religion asserts its position in the service of daily political goals.

The tragic circumstance for all Balkan nations and states is that peace, more precisely non-warfare between them, now as in the past, is guaranteed only by the great powers. There are a few places in the world where a "culture of hope" is so difficult and slow to be created as in the Balkans, especially in B&H, where the winds of historical humiliation, fear, and hatred among nations still flow. The "culture of fear" grows into a powerful inspiration into the "culture of hatred," which always quickly and effectively grows into a "culture of violence." The existence of a "minority and majority" or "friend and enemy" relationship (the enemy is always that of another religion or the atheist) is the foundation of the symbiosis of the political, religious, and ethnonational factors in the ex-Yugoslav communities. This symbiosis fills part of the personal space of human intimacy and becomes the dominant form of behavior for the new generations. Most religious leaders in the former Yugoslavia again failed to publicly acknowledge their actual cooperation in the bloody nationalist wars of the 1990s. Sensitivity to the suffering of others as the basis of the monotheistic ethos, but also a condition of the truthfulness of memory, has long since been expelled from the pulpits of religious communities (if it existed at all).[19] With religious myths of their own innocence, which are tirelessly disseminated, believers are socio-politically prepared to adopt the nationalist-archaic constructions by leaders whose "amnesia" is the result of their national-religious narcissism.

1. The Broader Discourse of Phenomena within the Former Yugoslavia

When it comes to studying and determining the origins, causes, and mechanisms of the mobilization of ethnic-religious groups, using ethnic-religious identity as a resource for

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[18]Esad Bajtal, "Religion, fascism and anti-fascism in BiH: Contribution to the phenomenology of religious cynicism of the Serbian Orthodox Church," *Zbornik Orbus*, Zagreb (2005): 1.

[19] B. O'Connor, ed., *The Adorno Reader*) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 36.

political mobilization, we find a significant starting point in classical elite theorists,[20] but later also in the views of modern elite theorists. Both classical and modern theorists share the view that ethnicity is primarily a political phenomenon. The basis of a collectivist pattern in post-Yugoslav countries is the identification of cultural-ethnic and institutional-political factors by which the political community fully identifies with the national or ethnic community. Ethnicism in the former Yugoslavia, as an ideology of a pure kind, is a speculative skill of "counting blood cells" and a controversial rule "in the name of the people." Such undisguised exclusivity of self-selected nominations prevents any possible communion and dialogue between them. It enabled political decision-makers, within the pernicious ideological-pragmatic manipulation of nationalized religion to serve daily political goals, to act according to the matrix of the old feudal-imperialist conception that each community and each territory has its religion and each individual belongs first to his/her community, and only then to the political space. Thus, for obvious reasons, the former Yugoslavia requires a unique approach: religious references were reactivated in a war frame to the most destructive genocidal apocalypse in the heart of Europe. In a study on the involvement of religions in the war, the sociologist, Srdjan Vrcan, concluded that it is about strengthening the link between Orthodoxy and nationalism in Serbia, the affirmation of an *ecclesiae militants* in a climate that is very conducive to Catholic integration in Croatia, and the strengthening of pan-Islamism in B&H. He argues that "religions have shown, in the Yugoslav crisis, that (...) they are more capable of distancing than of uniting, of separating than of gathering, of opposing than of bringing together, of igniting rather than calming."[21]

In the early 1990s, the multiethnic tradition could not resist the nationalism that had penetrated through all the pores of disintegrating communism. Consequently, various anti-communist and nationalist elements began to gain increasing influence. Therefore, it should be no surprise that all institutionalized religions (Serbian Orthodoxy, Croatian Catholicism, and Bosnian Islam) have taken on the roles as leaders of ethnonationalism. Part of the high clergy became distinctly nationalistic and patriotic, treating the concepts of democracy, liberalism, freedom of conscience, and Western culture as distinctly negative (usually the Serbian example). Nationalist sentiments were systematically created, committed to creating conditions in which the manifestation of nationalism was the only desirable public pattern of

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[20] V. Pareto, G. Mosca, and R. Michels were cofounders of the Italian school of elitism, which influenced subsequent elite theory in the Western tradition. It is important to note that they do not analyze ethnicity directly.

[21] Srdjan Vrcan, *The War in ex-Yugoslavia: The Involvement of Religions: Sea of War, a Sea of Religions*, (Florence: Cultura della Pace Editions, 1994).

behavior. During this period, there was a desecularization of public life which was seen in an increasing number of participants in religious ceremonies, an increasing emphasis on religious symbols, and demonstrations of personal and collective religious affiliation. Paradoxically, during communism, there was a certain contempt for people who went to a church or mosque and who honored or celebrated religious holy days. The collapse of the communist system introduced the sanctity of faith and nation, especially in these three nations, where one's ethnicity also means their religion. Being Serbian is at the same time being an Orthodox; Croatian and Catholic are synonym, just as Bosniaks are Muslims. The sacralization of nation implies the transfer of the functions and expressive forms of religion to the nation by creating a structural analogy between the modern nation and religion. However, this does not mean that nationalists of former Yugoslavia have an affinity for religion, nor are they true believers, as was clearly shown in Eastern and Southeastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when many national communist leaders very quickly "crossed paths" into church membership. Both then and today the question arises: did they go to church or mosques to reconsider their "dark communist" past, or because they were aware that they would find religious officials in those areas "who would receive them and give them the necessary religious legitimacy so that the believers who were the basis for gaining political power would not reject them, but accepted their new political parties as to the only possible and lasting solution."[22] We must not forget the difficult budget items associated with the establishment of new national ideologies, for example, religious indoctrination in public schools, financing of state television stations as the propaganda machine, payment from the budget for revisionist historic research, and an invention of new "linguistics" (especially in Croatia), [23] construction of colossal religious worship places and religious symbols, monuments to new politicians, construction of pilgrimage centers, plush residences of religious authorities, and similar economically unprofitable projects. Religious programs dominated state television, and atheism was no longer the worldview option for new generations but an obstacle to public action and career. Representatives of national parties in the region did their best to make religious communities faithful servants in obtaining the

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[22] Ivan Markešić, *Od religijskog do nacionalnog identiteta i natrag (na primjeru Bosne i Hercegovine), [From religious to national identity and back,(case of Bosnia and Herzegovina)],* (Zagreb: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2008), 15.

[23] The majority of Croatian linguists of Tudjman's time believed that the suppression (and sometimes clear prohibition) of lexical and other Croatian linguistic features and the imposition of the Serbian language should be resisted. Moreover, finally, today, they believe that the flood of English should be opposed. Dejan Brozović, "O jeziku dr. Franje Tuđmana", ["On the language of dr. Franjo Tudjman"]*,Journal of the Culture of the Croatian Literary Language*, Hrvatsko filološko društvo, Vol 47, Issue 2. (1999):41-80.

required number of Islamic-Bosniak, Catholic-Croat, and Orthodox-Serb votes, which they (religious communities) gladly accepted, considering their service to the Goddess of the Nation as a fulfillment of God's plan here on earth.

The connection between ethnonational policies, violence, and religion is visible in recent wars, where war has found proponents of personal sacrifice for the good of the nation in all national religions. Croatian defenders with a rosary around their necks laid their lives on the "Altar of the Homeland." Serbian fighters died "for the honorable cross and the Orthodox faith. Bosnian Muslims fought with shouts of "*Allahu Akbar.*" The very politicization of religion has always been associated with biological needs, a genetic survival strategy, empowering group survival, and the memory of "evil,"[24] which is the foundation of post-Yugoslav antagonism.

Serbian cases of religiously motivated nationalism were much more open than Croatian ones. The Orthodox Church openly supported aggressive actions against others, and soldiers were even blessed before and after the crime with a reference to the Martyr Serbian Prince Lazar, of the 14th -century, although the Serbian Orthodox Church simultaneously denied carrying out large outbreaks of violence and organized rapes. They claimed these were occasional excesses even when genocidal public and private expulsion of Bosniaks and Albanians from their homes was evident. [25] Shrines, mosques and Muslim buildings, including limitless number of gems of Balkan Islamic architecture, were destroyed during the war in B&H. It should be borne in mind that there is, above all, a destructive symbolic act at work. Churches and mosques were not destroyed so much as religious buildings, but as national, ethnic symbols of a particular community's presence in a territory. The systematic destruction of cultural monuments (culturocide) has been proposed as indirect evidence of the Serbs' desire to destroy Bosniaks as an ethnic group (referring to the genocidal intentions defined in Marusen and Mennecke).[26] Soldiers and criminalized hordes, within ideologies of the complete removal of others, as supreme authorities, were sent with religious blessings. Many records from the wars tell us about the presence of religious officials on the

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[24] Jakov Jukić,"Političke religije i memorija zla", ["Political Religions and the Memory of Evi"], *UDC 316*: 2,(1996): 1.

[25] Stephen Goodwin, "*From UN Safehavens to Sacred Spaces: Contributions of Religious Sodalities to Peace Building and Reconciliation in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina*", Edinburg University Press, *Studies in World Christianity* 9, no.2, (2003): 174. https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2003.9.2.171.

[26] Eric Marusen, and Martin Mennecke, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Human Rights Review* 5, no.4, (2003): 74.

battlefields, about the dedication of tanks, artillery, and the army, Četniks, Ustašas, and even foreign Russian, Ukrainian, and foreign Muslim *Mujahideen* fighters.

Furthermore, it is a fact that both older and newer ethnonational parties, particularly in B&H, were originally organized in churches or mosques. This continued to be the case with later factions of existing or newly formed national parties, which is understandable, because ethnicity and national consciousness in the former Yugoslavia were nurtured exclusively under the leadership of religious institutions. This author suggests that "making religion" as the sole basis of collective national identity is a typical model of politicized religion and sacralized politics (where politics is considered a religious obligation), intending to reorganize social relations on pseudo-religious foundations and functions. The politicization of religion is evident from the actions of religious leaders in the war and post-war period. There is no doubt that the dominant religious communities in the Balkans encourage—as seen in their leadership's behavior—the formation of nation-states. Awareness of the deeper roots of the three religious communities in the three nations is built with the awareness that national culture and particular national politics cannot survive without it. That is why they equated nation and religious community and confessional affiliation with national affiliation. The main agent is that ethnicity and nation are equated with religion. Religious leaders, who should be the essence of morality, are silent or trivially speaking; whoever is silent agrees. Simultaneously, the core values of the religious teaching they preached remain in the background.

If we briefly focus exclusively on B&H, we can observe that the peculiarities of B&H's historical development influenced the fact that members of its three peoples had a strong confessional and weak national consciousness. According to the sociologist, Ivan Cvitković,[27] this has remained a feature to this day. Because religion and even more denominations offered people "both personal and collective identity" in order to impose the denomination as a national institution. This is the rule with both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Islamic Community. In a society such as B&H, the one who neglects the influence of religion on politics usually makes a mistake, and B&H society, generally carries the specificity that in it, "ethnic or national identity is most closely linked to religion," and that the population "does not necessarily distinguish between the religious as a universal symbol and the one used and abused for political purposes." So when the cross is mentioned in B&H, it does not mean the Catholic cross, Orthodox (Greek or Russian) cross

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[27] Ivan Cvitković, *Sociološki pogledi na naciju i religiju III, [Sociological views on nation and religion III]* , (Fojnica:Štamparija Fojnica, 2017).

but the Croatian national cross or the exclusively Serbian national cross. Also, the crescent in B&H is always only Bosniak, rather than, say, Arabic. Moreover, in such an environment, the understanding is imposed that confessional and national affiliation are parts of the same collective identity. To be a Croat means to be a Catholic and vice versa, to be a Serb means to be an Orthodox and vice versa, and, finally, to be a Bosniak means to be a Muslim. The result of this social environment raises the question of the primary value within such a collective identity. Is it, in other words, first a nation or denomination? Moreover, is a nation a means expressing a confession or is a confession a means of expressing a nation? This kind of questioning, following the same logic, also raises the question of the relationship between the church and politics. Cvitković claims that the boundaries of that relationship were never clear, not even today. "They are often diffuse, and like any border, sometimes conflicting. Most often, the politicized religion that raised the Nation to the pedestal of worship performed the 'worship' of the Nation."[28]

Profiling B&H as a separate entity is not only the result of its survival over the centuries or a specific cultural milieu created within the state but also its response to the geopolitical circumstances surrounding it, its geographical entanglement between "two powerful nationalizing projects, destabilization by imperial geopolitics and devastation by genocidal violence."[29] Through intensive geopolitical and religious interventions throughout its history, at the beginning of the 20th century, B&H was under pressure from the neighboring Serbian or Croatian national idea. According to O'Tuathail, B&H's ability to reaffirm itself in such an environment as a separate, albeit fragile, geopolitical entity is what makes it not only special in geopolitical terms, but also different from other parts of ex-Yugoslavia.[30] Schematically speaking, the nature of Serbian and Croatian ethnopolitics can be described as special and decentralized with autonomist forms, and Bosniak as integralist. The problem with today's integration policy arises because the Bosniak state does not share an equal political foundation with other people's demands, i.e., the possibility to win others to the integral concept. One of the constants of history is the aspiration for social, political, and religious-cultural domination of one group over the other. The fact that Bosnians were a "unique" people from the 10th to the 20th century, which had three religious denominations, is completely ignored. At the same time, it is important to suggest that "big-state" concepts

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[28] Ibid, 37.
[29] Gerard Toal G., and Carl Dahlman, *Bosnia Remade: Ethnic Cleansing and Its Reversal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49.
[30] Gearoid O'Tuathail, *Uvod u geopolitiku* [*An Introduction to Geopolitics*], (Zagreb: Politička kultura, 2007), 48.

emerge when one political elite tries to "overlap" the ethnic, religious, and political dimensions. Hence, Serbia's attitudes and efforts should and must be where Serbs are or Croatia where Croats are. Bosnian misunderstandings are a consequence of these concepts and the centripetal forces of neighboring great-power aspirations.

At the same time, B& H is home to the Constitution (the Dayton Peace Agreement) based on "ethnoreligious principles" in the form of religious exclusivism. The Constitution defines Bosniak-Croat-Serbs as a constituent people. In the B&H's ethnoreligious model, which is formed by agreement of the three constituent peoples, the demographic remnant is unconstitutional. For the most part, a mere constitutional decor appropriately enshrined in the last article of the Preamble of the discriminatory B&H Constitution. Therefore, the term "Others," in the formulation of "hybrid" identities (mixed ethnic marriages, other ethnicities, and those who declared themselves as Bosnians) is an unsentimental description of their position in this ethnoreligiously divided society. Those who do not belong to one of the three religious groups or do not want to show affiliation are considered a foreign element; they cannot elect representatives and are barred from running for office at any state level. Several decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)[31] have never been implemented. At the same time, on the example of B&H, we have national pluralism, and in the process of social differentiation of the domicile population, religion and denomination played a key role, and the process was supported by the sacralization of the nation and the nationalization of religious communities. The problem is that religious pluralism in B&H has been introduced as national/confessional pluralism. Its essence was constituted by three national "war" political parties (SDA, SDS, HDZ[32]), each with the strong support of "their" denomination (Islamic Community, Serbian Orthodox Church, and Croatian Catholic Church). Religious communities are, even as they may try to dispute this, the most important logistics to ethnonationalist political philosophies. There are two important moments here: the first is the awakening of the nation through a return to religious roots. Others are speeches by religious leaders in election campaigns in which believers are told, most often indirectly, to vote for a particular party. Religious communities often decide local elections, and at the parliamentary level, candidates also seek the support of religious groups. Thus, it is impossible to follow the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics and not look at the role of religion in elections. Religious communities have been present in politics for almost three decades,

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[31] H. Išerič "Judgments of the European Court for Human Rights in Cases Sejdić and Finci, Zornić, Šlaku and Pilav – nudum ius in BiH," (2019).
[32] SDA (The Party of Democratic Action), HDZ (The Croatian Democratic Union), SDS (The Serb Democratic Party).

especially during election campaigns. As much as major religious leaders in principle refrain from supporting certain parties, lower-ranking priests and imams, either through sermons or by mere photographs with politicians—and since they are spiritual pastors by vocation and should be role models to believers—directly or indirectly suggest to believers for whom they should vote. In B&H, Max Weber's[33] assessment that the election campaign is not a struggle for the future, but a showdown regarding what happened in the (recent) past, has proved correct. Those who are disappointed with the constant victories of the national parties wish to return to the liberal theory of one person, one vote. Opponents point out that behind this principle lies the desire to establish the dominance of the most numerous people. Religious identity is regarded as the core of the nation in the former Yugoslavia. Post-Yugoslav interpreters of the "nations" overlook that it is the 21st century and that the world is organized in nation-states. It seems that this thesis does not fit into the "big state" policies of the parties in their hegemonic projects conducted under the auspices of "one people, one state, one religion." Such ethnicism leads directly to conflicts between ethnic groups. When one of these ethnonational parties claims that a particular territory belongs, or should belong, only to it, they seek and find like-minded support in their national and confessional (church and mosque) "guardians."

If we analyze national parties, the SDA, HDZ, SDS, and other Serbian parties behave similarly to religious communities, like Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. It is not just about religious leaders entering the national territory and helping national parties, but politicians are also manipulating the faith. To depart from a party means to abandon the faith; a person becomes a traitor, an apostate. This mechanism has been present in our people for a very long time, and it prevents them from voting freely in elections.[34] Furthermore, all three political and religious communities strive for their national good. They care more for the party/national common good than for the common good represented by the common state, forcing the appropriation and exclusion of religious symbols in favor of only one ethnic group. In this sense, the abuse of religion corresponds to consent or silence to that abuse. As stated above, religions are reduced first to the nation, and then to power.

The existence of a "minority and majority" or "friend and enemy" relationship (the enemy is always that of another religion or atheist) is the foundation of the symbiosis of political, religious, and ethnonational in ex-Yugoslav communities, which were evident in

[33] "Weber and the Making of Politicians: A Sociology of Political Responsibility" in Patrice Duran, Special Issue on Max Weber and the Political, *Max Weber Studies*. Vol. *9*, No. 1/2, (2009): 51-93.
[34] O. Karabeg, "Ivo,Marković,"
https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/most_religija_i_politika_markovic_dautovic/1853985.html ,2009.

wars. Namely, at one of the war negotiations with Karadžić's Serbs, at the Sarajevo airport Butmir, the negotiator of the Government of the then Republic of B&H asked Momčilo Krajišnik (then president of the Pale Assembly):[35] "How long will you kill civilians in Sarajevo?" Krajišnik answered him briefly, "All the time, until you stop wanting to live with us!"[36] The religious background of that fascist answer, according to Bajtal,[37] to be precisely and additionally deciphered from an extremely church-platonical statement of the pre-war atheist Radovan Karadžić,[38] the wartime president of Republika Srpska, who (sometime in early 1994), when asked about mutual relations and the SDS political party and Serb war policy in B&H, said: "Our clergy is present in all our thoughts and decisions, and the voice of the Church is heard as the voice of the highest authority."[39] If we move to the present, we can see that not much has changed. The Serbian member of the Presidency of B&H, Milorad Dodik, stated that he conveyed the greetings of the people from the Republika Srpska to the Serbian Patriarch Irinej who knows very well that without the Serbian Orthodox Church, there is no freedom for the Serbian people. Dodik pointed out that Serbs in Republika Srpska remained faithful to the Serbian Orthodox Church, to faith and baptism as the essential elements of Serbian identity.[40] Thus, in a broader sense, the presence of religious nationalism results in insisting on the symbiosis of political and religious, the nationalization of the denomination that precedes the religion of politics, which is a memory of the pre-political era, when the religious establishment invoked the right to rule.

Given all the above, it is indisputable that the foundation of the politicization of religion occurred in the region, especially after the war, highlighting part of the problem. The process was supported by the sacralization of the nation and the nationalization of religious communities. The stumbling blocks are the different religious profiles of ethnicity. In fact, "nationalism requires that one believe too strongly in something that is not so,"[41] which is why the national homeland becomes sacred, too holy, inviolable, unquestionable. Thus, a more rational notion of "national identity" includes a sense of political community that

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[35] Momčilo Krajišnik is a former Bosnian Serb political leader, who, along with Radovan Karadžić, co-founded the Bosnian Serb nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS). In 2006, Krajišnik was found guilty of committing crimes against humanity during the Bosnian War (1992–95) by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

[36] Arif Tanović , *Egzistencija u opsadi, [Existence under siege],* (Sarajevo: Zid, 2000), 77.

[37] Bajtal, op. cit., 1.

[38] Radovan Karadžić was a former Bosnian Serb politician who served as the President of Republika Srpska during the Bosnian War, and was later convicted by ICTY. For genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

[39] Milorad Tomanić, *Srpska crkva i ratovi u njoj,* [*Serbian church in the war and wars in it*], (Belgrade: Media Bookstore Krug, 2001), 119.

[40] Politika, http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/445344/Dodik-Bez-SPC-nema-slobode-za-srpski-narod 06.01.2020.

[41] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nacije i nacionalizam, [Nations and nationalism],* (Zagreb: Erasmus, 1993), 14.

implies "at least some common institutions and a code of rights and duties for all members of the community, which also refers to a certain social space, a fairly well-defined and limited area with which members can identify and to whom they consider themselves to belong.[42]

Besides, religiosity is often exaggerated, politically sentimental, and takes on civilian forms within a ceremonial character. The most striking example of the politicization of religion is the education system in B&H. Political projects were started by war, segregation among ethnic groups continues only through education, within the discriminated educational phenomenon of "Two schools under one roof."[43] "There are those borders, we don't agree, and we don't want to be in touch," says a high school student from Mostar, adding that he was never on the Old Bridge[44] out of fear, because, as he says, "someone will recognize that he is a Croat and get into trouble." "Four students express such an opinion in the same first sentence. The same student states that he can recognize a "Muslim" crossing the bridge by "speech, movement, clothing, facial texture, and darker skin."[45] These phenomena show obvious indoctrination with elements that produce antagonism and violence, creating clones of ethnoreligious primogenitors and preventing young people's development into moral citizens-individuals. In this way, ethnopolitics takes care of its reproduction by cultivating new generations of future xenophobes where young Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats learn to see objects (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) rather than independent and moral human beings. Thus, an extremist model emerges of the domination of ethnic discourse over the entire social life. In political life, ethnocracy replaces democracy, special ethnopolitical totalitarianism replaces national (state) political orientation, and ethnopolitics, biopolitics, and populism grow unstoppably against democratic politics. The most important feature of this approach is certainly the creation of a discourse of "naturalness," supported by different, mostly pseudo-scientific, or mythopoetic narratives of a particular nation. The goal of the discourse of naturalness is to devalue alternative discursive patterns as "utopian" or "abnormal." It is a kind of naturalistic delusion of the dominant ethnopolitical discourse.

The foundation of the complex relationship between the cunning of politics and the adjustment of religion can be realized on the example of the war in B&H, where Muslims

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[42] Hans Wehler, *Nacionalizam, povijest, oblici, posljedice, [Nationalism, history, shapes, consequences]*, (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski, 2005), 56.

[43] Schools in B&H are based on the ethnic segregation. Students from two ethnic groups, Bosniaks and Croats, attend classes in the same building, but are physically separated from each other and taught separate curricula.

[44] Unesco's 16th-century Ottoman bridge (rebuilt after it was destroyed during the war) in the city of Mostar in B&H crosses the river Neretva and connects the two parts of the city.

[45] *Perspektiva*, Radio Free Europe in cooperation with The National Endowment for Democracy, TV-series (2015).

initially did not even think of restoring Islam, much less wanted it as the foundation of their state and fundamentalist ideology. There were simply no conditions for this because communism reduced the religiosity of Muslims to a minimum. However, it was precisely the tragic experiences of the defense for survival that forced them to seek salvation in religion, for it was—as was mentioned earlier—the effective strategy for their survival, but always linked to historical memory. The same, of course, applies to other nations. Thus, according to Jukić,[46] the politicization of religion was linked to biological needs, the strategy of genetic survival, endangered group survival, and the memory of evil. All this is not present in true religion; at least not to an excessive extent. The fact is that at the moment when the danger of the disappearance of Bosniaks was threatened, the SDA party put itself at the head of the people, and everyone who fought to preserve biological survival and religion of Islam joined the movement. In this context, it can be understood why the Islamic religious community supported the SDA at the time, but less so later.

Analyzing all religious communities in the former Yugoslavia, starting from the Bosnian Islamic community (during the period of the former longtime mufti, Dr. Mustafa Cerić), I suggest that it also fell into the national-constructive discourses of religion in forming the identity of "Bosniaks," and these tendencies strengthened the notion of "Bosniak" nationalism. It is important to point out that the Islamic symbols that were politically mobilized in the war in B&H were not traditional Bosnian Islamic symbols, but Islamic symbols imported from some Arab countries. That infiltration of symbols influenced it and continued to do so in the post-war period. Paradoxically, Islam in B&H has never hidden its aversion to all versions of Wahhabi fundamentalism. Rather, Bosnian Islam openly supports various initiatives aimed at dialogue, interfaith respect, and coexistence that are specific to B&H's social conditions. They are similar to Western Europeans of Muslim descent. A 2013 study by the Pew Research Center shows that they are among the world's most liberal Muslims. Dr. Cerić openly expressed his political views, which eventually culminated in his candidacy for the presidency of B&H in 2014. Cerić claimed that Islam is a strong element of Bosniak nationalism and advocated that B&H become a Bosniak nation-state, since Croats and Serbs already have nation states.[47] I maintain that such statements radicalize and provoke new political and other conflicts. They complicate fragile security

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[46] Jakov Jukić,"Political Religions and the Memory of Evil," [Političke religije i memorija zla], *UDC* 316: 2, (1996). Jukić was Željko Mardešić's pseudonym during the communist period.
[47] International crisis group, ICG, *Bosnia's Dangerous Tango: Islam and Nationalism*, Policy Briefing,Europe, Briefing N°70, Sarajevo/Brussels, (2013).

relations and rhetorically inflate nationalists' aims, causing Bosniaks' reluctance to more fully participate in European society.

Political activity is one of the important features of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which during its history, in addition to religious affairs, was also involved with national politics, which is a characteristic of all Orthodox churches in the world. During the Ottoman period, the Serbian Church (i.e., the Patriarchate of Peč) often took over religious and political leadership. Even later, including in the 20th century, the Church set aside her primary duty in order to become actively involved in the struggle for the unification of Serbs, "in which the priest had to be both a teacher and a judge taking up arms, if necessary, to defend himself and his family."[48] In the early 1990s, Serbian President Slobodan Milošević sought to re-establish this ethnoreligious identity,[49] insisting that Serbian Orthodoxy was at the core of Serbian national identity and the pride of all Serbs. Milošević, supported the formula, "All Serbs in one state," which, according to Vojislav Šešelj,[50] would include "all Serbian lands."[51] The report of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights estimates that the Serbian Orthodox Church neglected the universal messages of the Gospel, slipping into nationalism and that the two main features of its activities are anti-communism and nationalism, by which it tries to "cleanse" the Serbian national identity of communist ideology.[52] Despite all the criticism, the Serbian Orthodox Church is one of the most trusted institutions in Serbia.[53] Apart from Serbia, the Serbian Orthodox Church is also influential politically in some other republics of the former Yugoslavia, such as Montenegro and B&H. Vesna Pešić estimates that the Serbian Orthodox Church is not a church but a "totem church" of Serbian origin, understood as a clan community.[54] Today, many criticize the Serbian Orthodox Church because there is still no public repentance for the war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica. At the same time, in traditional Serbian culture, the war was understood as a "way of life" and "philosophy of the universe." The war has an important place in the

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[48] Interview of Patriarch Pavle, *Danas*, 5-7. January 2001.
[49] Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 47.
[50] Vojislav Šešelj is the founder and president of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS). He was convicted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). From 1998 to 2000, he was Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia.
[51] Tomanić, *Srpska crkva i ratovi u njoj,* 78.
[52] http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Studija-Vukomanovic.pdf
[53] Tanjug, https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/vojska-i-crkva-institucije-koje-uzivaju-najvise poverenja/7ljh50f , 23.11.2010.
[54] https://pescanik.net/lazi-u-krug/ 14/10/2011.

collective memory of Serbs because it is part of the way of life, and not just a myth, legend, or epic.[55]

Croatia ranks seventh in Europe in terms of the number of priests per capita, i.e., 56.1 priests per 100,000 inhabitants. As extremely active in the election campaigns, the Catholic Church gained a special status under ethnopolitical auspices in the 1990s. A Croat historian Vjekoslav Perica stated that nothing has changed in the relationship between religion and politics. "The Croatian Church is not democratic: it wants to be the first to control society; it wants to be above society. It is not seen as part of civil society, on an equal footing with human rights NGOs and small religious communities advocating humanitarian work. It is the same as the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), with the SPC openly saying that it is a state church and a state partner. However, both are primarily nationalist organizations. In Croatia, Catholicism is ethnic; it is primarily about the Church of the Croats."[56] One example of how 'healthy' the Croatian Church is a means of strengthening national identity, accompanied by an interethnic escalation of tensions, is the period ahead of the ICTY's [57] "Six"[58] verdict in 2017. Persistent denial[59] of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia convictions of high-ranking participants by Croatian politicians and manipulating the public is entirely at the joint" criminal" enterprise level.

The politicized religion which is a human form and a non-political religion which is its mystical goodness that breaks through the resistance of human genetic heritage, finds its additional justification in some empirical studies of modem psychology and sociology. From a psychological point of view, A. Vergote, defends the division (following the work of Gordon Allport) into external and internal religion. The manipulation of historical memory and, at the same time, the religious justification of that memory proved very successful in

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[55] Nebojša Popov and Drinka Gojković, *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 81.

[56] D. Gozdanović, https://arhiva.portalnovosti.com/2013/03/vjekoslav-perica-za-mene-je-tudmanova-drzava-bila-druga-endehazija/,2013.

[57] The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the ex-Yu since 1991.

[58] Case no. IT-04-74-T, ICTY, Second amended indictment: Prosecutor of the tribunal. In 2004, the ICTY issued an indictment for six former HRHB leaders – J. Prlić, B. Stojić, S. Praljak, M. Petković, V. Ćorić and B. Pušić. On 29 May 2013, the ICTY sentenced all six.

[59] Despite a long list of established crimes, numerous evidence about Tuđman's role (Franjo Tuđman was the first president of Croatia), and the first-instance verdict itself, the Croatian public was persistently convinced that none of this was true. During the sentencing, Slobodan Praljak committed suicide. When the verdict was announced, the Croatian Parliament adjourned, the President cut off a visit to Iceland, the Prime Minister convened an emergency press conference, and senior political officials of the current HDZ and former SDP (Socialist Democratic Party), and Most (a political party in Croatia founded in 2012) started making statements about how the verdict was unfair, unacceptable, and incomprehensible. Nikola Bajto, https://www.tacno.net/novosti/uporno-negiranje-presude-visokorangiranih-ucesnika-na-razini-je-udruzenog-zlocinackog-pothvata/ 2017.

new social strategies of survival. Anticipating that religious memory is the most resilient, politics cunningly took advantage of it, reaping all the fruits of that cunning along the way. With religiously marked myths of innocence, believers are in the realm of socio-political preparation for the adoption of nationalist-archaic constructions of actors whose "amnesia" is often a victim of their national-religious narcissism. Politics of parallel memory [60] and revisionist historical narrative within the politics of fear spread influence among young people among whom ethnopolitical indoctrination has reception and is left to chance, [61] creating solid preconditions for hostilities in future generations to escalate into violence in specific political-economic circumstances. Throughout the world, attempts to revise the results of World War II falsification of historical facts are punishable. However, in the former Yugoslavia, collaborators of Hitler's genocidal machines, members of political-military-paramilitary formations (including convicts of International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) regularly receive pensions and medals. Schools and streets are named after them and they are celebrated at rallies. The commemoration of the events are accompanied by a ceremonies regularly led by religious officials. [62] Paradoxically, World War II strongmen, the Croat Ante Pavelić, [63] and the Serb, Draža Mihailović [64] and their Ustaša and Četnik followers

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[60] For Croatia, the military action "Storm" in 1995 (The last major battle of the Croatian War of Independence was a significant factor in the Bosnian War outcome, against the self-declared proto-state Republic of Serbian Krajina) was considered a magnificent victory. For Serbia it was a case of ethnic cleansing. The attitudes of ordinary citizens, Serbs, and Croats, have not changed significantly. Many believe that the relations between the two states on the anniversary "Storm" are becoming tenser each year. https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/oluja-potpuno-suprotni-stavovi-i-poslije-21-godine/27896141.html,2016.
The fight against revisionism is an ongoing process. In the case of B&H, that story intensified in 2006 and continues to this day. The agents of revisionism have organized and strengthened institutionally.

[61] Vjekoslav Perica, a Croat historian, stated, "In sports arenas, kill, and slaughter are shouted, fascists march through the streets, mutual lawsuits are filed for genocide, military parades are held, provocative commemorations are organized in support of nationalism, genocide denied, and mythomania within the transitional crime, corruption, and interethnic hatred." https://radiogornjigrad.wordpress.com/2016/02/19/dr-vjekoslav-perica-hrvatska-je-danas-najjaca-scena-etnickog-i-klerikalnog-nacionalizma-na-balkanu/ (2016).

[62] RJ.,H. ,https://direktno.hr/eu-i-svijet/okupljanje-cetnika-vise-stotina-pripadnika-ravnogorskog-pokreta-odalo-pocast-drazi-mihailovicu-116084/ 13.03.2018.

[63] Ante Pavelić was Croat lawyer, politician and dictator who founded and headed the fascist ultranationalist organization known as the Ustaše in 1929 and governed the Independent State of Croatia (Croatian: Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), a fascist puppet state built out of parts of occupied Yugoslavia by the authorities of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, from 1941 to 1945. Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*,(Stanford: University of California Press,, 2001), 351-352.

[64] Draža Mihailović was the leader of the Četniks. a detachments of the Yugoslav Army during World War II. "The struggle for the liberty of our whole nation under the scepter of His Majesty King Peter II; the creation of a Great Yugoslavia and within it of a Great Serbia which is to be ethnically pure and is to include Serbia, Montenegro, BiH, Srijem, the Banat, and Bačka; the struggle for the inclusion into Yugoslavia of all still unliberated Slovene territories under the Italians and Germans (Trieste, Gorizia, Istria, and Carinthia) as well as Bulgaria, and northern Albania with Skadar; the cleansing of the state territory of all national minorities and a-national elements; the creation of contiguous frontiers between Serbia and Montenegro, as well as between Serbia and Slovenia by cleansing the Muslim population from Sandžak and the Muslim and Croat populations from BiH." Directive of 20 December 1941, according to Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945 The Chetniks*, (Stanford: University of California, 1975), 170.

are being praised by nationalists and clerics of the region as patriots, while true anti-fascists and communists have acquired the stigma of national traitors. According to some media Ustaša, Četniks and the like are becoming more and more noble.

By instrumentalizing the issue of ethnic/national/confessional within the radicalization of political discourse, ethnic homogenization occurs. The result is that ethnopolitical parties remain in power. Ethnic mobilization encourages and spreads a sense of homogeneity and equality and creates a sense of security and power in the collective "We." Therefore, the whole process of ethnic mobilization ends with the imposition of a kind of pre-political equalization of the people and their political elite, which is now expected to lead them through the difficulties of the hostile transitional environment within the highly homogenized ex-Yugoslav political space.

Conclusion

The relationship between religion and politics is one of the most complex, profoundly far-reaching, and decisive relationships in shaping societies, particularly in areas that have undergone a sudden transition of order and values due to war conflicts, destruction, crime, persecution, and transitional anomalies, such as those of the former Yugoslavia. The use of ethnic/national/confessional affiliation in discourse today in the former Yugoslavia (especially during election campaigns) produces further political radicalization. Wherever religious principles are introduced into the "political field" and governmental policies are introduced into the "religious space," religious interest becomes secondary, and political attention is predominant. As a form of political power, politicized religions are, psychologically speaking, unconscious non-faith, whether they are accepted or rejected by believers, which the "actor" necessarily instrumentalizes. In contrast, in a non-politicized religion, only faith is the goal of the believer's preoccupation. As an ethnically-ideologized religion, it ceases to be an authentic religion. Faith should be the essential ingredient of religion, more critical than its rituals and daily political reckonings.

The constant relationship between religions and wars means that humanity has always lived in a paradoxical circumstance because religion is inherently incompatible with aggressive war—which must be distinguished from defensive ones. During the dramatic disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, religious communities and their clergy promoted sacral-national authority to ravage and kill. However, God can never be conceived as a murderer of other, different people/nations: "God" is not the instigator of devastation and crime.

Due to new national-state theoretical inadequacy, i.e., nationalism as an ideology, religion is used as an instrument of socialization and legitimization of new national-political, i.e., state subjects. Ethnopolitics and religious exclusivism as hegemonic projects conducted under the auspices of "one people, one state, one religion," (ethnophiletism), and the appropriation and exclusion of symbols of the religion for only one ethnic origin lead directly to conflicts between ethnic groups. In this way, religion, as such, which has its universal metaphysical contents, becomes instead instrumentalized for obscure daily political purposes. Religious contents become instruments or means of differentiation among nations.

When nation and religion are identified as "controversial" and "others" are marked as potentially dangerous by a policy that allegedly aims to "affirm" and "protect" its people and their faith, then in local historical-current circumstances, it necessarily implies antagonisms in the most dramatic conflicts. Reducing the nation to a single religious group is an authoritarian tendency; it attempts to completely take revert to a historical moment of dangerous backwardness, contrary to the times in which we live. Instead of relying on divine power as in the past, the modern state is initially political, based on the rule of law. Without imaginatively developed democracies with all their legal and political potential, the ethnic-religious construction of nations creates destabilization of society and deepening conflicts among ethnic groups.

Clerical-nationalist ideologies in the region have not departed the political stage. They more or less openly continue their ideological policies. In a symbolic sense, this region is burdened with a kind of negative ontology that is very difficult to change.[65] Given the gap between the authentic religious part and a hypocritical part of religion, which I call political religion, it is questionable whether it is capable to change its attitude of historical revisionism and the politics of memory. A memory of "evil" that metamorphosed and was stored subsequently becomes the dominant form of behavior that marks new generations. Living in multi-confessional and politically fragile regions requires a careful but above all, truthful interpretation of historical events, particularly in frozen conflict entities.

Instead of being places of exclusion and nurturing a cult of premodernity, religious communities of B&H and the rest of ex-Yugoslavia should build trust, inclusion, and a transformative environment. It is essential to state that religious abuse for political purposes is not the fault of religion, but of religious leaders. Religious communities should focus more

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[65] Faruk Hadžić, "The political psychology of extremism; "naturalness" of the phenomenon in the Western Balkans", *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, *11*(1), 250-267. (2020) : 264, https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v11i1.1519.

on society than on the nation/state by affirmative and constructive action and enrich people's lives with lasting values that will contribute to society and, thereby, the state. They should contribute to social and psychological health, in order to produce a culture of reconciliation.

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