

11-2014

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Recommended Citation

Athanasiadis, Athanasios G. (2014) "Islam as a Way of Defining the National Identity of Bosnian Muslims," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 34: Iss. 5, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol34/iss5/1>

ISLAM AS A WAY OF DEFINING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF BOSNIAN MUSLIMS

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Abstract: Political changes in Yugoslavia in the 1990s triggered a series of changes in the ethno-religious field. The ethnological problems faced by the residents of Bosnia formed part of more general ethnological reshuffling in former Yugoslavia, promoting idealized nations, non-existent ethnic ideologies and fabricated state designs. However, these nations already constitute part of the reshuffling of the reform of New Europe. A major part was played in the formulation of the ethnic identity of Bosnian Muslims by the Islamic Community, under unique conditions and in cooperation with the Communist Yugoslavia of Josip Broz Tito from 1945 to 1990. The description and analysis of these conditions are described in this article.

* * * * *

In the early 20th century, before World War I erupted, in the central Balkans and, more specifically, in the geographical area of Bosnia, the first attempts to assert the national rights of the Muslim community appeared, admittedly under adverse conditions. During the same period, major changes were occurring in the broader Balkan region. Political developments within the Ottoman Empire with the Young Turk Revolution (1908), combined with reshuffling in the political scene of central Europe, led to the annexation of Bosnia in 1909 under Hapsburg dominance. This was the outset for the overturn of the Muslim people’s geopolitical aspirations and the claim that they bore in view of their independence. Thus, the Young Turk diplomacy lost

significant pivotal influence in the Balkan diplomatic scene.¹ In 1901 Ehli-Islam describes this claim as follows:

... The pressure exercised against Bosnia and against its Serbian and Muslim residents by Kállay (Benjamin Kállay, 1839-1903)² and his government is so intense and unfair that it drives them to emigrate, leaving behind their fatherland. The reason for this misfortune is double: the government does not allow them educational independence and the right to property and their persecution is continued and their property assets usurped, while, on the other hand, foreign residents are allowed to enter their land, which results in it being impossible for them to grow socially, commercially, religiously.³

In order to fully elaborate on the matter, we consider it necessary to highlight certain basic principles that make up 'Islamic ideology' as a social phenomenon and are associated with the concepts of nation and history. One such aspect is the widely accepted view that Muslim teachings cohesively connect spiritual and secular people and, therefore, the overall activity of the faithful.⁴ The historical conjuncture is portentous: the juxtaposition of the West and the Islamic world counted its losses in Algeria following the extreme reactions regarding the *Satanic Verse*⁵ by Ahmed Salman Rushdie: unprecedented violence which led to another 'civil' war that

¹ On February 26, 1909, Turkey officially recognized the annexation of Bosnia. It was during this period that the centuries-long, direct dependence and manipulation of the Muslim population by the Constantinople center came to an end. Bosnian-Muslim historians regard this development as a major loss, as desertion, which, ultimately, had a deep impact on relations between the two peoples – cf. M. Imamović, *Historija Bošnjaka*, [History of Bosniaks] (Novi Pazar: Centar za bošnjačke studije 'Kulturna baština Bošnjaka', 2007), pp. 418-423 and 429. Soon, however, politicians and institutionalized agencies representing the Bosnian-Muslim society recognized the sovereignty of the Hapsburgs so they could be included into a legitimate regime.

² Kállay had excellent knowledge of the ethnic composition of Southern Slavs in general and the presence of Serbs in Bosnia, given that he had served as a Consul in Belgrade from 1867 to 1875. His work *Istorija Srba* [History of Serbs] was written in 1882 and does not seem to be disputing, historically or ethnographically, the ethnic dominance of Serbs over Bosnia, although he would later express somewhat differentiated views.

³ Ehli-Islam, *Bezakonja okupacione uprave u Bosni i Hercegovini* [Unlawfulness of Occupational Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Beograd: Čigoja Štampa, 2001), pp. 32-33. The first edition was published in Novi Sad, Srpska Štamparija 'Sv. Miletića' in 1901. Ehli-Islam lucidly describes the disenfranchisement of Muslim and Orthodox populations and the strengthening of the Roman Catholic clergy in Bosnia during this period. The author describes the Serb-Muslim connection that was growing against the "common persecutor", the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

⁴ In regard to the relation developed between nationalistic ideologies and the involvement of religion with the collateral phenomena accompanying it, see P. Lekkas, "Εθνικιστική ιδεολογία" [Nationalistic Ideology], *Five Working Hypotheses in Historical Sociology*, (Athens: Katarti Publications, 1996), pp. 163-194.

⁵ Ahmed Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, (Athens: Psychogios Publications, 1988). This is the case of an Anglo-Indian prize winning author, who published a book under this title which the Islamic world considered to be blasphemous to Prophet Mohammed. A barrage of recriminations by Islamic

broke out in 1992 and ended in 1997. In an Islamic context, the concept of state should be perceived as inherently expressing both religious and political ideology. Furthermore, it should be considered a given fact that during the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans, particularly in the southern Slavic countries, there was no consciousness of the term “nation” in the contemporary sense.

Nevertheless, in order to define Islam in relation to the religiousness cultivated by its faithful in Bosnia, we need to investigate its fundamental institutions and structural aspects: the *umma* (faithful people), the *shari'a* (Islamic law), the *madrassa* institution (religious school), the *waqf* as foundations, the *ulama* (scholar-priests), the Islamic community, as well as their relationships with the political scene at any given time. It should be added that movements or religious trends, revisionary or conservative, which develop both within the community and in the broader Islamic world play an important role.⁶

In the particular multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of Bosnia, the picture perceived by the international community had a favorable effect,⁷ shaping a different mentality among Muslim citizens themselves, most of whom – as part of the single state of Yugoslavia and, by extension, of Europe—felt European and assumed a European attitude. Sarajevo and its political leadership are clearly oriented towards the vision of “United Europe.” Credited with the experience of the successful 1984 Winter Olympics, they literally looked towards the West, although the social structures and behaviors are characterized as Eastern in nature.⁸ At this point,

fundamentalists ensued, led by the '*fatwa*' issued by the Iranian religious leader Ayatullah Khomeini (1902-1989) in 1989, according to which any Muslim had the right to kill Rushdie; in fact, a price was put on the author's head. Assassinations of translators and publishers of the book followed, protests by thousands of Islam followers and intense “religious terrorism” on the part of religious leaders. This was the prevailing climate a short while before the war broke out in Bosnia, which, in our opinion, had an impact on both the domestic Muslim community and the international Islamic climate.

⁶F. Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekti islamskog reformizma*, [Socio-legal Aspects of Islamic Reformism] (Sarajevo: Islamski Teološki Fakultet, 1990).

⁷ Cf. the professor's view regarding the role of Islam in South-East Europe – S. Balić, “Povijesni značaj islama za jugoistočnu Europu: (s posebnim osvrtom na Bosnu),” [Historical Significance of Islam of Southeast Europe (With Special Attention on Bosnia)] *Behar* 37 (1998): pp. 8–11.

⁸ Women do not wear the chador or the burka, of course, in the strict manner that this is encountered in other, mainly Arabic, countries. Men rarely wear a fez; they behave in a civilized manner and generally present a secularized attitude, more in tune with western Muslim standards. They often enter into mixed marriages and widely consume alcohol. Such conduct implies the penetration of secularized Islam into society. See N. Perišić, *Mješoviti brak u BiH- Od poželjnog do prezrenog – mješoviti brak kao kulturna i politička kategorija u savremenoj BiH*, [Mixed Marriage in B&H—From Desired to Rejected—Mixed

we would agree with the semiotic observation of Professor Darko Tanasković, who, presenting the social idiosyncrasy of these people, noted:

...The Bosnian Muslims are not fervent Mujahedin. They are more passive citizens; many of them are professors, teachers, physicians, farmers... these are people who identify elements of their national uniqueness in their religion. The everyday lifestyle of most young Muslims is distanced from religious mandates.⁹

This social reality lays the foundation for the European dream of Bosnian Muslims.¹⁰

As a religious entity, Islam has a radical impact on the thinking of the faithful and contributes to the meaning of their political views and historical positions. The term '*musliman*', signifying a person of the Muslim faith, although a purely religious one, exceeds its religious character in the case of the southern Slavic residents of Bosnia and acquires ethno-political meaning so as to confer a specific political identity.¹¹ Furthermore, the '*Bošnjaštvo*'¹² concept of national obsession is strongly associated with its religious counterpart of *musliman*. This

Marriage as Culture and Political Category in Contemporary B&H](Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012), and M. Milenković, *Od Libana* [From Lebanon], *op. cit.*, p. 94. For differences among Bosnian Muslims see also Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, the Holy War*, trans. Eleni Tserezole (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2001), pp. 359-382.

⁹ D. Tanasković, *Zašto se prikriva radikalizacija islama na Balkanu?* [Why is the Radicalization of Islam in the Balkans Hidden?] in *Islam i mi*, [Islam and We] (Beograd: Partenon, 2000), p. 86.

¹⁰ This does not mean that there is absolute identification between Bosnian Muslims and those “beyond Gibraltar” or even with those living in Europe who are not native residents, such as Bosnian Muslims. See the well-documented article by X. Bougarel *Bosnian Islam as “European Islam”*, *Islam in Europe (Diversity, Identity and Influence)*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh (Budapest: Central European University, E. Fokas, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, 2008), pp. 96-124.

¹¹ This position is encountered in the works of all Bosnian Muslim historians, e.g. M. Imamović, M. Filipović, S. Balić, R. Mahmućehajić, etc. See A. Zilkić, “*Historijski značaj islama na Balkanu*,” [Historical Meaning of Islam in the Balkans] in *Islamobalkanika* 1, (2010): pp. 17-23. Indeed, in relevant Yugoslavian literature as of 1967 and onward, the spelling with a capital M appears (*Musliman-Muslimani*), indicating those who belong to the ethnic group of Muslim residents of Bosnia, later to become *Bošnjaci*. Additionally, X. Bougarel, *Od “muslimana “do” Bošnjaka” pitanje nacionalnog imena bosanskih muslimana*, *Rasprave o nacionalnom identitetu Bošnjaka*, [From “muslims” to “Bosniaks” the national question of the name of Bosnian Muslims] (Collective Volume), (Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju u Sarajevu, 2009), pp. 130-131. Indicative of the vagueness of the content of the term “Muslim” is the answer given in the context of an experiential scientific survey at Sarajevo Islamic University to the question “*which faith do you belong to?*”, which was: “*to the Muslim one*”, at a rate of 8%, while only 67% answered with the correct response of “*Islam*”. See Islamčević et al., *Kriza Bošnjačkog identiteta* [The Crisis of Bosniak Identity], (Sarajevo: Fakultet Islamskih Nauka, 2012), pp. 17-18 and 22.

¹² In the sense of the newly-coined term “*Bošnjaštvo*” we translate the concept of the ethno-religious identity or the Bosnian Muslim ethnic identity or, even, the cultural definition of a nation. It is a synonym of “*Srpstvo-Serbism*” and “*Hrvatstvo-Croatism*”. It would correspond, to a certain extent, to the Greek term “*Romiosyni*”.

association, following the ideological processing that ensued, was primarily perceived by Bosnia's religious leadership and then expanded into society. The slogan “*Bošnjaštvo* is our religious obligation”¹³ coined by hafiz Abdurrahman Kujević is just one of numerous such slogans appealing to the faithful of Bosnia. The particular elements that compose *Bošnjaštvo*, namely historicity, statism, cultural uniqueness, the role of Islam, etc., were respectively highlighted, in their turn. Adnan Jahić moves along similar lines when attributing a deep religious nuance to this ethnic content by considering its adoption as returning to the "house of God" (*dar-al-islam*).¹⁴ Such a view goes beyond moral teaching, since it urges the faithful to battle and confers the character of a holy act, namely *jihād*.

The view of Bosnian Muslim Professor of Political Science Nijaz Duraković on the influence of Islam on the cultural production of Bosnia and its residents is typical. This is what he characteristically writes: "...when Bosnia was occupied by the Ottoman, a superior civilization was immediately transferred, modernizing state structures and military administration and more effectively organizing the feudal system..."¹⁵ In the author's view, the Ottoman presence had a positive impact, since the society of Bosnia progressed culturally, grew economically, its military was strengthened with the new system established by the Ottoman Empire and entered its modern history period smoothly. Therefore, there was never any issue of liberating Bosnia and Herzegovina in the model of the liberating movements that occurred in the whole Balkan Peninsula in the 19th century, particularly in Greece and Serbia, so as to overturn Ottoman rule.¹⁶ This view is explicitly supportive of the idea of the birth of a nation and contributes towards beautifying the role of Ottoman Bosnia, so that the picture of the medieval conqueror as a benefactor would be reinforced in the whole of society. This has resulted in religious Islam “sanctifying” ethnic origin, relieving it of undesirable elements, and, ultimately,

¹³ Ab. Kujević '*Bošnjaštvo nam je vjerska obaveza*', [Bošnjaštvo is our Religious Duty] with characteristic declarations expressed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpDgECiGnUA – also cf. by the same '*Hutba-Bošnjaštvo je sinonim islama*', at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKAn4OM1TkQ>.

¹⁴ Cf. the comments by X. Bougarel *Bosnian Islam*, op. cit., pp. 121-122. In the view of Adnan Jahić, the legal system heralded is more similar to a semi-theocratic regime influenced by the West, which would appear in political science as '*Islamic Republic*'.

¹⁵ N. Duraković *Prokletstvo Muslimana* [Damnation of Islam], (Tuzla: Harfo-Graf, 1998), p. 16.

¹⁶ When faced with this type of argument that does not hold up to scientific criticism, we cannot but refer the reader to the monumental monograph by M. Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni 1875-1878* [Uprising in Bosnia], (Sarajevo: Izdavačko preduzeće 'Veselin Masleša', 1960). This voluminous book indicates in the most detailed and strictly scientific manner what the role of the Ottomans, of economy, society, culture and the hunger for freedom of all residents of Bosnia was from the beginning of the 19th century until its final liberation.

bestowing the content of identity to it. This “sanctified” Bosnian Islam is often promoted as an Islamic model within European structures. In other words, Bosnian-Muslim historians try to present this socio-religious model as the cradle of Islam in the heart of Europe.

When defining the goals and particularities of Pan-Islamism in South-East Europe, Serbian academic Radovan Samardžić wrote:

...Those belonging to Pan-Islamism are, in fact, vectors of a belligerent branch of a multi-ethnic religious community where citizens do not belong to the same ethnic group, the same historic tradition, do not have a common cultural past or language, but they define religion as the universal regulator of their social and personal lives... Islam is at the top of the pyramid and their correlation with Islam, in particular within specific circles, officially signifies entering the realm of human consciousness and a substantial relationship with the divine.¹⁷

What is also distinct on the part of Bosnian-Muslims is disclaiming the view that the political ideology of Islam was a decisive parameter in defining the Bošnjastvo ideology. The potent argument they forcefully put forward to support this is the political-religious difference of Islam when compared to the Byzantine and Serbian tradition, "...who are no different in ideology from the Catholics and Protestants of Europe".¹⁸ There is a well-established group of Bosnian Muslim historians stating that the three religions were created in respect to the three ethnic communities in Bosnia already in the early Middle Ages. Mehmedalija Bojić characteristically expresses this view when he writes:

...With the eradication of the supporters of the Bosnian Church and their conversion to the three religions during the 16th century, three strong religious communities were established in Bosnia: the Muslim one, the Orthodox Christian one and the Roman Catholic one. It was from these three communities that three distinct ethnic entities were formed in the 19th century, namely Bošnjaci-Muslimani, the Serbs and the Croats.¹⁹

In other words, what is used as documentation is the view expressed by the Christians of medieval Central Europe in the doctrine: "*Cuius regio, eius religio*". Scholarship, however, is

¹⁷ R. Samardžić, *Prodor islama u jugoistočnu Evropu* [Penetration of Islam into Europe], (Beograd: Upporedna idraživanja, 1991) pp. 35-54. At this point the reader can compare the view of Adil Zulfikarpašić on pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism in the analyses of M. Jevtić, *Panislamizam i panturkizam u ideologiji Adila Zulfikarpašića, Od Islamske deklaracije do verskog rata u BiH (Prilog "Islamska Deklaracija" Alije Izetbegovića)* [Panislamism and Panturkism in the ideology of Adil Zulfikarpašić, From the Islamic Declaration to Religious War in B&H (Appendix "Islamic Declaration of Alija Izetbegović), (Prnjavor: Grafomotajica, 1995), pp. 69-77.

¹⁸ See M. Imamović *Historija Bošnjaka*, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁹ M. Bojić, *Historija Bosne i Bošnjaka* [History of Bosnia and Bošnjakdom], (Sarajevo: T.K.D., Šahinpašić, 2001), p. 59.

called upon to investigate the following question: which religion cultivates direct involvement in the shaping of the ethnic groups' political agendas, entrenching 'holy texts' as state laws on the basis of theocratic sentiments? In the case at hand, it is obvious from the political options projected on the political scene that religion is politicized not only as dogmatic teaching, but – mainly – as a social function that clearly acquires political and cultural features of the new nation. The use of naming the new nation, due to its religious past (musliman=Bošnjak) echoes religion itself, so as to distinguish the evolution of the ethnological phenomenon from that of other groups of the same race and language, who they used to be cohabiting with until recently. For Bosnian Muslim historians it seems that the major event that contributed to the ethnic mutation of the native residents of the broader Bosnia territory during the Middle Ages was their religious assimilation by Islam, which led to the creation of the “Bosnian Muslim nation”²⁰.

Of course, there have also been spiritual movements within the Muslim intelligentsia and literature, which were sometimes oriented towards the Serbian and at other times towards the Croatian national choice. Interactions in the course of these trends influenced their public discourse and often contributed to the transformation of the terms Bošnjak and Musliman. Printed material of an educational and literary content, such as *Behar* and *Gajret*, became the voice of such tendencies and hosted articles by Muslim literary authors as well as by the members of the Bosnian intelligentsia.²¹ There have also been, however, some “heretics” concerning the coalescence of the national and religious entity on the part of Muslims. A typical case illustrating this is Šukrija Kurtović, who underlined the difference between the ethnic and the religious aspect. Indeed, because he was fully aware of his own Serbian origin, he sought to

²⁰ This is what M. Imamović writes: “...devotion to Islam decisively shaped the Bosnian-Muslim or else Bosnian ethnic group, just like it happened in the rest of the southern Slavic groups who spoke the same language (Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins), which, of course, have a different religion, culture and political experience.” (*Historija Bošnjaka*, op. cit.), p. 9.

²¹ Ibrahim Kemura. *Uloga Gajreta u društvenom životu Muslimana 1903-1941*, (Sarajevo: V. Masleša, 1986). Cf. *Gajret* for its pro-Serbian orientation in the article by A. Jahić, “O neuspjehu nacionaliziranja bosanskohercegovačkih muslimana u Monarhističkoj Jugoslaviji” [About the Lack of Success of Bosnia-Herzegovinian Muslims in Monarchist Yugoslavia] (Center for History, Democracy and Reconciliation), p. 6. Regarding this concern a Conference was titled: *Suočavanje sa prošlošću- put ka budućnosti; Istorija Jugoslavije u dvadesetom veku* [Confronting the Past, Path toward the Future: History of Yugoslavia in the Twentieth Century]– Opatija, Beograd 2009', at <http://www.centerporhistory.net/index.php?option>.

find a common base for the political co-habitation of the Serbs and the Muslim residents of Bosnia.²²

Nevertheless, a contradiction arises which, in my view, has not yet been sufficiently interpreted by Muslim historians. Šukrija Kurtović is meaningful in the context of the religiosity sown by the Ottoman, it also hails fighters who struggled for the independence of Bosnia. Such a fighter was the famous Visier Husein Kapetan Gradašćević (1802-1834), who resisted in arms against the Ottoman yoke. Another person honored as a glorious defender of Bosnia and its ideals is Ali Paša Rizvanbegović (1783-1851), who collected troops, fought and finally defeated Gradašćević; Sultan Mohammed II rewarded him handsomely for this action (1789-1839).²³ This contradiction entails the fact that present-day Bošnjaci honor the persecutors of the Caliphate as well as its defenders as 'national heroes' who in fact fought at the same time period. They pay tribute to both Gradašćević and Rizvanbegović. These internal contradictions indicate the darker aspects of the Bošnjaštvo phenomenon.

A careful observer would recognize the common ground in the historical argumentation of Bosnian Muslims, namely the dual position: on the one hand, the two-way course of direct interaction between Bošnjaštvo and the Islamic religious factor, and on the other, the view collectively adopted that an anti-Serbian or anti-Croatian stance to the idea of Bošnjaštvo is, in essence, anti-Islam; in other words, the deeper causes of the emerging dispute are religious.²⁴

²² Radical Islamic circles regard Kurtović's "vision" and views as "perfidious" and "acquiescent" in relation to the self-awareness of the Muslim community. Bataković Dušan is most successful in his commentary of *Kurtović's* political actions and of the persecutions of the Serbs after the attempted murder on the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian throne in 1914 in Sarajevo. An event that, as he comments, came hand in hand with the newly renewed cooperation between the Roman Catholics and the Muslims. D. Bataković. *La Bosnie-Herzegovine: le System des Lalliances, Islam the Balkans and the Great Powers (XIV-XX centuries)*, ed. Terzić Slavenko, (Beograd: S.A.N.U., 1997), pp. 335-347. Cf. Š Kurtović "Nacionalizovanje muslimana," [Nationalization of Muslims] *Narod*, [Sarajevo] 1914. A view that differs from that expressed by Bataković is expressed by R. Donia, who characterizes Muslim politicians with a Serbian or Croatian orientation as "ephemeral choices" aiming at an illustrious career course. Behind the apparent Serbian or Croatian national-ideological choice, there was a latent "Muslim politician who never deviated from his religious center", according to the American historian. See R. Donia, "Vještački nalaz," [Artificial Finding] (*Časopis za Suvremenu Povijest*, et. 36, No.1, 2004): p. 84.

²³ See Ham. Kapitzić, *Ali-paša Rizvabegović i njegovo doba* [Ali-paša Rizvabegović and His Time], (Sarajevo: A.N.U.BiH i Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu, 2001). As for Gradašević, also known as "the Dragon of Bosnia – Zmaj Bosne", he died displaced and under unclear circumstances in Constantinople at a young age. For a comparison of the two heroes see M. Jevtić, *Od Islamske deklaracije*, op. cit., p. 60.

²⁴ This view was found in M. Filipović, M. Bojić, M. Hatžijahić, Mustafa Cerić, S. Balić, as well as in the works by other historical and religious leaders of Islam, who – in order to strengthen their ethnic views – present the ideas of their adversaries using epithets such as: "antimuslimanska"-anti-Muslim,

Professor Mustafa Cerić, former *Reis-I-ulema* of the Islamic community, further specified the limits of this polemic against Islam as a practice of the European forces. What he meant was that Europe was behind the persecution of Bosnian Muslims: "...They accuse us for being faithful to Islam! They accuse us of being criminals...which means that Islam commits crimes in Europe".²⁵

Another point confirmed is also that the Muslim of Bosnia did not raise the dilemma of exploiting one's religious sense to construct a nationalistic ideology. There was never such a necessity from within. Benjamin Braude supports, in this case, "ethnicity was based on religiosity and common cultural origin, whereas the concept of the state underpinned in the context of territorial presence".²⁶ There was a manifest acceptance of the fact that the national and the religious fully coincide. In any case, it is clear and blatantly obvious that Bošnjatvo uses religious terms to define its identity. This is why it self-exempts the presence of Serbs and Croats of other faiths from its political content; the result is that it limits itself to its own faithful, but also opens up communication channels with others of the same faith at an international level, such as, for example, the Turks. This explains the psychological affinity felt by present-day Muslim residents of Bosnia with a Turkish businessman establishing himself as a professional in Bosnia. A coupling of a Bosnian Muslim with a Turk favors the relationship as opposed to, for example, a coupling of a Bosnian Muslim with a German.

Another aspect holding together the relation between Bošnjaštvo and religion in Bosnia in the 21st century is the secular character of the latter. This secularization, which is mainly

"antiislamska"-anti-Islamic, *"antibošnjačka"*-anti-Bosnian, as synonyms or of exactly the same meaning, in other cases. This way, they attribute religious features to their national 'birth'. A good illustration of this view is the monograph by H. Čaušević, *Antiislamski sindrom kao faktor destrukcije Bosne i Hercegovine*, [Anti-Islamic Syndrome as a Factor of Destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina] (Sarajevo: Biblioteka 'Tribina', V.K.B.I., 1994). Most frequently, this argument was put forward in discussions with international community representatives so as to strengthen the diplomatic aspects of their argumentation in the context of a holy war during the civil conflict that broke out in 1992-93 between Serbians-Croats and Bosnian Muslims. See also Ath. Athanassiadis, *Ο εμφύλιος πόλεμος στη Γιουγκοσλαβία 1990-1995. Πτυχές της ιστορικής και θρησκευτικής του διάστασης*, [The Civil War in Yugoslavia (1990-1995), Historical and Religious Aspects], (Thessaloniki: Vaniats, 2008), pp. 305-326.

²⁵ M. Cerić, *Islam u Bosni*, [Islam in Bosnia](Sarajevo: V.K.B.I. i Rijaset Islamske zajednice 'El – Kalem', 1994), p. 12.

²⁶ B. Braude – B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, (New York-London: Holmes & Meier, 1982), p. 77.

reflected in texts by clerics,²⁷ acquires a tone of political discourse. To the unsuspecting reader who is not aware of the priestly capacity of the *reis-u-lemma*, the public discourse expressed seems to be primarily political and secondarily religious.²⁸ This is what makes the penetration of sacred Quranic elements obvious in fulfilling secularized social mandates. At the same time, though, in the rationale of a faithful Muslim in Bosnia, this action is, on the one hand, a justification of their religiosity, and, on the other, a call to fulfill the expectations of their faith. This organic relation developed between Bošnjastvo and the faithful feeds reinforces their ethnic inter-connection.

The “ethnic Islam”--if this un-scholarly term may be used--for Bosnian Muslims, becomes a point of reference and acquires the value of an ethnic-cultural decree, which, when threatened, brings together all organic members of the same faith, who rush to help. In the Muslim world camp, the case of this ethnic-cultural decree has operated as a quasi-threat, which, from a religious point of view required its moral and military intervention. The impact of this measure is confirmed by the participation of volunteer soldiers in the war against Serbia and Croatia in the bloody events of the '90s.²⁹

The clerical status quo was closely related and went hand in hand with political parties that appeared--at least in the beginning--in the independent state (BiH). The ideological axis along which the clergy moved and influence their flock was based on the Quranic principle of the "brotherhood of the faithful". The aim was to establish the prerequisite conditions that would shape the political platform on the basis of which the ethnic notion was to be negotiated first,

²⁷ Cf. M. Cerić, *Islam u Bosni*, op. cit., passim and M. Cerić, *Bajramska Hutva-Poruka* [Bairamic Hutva-Message], (Sarajevo: Povodom Ramazanskog bajrama, El-Kalem, 2000), passim. The Islamic-clerical discourse expressed in Bosnia is directly connected/associated with the promotion of the “national language,” “bosančica”, resulting in mutual strengthening of the prestige of both poles, namely that of the new language and religion. Cf. the excellent comments by P. Lekkas in *Nationalistic Ideology*, as above, p. 192.

²⁸ J. Rob. Donia, “Nationalism and Religious Extremism in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo since 1990,” (*Europe*”, 14.6.2007), in which the Professor at Michigan University analyzes the penetration of religious nationalism into the political life of Bosnia.

²⁹ See Gilles Kepel: *Jihad, the Holy War* op. cit. and Ath. Athanassiadis, *The Civil War in Yugoslavia*, as above, pp. 305-311; Cf. the views expressed by Sulejman Mašović, *Genocide against Boshniaks, Religion and the War in Bosnia*, ed. Paul Mojzes, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 145-150. It is without a doubt that the phenomenon of ideological volunteers (nationalists) was one that also drew the attention of the Serbians who came to notice the Russian and Greek volunteers taking action to assist their Serbian counterparts sharing in the same religion. However, these two cannot be compared, either quantitatively or qualitatively, in view of the fact that the Greek volunteers were very few while the Russians were dozens. On the contrary, it was noted, that on the battlefields of the Serbian-Bosnian war of the '90s, there was a large number of “Mujahedeen religious warriors” originating from Muslim countries.

followed by the state with its prevailing religious features at stake. The political 'Islamic Declaration-*Islamska Deklaracija*' was the spark for even closer cooperation of the religions intervention in public life and the demands by the political world in B&H (and the S.D.A. Party in particular) for a state organized along religious ideals³⁰. The interconnection of the *Declaration-Deklaracija* with its religious background is described in the most vivid and revealing manner by the then leader of the Islamic Community, Jakub Selimovski:

...Viewed from the religious point of view, the Declaration should not be inflaming with its content, particularly where the Muslims are in the minority among residents, since it is a religious mandate that social structures should be organized on the basis of Islamic principles. Since Islam has its own terms and its own rules for social, political and, even, economic life.³¹

Therefore, the leader of the Islamic Community encourages the faithful to establish an Islamic state, reflecting the political choice of the religious leadership on Alija Izetbegović's Party (S.D.A.). However, this political choice by the religious leader did not constitute a homogenous political platform that was to be adopted by all Yugoslavian Muslims.

³⁰ Imams and hodjas within holy mosques as well as trustworthy persons inside and outside Bosnia disseminated propaganda to impose the name Bošnjak on all the Muslim of Yugoslavia. Fanatic religious Islamists delivered '*vehabija*' [Wahabi] speeches spreading fear and exercising psychological pressure and imposing unfair measures to achieve their goals. See Av. Kurpejović, "Muslimani Crne Gore do bošnjačke asimilacije," [Muslims of Montenegro to Bošnjak Assymilation] (*OSVIT glas Muslimana Crne Gore*, Matica Muslimanska Crne Gore 5 (2013), pp. 25-27.

³¹ '*Preporod*', (Sarajevo, 15.1.1991), p. 20.