

The ethnic-confessional mobilization politics as the stability and progression's stalemate in the Western Balkans

Faruk Hadžić

Abstract

The study aims to understand ethno-religious identities arguing that it is a politically significant resource for mobilization and essential for the stability and progression stalemate in the Western Balkans. Moreover, ethnic mobilization induces and spreads a sense of homogeneity and equality and a sense of security and power in the collective „We.“ The gap from democracy is motivated by the fear of competitive nationalist movements, and radical rhetoric leads political parties to succeed. The greater the fear and insecurity in society, the more people are dependent on the government and less instructed in measuring its objective results. If there is a conflict, the strengthening of „our“ ethnic-confessional identity simultaneously strengthens the belief in the diversity of „others.“ The

mutual consolidation of identity has a backlash against the importance of the conflict. That is why conflicts enter again into traditional Balkans' collective myths by which identity is continually affirmed. The practice of constant mobilization, i.e., collectivist homogenization, takes the place of democratic legitimacy, providing political elites with a base of power outside democratic procedures. The risk of current policies is not just the involvement of citizens in the conflict but also the exclusion of the majority of citizens from the political arena and making decisions for the community. Public (social, national, state) interest must not be equated with officials; justice sets boundaries. Emphasizing ethnicity instead of dialogue and transformation of a „utopian discourse“ produces antagonisms and thus stagnates economic, politi-

*Independent researcher, Bosnia and Herzegovina, faruk.hadzic01@gmail.com,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1158-7858>



cal, and cultural development; an obstacle for EU integration. Keywords: The Balkans, Stability, Progression, Ethnic-confessional identity, Collectivity, Mobilization, Ethnopolitics

Introduction

There are different motives for interest in the phenomena. My interest lies in ethnic-confessional identities' arguing as a politically significant resource for mobilization within the peace, security, and progression frameworks. Moreover, the ethnic mobilization induces and spreads a sense of homogeneity and equality and a sense of security and power in the collective "We". The disintegration of ex-Yu (former Yugoslavia) also meant the process of "demythologization" of old myths, but creating new ones and reviving the old ones began. We could observe these processes through the laws of paradigm shifts, which Khun (1962) wrote about

in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Since traditional Balkan myths draw their material from the past, it is no wonder that there are tendencies to manipulate identity through a particular interpretation of history. The cult of the "sacred" past function to preserve the exclusivity and purity of ethnic identity and "returning to the roots." In this sense, there is probably no better example than Kosovo, which is considered the holy land of Serbian Orthodoxy, an actual museum of symbols and a living past of centuries of conflict between Christians and Muslims. (Jukic, 1996)

The first-class normative significance is aimed at emphasizing the primacy of collectivism over individualism and pluralism. Both classical and modern theorists must share the view that ethnicity is primarily a political phenomenon and that despite various technological and organizational

innovations, social structures have remained hierarchical, and any change is only “camouflage used by the elite to hold political power more firmly.” (Malesevic, 2009: 203) Thus, one of the main obstacles to significant resistance remains nationalism as a conservative and discriminatory ideology and a mobilizing force.

Internal ethnic conflicts in almost all Southeast European countries significantly affect these countries’ national security, the EU (European Union) integration and security. The EU integration of six Balkan countries (Slovenia and Croatia are members) through various initiatives can help speed up the region’s socio-economic development and stability, among which regional integration is one of the critical aspects. European integration and regional cooperation are near intertwined. Throughout its history, it was a space of turbulent events and wars that led to unification and separation. Only in the 20th century, two Balkan, two world, and several local wars confirm the thesis that “the Balkans produce more history than it can overcome.” All of this has continuously complicated ethnic relations in the individual countries in the region. As a somewhat limited geographical area and, in turn, exposed to influences coming from the Middle East from Western and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the Balkans, for its part, represents structural fragility. In a figurative sense, Balkanization is broader than the

Balkans and means an area of destabilization and permanent conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups. It manifested at the end of the last century, primarily in ex-Yu (former Yugoslavia). The “Balkan question”, no matter how autonomous its roots, cannot be understood without a broader EU and global power context. The partial successes or failures of peacekeeping missions in the early 1990s and additional concerns about ethnically diverse states’ future led to a negative and limited trend in democratic thinking. It mainly refers to “new democracies” that have nothing new to offer other than elections, which sets up a democracy of “good” or “bad.” Arguments for this can be found in authors who believe that the global democratic wave is exaggerated but the danger from the newly elected leaders.

Fear of losing identity within global communities, such as ex-Yu, after disintegration led to the sudden “emergence of antagonistic individual national identities, becoming indivisible and exclusive.” (Hadžić, 2020: 2) National identities built and consolidated with such confessional exclusivism (associated with ethnic) manifested themselves as extremely impermeable and inflexible, and the rivalry between their national umbrella projects was almost irreconcilable. Therefore, this form of nationalism maintained a firm position in these societies’ political processes. In addition to the existing innate and

systemic defects of the new Balkan ethnic nations, their states are emphatically clerical. The question arises as to whence and since when so much influence of religion. The majority of religions have been a proven factor of destruction and war from which nothing positive emerged even after the war. On the contrary, majority state religions have also become probably the most important national institutions, the leading guardians of new state myths and the brakes on democratization. Of the domestic factors that have contributed to this, the most important are the fusions of ethnic and confessional identities that have helped emphasize borders and differences, especially among peoples of the de facto same language. (Perica, 2018)

The foundation of such a collectivist pattern identifies cultural-ethnic and institutional-political an identity in which the political community fully identifies with the national or ethnic community. (Hadžić, 2020: 6) Thus, collective interests dominate the individual preferences of citizens in B&H (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the most critical discourse of former Yugoslavia multiculturalism, preventing the development of free debate and the inclusion of non-ethnic elements of society (the Dayton Peace Accords Constitution defines Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Croats and Serbs as constituent people. In contrast, the citizen is mentioned only in the preamble, thus denying “others

“the opportunity to participate in the newly established power-sharing system. (Beridan et al., 2010)

The most critical question is how all the ruling systems that have emerged on the scene are, in their essence, ethnopolitics. The answer lies in the constitutive role of war for any policy that has won the people’s consent. “The existence of more ethnic nations implies more narratives of power and circulation in public opinion.” (Bhaba, 1990: 28) Adopting an ethnic identity means participating in the transgenerational transmission of a particular narrative. In other words, one ideology of collectivity has been replaced by another; the ideology of former socialism, for the ideology of nationalism, changed it.

I maintain that religious nationalism is a necessary form of collective representation and a new ontology of political power in the Balkans. The presence of religious nationalism results in insisting on the political and religious symbiosis, the nationalization of the denomination that precedes politics’ religion. I suggest that this is a memory of the pre-political era when the religious establishment invoked the right to rule because religion was an essential element for its establishment. In B&H, ethnicity is confessional; it has begun to be assumed that it can be a member of an ethnic group only if at the same time the person is a member of a particular religion. It leads to the deepening of

the differences and the existing polarization produced by the war and is in the post-war period. It was strengthened by constitutional grounding- the legal system of the state on the facts that they are formed constitutive peoples began to overlap with ethnicity and later with confessional. "(Turcalo, 2018). Ethnic-confessionally homogenized nations born on the ruins of the socialist Yugoslav federation were conceived in tribal hatred, crime, and the privatization of the socialist era's vast wealth and resources created by tens of millions of people as social property. (Perica, 2018) Moreover, today we have a series of fragile countries dependent on external factors and do not have cooperation instruments.

1. Method

The multidisciplinary approach to analytical and descriptive analysis aims to understand ethnoreligious identities arguing that it is a politically significant resource for mobilization and essential for the , security, stability and progression stalemate in the western Balkans. Moreover, ethnic mobilization induces and spreads a sense of homogeneity and equality and a sense of security and power in the collective „We.“ Authors' past and present experience in ex-Yu as general observation and ethnographic fieldwork is a particular value when studying is subtle (relationships, networks, identities, styles, beliefs, or modes) and when the object is sensitive, or otherwise kept behind barriers

that require unlocking access. The in-depth literature review highlights knowledge and research gaps and identifies relevant initiatives.

2. Ethnicity and nationalism

Interest in ethnicity shows that each community is in a hierarchical relationship with the other community and power, and therefore has a need to strengthen the foundations of their community and establish a border with others. (Supek, 1998) It is evident that each ethnic group emphasizes what distinguishes it from others and glorifies its people's characteristic that makes them different. It is on this difference that communities build their identity. Bromley believes that one key feature that distinguishes ethnic communities from other communities is a confrontation between them. (Grbic, 1993) The notion of ethnicity and its various uses, the overall conceptual layering of ethnicity, ethnic identity, and similar notions in the sociological discourse is given unexpected popularity. This situation marked as "unexpected" can be scientifically, epistemologically, and historically problematized in the context of social relations, social phenomena, and social processes, as well as from the aspect of the relative stability of the overall social structure. It is also significant that culture validly loses or is deprived of its noble character. Thus, culture was defined in the modern context as: "how a human community lives and regulates its relations with nature, other people

and God, and transfers these relations to science, technology, and art, to its economic system and institutions.” (Ziga and Đozić, 2013: 345) When it comes to new meanings of ethnicity in the Anglo-American tradition, it was used as a label for minority groups, and in the European tradition, it was used as a synonym for belonging to a nation. The presence of ethnicity is not a negative phenomenon in itself, and there are several successful examples of European societies and states in which the ethnic and civic concept function if well correlated (Switzerland, Belgium).

The closest to the Western European model’s nationalism, i.e., the ideals of integration, modernization, and the civil state, was Tito’s socialist Yugoslavia. In 1948, after the conflict with Stalinism, Yugoslav communism was expelled from the international revolutionary socialist movement due to nationalism. They called it “national communism” or “Titoism.” All other nationalisms in these areas before and after, especially in the last thirty years, could not be categorized as nationalism. The more appropriate names are ethnocentrism, tribalism, primitivism, provincialism, clericalism, religious nationalism, and the most well-known already established term, Balkanization. Balkanization is not nationalism; it is not about any well-thought-out development strategy or building a modern state and democratic institutions, but the demolition of everything and war with

neighbors. If nationalism originated and conceived in Western Europe, and if successful nation-states set certain postulates of nationalist ideology and national development, then Balkanization cannot be nationalism. I maintain that it is the negation of nationalism; it is disintegration, destruction, and then reconstruction without a strategy, philosophy, and ideology, without plan and vision, religious and political myths, and collectivities. It is a process that creates unsustainable states, without the material and human resources to achieve any more ambitious role in the world, problematic national constructions entangled in permanent conflict. (Perica, 2018)

Local actors’ circular actions and the conditions of new international actors are often attributed to mere ethnic theories that are frequently applied in the Balkans analysis. By spreading ethnic studies to describe and understand phenomena often not in-depth, they returned to old theories of “atavistic hatred”: “Serbo-Croatian-Albanian-Bosnian,” including ethnic elements. The fact remains that many theories sometimes suggest excessive schematization. However, the observation on the border between the large “religious” areas that longitudinally divide the Balkans is correct; it remains within the “weak state theory” prevailing in different contexts. The same is true for economic theories of development that do not help in understanding all phenomena. We have an intertwined complex

of seemingly unrelated phenomena: religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and crime - violence.

Ethnonationalism in a multiethnic state is “more rational” for a new but relatively small number of people who, in the old order, could not find or retain a role or position of personally great benefit. For others, for the most part, ethnonationalism is a symbolic compensation, a form of collective affiliation and meaning that best suits their feelings and perceptions. i.e., social closeness. Horowitz points out that in almost all cases of secessionist movements in the third world, one can speak only of the “rational interests.” (Horowitz, 2003: 132); however, that same man will not consider that the ethnonational action was wrong and caused the deterioration of his material position. Shifts in power systems cause (dis)integration that leads to such outcomes, actions of elites that primarily use physical or economic coercion elements, which

causes divisions, relocations, connections, and other changes in relations between large groups of people.

3. Ethnoreligious mobilization

When it comes to studying and determining the origin, causes, and mechanisms of mobilization of ethnic groups, the use of ethnic identity as a resource for political mobilization, we mentioned earlier a significant starting point in the views of theorists of classical elite theory, but also later in the views of modern elite theorists. Elite theorists believe that the fundamental starting point of the elite’s goals is submission and that it is best done by force and deception. Machiavelli saw the combination of force and deception as the most potent weapon that elites can have at their disposal.

Ethnic mobilization is not necessarily born within a new political elite. It can extend, in various arrangements (from renaming a political party to joining and converting to other par-



ties), the survival of the old political elites or the majority of its former members. Although the nations undermined the ex-Yu, they already had the infrastructure for an independent state appropriated thanks to the former common state's polycentric growth. By analogy with the type of nation that strengthens the state, "it should be noted that thousands of people in the bureaucracy (state administration and military), members of their families, depend on the survival and strengthening of the state." (Mann, 1993: 733) Therefore, they became, at a given moment, although not only them, advocates of nationalism and violence. By emphasizing the ethnic contributes to ideological exclusivity and, at the same time, fragmentation.

The Balkans showed the unsustainability of the widespread opinion that the era of nationalism is gone, and the era of multinational and multicultural societies has arrived. (Losenc, 2003: 194) Although Balkan countries are multicultural, they are reluctant to admit it because the area is intertwined with national and administrative-political borders, with different cultures, nations, and religions, but also inherited inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts. Thus the whole process of ethnic mobilization ends with the imposition of a kind of pre-political equalization between the people and its political elite, which is now expected to lead them through the difficulties of a hostile transitional

environment within a highly homogenized political space. (Hadžić, 2020)

Bearing in mind that political mobilization processes are closely linked to extraordinary circumstances, it can be concluded that there is hardly a need for them in societies of stable democracies, whose institutions are flexible and efficient and where public space and debate are open. However, when institutions reflect a more remarkable inability to cope with a range of social problems when a collapse threatens them in an atmosphere of danger, mobilization can become an effective instrument for controlling society, transcending a fragile institutional framework. The non-institutional practice, which at least parasitizes the existing structurally weak institutions, is an essential feature of ethnic mobilizations in the ex-Yu. This practice of creating a base of political power for the political elite is called the people's event, which will be shown later as a constitutive element of ethnopolitics and any new authoritarian order. (Mujkic, 2007) Thus, an extra-institutional legitimation of ethnopolitical elites' power has been sustained by the media's selective engagement, which is under the control of these elites, especially by portraying and creating extreme situations (Stanisavljevic, 2010). Thus, suggesting ethnic conflicts. This ruling class, regardless of different ethnic backgrounds, even territorial distribution within B&H shares similar economic-political interests and is

maintained in power along with the assistance of controlled, directed, and limited hostility in order to maintain fragmentation and mutual opposition of the broadest citizens ethnic strata by ethnicity and sequence other grounds. (Mujkic, 2016)

Religious nationalism is a necessary form of collective representation and a new ontology of political power in the former Yugoslav countries. The use of ethnic and confessional discourse produces that kind of political radicalization. A Croat historian V. Perica stated that nothing has changed in the relationship between religion and politics. "The Croatian Church is not democratic: it wants to be the first to control society; it wants to be above society. It is not seen as part of civil society, on an equal footing with human rights NGOs and small religious communities advocating humanitarian work. It is the same as the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), with the SPC openly saying that it is a state church and a state partner. However, both are primarily nationalist organizations. In Croatia, Catholicism is ethnic; it is primarily about the Church of the Croats." (Perica, 2013) One example of how 'healthy' the Croatian Church is a means of strengthening national identity, accompanied by an interethnic escalation of tensions, is the period ahead of the ICTY's "Six" (Case no. IT-04-74-T, ICTY, Second amended indictment: Prosecutor of the tribunal. In 2004, the ICTY issued an indictment for six former HRHB

leaders – J. Prlić, B. Stojić, S. Praljak, M. Petković, V. Čorić and B. Pušić. On 29 May 2013, the ICTY sentenced all six) verdict in 2017. Persistent denial¹ of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia convictions of high-ranking participants by Croatian politicians and manipulating the public is entirely at the joint" criminal" enterprise level. (Hadžić, 2020) In this way, they instrumentalize it to radicalize political discourse leading to ethnic homogenization.

The result is that political parties that base their programs on ethnic issues remain in power. The fact is that it leads to the reduction of identity to ethnicity and religious affiliation. The political party or political coalition that wins the election determines what the public interest is. On the example of B&H and its Constitution, if an individual is not a priori committed to one of the three dominant ethnic groups (in any social sphere or activity) or his/her ethnic-confessional identity is not the primary determinant of personality, he/she is

¹ Despite a long list of established crimes, numerous evidence about Tudman's role (Franjo Tudman was the first president of Croatia), and the first-instance verdict itself, the Croatian public was persistently convinced that none of this was true. During the sentencing, Slobodan Praljak committed suicide. When the verdict was announced, the Croatian Parliament adjourned, the President cut off a visit to Iceland, the Prime Minister convened an emergency press conference, and senior political officials of the current HDZ and former SDP (Socialist Democratic Party), and Most (a political party in Croatia founded in 2012) started making statements about how the verdict was unfair, unacceptable, and incomprehensible. Bajto, N. (2017). <https://www.tacno.net/novosti/uporno-negiranje-presude-visokorangiranih-ucesnika-na-radini-je-udruzenogzlocinackog-pothvata/>

in advance classified as “different,” “other,” “minority.” (Hadžić, 2020) If we analyze dominant former Yugoslavia national parties, the SDA, HDZ, SDS, and other Serbian parties behave similarly to religious communities, like Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. It is not just about religious leaders entering the national territory and helping national parties, but politicians are also manipulating the faith. (Hadžić, 2020) The government’s emphasis on nationalism and the marginalization of any opposition contribute to demobilization, discouraging voters, activists, and politicians from fighting for a different policy and government change. This constant party competition reduces the citizen exclusively to a “vote” for a particular party, to appear only in a supporting role a script written by the creators of public opinion. Some political parties (e.g., SNSD - Alliance of Independent Social Democrats party) have radicalized their positions concerning the post-war period, for which there are two potential explanations. That can be the result of certain circumstances, such as, e.g., political pressures, but they are also political parties, and their leaders realized over time that the radicalization of attitudes significantly affects their electoral success. (Simovic, 2011) We can explain this by what, through experience, that radical rhetoric has led political parties to succeed in the elections and secured them a government position. Even political parties that considered themselves “moder-

ate” changed their attitudes and favored a matrix.

The mechanisms of ethnoreligious mobilization are still in force today and specially come to the fore during election campaigns in the former Yugoslav countries. There are two crucial moments here: the first is the national awakening through a return to religious roots. Others are speeches by religious leaders in election campaigns in which believers are suggested, most often indirectly, to vote for a particular party. Religious communities often decide elections in local communities, and at the parliamentary level, candidates also seek the support of religious groups. Thus, it is impossible to follow the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics without looking at religion’s role in elections. Religious communities have been present in politics for almost three decades, especially during election campaigns. (Hadžić, 2020) With the help of the inflammatory rhetoric of representatives of ethnopolitical elites, the regimes are maintained on the political stage, retaining the mask of democracy. Moreover, the use of funds by parties in election competitions is not always in line with the democratic principle of “one man - one vote”, because the use of money as a political resource introduces violence-inequality in the distribution of wealth in the political process. (Nassmacher, 2003)



Since traditional Balkan myths draw their material from the past, it is no wonder that there are tendencies to manipulate identity through a specific interpretation of history. Myths appear as a need of almost all socio-cultural communities, they are used as a means of identification and self-identification, and the accompanying possibility of manipulating these symbols for various purposes is indispensable. A clear example of manipulation, political mobilization of mythical symbols in the Balkans is the Kosovo myth and the far-reaching consequences of that “use.” It is not surprising, then, that the first spark of unrest in the former Yugoslavia ignited precisely where the past was most accessible: the memory of betrayal, holy wars, mythical heroism, and unrequited defeats. And then, at one point, that memory suddenly burst

into the present, brutal and unstoppable. Then the bigger war could begin. (Jukic, 1996) Brown (1994) argues that myths and the systematic falsification of historical facts can contribute to the demonization of others and different, and consequently increase hostilities that can culminate in conflict. (Brown, 1994) As an example for this use of myths, we use antagonisms (mythological) between Serbs and Croats: “Serbs, for example, think of themselves as brave defenders of Europe, and Croats as warlike bandits. Croats perceive themselves as heroic victims of oppression, and Serbs as oppressors by nature.” (Holborn and Haralambos, 2000: 235) It is even more significant, equating the overall national habitus and identity with the Kosovo myth.

Despite all the advances in communication and information, ordinary human experience is limited by human life, the individual's capabilities and abilities to communicate, and understand events that transcend time and space beyond his immediate horizon. These abilities and possibilities are limited. We are still dimensioned to contacts with several hundred people, and the length of human life limits our understanding of historical diameters. That is why we attribute "typical" collective characteristics to peoples (including our own), which we often see as fundamental innate characteristics afterward.

4. Stability and progression stalemate

I. Bibo analyzed nations' experiences in Central Europe and the Balkans in the "The Miseries of East European Small States." He stated that these peoples (nations) possess sad feelings of uncertainty, in threat and fear, respectively existential fears for the community. Namely, during their discontinuous histories, they were faced with the disappearance of their state, their conquest and the division between the great powers, and no less tragic experiences of mutual conflicts and attempts subjugation. Between (aggressive foot) nationalism of large and small, the nation has no fundamental differences. The dominant experience of autocrats characterizes the traditional, political-cultural field of these societies, violent orders, dependent and partial moderniza-

tion and developed an inclination to myths and ideas about the people God's chosen ones, to which they are they also relied on the authoritarian-socialist concept and practice (Bibo, 2015).

To paraphrase Gagnon, the mobilization of ethnic politics- previously initiated in the war, unlawful use of force, and ethnic cleansing and mass war crimes- is itself an instrument of demobilization of the public policy, which is portrayed as a security threat. The immediate purpose of this violence was to demobilize the wider population, to prevent a successful anti-regime mobilization from toppling the existing structures of power in the republic, shifting the focus of political discourse and action away from liberalization toward purported threats to the very existence of the nation newly defined in very narrow terms. The effect of the violence was also the construction of homogeneous political space, that is, "political space within which were imposed anti-liberal, authoritarian notions of (Croatness and Serbness), in which the views of challenger elites and the wider population, which were not in line with some Croat and Serbian opinions, were defined as (anti-Croat or anti-Serb)." (Gagnon, 2004: 122) The ex-Yu's hostile climate is part of the elites' strategic political orientation, who faced political pluralism and mass mobilization. Part of the Yugoslav elite responded to these challenges by initiating violence

among different plural communities to demobilize critical sections of its population through an attempt to impose political homogeneity on heterogeneous social spaces.

If we look at the historical aspect of the 1990s, we can easily conclude that they carry profound psychological and material consequences from recent armed, ethnic, religious, and national conflicts. As a result, security cooperation in the EU is still struggling to meet these challenges. The wars and sufferings of the twentieth century, primarily driven by ethnic and religious differences, were particularly characteristic of Southeast Europe. In the 21st century, the Western Balkans remain weak and unable to deal effectively with security challenges independently. It is for this reason that countries are going through a difficult path towards EU and NATO membership. Violence in the Balkans is much described but too little explained. With the power of phenomenal research, vivid reconstruction, and meticulous analysis, M. Bergholz, in his book (2016), revealed the truth about interethnic killings in a B&H town during 1941. Simultaneously, impartial and passionate, and deeply responsible, his research proves that extreme violence has a transformative power to create an identity.

After the US largely withdrew from the Balkans, countries with unresolved conflicts and lack of democrat-

ic competencies such as B&H, Serbia, Kosovo, or Macedonia (neither of these countries is a NATO member) should be the focus of EU foreign and security policy. However, the more we talk about those countries' EU perspective, the less likely real membership becomes, and the influence of Russia, China, or Turkey grows. (Rose, 2018)

The collective attitude is difficult to classify as calculative action, mainly when the disintegration of a multiethnic state and society, as a consequence of collective action based on ethnic association, includes ethnic conflicts, wars, and economic decline. In the broadest sense, ethnic mobilization can be defined as the "consolidation of ranks "of a single national body to achieve a specific goal or do some extraordinary work, most often for "organizing defense against the enemy, "i.e., eliminating the causes of vulnerability. It means bringing members of one ethnic group into a state of readiness, mobility, which should be a prerequisite for other actions or a barrier against a sudden or "unannounced attack by another rival ethnic group or groups." (Abazovic, 2007: 3)

Teletovic argues that ethnic aspects of security are essential to understanding this area's overall security, especially in the 21st century. Southeast Europe's security can also be analyzed, starting from realistic, idealistic, and neorealist approaches to modern security. Based on these

approaches, security is affected by the internal situation in this region's countries, primarily conditioned by the economic situation and interethnic relations. Likewise, the relations between states and peoples living here have a significant impact, and the conflicts with ethnic basis result from these relations. Several issues causing Eastern European transformations also relate to unresolved ethnic and minority issues. Primarily because of this, "in today's conditions, no country has fully resolved relations with its neighbors. This part of Europe will continue to emerge as a fragile area, filled with economic difficulties and crises, nationalism, and xenophobia." (Talatovic, 1998: 1) The discourse "our vs. their sacred land" created unbearable ease of creating fear, manipulating, and motivating new crimes. Its absurdity was confirmed by the right of entity creation, given the prerogatives of statehood. "Such principles could be used as a motive for new "territorial redistribution" and further violence in the in the Balkans. (Hadžić, 2020: 1)

We have been witnessing rising nationalist tensions within the ethnic mobilizations; radical populism, in the run-up to the election, reminded many of the atmospheres during the 1990s. (Mihajlovic, 2017) The absence of a law banning neo-fascist organizations and movements enables the legal promotion of hatred and criminals in B&H, as well as ideas that lead society to degradation. For the EU

and globally, this can signal how, by legal omissions, extreme right-wing organizations are recruited in the countries where they exist and what kind of content they share through social networks. In a broader sense, the return of right-wing ideologies and the parties themselves to Europe in different denominations shows significant operability in the broader area. (EU Parliament). Simultaneously, "the reasons and mechanics of blood disintegration are generally superficially interpreted, witnessing widespread historical revisionist narratives and parallel memory politics, creating the preconditions for future generations' hostilities that may escalate into violence in specific socio-political-economic circumstances." (Hadžić, 2020: 29)

Market changes, political struggles, and wars are mechanisms that trigger and question the fate of the masses of people, regardless of whether they have given their informed and public consent to such changes. They cannot guess with such fatality but reinterpret it in the subjectively most appropriate way, in the form of a religious or secular myth about a community of destiny, a collective identity that meaningfully absorbs fatality, contingency, real insanity. Probably because of this, most find it easier to bear a terrible fate nationally than internationally, as they would rather suffer or die in a family circle than in a hospital.

The lack of supranational and non-party-based civic movements (gathered around the universal values of human and civil rights) affect resistance to the government's ideological-interest manipulation. Moreover, outside the ritual, political matrix framework, concentration on specific programs to stimulate economic, technological, social, human development growth, and regional integration is not progressive. (Hadžić, 2020: 4) Creating a project that would eliminate the conflict's internal rationality would not be a significant issue as long as the general social awareness would be created that a way out of the current hopelessness, depression is possible. Finally, prosperity and stability often coincide.

The international community is closed to progressive voices from the region, to political ideas that could rethink the current EU political stalemate and fight the return of ultranationalist and xenophobic policies in EU member states. Simultaneously, the absence of a democratic tradition, the lack of a "critical public," and the dominance of an "ethnic public" contribute to the security stalemate. Real democratic practices remain an indispensable part of the struggle to achieve or influence wider social, economic, and political changes.

Conclusion

The political position within right national exclusivity that is interdependence connectivity existential

endangerment and anti-democracy. The gap from democracy is motivated by the fear of competitive nationalist movements, and radical rhetoric leads political parties to succeed. The way of ethnicity presence in Western Balkans, particularly in B&H, leads to the radicalization of political decision-makers' current attitudes because such a way of conducting politics enables them to retain the permanent status quo and retain the positions they currently hold they find. In analyzing peace, imposed by economic, political, spatial reasons, we need to combine the historical, systemic, social, and psychological levels.

The emphasis on nationalism by the ruling ethnic-elites contribute to mobilization - discourage voters, activists, and politicians from fighting for a different policy and an inevitable government change. The greater the fear and insecurity in society, the more people are dependent on the government and less instructed in measuring its objective results. If there is a conflict, the strengthening of "our" ethnic-confessional identity simultaneously strengthens the belief in the diversity of "others". The mutual consolidation of identity has a backlash against the importance of the conflict. That is why conflicts enter again into traditional Balkans' collective myths by which identity is continually affirmed. The practice of constant mobilization, i.e., collectivist homogenization, takes the place of democratic legitimacy, providing

political elites with a base of power outside institutions and democratic procedures.

I suggest that the risk of current policies is not just the involvement of citizens in the conflict but also the exclusion of the majority of citizens from the political arena and making decisions for the community. Public (social, national, state) interest cannot and must not be equated with officials, bureaucracy, and political parties; justice sets boundaries. Aristotle warned that tyrants consciously spread fear and mistrust among citizens, not to discuss public issues. It opens the space for the creation of radical democratic practice within the democratic societies as an indispensable part of the struggle to achieve or influence wider social, economic, and political changes. By opening up political spaces for a "gradual transformation of a world of violence into a world of peace," the transformation of a "utopian discourse" can be a severe factor that can not only "disrupt reality" but also fundamentally change it.

On the EU and broader scale, the unification processes must have its regional equivalent and be based on a partnership for development, peace, and cooperation among the Balkan peoples. Emphasizing ethnicity instead of dialogue and transformation of a "utopian discourse" produces new antagonisms and thus stagnates economic, political, and cultural de-

velopment and is an obstacle for regional EU integration. The integration of the Western Balkans into the EU should be in the Western Balkans and the EU's interests.

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