

# Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Integrity and its European Religious, Ideological and Political Clash

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## Abstract

The study analyzes B&H's historical, religious, ideological, and political contests, its post-war integrity, the EU path, and the "majority Muslim European country" paradigm. First, the paper argues that ethnoreligious polarization, political radicalism, and the secessionist processes influence conflict transformation, sociopolitical stagnation, and ineffectual EU process. Second, the regional and international rhetorics related to inaccurate claims of B&H's Islamic radicalism/terrorism is a metaphor for historical/current Balkan religious and ideological hybrid conflicts. Third, it represents the securitization of Islam in a broader sociopolitical context. Fourth, B&H's electoral law and regional geopolitical interference influence the country's integrity due to secessionism and the potential of creating a third-Croat entity. The jingoism and ethnoreligious nationalism persisted, creating "three" prospective antagonistic collectivities generated by ethnopolitics. Preserving B&H's integrity, i.e., the country's anti-dissolution model, and B&H's EU membership, is European security against new violence and inter-religious wars. B&H, as the most critical multiethnic discourse of the Region, is in a perpetuating crisis; the ethnopolitical conflicts, multiple memory politics-genocide denial, and secessionism chronologies. The historical unification of B&H peoples and state existence confirms that secessionist narratives are not artificial but an inherently ethnoreligious hegemonic companion of Croat and Serbian nationalism. Numerous regional intellectuals' narratives (i.e., Andrić, Njegoš) combined anti-Islam discourses on polarization between the "civilized" West and the "despotic" East, historiographically, ideologically, and politically. The Ottoman period was marked as a legacy of foreign and undesirable power and had to be eliminated from European civilization, contributing to the B&H

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nation-state's intricacy. The inaccurate rhetorics related to B&H's Islamic fundamentalism/terrorism (a security threat to the EU) by regional political leaders (i.e., Tuđman, Grabar-Kitarovic) are a metaphor for religious and ideological hybrid conflicts. B&H's Bosniaks and Croats should initiate an indicative ethical dialogue of "conflict transformation" regarding the non-functional election legislation - without "external" interference (Croatia). Milorad Dodik exploits European Islamophobia, emphasizes the identity link between B&H Muslims and the Turks, cites Bosniaks as Muslims in public life, and discriminates against inter-ethnic marriages ("cancer" on the otherwise clean and healthy tissue of all three ethnoreligious groups). It fits the discursive radical ideology due to ethnoreligious political antagonism and polarization of religious identities. The hostile and incorrect declarations of a few international- EU leaders regarding Islamic extremism in B&H represent the securitization of Islam in a broader sociopolitical context. The autochthonous European Muslims, one of the world's most liberal Muslim nations, Bosniaks, are a potential linkage for peace dialogue between Europe and the Muslim world. The hypothesis that B&H will never be divided because the West - EU will not allow a "100 percent" Muslim state is not grounded. The international failure in B&H requires inclusive liberal conditions for returning to state-building, reconciliation, and developing constructive group and political relationships.

**Keywords:** Western Balkans, Bosnian integrity, Stability, State-building, Islam and Christianity, Ethnopolitics, European Union, Religious polarization, Peace and conflict, Balkan geopolitics

### **Bosna-Hersek'in Ulusal Bütünlüğü ve Avrupa'daki Dini, İdeolojik ve Siyasi Çatışması**

#### **Öz**

Çalışma, B&H'nin tarihi, dini, ideolojik ve siyasi çekişmelerini, savaş sonrası bütünlüğünü, AB yolunu ve "çoğunlukla Müslüman Avrupa ülkesi" paradigmasını analiz etmektedir. Burada üzerinde durduğu 4 nokta bulunmaktadır. Makale ilke olarak etno-dini kutuplaşma, siyasi radikalizm ve ayrılıkçı süreçlerin çatışma dönüşümünü, sosyo-politik durgunluğu ve etkisiz AB sürecini etkilediğini savunuyor. İkinci unsur B&H'nin İslami radikalizmi/terörizmiyle ilgili yanlış iddialarla ilgili bölgesel ve uluslararası retorik, tarihsel/güncel Balkan dini ve ideolojik çatışmaları için bir metafordur. Üçüncü unsur ise daha geniş bir sosyopolitik bağlamda İslam'ın güvenleştirilmesi konusudur. Dördüncüsü ve son olarak, B&H'nin seçim yasası ve bölgesel jeopolitik müdahalesi, ayrılıkçılık ve üçüncü bir Hırvat varlığı

yaratma potansiyeli nedeniyle ülkenin bütünlüğünü etkiliyor. Aşırı ve etno-dinsel milliyetçilik, etnopolitiğin ürettiği üç olası düşman kolektivite yaratarak devam etmektedir. B&H'nin bütünlüğünü veya ülkenin dağılma karşıtı modelini ve B&H'nin AB üyeliğini korumak, yeni şiddete ve dinler arası savaflara karşı Avrupa'nın da güvenli anlamında önemlidir. Bölge'nin en kritik çok ırklı söylemi olan B&H sürekli olarak etnopolitik çatışmalar, çoklu hafıza siyaseti-soykırım inkarı ve ayrılıkçılık kronolojileri gibi krizlerle iç içedir. B&H halklarının tarihsel birliği ve devlet varlığı, ayrılıkçı anlatıların yapay olmadığını, Hırvat ve Sırp milliyetçiliğinin doğası gereği etno-dinsel hegemonik bir yoldaş olduğunu doğrular niteliktedir ve sayıda bölgesel entelektüelin anlatıları (Andrić, Njegoš), "uygar" Batı ile "despot" Doğu arasındaki kutuplaşmaya ilişkin İslam karşıtı söylemleri tarihyazımı, ideolojik ve politik olarak birleştirdi. Osmanlı dönemi, yabancı ve istenmeyen bir gücün mirası olarak damgalandı ve bu düşünce ile B&H ulus-devletinin karmaşıklığına katkıda bulunarak Avrupa medeniyetinden elenmesi gerekiyordu. Bölgesel siyasi liderlerin (Tuđman, Grabar-Kitaroviç) B&H'nin İslami köktencilik/terörizmi (AB için bir güvenlik tehdidi) ile ilgili yanlış söylemleri, dini ve ideolojik çatışmalar için bir metafor oluşturmaktadır. B&H'nin Boşnakları ve Hırvatları, işlevsel olmayan seçim mevzuatıyla ilgili olarak "dış" müdahale olmaksızın (Hırvatistan) "çatışma dönüşümüne" ilişkin gösterge niteliğinde bir etik diyalog başlatılmalıdır. Milorad Dodik, Avrupa İslamofobisini istismar ediyor, B&H Müslümanları ile Türkler arasındaki kimlik bağını vurguluyor, Boşnakları kamusal yaşamda Müslüman olarak gösteriyor ve etnik gruplar arası evliliklere karşı ayrımcılık yaparak her üç etnik ve dinsel grubun sağlıklı ilişkilerinde adeta kanser etkisi yaratmaktadır. Bu ise etno-dinsel siyasi antagonizma ve dini kimliklerin kutuplaşması nedeniyle söylemsel radikal ideolojiye uymaktadır. Ayrıca birkaç uluslararası AB liderinin B&H'deki İslami aşırılikle ilgili düşmanca ve yanlış beyanları, İslam'ın daha geniş bir sosyopolitik bağlamda güvenlikleştirilmesini temsil etmektedir. Dünyanın en liberal Müslüman milletlerinden biri olan Avrupalı Yerli Müslüman Boşnaklar, Avrupa ile Müslüman dünya arasındaki barış diyalogu için potansiyel bir bağlantıdır. Batı ( AB) "yüzde 100" bir Müslüman devlete izin vermeyeceği için B&H'nin asla bölünmeyeceği hipotezi temellendirilmemiştir. B&H'deki uluslararası başarısızlık, devlet inşasına, uzlaşmaya ve yapıcı grup ve siyasi ilişkiler geliştirmeye geri dönmek için kapsayıcı liberal koşulları gerektirir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Batı Balkanlar, Boşnak Bütünlüğü, İstikrar, Devlet İnşası, İslam ve Hristiyanlık, Etnopolitika, Avrupa Birliği, Dini Kutuplaşma, Barış ve Çatışma, Balkan jeopolitiği

## Introduction

Religious doctrinal differences seem responsible for growing intercommunal fear and hatred. Historical events, states, and transnational actors recreated sectarian discord. Much of today's worldview conflicts and war conflicts take place in the name of God. If we study the sociopolitics of the EU, and religious element, religious freedoms, we can notice that the EU was created based on some already existing principles in Western Europe. One of them is the division of spiritual and secular power won in XI/XII. century. It divided the spiritual and secular authority sphere, which failed neither in Eastern Europe nor in the Muslim world (Islam rejects such a division). The second principle derives from the Magna Charta liberated (1215) and refers to human freedom and equal rights. Charles Montesquieu, in *On the Spirit of the Law* (1784), wrote that the possibility of freedom exists only in Europe and not in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the EU faces challenges to European unity that threaten its disappearance. It all started in 1951 when six countries signed an agreement establishing the Economic Community for Coal and Steel. Various transformations and enlargements followed so that, with the accession of Croatia, the number of EU member states was 28. With the exit of Britain, their number was reduced to 27 countries. However, Europe, civil society, and liberal democracy should not be idealized. Some authors consider the "idealization of Western democracy a lesser evil than ideologization of an ethnic nation."<sup>2</sup> There is growing criticism of the current structure and functioning of the EU. Two centuries ago, the West had taken a position toward contemporary secular democracy. As a result, the awareness was raised that other societies would undoubtedly follow the same path. Although this has not happened, we still implicitly consider the process of modernization. Some find various mitigating circumstances, such as poverty, to justify a delay.

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<sup>1</sup> Cvitkovic, Ivan, *Religion in the jaws of politics*, Sarajevo: Akademija Nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine [Academy of sciences and arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina], volume 47, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Živković, Marko, *Srpski stanovnik*. Beograd, XX vek, 2012.

Is there a historical fear of Islam in Europe? Here, too, memories must be taken back centuries. The first arrival of Muslims in Europe dates back to the beginning of the VIII century (Iberian Peninsula). For the next seven centuries, Muslims will boost Spanish (and thus European) science, culture, and thus civilization. Only European narcissism can deny Muslim influence in Europe (not only in Spain but also in the Balkans). Spain and Sicily were the two main political centers of the Muslims of Europe in the Middle Ages. Muslims were the first in Europe to grow lemons, mulberries, and oranges in Sicily. Palermo had 300 mosques in the 10th century. The later Pope Sylvester II studied as a young man at the Muslim University of Cordoba. In 1698, the first translation of the Qur'an in Latin was published in Padua. Times have changed, so the Muslim peoples did not see any civilizers in the Western conquerors but their Attila, Nero. Islamic complete empathy with Europe, especially the European way of spiritual, family, and social life as it occurs today would be dangerous for Muslims want to maintain as Muslims if we want to preserve our spiritual identity (religion, religious family life, traditions "Islamic culture."<sup>3</sup> During the migration of Muslims to Europe in the twentieth century issues changed. This, in the first half of the century, the arrival of workers from the colonies, and in the second half, the arrival of workers and family reunification. The third generation of Muslim immigrants already lives in today's Europe; they already feel French, Belgians, and Germans (not Algerians, Moroccans, Turks). More than 4.5 million Muslims in France, half of whom have French citizenship.<sup>4</sup> For the Muslim minority, Western Europe, as their migration opportunity, is a space where Muslims can develop their indigenous European political identities and cultural ideas, entities, worldview identities, and the like. These identities can be developed and shared in cooperation with Europeans of other faiths, worldviews."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Busuladzic, Mustafa, *Muslimani u Evropi*. Sarajevo, Sejtarija, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Sebel, Malik, *Rijecnik zaljubljenika u Islam*, Beograd, Sluzbeni glasnik, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Karic, Enes, *Čekajući Evropu*. Sarajevo, Zagreb, Synopsis, 2015.

Ivo Andrić<sup>6</sup> and Petar II Njegoš<sup>7</sup> formed the image of Muslims as "traitors" of the Christian-Slavic race. Andrić's and Njegoš's literary work resonates with the polarization between the "civilized" West and the "despotic" East (Orient), which accompanied the Enlightenment and the rise of European culture and science in the early modern period. Since the Balkans found themselves as an intermediate zone between these polarized civilizations, everything related to the Ottoman period was marked as a legacy of foreign and undesirable power and had to be eliminated for European civilization to return to the linear path of progress had begun in the classical period. Consequently, eliminating Ottoman tangible and intangible culture took off throughout the Balkans, and the Muslim population was subjected to systematic persecution. As a result, millions were expelled in de-Islamization, which began as early as the early 19th century and continued periodically over the next hundred years. In this atmosphere of polarization, the local population that embraced Islam was the most terrible reflection of contact with the "Turks" because they were seen as arbitrary traitors to the essential Slavic connection with Christianity and therefore had to be either assimilated or eliminated. It should be borne in mind that this worldview was also related to the discourse on racial differences, myths about the natural connection between culture and religion, civilization, and racial characteristics.<sup>8</sup>

Slobodan Milosevic<sup>9</sup> abolished the positive energies that arose during the five centuries of encounters between Christian Orthodoxy and Islam in this area, encouraging the negative emotions he used in the war. The subjection of seduced ethnic masses exploited to ethnoreligious and national identity is incapable of realizing its systematically subjected ideological manipulation. Milosevic's

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<sup>6</sup> He was a Yugoslav novelist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961, whose writings dealt mainly with life in his native Bosnia under the Ottoman rule.

<sup>7</sup> Petar II Petrović-Njegoš was a Prince-Bishop of Montenegro, poet, and philosopher whose works are widely considered some of the most important in Montenegrin and Serbian literature.

<sup>8</sup> Buturovic, Amila, Aljazeera, „Za Andrića i Njegoša islam je strano tijelo na kršćanskom Balkanu“, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Former President of Yugoslavia, Serbia, and Montenegro; the first sitting head of state to be charged with war crimes.

hegemonic aim was to create Greater Serbia - "One nation, one ethnicity, one religion, one language." Serbs instrumentalize the faith in political Orthodoxy<sup>10</sup> as a recipe for ethnic mobilization before the elections. The political tragedy of Serbian society seems to continue with current political structures-genocide denial, genocide honoring, and comprehensive political radicalism.<sup>11</sup> Franjo Tuđman<sup>12</sup> initiated the conflict in B&H, among other circumstances, because of the necessary conflict of civilizations, building a dam of Christianity. In December 1993, Tuđman said that the Croats had fought the Muslims for three centuries and that the Muslims had brought Croatia to the brink of disaster. Tuđman explained that the ordinary B&H Croat preferred the Orthodox Christian Serbs to the Muslims, quoting, "because he is a Christian, after all."<sup>13</sup> In the book "Origins of the Catastrophe," the last US ambassador to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia described what Tuđman told him about the meetings with Milosevic. "Tuđman admitted that he had discussed these fantasies about B&H Islamic fundamentalist with Milosevic and agreed that the only solution was to divide B&H between Serbia and Croatia."<sup>14</sup> As a witness in the trial of

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<sup>10</sup> On the occasion (2022) of the "disputed" Statehood Day of the Republic of Srpska (RS) entity in B&H, the RS Entity President Zeljka Cvijanovic, member of B&H Presidency Milorad Dodik, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic and Serbian Patriarch Porfirije addressed the media and audience. Serbian Patriarch Porphyry stated: "Serbs' identity in today's RS is a Christian/Orthodox identity that commits to the evangelical value system. The Patriarch expressed that Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic is an Orthodox Christian and Serb who was detained in Australia because he wanted his freedom and did not accept that freedom and models of way and life are imposed on him." B92, „Brnabić: Srpska je stvorena na genocidu, ali na genocidu nad srpskim narodom Porfirije: Novak zatočen jer je hteo svoju slobodu“, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> The well-known catchphrase/song, often shown at the sports Stadiums in Serbia and RS entity in B&H is: "Noz, Zica, Srebrenica ("The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica"). It is a Serbian chauvinist hatred motto that praises and honors the Srebrenica genocide of Bosniaks and supports genocide convicted criminals (Mladic, Karadzic, and others). Periodically "Biće Repriza!" ("There Will Be a Repetition!") is added to the motto, celebrating the mass killings and threatening a future genocide. Wagner, Sarah, *To Know Where He Lies DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Franjo Tuđman was the first president of independent Croatia.

<sup>13</sup> ICTY, Case number IT-04-74-T, the Prosecutor versus Prlic et al.

<sup>14</sup> Zimmerman, Warren, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers*, New York, Times Books, 1999

Slobodan Milosevic in The Hague, former Yugoslav and Croatian President, Stjepan Mesic spoke about his and Tudman's conversation with Milosevic in the spring of 1991. At that time, Tudjman was especially afraid of the possibility, as Milosevic said, of the return of 500,000 Muslims who had long since left B&H, Kosovo, and Macedonia to Turkey. Tudman looked carefully at the map that Milosevic told him was made by the world's most famous exports. He put it in his pocket and took it to Zagreb. He repeated Milosevic's words, and a little later, they agreed in Karadjordjevo - according to NIN, no. 270, Belgrade, October 3, 2002. Josip Manolić, in "Politics and Homeland: My Struggle for a Sovereign and Social Croatia, Zagreb 2015", writes that, after their meeting in Karađorđevo on March 25, 1991, a Serbo-Croatian commission was formed to specify a plan to divide B&H into two parts, as well as to consider "humane" relocation of Muslims in Turkey, "in order to realize Tudman's and Milosevic's idea of a B&H without Muslims."<sup>15</sup>

During the Balkan wars at the end of the twentieth century, a more extensive European state with an excellent reputation in the East and the West, especially in the Third World, was destroyed, and seven smaller infamous states were built on its ruins. The creators of ethnic cleansing of the 1990s declared entire nations, each with a different language, state religion, and ethnically homogenized population, an army, border crossings, and customs in a once common space. These operations cost about 150,000 human lives, not counting the far greater number of physically and mentally disabled and their families affected for life. In addition, several million people were expelled from their homes and forcibly displaced according to nationalist elites' designs to break up mixed multiethnic communities and homogenize new states. The "International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia-ICTY" served to establish the facts. In The Hague, the Netherlands, the Tribunal worked 10,800 working days in courtrooms, heard and consulted 4,650 witnesses and experts, presented 2.5 million pages of transcripts and documents at hearings, and filed 161 indictments. It

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<sup>15</sup> Bandzovic, Safet, Nedovršena prošlost u vrtlozima balkanizacije: refleksije „istočnog pitanja“ u historijskoj perspektivi, *Historijski pregledi*, 2, 2019, 33-71



ended in verdicts for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass rape, torture, and robbery.<sup>16</sup>

The connection between ethnonational policies, violence, and religion is visible in the Balkan 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. Moreover, 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. 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 ideologies of the complete removal of others and the careful labeling of members of one's ethnic group, the "tribes," returned to the Balkan 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.<sup>17</sup> The main factor of brutal violence in former Yugoslavia, particularly B&H, was the ethnic mobilization of the 1990s, which brought religiosity directly connected with ethnicity, and since ethnicity was very high on the scale of values, it brought with it religiosity. Moreover, in that period, churches and

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, *The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina.* Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 40/7, 2020, 105-131.

religious communities occupied a much larger space than they had in the former Yugoslavia, so there was a strong influence of religious institutions on political and social life, which continues today. A Croat historian Vjekoslav Perica stated that since the 90s, nothing has improved 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, 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 strictly the 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."<sup>18</sup> There is an intense politicization of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam in secular and non-secular positions in contemporary Balkans. As a form of political power in the Balkans, politicized religions are, psychologically speaking, unconscious non-faith.<sup>19</sup> The issues of sociopolitical life are perpetually the equivalent within ethnonationalism and political institutions conceived by a significant clerical paradigm, which is strongly manifested in the Balkans.

A unique kind of duality essentially determines the image of B&H culture. The sphere of high culture is marked by an extreme degree of isolation between three religious and cultural entities (Muslim/Bosniak, Orthodox/Serbian, and Catholic/Croat, with a fourth, Sephardic/Jewish) in the sphere of popular culture achieving mutual contact and permeation. On the one hand, in the Ottoman period of 600 years of rule, in the sphere of high culture, three separate cultures (three different religions, one of which - Islam - state ruling, while the others are in the status of subordinates, tolerated, with separate, foreign liturgical languages, sweaters with spiritual and political centers far from B&H, with different, often conflicting political interests and

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<sup>18</sup> Gozdanović, Dejan, Portal Novosti, „Vjekoslav Perica: Za meine je Tadjamonova drzava bila druga Endhazija“ [Vjekoslav Perica: For me, Tudman's state was the second NDH], 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina." Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 40/7, 2020, 105-131.

aspirations). On the other hand, in the sphere of folk culture: a common fund of cultural models and creative laws (common language, poetic structures, and prose of folk literature, ethnic origin, the entire folklore substratum, certain forms and customs of trans-confessional social solidarity). Verticals should also be introduced in this picture of horizontal plans: the organic unity between the three cultures and its part of the popular cultural sphere. From these indications should be read and historical-interesting roots of mutual ethnic-confessional antagonisms that occur in increasing intensity. Especially in the second period of Turkish rule - that of the late 17th century, i.e., after the collapse of the Turkish offensive against Central Europe and Turkey's withdrawal from Trans-Kosovo, Transdanubian and transcoding countries, when B&H becomes, and for the entire next two centuries remains border of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Historically explainable, it contains both the root of Muslim hatred of the Christian element and the root of common anti-Turkish and anti-Islamic sentiment; therein also lie the roots of mistrust and conflict in the relationship between the Orthodox and Catholic worlds.<sup>20</sup>

The demolition of 90 % of historical Islamic religious buildings (including UNESCO heritage and gems of European Islamic architecture) in B&H was the policy of symbolically cleansing the area of Muslims and traces of the Ottoman era, the Islamic presence, to create ethnically pure Serbian/Orthodox or Croatian/Catholic territory there. The question arises: why mosques and other Islamic religious and cultural buildings were demolished? However, Catholic churches and other religious buildings of the Orthodox Church in areas inhabited by Bosniaks were not damaged. Nevertheless, Croats destroyed Serbian/Orthodox religious buildings. Thus, a similar type of destruction. There are two reasons there was no significant damage to religious buildings. First, their central premise was what they wanted to prove to the world and the people of B&H - that B&H is the homeland of Bosniaks, that they are responsible for it, that they feel it as their homeland and mean everything in she finds something that belongs to B&H. Second, they did not want to destroy it, of course, for such reasons

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<sup>20</sup> Lovrenovic, Ivan, *Unutarnja zemlja. Kratki pregled kulturne povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo, Synopsis, 2017

because they thought that they were destroying their state and that there was no reason for them to destroy their country.<sup>21</sup> The ethnic basis of the nation was and remained the foundation of a national identity that has resisted socio-historical changes. Muslims/Bosniaks, from the beginning of the Constitution of national movements, had a defined political position that B&H should have state autonomy or be an independent state and that its territorial integrity and integrity could never and under no circumstances be brought into question. This attitude has not changed in the last hundred years and today remains the basis of Bosniaks' political organization and activities in B&H.

Milorad Dodik<sup>22</sup> has regularly been calling Bosniaks "Muslims" in Balkan media, including the speech at the European (EU) Parliament (2022). Does Dodik want to articulate that Bosniaks are not a people like Serbs and Croats but a religious group? Moreover, according to Dodik, the Serbian people cannot be represented by a Serb married to a Muslim. Whether Dodik is courting the "European right" with such rhetoric from Islamic threat and capitalizing on global Islamophobia? During the inauguration ceremony in 2022, Hungarian president Orban, who is in close relations with Dodik, referred to a conspiracy theory popularized by the far right that elites organize the replacement of European populations with non-European immigrants. "This program wants to replace "Christian children" who are on the way to disappearing with Muslim migrants from other civilizations."<sup>23</sup> Dodik stated to numerous media: "The migrant crisis is a civilizational occupation of Christianity, and B&H has been offered as a refugee parking lot. We in B&H have a serious problem. They do not see it in (Muslim) Sarajevo. Our people are afraid of migrants."<sup>24</sup> Thus, he aims

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<sup>21</sup> Tanaskovic, Darko, Radio Pescanik, 48 Emisija, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> He is a Bosnian Serb politician serving as the 7th and current Serb member of the B&H Presidency. Long-period on the USA State Department blacklist, Dodik and the SNSD party have pursued an increasingly nationalist and separatist line, invoking the right of the B&H Serbs to self-determination. His time in power has been characterized by authoritarianism, repudiation of federal B&H institutions, and closer connections to Serbia and Russia.

<sup>23</sup> Beta, Beta, „Potpuno pomračenje uma Viktora Orbana tokom inaguracije, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, The European Union (EU) Political Identity within the migrant crisis, and the Balkan Bosnian route; xenophobia and religious identity, Research, Society and Development, 9 (10), 2020, 1-30

to benefit from the right-wing policies and growing radical populism in Europe that is anti-immigrant and anti-Islam. Dodik undoubtedly follows these sociopolitical and ideological matrices. His politics are proximate to those political networks (i.e., Hungarian Viktor Orban and French far-right politician Thierry Mariani). "Is the cosmopolitan European republic closer to the horizon of human desires? Or Orban's and Zemmour's replica of the Third Reich? European Muslims are the new Jews of Europe. We will first politically de-subjectivize them (whence the historical right to have a state, B&H, for example)", political scientist Nerzuk Curak writes.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, according to Dodik's rhetorics, since Bosniaks often call themselves nation-building people, they should be deprived of that character and reduced to the level of a religious community. Furthermore, it is precisely why the Bosnian language is not recognized in the Republika Srpska (RS) entity. Accordingly, it represents the sociopolitical and ideological foundations—consequently, no association with Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) and disputable integration. Adnan Huskic maintains that this Dodik's narrative means that B&H Muslims are not significantly different from the Muslims living in Turkey, Egypt, or Indonesia. Srđan Puhalo argues that the reasons are multiple. Dodik wants to humiliate Bosniaks. He constantly emphasizes an identity link between Muslims in B&H and Turks. They have become something that every "decent and honest" Serb should despise. Dodik's rhetoric fits into the right-wing narrative of defending Christianity. It is a narrative of Hungarian Prime Minister Orban, and it often unfolds in the approach of some Croatian politicians. In that narrative, Muslims are treated as a foreign body in Europe. Therefore, Bosniaks, reduced to Muslims, are denied European authenticity. Nevertheless, Dodik displayed the traditional Balkan nationalist ideological portrayal - of converts that "we must despise because they abandoned their ancestral faith, betrayed Orthodoxy, their ancestors, and became Muslims." Dodik's rhetorics fit in with the radical narrative "that Muslims are a foreign body in B&H."<sup>26</sup> However, Bosniaks, the most numerous ethnic group in B&H, are not ethnic Turks

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<sup>25</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, Vijesti.ba, „Evropski muslimani novi su Jevreji Evrope“, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Karabeg, Omer, Radio Slobodna Europa, „Zašto Dodik Bošnjake zove muslimanima?“, 2021

but South Slavs with more proximity to Slovenes, Macedonians, Croats, and Serbs, than Ottomans. The historical revisionism and the memory of the "evil" developed into a behavioral practice in the Balkans.<sup>27</sup> It jeopardizes the critical human security of Muslims on the European continent. Thus, it is a discriminational political narrative. It represents and defines the marginalization of Muslims. Moreover, Milorad Dodik stated that the narrative about Srebrenica is a "false myth."<sup>28</sup> Most world countries, the UN, the EU, and the ICTY have confirmed that the Serbian Army committed the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995. Genocide denial and honoring convicted war criminals represent the Serbian "political mainstream."<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it is the ideological capability of ethnoreligious collective patriotism.

Former Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović argued about the alleged radicalization of B&H, Islamic terrorism, and the B&H as a security threat to the EU. The radicalization<sup>30</sup> of the sociopolitical space in Croatia, in which nationalist and extremist elements advance, is unsuitable for regional interrelations. It is a structural matrix that religion is associated with national identity. Antagonistic sentiments towards the other parts of Balkan decrease beneficial relationships with neighboring societies, denigrate "others," and invent incorrect political qualifications and tendencies. Namely, German „Die Tageszeitung“ reported that members of the Croatian Security and Intelligence Agency recruited Salafis to transfer weapons from Croatia to B&H Masjids to justify allegations of the former president. Die Tageszeitung mentions that behind the complete project is the top of the Croatian political

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<sup>27</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina." Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 40/7, 2020, 105-131.

<sup>28</sup> Dnevni Avaz, Dnevni Avaz, „Žrtve rata poručile Dodiku: UN i EU potvrdili su da su genocid u Srebrenici počinili Vojska i MUP RS“ 2019.

<sup>29</sup> BBC News, Youtube, „Fears of new conflict as Bosnia-Herzegovina faces growing Serb nationalism“, 2022.

<sup>30</sup> In 2015, before a Euro 2016 qualifying match between Croatia and Italy's national football teams in Split, a 14-meter swastika appeared on the pitch. The US State Department report on religious freedom for 2018 stated that religious intolerance is rising in Croatia, especially on the Internet. The Council of Europe had similar warnings, warning of pro-Ustaša graffiti and intimidating minority religious communities. USDOS, Ecol.net, Report on International Religious Freedom: Croatia, 2019.

establishment, whose primary goal is to create adequate preconditions for establishing a third entity in B&H.<sup>31</sup> Nationalist politicians in B&H still promote the idea of secession - and have strong links to parties in Croatia and Serbia. The governing HDZ party<sup>32</sup> in Croatia has a highly influential sister organisation over the border.<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, B&H Islam has never hidden its aversion to all Wahhabi fundamentalism demonstrations that openly support their various initiatives aimed at dialogue, interfaith respect, and coexistence, which is in some ways specific to B&H's general sociological conditions; more similar to Western Europeans of Muslim-descent. Roughly two million Muslims live in B&H, and twenty times less than there are on the European continent. The statistics themselves show how unfounded is the fear of Bosniaks. A 2013 Pew Research Center Study reveals that Bosniaks are among the world's most liberal and tolerant Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, after the war, Bosniaks live integratively and peacefully in all EU countries and worldwide. The statement<sup>35</sup> of French President Macron that B&H is an international security "time bomb" displays Frank Furedis's "Culture of fear" in practice. Thus, Western culture feeds on terror and inadvertently calls on its enemies to be terrorized, insulted, and humiliated in the case of B&H. However, the 2020 report of The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) and Global Index of Terrorism rated B&H as a country with the most significant decline in the terrorist influence of any country in the world. Again, B&H recorded the most remarkable progress according to the assessment.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, historically and presently, the case of Bosniaks is particularly instructive if we observe peace, modernity, and Islam in the European context. Bosniak case shows how attitudes towards Islam can develop over time and how its adherents, with the help of progressiveness, can accept

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<sup>31</sup> Die Tageszeitung, "Terror in Bosnien und Herzegowina: Waffen in Moscheen", 2019.

<sup>32</sup> The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) is a conservative political party with a Christian Democrat orientation. Croatian Democratic Union B&H is a Christian democratic, nationalist political party in B&H, representing the Croats of B&H.

<sup>33</sup> De Launey, Guy, BBC News, „Bosnia in spat with Croatia over 'arms in mosques“, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Pew Research Center, "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics, and Society," 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Al Jazeera, "French President, calls Bosnia a 'ticking time-bomb," 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, 2020.

modernity without abandoning their religious identity. However, the policy of Islamophobia and intimidation creates an atmosphere in which citizens are afraid of unknown threats, unknown terrorists, unknown jihadists. According to Furedi, the fear of terrorism is much greater among political elites than in the ordinary population. "Bad" politicians do not appreciate their citizens either; they are apprehensive of them, constantly keeping them in psychosis.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the culture of fear occurs.

The paradox of B&H identity is noticeable, where the discrepancy between territorial Bosnianness and national non-Bosnianness is visible. B&H is an interesting, almost unique example of the discrepancy between national genesis and the historical situation. In the process of nation-building, many complex societies must resolve internal tensions and differences, and from this often arise problems of human rights, treatment of minorities, territorial integrity, and unresolved issues of affiliation. Regardless of the myths of ancient existence, nations are not "natural" creations but are created in specific political contexts and through the ideology of uniting some, but not all, members of society. That is why they are often said to be "imaginary communities." In the case of B&H, its inhabitants had no ideological and political unification because their differences were treated as a negative consequence of historical trends and, as such, internally unsolvable. Although B&H has remained geographically/territorially almost unchanged throughout history, its population is fragmented through three national nomenclatures. Under the influence of divisional plans from Serbia and Croatia, the territory of B&H was depoliticized and left as a regional reference, not a national creation. Thus we have B&H as a territorial unit, but we do not have Bosnians as a national group, although in an everyday language, people identify as Bosnians in terms of belonging to a typical cultural climate and customs. It is probably the only case in modern history where the ethnic-territorial link between society and the country in which he lives is broken. There are reverse examples, i.e., formation and self-determination of the nation, but non-recognition of its anchoring in space, as in the case of the Kurds, Palestinians, and Uighurs. For conceptual reasons, as a contribution to the debate on

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<sup>37</sup> Furedi, Frank, *Culture of Fear Revisited*, London/New York, Continuum, 2006.



citizenship, we can recall notice from Slovenian scientist Tomaž Mastnak. A text from 1995 says: "according to a well-known contemporary political maxim, ethnicity and religion should be a private matter (in the sense that it must not be allowed to use public authority for its particularist and exclusivist goals). The state as a state cannot be multiethnic or multireligious. It can be a state only if it is non-ethnic, non-religious, and if it is established as such, it can guarantee any society because it is the power that guarantees (and is the only one that can guarantee) order. To expect B&H to be a multiethnic, multireligious, and multireligious state confuses civil society with the state. That is what the Serbian fascists did. It is what democratic fundamentalists want to do. The latter differs from the former only because they want the existence of many "multi," whereas the former created one state. Fascists and democrats have one basic principle in common. Both associate power with ethnicity, culture, religion, and hostility to the state."<sup>38</sup>

During the B&H war, Serb parties (Serbian Democratic Party, Serbian Renewal Movement, and the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia, and since 1991 the Serb Assembly in B&H opposed the separation of B&H from Yugoslavia. Later, their Assembly decided to separate the Serbs from B&H and make an alliance with Serbia. Some radical Croatian parties also decided to separate. However, after the war, the primary constitutional contradictions still exist today are related to the role of the two highest levels of government, the border between the two entities, and the possibility of dividing the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) into Bosniak and Croat entities. In general, ethnonationalism Croatian parties, such as the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and (HDZ)- 1990, advocate the establishment of a third Croat entity, in addition to Bosnian and Serbian. In 2011, they renewed the non-institutional Croatian National Assembly, which opened up space for "concerns that in time there may be a risk of establishing parallel power structures." Some of our interlocutors from Croatia and several from the Bosniak ethnic group even expressed the belief that one of the keys to solving the problem in B&H is the solution of the

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<sup>38</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, Tacno.net. „Zašto je uopće Bosna a ne ništa?“, 2018.

"Croat issue," while Bosniaks, in general, are not of that opinion.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, B&H Serbian parties tend to emphasize the position of the second level of government, and the competencies of the Republic of Srpska (RS) are essential to Serbian political parties. In early 2008, for example, Republic of Srpska's (RS) leading party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), called for B&H's transformation into an asymmetric federation (or confederation) and demanded the right to self-determination, including the right to secede for the entity. Instead of focusing their energy on changing the Dayton Peace Accords, they seek to expand the practical autonomy and powers of Republika Srpska (RS) within the constitutional limits of the Dayton Peace Accords. Many Serbian interlocutors, for example, assess the usefulness of NATO and the EU in terms of whether they are favorable to the powers of Republic of Srpska (RS) entity.<sup>40</sup> Instead of open resistance, Serbian ethnonationalism, like the RS entity in B&H (morally supported by the Republic of Serbia), ignores the existence of the state level of government and tries to build its political reality, neglecting the state of B&H. Bosniaks, in particular, see this as a threat to the continuation of "Greater Serbia" politics. Greater Serbia describes the Serbian nationalist and irredentist ideology of creating a Serb state which would incorporate all regions of traditional significance to Serbs, a South Slavic ethnic group, including regions outside modern-day Serbia that Serbs partly populate. Its ideology includes claims to various territories aside from modern-day Serbia, including the whole of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia and part of Croatia. According to historian Jozo Tomasevich, Greater Serbian aspirations also include parts of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania in some historical

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<sup>39</sup> Kivimäki, Timo et al, *Dinamika konflikta u multietničkoj državi Bosni i Hercegovini, Studija analize konflikta u pojedinim zemljama* [Conflict dynamics in the multiethnic state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Study of conflict analysis in individual countries], Sarajevo, Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Solaja, Milos, *Direktor Centra za međunarodne odnose, Banja Luka, Intervju John Feffer, Banja Luka, 2008.*

forms.<sup>41</sup> The war goal of the Milosevic regime and Karadzic's<sup>42</sup> Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) was the destruction and ethnic division of the B&H. On the other hand, Bosniaks' priority and objective in the war and the post-war period has been to "preserve the integrity of the state." Breaking up the country would assumably create new war and violence in B&H. Bosniaks would defend the integrity of the state again. A survey (2021/2022) on the streets of Sarajevo at the beginning of the most alarming B&H crisis (after the Dayton Peace Accords) confirms it.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, all political sides (Bosniaks/Serbs/Croats) use division and growing fear to maintain power.<sup>44</sup>

The prospect (survival) of B&H, as the most critical multicultural discourse of the region, is essentially conditioned by the International Community's attitude towards the state-building and peacebuilding, the EU process and its broader enlargement strategies, and the geopolitical process within the hegemonist ethnonational/ethnopolitical and religious in-state conflicts. In this sense, the distinction between the "international community," the EU, and the United States (USA) is undefined in the Balkans and B&H. The EU's role in Southeast Europe is inconsistent between its normative potential and current problematic aspects of process implementation policies.<sup>45</sup>

The existence of pluralism in exceptionally religious divided societies leads us to question the impact of diversity on the stability of democracy in these societies. Furthermore, there is a gap between the "reform path," social capital, plural civic space, and antagonistic sociopolitical actuality. The fact is that the post-war B&H does not have a hybrid strength to advance the peace among religious communities

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<sup>41</sup> Tomasevich, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: The Cetniks*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1975.

<sup>42</sup> Bosnian Serb former politician served as the President of RS during the B&H war and was later convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

<sup>43</sup> Face HD TV, *Anketa CD-a u Istočnom i u Sarajevu: RAT ili MIR?*, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> BBC News, Youtube, „Fears of new conflict as Bosnia-Herzegovina faces growing Serb nationalism“, 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, *Bosnia Between the Dayton's Peace Straightjacket, Development, and Power Centers' Moral Obligation; Solicitation to Biden*, *Small Wars Journal*, 2020.

and institutions. The crisis condition and conflict persisted in B&H, fearing minor or significant consequences and escalation. Intra-religious rivalries between religious/political elites influence the complex structural mechanism of conflict. Competing religious/political elites mobilize their ethnic groups against their opponents to establish their predominance. B&H is an enemy figure, an enemy state for crucial internal and regional political, cultural and intellectual elites. De facto, just because it exists. This hostility will multiply if there is no development in the direction of a liberal civil state. If it comes, it will still be a long history, so the enemies of B&H will not have to be nervous every day because of the liberal development of B&H. They should support a rational, pioneering discussion on political citizenship without harming them. However, can B&H open a series of "citizenship construction sites" to emancipate B&H citizens as human beings? Alternatively, because of the organized production of fear, give up citizenship and base every future on the fact of ethnicity. "B&H exists through its non-existence and does not exist through its (Dayton Peace Accords) existence."<sup>46</sup> According to official politics, B&H is on the European (EU) path. Alternatively, the actuality is practically beyond that. Documents do not determine it; conferences, decisions, and media retellings. Nor are the assessments of the (un)successful beautification of specific reforms given to themselves by domestic "leaders" and EU representatives. There is a gap between the "reform path" and the everyday life of the vast majority of people. The influence of common sense on life is less and less.<sup>47</sup> The EU presented the principles and 19 points related to reforms that would ensure a functional state and accelerate the EU path. Moreover, according to the Delegation of the European Union (EUD), the feature of the civil society in B&H is typical of post-authoritarian (post-communist) societies. Therefore, a general assessment of the civil society in B&H corresponds to a general assessment of the B&H state and society – fragmented, institutionally very weak, financially unsustainable, and greatly dependent on the political and financial support of the international community, without a clear vision of how to meet citizens' needs, with

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<sup>46</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, Tacno.net. „Zašto je uopće Bosna a ne ništa?“, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, Tacno.net. „Zašto je uopće Bosna a ne ništa?“, 2018.

a private sector and unfavorable public perception of the general social benefit of their work.<sup>48</sup>

After the devastating war and ethnic cleansing, B&H is a country of constant ethnopolitical radicalism, fascism, genocide denial, and secessionism campaigns. The hybrid conflicts in B&H, in local ethnopolitical and regional form, represent a group of state and non-state actors with overlapping objectives to prove that B&H is "impossible as a mono-national and independent- the UN country under its historical borders." Consequently, B&H is a fragile country. This condition also directly benefits the Eastern bloc (i.e., Russia), which profits from weak European regions - reduced EU and NATO influence. 2021/2022 in B&H has been profoundly divided and faced the most frightening political crisis since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. It included war rhetorics, army appearances, a total blockade of state institutions, and absolute country collapse initiated by B&H Serbs led by Milorad Dodik. Austrian Valentin Inzko imposed a law forbidding genocide denial.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska (2021) adopted the Law on Non-Application of the Decision of the High Representative related to genocide denial. Thus, they disputed the Srebrenica genocide of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys and moved out of all state institutions, threatening the integrity of B&H's entire political and legal system. The current holder of the high representative's office in B&H, Christian Schmidt, confirmed that he supported new legislation explicitly over the genocide denial. "The High Representative's primary focus is on the apparent need to create the basis for a parliamentary legislative process through a broad social discussion involving social and religious stakeholders. However, he warns against politicizing the issue."<sup>50</sup>

This challenging period brought complicated discussions about the actual representation of B&H Croats in government institutions and their influence on the policies and processes conducted in government

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<sup>48</sup> Zeravcic, Goran, Mapping study on civil society organizations in B&H, EPRD, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Latal, Srecko, Balkan Insight, „New Bosnian Peace Envoy Inherits Mission Impossible“, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> The Guardian, „EU is working to amend genocide denial law blamed for Bosnia crisis“, 2022.

bodies. For example, despite the failed negotiations on the B&H Election Law reform, the question arose whether there were too many or too few B&H Croats in power (concerning their number). Bosniak political representatives have repeatedly stated that B&H Croats have "occupied" significantly more positions than they deserve and that the story of a legitimate national representation is an excuse for the leading Croatian ethnopolitical party, HDZ B&H, to secure a permanent seat in government.<sup>51</sup> However, in general, the B&H electoral system problem is the legitimacy of the representation of the collective. Thus, different interpretations of legitimacy depend on whether the mandate is understood; entrusted to a representative or a member of the constituent people. Electoral reform as a process does not mean that only a crucial new election law in that milieu needs to be changed or enacted. B&H needs an electoral system with open lists and preferential voting for all levels. At the same time, the President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, flagrantly interferes in the internal affairs of another country (B&H) with his daily (insulting and offensive) statements. Milanovic stated: "Dzaferovic<sup>52</sup> is a sponsor of the Mujahedins<sup>53</sup> who came to Vukovar, Croatia to provoke Serbs."<sup>54</sup> (...) However, the fact is that the mujahedin came to wartime B&H through Croatia and that the Croatian authorities were informed about it.<sup>55</sup> Milanovic also stated: "So what if the Republic of Srpska (RS) Entity was created- based on a genocide? The USA was created on genocide. Many countries were created - based on war crimes."<sup>56</sup> At the same time, the attempt to create an "ethnoreligiously" pure Croatian entity on the B&H territory ended with multiple ICTY verdicts for war-crimes and crimes against humanity, against the entire political and military leadership of

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<sup>51</sup> Jazvic, Dejan, Vecernji.hr, „Matematika moci“, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Sefik Dzaferovic is a Bosniak member of the B&H presidency and SDA Party (Party of Democratic Action), a Bosniak nationalist, and a conservative political party in B&H.

<sup>53</sup> Several hundred Muslim foreign fighters fought in the B&H war; some were involved in a few individual war crimes cases.

<sup>54</sup> Al Jazeera, „Milanović: Džaferović je sponzor mudžahedina koji je u Vukovar došao provocirati Srbe“, 2022

<sup>55</sup> Lucić, Ivo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and terrorism, National security and the future, 2/3-4, 2001, 11-142

<sup>56</sup> Oslobođenje, „Milanović: Amerika je nastala na genocidu“, 2022.

the "Herceg-Bosna"<sup>57</sup> and part of the political and military leadership of Croatia for a joint criminal enterprise. The future social and political relations are contested because of historical revisionism and persistent denial of the ICTY convictions by Croatian leadership and B&H Croat political parties. After the verdicts (ICTY, case number IT-04-74-), Croatian president Grabar-Kitarovic stated: "No one, not even the Hague Tribunal, will write our history!"<sup>58</sup> One of the Six convicted Slobodan Praljak, drank poison in the courtroom. Moreover, the commemorations and Church masses were organized in Croatia and B&H. Among many Croatian highest-ranking politicians, (then) the chairman of the B&H Presidency, Dragan Covic<sup>59</sup>, lit the candles for Six convicted war-criminals.<sup>60</sup>

The study analyzes B&H's historical, religious, ideological, and political contests, its post-war integrity, the EU path, and the "majority Muslim European country" paradigm. First, the paper argues that ethnoreligious polarization, political radicalism, and the secessionist processes influence conflict transformation, sociopolitical stagnation, and ineffectual EU process. Second, the regional and international rhetorics related to inaccurate claims of B&H's Islamic radicalism/terrorism is a metaphor for historical/current Balkan religious and ideological hybrid conflicts. Third, it represents the securitization of Islam in a broader sociopolitical context. Fourth, B&H's electoral law and regional geopolitical interference influence the country's integrity due to secessionism and the potential of creating a third-Croat entity.

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<sup>57</sup> The Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was an unknown geopolitical entity and proto-state in B&H. Its administration was sanctioned in the International Criminal Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia in Hague (ICTY) as a joint criminal enterprise that committed crimes against humanity.

<sup>58</sup> Slobodna Dalmacija, „Grabar Kitarović o presudi hrvatskoj šestorki: Nitko drugi, pa ni Haški sud, neće pisati našu povijest!“, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> He is a Bosnian Croat politician who served as a Croat member of the B&H Presidency from 2002 to 2005 and 2014 to 2018. He is the current president of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ B&H) and is a national House of Peoples member.

<sup>60</sup> Lepad, Franjo, 24sata.hr., „U BiH tisuće svijeća upaljeno za Praljka i haške osuđenike“, 2017.

## Method

The scientific methodology of the content analysis, comparative method, induction, and descriptive method was used in the study. Moreover, desk research included an in-depth theoretical literature review. The study analyzed various sources, such as books, publications, media accounts, archive materials, grey literature, and other primary documents relating to regional sociopolitics, security, ethnicity, religion, peacebuilding, and international relations.

### 1. BOSNIAN INTEGRITY AND ETHNORELIGIOUS PARADIGM

The leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Vojislav Seselj, convicted of war crimes by the ICTY, stated before the Hague Tribunal, testifying in defense of Radovan Karadzic, that "only Serbs have always lived in B&H (and Croatia)," i.e., "Serb Catholics, Serb Muslims, and Serb Orthodox", and that the SRS advocates the policy of "All-Serbian National Unity".<sup>61</sup> The fact is that through intensive geopolitical and religious interventions throughout its history, from the beginning of the 20th century, B&H has been under pressure from the neighboring Serbian or Croatian national ideas. Furthermore, Russia's economic influence (oil refining and distribution) on social movements in B&H is realized in the political life of the Republic of Srpska (RS) entity. Moreover, China and, lately, Turkey's influence are within the economic framework. At the same time, political influence is exercised, regardless of the transparency of the intention to use the fear of drawing new borders as a powerful agent of another foundation of nationalism and defective democracy. Thus, the production of dangerous geopolitical discourses suits internal political actors. However, historically, these geopolitical aspirations cannot be dismissed at the outset as just a methodology for surviving in the power of multiethnic nationalist classes. Let us recall Radovan Karadzic's words before the War at B&H: "Do not think that you will not take B&H to hell and the Muslim people to extinction."<sup>62</sup> The "inferior and unjust" Dayton Peace Agreement led by the international community was too late. Ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks and Crimes against humanity have already happened.

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<sup>61</sup> Srbin.info, „Šešelj svjedoči za Karadžića: U BiH su oduvijek živjeli samo Srbi“, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Deutsche Welle, “Karadzic se neće pokajati” [Karadzic will not repent], 2010.



However, war tasks, ideologies, and contractors remained unfinished after that interruption. It is indisputable that the Greater Serbia project caused the most violence, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and economic destruction of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, especially B&H. B&H had great destruction of its economic and social infrastructure. About two million civilians were forcibly persecuted from pre-war places of residence. However, the wars in the 1990s caused the continuity of Greater Serbia policies. The current events in the Balkans demonstrate it. After the end of the wars, a much more significant peacebuilding role of religious communities in the Balkans was expected, but they largely failed mutually with ethnopolitics. Instead, mediators and initiators of reconciliation have always been actors on the sidelines, whether NGOs, foundations, or international organizations.

Presently, political bargaining is taking place at lower levels of constitutional reform. The debate focuses on whether police and military forces belong to the highest or second level of administration, whether the highest level of administration has authority over the protection of ethnic minorities in the second level of administration, and to which level of government the various state-owned facilities belong. Constitutional disputes can provoke violence in two key ways. On the one hand, violence may be used in constitutional negotiations: threats can be made by those opponents in the dispute who are more dependent on a compromise solution, as this can improve the negotiating status of those parties. A significant international presence that supports the constitutional ideas of the Dayton Peace Agreement could aggravate the situation in which conflicting parties at the highest level (entities or leading ethnic parties) use violence or threats as a bargaining chip. On the other hand, however, the leadership of Republic of Srpska (RS) is threatening unilateral political decisions on the referendum and separation. If these threats materialized, imposing a new status on the entity could lead to violence.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Kivimäki, Timo et al, *Dinamika konflikta u multietničkoj državi Bosni i Hercegovini, Studija analize konflikta u pojedinim zemljama [Conflict dynamics in the multiethnic state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Study of conflict analysis in individual countries]*, Sarajevo, Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, 2012.

The B&H Constitution defines Bosniak/Croat/Serbs as a constituent of people. For the most part, a mere constitutional decor is appropriately enshrined in the last article of the Preamble of the discriminatory Constitution. Therefore, the term "Others" in formulating "hybrid" identities 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.<sup>64</sup> The B&H Constitution obstructs the creation of a plural civic identity, hypostasizes the collective political mentality. Spiritual usurpation has moved into the realm of identity.<sup>65</sup> Western Balkans and B&H is an exemplary environment with ideological and axiological levels. There is national exploitation of ethnoreligious elements to benefit ethnopolitics.

Since entering the EU, Croatia has turned its B&H policy into misrepresenting enlargement policy related to political lobbying - "claiming" Islamic radicalization of B&H and interfering with the B&H Constitution and elections.<sup>66</sup> Because of Croatia's unresolved relationship with the recent past, Croatian policy, from the far right to the left, while officially performing as the defender of the interests of B&H Croats, remains trapped in the role of the extended arm and spokesperson of Dragan Čović<sup>67</sup> to the considerable detriment of the Croatian people in B&H, Croatia's reputation within the EU, i.e., in the

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<sup>64</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, *The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina.* Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 40/7, 2020, 105-131.

<sup>65</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, *Agnosticism and Atheism as Amoralism and Anti-Ideological Sociopolitical Paradigm in the Balkans, Specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina,* Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe (OPREE) 41/2, 2021, 67-85.

<sup>66</sup> In the latest example from 2022, Croatia and its president Zoran Milanovic question the legality of holding elections in B&H scheduled for October 2nd.

<sup>67</sup> He is a Bosnian Croat politician and member of the B&H Presidency from 2014 to 2018. He has been the President of the HDZ B&H since 2005 and a member of the Collegium of the B&H House of Peoples from 2011 to 2015. In 2005 as a Croat member of the B&H Presidency, he was removed by a decision of the High Representative. Between 1998 and 2001, he was Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of the FB&H Government. He is the President of the Croatian National Assembly of B&H.

European Parliament, and in the Council of the EU. Croatian government representatives, for example, through years of Council negotiations on conclusions on B&H, request the formulation, "equality of constituent people" to be included, and "equality of citizens," one of the foundations of the *acquis*, to be removed. B&H Croat representatives perform more or less secessionist narratives about a third entity.<sup>68</sup> The constitutional and legal provisions define that "one member from the ranks" of Bosniaks and Croats is elected to the B&H Presidency (from the Federation of B&H). It implies that this member is explicitly a "member" and possibly "implicitly" a representative of that person in the Presidency. A similar anomaly has been happening in the parliamentary elections for several cycles in the past. Some candidates changed their "ethnicity" due to the higher probability of direct or indirect election to one of the parliamentary houses. However, the issue of electing a member of the B&H Presidency from the ranks of the B&H Croats is an essential milestone in the reform of the electoral system and a testing ground for consensus between the individualist (civil) and collectivist (ethnic) principles, and the possibilities of instrumentalizing ethnicity must be minimized.<sup>69</sup> Zoran Milanovic, the Croatian President, declared in May 2022 that "B&H Croats would go to the third entity(...)" "B&H Serbs are our allies."<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU) calls for ensuring the Croatian people's equality by forming the „Third entity“ in B&H.<sup>71</sup>

The B&H Entities do not have the right to change the content of the decisions made by the arbitration under their jurisdiction. Thus, for example, the Republic of Srpska (RS) and the Federation of B&H (FB&H) do not have the right to individually or jointly change the content of the Final Arbitration Award for Brcko, as this award can only be changed by

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<sup>68</sup> Democratization Policy, DPC, Making sense of Croatia's destructive Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) policy. 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Arapovic, Adis, Kritične tačke unapređenja izbornog sistema Bosne i Hercegovine – rubikon demokratizacije, In: Reform of the electoral legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, Special edition, Volume 17, 2021, 11-26 10.5644/PI2021.198.01

<sup>70</sup> Oslobođenje, „Milanović: Amerika je nastala na genocidu“, 2022.

<sup>71</sup> Zvijerac, Predrag, Slobodna Europa, „Hrvatski akademici uvjetuju ulazak BiH u EU trećim entitetom“, 2022.

a new decision of the arbitral tribunal. The modalities of B&H's internal reorganization differed, but the state's independence, territorial integrity, and international subjectivity remained unchanged elements of the overall process. Except for Oven Stoltenberg's, all the proposed plans were based on maintaining B&H as a state. In the preamble to the Constitution, the constituent peoples (their authorized representatives) accepted the obligation to "adhere to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of B&H by international law." The Constitution defines B&H's continuity of independence and territorial integrity of B&H: "Continuity, the Republic of B&H (...) will continue its legal existence under international law as a state with an internal structure changed."<sup>72</sup> The viability of B&H as a state and international recognition also depends on its people's acceptance of the state. A stable constitutional basis for maintaining the state depends on the attitude of the three ethnic nations towards B&H. When peoples have joint sovereignty, it is indivisible; one or two peoples cannot use it separately. Constitutive statehood is equal, so there is no domination of one ethnic community over another, and coexistence and consociational democracy become necessary for state maintenance. When the entities were the bearers of sovereignty, they would take advantage of this property and secede, thus disintegrating the state. If the institutions at the B&H were the bearers of sovereignty, they could reduce the status and competencies of the entities through constitutional changes. The state-building powers of the three ethnic nations, which the Constitution defines, mean that these nations have the right to exercise their rights, but it also means their obligation to ensure the maintenance of the state. Statehood is a right and an obligation in equal measure and cannot be separated into separate categories.<sup>73</sup> B&H is in a constant perpetuating crisis within the ethnopolitical conflicts, on the verge of disintegration - Bosnian Serb politicians in the (RS) entity are announcing the secession and disintegration of B&H.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the most numerous ethnic

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<sup>72</sup> Article I of the B&H Constitution.

<sup>73</sup> Neskovic, Radomir, *Nedostvrsena drzava: Politicki sistem B&H*, Sarajevo, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Toal, Gerard, *Republic of Srpska will have a referendum: the rhetorical politics of Milorad Dodik*, "The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, 41/1, 2013, 166-204.

group, Bosniaks/Muslims, particularly the dominant ethnopolics, the SDA party<sup>75</sup>, aspire to more ideal centralization of the state as a unitary B&H. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the country is in economic depression, the corruption-clientelistic embrace of (all) three ethnic political "elites," politically judicial settlements<sup>76</sup>, and the constant outflow of the population.

We can indicate that the construction of the division of B&H invokes ethnoreligious "borders." There are national-religious aspirations of territorialization in B&H. Ivan Markesic points out a debate about endangering B&H Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox. Accordingly, a clean area is needed politically, religiously, and culturally for the national political body to take place. Everyone advocates multiethnicity and multiculturalism, but everyone wants to stay in that one - area with their pure religious, national, and cultural identity.<sup>77</sup> However, turning attention from the eternal and transcendent, political leaders need to eliminate the old religious synergy habit within politics and create new ones. The way to manage the intensities that move from religion to the realm of politics (and then find their way back to religion) is to completely separate political life from religion. Of course, we can problematize that it must happen within the institutions, but above all, it must take place in the minds of citizens, although ethnopolics orient them in that direction in the Balkans.

Ethnopolitical structures built and are building their campaigns on mutual fear, the media that create an atmosphere of mistrust, and the international community that has not directed enough activity in this direction, have made B&H a highly fragile country. Here, without understanding the world and politics in general and its reflection on the Balkans and B&H, hatred and mistrust are nurtured (and already well nurtured through the younger generations), as well as the demonization of other nations and believers, with the discriminational segregation phenomenon "Two schools under one roof" (the term for

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<sup>75</sup> The Party of Democratic Action is a Bosniak nationalist, a conservative political party in B&H.

<sup>76</sup> OSCE, OSCE presents the third report on judicial response to corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Sostaric, Tomislav, Al Jazeera, „Kako religija i politika nagrizaju i sebe, i društvo“, 2018.

schools in B&H is based on the ethnic segregation of students). The ideological ethnonationalism has metastasized into a social organization's daily political discourse that produces uncritical subjects in all three constitutive ethnic governments. The culture of fear, constant fabrication of dangers (a stimulant) that threaten the alleged survival of an ethnic/national/confessional group creates a psychosis of fear and uncertainty defensive internal cohesiveness. It discerns the dangers of peoples' existence from that group. It is rapidly transferred from one religious group (nation) to another in which the same processes occur, creating a chain of "imaginary" interethnic threats.<sup>78</sup>

Modest results have been achieved in building and strengthening interethnic reconciliation in B&H with high interethnic mistrust.<sup>79</sup> It is evident by the division of voters in the elections, which is greater than it was in the 1990s. The favorable circumstance is that there is no pronounced external influence of the great powers for the time being, which has always been crucial for disrupting interethnic relations and conflicts in B&H. In addition to time and adequate access, political, democratic, historical, legal, international, and other preconditions must be met for international reconciliation. One of the international community's significant goals in the Western Balkans, particularly B&H, was rebuilding "viable multiethnic societies." Ethnically divided societies require support from a population that builds inclusive social capital. Moreover, the social network theory to interethnic relations could help identify the conditions under which minorities could embark in divided, post-war societies like B&H. Moreover, beyond any policy, "the question remains for the citizens of BiH: would they agree, maddened by the call of their ethnonational, to support annexations and Anschluss, and would they agree to be pawns in the production of two new Reichs? And lone geography of rage. We have no choice but to

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<sup>78</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, Agnosticism and Atheism as Amoralism and Anti-Ideological Sociopolitical Paradigm in the Balkans, Specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe (OPREE) 41/2, 2021, 67-85.

<sup>79</sup> UN News, UN chief underscores the need for reconciliation 25 years after the Srebrenica genocide. 2021.

ZAVNOBiH<sup>80</sup> again until it is not too late."<sup>81</sup> Do Western Balkans need two new republics? Certainly not. Besides, the word "republic" was dropped from the country's name-Republic of B&H.

At the end of his long term, the Austrian OHR High Representative, Valentin Inzko, in B&H, imposed the most critical law, colloquially called the law banning genocide denial. Why is this the most important law? Because it produced consequences that will determine the future of B&H and the future of humanity. Thus, the extent of the B&H future. It will be determined either by the triumph of authoritarian regimes and their worldview or liberal democratic systems and their worldview.<sup>82</sup> Historical revisionism led to primarily disputable and parallel memory politics. It directly affects the country's progression—moreover, the peace stalemate. After the genocide of Bosniaks, the international community "provided" the protagonists of the genocide and ethnic cleansing policy with half of the territory of B&H, creating the entity of the Republic of Srpska (RS), whose President Milorad Dodik wanted to annex it to Serbia. On the other hand, the fascist and war-crime product of Herceg-Bosna was formally abolished. However, the hope remains that it does not live today through the HDZ Party<sup>83</sup>.

An essential aspect of sociopolitical atrophy is the reduction of US influence in B&H in the last decade. Russian factors try to decrease crucial steps the US under President Biden announced in B&H. Considering B&H's local political failure and international neglect, the conditions for returning to state-building, reconciliation, and EU membership are challenged but open to the strategy. However, Dayton Peace Accords/Constitution is the world's most complex public administration (economically and politically dysfunctional). It should be transformed into a self-sustaining community whose liberal democratic

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<sup>80</sup> The State Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina-ZAVNOBiH was convened on 25 November 1943 in Mrkonjić Grad during WW2. The final session of the ZAVNOBiH was held in Sarajevo in April 1945. There the ZAVNOBiH was transformed into the People's Assembly of B&H, and it established the first government of B&H.

<sup>81</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, *Front slobode*, „Geopolitika mraka“, 2021,

<sup>82</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, *Tacno.net*, „Pad Bosne i novo uzdizanje“, 2021.

<sup>83</sup> The Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a Christian democratic, nationalist political party in B&H.

capacity grows. Dayton is unnatural on all grounds, and it must be scientifically questioned.<sup>84</sup> Janusz Bugajski, the Jamestown Foundation analyst, stated that no status quo is indefinite. Neither will be B&H's complex government system, which causes the country's stagnation. Sooner or later, the situation will explode in B&H, which is why the USA must work together with the EU to create an appropriate Constitution, warning the Committee that once the situation becomes unbearable, the Serb majority Republic of Srpska (RS) entity could decide to secede, expecting the recognition from Russia.<sup>85</sup>

## **2. RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATION AND SOCIOPOLITICS IN BALKANS AND B&H**

Ivo Andrić's doctoral dissertation underlines the incompatibility between Islam and Christianity by considering the spiritual development of Bosnia in the Ottoman period. Although more essayistic than scientifically documented, his thesis continues and concretizes the ideological view on Islam. He argued that due to Islam, the Christian population in the Balkans was deprived of a connection with the European progressive development. Andrić, therefore, mixes several discourses, from the fictional to the historiographical and the political, authoritatively enough to be considered an authentic spokesman for everything that has happened (is happening) in B&H.<sup>86</sup>

Croatian leader Tudman and Serbian Milosevic advocating the thesis of "conflict between the Islamic and Catholic worlds," claiming Islamic fundamentalism, and discussing dividing B&H between Serbia and Croatia. Recently, former Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic has pursued rhetorics as a metaphor for hybrid wars in this region and nations. The more the Croatian President adjudicated to impose unrealistic past paradigms on Croatian society, the more realistic and absolute its awareness became. French President Macron stated (2019)

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<sup>84</sup> Hadžić, Faruk, *The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina.* Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe 40/7, 2020, 105-131.

<sup>85</sup> US Committee, N1, *Bosnia dysfunctional and susceptible to Russia and China influence*, 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Buturovic, Amila, Al Jazeera, „Za Andrića i Njegoša islam je strano tijelo na kršćanskom Balkanu“, 2019.



that B&H is a "time bomb knocking right next to Croatia", putting an "international political target" on B&H and its inhabitants, exposing them to suspicion, contempt, and lynching of the world, excommunicating them from the European civilization context. Thus, securitization in international relations and European (EU) national politics. The process of state actors transforms subjects from common political issues into matters of "national or international security," enabling extraordinary means to be used in the name of security. It further heightens the fear among B&H and their neighbors. Suppose the affair with the recruitment of B&H Salafis from the Croatian Security Intelligence Agency (SOA) for very malicious targets towards B&H proves to be at least partially true. In that case, it could fundamentally expose and explain Croatia's foreign policy. Minister of Security of B&H, Dragan Mektic (Bosnian Serb), B&H's Security Minister claimed that Croatia's security and intelligence service came up with the plan, in order to present B&H as a threat to European security. "The plan was to discredit B&H and show it as a terrorist hub and a threat to the region and Europe."<sup>87</sup> All this has been raised to a higher level when Croatian representatives in EU bodies began to impose in official debates the issue of "the need to amend the Election Law to ensure the equality of Croats in B&H." At the same time, the lobbying of officials in Brussels in that direction was recorded. It should not be emphasized that the optimal option for the equality of Croats would be the - Third entity.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, hostility towards the neighboring country-B&H adversely affects conflict transformation.

Paradoxically, B&H Islam has never hidden its aversion to all Wahhabi fundamentalism demonstrations that openly support their various initiatives aimed at dialogue, interfaith respect, and coexistence, which is in some ways specific to B&H's general sociological conditions; more similar to Western Europeans of Muslim-descent. For most B&H residents, Salafism (Wahabism) is imposed on local Muslims from the outside, but Bosnian Serbs and Croats consider influenced by B&H Islamic Community. According to the study "Selefism in B&H, Who

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<sup>87</sup> Lacic, Mladen and Vladislavljevic, Anja, BalkanInsight, „Bosnia Probes Alleged Croatian ‘Plot to Discredit it’“, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Subasic, Edin, Aljazeera, „Pozadina afere Selefija’: fabricirani argumenti za treći entitet“, 2019.

they are, how others see them, and what media reported, Sociopsychological study," the most common form of violence to which members of the Salafi movement in B&H are exposed is verbal violence. Most often because of their appearance. They also challenge the way they dress, and this does not only refer to vicious criticism but also to attempts to remove those clothes. Physical abuse is also present (throwing stones, attacks by drunk people, hitting, spitting). Several people were arrested and imprisoned, only to be later released. One part of the criticism refers to their way of practicing Islam, the way of worship, and the like. They find employment challenging because of their appearance, women because of their coverage, and men because of their beards. Problems within the family are reduced to verbal threats from parents and the request to shave the beard. They encounter economic insecurity and emotional violence daily, while they encounter the most emotional and verbal violence during the week. Physical violence is present several times a year in every tenth Salafi in B&H.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to insisting on the name Muslims and not Bosniaks and the identification of Bosniaks as Turks ("Bosniaks are converts who were Islamized after Turkey came to the area"), Milorad Dodik goes so far as to point out that one who is married to a Muslim cannot belong to the Serbian people. Lately, dissatisfied with a decision by the Central Election Commission voted for by Vanja Bjelica Prutina, a member of the commission, Dodik called her "a lady who presented herself as a representative of the Serb people and was or is still married to a Muslim in Sarajevo."<sup>90</sup> In general, "Mixed ethnic marriages" (inter-ethnic) in B&H and region can be observed from the horizon of the dominant ethnonational consciousness and complex mental disorders. It is the force of this form of consciousness. They are mostly labeled or denoted as "cancer" on the otherwise clean and healthy tissue of a distinct ethnic group. Consequently, as marital and living communities of those who

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<sup>89</sup> Puhalo, Srđan, *Selefije u Bosni i Hercegovini, ko su oni, kako ih drugi vide i kako se izvještava o njima* Socio- psihološka studija [Selefism in B&H, Who they are, how others see them, and what media reported, Sociopsychological study]. Banja Luka, Art Print, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Karabeg, Omer, *Radio Slobodna Europa, Zašto Dodik Bošnjake zove muslimanima?*, 2021

betrayed "their" people or as institutions of heretics who themselves - especially their children - do not know their religious identity and national belonging. In such a context, the attitude toward "mixed marriages" reflects the degree of society's disease.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Milorad Dodik stated, "that Muslim judges could not judge him."<sup>92</sup> Does Dodik's rhetoric have an impact on citizens? Do B&H Serbs from Republika Srpska (RS) entity view Bosniaks as Muslims? Srđan Puhalo notes that they see them as both Bosniaks and Muslims. However, in research on „ethnic distance“ in the Republic of Srpska (RS) entity, Bosniaks are less valuable than Croats. (...) "Croats/Catholics are closer to us than Bosniaks/Muslims."<sup>93</sup> The stereotypes that have historical roots might influence it. However, even historical enemies Croatian/Catholics and Serbian/Orthodox demonstrated it in the war. For example, as mentioned earlier, Croatian Tudman and Serbian Milosevic had close war discussions regarding the future of "divided" B&H without Muslims and their view on Islam (...) "B&H Croat preferred the Orthodox Christian Serbs to the Muslims, because he is a Christian, after all."<sup>94</sup> However, currently, the citizens of B&H function well on an individual level, i.e., everyday life, but problems arise at the collective status, that is, at the level of politics. When they reach topics such as the Dayton Peace Agreement, the future of Republic of Srpska (RS), or the survival of B&H, not to mention the war, the polarization exists. Most importantly, politicians encourage it for the sake of easier people management. However, a small number of those do not want to live and cooperate with other ethnic/religious groups.<sup>95</sup>

The existence of pluralism in profoundly divided societies leads us to question the impact of diversity on the stability of democracy in these societies. Is such diversity a resource for the further development of

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<sup>91</sup> Perisic, Nada, *Mjesoviti brak u BiH -Od poželjnog do prezrenog – mjesoviti brak kao kulturna i politicka kategorija u savremenoj BiH*, Sarajevo, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES)-Ljubljana, "Dodik će odgovarati i za ratne zločine," 2008.

<sup>93</sup> Karabeg, Omer, Radio Slobodna Europa, „Zašto Dodik Bošnjake zove muslimanima?“, 2021

<sup>94</sup> ICTY, Case number IT-04-74-T, the Prosecutor versus Prlic et al.

<sup>95</sup> Karabeg, Omer, Radio Slobodna Europa, „Zašto Dodik Bošnjake zove muslimanima?“, 2021

these societies? Scott Page advocates such a thesis in his book "The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies," in which he argues that, in the long run, the existence of diversity in society encourages citizens' creativity. Thus, economic and political development. On the other hand, some theses claim that diversity and profound divisions negatively affect the overall development of society.<sup>96</sup> By the example of former Yugoslavia countries, regional ethnoreligious communities in social networking and formal associations, which only create social capital, belong to them. In contrast to other civil, ethnic, and religious communities, they are closing down. The argument is proven by the research that showed a relatively unsatisfactory status in the observed dimensions of social capital in B&H.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the social network theory to interethnic relations could help identify the conditions under which minorities could embark in divided, post-war societies like B&H. In the current disunity at various levels of B&H society, including the political issue of affiliation, it does not seem possible to unify the Bosnian nation. The nation-state is the only political option in the modern age. Nationalism has proven to be a dangerous ideology, which has led to destruction, wars, and discrimination, not only in B&H but globally. However, not every national project is malignant. For example, there is civic nationalism that does not discriminate in the same way as one based on religion or ethnicity. However, in B&H, it became a platform for conflict and xenophobia.

### 3. EUROPEAN UNION, B&H EU PATH, AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Today in Europe, a young man is taught that he has an individual (in the Western Balkans collective, national) consciousness and that it depends exclusively on him which religion to follow (in the post-Yugoslav societies, they are taught that they must - or will be harassed to follow the religion of their parents). The religious image of Europe is changing today: the number of followers of Islam is growing; the number of Christians and Jews returning to the "forgotten religion" is

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<sup>96</sup> Page, Scott, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (New Edition), Princeton: Princetown university press, 2007.

<sup>97</sup> Delic, Zlatan et al., *Significance of Social Capital in Socio-economic Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *International Business Research Archives*. 10/3, 2017, 169-181

growing; but Europe is the only continent on which the interests of these religious groups are aligned with the interests of those who do not need a religion, but are all bound by common goods, rights, obligations, and shared values. Today in the EU, some states are separate from religious communities and religious communities from the state. Still, we also have a state church model (Greece, Finland, Denmark). However, "no nation, no country in Europe bases its progress on religious grounds."<sup>98</sup>

The main factor in the post-Yugoslav states was the ethnic mobilization of the 1990s, which brought religiosity directly connected with ethnicity, and since ethnicity was very high on the scale of values, it brought with it religiosity. Furthermore, the B&H public is familiar with the decades-long mantra that has become a public place of relations with B&H, both in the country and globally. It is the idea that is based on the belief that B&H will never be divided because the West will not allow a Muslim state in the heart of Europe. The negative right-wing pattern against one traditional component of B&H syncretism was, at the same time, an affirmation of the preservation of B&H. Thus, in the name of state integrity, it quickly overcame the chauvinistic criterion; pre-treats a community as a danger if alone. Nobody ever heard that the disintegration of B&H would not be allowed because that would mean an Orthodox or Catholic entity in the heart of Europe. While the xenophobic European right was only a rarity in the EU, few paid attention to the fact that the rhetorical figure of the reactionary right has been commonplace for decades: affirmation of B&H through the negation of one of its cultural elements.<sup>99</sup> However, every European society's attachment, cohesion, and unity element should be culture, not religion.

The decades-long mantra has become a public place of relations with B&H in the country and worldwide. There is a hypothesis based on the belief that B&H will never be divided because the West will not allow a European Muslim state. B&H and Turkey are predominantly Muslim

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<sup>98</sup> Cvitkovic, Ivan, *Religion in the jaws of politics*, Sarajevo, Akademija Nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine [Academy of sciences and arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina], 47, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, *Front slobode*, „Geopolitika mraka“, 2021,

countries in Europe. However, is this paradigm grounded? With growing concerns about the presence of Muslims in Europe, which has a "Christian historical and cultural heritage," the question is whether these countries can be entirely European, stated John Esposito, a leading name in the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. "If we study certain rhetoric in Europe, the fact that Europe is becoming more secular in many religions, but also concerns about the presence of Muslims. Not only religious but also highly secular people and considered atheists in Europe suddenly talk about "what" our values are and who it is us. Suddenly they are addressing the Christian heritage in Europe. Then the question arises, can there be a predominantly Muslim country in Europe? Can they be entirely Europeans? After WW1, Turkey represented an "Asian executioner" for Europe, only to become an ally of the "libertarian part of the world" during the Cold War. Nevertheless, in 2004, Ratzinger "stated to a Swiss Catholic newspaper regarding Turkey's European integration. As on some previous occasions, but this time more decisively, Ratzinger spoke out against Turkey's joining the family of European states, emphasizing that it would be an anti-historical, unnatural act. "Only two years later, the Holy See "announced that it does not oppose Turkey's entry into the EU - but believes that in that case, Turkey must respond positively to all of Brussels' demands for religious freedom." By expressing this view in an interview with *Avvenire* (a Catholic daily owned by the Italian Bishops' Conference), Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with the Holy See, has changed the Vatican's view."<sup>100</sup>

Sociopolitical radicalism is presented as the standard as an everyday political language of democracy. There is a growing Islamophobia and radical populism in Europe and Balkans. Milorad Dodik stated that the Council of Europe rapporteur for B&H could not be from Turkey. Moreover, in Moscow, in a meeting with the Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill Smolesky, Dodik stated that there is a need to improve cooperation among Orthodox peoples."<sup>101</sup> If we observe Islamophobia at the population level, many Europeans have intricacies

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<sup>100</sup> Esposito, John, *Radiosarajevo*, "Esposito: BiH i Turska kao većinski muslimanske zemlje teško će u EU", 2013.

<sup>101</sup> International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES)-Ljubljana, „Dodik će odgovarati i za ratne zločine,“ 2008.

with this phenomenon. Perhaps a minority, but it substantially occurs with anti-immigration political parties. In addition, they have an irrational fear and prejudice against Muslims. It will affect their attitudes toward a robust Muslim presence in Europe or even accept the idea that Europe can have a secular Muslim country. However, we can compare, for example, European Muslims and Muslims in the USA. Muslims came to Europe as a labor force, from the lower strata of society and with more secondary education. The difference in language, culture and education is very noticeable and definite. It should be added that they are not educationally progressing fast, and many still live on social welfare. It is an issue in Europe, and with the economic downturn, many of these workers are "no longer needed." It increases the anti-immigrant groups, which focus on Muslims because they are the largest group. Islamophobia and radicalism in Europe further complicate the position of B&H and Turkey in the EU.<sup>102</sup> However, Turkey is also distinguishable from B&H because 97% of Turkey's territory lies in Asia, and only 3% of its territory lies in Europe. In the text: "European Muslims are the new Jews of Europe", political scientist Nerzuk Curak writes: "Unfortunately, the 1930s are never long gone. They return hidden in the saddles of democracy. They are in Hungary, France, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, and B&H (...) How to integrate two million B&H Muslims? In defense of sanguinity, they quote the great Czeslaw Milosz: "There can be no question of the triumph of force, for this is the age when righteousness prevails."<sup>103</sup>

It would be inappropriate to use "Christian Europe/Christian West" just as calling the "Islamic East." Europe has never been without Islam in geographical, social, and cultural terms and has always benefited from meeting others. Cultural perspective activates many anti-Islam attitudes and legitimizes far-right synchronous sociopolitical processes in the EU. Furthermore, many indications are that this mantra about B&H, which cannot be dismantled for fear of an Islamic entity, is changing as a more substantial chauvinistic, prejudiced, anti-cosmopolitan right. However, it appears that the disintegration of

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<sup>102</sup> Esposito, John, Radiosarajevo, „Esposito: BiH i Turska kao većinski muslimanske zemlje teško će u EU“, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Curak, Nerzuk, Vijesti.ba, „Evropski muslimani novi su Jevreji Evrope“, 2021.

Yugoslavia is not over, and B&H is called "tiny Yugoslavia." French President Francois Mitterrand stated that "the Bosnian state does not belong to Christian Europe."<sup>104</sup> However, Greater Serbia and Croatia would produce a small Muslim country (presumably secular) in the heart of Europe, most likely with the new era of violence because Bosniak people would not authorize the dissolution of B&H. A survey on the streets of Sarajevo at the beginning of the crisis in B&H (2021/2022) confirms it. Most Bosniaks answered that they would go to war to "preserve the state" as they did in the 1990s. However, most B&H Serbs in East Sarajevo (part of the RS entity) believe there will be no war and that all political leaders are manipulating. One man argues that the international community is producing hatred and conflict in B&H among its people/religions and that B&H people should agree independently. One woman claims she would go to war again for the Serbian/Orthodox national identity; however if global geopolitical powers produced the war, she would not.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Bosniak ethnopolitics who would accept any new "peaceful" model of dissolution of B&H are profoundly unaware of the outcome. B&H needs EU directions. It requires sociopolitical progress under the EU and human security development. Consequently, the EU membership of B&H would protect the Balkan fragile region from new violence and inter-religious wars.

Only living in peace already justifies European unification. However, Europeanism "does not consist in uniting with Europe, but in being an integral part of it - specific, which cannot be replaced by anything," wrote Witold Gombrowicz in "Diary."<sup>106</sup> Some authors warn of the possibility of strengthening European integration "based on radical political Christianity."<sup>107</sup> It is driven by religious, national, and racial conflicts in European countries and the "fear" of "radicalized political

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<sup>104</sup> Safet Bandzovic, Nedovršena prošlost u vrtlozima balkanizacije: refleksije „istočnog pitanja“ u historijskoj perspektivi [The Unfinished Past in the Vortices of Balkanization: Reflections on the "Eastern Question" in Historical Perspective], *Historijski pregledi* 2, 2019, 33-71

<sup>105</sup> Face HD TV, Anкета CD-a u Istočnom i u Sarajevu: RAT ili MIR?, 2021.

<sup>106</sup> Gombrowicz, Witold, *Diary* (The Margellos World Republic of Letters), London, Yale University Press 2012

<sup>107</sup> Vidojević, Zoran, Što je na istoku vidika Evrope, In: *Geokultura razvoja i kultura mira na Balkanu*. Niš, Institut za sociologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, 2012.



Islam." However, the dream of traditionalists about the European Christian space is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, many in Europe cultivate memories of religious wars and base an unfounded fear of Islam in Europe. In 1982, "sixteen professors in West Germany signed a proclamation calling for the deportation of all immigrant workers in order to preserve "Christian Western European values ," writes Mark Mozover.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, part of the Christian leadership in Europe views Islam as a rival to Christianity. "If he wants to defend himself and avoid religious or civil wars. Today, Europe is under a fierce blow from Islamic fundamentalism and the violent but insidious Islamic migration."<sup>109</sup> The promotion of Islam there is ardent. It is generously financed by countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar in the West. In contrast, more tolerant messages are sent from Muslim intellectual circles. We can problematize that the concept of Europe after 1945 is an excellent chance for a fruitful meeting of Muslims and Christians on that continent. Of course, the institutions should work more on profiling education and interpretation of Islam to better prepare the Muslim world for Europe. B&H Bosniaks want to be an essential and formal part of European society within a "social contract "that will ensure all Muslims in Europe the right to life, religion, freedom, property, and honor. In return, Europe can be proud to show the world and write its history consistent with the principles of democracy, human rights, and multicultural ideology. The peace and security of Europe are the joint peace and critical security. Tolerance and coexistence in Europe are the life and progress of European Muslims. It is important for Muslims in the EU whether they want a "European value orientation," a life in Europe with a "Muslim value orientation," or a combination of the first and the second, or the second and the first. Islam in Europe and the EU is more than a "guest worker religion." It is shown by the Constitution of the "German Islamic Conference" and the Islamic Council of Europe with its seat in London.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Mazover, Mark, *Mračni kontinent – Evropa u dvadesetom veku*. Beograd, Arhipelag, 2011.

<sup>109</sup> Pera, Marčelo, „Zašto se moramo zvati kršćanima. Beograd“, *Službeni glasnik*, 2010.

<sup>110</sup> Cvitkovic, Ivan, *Religion in the jaws of politics*, Sarajevo: Akademija Nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine [Academy of sciences and arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina], 47, 2019.

## Conclusion

B&H, as the most critical multiethnic discourse of the Region, is in a perpetuating crisis; the ethnopolitical conflicts, multiple memory politics- genocide denial, and secessionism chronologies. Moreover, genocide denial and historical revisionism affect conflict transformation. Numerous regional intellectuals' narratives (i.e., Andrić, Njegoš) combined anti-Islam discourses on polarization between the "civilized" West and the "despotic" East, historiographically, ideologically, and politically. The inaccurate rhetorics related to B&H's Islamic fundamentalism/terrorism (a security threat to the EU) by regional political leaders (i.e., Tuđman, Grabar-Kitarovic) are a metaphor for religious and ideological hybrid conflicts. However, B&H's Bosniaks and Croats should initiate an indicative ethical dialogue of "conflict transformation" regarding the non-functional election legislation - without "external" interference (Croatia). Milorad Dodik exploits European Islamophobia, emphasizes the identity link between B&H Muslims and the Turks, cites Bosniaks as Muslims in public life, and discriminates against inter-ethnic marriages ("cancer" on the otherwise clean and healthy tissue of all three ethnoreligious groups). Therefore, Muslims are a foreign and undesirable element in B&H. Accordingly, they are converts, Islamized by the Ottomans. Moreover, the hostile and incorrect declarations of a few international-EU leaders regarding Islamic extremism in B&H represent the securitization of Islam in a broader sociopolitical context. Likewise, international political leaders' narratives denote an adversary viewpoint towards the region and B&H. It denigrates and invents the adversarial qualifications. At the same time, the autochthonous European Muslims, one of the world's most liberal Muslim nations, Bosniaks, are a potential linkage for peace dialogue between Europe and the Muslim world.

The historical unification of B&H peoples and state existence confirms that secessionist narratives are not artificial but an inherently ethnoreligious hegemonic companion of Croat and Serbian nationalism. The Ottoman period was marked as a legacy of foreign and undesirable power and had to be eliminated from European civilization, contributing to the B&H nation-state's intricacy. The conservative rightist approach against a definitive component of B&H unification was

a consenting matrix for the country's preservation. The jingoism and ethnoreligious nationalism persisted, creating "three" prospective antagonistic collectivities generated by ethnopolitics. The hypothesis that B&H will never be divided because the West - EU will not allow a "100 percent" Muslim state is not grounded. However, preserving B&H's integrity, i.e., the country's anti-dissolution model, and B&H's EU membership, is European security against new violence and inter-religious wars.

All former Yugoslav societies are quasi-secular. The Dayton Peace Accords and its model of the organization maintain an ethnicity/religion factor, not civic pluralism philosophy. It strengthens the line of ethnoreligious separation, mistrust, and intolerance. Nevertheless, B&H religions (Islam/ Christianity/Orthodoxy) can not be state principles. The rebuilding of civil society in divided post-conflict societies is mutually dependent on interethnic interaction and rooted in local sociopolitical culture. B&H citizens, regardless of their ethnoreligious background, are stagnant compared to other nations. Consequently, it reduces the state's progression and its EU direction.

The international failure in B&H requires inclusive liberal conditions for returning to state-building, reconciliation, and developing constructive group and political relationships. The EU should acknowledge that B&H ethnopolitical elites reject, veto, and contradict the progress because of the ethnopolitical power positions in various combinations and constitutional/governance complexity. Furthermore, the USA's geopolitical influence and positive strategic attitude are crucial. Empowering hybrid peace and promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and reconciliation is crucial for the Europe.

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