

Religious Claims during the War and Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina

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During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991-1995), politicized and ethicized religion became a powerful tool for mobilization against 'ethnic enemies'. Yet many scholars who have worked on the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not consider it a religious conflict. However, the collapse of religious and ethnic identities and the involvement of religious institutions and their leaders throughout the war turned various sites—including religious ones—into targets of actual and symbolic violence. In the post-conflict period, faith-based identities were nationalized in such a way that simply reduced them to ethnicities, thus (post-) conflict social reconstruction continues to depend on (non-) intervention of key actors, including clergy and religious leaders. Bosnia and Herzegovina is faced with a diverse set of issues, but the underlying paradox is that the institutional framework established through the Dayton Peace Accords favors the political options that are the least supportive of its implementation. The design of its political institutions does not encourage cross-ethnic cooperation; rather, it institutionalizes ethnic discrimination. In the face of failures, limits, and retrenchments of Bosnian political institutions (state), some sort of organised actors should fill the gap. In this paper, I examine these persisting tensions by focusing on the role of organized religion during the war and aftermath of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina

KEY WORDS: Religion, religious communities, confession, ethnicity, Islam, Christianity, war, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Introduction

During the period when the process of disintegration of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was unraveling into aggression, war, and bloodshed, the 'international response' was

marked by a lack of unity and determination. David Owen, the EU mediator for SFRY and a prominent figure of international power at this key historical moment, stated that

... what the Clinton Administration seemed to want until 1994, when they first began asserting themselves positively in the Balkans, was power without responsibility [...] The member states of the European Union and their Foreign Ministers did accept responsibility [...] but they never exercised power. (Yannis 2002, p. 264)

Force did indeed become necessary to put an end to the war, and in late summer 1995 NATO intervened with large-scale air operations (large-scale bombing of the Serbs' army targets), followed with the deployment of approximately 60,000 peacekeeper-soldiers. After intensive negotiations in Dayton, in late 1995 the political leaders of warring sides from Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), and the presidents of the Federal Republic Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia, reached the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFAP). This compromise led to a cessation of hostilities, gave life to the present state structure of B&H, deemed an 'internationally designed state that exists by international design' (Bose 2005).

However, it should be noted that the position of the International Community (IC) in and around B&H cannot be reduced to the more or less formal relationships of a protectorate (such as, for example, East Timor or Kosovo). David Chandler, an author indicating the role of 'local consent' for the Agreement, as well as implications arising from it, asserts:

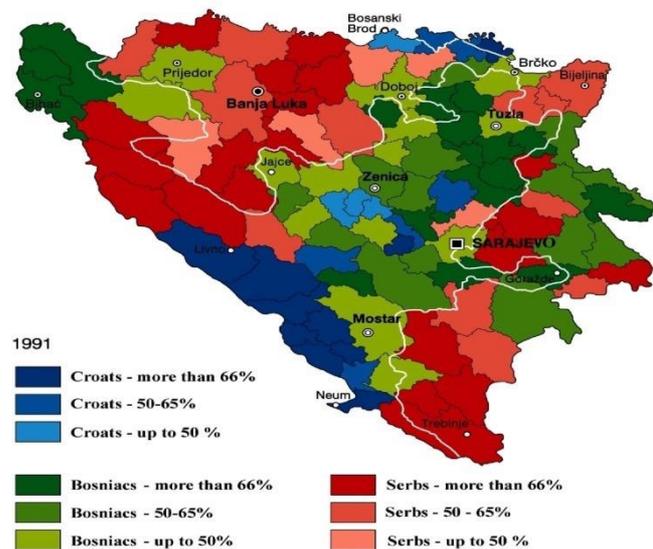
[r]ather than an external imposition, Dayton formally appears to be a treaty made by the local powers—B&H and its neighbors, Croatia and the rump former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). It was not by UN Security Council resolution but by the coercive fiction of 'local consent' that international actors were invited to oversee Dayton and to install the temporary post-conflict administrative mechanism of the Office of High Representative (OHR). This was an office only 'consistent with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions', not formally run by or directly accountable to the UN. (2005, p. 337)

A key foci of analyses of conflict settlement in B&H since 1991 until today must include the question of the responsibility of the International Community. However, several general features of the pre- and post- Dayton Bosnia should be considered alongside this frame.

Many considered the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as one of the six republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Yugoslavia 'en miniature', inhabited mainly by the three peoples; Muslims (today Bosniaks)ⁱ, Serbs, and Croats. Still, historically, neither Bosniaks nor Serbs nor Croats constituted a

significant majority of the overall population, and 15 national minorities intermingled in the entire territory until 1991. Ex-Yugoslav literature perceives B&H as a model multiethnic society, with peaceful interethnic co-existence. The last official census data on B&H dates back to 1991. According to this data, there is an ethnic, not religious map of the country. During this period between 1945-1991, but even more so today, ethnic and religious identities have been empirically conflated. I will use an ethnic map in order to illustrate the religious distribution of the population. In addition, the geographical distribution and ethnic (Muslims/Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) and religious (Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic) communities' borders coincide as well.

Ethnic composition before the war in BiH (1991)



Map1: Ethnic composition before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991) (OCHA 2015)

Based on religious classification, the population in 1991 was distributed as follows: Islamic: 42,7660; Orthodox: 29,3995; Roman-Catholic: 13,5687; Catholic: 3,3195; Serbian: 0,6934; Greek-Catholic: 0,0717; Croatian: 0,0668; Protestant: 0,0416; Islamic-Catholic: 0,0118; Members of Pro-Oriental Cults: 0,0098; Jewish: 0,0052; Old-Catholic: 0,0028; Bosnian Roman-Catholic: 0,0024; Orthodox Serbs: 0,0023; Free Catholic: 0,0017; Orthodox-Catholic: 0,0010; Catholic-Orthodox: 0,0006 Orthodox-Islamic: 0,0005; Macedonian: 0,0004; Islamic Community: 0,0004; Romanian: 0,0003; ZIDRA: 0,0002; Roman-Catholic Muslims: 0,0002; other confessions: 0,0245. There was no municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina in which Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox were not represented in the composition of the population. The census did not offer specific options in its questionnaire, and citizens were free to provide any answer to the question about their religious affiliation. This resulted in diverse

categorization, which was sometimes paradoxical.ⁱⁱ (Agency of Statistics of B&H 1993)

The diverse religious makeup of B&H is a product of the region's tumultuous history (Buchenau 2013). Until the Ottoman conquest of the 15th century, the country was considered to be Christian because of its distinctive Bosnia Church (developed during the medieval period, between the fifth and 15th centuries). Over time it came to be identified as Roman Catholic, with Orthodoxy existing only in Herzegovina, in the south. Neither Western nor Eastern Christianity managed to penetrate B&H deeply, however. This situation, among other factors, facilitated conversions to Islam in the early Ottoman period. In addition, Ottoman rule granted a special legal status to Orthodox Christianity, which further extended its reach. The number of Roman Catholics, however, was reduced by migration and by conversions to both Islam and Orthodoxy. Those who remained were unified under the leadership of the Catholic Church's Franciscan order, which was established in B&H at the beginning of the 18th century.

Religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in B&H. The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is largely divided along ethnic-religious lines. Since the 19th century religious adherence in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a marker of national identity. Orthodoxy is equated with Serbian nationality and Catholicism with Croatian nationality, while Islam is one of the main pillars of the Bosniak identity.

The commonly accepted fact for B&H among scholars, but population too, is that organized religion played the role of preserving and transmitting ethno-national cultures and values. Still, in other ways, pseudo-religious identification can result in social situations in which religion is merely a referent for group identity. In the process of ethno-national differentiation among the B&H population, religions played a key role. Thus, until now, the majority of B&H peoples considered religion and confessions a fundamental element for determining identity and individual and collective consciousness—both their own community's as well as others (Abazović 2010). Therefore, historical subjectivities in B&H have not produced the nominal equivalence of territory and nation—'one people on one territory'—but instead ethno-national plurality. This has created aggressive and radical ethno-confessional mobilizations that have been used as primary tools for political legitimacy and de-legitimacy. As a part of nationalistic mobilization in the late 1980s, religious symbols (the crescent of Islam and the two crosses of Catholicism and Orthodoxy) were first secularized and then re-sacralized as national symbols. Religious divisions, in turn, made possible the use and misuse of these religious symbols in the war during the 1990s. Accordingly, the early 1990s, marked by SFRY's process of dissolution, inevitably reflected directly on the territory of B&H.

These nationalist tensions led not only to war, but also to crimes against humanity and genocide. Silber and Little trace the beginning of SFRY's break-up to the rise of Serb nationalism in the 1980s, which Serbian President Slobodan Milošević harnessed to strengthen his control. By the early 1990s some regions with Serb minorities, including those dominated by Croats, openly went to war against Milošević's Yugoslav's People's Army (JNA), while others, such as the B&H territory were quickly swept along in conflict (Silber & Little 1996, pp. 26-7).

As a consequence of the massive ethnic cleansing during the war, nearly one and half million Bosnians were recorded as refugees and internally displaced persons. The death toll after the war (between 1991-1995) is generally estimated around 102,000:55,000 civilians and just over 47,000 soldiers (Tabeau & Bijak 2005). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings from February 2007 effectively determined the character of the war to be 'international', 'despite the evidence of widespread killings, rape and torture elsewhere during the Bosnian war, especially in detention centres, the judges ruled that the criteria for genocide were met only in Srebrenica' (USA Today 2007).

One such example of targeted killings occurred in early July 1995. At the UN compound in Potočari/Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serb Army separated more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys from the women, and executed, buried and reburied these men in mass graves. Till today, nearly 7,000 genocide victims have been identified through DNA analysis of body parts recovered from mass graves, and 6,066 have been buried at the Srebrenica—Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) negotiated an end to the war in B&H by creating the current structure of B&H, which comprises two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, FB&H and Republika Srpska, each with a high level of autonomy. The FB&H includes 10 cantons—regional political and economic areas. The town of Brčko, which was the subject of international arbitration, now has the status of a district and until 2012 was under the direct supervision of a special international envoy. As the current state was established through an international agreement, for the purpose of implementation and particularly in view of maintaining peace:

the Office of the High Representative (OHR) is an *ad hoc* international institution responsible for overseeing implementation of civilian aspects of the accord [...] The High Representative [...] is working with the people and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina evolves into a peaceful and viable democracy on course for integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. (OHR 2012)

Other international organizations 'were originally intended at facilitating the domestic decision-making process by insuring adequate security for citizens (SFOR, IPTF), creating the economic

framework for successful governance (EU, UN) and by promoting democratic and more tolerant institutions and processes (OSCE)', (Bieber 2002, p. 213).

The complex structures of state organization of B&H can (irrespective of international interventionism aimed at achieving peace) ultimately be subsumed under those models that a number of scholars define as consociationalism (Lijphart 1977).

As I have argued elsewhere (Abazović 2007), in order to accommodate conflict, stabilization and democratic development, key elements of consociationalism—composed of a grand coalition, proportionality, mutual veto and segmental autonomy—have been implemented. The post-Dayton B&H must therefore be considered a form of consociational democracy since it includes a grand coalition determined by election legislation (and results of all the elections thus far), and the process of establishing an executive branch comprising key parties and based on the principle of ethnic representation. The element of proportionality is simply the three-member state Presidency, as well as election of members of Parliament (following ethnic and entity criteria, let alone the House of Peoples), composition of the Court of B&H, etc. The mechanism of protection of vital national interests used in B&H parliamentary practice is, in effect, the mutual veto. Finally, segmental autonomy is reflected, first and foremost, through institutions and policies (in the widest sense) of entity structures of the state, i.e. through 10 cantons of the FB&H (five with majority Bosniak population, three with majority Croat population and two so called mixed cantons). The way this political situation was shaped after the war, based on statistical estimations, is displayed on the map below:

Ethnic composition in 1998



Map 2: Ethnic composition after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1998) (OCHA 2015)

During and following the war, borders shifted (and continue to shift), while tension between groups has increased. Religious homogenization has been linked with national homogenization, which in turn influences the rise of religious self-identification. Today in B&H, unimodal environments are present (where one confession is dominating). According to estimates, 45 percent of the population is Bosniak (Muslim), 36 percent is Serb (Orthodox Christian), and 15 percent is Croat (Roman Catholic).

B&H is today faced with a diverse set of issues, but the underlining paradox is that the institutional framework established through the GFAP favors the political options that are the least supportive of this agreement's implementation. The design of its political institutions does not encourage cross-ethnic cooperation; rather, it institutionalizes ethnic discrimination. In light of failures, limitations, and retrenchments of B&H state institutions, some sort of organized actors should fill the gap. Therefore I will discuss the role of organized religion in (the Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church) in that respect.

During the war, politicized and ethicized religion became a powerful tool for mobilization against 'ethnic enemies' in B&H. Although many scholars who have worked on the armed conflict in B&H do not consider it a religious conflict, collapsing religious and ethnic identities and involvement of religious institutions and its leadership in the war made various sites—including religious ones—targets of actual and symbolic violence. Craig Calhoun argues:

one of the uglier ways in which nationalism gained popular and academic attention in the early 1990s was the Serbian program of 'ethnic cleansing' ... the policy of 'ethnic cleansing', like all of nationalism and ethnic politics, depended on social construction of identity, mobilised members of the chosen ethnic group only unevenly, and served the interest of some participants far more than others ... Claiming these ethnic solidarities and the identity of Serbs as both ancient and seemingly 'natural', the new ideological mobilisation successfully demanded that its adherents be willing both to kill and to die for their nation. (1993, pp. 211-2)

However, Roger Brubaker and David D. Laitin rightly point out that 'ethnicity thus remained theoretically exogenous rather than being integrated into key analytical or theoretical concepts' (1998, p. 426).

In the study of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and nationalism, accounts of *conflict* have not been distinguished sharply from accounts of *violence*. Violence has generally been conceptualized—if only tacitly—as a *degree* of conflict rather than as a *form* of conflict, or indeed as a form of social and political action in its own right. ... In the study of collective or political violence, on the other hand,

ethnicity figured (until recently) only incidentally and peripherally'. (Brubaker & Laitin 1998, pp. 425-426)

Following Brubaker and Laitin's insight that we are no longer blind to ethnicity, but we might be blinded by it, in the case of war in B&H, the same can be applied to religious identities. Scholars have argued that religion personalizes conflict and provides justification for violence (e.g. Girard 1979; Mojzes 1998; Sells 1998; Juergensmeyer 2004), while the religious/secular dichotomy is incoherent and might produce the 'myth of religious violence' (Cavanaugh 2007, 2009). Interestingly enough, for Cavanaugh, one of the main arguments about theoretical misconceptions in researching the religion and violence nexus is that religion-and-violence theorists inevitably undermine their own distinctions, such that 'the problem with [the] argument is that what counts as "absolute" is decided *a priori* and is immune to empirical testing' (Cavanaugh 2007, p. 8). Be that as it may, often there are arguments that the question is not simply one of belief, but of behaviour.

The behavior of specific actors, made manifest during the B&H war, includes the reliance on traditional religious symbols, the use of traditional religious slogans and salutations, interpretations of political developments in religious terms, denominations of the enemy, and destruction of the enemy's sacred objects, etc. (Velikonja 2003; Abazović 2006). Moe (2006) describes 'religious' characteristics of the war in way that includes, among others, the political mobilisation through mass pilgrimages, mythical narratives and the manipulation of dead bodies, as well as declaring the fought-over territories as holy land of the divinely elected nation.

In his essay on religion and politics, Srdjan Vrcan (2003) writes about the role of religion in the conflicts that marked the disintegration of SFRY in the nineties and across the past century. That role is visible in systematic political mobilization of religious traditions and available religious resources, but also in a political abuse of religious symbolism by all major religions' nationalist political strategies. New political elites have been in need of additional legitimacy, and those who can provide them with it were major religious institutions. According to Vrcan:

This legitimacy was a special legitimacy in the form of national legitimacy 'from above' and numinous legitimacy. In such a way, all dominant nationalist strategies acted practically under a certain "saint patronage". (2003, p. 2)

Considering the war and crimes committed during the conflict in B&H, Michael Sells reflects on the double role of religion; first as a force to impose an identity on individuals irrespective of an individual's convictions and beliefs, and second to 'direct religion towards institutions, symbols, rituals and ideologies through which violence will be motivated and justified' (2003, p. 310). Sells, furthermore, argues that in such situations:

religions, in their ideological manifestations, are traditionally stronger in promoting internal identity, which is opposed to other religions, than in affirming its identity by affirming the identity of others ... Their conflict-based paradigms have become reservoirs of power for perpetuating violence, claiming territory and rewriting history by rewriting the textuality of the country itself. (2003, p. 329)

As opposed to pre-war events under the Socialist regime, religious leaders have faced significant changes within the new situation:

From being marginalised, controlled, and even oppressed, they suddenly found themselves courted by politicians, the media, and even academics. It is fair to say that most of them were not used to this limelight, and it made most of them prone to being manipulated by all this attention and flattery. (Mojzes 1998, p. 81)

Mitja Velikonja, using a comparative and socio-historical approach, analysed the importance of religious symbolism in the previous war. Velikonja (2003) explored how religious symbols were renewed and 'traditionalized', how they were 'nationalized' and 'politicized', the most frequently used elements of religious inheritance and how these elements are used for the purpose of military operations and ethnic/confessional cleansing policies. Finally, while contemplating the society-war-religion relationship, Jakov Jukić claimed that 'in order to take all this unexacting, they turn the terrible war into a calming religious ceremony, the fierce and bloody fight into a big holy game of expenditure and destruction—victory into lavish religious holidays, and defeat into inviolable taboos' (1995, p. 31 in Ćimić 2005, p. 155).

The ambivalence of organized religion

The way religion was mobilized during the war reshaped/transformed the major organized religious institutions in B&H: the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, and the Islamic community.

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), according to Ćimić, lost its spiritual dimension due to the fact that it has a programmed tendency to drastically transform the spiritual into the worldly and that it is frequently completely reduced to Serbian nationalism. He outlines how the SOC, as early as the start of the war, even before other social factors, supported the expansion of its own people and state, in order, allegedly, to eliminate historical injustices that it suffered (Ćimić, 2005). The absolutisation of the relation between religion and nation—which has led to the appearance of phrases about the 'Serbian Orthodox people', 'Serbian Orthodox people's individuality', 'Kosovo heroes that have not fought for the faith of religion but faith of nation'—and the question of whether the religion preserved the nation, or the nation preserved Orthodoxy, are some of the key premises in the works of Olivera Milosavljević. Milosavljević (2002) has examined the tradition of nationalism in Serbia, and she notes that the identification of Serbian and Orthodox identity has gone beyond its primary origin, such that, without recognizing the multi-

layered nature of Serb identity in modern society it became a characteristic of the tendency for petrification of the 'original' nation in religion. Offering a detailed analysis of the relationship between religion and nationalism in Serbia, Milosavljević starts from the premise that the recognized modern tendency—according to which Orthodox religion is equated to Serb identity and that Serb identity is denied without Orthodox Christianity—stems from a certain part of the Serbs intellectual elite that has never accepted the so-called 'language' theory on the formation of a nation. Milosavljević writes:

The achieved national homogenization, and then also the isolation and closedness of this society have created an even more adequate basis for ideological equalization of the Serbian nation with Orthodox religion, which became its all-determining factor. At the same time, the possibility of the very survival of the Serbian nation without Orthodox religion was negated by interpreting any change of the national identity as the religious identity, fatal for the nation, or maintaining the belief that the Serbian people without Orthodox religion "can survive in [an] ethnic and physical sense, but it would be then people with a new, different, maybe even foreign identity" (Bogdanović cited in Milosavljević). (2002, p. 52)

One of the key characters in this context is the bishop of Žiča diocese, Nikolaj Velimirović, the creator of the theory of 'Evangelic nationalism' which includes worshipping Saint Sava (*svetosavlje*) as the national ideology. In addition to Nikolaj Velimirović, the writings of Justin Popović are relevant. Popović is considered a venerated teacher of Orthodox Christianity who is also a representative of the theological and organic thought in Serbia. He insists on the distinction between European man as progeny of historical Catholicism, and Saint Sava as a God-man, a progeny of the ideal Orthodox religion.

However, the religious nationalism of individual theologians and priests of the SOC became fully pronounced only in the 1980s and 1990s, including during the period of war.

Milorad Tomanić called the key originators and generators of extreme nationalism in Serbia a 'Serbian three-petaled flower of a deadly intoxicating odour' (Tomanić 2001, p. 10). According to Tomanić, the first two petals are the Association of Writers of Serbia—UKS, and the Serbian Academy of Science and Art—SANU, and the third petal of the flower is the SOC, especially monks, theologians, professors of the Theological Faculty, and the so-called 'Justinians' (named after the first name of above-mentioned Justin Popović). The most renowned of them are Atanasije Jevtić, Irinej Bulović, Artemije Radosavljević and Amfilohije Radović.

The leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church before and during the war was elected at an extraordinary session at the end of 1990, when Pavle, a former bishop, was elected Patriarch. During the same session the bishop Amfilohije Radović was elected to the position of

archbishop, and his position was filled by the then dean of the Faculty of Theology, Atanasije Jevtić.

During the ceremony of ordination and enthronement for the bishop in 1991 in Vršac, Serbia, Atanasije Jevtić said:

The Serbian people are again on the cross ... And that we can say something different than what a young wise Jewish woman said to the malicious and aggressive Muslims: "We forgive you [for] the fact that you have been killing us, but we cannot forgive you if you force us to kill you" ... This is the danger faced today by my crucified people, to a lesser extent here in Banat, but every Orthodox Serb is co-crucified together with the crucified people from Kosovo to Jadovna, especially from Krajina to Borovo [in B&H and Croatia] ... And may God give that this crucifixion results in resurrection, not just our resurrection, but also of those who have, allegedly, in the name of Christ fought the cross with three fingers up. (Jevtić 1991, in Tomanić 2001, p. 56)

Numerous similar statements can be found in Serbian print media, authored by priests of the SOC. However, I include these words of bishop Atanasije because he declared them during the official church procession of his ordination, an occasion dedicated to spiritual and ritual gathering.

Especially during the war period, some of the SOC priests zealously expressed this religious nationalism. Indeed, the conditions under which religion is revitalized favors simultaneously nationalist and any other type of instrumentalization of the church.

The Catholic Church in Croatia was also unable to fight the nationalist instrumentalizations of the Church at the end of the 20th century. In the absence of the general statement that it is unacceptable to use religion in order to morally justify the use of violence, 'religious images and religious leaders will continue to be abused by politicians and generals exercising violence' (Volf 2002, p. 294).

However, the establishment of a new regime after the Republic of Croatia's independence (1991) from SFRY, and especially the war that ensued immediately after in Croatia and in B&H, impacted the proactive role of the Catholic Church. The new political order shifted the manner and content of the Catholic Church's intervention in political and social conflicts in ways that were not consistent with its original principles. This was particularly pronounced in the past century, such that ethnic and religious identity almost fully overlapped as a result of ethno-national mobilization conducted through the experience of war and through the media (Prleđa 2002, p. 140).

Josip Beljan, in an issue of the Catholic journal 'Veritas' from 1992, described the relationship between the Church and the new government in the following way:

Christ's cross is standing next to the Croatian flag. [A] Croatian bishop is standing next to [the] Croatian Prime minister ... This was indeed the true war for 'honourable cross and golden freedom', for the return of Christ and freedom to Croatia. The Church is happy to see its people being saved from double slavery—[both] a Serbian and Communist one. (Veljan 1992 in Bellamy 2002, p. 47)ⁱⁱⁱ

While clerics of the Catholic Church have consistently insisted on Catholic ultra-traditionalism on some welfare and social issues (i.e. abortion, reproductive health, and family planning or labor laws), their position on political issues has not been as predictable. The visit of Pope John Paul II to Croatia in 1994 illustrates this variation. The Pope originally intended to visit Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb, but the leadership of the SOC disapproved of his visit to Belgrade. Additionally, UN forces were unable to guarantee his safety during his potential stay in besieged Sarajevo.

Therefore the Pope only visited Croatia and in his speech to youth gathered at Zagreb Hippodrome he stated: 'When a person rejects or neglects God, he/she becomes almost always a worshipper of empty idols. The person starts adoring idols of a nation, race, party and later justifies hatred, discrimination and force in their name' (John Paul II 1994 at OoCities 2015).^{iv}

Many scholars interpreted this statement as a direct critique of the then ruling establishment in Croatia, especially the main political party leadership (Croat Democratic Community, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ), and other right-wing oriented politicians in Croatia. Much of the clergy was also supporting the official Croatian political regime at that time. Therefore, the Croatian Cardinal Kuharić quoted the Pope's statement after the Zagreb visit several times. Kuharić's recitation of this quote illustrated the importance of recognizing past mistakes in order to not repeat them. He was particularly concerned about improvement of a bad image which Croatia had in the world. Soon after the Pope's visit to Croatia, the highest ranked clergy of the Catholic Church, although led by the conservative Cardinal Kuharić, in their public addresses accepted the Pope's messages and significantly started with distancing themselves from the ruling politics.

At the beginning of 1990s, the Catholic Church and the ruling Croat national party (Croat Democratic Community of B&H—HDZB&H) began to collaborate more closely. Marko Oršolić, a prominent Bosnian Franciscan monk, in several of his public statements, criticized the link between the Church and Croatian political representatives in B&H. In his 1993 interview for a daily newspaper 'Oslobođenje', Oršolić stated:

When some highly ranked officials of HDZ in B&H came to Sarajevo Cathedral for a Christmas midnight mass, the Cathedral was decorated with coats of arms with red and white chessboard and national emblems, but not those of Bosnia and Herzegovina. ... [I] really do not understand why we would put this on the candle

(since it symbolises faith), this is something ideological. (2003, p. 84)

Yet from the start of the war there were divisions among Catholic clerics in B&H. The greatest number of members of the Franciscan order of the Province of Bosna Srebrena (*Bosnia Argentina*) harshly and directly criticized the politics and positions of HDZ. But members of the Franciscan order of the Province of Herzegovina were openly supportive of nationalist Croatian politicians in B&H. One of the most notorious examples of such nurturing activities favouring nationalism is:

... Tomislav Pervan, the head of the province of 250 Franciscans in the region of Mostar, who repeated the Tuđman propaganda that the Bosnian Muslims wanted an Islamic state. ... In the Herzegovinian town Bobanovi ... the Catholic Church features the large mural behind the altar showing the suffering of the Croat People, with portraits of a World War II Ustashe militiaman, Ranko Boban, hanging nearby. Portraits of the leader of the Ustashe Croatia, Ante Pavelić, one of the most ruthless criminals of the Nazi empire, are displayed in the homes of local Catholic priests. (Sells 1998, p. 106)

The conflict between the Herzegovina Franciscan monks and the diocesan bishop of Mostar, a tension that had previously existed, became more evidently 'political' among the clerics in B&H as the war unfolded. This rising friction required a direct declaration from the Vatican about these issues. Remembering the lessons from the Second World War, when the Vatican delayed taking a position against the Nazi regime (Iveković 2002), and also aware of the collaborative role of some Catholic clergy with the Nazi regime during *Nezavisna država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia), the Pope insisted on the separation of Church and state. In several addresses, Pope John Paul II advocated for peace in B&H, which was the position of the Sarajevo-based cardinal Vinko Puljić as well.

Even though the Pope spoke out against racial animosity and violent nationalism in 1994, some authors like Sells believe he could have done more, since 'he did not even once condemn the role of [the] Herzegovina clergy in supporting [the] harsh religious nationalism of paramilitary units of Herceg-Bosna' (Sells 1998, p. 142).

Many scholars emphasize a direct link between the Catholic Church and HDZ in the creation of a nationalist euphoria in Croatia and B&H (Powers 1996; Ramet 1996; Cohen 1998; Mojzes 1998; Sells 1998; Vrcan 2001; Bellamy 2002;). Nevertheless, it needs to be stated that there were differences between the actions of liberal urban (higher ranked) clergy in the Catholic Church and its middle and lower ranked traditionalist (nationalist) clergy in rural areas of Croatia and B&H.

The religious and political representatives of Bosniaks in B&H took an active role in creating a nationalist euphoria in B&H during the post-

socialist period. Contrary to the expectations of the domestic political elites, religion became an even more significant and defining factor of national self-identification of the Bosniaks. This is perhaps because networks of established, genuine national institutions were lacking, and with religion covered in a veil of nationality, in the time period following the official recognition of the Muslims as nation in B&H. Amin Maalouf presents an insightful illustration:

Let us stay in Sarajevo and carry out an imaginary survey there. Let us observe a man about 50 whom we see in [the] street. In 1980 or thereabouts he might have said proudly and without hesitation, 'I'm a Yugoslavian!' Questioned more closely, he could have said he was a citizen of the Federal Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, incidentally, that he came from a traditional Muslim family. If you had met the same man twelve years later, when the war was at its height, he might have answered automatically and emphatically: 'I'm a Muslim!' He might even have grown the statutory beard. He would quickly have added that he was a Bosnian, and he would not have been pleased to be reminded of how proudly he once called himself a Yugoslavian. If he was stopped and questioned now, he would say first of all that he was a Bosnian, then that he was a Muslim. He'd tell you he was just on his way to the mosque, but he'd also want to tell you to know that his country is part of Europe and that he hopes it will one day be a member of the Union. How will the same person want to define himself if we meet him in the same place 20 years hence? Which of his affiliations will he put first? The European? The Islamic? The Bosnian? Something else again? The Balkan connection, perhaps? (Maalouf 2003, p. 13)

Maalouf's insight reflects the situation of many B&H Muslims preceding and during the war. Yet Maalouf's example should have positioned his imaginary subject earlier. At the end of the 1980s, at the peak of the SFRY crisis, the Muslim community also experienced a 'regrouping' of their political forces. A number of Muslim intellectuals, lead by Alija Izetbegović, with the support of some of the *ulema* (Muslim clerics), worked to establish a political party that was supposed to reflect and represent the political interests of Muslims. When its founders first conceived of it, *Stranka Demokratske Akcije*, SDA (Party for Democratic Action), was defined as the party of the 'Muslim cultural and historical circle', and its SDA leaders planned to represent Muslims from all over SFRY. Yet the dissolution of SFRY led the party to completely shift its focus to B&H.

At the first multi-party elections in B&H in November 1990, SDA won the majority of votes and its leader Alija Izetbegović was elected president of the collective Presidency of B&H.

From the very start of their political activity, those involved with the SDA faced two key problems. The first was how to resist expansionist state projects favoured by the ruling politics in Serbia (and later also Croatia), and second, the internal processes related to the political and religious profiling of Muslims that SDA represented (e.g. at the

largely attended SDA pre-election gatherings, its members instrumentalized the religious symbols, so that along with state and party flags one could see the flaunting of green flags with crescent and star, or flags with Qur'an verses).

When the aggression and war in B&H began in 1992, response to the anti-B&H and anti-Bosniaks ideologies was the Muslim reciprocation based on ideologized denominationalism as the national ideology.

The Muslim establishment, and specifically the SDA leaders, maintained their elected positions during the war, but also continued to grasp total control of all aspects of governing the state and society. Bougarel (1999) argues that SDA methods of rule led to the duality of the B&H state since official multi-ethnic institutions were circumvented for the sake of parallel networks of party cadre' institutions. According to him, members of the collective Presidency, among them Serbs and Croats, were reduced to purely symbolic figures since the SDA leader Izetbegović did not allow them to have any real influence. In addition:

The Bosniak Assembly—made up exclusively from the political and cultural representatives of the Muslim community—held sessions in parallel with the Bosnian parliament. In the Bosnian Army, 'Muslim brigades', directly financed by SDA's parallel networks, appeared next to the regular units (Bougarel 1999).

During the war and immediately after it, a strong re-Islamization of the national, political and cultural identity occurred among the Bosniak community, which facilitated the construction of a Muslim political identity. The re-Islamization of their national identity was much stronger than the possible attempts to 'nationalize' Islam. As Hastings argues, 'the religious stimulation of nationalism usually looks like pouring the religious influence onto the construction of the nation. The more influential religion is in the latter case, the more accountable it is in the former' (2003, p. 165).

However, even in the early postwar situation, religious and political leaders of major B&H communities maintained the ongoing processes of politicization of religion and religionization of politics. Although the roles of organised religions in B&H in the 1990s were different and specific, Vrcan (2001) provides their common sociological characteristics:

a) they are the only legitimate possessors of the 'final' truths about the meaning of human life ... b) they are the only ones with a collective memory that defines the permanent, primordial and stable identities, both collective and individual, in contrast to all other identities—temporary, partial, precarious or ephemeral, c) they are the true guardian of the available and reliable crystallisations and sedimentations of the centuries-long collective experience and collective wisdom ... d) they have the capital of the generally accepted and unquestionable human morality and common sense, and are therefore able to offer a modern gate against the spreading of evil and depravity, characteristic of the

modern world that moves away from God, and e) that they are the final guardians of the deepest and most original roots of the authentic and genuine national being. (Vrcan 2001, p. 23)

Concluding remarks

In B&H, religion is either considered a source (or resource) of conflict, which desacralizes religion and sacralizes conflict, or violence is understood as a mechanism to resolve complex inter-religious and interethnic issues. In both lines of thought, religion's role in B&H was more detrimental than it was productive.

Additionally, the debates about the role of religion and religious communities in the war and its role over the past twenty years are still today considered 'controversial', both within and outside religious communities. This is partly due to the fact that religion is considered a 'special case' in the public domain, because of both historical reasons, and because of a 'culture' of denial about what happened in the near past. The question of the potential healing role of religious institutions and acknowledgement of human suffering versus processes of systematic denial is evident in present-day B&H:

Denial may be neither a matter of telling the truth nor intentionally telling a lie. The statement is not wholly deliberate, and the status of 'knowledge' about the truth is not wholly clear. There seems to be states of mind, or even whole cultures, in which we know and don't know at the same time. (Cohen 2001, p. 255)

I draw on the sociological work of Stanley Cohen to argue that no matter whether there is direct denial, denial of meanings, or denial of implications, it is not only past (events) that have been denied, but the present too. Cohen's (2001) insights on the politics of denial aptly apply to the case of B&H. Currently, different groups exercise several forms of denial: literal denial (the event did not happen or is not happening as a means of disputing the truth; the fact or knowledge of the fact is denied); interpretive denial (the fact is accepted, but its meaning or conventional interpretation is contested), and implicatory denial (failure to recognize and acknowledge the significance of implications; the fact is accepted and the conventional interpretation of the facts is accepted, but the psychological or moral significance is disputed). Ethnic expropriation of memories therefore results in different versions of past events.

Yet the question remains: do the people of B&H share a common memory? In the post-conflict period, common memory is under constant destruction by ethno-political elites, thus any shared/collective memory has the potential to become a deeply divided memory within a deeply divided society. Collective memory and history provides individuals with continuity of the past and offers them a common identity that connects communities.

Still, 'collective amnesia' is relevant here, as a condition that allows individuals and communities to continue with life. Thus we must also recognize the process of forgetting. In B&H today, one way of dealing with the past is that everyday citizens are faced with the official standpoint that 'forgetting' is considered a useful strategy for working against formations of any particular ethnic social cohesion. Accordingly, public commemoration and memorials related to the war are fragmented, exclusive, and ethnically based. These sites might even be considered 'commemoration from below', fulfilling the psychological need of individuals, or 'commemoration from above', which is politically driven and shaped. Religious institutions and their representatives are still highly ambivalent actors in processes of creating memorials.

Conflict and post-conflict societies, particularly if they are characterized by a plurality of confessional groups, are in many ways more suitable for the processes of intensifying religiosity. B&H is, in that sense, an extraordinary case for reviewing such claims. In B&H, there is an evident process of returning to religion over the last two decades. Religious representation has returned to public life, it has crossed from the 'invisible/private' into the public sphere, which marks a deprivatisation of religion par excellence. The religious revival and the revitalization of religion are present through the desecularisation of public life, and all relevant indicators point towards a significant revitalization of religion in B&H society. This includes increased participation in religious activities, emphasis on religious affiliation, presence of religious communities in the political and public life as well as in the media, the role of religious communities in the educational system, and so on.

However, just as the retreat of institutional religion in Western Europe is not equal to the retreat of religion, the revitalization of religion in the public sphere in B&H does not necessarily signify the increase in personal religiosity and the spiritualization of personal life. In the ideological vacuum of post-socialism, the revitalization of religion, as such, did not occur, but religion was again understood as a political fact within transformed circumstances. This new understanding of religion is, unfortunately, also particular to B&H; by enforcing confessional (collective) identities, religion is oriented and reduced to ethnicity, and not to its universal characteristics, features, and mission. It thus becomes the means for the political legitimization of the new political order. In B&H's post-conflict period, faith-based identities were nationalized in such a way that simply reduced them to ethnicities, thus (post-)conflict social reconstruction continues to depend on (non-)intervention of key actors, including the clergy and religious institutions (Abazović 2014).

B&H's constitution does not include explicit rules mandating the separation of church and religious communities and state, but the Law on the Freedom of Religion and Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities, adopted in 2004, introduced a secular notion

of the state. Thus in legal reasoning, the churches and religious communities are separate from the state, and 'the state may not recognize the status of state religion to any religion nor that of state church or religious community to a church or religious community' (Article 14, Official Gazette 2014).

When it comes to the commitment to religious accommodation in B&H, the implementation of the French model of *laïcité* reflects experience of the B&H population under the former socialist government. On the other hand, the ethno-religious nationalism today marking B&H politics makes the introduction of this model very unlikely. At the same time, the 'territorial compartmentalization' of freedom of religion with discrimination against 'others' in all spheres of life is the result of the omnipresent ethno-political pressure, which is based on the 'symbiosis' of political parties and religions and their leaders. Individuals must choose to accept the 'ethno-religious' ascription by others, or to become suspect of being a 'traitor' of one's own faith. This choice certainly violates all normative standards of freedom of conscience, religion, and belief.

On the level of everyday life, such a situation has been possible because 'the seeds of Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian religiosity were not stamped out under communist rule, even among so-called secularized masses; but neither were they nurtured. Scattered and left untended, they were eventually planted in the crude soil of ethnonationalism' (Appleby 2002, p. 71).

In multi-confessional and ethnically plural communities, religious identity not only could, but also should be categorically differentiated from ethnic identity. Miles (1996), discussing political para-theology, distinguishes between religious identity, as a matter of shared theology, ritual, and belief and ethnic identity as a matter of common ancestry, descent, history, language, culture, and includes the possibility of religion. According to him:

If we do not distinguish the two identities from each other then we cannot hope to demarcate ethnic from religious conflict. The danger of such intellectual confusion is that, by undermining the legitimacy of religion as an instrument of peace, its inherent potential for conflict resolution will be seriously compromised. (Miles 1996, p. 203)

Finally, one thing seems to be certain: regardless of whether religiously- or ethnically-inspired claims are questioned, in the face of failures, limitation, and retrenchments of the state actors, for instance, some sort of institutions should fill the gap between expectation and achievements of everyday citizens. By doing so, religious communities in B&H can (re-)define their place within the society.

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Notes

ⁱ It is well known that in the SFRY, Muslims, unlike Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Montenegrins and Macedonians—did not obtain the status of Yugoslav people (*Jugoslovenski narod* in term of nation) until 1971. Until then, during official censuses, Muslims had to rely on a wide range of variants and models of self-identification. Accordingly, in the Census from 1948 the offered options were ‘Muslim—nationally undecided’, but ‘Serb’ and ‘Croat’ as well. For those who did not want to declare themselves as Serbs and Croats during the Census in 1953 the option was ‘Yugoslav—nationally undecided’. During 1961 Muslims could choose to declare themselves in terms of belonging to ethnic minority group (*narodnost*—‘Muslims as ethnic group’) and finally, in the Census from 1971 they could register under the *people/nationality* (Muslims as nationality). After 1993, according to the decision of the Bosniak Assembly (*Svebosnjački sabor*) held in Sarajevo, the term ‘Muslims as ethnic group’ is no longer used. Instead, the name ‘Bosniaks’ is recognized as the national name, so the term ‘Muslims’ is used solely in the domain of confessional designation. In Bosnian language there is a distinction between *Musliman* with capital M, and *musliman* written in lower case. The first is understood as the name for members of the ethnic group (which is, in a way, a secularized notion) for that population in B&H, while the latter is used to denote members of the Islamic Community, namely practicing believers.

ⁱⁱ For example, Islamic-Catholic, Catholic-Orthodox or Orthodox-Islamic!? However, having in mind that numbers of B&H citizens were offspring from bi-religious and bi-national marriages, there is the possibility that in such cases individuals provided answers that reflected the different religious and ethnical background of their parents.

ⁱⁱⁱ Quoted in Bellamy (2002, p. 47). Bellamy takes this reference from Paul Mojzes. It was translated into English and from English translated back to Bosnian and back to English so that minor differences might be present.

^{iv} Quote is translated from Croatian to English; full version of the speech is published at OoCities web page.

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