



UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ  
The scientific journal FACTA UNIVERSITATIS  
Series: **Philosophy and Sociology** Vol.2, N° 5, 1999 pp. 135 - 146  
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## THE GEOSTRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THE ENCOUNTERS AND CONFLICTS OF RELIGIOUS CULTURES AND THE CIVILIZATIONS IN THE BALKANS <sup>1</sup>

UDC: 316.4:316.7

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**Abstract.** *Starting from the thesis that the Balkans represented, both regarding its geopolitical position and its culturological status, not only in the past but in the modern times as well, the zone of "transition and choice", the author of this paper discusses the relation between the process of modernization and religion, especially the role of some forms of religious cultures in geostrategic confrontations on this territory.*

*The paper first explores the analytical possibilities and limitations of particular theories and theoretical concepts (such as the theory of the world system, modernization, the cultural context and the conflict between civilization and acculturalization) in order to proceed, from the standpoint of the theory of conflict and permeation of various cultures, to reconsider the issues concerning the influence of modern global, social and political strategies on this territory; in this context, an attempt is made to explore the potential for "permeability", adaptive capacities and resistance of particular national and religious cultures with respect to their geopolitical effect. By pointing to a positive role of the globalization process, modernization and acculturalization in modern society, the author thinks that modern world society is increasingly becoming an open society (cherishing multiculturalism as well as ethnic and religious tolerance of differences) affirming the phenomenon of a "culture with no borders". The author also critically warns about opposing tendencies of fragmentation of the worlds' society and of the processes of "planetary tribalism". In this context, the author analyzes the encounter and conflict of religious culture in the Balkans regarding the present state (of Orthodoxy, Islam and Catholicism), thus pointing to their integrative and disintegrative abilities, to the phenomenon of the mingling of cultures, as well as to the need for the preservation of cultural and national identity and the redefinition of the issues of sovereignty in the light of newly induced changes at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

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Received November 25, 1997

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the paper pertaining to the research project of the Institute for Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, entitled "The Regional Cultural Collaboration in the Balkans" (14TO7) sponsored by the Ministry for Science and Technology of the Republic of Serbia

INTRODUCTION: THE INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK AND  
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH CONSIDERING THE GIVEN TOPIC

In exploring ethnic, religious and confessional relationships in the Balkans various theoretical approaches have been applied in the modern sciences starting from the re-affirmation of the geopolitical approach through the culturological one to the sociological ones. Having in view the complexity of this problem as well as the polyvalent structure of the deterministic knot at its basis, it is necessary to point both to the possibilities and to the limits of particular theoretical approaches applied in its analysis.

At the end of this century it seems that the geopolitical theories and tendencies are being revived in modern society. Geopolitics dealing with the relationship between the state power and space came to prominence in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries - and whose goals, such as the division of territories into spheres of interest and territorial expansion were at the very root of the First and Second World Wars - has long been considered undesirable or even a "fascist" science. Namely, after the Second World War the world moved towards its stability and new social goals, that is, it moved from geopolitics to geoeconomics. In other words, it allotted an increasing importance to economic processes, transnational economic integration, globalization and the creation of the new world economic balance.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the main direction of the political divisions in the world is no longer East-West, socialism-capitalism, but rather North -South, that is, the rich-the poor. At the end of this century, scientists are presenting the thesis about geoculture, that is, about the prevailing importance of culture and civilization in social changes, thus predicting - like S. Huntington does - that the main global conflict in the next century will take place between various cultures and civilizations..

The modern world we live in is characterized by the conditions of an explosive growth of new production forces of the scientific-technological revolution. This process is followed by the globalization of the economy and politics of the modern world. Technologies, the market and democracy, being themselves processes, tend to spread outside the national borders, thus becoming transnational and transcontinental. There is more and more talk of the internationalization of the economy, the world market, democracy without boundaries, meaning equal rights for all the citizens as well as foreigners of all nations, as well as minorities. Within this context, culture, as a specific entity of social groups, as an expression of their diversity, and as the basis of preserving national identity, is increasingly becoming important. It is exactly what is preserved with utmost jealousy and cherished in the conditions of the globalization process that tends to diminish the inter-state borders and make them easy to cross. In the conditions of new technologies it is not difficult to expand physically into a new area, but the main problem is how to penetrate it culturally.

In modern society there is an increasing tendency to affirm pluralism of cultures or multi-culturality. In this sense culture appears as both a bridge and a border between nations. Due to the openness of contemporary society and space mobility of its citizens there is a process of inter-penetration of diverse cultures. The process of acculturation is becoming more intense, thus giving rise to the phenomenon of inter-culturality, that is, cultures are enriching themselves due to their mutual contacts. The globalization processes make various nations come closer, while culture serves as a means of

preserving identity, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of ethnic groups. The future of united mankind will be founded upon a pluralism of cultures, upon their co-existence and convergence. However, S. Huntington predicts that the 21st century will witness a conflict of diverse cultures and civilizations primarily on the basis of their differences in the religious cultures' matrices.<sup>2</sup> He thinks that this global conflict will particularly be intense on those territories where diverse civilization arches intersect each other and where there are so-called imperfect and broken borders. Thence, geoculture as an expression of the strategic links between culture and space as well as the importance of the conflicts of cultures and civilizations as a function of a re-balance of power and of territorial conquest and expansion, that is, of domination in international relations, is becoming more and more important and it provides for the formulation of a new paradigm of geoculture.

Current research shows the limitation of the geopolitical and sociological approach to the exploration of contemporary social processes, especially of the role of religious cultures in modern society. It is for this reason that it is necessary to affirm an integral multi-theoretical and multimethodological approach to the exploration of ethnic, religious and confessional relations in the Balkans, namely, such an approach that will assume collaboration and integration of diverse theories and methods in exploring these phenomena.

#### 1. ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN SOCIAL DYNAMICS: CULTURE AS A BRIDGE AND A BORDER BETWEEN NATIONS

Religious culture represents a relatively autonomous subsystem within the global society cultural system. This is the part of social culture and sub-culture which is permeated with religious goals, values and specific ritual practices. The system itself can be further differentiated - according to its goals and its forms - into a variety of religious and cultural orientations; thus we can speak about diverse forms and types of religion (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc.) Moreover, various kinds of communication are existent between religions (contacts, inter-penetration, just like distance, conflicts, exclusion).

Religious systems are dynamic categories susceptible to changes. Inter-religious contacts are a legitimate phenomenon which is a part of the development of religious ideas and culture. Cultural contacts between religions promote and change their inter-relations as well as their role in social changes. Sofer claims that three types of relationship can be set up among religions in an ethnically and religiously mixed multicultural space, namely, peaceful coexistence and convergence, non-stability and competition, and intolerance and exclusion.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding socio-cultural dynamics, it can be said that the systems of religious cultures are subject to the processes of diffusion, adaptation, acculturation and assimilation, naturally, slower in progression than other phenomena. Cultural contact may bring about conflicts and inter-penetration; it can lead to a meaningful enrichment of the target culture. But, it can also lead to an extremely opposite reaction: it can revitalize cultural patterns or lead to the destruction of the formerly autonomous culture, even to a crisis and

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<sup>2</sup> S. Huntington, "Sukob civilizacija", *Gradina*, Niš, No. 7-8/ 1997, p. 107

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from R. Šećibović, *Uvod u opštu geografiju religije*, Novi Sad, 1995, p. 109

the destruction of its very identity. Such is exactly the case of interaction between the cosmopolitan culture of the world center and the so-called peripheral cultures that tend to lose their autonomy and identity.

In traditional societies cultures have preserved their autonomy due to autarchy and isolation, while in modern society cultures are encouraged to interact. It is within modern cultures that the processes of acculturation, multiculturalism and interculturalism are prominent. They are the ones to undergo a specific "cultural dialogics" and to form a plural cultural identity (E. Morain).<sup>4</sup> Still, modern society is also confronted with the problem of cultural imperialism in the sense of a world center and peripheral societies dependent on it, as well as of a cultural conflict. It is also faced with the problem of preserving national integrity in the conditions of mondialization and globalization of the world. Scientists doing research in the field of sociology and religion, relying on their historical experience and their knowledge of contemporary social processes, have made an analysis of various forms of religious cultures and thus they have explored their function in social changes. Hence various classifications of religious cultures; divisions into "hard" and "soft", into closed and open ones, into complete and instrumental ones, etc.

Following diverse theoretical paradigms (culturalist, sociologist, psychologist, functionalist, or Marxist), various authors have developed their own views of the structure as well as the dynamics of religion, of the forms of communication between religious cultures and their function in social changes. Thus there are various interpretations of the relationship between various religious cultures, be they given from the standpoint of the theory of conflict or of the theory of convergence. Huntington's theory of the relationship between religion and modernization processes in contemporary society is discussed in short here. Namely, Huntington has divided all religions into complete and instrumental. The first type of religion comprises the closed, fundamentalist, and rigid religions that, once in an acculturation process, refuse to cooperate and to mix with others; on the contrary, they exclude others and induce conflicts, thus starting a process of cultural conflicts. On the other hand, the instrumental type of religion provides for and stimulates dialogue and inter-penetration, thus enabling mutual endowment, supplementation of traditions and modernization. In his study dealing with the conflict of civilizations Huntington shows the attitude of particular religions (Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam) toward other religions and modernization processes. He shows that Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity are the religions that are more open to modernization processes than Islam which belongs to the type of religion which is "hard" and resistant to modernization processes. On the basis of this analysis Huntington elaborates his thesis about a possible conflict of the religious civilizations in the 21st century. Other social analysts have also analyzed a degree of autonomy of the religious subsystem or their instrumentalization in political and geopolitical conflicts. Starting from the view that the causes of social changes and wars are polyvalent, these authors emphasize that in authoritarian and traditional societies in which there is no autonomy of the spheres nor a developed civil society, religion is often instrumentalized by politics (state, parties). It happens that the basic class conflicts are frequently masked and re-

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<sup>4</sup> B. Stojković, *Evropski kulturni identitet*, Prosveta, Niš, 1993, p. 139

oriented to the field of religious and ethnic relations. Or, by provoking and stimulating a conflict between various religious and ethnic groups, the so-called religious differences are used to trigger off and stimulate social conflicts. Thus, regarding geostrategic and geopolitical conflicts in view of their history and of their present state, ethnically and religiously mixed areas have been used most often to induce conflicts, the disintegration of mixed states or the destruction of their sovereignty; in the same way they have been used for re-tailoring a geopolitical map, that is, for the re-distribution of territorial influence or for re-colonization and the inducement of dependence on the world centers of political power.

The analysis of the diverse roles and places of religious systems in global societies points to two different approaches and attitudes to religion. On the one hand, religious cultures have a much wider autonomy and thus they mutually achieve democratic communication and convergence, which are an integral part of civilization multiculturalism. On the other hand, religious cultures are also held to lack any autonomy; instead they are politically instrumentalized and turned into instruments of the state or servants of the current politics, thus becoming non-resistant to political abuse on the part of current political elites or international political factors. While in the former case dialogue and tolerance, that is, communication between diverse cultures, provides for richness in diversity and affirmation of an open multicultural society as the society of the future, in the latter case, differences in religious cultures of various ethnic groups are used and abused by super powers for triggering off conflicts (following the principle "divide and rule"). Thus any given territory is brought into forms of neo-colonial dependence. Our further discussion focuses on the reasons why the Yugoslav territory and the Balkans represent both the border and the bridge of a great variety of religious cultures as well as the role these territories play in current conflicts and social changes.

## 2. THE CULTURAL AND GEOPOLITICAL TRAITS OF THE BALKANS - THE BALKANS AS A REGION OF CONFLICTS AND CONVERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS CULTURES

Regarding both its history and its current position, the Balkan region can be said to have represented "the chains of the world" in the sense of its being "the East in the West, the West in the East". It has been considered "the gateway to Europe" being the land of the frontiersmen in "the gap of the worlds". It has been both "the passage and the obstacle" meaning both the "contact and conflict" zone of civilization. It was the first Europe as well as the land mine under the footsteps of Europe, being its constant "barrel of gun powder, ready to explode any moment".<sup>5</sup> Having this in view, Serbia and Serbian lands are "the crossroads of history" as written by Ernest Jinger in 1929.

Any consideration of the cultural and political history of the Balkans reveals its everlasting traits. The Balkan region seems to be the crossroads exposed to all kinds of winds of history and thus it is regarded as a "dark vilayet" or "the Balkan cross".

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<sup>5</sup> More about geopolitical aspects of the Balkans, see in M. Knežević *Balkanska pomemnja*, Đuro Salaj, Belgrade, 1966 and in the anthology *Geopolitička stvarnost Srba*, Institut za geopolitičke nauke, Belgrade, 1997

Moreover, it is the region which gave rise to balkanization as a culturological and political phenomenon and an expression of divisions and conflicts. This region is a paradigm of the mingling of cultures, nations and armies in the past, where diverse civilization arches intersect each other and where centuries-long cultural pluralism existed while always being accompanied with conflicts. This is the region where the geopolitical lines meet and where the aspirations and projects of super powers intersect each other.

The Balkans as a geopolitical territory has always been the subject of research of many foreign and domestic authors. The academician Jovan Cvijić in his study "The Balkan Peninsula and Southern Slav States" put a special emphasis on the Balkans as a space at which various cultural and political civilizations meet, being located in a gap between two basic forms of Christianity and Islam, between the inner and outer rings of the Euro-Asian continent, between the central land and the peripheral ones, between the gravitational fields of the strongest land and navy powers or, in short, between Atlanticism and Euro-Asiatism. Within the context of his anthropo-geographical research, J. Cvijić wrote about the position of the Balkans and the Southern Slav states describing them as "a house built on the road."<sup>6</sup>

Other scientists and writers (such as, for example, Ivo Andrić) have also dealt with Balkan peculiarities. Thus, for instance, Andrić especially dealt with the role of religious cultures in the formation process of ethnic character and the dynamics of social life in the Balkans. In his study *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia Under Turkish Rule* as well as in his letters from the twenties Andrić showed the role of religious culture. Firstly, it is a "bullet of resistance" and defense or an obstacle to foreign invaders; thus it mitigates their indoctrination by trying to preserve cultural and national identity just like it acts as a resistance factor against spiritual conquest of the given territory. Secondly, it is also a bridge providing for spiritual co-existence and integration through inter-penetration with other cultures. More precisely, Andrić analyzed the role as well as the consequences of the Islam break-through into Bosnia in the 14th century, that is, he showed the islamization process. In his study Andrić revealed how in Bosnia, as an epitome of a multiethnic and multireligious territory before the coming of Islam, Bogomilism was a barrier against the Roman Catholic influence. With the coming of Islam this barrier became even more strengthened. Andrić discussed the relationships and cultural dynamics of the three religions and nations as well as their role in social changes. In his analysis he showed ethnic and religious contrasts of the Balkan territory. His poetic metaphor of Bosnia in which three religions co-existed evokes three church bells of the given confessions (of the cathedral, of the church and of the mosque in Sarajevo) striking the hour, each at a different moment in time. In this way Andrić wanted to emphasize profound collective matrices and religious divisions among the peoples.

In his Notes about Bosnia dating to 1920 Andrić wrote about Bosnia as "a land of hatred" in which, due to the collective unconscious, both love and hatred are expressed more passionately and more "explosively."

In his doctoral dissertation *The Development of the Spiritual Life in Bosnia Under Turkish Rule* Andrić dealt more specifically with the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church

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<sup>6</sup> J. Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo*, Belgrade, 1987, p. 115-126

in the Middle Ages, which concerned itself with the preservation of national tradition and national identity. Regarding this, he stated, among other things, that "under Turkish rule monasteries represented some sort of accumulators of national energy... The importance of the Serbian Orthodox Church would lie in the fact that it cherished the strength of the nation itself and thus it managed to save - for the Modern Age - the continuity of the spiritual life and the unbroken national tradition."<sup>7</sup>

Andrić's analysis, as well as those of other scientists, shows that in Bosnia, as a multiethnic and multiconfessional community (regardless of Andrić's sharp observations concerning Bosnia as "the dark vilayet" or "the land of hatred" in which the bells of the cathedral, of the church and of the mosque tell a different time) there was a long period of peaceful coexistence of various religions and confessions (more particularly, of Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam), namely the period of coexistence and convergence of the parallel religious lives in the remote and recent past. For example, in the last fifty years, there was such a period following the Second World War. Some ethnological and sociological research done on this topic confirms the thesis that in this period there was a reduced religious and ethnic distance characteristic for the state of inter-ethnic relations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. However, there remains the question of the events that have taken place on the same territory since 1990 when the invisible "dead hand" of tradition was suddenly brought to life again and when the process of re-traditionalization was revived, meaning when politics together with religion induced a "quarrel" among the peoples in Bosnia and thus initiated a blood-soaked chaos of conflicts and ethnic cleansing. Bosnia is a perfect example of the abuse of religion by politics, when religion loses its autonomy and becomes subordinate to heterogeneous aims outside itself.

In current publications there are three delusions concerning the causes of the crisis on the former Yugoslav territory and of the Balkan conflict, namely, 1) the strategic position of the Balkans and the role of the super powers, that is, their penetration, 2) the collapse of communism and the revival of the ancestral hatred ("shock of the past" and re-traditionalization) and 3) the conflict of civilizations, that is, an explanation of the conflict by means of various cultural and religious orientations (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam).

However, it should be said that the real truth of the Bosnian conflict lies in poly-determinism of the factors and their combination. First of all, what should be stressed is the inability of the national elites to control the conflict and to resolve it in a democratic way on the eve of the collapse of real-socialism and opening up of the post-socialist transition process, even more so on the territory which is characterized by national and ethnic mingling. The failure to do so was an opportunity for ethno-nationalists and ethno-*etatists* to abuse religious cultures. Bosnia is an example of the way in which a multiethnic and multireligious area was used as a platform for the disintegration of the country while the disintegration itself was a genuine product of the conflict between national-theocracies masked by the abused religious culture as well as a manifestation of the geostrategic influence of the external powers upon the territory in question. The ethnic

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<sup>7</sup> I. Andrić, *The Development of the Spiritual Life in Bosnia Under Turkish Rule*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1990, p.82

cleansing is ultimately a manifestation of the national-chauvinist strategies and of the vampire-like revitalization of an ideology of blood and land in the Balkans.

The analysis shows that an implosion of socialism on former Yugoslav territory is also followed by the phenomenon of a late national awakening in the Balkans. These processes are accompanied with a strong politization of religion and ecclesiastical organizations in the war so that the conflict did not only take on ethnic but religious traits as well. Religion is here used as an additional ideological potential as well as a legitimate cover for politocracy and natiocracy. That is how history repeated itself in a bloodshed. Warriors and politicians, hand in hand, found support among some clergy, who were used as war bards and ideologues.

Another matter at issue here is what happens with religion and the church when they enter the field of politics, when they lose their own internal autonomy, when the religious subsystem becomes subordinate to "state reasons" or some other particular goal. History teaches us that, in cases in which religious culture becomes a barrier, that is, an obstacle to communication between members of an ethnically and religiously mixed community, both religious and ethnic distances increase in it. In this case, various religions appear as an additional factor of the conflict and of the disintegration in the internal relations among social groups whose members belong to different a ethos and religion. Geostrategically speaking, it easily happens that the multiethnic and multireligious community becomes instrumentalized by external factors within the international distribution network of the global social power, geopolitical changes and influences. Thus, instrumentalized religious culture may be abused as a means of weakening state unity, as a detonator of much more explosive and extensive conflicts and as an additional stimulus for the numerous activities of separatists and secessionists aiming at the destruction of the country's integrity and sovereignty.

A great deal of research done by historians and other scientists shows that, geopolitically speaking, the Balkan region is both a passage and an obstacle in the geographic, cultural and civilization sense. It is the region of the most profound penetration of Islam into Europe as well as of the furthestmost reach of Roman Catholicism to the east, while at the same time it is the most western fortress of the Orthodox world. As such, it has attracted as well as stopped migrations of many peoples for millennia, including the conquest campaigns of armies and of religions. Thus it represents a unique arena of the conflict of, on the one hand, two basic forms of Christianity and, on the other hand, of Islam. This is the region where the civilization arches intersect. Therefore, it can easily illustrate Huntington's thesis which states that on the fringes and edges upon which various religions intersect and cultural circles overlap and where there are imperfect and broken borders, the phenomenon of collision and conflict of cultures, which induce wider social conflicts, is most frequently and most intensely present. Or, where it is most often a part of more extensive conflicts related to economic and political interests and group hegemony. In view of all this, the war on the former Yugoslav territory, especially in Bosnia, most adequately illustrates complex and intertwined interests and various factors (religious, confessional, local, regional, and global). The Balkan region has again turned into a "barrel of gunpowder" exposed to



political struggles of inner and outer actors of the balkanization process as well as of the geostrategic interests in conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Though the conflict on the former Yugoslav territory has primarily been initiated by increased internal contrasts and contradictions, it should also be said that it was additionally instrumentalized by the super powers, especially Germany and the USA, and their geostrategic interests. The socialist implosion in the Balkans has opened up free space for re-traditionalization ("the shock of the past"). Old passions and myth-making have been revived. Numerous geostrategic projects have been reactivated aiming at splitting up the Balkan area (such as, for instance, the diagonal geostrategy - "the penetration into the east", Islam intersection, center-periphery, Pan-American uni-polarity in the form of the "New World Balance").

In the period after 1989, following the end of the Cold War, the USA has been developing a Pan-American strategy of limited sovereignty in the form of the "New World Order." What is taking place in the Balkans is the strategy of an indirect domination which is practiced on our country and this territory primarily by the USA. The essence of this strategy is correlated with the large capital hegemony in the global plan as well as a new global re-distribution of power in the modern world. All this points to the fact that, toward the end of this century, geopolitical projects are being revived, of course, camouflaging their genuine interests in new raw materials and ecologically pure resources. Consequently, the war in Bosnia, beside showing all the traits of the historical and contemporary balkanization of this territory, also persuasively illustrates geostrategic interests of the super powers that try, by manipulating this territory, to realize their indirect influence and control further east, especially toward Russia. Of course, these potential geostrategic interests are skillfully camouflaged by the pacifist story about human rights and freedom and the alleged "endangerment of USA national interests"; at the same time, while presenting the theory of limited sovereignty, the right to national security is denied to the native nations on this territory.

### 3. GEOSTRATEGY AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN THE LIGHT OF 2000 MEGATRENDS

Historical, sociological and culturological explorations of the phenomenon of religious culture provide us with the possibility to question more closely the relationship between geostrategy and religious cultures in the light of 2000 megatrends. While in the past and in traditional societies, people and social groups were related to the space they lived in and to the "ideology of land and blood" with both culture and politics obtaining an important role in the formation of the society of mechanical solidarity (Durkhem), in the modern age, on the contrary, due to 2000 megatrends (namely, the processes of globalization, internationalization, cybernetics, new technologies) there are different bases upon which correlation and social cohesion are founded, namely, through division of labor (inner and international), and thus a new type of society is formed, namely, that of the so-called "organic solidarity".

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<sup>8</sup> M. Stojković, "Tajne Balkana", *Geopolitički činioci balkanizacije* (an anthology), Belgrade, 1992, p. 204-205

In the conditions of the so-called "third wave" (Topffler) there is a different conception of space and time, of life logic and causality. The law of interdependence is today more than ever in history the one which determines the fate of every contemporary society. Having this in view, at the end of the 20th century, it should be stressed that we are witnessing a very peculiar transition of the traditional geopolitics into geoeconomy and, I would like to add, geoculture. The 2000 megatrends lead to the process of deterioration of sovereignty and to the formation of plural identity in modern society (unity in diversity of the ethnic, the regional, the European and the universal). That is how space is becoming relative, while the future world development will be primarily determined by the power of economy and culture. Due to the prevalence of technology in our century, the super powers do not find it difficult to apply physical force in order to subdue a given area, though they find it difficult to conquer and subdue it spiritually from the inside.

At the end of the century we are witnessing a paradox. Namely, on the one hand, there is an internalization of the production forces and the creation of an integrated world economy. This process is simultaneously accompanied with political integration requiring "a democracy without borders" (G. Atali), that is, a deletion or weakening of state borders, the identification of nations and minorities, giving voting rights to foreigners, etc. Therefore, while "democracy and the market count upon movement and expansion", on the other hand, there is an expressed tendency toward egotism of national identities, toward the emergence and expansion of the "planetary tribalism" phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> In view of this, in the modern world, culture has turned into a refuge of egotism of nationalities as well as the last fortress within which - an age of technicism, unification, standardization and globalization, identity (cultural, national, local and regional) is jealously preserved. Thus it seems to us that Huntington's thesis about the role of the cultural factor and about the civilization conflict expected in the 21st century is neither accidental nor groundless.

Under the conditions of world integration - on the eve of the new millennium - the question of cultural identity and cultural sovereignty will be gaining in importance while other forms of sovereignty will tend to weaken. Thus what should be expected is the transition of geopolitics into geoculture, as well as the re-definition of the concept of sovereignty. Namely, in the future, people and nations will differ primarily according to their specific culture while their technical and economic standards, as well as those of democracy and of democratic procedures, will make them closer and more uniform. Along with the request for interculturality, people and nations will also cherish peculiarities of their cultural character and identity. We can only hope that a great deal of integration and standardization will not be able to destroy this specific trait of the human species - culture as the most beautiful "flower" of a society's own self-production, nor, for that matter, the Promethean human wish to create in the way appropriate for every species, including the "measure of beauty." The same refers to the human right to differ. Therefore, when religious culture is at issue, it should be said that it is not only a part of the past, but it is also an integral part of a people's way of life in the present and in the future. Along with all the scientific and technological progress, man refuses to be reduced to a robot. As for the future of mankind, not only technology and silicon chips and the

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<sup>9</sup> G. Atali, "Demokratija bez granica", *Treći program*, No. 100, 1994

genetic code will decide upon it, but also the accumulated cultural experience of mankind with all its visions that are imbued not only with rich contents but religious values as well.

*Religious culture is the first escape of man and his last refuge* from reality, his transcendence and projection of the desired. If "the hope is a dream of the awakened" (Aristotle) and if utopias are ancient dreams, then religion is "an illusory sun" (Marx) of those who have lost all hope (and are thus condemned to faith), namely, of those whose choice is faith as well as worship. As such, religion is an integral part of human culture, of man's habitus and his view of the world. It is an integral part of human rights and freedoms. In that sense, it is necessary to develop such social relations in which this part of human rights and freedoms will also be respected, while society will develop as a democratic, multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural community.

Starting from the contemporary world's experience and the global megatrends it is necessary to stress the important role of culture in solving the Balkan ethnic conflict. The Dayton agreement has only stopped bloodshed and chaos. The people, as well as the political elite and all other social forces, are faced with numerous problems and tasks for the sake of securing a lasting and just peace in Bosnia. In that sense, it is necessary to develop a modern and autonomous strategy of social development of the Balkan countries at the center of which there will be principles of civil and national equality, good neighborly relations and collaboration. It is necessary to connect the further development of this area with the processes of modernization, reform and democratization of the post-socialist countries in transition. Consequently, an important role is also played by culture which connects peoples and nations on the former Yugoslav territory, in the Balkans and in Europe. In order to fulfill such a progressive and emancipatory role in social changes it is necessary to give culture a different treatment. The development of pluralism and the strengthening of the civil society autonomy should provide for the abandonment of the former subordination of all the social spheres (including the religious subsystem) to the political one. The time is ripe for politics to stop being a superdetermining sphere of peoples' and societies' future fate. Once this is provided for, culture will be able, through dialogue and tolerance of diversity, to enrich itself and society at large and thus it will improve future social development. Until then it is liable to be instrumentalized for purposes outside its own sphere and against itself and this ultimately means its abuse against man himself.

#### INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Our consideration of the geostrategic aspects of the religious cultures' dynamics in the Balkans, with a special reference to the present state, has led us to the following conclusions:

1. The Balkan regions, as a multicultural and multiethnic region, most aptly illustrates Huntington's thesis, namely, the one that states that at the points of the civilization arches' intersection wherein there are no perfect borders among nations and states, encounters and conflicts of members of various ethnic, religious and confessional groups happen most frequently.

2. The conflict of religious cultures is most often mixed and connected with a wider deterministic coupling of the following factors: economic, political, geostrategic,

subjective and objective, internal and international ones.

3. At the places lacking autonomy of the religious subsystem with regard to the political one (which is one of the achievements of the civil revolution expressed, among other things, as the separation of church from state) what happens most often is instrumentalization and abuse of faith for political purposes. In other words, religion is reduced to the servant of the current politics instead of serving, as an integral part of human rights and freedoms, to fulfill man's anthropological and psychological needs.

4. Only by developing a complete autonomy of the civil state, by a consistent separation of church from state and by opening up to modernization processes, is it possible to develop the relations of multicultural cooperation and tolerance, as well as interculturalism, which regards the right to difference and plural identity not as a cause for conflict but as something to cherish.

5. Contemporary world experience leads us to conclude that the world megatrends and mega-globalization processes (expressed primarily through planetary expansion of new technologies, markets and democratic principles) will give rise to the formation of transparent, "soft", passable borders among states and nations. Therefore, it is imminent that cultural peculiarities and cultural identities will gain in importance. In the future, the lines of conflict will move from the political borders to the cultural ones, while the future of a nation will be crucially determined by its cultural capital, its ways of managing it as a rich resource and the importance has for defending one's sovereignty. Hence the thesis about the transition of geopolitics into geoculture in the 21st century has its *raison d'être* just like its importance for re-defining the concept of sovereignty itself.

## **GEOSTRATEŠKI ASPEKTI SUSRETA I SUKOB RELIGIJSKIH KULTURA I CIVILIZACIJA NA BALKANU**

**Ljubiša Mitrović**

*Polazeći od teze da je Balkan uvek, kako po svom geopolitičkom položaju, tako i u kulturološkom pogledu, ne samo kroz istoriju, već i u savremenosti, predstavljao "zonu tranzicije i izbora", autor u radu razmatra odnos procesa modernizacije i religije, a posebno ulogu pojedinih oblika religijskih kultura u geostrateškim konfrontacijama na ovom prostoru.*

*U radu se najpre istražuju analitičke mogućnosti i ograničenja pojedinih teorija i teorijskih koncepata (kao što su teorija svetskog sistema, modernizacije, kulturnog konteksta i sukoba civilizacija i akulturacije), da bi se, potom, sa stanovišta teorije sukoba i prožimanja različitih kultura, izvršila problematizacija pitanja uticaja savremenih globalnih društvenih i političkih strategija na ovaj prostor i u tom kontekstu istražila "propusna" moć, adaptivni kapaciteti i otpor pojedinih nacionalnih i religijskih kultura u odnosu na njihovo geopolitičko dejstvo.*

*Ukazujući na pozitivnu ulogu procesa globalizacije, mondijalizacije, modernizacije i akulturacije u savremenom društvu, autor smatra da savremeno svetsko društvo sve više postaje otvoreno društvo (koje neguje multikulturalnost, etničku i versku toleranciju razlika) koje afirmiše fenomen "kulture bez granica". Autor pri tom kritički upozorava i na suprotne tendencije fragmentacije i svetskog društva i procese "planetarnog tribalizma." U tom kontekstu, autor analizira susret i sukob religijske kulture na Balkanu u našoj savremenosti (pravoslavlja, islama i katoličanstva), ukazujući na njihovu integrativnu i dezintegrativnu moć, na fenomen prožimanja kultura, ali i potrebe očuvanja kulturnog i nacionalnog identiteta i redefinisavanja pitanja suvereniteta u svetlu novonastalih društvenih promena na kraju našeg veka.*