

**Contemporary Serbian Ethno-Religious Nationalism in
Montenegro:
Position of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian State
towards the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedom**

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is on the role of religion in Orthodox countries where religion is tied to national identity, with a particular focus on Serbia and Montenegro. Apart from analyzing this specific connection, the thesis will address the phenomenon of politicization of religion by both the state and by the religious institution during turbulent events in Montenegro from 2019 and 2020. The thesis employs critical discourse analysis and discourse-historical approach to analyze the potential, but significant, shift in the ethnoreligious and nationalist discourse of the Serbian Orthodox Church officials. Moreover, it demonstrates the discursive change of instrumentalizing religion since, in the analyzed case, the shift implies reduced discursive usage of religion as a marker of someone's ethnicity in the predominantly mono-confessional society. These findings contradict the established pattern of emphasizing the interconnection of Orthodoxy and nation in the discourse of the Church officials in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional states. The same methodological tools have been used for observing the phenomenon of politicization of religion and for framing the discourse of the two actors of this process, the Serbian state and the Serbian Orthodox Church. The thesis claims that the Serbian state has to "defend" the Serbian Church's influential position because of their historical connectivity. Protecting the Church, the state is showing its dedication to the preservation of the Serbian national identity.

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Introduction

The Montenegrin state adopted a new and long-awaited Law on Religious Freedom on December 27th, 2019. However, the adoption of the law, which has a secularizing character, provoked the reaction of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and a part of the public affiliated with this institution. The public and religious protests emerged in Montenegro, but also in other parts of the region where Serbs live. The Serbian Orthodox Church mostly organizes these protests. The emerged events created a dispute that enabled the involvement of the Serbian state, which intervened with the aim of “defending” the intrinsically important institution for the Serbian national identity, whose dominance was jeopardized by specific provisions of the newly adopted law. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the interconnection between religion and national identity in the Serbian context and to argue that this interconnection serves to maintain, protect, and reaffirm national identity even extraterritorially, within the borders of another state, in this case, Montenegro. The thesis will also analyze the politicization of religion, enabled due to the influential position of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Serbian and Montenegrin society, and which was gained through the interconnection of religion and national identity.

The thesis will investigate why and how the discursive practice of the SOC has changed in the current Montenegrin case in which the state institutions adopted the Law on Religious Freedom, which put the highly politicized and favored position of the SOC in question. In the research, I perceive this Law as the main instrument that caused the re-emergence and rise of Serbian ethnoreligious nationalism in Montenegro. This rising issue destabilized social and political dynamics in Montenegro and Serbia. For that reason, I will try to answer the question *of why the Serbian Orthodox Church changed its discourse and stopped emphasizing its national*

character in the case of Montenegro as it did during the Kosovo crisis and the wars in Bosnia and Croatia? By answering the question, I will intend to investigate why and how the practice of using religion and its symbolism as the marker of someone's national identity has changed and in which way.

Causally, as it has been stated previously, the symbiosis of the religion and nation, together with the process of desecularization, enabled the high politicization of religion. This phenomenon will also be addressed and analyzed in the case of Montenegro. The question that this analysis should answer is *why the Serbian state and the Serbian Orthodox Church have strong affiliations and nationalistic discourse when it comes to the Montenegrin internal religious matters?* Before answering the question, I will offer a historical overview of the SOC highly politicized relations and attitudes towards the process of the Montenegrin state building from the 1990s onwards. By emphasizing this, I would point to the fact that this process implies the creation of the distinct Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC). Therefore, the perception of the process is that it will be completed after establishing the unique national church that will sacralize and internalize national symbols. However, this is not a unique case as it has been present in other nation and state-building processes of the countries with the strong Orthodox roots.¹ More precisely, the process has been based on the concept of ethnophyletism, which implies that one nation should have one national church.

The empirical analysis of the thesis has been based on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the discourse-historical approach (DHA). In the thesis, the discourse has been perceived as the

¹ Other examples of creating the National Orthodox Church being crucial for the process of nation building could be recognized in the case of Ukraine, Macedonia etc. See: Parry, Ken. 2010. "The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity." Essay. In the Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity, 47–72, 137–155, 186–249.; Ramet, Sabrina, "Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva (Serbian Orthodox Church)." In *Religija i Politika u Vreme Promene (Religion and Politics in the Time of Transition)*, 123–43. Beograd: Centar za zenske studije i istrazivanja roda, 2006.

primary tool for strengthening the national feeling and preserving the well-established symbiosis of religion and national identity. Moreover, the discursive patterns established in the statements of the SOC officials and the Serbian state officials are causing certain social and political actions, and therefore I have found it essential that these discursive patterns should be analyzed and characterized.

The discourse of the SOC officials from the 1990s will be analyzed and compared to the one from the current crisis in Montenegro. This way, I will try to prove that shift has happened in the deeply established discursive practice, enabled by the connection of nationalism and religion, which served the purpose of determining someone's belonging in the multiethnic societies by emphasizing his/her religious affiliation. The thesis will target the statements given by the high-ranking SOC officials because of the social reputation and influence gained during the process of desecularization.

Secondly, to show the political nature of the role of the SOC in Montenegro and to point to the phenomenon of the religious institution with the strong national character being influential and politicized outside of the borders of its state the thesis will employ the same methodology and analyze the discourse of the high-ranking SOC. Since the politicization of religion is a two-fold process, the thesis will also address in which way the Serbian state officials are discursively instrumentalizing religion when addressing the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedom. Only statements given by the political elite on the high-ranking positions will be analyzed because of the nature of their public position and because of the influence they have on the electorate not just in Serbia, but also among the Serbs living in the neighboring countries.

Positioning the first part of the analysis of the thesis into a broader spectrum of the literature on the topic, is it important to emphasize that contemporary matters in Montenegro still have not

been academically analyzed in this context, especially from the angle of analyzing the discursive patterns of the SOC. Moreover, the hypothesis set in this research is different from those in the existing literature as in the targeted case, the Montenegrin society has not been perceived as multiethnic by the SOC, but as the second Serbian state with the same language, traditional patterns, and religious affiliation. Therefore, the discursive patterns of its officials do not intend to draw lines between the different ethnic communities which have been based and connected to a particular denomination.²

When it comes to the second part of the analysis that has been focused on the phenomenon of the politicization of religion, the literature will benefit from the thesis as the analysis will add new, more contemporary examples to it.³ What distinguishes my premise from those in the listed literature is that I will try to characterize the church-state relations during the crisis in Montenegro by analyzing their discursive patterns that have not been present in the existing literature. My final intention is to characterize the discourse of these two actors and to emphasize their differences and similarities but also to offer the potential reason why the discourse of these two actors can be characterized in this way. Lastly, by characterizing and comparing these discourses, I will try to

² As it has been the case in Croatia (Serbs- Orthodox and Croats- Catholics), Bosnia (Bosniaks- Muslim and Serbs- Orthodox) and Kosovo (Kosovo Albanians- Muslims and Serbs- Orthodox).

Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. "The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro." In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, edited by Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić, 151–70. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.; Zdravkovki, Aleksander, and Kenneth Morrison. "The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: The Quest for Autocephaly." In *Religion and Politics In Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P Ramet, 240–269. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Radic, Radmila. „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 39–83.

³ Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. "The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro." *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, 2014, 151–70. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137477866_7; „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 39–83.; Vukomanović, Milan. "The Serbian Orthodox Church as a Political Actor in the Aftermath of October 5, 2000." *Politics and Religion* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 237–69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755048308000199>.

emphasize the intentions for instrumentalizing religion by these two social actors with the presumption that the discursive tools may not differ, but the final goal surely does.

The first chapter of the thesis will introduce the literature on the interconnection of religion and national identity, and religion and nationalism, but also briefly touch upon the most critical debates on the theories of secularization and desecularization. Additionally, the methodology (CDA, DHA) that will be used in the analytical part will be presented and reasoned in the same chapter. Furthermore, to position this case study into a more general framework, I will present the process of desecularization during the late modernization and transition period of the post-communist countries in East and Southeast Europe which have Orthodox tradition before the communist period (Chapter 2). The thesis will emphasize the distinctiveness of the Serbian case since the social and political dynamics during the time of the wars of the 1990s brought up this process to be different than in other countries with the strong Orthodox tradition. After pointing to the more general phenomenon of desecularization, that enabled the high politicization of religion and reconfiguration of the national identity by tying religion to it, the central premise will be presented. More precisely, in the first part of the empirical analysis (Chapter 3), I tend to show the shift in the SOC discourse and to recognize certain patterns of Serbian ethnoreligious nationalism. By analyzing the discourse of the SOC officials from the 1990s and comparing it to the one from the current events in Montenegro, I will give a general overview of the argumentation practices and discursive patterns of the SOC as the leading representative of ethnoreligious nationalism. The fourth chapter contains the second part of the analysis that shows the causal effect of the present symbiosis of religion and national identity in Serbia and Montenegro and points to the empirical examples (discursive examples) of the politicization of religion during the ongoing crisis in Montenegro. The analysis will be two-fold since the thesis will address the discursive

instrumentalization of religion for political purposes by both actors, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Serbian political elite in power.

Chapter 1- Theoretical Background and Methodology

1.1. Theoretical Background

1.1.1. Religion and National Identity

In order to analyze identity politics and its creation, I will rely on the theory of Anthony Smith and try to answer the question: “Why and where particular nations are formed, and why nationalism, though formally alike, possess such distinctive features and contents?”⁴ Moreover, Smith's book on national identity is relevant for this research since it provides a theoretical basis for conceptualizing Serbian and Montenegrin identities. Smith's theory on national identity places emphasis on myths, memories, values, and symbols and other features that constitute a national identity of an ethnic community which will also be of great importance for my research since I will try to locate these features in the oral and written statements that will be analyzed.

However, in this thesis, I aim to include religion as one of the standard features that highly contributes to the process of the creation of national identity as it happened in the case of Serbia. To prove the statement that religion played a significant part in the process of the creation of Serbian and Montenegrin identities, I rely on Christos Mylonas' hypothesis that Orthodoxy served to sacralize Serbian national identity.⁵ Following Mylonas' characterization of Orthodoxy as a

⁴ Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993, 191.

⁵ Mylonas, Christos. *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals the Quest for Eternal Identity*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003, 1-5.

widespread belief that has been shared among people who are ignorant when it comes to theological axioms, but more affected by instrumentalized and collective perception of religion and its liturgical practices, I will try to indicate that this feature enabled more straightforward incorporation of religion into Serbian national identity.⁶ Moreover, complementary to Mylonas, Serbian sociologist of religion Dragoljub Djordjevic states that Serbian Orthodoxy is, in its core, highly traditionalistic.⁷ Djordjevic frames the perception of religion in Serbia as “traditional belonging without believing” since practicing the religious rituals such as baptism, celebrating, patron saint (slava), church weddings, funerals with the presence of the priest has instrumental value for Serbs as it shows their national belonging and ties to their tradition.⁸ Djordjevic also emphasizes that among the Serbs, there is a “dissolution of religious consciousness, Serbs do not believe in the substantial doctrines of Orthodox Christianity, but they are identifying by their confessions, declaring as religious, and generally believe in God.” Additionally, to the previous statement, Radulovic and Blagojevic are stating that people in Serbia are looking for the approval of their national, personal, and family identity through practicing Orthodox rituals.⁹

Furthermore, Orthodoxy in Serbia has been instrumentalized as a tool for differentiating the Serbs from other ethnicities as their tradition, myths, and significant historical events have been sacralized by the Church. This phenomenon has been enabled due to the lack of central authority in Orthodoxy, which consequently led to increased autonomy (autocephaly) of Orthodox churches, which eased the sacralization and nationalization of traditions, myths, and certain

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Djordjevic, Dragoljub B. “Religiousness of Serbs at the Beginning of the 21st Century: What Is It About?” In *Revitalization of Religion- Theoretical and Comparative Approaches*, edited by Danijela Gavrilovic, 57–64. Nis, Serbian: Yugoslav Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2009.

⁸ Ibid, 58.

⁹ Radulovic, Lidija, and Mirko Blagojevic. “Tradicionalna Verska Kultura, Narodno i Oficijelno Pravoslavlje (Traditional Religious Culture, Popular and Official Orthodoxy),” 2013. <https://doi.org/10.5937/kultura1341023R>.

historical events.¹⁰ For that reason, Serbian Orthodoxy can serve as a determiner of group belonging and differentiate the ethnic group even from those ethnicities that also share a dedication to Orthodoxy. Moreover, I will focus on Mylonas' observation, which points out that religion is also a social marker that shows how strongly someone is dedicated to his/her Serbian identity.¹¹ Lastly, relying on Mylonas' work, I will emphasize the role of religion in these two societies, which provides a set of universal moral values that these two national identities were based on.

Theoretically observing the process of reconfiguring the Serbian national identity the literature points that since the beginning of the 1990s and re-emergence of religiosity and nationalism, the Serbian Orthodox Church has emphasized its ethnonational character and the importance of the Church for the Serbian national identity. The main argument that defends this claim is that the SOC preserved the national identity of Serbs during the five hundred years of Ottoman ruling.¹² Moreover, the other post-communist countries which had Orthodox tradition before the communist period have traditionally perceived national churches as institutions that maintain and reaffirm national identities and tradition of these societies. The rich history of this national Churches and pre-communist tight connection to the state enabled them to re-establish their salient position in the societies after the communist regimes collapsed. To prove this argument, I rely on Helmke and Levitsky's theory on formal and informal institutions and the

¹⁰ Radic, Radmila. "The Church and the "Serbian Question."" In *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, edited by Nebojsa Popov, 247–48. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000.

¹¹ Mylonas, Christos. *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals the Quest for Eternal Identity*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003, 1-5.

¹² Radic, Radmila. "The Church and the "Serbian Question."" In *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, edited by Nebojsa Popov, 247–48. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000. Radic, Radmila, and Milan Vukomanovic. "Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989: The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church." In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, 180–211. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.; Banac, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia Origins, History, Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.; Mylonas, Christos. *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals the Quest for Eternal Identity*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003, 78-82.

interaction between them to achieve specific goals in a particular society.¹³ These two authors define an informal institution as the one that can be connected to certain “socially shared rules that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels.”¹⁴ Having a historically significant role in the creation, preservation, and promotion of the socially shared rules, based on religion and tradition, national Orthodox churches can fit into this theoretical framework. Following Helmke and Levitsky's typology, four types of informal institutions can be differentiated by observing their relationship with formal institutions (state, state institutions) that influence people's behavior by imposing generally applicable laws.¹⁵ Therefore, complementary, accommodating, competing, and substitutive informal institutions can be recognized.¹⁶ In the case of Serbia, the relation between the state as a formal institution and the Church as an informal institution has been already characterized as complementary by Hadzibulic and Lagerspetz.¹⁷ In other words, achieving the same goal after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Serbian state and the Serbian Orthodox Church have complementarily worked on the creation of a new national identity.

1.1.2. Religion and Nationalism

To create a proper theoretical basis, I would rely on the conceptualization of the relationship between religion and nationalism offered by Rogers Brubaker.¹⁸ More precisely, Brubaker introduces four different approaches to observing relations between religion and nationalism. The first approach emphasizes that these two concepts are analogous phenomena that

¹³ Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda.” *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (December 2004): 725–40. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781001219.00011>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 727.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 728–730.

¹⁷ Hadzibulic, Sabina, and Mikko Lagerspetz. “The Colonization of a Celebration: The Transformation of Krsna Slava.” *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2016).

¹⁸ Brubaker, Rogers. “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*.” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 2–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x>.

could be applied in this case study. Moreover, this approach perceives religion as a tool that serves and helps an individual or group identification.¹⁹ Finally, and for this research, more importantly, religion also complements the construction of a social group and plays a significant role in the process of the creation of political claims.

However, in the process of analyzing the written and oral statements, I will try to locate particular features of them which Brubaker introduced within these different approaches. Additionally, my intention in this research is to position these statements within the relevant theoretical framework. Therefore, I will focus on the other three approaches as well since they are just as relevant for this research. Therefore, I will rely primarily on the second approach, which sees religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism, which I will try to locate in the statements that will be analyzed.²⁰ Additionally, the third approach will enable me to show how and to which extent religion and nationalism are intertwined in the case of Serbia.²¹ Lastly, Brubaker introduced the concept of religious nationalism, whose features and elements I aim to find in my analysis.²² This distinct form of nationalism, according to Friedland, is state-centered.²³ It has been characterized by the set of discursive practices attached to this form of nationalism that connects and homogenizes “territorial identity of the state and the cultural identity of the people”²⁴ Relying on this theoretical framework I would try to track the roots and the urge of the SOC to preserve its highly politicized and influential position in Montenegro. Moreover, for the Serbian ethnonationalism, religion is an essential component that helps its actors and transmitters to work on achieving the primary goal of this form of nationalism, and that is to join the state, territory,

¹⁹ Ibid, 2.

²⁰ Ibid, 5-8.

²¹ Ibid, 8-12.

²² Ibid, 12-14.

²³ Friedland, Roger. “Money, Sex, and God: The Erotic Logic of Religious Nationalism.” *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 3 (2002): 381–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00169>.

²⁴ Ibid, 386.

and culture. In other words, to finally achieve a long-awaited nationalistic and chauvinistic dream of uniting all the Serbs within one single state.

Finally, Merdjanova's two directions of maintaining the relationship between religion and nationalism in Eastern Europe will be taken into account. It is significantly important for the Serbian and Montenegrin case that religion, as Merdjanova states, serves as a "catalyst for delimitation, alienation, and animosity towards the "Others," and at the same time it can be one of the main factors that contribute to the "creation and preservation of identity."²⁵ This theoretical framework entirely relies on the empirical examples of the Serbian and Montenegrin societies from the 1990s onwards since both dimensions of the relationship between these two concepts can be recognized in the actions of the SOC.

1.1.3. Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian State

To show the interconnection of religion and nationalism in Serbia, I will try to explain how the Serbian Orthodox Church has become an essential agent of Serbian ethnoreligious nationalism and one of the crucial institutions for the preservation of the Serbian national identity. Moreover, decentralization and the absence of the central authority as the main characteristics of the Orthodox Churches during medieval times enabled the creation of the national churches with their distinctive features. They made them closer and interdependent on the medieval states and their rulers. Moreover, churches gave divine legitimacy to the rulers while they secured financial aid and other forms of support to these religious institutions.²⁶ The interconnection of the Serbian Orthodox

²⁵ Merdjanova, Ina. "In Search of Identity: Nationalism and Religion in Eastern Europe." *Religion, State and Society* 28, no. 3 (2000): 233–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713694765>.

²⁶ Banac, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia Origins, History, Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015, 75.; Radic, Radmila. "The Church and the "Serbian Question."" In *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, edited by Nebojsa Popov, 247–8. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000.

Church and the medieval Serbian state is still one of the primary legitimizing resources that the Church uses for preserving its position in the public sphere. As the Serbian national identity is strongly tied to the symbolism, myths and historical events from the medieval period, and as these three components have been sacralized and hijacked by the Serbian Orthodox Church which played a crucial role in these events, but also in the creation of the symbols and myths, the separation of the state and the Church is not likely to happen even during secular times. Moreover, as the only Serbian institution having partial autonomy within the Ottoman rule, the SOC has been presented as the only institution responsible for preserving the Serbian national identity throughout centuries. Therefore, the role of the keeper and the savior of the Serbs and their cultural and national uniqueness helped the SOC to be consistently close to the Serbian state and to gain legitimacy even for political actions that not only shaped religious matters but secular matters as well.²⁷

In the broader literature on the topic, it has been emphasized that due to the interconnection between the Church and Serbian national identity, the Serbian Orthodox Church has argued that it is responsible for protecting all Serbs, regardless of where do they live.³ Analyzing politicization of religion in the case of the SOC, Ognjenovic and Jozelic conceptualize these extraterritorial interests of the Church as “territoriality.”⁴ Under this term, these two authors refer to the phenomenon of destruction of the cultural heritage of others to replace it with the objects that would mark a particular territory as one’s own.⁵ Moreover these two authors are supporting the argument that after the dissolution of the common state, and after the separation of Montenegro

²⁷ Ibid, 252-257.; Vukomanović, Milan. “The Serbian Orthodox Church as a Political Actor in the Aftermath of October 5, 2000.” *Politics and Religion* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 237–69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755048308000199>.

and Serbia in 2006, it became difficult for Serbian Orthodox Church to exert its influence on neighboring countries where Serbs live by instrumentalizing religion.²⁸

1.1.4. Secularization and Desecularization

1.1.4.1. Secularization

To analyze the process of desecularization in the countries of the East and Southeast Europe, I will first have to position the thesis theoretically and present the particular view on secularism as a pre-stage of the concept that is the main focus of the paper. The concept of *secularism* has been conceptualized and analyzed for already a long time, and its significance for academia can be recognized within many disciplines. One of the most common definitions of the theory of secularization has been provided by Berger, which frames it as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”²⁹ This definition has its significance for the paper as I will observe the process of revival of the religious institutions and their symbols in the countries from the regions mentioned above with a particular focus on Serbia. Moreover, secularization has to be perceived as a long, historical, and complex process that had different phases. All these changes influence the way in which religious institutions act, which also caused changes in their structures, policies, positions within the societies, and, lastly, determined their futures.³⁰ Therefore, Wilson’s characterization fits perfectly into this premise. He frames secularization as a historical process in which the social

²⁸ Ognjenovic, Gordana, and Jasna Jozelic. “Introduction: The Power of Symbolism.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia and Its Successor States*, edited by Gordana Ognjenovic and Jasna Jozelic, 1–4. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

²⁹ Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy*, 107. New York: Garden City Doubleday.

³⁰ Blagojevic, Mirko. “Current Religious Changes: Secularizational Paradigm and Desecularization.” *Original Scientific Article*, no. 1-2 (2005): 15–39.

importance of religion, as well as the influence of the religious ideas in everyday life, are reduced.³¹ Complementary to these changes, Wilson emphasized that the religious organizations, its praxis, religious consciousness are also losing their social significance.³²

Lastly, Jose Casanova offered three fundamental connotations that could be differentiated when secularization is analyzed.³³ The first one is secularization as the “decline of the religious beliefs and practices,” which has been perceived as a natural stage in the human developmental process.³⁴ Secondly, the feature of privatization of religion could be perceived as a compulsory and regular stage in reaching modernity and achieving liberal democratic politics.³⁵ The last connotation that can appear while conceptualizing secularism is the separation of the “secular spheres” from the religious institutions and the norms that they are propagating.³⁶ In other words, it means that the religious institutions and the norms attached to them should not influence the public sphere or, more precisely, state institutions, markets, and lastly, academic and scientific institutions.

Contrary to these conceptualizations, my intention in the thesis is not to deny the existence of secularization of particular societies, but to point to the changes that emerged in East and South-east Europe that are characterized as the revival of religion and religious institutions. Nevertheless, emphasizing the significance of the phenomenon of politicization of religion and concentrating my analysis around it would be senseless if the importance of the shift from communist secularism to the post-1989 desecularization is not presented.

³¹ Wilson, Bryan. 1966. *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment*, 14. London, C. A. Watts.

³² Ibid.

³³ Casanova, José. 2007. “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective.” *Religion, Globalization, and Culture*, 101. doi:10.1163/ej.9789004154070.i-608.39.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 101-102.

1.1.4.2. Desecularization

The concept of desecularization is the main focus of the analysis as I treat it as a catalysator of the changes in the Serbian society that consequently enabled the increase of the presence of religion in the public sphere and created a space for religion to be politicized. The concept itself was highly present in the work of the well-known sociologist Peter Berger who stated that the world is more religious than it used to be since he noticed the rise of conservative and orthodox traditionalist movements during the second half of the 20th century.³⁷ Berger questioned the premise of the secularization theory that the success of the religious institutions in the secularized societies could be measured by their adaptivity to the secularization patterns. What he claims is that religious institutions' success could be evaluated by observing to what extent these institutions did not adapt to the secular frameworks.³⁸

Additionally to Berger, Jose Casanova also put the secularism in question and stated that many empirical proofs that the presence of religion in the public spheres of many societies is not questionable and that it could only increase.³⁹ Casanova listed “globalization, transnational migrations, increasing multiculturalism, the biogenetic revolution, and the persistence of blatant gender discrimination” as just some of the religious issues that have been debated in the public sphere.⁴⁰ Blagojevic frames the process of desecularization as a social stage in which religious traditions are treated with more political significance on one side, and on the other, the same traditions are announcing their comeback by deprivatizing the religious beliefs.⁴¹ Observing the

³⁷ Reaves, Dylan. 2012. “Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization.” *Denison Journal of Religion* 11: 15. <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol11/iss1/3>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Casanova, José. 2007. “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective.” *Religion, Globalization, and Culture*, 120. doi:10.1163/ej.9789004154070.i-608.39.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Blagojevic, Mirko. “Current Religious Changes: Secularizational Paradigm and Desecularization.” *Original Scientific Article*, no. 1-2 (2005): 33.

process of secularization from this angle could be entirely applicable to the case of Serbian society during the 1990s since the SOC gained more political significance and deprivatized the religion by entering the public sphere and even transmitting certain religious rituals from private to the public sphere. However, the interconnectivity of religion and national identity in Serbia played a significant role in the process of desecularization since deprivatization of religion was the primary mechanism through which people were proving their national identities.

However, the process of desecularization is not unique in each of the societies where it has emerged. For that reason, the distinctiveness of the post-communist countries and their experiences must be emphasized. Blagojevic, in his work on secularization and desecularization, has encountered the active role of the religious communities in dissolving communist regimes in Central and East Europe during the 1980s as one significant example of the comeback of previously oppressed and marginalized religious institutions into the public sphere.⁴² Precisely these factors of oppression and marginalization were among many that caused the revival of religion in the post-communist countries of Central, East, and Southeast Europe. In Northmore-Ball and Evans' paper on a revival of religion in East Europe, the authors have indicated that after the fall of communism the religiosity has revived in the countries with the Orthodox roots and remained constant in the post-communist countries with the Catholic past.⁴³ The analysis of these two authors offers the conclusion which indicates that the size and extent of repression of religion and religious institutions played a role in their revival.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Northmore-Ball, Ksenia, and Geoffrey Evans. 2016. "Secularization versus Religious Revival in Eastern Europe: Church Institutional Resilience, State Repression and Divergent Paths." *Social Science Research* 57: 45. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.11.001.

Moreover, it has been stated that in the case of higher repression, the revival was regressively higher.⁴⁴ However, the repression argument is not the crucial one for the whole process, but its importance cannot be denied. Lastly, one more factor whose importance cannot be avoided is, according to Blagojevic, the clericalization of the Serbian society during the 1990s, which has continued and is still present in the Serbian society.⁴⁵

1.2. Methodology: critical discourse analysis (CDA), discourse-historical approach (DHA), document analysis (DA)

To analyze the collected data, I will use the triangulation method or, in other words, the combination of, in this case, qualitative research methods. This way, I tend to assure the higher degree of validity of research outcomes while approaching the collected data in the most suitable way. Moreover, I am focusing on the discourse analysis of ethnoreligious nationalism in Serbia by relying on the theoretical conceptualization of Michael Billig that nationalism is a discourse phenomenon.⁴⁶

One of the research methods that I will use is critical discourse analysis (CDA), which has been conceptualized by Van Dijk as a type of discourse-analytical research method that focuses on ideology, identity, and inequality, which have been based in texts and talks produced in a social and political context.⁴⁷ Complementary, with critical discourse analysis, I will use the discourse-historical approach. This research method will enable me to analyze the statements of the SOC officials and the officials of the Serbian state by emphasizing the historical context highly relevant

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Blagojevic, Mirko. 2008. "Desecularization of Contemporary Serbian Society." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 28 (1): 37–50. <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol28/iss1/4>.

⁴⁶ Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2018.

⁴⁷ Van Dijk, Teun A. "Multidisciplinary CDA: A Plea for Diversity." In *Methods of CDA*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 95-120. London: Sage, 2001.

for the research. Moreover, it will enable me to compare the discourses of the social-political actors during the targeted period.

To start with, I would like to emphasize the advantages of critical discourse analysis for this research. My focus in this research is on the written and oral statements of the SOC officials and the officials of the Serbian state that use certain patterns of the ethnoreligious nationalistic discourse. Moreover, I will focus on the structure of the arguments in these statements. To be more specific, I will try to locate the topoi of a savior, threat, and history. Topoi are argumentation shames that are used to increase the success of persuasion of a particular text or discourse by actually legitimizing certain political ideas or discrediting specific claims of the opponents.⁴⁸ The topos of the savior is highly present in the discourse of the SOC officials since they are presenting the Church as a savior and keeper of the Serbian national identity and its distinctiveness.⁴⁹ Secondly, the topos of threat is the crucial one since it has often been used in the statements by both Serbian state officials and officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church as they are frequently emphasizing the threat for the Serbian national identity coming from the new Montenegrin Law.⁵⁰ Moreover, the topos of threat has been present in the discourse of the Church officials since the beginning of the 1990s when the ethnic tensions emerged, and it is preserved until today as it helps the unification and mobilization of the people sharing the Serbian national identity or its specific components (for example religion or tradition that are connected to it). Lastly, the topos of history is not less relevant than the previous two since in the discourse of the Church and the state officials

⁴⁸ Wodak, Ruth, De Cillia, Rudolf, Reisigl, Martin and Liebhart, Karin. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2009. Translated by: Hirsch, Angelika. Mitten, Richard and Unger, J.W.

⁴⁹ Wodak, Ruth. "Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach." *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 2015, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

there is a constant connection of the current events with the historical ones⁵¹ Besides of connecting the present with the past this argumentation scheme promotes the implementation of the solutions from the past that had preferable results. This feature is highly relevant for the case of the SOC in Montenegro, as the Church wants to preserve its historically highly politicized and influential position in this country.

Additionally, I will focus on the statements from the 1990s and compare them to those from 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, to observe the phenomenon of the secular state helping its national church to preserve its supremacy at the territory of the independent neighboring state, I will analyze the statements from 2019 and 2020 particularly. Moreover, I would not focus mainly on the importance of these statements by analyzing its semantic character, but additionally, to position them within a relevant political and social context, which will emphasize its significance on the changes of the social and political dynamics in Serbia and Montenegro. For reaching this goal, I will rely on the critical discourse analysis as it helps the researcher raise awareness of the stashed motivation of the creators of particular discourses. Moreover, it leads us to reveal for what purposes these actors have created these discourses.⁵² Van Dijk also finds the relevance of the critical discourse analysis for observing the abuses of the social power, inequalities that have been enacted, legitimated, and resisted by text and talks in the social and political context.⁵³

Secondly, I will focus on the discourse-historical approach as a part of the critical discourse analysis. This research method will help me to analyze data with including a highly relevant historical context, as I am dealing with the interpretations of the past and their instrumentalization.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer. "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology." In *Methods of CDA*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 1-33. Vol. 1. London: Sage, 2001.

⁵³ Van Dijk, Teun A., and Deborah Schiffrin. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Heidi Hamilton and Deborah Tannen, 352-72. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

As Ruth Wodak emphasizes, the discourse-historical approach follows the concept of critique on three levels.⁵⁴ These are *text or discourse-immanent critique*, *socio-diagnostic critique*, and *prospective critique*.⁵⁵ I will analyze the data with the help of the first two approaches, as discourse-immanent critique helped me focus on the inconsistencies, self-contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas in the written and oral statements.⁵⁶ Moreover, as my focus is on the Serbian ethnoreligious nationalism and its influence on the Montenegrin society, the second approach, socio-diagnostic critique, has enabled me to analyze data by locating the persuasive or manipulative characteristics of the discourse.⁵⁷ These characteristics are highly relevant since the Church, through its discourse is trying to pursue people in Montenegro to act against the Law, or in other words, the discourse causes the actions such as the public and religious protests.

The discourse-historical approach, as Wodak states, critically analyses the language that has been used as a means of maintaining or gaining political power by the political and social actors.⁵⁸ Therefore, to analyze the Serbian ethnoreligious nationalism, I will focus on the forms of argumentation, strategies of argumentation, collective symbolism and metaphors, vocabulary, actors, and finally, the sources of the knowledge which has been the basis for certain statements. This way, I will try to emphasize the nature and the characteristics of the language that has been used in order to influence the perceptions and behavior of people in Serbia and Montenegro when it comes to religious matters. Analyzing the statements, I will emphasize the discursive strategies of nomination and predication.⁵⁹ As Wodak has emphasized, the nomination has been used for

⁵⁴ Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer. "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology." In *Methods of CDA*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 1-33. Vol. 1. London: Sage, 2001.

⁵⁵ Wodak, Ruth and Martin Reisigl. "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)." In *Methods of CDA*. Edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 87-119. Vol. 1. London: Sage, 2001.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 88.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Wodak, Ruth. "Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach." *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 2015, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116>.

categorizing someone's membership, which is recognizable in the case of the SOC. The officials of the SOC are using certain metaphors, verbs, and nouns that emphasize someone's membership based on his/her affiliation to a particular religious institution or nation.⁶⁰ The focus on the predication strategy will help me locate “stereotypical and evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits” in the discourse of the Serbian state officials and the Church officials when addressing the Law and the current Montenegrin regime that adopted it.⁶¹ Therefore, my focus will be on the adjectives, comparisons, metaphors, and other rhetorical figures that have been used by the aforementioned actors.

Lastly, I will analyze the data by using the document analysis research method. I will use this method in order to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the documents issued by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Montenegrin state since I am focusing on the Law on Religious Freedom and its content. Moreover, I will critically analyze the Law by finding and selecting information, and legal formulations that caused the dispute and became a part of the broad and intense debates in Serbian and Montenegro. Finally, I will evaluate and analyze not just the language used in the documents but also its purposes and the targeted audience.

Chapter 2: Late post-Socialist Transitions: Re-emergence of Religion and the process of Desecularization

In this chapter, I will observe the processes of late post-socialist transitions of the countries of East and Southeast Europe and focus on the re-emergence of religion within these societies. Framing this re-emergence as desecularization, I aim to see how religious institutions penetrated

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the public spheres and started shaping the social and political dynamics in these societies. Moreover, by briefly presenting these late post-socialist transitional processes, I aim to place the Serbian case into a more general phenomenon to show its similarities and differences. Through the analysis of the process of desecularization in the countries from Eastern and South-eastern Europe, I will emphasize how religion has been re-established as the main component of national identities of these states and compare the findings with the case of religious revival in Serbia. Finally, presenting the more general theoretical and empirical framework and placing Serbia into it will show that even with drastic social, historical, and political differences, the countries from these regions experienced a similar process of desecularization.

In the rest of the chapter, I will specifically focus on the process of desecularization in Serbia as that will offer insight and set a basis for further understanding of the process of politicization of religion in Serbia and Montenegro. Presenting this process in Serbia during the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, I will set the basis for easier comprehension of the comparison of the SOC discourse from the 1990s and during the current crisis in Montenegro (Chapter 3).

2.1. Desecularization in post-Communist Europe: Special reference to the Countries with Strong Orthodox Roots

In the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, Eastern and South-eastern Europe faced drastic changes with the fall of communism. As Blagojevic states, the position of religion and religious institutions has changed in these societies as the religious institutions (in the targeted case Orthodox Churches) sought for the political significance of their religious traditions.⁶² Moreover,

⁶² Blagojevic, Mirko. "Current Religious Changes: Secularizational Paradigm and Desecularization." Original Scientific Article, no. 1-2 (2005): 15–39.

the same author emphasizes that these religious traditions de-privatized religion and penetrated the public sphere.⁶³ Summarizing all the changes listed above, arguable is that these post-communist countries of East and South-East Europe Orthodox traditions have gone through the same process of desecularization or, in other words, the revival of religion and religious institutions.

After the fall of the Communist bloc, previously highly secularized identities that the communist states had constructed and promoted were deconstructed as the democratization process brought more rights to the previously marginalized religious institutions. By opening the public space for these institutions, the state enabled them to re-establish their influential positions, in most of the targeted countries, strongly tied to the state. Therefore, by shaping the social and political dynamics in these countries, the national Orthodox Churches reconfigured the perception of the national identities by incorporating religion into it.⁶⁴ As Kanin argues, the Orthodox Churches at the Balkans were instrumentalizing both religion and nationalism over centuries in order to cope with the “religious, social, economic, and political challenges.”⁶⁵ Moreover, by initiating and promoting desecularization, national Orthodox Churches preserved and secured the influential and prominent position within these societies. The clear examples of this phenomenon are the acts of Romania Orthodox Church after 1989 as the Church discourse has changed in the way of extensively connecting Orthodoxy with Romanianism. Romanian Orthodox Church had an “intention” to preserve Romanian national identity during the times of modernization,

⁶³ Ibid, 32-34.; Hann, Chris. “Problems with the (De)Privatization of Religion.” *Anthropology Today* 16, no. 6 (2000): 14–15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.00033>.

⁶⁴ Examples on Georgia, Ukraine, Serbia, Russia, and Romania could be found in: Radu, Michael. “The Burden of Eastern Orthodoxy.” *Orbis* 42, no. 2 (1998): 283–300. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0030-4387\(98\)90007-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0030-4387(98)90007-2).

⁶⁵ Kanin, David B. “Faith, Nation, and Structure: The Diachronic Durability of Orthodox Churches in the Balkans.” In *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Sabrina P Ramet, 16. Palgrave, 2019.

globalization, and EU (European Union) integration, but also because of the competition on the religious market opened due to the democratic changes in the country.⁶⁶

One of the distinctions and significances of the process of desecularization in post-communist historically Orthodox countries is that religious organizations were in most of the cases traditionally tied to the state whose national character gave them legitimacy to start politicizing their actions and be more influential in these societies.⁶⁷ In Ukraine, the significant amount of the nationally important historical events, together with traditional patterns, are constructed around religion and nationalism, which made the Ukrainian nation to be developed as a distinct ethnic community.⁶⁸ However, Orthodox Churches had different positions in these countries before and during communism, but that does not change the fact that the evident revival of religion happened after its fall. Causally, strengthening of the religious institutions happened, and it enabled these institutions to be more politically and socially influential. This process in most of the countries was caused by the revanchism of communism as these religious institutions were marginalized and prosecuted during the communist regimes. Therefore, with the strong anti-communist stances, victim identity, and symbolic resources from history, these institutions succeeded in occupying parts of the public sphere. Comparing Serbia with the more general framework of the process, the revival of religion and strengthening of the SOC did not happen just because of the three aforementioned factors of anti-communism, victimhood during communism, and symbolic

⁶⁶ Stan, Lavinia, and Lucian Turcescu. "Religion and Nationalism." In *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, 41–64. Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁶⁷ Parry, Ken. 2010. "The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity." Essay. In the Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity, 47–72, 137–155, 186–249.; Malešević, Siniša. "Nationalisms and the Orthodox Worlds." *Nations and Nationalism*, 2019, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12539>.

⁶⁸ Filipovitch, Lyudmila. "Role of Religion for the Ukrainian Nationalism." In *Nacionalismo En Europa. Nacionalismo En Galicia. La Religión Como Elemento Impulsador De La Ideología Nacionalista (Cursos, Congresos, Simposios)*, edited by Morán García, 167–78. La Coruña: Universidade da Coruna, 1998.

resources based on history and tradition, but also the ethnic conflict and emergence of nationalism can be seen as essential factors fuelling the process.⁶⁹

However, even being accelerated by the rising nationalism during the war, desecularization in Serbia had a distinctive path. After the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and after the separation of Montenegro from Serbia in 2006, it became difficult for the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian state to exert its influence on the Serbian communities in the neighboring countries by using religion as a tool. The urge for control over these territories can be tracked from the period of the modern nation-building processes in the 19th century, which in the case of orthodox countries, implied the creation of the autocephalous church as well. Therefore, there is a well known, and still present concept of *ethnophyletism*, which implicates that there should be “one church, one state” or, in other words, state, nation, and national church are sharing the same territory and people.⁷⁰ Exactly, this phenomenon enabled the cohesion of religion and national identity. However, the Serbian Orthodox Church, due to many circumstances, was able to escape the state borders and to act at the translational scale (during the existence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Socialist Yugoslavia). Since after the wars in the 1990s and dissolution of the common state with Montenegro, the Serbian state and the SOC were unable to control these territories, they started influencing the Serb communities that are beyond the territorial borders of Serbia by instrumentalizing religion and its symbolism.⁷¹ The way the Church did this was that it

⁶⁹ Buchenau, Klaus. 2010. “The Serbian Orthodox Church.” Essay. In *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945–91*, edited by Lucian N. Leustean, 74–75. New York & London: Routledge.

⁷⁰ Yelensky, Victor, Alexander Agadjanian, and Jerry Pankhurst. “Globalization, Nationalism, and Orthodoxy: The Case of Ukrainian National Building.” Essay. In *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Victor Roudometof, 166. Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2005.; Kormina, Jeanne, and Vlad Naumescu. “A New “Great Schism”? Theopolitics of Communion and Canonical Territory in the Orthodox Church.” *Anthropology Today* 36, no. 1 (2020): 7–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12551>; Malešević, Siniša. “Nationalisms and the Orthodox Worlds.” *Nations and Nationalism*, 2019, 4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12539>.

⁷¹ Ognjenovic, Gordana, and Jasna Jozelic. “Introduction: The Power of Symbolism.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia and Its Successor States*, edited by Gordana Ognjenovic and Jasna Jozelic, 1–4. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

claimed extra-territory based on ethnicity rather than canonicity, as Orthodoxy has already been strongly tied to the Serbian national identity. This practice is highly present in the actions of the SOC as it has during the conflicts continually emphasized the national character of the Church and its importance for the Serbian nation. The SOC used this practice intending to polarize the ethnic groups in multiethnic societies. The distinctive feature of the Montenegrin case that makes it academically significant is that Montenegro shares the same religion, certain traditional patterns, and historical events. For those reasons, these boundaries are more blurred than in other post-Yugoslav countries. Finally, the specificities of this case will be presented in the following paragraphs.

2.2. The Revival of Religion in Serbia during the 1990s

The fall of communism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia brought the changes within the social and political dynamics in Serbia. The fall of communism did not lead the country into the process of democratic transition, but opposingly, the authoritarian and repressive regime of Slobodan Milosevic has emerged. These changes include re-emergence of nationalism and religiosity that affected the Serbian society and started reshaping the process of creation of the new national identity. The creation of the new national identity was required since the old supranational Yugoslav identity had to be replaced. Both concepts were marginalized or forbidden (frequent prosecutions of ethnic nationalism), and the fall of the old communist system enabled the social actors who propagated them to re-enter the public sphere and start influencing the society. Therefore, the Serbian Orthodox Church entered the public sphere with the intention of re-establishing itself as an institution closely related to the Serbian national identity and, consequently, to the Serbian state as well. On the other side, the nationalistic political elite in

power saw the opportunity of instrumentalizing religion and its main propagator, the SOC, to establish a new national identity based on the traditional perception of religion, cultural distinctiveness, and national myths and symbols that already have been sacralized by the SOC.⁷² However, anti-communism of the Church officials did not play any significant role at the beginning of the 1990s or determined church-state relations in any way since both actors had the same goal of reconstructing the new Serbian identity as well as achieving the irredentist and nationalistic dream of uniting all Serbs in a single state.⁷³ This cooperation could be conceptualized as the complementary cooperation of a formal and informal institution with a mutual goal of creating a distinctive and strongly nationalized identity that will help them more easily draw lines between the ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic societies of the post-Yugoslav countries.⁷⁴ Making distinctions based on the ethnic identity was supposed to help the achievement of the idea of a Great Serbia (the nationalistic and irredentist concept of uniting all Serbs within the borders of one state) by both actors, the Serbian state and the Serbian Orthodox Church. This phenomenon could also be interpreted through Brubaker's conceptualization of the relationship between religion and nationalism as in the first, out of four approaches, he has emphasized that religion can be instrumentalized for individual and group identification. This particular perception was of high importance for the Serbian nationalist and right-wing politics of making ethnic distinctions and while using the mechanism of othering.⁷⁵

⁷² Radic, Radmila, and Milan Vukomanovic. "Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989: The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church." In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, 180–211. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁷³ Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (December 2004): 725–40. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781001219.00011>; Hadzibulic, Sabina, and Mikko Lagerspetz. "The Colonization of a Celebration: The Transformation of Krsna Slava." *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2016).

⁷⁵ Brubaker, Rogers. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*." *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x>.

Re-emergence of religion and re-establishment of the highly influential position of the SOC led to the politicization of religion. The Church became not just a social, but also a political actor in Serbian, Montenegro and other neighboring post-Yugoslav countries where Serbs live. The SOC started more frequently to intervene in the political matters and to influence the political decision-making process by addressing the issues publicly, pressure the politicians, give opinions and offer solutions on the rising problem during the ethnic conflicts in Bosnia, Croatia and later at Kosovo.⁷⁶ However, one part of the nationalistic elite in power and their leader Slobodan Milosevic (mostly those affiliated to the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Yugoslav Left) were not supportive of the SOC and their actions.⁷⁷ Moreover, the SOC political reactions and actions were less influential in Serbia than in the neighboring countries of the post-Yugoslav space where Serbs live. During the first part of the 1990s, the Church officials were visiting parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and the Serbian communities in these countries. During these visits, they met with the political representative of Serbs, who strongly supported the Church, its mission, and its position within the Serbian society. The support that the Church had within these particular Serbian communities enabled the SOC to influence the political decisions of the Serbian political representatives, like, for example, Karadzic's decision to accept Vance-Owen's plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁸ On the other side, Milosevic's regime in Serbia was mostly instrumentalizing the Church and religion in nationally important events but did not want to create enough space in the political sphere for the SOC officials to influence and shape the political matters. After realizing that the regime of Slobodan Milosevic will not let the Church influence the political and social

⁷⁶ Tomanic, Milorad. *Srpska Crkva u Ratu i Ratovi u Njoj (The Serbian Church in the War and the Wars in It)*. Beograd: Medijska knjizara Krug, 2001.

⁷⁷ Kanin, David B. "Faith, Nation, and Structure: The Diachronic Durability of Orthodox Churches in the Balkans." In *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Sabrina P Ramet, 29. Palgrave, 2019.

⁷⁸ Vukomanovic, Milan. "O Cemu Crkva (Ne) Moze Da Se Pita- SPC, Drzava i Drustvo u Srbiji (2000-2005) (About What the Church Can (Not) Be Asked for- SOC, the State and Society in Serbia (2000-2005))." *Helsinki Odbor Za Ljudska Prava u Srbiji*, 2005, 29–30.

matters in Serbia, the Church officials turned to the political representatives of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia. Moreover, the SOC had an already well-established reputation among the Bosnian Serbs since they supported and propagated the idea of the SOC is a central institution for the Serbian people and the main preserver of their national identity.⁷⁹

Cooperating with the representatives of Serbs in neighboring countries during the ethnic conflict and gaining more influence outside of the Serbian state borders helped the Church to re-enter the political sphere in Serbia. Moreover, the Serbian Orthodox Church started emphasizing its importance for the Serbian nation by claiming that through the history it has been the only responsible institution for preserving and protecting the Serbs and their national distinctiveness, that, according to the official politics of the Church, was firmly based on the Serbian Orthodoxy.⁸⁰ Apart from being highly protective of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia, the SOC used Orthodoxy and its heritage as a marker of the territory.⁸¹ The SOC extraterritorial interests of uniting all Serbs into one state have been characterized by the explicitly established pattern that follows the logic of stating the Serbian land is where Serbs are living. This pattern has been preserved until today.⁸²

In the second half of the decade and after the wars in Bosnia and Croatia ended, the SOC started turning its focus from the regime to the opposition parties. The reason for this was the

⁷⁹ Radic Radmila „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 39–83.

⁸⁰ Radic, Radmila, and Milan Vukomanovic. “Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989: The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church.” In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, 180–211. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁸¹ Ognjenovic, Gordana, and Jasna Jozelic. “Introduction: The Power of Symbolism.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia and Its Successor States*, edited by Gordana Ognjenovic and Jasna Jozelic, 1–4. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁸² The Serbian Patriarch Irinej on the Book Fair in Belgrade commenting what should Serbs do to preserve their collective soul and survive as a nation said that Wherever Serbs Live, That Is Serbia.

“Patrijarh Irinej: Gde God Žive Srbi, To Je Srbija, Braća Iz Republike Srpske Da Čuvaju RS i Onog Koji Danas Vodi Narod Srpske (Patriarch Irinej: Wherever Serbs Live, That Is Serbia, Brothers from the Republica Srpska to Take Care of RS and Those to Leads the People of Srpska).” Nova politička misao, October 25, 2017.

<http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/patrijarh-irinej-gde-god-zive-srbi-to-je-srbija-braca-iz-republike-srpske-da-cuvaju-rs-i-onog-koji-danas-vodi-narod-srpske.html?alphabet=l>.

disappointment of the Church in the regime for not being able to fulfill the nationalist dream of uniting all Serbs into one state. Furthermore, the SOC was publicly opposing Slobodan Milosevic and even started participating in the oppositionist protests in Belgrade in 1996 and 1997. These acts can serve as proof that the SOC is a highly politicized institution in Serbia as their actions were directed towards achieving secular and political goals. The increased presence of the SOC in the public and political sphere affected society and the level of traditional religiosity. The clear indicator of the desecularization of the Serbian society during the 1990s was presented in a sociological study on attitudes of the youth in Serbia and Montenegro on religion and religiosity conducted by Blagojevic and Djordjevic in 1997.⁸³ In this study, the authors state that 93,7% of the interviewees are identifying based on their confession, with one of the three most present denominations (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Islam).⁸⁴ However, only 59,1% of the Serbian youth believes in God, which shows the perception of religion as an identity marker.⁸⁵ Moreover, according to the same study, 59,6% of the Serbian youth are visiting the churches at least a few times per year, and mostly on the important religious holiday, which proves Djordjevic's argument that traditionalist perception of religion in Serbia does not imply spiritual devotion for practicing it. Lastly, Djordjevic and Blagojevic observing the research findings concluded that the increased level of identifying with a particular confession and not believing and practicing this religion is undoubtedly a clear product of rising nationalism during the process of desecularization.⁸⁶

⁸³ Blagojevic, Mirko, and Dragoljub Djordjevic. "„Religioznost Stanovništva Jugoslavije - Delimičan Pregled Iskustvenih Istraživanja" (Religiosity of Yugoslav Population: Partial Review of the Experiential Researches)." *Teme* 22, no. 1 (1999): 81–94.

⁸⁴ Djordjevic, Dragoljub, and Dragan Todorovic. "Stavovi Mladnih u Jugoslaviji o Nacionalnoj, Konfesionalnoj I Religijskoj Pripadnosti (Attitudes of the Yugoslav Youth on National Belonging, and Confessional and Religious Affiliation)." In *Mladi, Religija, Veronauka (Youth, Religion, and Religious Education)*, 2:31–50. Belgrade: AGENA, 1999.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁶ Radic Radmila „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi" (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), *Srpska elita (Serbian elite)*, *Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks)*, Beograd, 2000, 39–83.

The political actions of the Church continued throughout the decade and became more focused on Kosovo as the end of the 1990s was slowly approaching. Sacralization of the territory of Kosovo started even during the last years of the 1980s and was one of the main reasons why the SOC re-established its influential and politicized position in the Serbian society.⁸⁷ However, the end of the last decade of the 20th century was marked with intensified politicization of religion since the SOC was more than an active player in resolving the Kosovo conflict. Raising ethnic tensions at Kosovo concerned the SOC that the sacred, mythologized, and sacralized heart of the Serbian nation will be lost. Therefore, Patriarch Pavle (1990-2009) and the high-ranking priests were delegitimizing Slobodan Milosevic's regime while presenting themselves and the Church as the only capable and responsible institution of solving the issue since Kosovo was not perceived only as a piece of territory but as Serbian Jerusalem.⁸⁸

Moreover, the SOC started pressuring the regime, accusing it that because of its incapability shown during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, Kosovo will potentially be lost. Therefore, the Church expected from the regime to use all the means possible to preserve the integrity of the Serbian state. Political actions of the Church were not only limited at the national level. Moreover, the Church interacted with the international community as well as asking for assistance and victimizing Serbs from Kosovo. Meetings of the SOC high officials with the foreign ambassadors and delegations were normality in Serbia, and it reached its peak when the SOC was

⁸⁷ Subotic, Jelena. "The Church, the Nation, and the State: The Serbian Orthodox Church After Communism." In *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe: Nationalism, Conservatism, and Intolerance*, edited by Sabrina Ramet, 85–110. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.; Radic Radmila „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (The Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 45.

⁸⁸ Ejodus, Filip, and Jelena Subotić. "Kosovo as Serbia's Sacred Space: Governmentality, Pastoral Power, and Sacralization of Territories." *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism*, 2014, 159–84. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137477897_8.

demanding to be included in the peace negotiations in Rambouillet (France) in 1999.⁸⁹ Apart from the political representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albanians from Kosovo, the negotiations were mediated by the NATO representatives, and there was no space for the SOC at these high official political meetings. Therefore, the SOC demand was rejected, which did not stop them from being in Paris during the meeting and later lobbying for the support for Kosovo Serbs in the USA. Summarizing all the actions of the SOC during the Kosovo conflict and characterizing its nature, I argue that they were and still are, highly political and secular, which once again proves the argument of the SOC begins a politicized religious institution.

During the same time, from 1995 until the end of the 1990s, the SOC was facing with schisms and inconsistencies within the Church itself. The Macedonian Church was the first one to seek its autonomy, which later has been achieved, but still problematized and questioned by the SOC.⁹⁰ However, for this research, more important is the period of re-establishment of the autonomous Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC). As Morrison and Čagorović phrase it, this dispute is more of a political nature created by those who are promoting the idea of Montenegrin independence and those who perceive Montenegro as an inseparable part of the “Serbian national corpus.”⁹¹ Moreover, the SOC constructed and sacralized certain myths, traditional patterns, and shared historical events in order to amalgamate these components into the shared and collective Serbian national identity.⁹² The shared identity was supposed to create a sense of shared history, present, and future for these ethnicities.

⁸⁹ Radic Radmila „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (The Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 49.

⁹⁰ Zdravkovski, Aleksandar, and Kenneth Morrison. “The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: The Quest for Autocephaly.” In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P Ramet, 240–62. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁹¹ Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. “The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, edited by Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić, 152. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁹² Ibid, 153.

Briefly, the dispute that emerged at the beginning of the 1990s and intensified during the last few years of the decade was based on the events from 1920 when the Montenegrin Orthodox Church lost its autocephaly due to the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Together with the alienation of the autonomy, the Montenegrin Orthodox Church lost its property, which became a part of the Serbian Orthodox Church property.⁹³ Seeking for re-establishment of the autocephaly of their Church, Montenegrins, more affiliated to the idea of their unique national identity and independence from Serbia, started acting and opposing the Serbian Orthodox Church during the first years of the 1990s. Moreover, seeking independence of the Church during that time was a product of the emergence of the idea of independence of the state in general. The idea implied the creation of the unique national identity based on ethnic characteristics, which inseparable part is the autocephalous national church.⁹⁴ The oppositionist acts were, except for lobbying for its autonomy, directed towards the property the MOC lost in 1920. However, solving this problem was not easy since the SOC appointed Amfilohije Radovic for the head of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, well-known for his nationalist affiliations and skillful political acting. This shift in the hierarchical structure of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro resulted with intensified enactment of the policy of marking the territory with building the new SOC monasteries and churches and by spiritualizing the society by the publicly displaying the relics of St. Basil, the most significant Montenegrin saint from the 11th century in several towns in Montenegro.⁹⁵ Apart

⁹³ During the time of unification, the opposition to the intention coming from Serbia were rare within the MOC. However, according to Morrison and Cagorovic there were still some Montenegrins outside of the Church who were opposing this idea and perceiving it as an impermissible act which will alienate them from one of the crucial components of their national identity, a national Orthodox church.

Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. "The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro." In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, edited by Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić, 154-155. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁹⁴ Zdravkovki, Aleksander, and Kenneth Morrison. "The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: The Quest for Autocephaly." In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P Ramet, 251. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 156-157.

from building the infrastructure, Amfilohije Radovic initiated the increase of the number of priests, nuns, monks, and followers and intensively worked on the idea of introducing religious education in primary schools in Montenegro.⁹⁶ After institutionalizing the MOC in 1991, the clash between these two churches intensified and reached a higher political level as the political representatives of the regime and the opposition parties had to take stances and decide whom to support.⁹⁷ A clear example was the case when the MOC got recognized by the Montenegrin state and when former PM, now President of Montenegro Milo Djukanovic, started supporting the idea of the Montenegrin independent Orthodox Church. However, until today the MOC does not have a canonical status announced by the Ecumenical Patriarchy.

The clash between the MOC and the SOC was structured mostly by the MOC, emphasizing the traditional differences during the same religious rituals, for example, during the burning of the yule log on the Orthodox Christmas Eve. The differences were shown through displaying different national symbols (flags, clothes, and other) and by singing nationalist songs, which once again shows the differences between the national Orthodox churches and their nationalized and scalarized myths and symbols that are characterizing particular ethnic community. The SOC stance on the issue was different since they had higher financial and social resources. Moreover, the main argument of the SOC officials was that the “unnatural” separation of Montenegrins from Serbia as a product of the communist and Titoist policy of creating the separate Montenegrin national identity.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the MOC was characterized by the SOC officials as a sect and with other

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ramet, Sabrina. “Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva (Serbian Orthodox Church).” In *Religija i Politika u Vreme Promene (Religion and Politics in the Time of Transition)*, 132-133. Beograd: Centar za zenske studije i istrazivanja roda, 2006.

⁹⁸ Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. “The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, edited by Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić, 156. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

derogatory terms.⁹⁹ The existence of the MOC, its legality, and legitimacy was deeply neglected since the SOC has been presented as the only righteous Orthodox church in Montenegro, which created the Montenegrin state and continued the historical trace. The intensity of the clash was changing through the years, but it was and still is present. The same argumentation was preserved by both actors from this conflict, and it will be an object of analysis in the following chapters. The happenings from the last decade of the 20th century have set the basis for future developments in the sphere of religious matters both in Serbia and Montenegro. However, this process was characterized by the strong presence of the Churches in the public and political spheres of these societies.

2.3. Democratic Changes and the Serbian Orthodox Church

With the Fall of Milosevic's regime, the Republic of Serbia faced with the democratic changes that opened the public space even more for the religious communities, which were now free to interact within the religious market and with the state institutions as well. These changes had intrinsic value for the SOC since, as it has been previously indicated, the Church and its officials were supportive of the regime change since they expected to get a more influential position within the Serbian society. The government of the newly elected PM Zoran Djindjic due to a still-fragile coalition with various parties and political movements in it, promoted both the traditional and national distinctiveness of Serbia, in order to satisfy that part of the electorate more affiliated with these attitudes, and on the other side the European vision of Serbia that can only be

⁹⁹ As Radmila Radic has indicated in the article on the politicization of religion the officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church characterized the Montenegrin Orthodox Church also as newly tribal-party sect which falsely state that it is Montenegrin Church.

Radic Radmila „Crkva u politici i politika u Crkvi” (The Church in politics and the politics within the Church), Srpska elita (The Serbian elite), Helsinške sveske (Helsinki notebooks), Beograd, 2000, 56.

achieved through the European Integration process. The former was used by the SOC to lobby for its more active role in the public sphere of the society, which had to be accepted by the government since the SOC has already achieved high credibility among the electorate. The risk that existed was that the electorate could probably, in the case of decline of the Church initiatives, be unsatisfied with the action of the first unstable democratic government. Therefore, the process of desecularization of the society was embodied in many new policies imposed by the first democratic government. With the newly established laws, the Orthodox priests became the mandatory personnel in the national army in 2001. Moreover, confessional religious education has been introduced in the public schools, and lastly, the reinstatement of a Theological Faculty at the University of Belgrade happened in 2010.¹⁰⁰

Some of the main changes that prove empirically that the process of desecularization has happened are firstly the newly enacted laws on religious freedom that regulated the religious market in Serbia and framed the relations between the religious communities and the state institutions.¹⁰¹ Secondly, the reconstruction of the infrastructure of the religious communities started.¹⁰² Additionally, the religious communities got the place within the private and public media through which they were able to promote their stances. Furthermore, the state provided these communities with financial support and set the legal framework for starting the process of restitution of their property. However, the most important is the presence of the religious communities in the public schools, which implies the more substantial influence of the youth. One more significant step in deepening the desecularization of the society is that the religious

¹⁰⁰ Hadzibulic, Sabina, and Mikko Lagerspetz. "The Colonization of a Celebration: The Transformation of Krsna Slava." *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2016).

¹⁰¹ Radic, Radmila, and Milan Vukomanovic. "Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989: The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church." In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, 201. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

¹⁰² Ibid.

communities were able to act at the economic market as they were able to sell their products, rent their properties and practice other economic activities.¹⁰³ All these features together create a complete picture of the position of the SOC in the Serbian society after 2000 and the democratic changes, but it has to be emphasized that even with this legal framework, the SOC was favored because of the historical role it has for the Serbian nation.

Moreover, the position of the SOC has stayed to be highly privileged and politicized, which specific actions of the Church show during the last two decades. Observing the SOC's interferences into Serbia's and Montenegro's political matters, one of the most important examples occurred during the process of Montenegro achieving its independence. The first problems raised during the first years of the 2000s and after the democratic changes in Serbia as Milo Djukanovic, the protagonist of the independence of Montenegro, actively start campaigning for the idea. During that time, both the SOC and the Serbian state were highly judgmental of the idea of Montenegro's independence, which resulted in the explicit "othering" and negative attitudes towards the political groups and individuals seeking the independence of the "second Serbia."¹⁰⁴ During that period, the officials of the MOC and its Patriarch Mihailo (Miras Dedic, elected in 1998) were accusing the SOC of trying to preserve its hegemony over Montenegro. The main accusation was that the SOC intends to neglect that Montenegrins are ethnically different from Serbs, with a final aim of enacting Montenegro to Serbia.¹⁰⁵ The reaction from the SOC was showing the continuity of degradation of the Montenegrin Church and those supportive of the idea of Montenegro secession

¹⁰³ Lukić, Svetlana, and Svetlana Vuković. "Zašto Se u Crkvi Šapuće 1 - Emisija (Why There Is Whisper in the Church 1)." Pešcanik, September 10, 2018. <https://pescanik.net/zasto-se-u-crkvi-sapuce-full/>; Vukomanović, Milan. "The Serbian Orthodox Church as a Political Actor in the Aftermath of October 5, 2000." *Politics and Religion* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 237–69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755048308000199>.

¹⁰⁴ Stojanović, D. (2010). Odnos prema „drugom” (Attitude towards “Other”). In *Ulje na vodi: Ogledi iz istorije sadašnjosti Srbije (Oil on Water: Study of the contemporary Serbian history)* (pp. 225–255). Belgrade: Pescanik.

¹⁰⁵ Ramet, Sabrina. "Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva (Serbian Orthodox Church)." In *Religija i Politika u Vreme Promene (Religion and Politics in the Time of Transition)*, 136. Beograd: Centar za zenske studije i istrazivanja roda, 2006.

from the federalist state. The peak has been reached in the time of Montenegro's referendum for independence in 2006 when Montenegrins voted positively for their independence. This significant political change affected both churches in different ways. The MOC expected more support from the state and the Montenegrin citizens. However, after declaring that they will take control of all Orthodox Churches in Montenegro in 2007, even without the help of the state, the MOC officials did not count on the adverse reaction from the state, which guaranteed to the SOC that its property and personnel would be protected if something like this occurs.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it is clear that the Montenegrin state was meditating and trying not to cause any abrupt changes after just a year of its independence.

However, the clash between the SOC, the Montenegrin state, and the MOC continues and has been drastically intensified during the second half of 2019 and at the beginning of 2020. The main reason is the adoption of the Law on Religious Freedom at the National Parliament of Montenegro, which tackles the hegemony of the SOC in Montenegro. The Law's most problematic provision is the one on property rights, which gives the right to the Montenegrin state to become the owner of the property of the religious community, that has been built before December 1918, if the community cannot legally prove the ownership.¹⁰⁷ This particular provision has been interpreted as a threat and attack to the Serbian national identity since most of the churches that are currently under the ownership of the SOC will become the property of the Montenegrin state. Because of the possible implementation of this provision, the Montenegrin regime is characterized as communist, chauvinist, anti-Serb in their intention to weaken the SOC influence of the society

¹⁰⁶ Morrison, Kenneth, and Nebojša Čagorović. "The Political Dynamics of Intra-Orthodox Conflict in Montenegro." In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of State, Nation, and Faith*, edited by Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić, 151–70. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Clan 62. (Paragraph 62.). Zakon o slobodi vjeroispovesti ili uvjerenja I pravnom položaju vjerskih zajednica (Law on Freedom of Religion and Confession and the legal status of religious communities). Sluzbeni list CG (Official Gazette of Montenegro), br. 74/2019.

and proceed with constructing the separate Montenegrin national identity by regulating the religious market and strengthening the MOC.

Chapter 3: How does the National Character of the Orthodox Church Matter?

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) is a long-lasting religious institution that, through history, played a vital role in the processes of constructing, preserving, and promoting the Serbian national identity. Being highly politicized, the SOC has been present in the public sphere and influenced social and political matters in Serbia and other neighboring countries since the fall of communism.¹⁰⁸ During the wars of the 1990s, the SOC was active in promoting the nationalistic idea of unifying all Serbs in a single state which could not be fulfilled without conflict, because of the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of the region. For promoting this idea, the Church had to emphasize its national character to create a distinction between other ethnicities and people of other confessions. This phenomenon is ideally in line with the first approach of the relationship between religion and nationalism, introduced by Rodgers Brubaker that treats religion and nationalism as an analogous phenomenon. Moreover, this approach perceives religion as a tool that serves and helps the individual or group identification. Finally, and for this paper, more importantly, it also helps the construction of the social group and plays a significant role in the process of the creation of political claims.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Sabrina Ramet. *Religija i Politika u Vreme Promene (Religion and Politics in the Time of Transition)*. Beograd: Centar za zenske studije i istrazivanja roda, 2006, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Brubaker, Rogers. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*." *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2011): 2. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x

Moreover, to preserve its privileged position within the public sphere, the SOC has consistently emphasized its national character, which also served as a mechanism of unification and mobilization. This discourse has been present during the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. However, the current crisis that emerged in Montenegro over the highly debated Law on Religious Freedom brought a shift in this practice. Accusing the Montenegrin ruling political elite of being discriminatory towards the SOC, the Church officials have changed their discourse in the way of emphasizing the international nature of it. From being a church of all the Serbs, it became a church of all nations and all those who believe in the only truthful denomination.

In the following paragraphs, I will try to show the shift that has happened and try to answer the question of why this has happened in the case of Montenegro. Moreover, I will locate and analyze the discursive patterns not just semantically, but also by emphasizing the political and social context in which it has been placed. Furthermore, I will emphasize, where recognizable, the topoi of threat, savor, and history. Lastly, this analysis will theoretically rely on the conceptualization of Brubaker, which offers the four approaches to analyzing the relationship between religion and nationalism. I will intend to connect the first approach of this theoretical framework with the empirical examples that will be presented in the paper.

3.1. Serbian Orthodox Church as a Church of all the Serbs

Using religion as an instrument for determining and expressing the Church's interconnection to the Serbian national identity, the SOC has, in many ways, emphasized its national character. Moreover, as the SOC is the only actor representing this denomination in Serbia, it has been institutionally connected to the Serbian statehood as well. One of the most well-known statements is from the SOC media outlet, called "The Voice of the Church" from 1991. In

this statement, it has been written: “In our restoration of the spiritual foundations, it is necessary, to begin with the fact that Serbianness sprouts from Orthodox Christianity and that without it there would not be any Serbianness. Those Serbs who stopped being Orthodox, they stopped being Serbs.”¹¹⁰ This statement serves as a primary example of how the SOC used religion to draw lines in the multiethnic and multi-confessional societies as the country of ex-Yugoslavia states are. As it has been stated, the Serbianness “sprouts” from Orthodox Christianity, which shows the deep interconnection of the Serbian national identity and Orthodoxy. Sprouting from Orthodoxy, Serbianness is something that finds its basis in religion and cannot exist without it. Moreover, in this statement, it is important to emphasize the last sentence in which explicitly has been said that being a Serb means being an Orthodox. This conclusion can be drawn from observing how the verb “stopped” has been used to describe the connectivity of religion and national identity in Serbia. The usage of this verb in this particular context creates a simple dichotomy of who can be a Serb and who cannot, which is determined by someone’s religious affiliation. The dichotomy created in this text serves the purpose of differentiating those who are Serbs from those who are not in the time of increased nationalism and ethnic tensions. Presenting Orthodoxy as a marker of someone's national identity perfectly fits Brubaker’s conceptualization of the relationship between religion and nationalism. As it has been previously emphasized treating these two concepts as the analogous phenomenon, Brubaker has pointed that religion can serve as a marker of the individual or a group belonging, which here explicitly has been the case as it has been strongly stated that to be a Serbs you have to be Orthodox.

Throughout the argument that “without it (Orthodoxy), there would not be any Serbianness,” the role of the SOC as a keeper of the Serbian national identity and Serbianness has

¹¹⁰ Barisic, Srdjan. “Crkvena Doktrina O Ratu.” Helsinška Povelja, March/April 2009, 18. 2009. <https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/hpovelja02.html>.

been emphasized. Moreover, the topos of savior has been present in this statement since the Church has presented itself as the preserver of the Serbianness by arguing that it has been based on Orthodoxy, and it cannot exist without it.

Furthermore, stating that the spiritual restoration implies that Serbian society has to come back to its Orthodox roots, on which it has been based and without which it cannot exist, shows us the usage of the topos of history. The first proof for stating this is that SOC officials referred to the historical, medieval, connection of the Serbian state and with Orthodoxy. Secondly, as it has been referred earlier, this topos also implies that the solutions for the problems from the present have usually be found in history. Therefore, the adjective “necessary” creates a perception of an imperative for the Serbian society, which implies that if the society wants to restore its spirituality, it has to reconnect with its intrinsic and historical Orthodox roots.

The political context in which this statement can be placed is characterized by the mechanism of othering. In 1991, the nationalistic discourse drastically increased, and it played a role in the revival of the national feelings with a final aim of determining who is who. In other words, the SOC used religion, in this case, to determine who is a Serb and who is not.¹¹¹ Apart from that, the statement is an example of the process of desecularization of society since the “spiritual restoration” refers to the fact that in 1991 the process of transition was ongoing, and as the new regime was still deconstructing the communists’ machinery that kept the country functional for five decades.

In the same year, on the cover page of the SOC magazine, “Pravoslavlje” (Orthodoxy), the former Patriarch Pavel's letter to Lord Carrington was published. In the first part of the letter, there is a statement that can strengthen the premise that the Church has intensively emphasized its

¹¹¹ Brubaker, Rogers. “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*.” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2011): 2. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x

national character and its interconnectivity with the Serbian nation: “As a centurial keeper of the Serbian spirituality, Serbian national and culture-historical identity, Serbian Orthodox Church is especially worried about the destiny of the Serbian people in these breaking times.”¹¹² From the very beginning of the letter, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church emphasized the longevity of the connection between the Serbian nation and its Church. Pointing to the fact that the SOC is a “centurial keeper” of the Serbian national, cultural, and historical identity shows the strength of this connection. Moreover, being a keeper of the Serbian national identity Patriarch Pavle emphasized to which extent the Church as an institution is essential for the Serbian people as a savior of its bare soul and distinctiveness. Preserving the uniqueness of the Serbian national identity and culture as being its “keeper” shows the usage of the topos of a savior. Moreover, being “worried about the destiny of the Serbian people in these breaking times,” the Serbian Patriarch was raising concern for a threat coming from the newly established regimes in the ex-Yugoslav countries where Serbs live. Therefore, in this statement, the topos of threat can be located in the argument formulation, which emphasizes that the head of the SOC is “worried about the destiny of the Serbian people.” Lastly, focusing on the adjective (“centurial”) used for describing the Church as a keeper enables us to locate the topos of history since this particular adjective point to the fact that the Church has this role for an extended period which legitimizes the Church to acts as a savior of the Serbs and their national identity in the “breaking times.”

During that time, the newly independent state of Croatia imposed problematic law on national minorities, which deprived Serbs of some of their fundamental civil rights. With the rising xenophobia and nationalism, patriarch's primary concern in this letter was the future of the Serbian people and its Church when the war was slowly starting to emerge.

¹¹² Tomanic, Milorad. SPC U Ratu I Rat U Njoj. Beograd, Serbia: Medijska Knjižara Krug, 2001, pp. 99.

Being concerned about the outcomes of the war and all the peace talks during the last years of the conflict in Bosnia, the SOC officials once again proved and emphasized to which extent religion and the SOC have been “rooted” in the Serbian nation. This symbiosis can be recognized in the Appeal for Serbian people and the international community from Episcopate Conference of Serbian Orthodox Church from 1995:

With full responsibility in front of God, our people, and human history, we are calling all Serbian people to stand up and defend centurial rights and freedoms of their vital interests, which are necessary for physical and spiritual survival and survival of their fatherland. (...) as the people and the Church, deeply rooted in this suffering state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we today cannot agree upon, nor accept the imposed decision from Geneva about percentages and maps, we cannot stay without our Zitomislica on Neretva river, Saborne Church in Mostar.¹¹³

Emphasizing that “physical and spiritual survival,” but also “survival of their fatherland” have to be “defended,” the recipient of this information could easily create an image of the rising threat for the individual and collective existence. Moreover, in the statement, it has been emphasized that also “centurial rights and freedoms” have been under threat, which just builds up the perception of the high importance of the emerging threat. Therefore, the topos of threat has been used for mobilization purposes since the survival of the Serbian people has been under question. The call for mobilization and unification has been evident since the Episcopate Conference “with full responsibility in front of God, our people, and human history” called the Serbian people to defend their bare existence.

¹¹³ Barisic, Srdjan. “Crkvena Doktrina O Ratu.” (The Church Doctrine on War) Helsinška Povelja, March/April 2009, 18. 2009. <https://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/hpovelja02.html>.

The topos of history in this statement has been connected with the clear emphasis of the national character of the SOC. Being “deeply rooted” in the “suffering state of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” the SOC shows a tight and historical connection to the land where now Serbs have been under threat. This connection can be recognized through how the SOC has been described in the statement. Being responsible for “our people” and addressing all Serbian people throughout the statement is a clear indicator of how the SOC perceives itself, and how it has presented itself as the Church of all Serbs.

Lastly, through this statement, the Church wanted to show that they are not satisfied with the results of the war and the results of the peace negotiations in Geneva. Moreover, they claim that the unification of the Serbian Orthodox people is not fulfilled, and it is the responsibility of the “sacred nation” to defend its churches and its holy land.

The same Episcopate Conference, three years earlier (1992), defending its politicized position from the Milosevic's attempts to instrumentalize it and not give it real political power, had an intention to make an unbreakable connection with the Serbs from the neighboring post-Yugoslav countries. Commenting on the Vance-Owen's plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the highest body of the SOC once again emphasized its inseparable ties with the Serbian nation and its people: “Nobody's agreements with the holders of political power in Serbia, who does not have the mandate to represent all the Serbs, or with the organizational structures of Yugoslav Federation or with the commanding structures of the Yugoslav army does not oblige the Serbian people as a whole without its acceptance and the blessing by its spiritual mother Serbian Orthodox Church.”¹¹⁴ Here, in this statement, the sacralized discourse can be found as the Church invokes that any

¹¹⁴ Barišić, Srđan. “Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva i Jugoslavija (The Serbian Orthodox Church and Yugoslavia).” YU Historija, 2017. https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt00c5.html.

agreements cannot oblige the Serbian people if it is not “blessed” by the SOC. Therefore, the Church positions itself as a higher authority than the state, and as the only representative of all the Serbs. The legitimization of this claim comes from the presented fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church is “spiritual mother” of the Serbian nation. Just the usage of the noun “mother” has a binding and emotional connotation. Lastly, the emphasis in this statement can also be put on the claim that all the formal institutions do not have legitimization to oblige all Serbs, but only Church does. Therefore, it shows the perceptions of the Church's jurisdictions, which in this case, are extra-territorial.

The last and more contemporary example that shows the continuity of the same matrix within the discourse of the SOC is a statement by the current patriarch Irinej from 2019. Celebrating eight centuries of its autocephaly the head of the SOC evoked frequently used nationalistic and irredentist statements from the 1990s, which during the time of the still ongoing reconciliation in the region can cause problematic consequences:

Throughout the longest part of its history, our nation was not unified within the borders of one state, and it still has not lost its identity because it is deeply rooted in the Church. Even today, wherever the Church is present, it is the basis of the Serbian identity. Especially in those parts where it is jeopardized, people find the strength to survive, a peaceful dock, and consolation for everyday life within the St. Sava's Church. For that reason, we should say clearly and loudly: without St. Sava's Serbian Orthodox Church, we Serbs, as a nation, would not exist.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ “Irinej: Bez Svetosavske Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve, Mi Srbi Kao Narod Ne Bismo Ni Postojali!” Sve o Srpskoj, October 9, 2019. <https://sveosrpskoj.com/vjere/irinej-bez-svetosavske-srpske-pravoslavne-crkve-mi-srbi-kao-narod-ne-bismo-ni-postojali/?script=lat>.

Patriarch has presented the SOC as a unique and crucial institution for the Serbian nation. Moreover, his claims that the Serbian people, even not living in a single state, have not “lost” their identity because of being “deeply rooted in the Church” creates a perception of the Church as a savior of Serbs and their national distinctiveness. In addition to the previous claim, the part of the statement in which Irinej has emphasized that the presence of the Church gives the “strength” to the Serbian people to survive when being jeopardized can be added. Giving them strength and “consolidation for everyday life,” the SOC has been presented by the usage of the topos of savior by its Patriarch.

The pattern of continuously using the topos of history could be located in the discourse of the SOC officials as in this statement, and in all previously analyzed ones, the authors are emphasizing the historically strong ties of the SOC and the Serbian nation. To be more precise Patriarch Irinej has referred to the centurial role of the SOC in the preservation of the Serbian national identity (especially during the Ottoman period) as the Serbian people did not lose their national identity “throughout the longest part of its history” because it is rooted in the SOC.

Nonetheless, the topos of threat is not less represented in this statement as the clear connotation has been made through the usage of the verb “jeopardized” and also through the constant reference to the physical “existence” of the nation. Therefore, as a keeper and a savior of the nation, the SOC, as it has been presented in the statement, is the bare soul of it and, consequently, one of the most significant markers of someone's national belonging. This feature in the argumentation can be tracked in the part of the statements which claim that “even today, wherever the Church is present, it is the basis of the Serbian identity.” However, there is one more layer of meaning in this argumentation, as it has been emphasized that “wherever” the Serbian Church is, it has been the basis of the Serbian identity. This claim perfectly fits into the SOC

political actions beyond the Serbian borders, and into the “territoriality” argument made by Ognjenovic and Jozelic.¹¹⁶

Lastly, the subtle allegory of the concept of Big Serbia can be located. This irredentist concept is still present in the discourse of the Church officials who once again presented the SOC as the most important keeper of the Serbian national identity. Another argument that can be connected to the first statement analyzed in this sub-chapter is imperative that states that without its national Church, the Serbs would simply not exist. Finally, according to the SOC, this premise cannot be questioned, and it is the ultimate truth.

3.2. Serbian Orthodox Church as a Church of all Nations

The pattern mentioned above, and the preserved matrix had changed recently when the power of the SOC was questioned in Montenegro. The Law on Religious Freedom shaken the privileged and highly politicized position of the SOC in Montenegro. These events urged the Church to react and to defend its position and reputation. Significantly, the shift has happened as the Church officials changed their discourse and “internationalized” the Church. I have used the term internationalization intending to describe the new phenomenon in which the SOC started presenting itself as the Church of all nationalities. Its national character has not been forgotten, but emphasizing it, in this case, started to be highly avoided. Therefore, I will present a few statements which will serve as examples for analyzing why the discourse has changed.

¹¹⁶ Ognjenovic, Gordana, and Jasna Jozelic. “Introduction: The Power of Symbolism.” In *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia and Its Successor States*, edited by Gordana Ognjenovic and Jasna Jozelic, 1–4. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

The first statement came from one of the current leaders of the religious protests in Montenegro, priest Gojko Petrovic, who is also a rector of the Eastern Orthodoxy Theology Faculty at Cetinje (Montenegro). At the end of 2019, when the debate over the Law started to be more intense Petrovic started emphasizing the international nature of the Serbian Orthodox Church for which ethnicity does not play any role:

Nor today, the Church does not even question one's national belonging.

Neither I nor any other priest of the SOC aims to modify one's national identity.

This is everyone's Church, and its official name does not mean that all of its followers are Serbs. Just like the name of the Montenegrin state does not imply that all of its citizens are of Montenegrin nation.¹¹⁷

Within this statement, we can see how the discourse has changed in the case of Montenegro as it has been explicitly referring that the SOC is “everyone's Church.” Moreover, the epithet that determines the Church has been neglected here as Petrovic emphasized that the Church being Serbian does not imply that only Serbs can be its followers. Therefore, it is important to question what does the prefix “Serbian” mean then, since the other nationalities can, and probably should follow and internalize the Serbian myths and other national symbols deeply embedded into the Church? The comparison that has been made at the end of the statement is questionable since the obligations and benefits of being a Montenegrin citizen are not the same as being a member of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The main concern is that being of any ethnicity and still being a Montenegrin citizen implies that the state will grant and protect generally established individual and collective rights while your obligation is to follow the laws, pay taxes, as it is for everyone regardless of their ethnicity. On the other side, being a member of the SOC the benefit you can get

¹¹⁷ IN4S. “Otac Gojko Perović Za IN4S – O Neistinama Koje Protiv Crkve Šire...” IN4S, October 20, 2019. <https://www.in4s.net/otac-gojko-perovic-za-in4s-o-neistinama-koje-protiv-crkve-sire-mediji-u-crnoj-gorii/>.

is mostly spiritual and depends from the type and level of your religiosity while your “obligation” is to dedicate yourself to the preservation of the certain national symbols which are specific only for the SOC since it has internalized and sacralized particular nationally important symbols, traditions, and historical events.

The more significant and contradictory example is the statement from 2019 by Metropolitan Amfilohije, who is the head of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral. In one of the interviews, he emphasized that “the Church is not of a particular state or nation, but God's Church.” Besides that, the pattern that can also be located in the current discourse of the SOC officials, especially those from Montenegro, is the geographical or territorial argument which implies that the name of the Church comes from the territory on which it has canonical jurisdiction:

If they are going to the Church, they would know that in it, the symbol of faith that is preached is not Russian, nor Greek, nor Serbian, but the only holy apostolic church of Christ has been confessed. (...) The names of the Orthodox Churches with their national or state prefix are representing names based on geography or after most of the believers, and conditioned by the historical and external changes, and not by nature, meaning, and being of the church itself.¹¹⁸

In this particular statement, we can locate the specific discursive strategy of predication as there is a clear discursive qualification of the social actors.¹¹⁹ Addressing those who are opposing the Church stances on the issue and connecting it with the Serbian state have been described as ignorant since there is a connotation which points that “if they are going to the Church they would know.” Characterized in this way, this social and political group has been delegitimized in the

¹¹⁸ “Amfilohije: Crkva Je Božija, a Ne Bilo Kojе Države Ili Nacije.” Antena M, August 12, 2019. <https://www.antenam.net/drustvo/129360-amfilohije-crkva-je-bozija-a-ne-bilo-koje-drzave-ili-nacije;>

¹¹⁹ Wodak, Ruth. “Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach.” The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction, 2015, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116>.

ongoing debate on the nature of the SOC. Since it has been established how this group has been characterized, we can say that the discursive strategy of nomination has also been used for discursive construction of the social actors as we can see that the particular group can be distinguished by the characteristics prescribed to it.

Taking into consideration the discourse that has firstly been analyzed in the first example, this statement that represents the politics of the same institution is quite paradoxical. Deconstructing these arguments, we have to point out that the Serbian Orthodox Church has its national character as it has provided certain myths that glued together national history on which consequently the national identity has been based. Moreover, the specific religious and traditional ritual is transformed into a distinctive national ritual, and it is also a feature that gives the Church its national character. As Sabrina Ramet would emphasize, decentralized and nationalized Orthodox Churches are different from one another since each of them has its myths, history, different relations with the state, religious rituals, and other patterns.¹²⁰

During the same year (2019) inviting the people to join the Church during the liturgies the Metropolitanate of Montenegro-Primorje and the Diocese of Budva-Niksic, Joanikije, has used the same discursive strategies and once again emphasized that the Church is not connected to any nation or national symbols:

Thanking all political and other organizations and individuals who raised concerns and showed readiness to participate in the Council we remind that Church Council is not the place for any ideological, political or national symbols or paroles- let only church flags and liturgies flutter during the Council and let only prayers and words

¹²⁰ Sabrina Ramet. *Religija i Politika u Vreme Promene (Religion and Politics in the Time of Transition)*. Beograd: Centar za zenske studije i istrazivanja roda, 2006, 123-146.; Ramet, Sabrina. "The Orthodox Churches of Southeastern Europe: An Introduction." In *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe: Nationalism, Conservatism, and Intolerance*, edited by Sabrina Ramet, 1–14. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

of trust in God be heard, which will best show our determination to defend and protect the saints with the help of God in peace and brotherly love. The church gathers and does not divide, all believers without exceptions. (...) The Church is by its nature a Council- a Council of God and people, Council between us, Council of the sky and earth, and it has to preserve this position and never become a maid of any state, nation, or ideology. Being like this, it will be free. To be in service of any temporary earthly ideal, whatever it would be, it loses its evangelical strength and betrays loyalty to God and its mission of salvation of humans and the world.¹²¹

The first feature that shows the change in the discourse is that it has been stated that “the Church Council is not the place for any ideological, political, and national symbols and paroles.” By stating this, the Church officials from Montenegro are trying to prevent the nationalization of the protests, but paradoxically the symbols desirable at the protest still have historically established national symbols or depicts the Serbian saints. Moreover, saying that “only church flags” and “prayers and words of trust in God” will preserve and show brotherly love, lead us back to the argument that the Church by not emphasizing its national character tries to avoid social divisions and to lose the support of those who can find it problematic if the Church officials emphasize their previously unquestioned tie to the Serbian nation. Actions like these have been enabled because these national symbols, deeply embedded in the Church, are sacralized and hijacked by the SOC so people will perceive them as those of Church and not connected to the nation in general. This premise that the SOC seeks support in this way is present as well in the argument that “the Church gathers and does not divide.” The high level of interconnection between religion and nationalism that has been

¹²¹ “Saopštenje Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske i Eparhije Budimljansko-Nikšićke (Announcement of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro-Primorje and the Diocese of Budva-Niksic).” Saopštenje Mitropolije crnogorsko-primorske i Eparhije budimljansko-nikšićke | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], December 20, 2019. http://spc.rs/sr/saopshtenje_mitropolije_crnogorskoprivorske_eparhije_budimljanskonihshtsk.

indicated in this statement and the social actions (protests) is a perfect embodiment of Brubaker's conceptualization of the relationship between these two concepts. More precisely, we can state that religion is "imbricated or intertwined with nationalism" in this particular case.¹²² Finally, the noun ("maid") has been used in the argument that the Serbian Orthodox Church is not affiliated with any nation. In this particular case, it has a negative connotation since it practically means that the Church cannot serve any state, nation, or ideology as by doing this, it will betray and "lose" its evangelical nature. Therefore, the problem that has raised with the enacted Law has been presented as a universal problem of violation of religious rights and not as an identity cleavage.

In most of the statements given on the Law on Religious Freedom and the position of the SOC regarding the Law, the Church officials are targeting the current Montenegrin regime. By characterizing the regime and individuals representing it, the SOC officials are trying to position themselves and make a clear distinction of these two social groups:

He is a politician, he is a man of a political party, for him, the church is the same as a political party, so he does not know what the church is. He even cannot know when he is not baptized. (...) I am first and foremost a Christian, and a bishop of the Orthodox Christian Church and for me it is a fundamental feature, to belong to the church, and the church we belong to is called Serbian or Russian or Greek due to its geographical presence or due to the majority of believers it has. However, by its nature, it is a cosmopolitan, it has no national character. (...) What is important to me here is whether someone is baptized and whether someone believes in God, the

¹²² Brubaker, Rogers. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*." *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 8–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x>.

true living Christ, and whether someone goes to the Church no matter how someone declares nationally or from which country someone is coming from.¹²³

Both discursive strategies, nomination, and predication are present in this statement. We can locate the nomination strategy as the Metropolitan Amfilohije constructs the boundaries of the social group to which he belongs by emphasized the characteristics of the President of Montenegro. Milo Djukanovic, the President of Montenegro, has been described as a “politician” and a “party man,” and therefore, he does not know “what the church is.” Once again, the other side in this social and political cleavage has been delegitimized since they have been perceived as ignorant when it comes to the sacrality of the Church and when it comes to religion in general. Moreover, being a “politician” and a “party man” have a clear connotation of the secular position that Djukanovic holds and his ideological stances from the past, which often has been described as communist and Titoist (affiliated to Tito's regime). Lastly, the delegitimization of the opposite side can be seen in the argument that Djukanovic cannot know what the church is as he is not “baptized.” This characterization shows us the usage of the predication strategy, since not being formally a part of the church by being baptized this social group has been negatively evaluated as without internalizing the Holy spirit through this religious ritual, they are considered to be unable to comprehend what the church is.

The territorial or geographic argument certainly plays a significant role in the discourse of the SOC officials as in this statement again, it has been claimed that the name of the Church has been determined by its territorial jurisdiction and by the ethnicity of their followers. However, both of these features have been put aside as religiosity, and religious practice are the most

¹²³ Kostić, Stevan. “Okolo: Amfilohije Radović (Eye: Amfilohije Radović).” You Tube. Radio Television of Serbia, August 20, 2019.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1Cab43_8w4&feature=youtu.be&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSqo&t=345.

important determiners of a good believer and a member of the SOC, according to Metropolitan Amfilohije.

Finally, by analyzing the statements in the Church media outlets, the SOC website, and in the interviews that the SOC officials gave for other media outlets, the interesting discursive patterns can be found. When addressing the public, the SOC officials avoid using any ethnical determinants. Therefore, in most of the statements, we can locate the nouns for describing the collective belonging as “people,” “brothers,” “sisters.”¹²⁴ Besides these nouns, the Serbian Orthodox Church has been often mentioned as “the Church” where the prefix has been left out as the focus and perception of the Church has to be changed from it being national, Serbian Church, to being cosmopolitan, internationalized, and inclusive church. These discursive patterns go in hand with the policy of the Church to present itself as a uniting factor in Montenegro, while the political regime should be perceived as the only actor that creates cleavages. Moreover, the risk of

¹²⁴ “Amfilohije Vlast Hapsenjem Joanikija i Svestenika Priprema Gradjanski Rat.” You Tube. Novi TV, May 15, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ait-vgSy85Y&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSsqo&index=3&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ait-vgSy85Y&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSsqo&index=3&t=0s;); Milosavljević, Nataša. “Mitropolit Amfilohije: Mi Koji Smo Tu Osam Vekova Možemo Da Registrujemo Državu, a Ne Ona Nas (We Who Are Here for Eight Centuries, We Can Register the State, but the State Cannot Register Us).” You Tube. Sputnjik Srbija, March 16, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHeVDi3RQnE&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSsqo&index=15>; “U Zizi - Joanikije (In Focus- Joanikije).” You Tube. Novi TV, June 6, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK66rutLios&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSsqo&index=28&t=0s>; “Berane: Vasovo Pleme Brani Veru i Svetinje (Vasovo Tribe Defends the Faith and Shrines).” Berane: Vasovo pleme brani veru i svetinje | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], January 5, 2020. http://spc.rs/sr/berane_vasovo_pleme_brani_veru_svetinje; “Vladika Joanikije: Čuvamo Temelje Crne Gore (Bishop Joanikije: We Are Preserving the Foundations of Montenegro).” Vladika Joanikije: Čuvamo temelje Crne Gore | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], December 28, 2019. http://spc.rs/sr/vladika_joanikije_chuvamo_temelje_crne_gore; “Vladika Jonikije: Mi Ćemo Našu Borbu Protiv Zla i Nepravde Nastaviti (Bishop Joanikije: We Will Continue Our Struggle against the Evil and Injustice).” Vladika Jonikije: Mi ćemo našu borbu protiv zla i nepravde nastaviti | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], December 27, 2019. http://spc.rs/sr/vladika_jonikije_mi_tshemo_nashu_borbu_protiv_zla_nepravde_nastaviti; “Episkop Joanikije u Pljevljima: Litije Su Narodna Skupština (Bishop Joanikije: the Liturgies Are Peoples’ Council).” Episkop Joanikije u Pljevljima: Litije su narodna skupština | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], March 6, 2020. http://www.spc.rs/sr/episkop_joanikije_u_pljevljima_litije_su_narodna_skupshtina; “Mitropolit Amfilohije: Bezakonje Je Proglašeno Za Zakon (Metropolit Amfilohije: Lawlessness Has Been Proclaimed as a Law).” Mitropolit Amfilohije: Bezakonje je proglašeno za zakon | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], February 24, 2020. http://www.spc.rs/sr/mitropolit_amfilohije_bezakonje_je_proglasheno_za_zakon.

using the ethnical determinants is too high that the SOC cannot afford itself to make such mistakes and potentially lose support. For this reason, the SOC officials are often referring to certain historical events and characters that are common for both ethnicities.

3.3. Conclusion

From all examples presented, the conclusion that can be drawn is that religion is a useful instrument for the process of distinction and the process of unification. The difference is how the religious institution as a social actor instrumentalizes religion. Relying on Brubaker's conceptualization, we can say that during the 1990s, religion has been used to determine someone's national belonging and the borders of a particular social group. However, the discourse from the 1990s differs from the current discourse on the Montenegro issue if we also observe them through Brubaker's conceptualization. The main difference is that during the 1990s, religion was instrumentalized as a marker of national belonging. However, in the Montenegrin case, it fulfills the purpose of a marker of belonging to a particular denomination since the nationalist layer has been hidden in the discourse of the SOC officials. Moreover, religion serves this purpose during the time of rising nationalism and in the societies where there is a clear confessional and national difference, as it was in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. However, in the more current SOC discourse on the Montenegro dispute, religion has been instrumentalized as a tool for unification. In this particular case, the instrumentalization of religion for unification serves the higher purpose of preserving the privileged and high reputation of the SOC in Montenegrin society through the politicization of religion. What has been located in the second part of the analysis is that the SOC tries to internationalize itself and decrease the importance of its national character. Playing a game as both a political and a religious institution, the SOC is concerned about its social and political

power, which can be in question if it loses the support of those who are declaring as Montenegrins. Both Serbs and Montenegrins being Orthodox and both sharing some historical and cultural events, and patterns enabled the SOC to shift its discourse without the need to draw the lines but to unify the people with a higher secular (political) goal. The unification itself is specific in its core and has been possible because the SOC connects both ethnicities by hijacking certain Serbian national symbols and sacralize them. By doing this, the SOC changed how these symbols are perceived since they are now seen as more attached to the SOC than to the Serbian nation.¹²⁵

Critical discourse analysis and discourse-historical approach enabled me to distinguish discursive patterns of the SOC. In the case of the discourse from the 1990s, we can often locate the usage of the topoi of a savior, threat, and history, which serve to strengthen the arguments that intended to fuel the national feeling among the Serbs in general. These three topoi combined to create a useful tool for maintaining unity among the people, but also for the constant reminding of someone belonging. Using this argumentation scheme, the SOC is constantly showing and proving its connection to the Serbian nation. The best way to do that is through the topoi of savior and history.

Additionally, to these two topoi, the relation between the SOC and the Serbian nation is maintained and often defended because of the frequent usage of the topos of threat. The primary way in which these three topoi are contributing to the strength of the argument is that firstly the topos of history will show the longevity of the connection of the Church and the nation. The topos of savior will be imposed since the Church will be presented as a keeper and preserver of the nation through history, and finally, the topos of threat will raise the concern about the vulnerability of this relationship, which has to be protected. The argumentation schemes, structured in this

¹²⁵ Brubaker, Rogers. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*." *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 8–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x>.

particular way, caused certain social actions, which, in the case of Montenegro, are embodied in the current protests. Besides the topoi, there is a clear semantical pattern that usually served the purpose of showing the connection of the Serbian nation and the Serbian Church (mother, spiritual basis, church rooted in the nation). On the other side, the more contemporary discourse of the SOC on the Montenegrin Law has been characterized by frequently used argumentation strategies of nomination and predication, which both serve the SOC to establish the binderies of this social group and also for the evaluation of the opposing group. In these statements, the usage of adjectives, metaphors, and allegories is not that often as it is in those from the 1990s since any characterization of people in Montenegro and the Church itself is highly avoidable. Lastly, we can see the apparent shift in the discourse that occurred intentionally and purposefully since the SOC intends to achieve different secular goals in the society with a different ethnical composition.

Chapter 4: Position of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian State towards the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedoms

The Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedom was adopted on December 27th, 2019, even with the high pressure from the SOC that its adoption should not happen.¹²⁶ This law has a secularizing character, and it has an aim, as the initiators claim, to open and regulate the religious market in the secular state of Montenegro. These changes have been interpreted in a way that the current Montenegrin government wants to jeopardize the dominant position that the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) has in this country. Therefore, the adoption of the Law and its potential

¹²⁶ Zakon o slobodi vjeroispovijesti ili uvjerenja i pravnom položaju vjerskih zajednica (Law on Freedom of religion and confession and legal status of religious communities). Sluzbeni list CG (Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro), br. 74/2019.

implementation provoked reactions of the SOC, part of the public affiliated with this denomination, and the Serbian state. Moreover, religious protests emerged in Montenegro, but also in other parts of the region where Serbs live. The events created a dispute that enabled involvement of the Serbian state, which intervened with the aim of “defending” the intrinsically important institution for Serbian national identity, whose dominance was jeopardized by certain provisions of the newly adopted law.

In the following paragraphs, I will present and analyze the discursive reactions of the SOC and the Serbian state towards the newly adopted Law and try to show the interconnection of the church and the state, which provoked the former institution to intervene into the internal social, religious, and political matters of the neighboring state. Finally, the focus of the discourse analysis would be on locating the topoi and argumentation strategies that will help me to frame the discourse of these actors, but also to show similarities and differences between them.

4.1 Reactions of the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedoms

The Serbian Orthodox Church is the largest religious community in Montenegro, with the highest number of followers.¹²⁷ Moreover, their role in the Montenegrin society is not based just on religious matters but is highly politicized. Through various political actions and statements, the Church officials are influencing the attitudes of their followers who are at the same time part of the electorate. Moreover, because of the interconnection between the Church and the Serbian state, the action that SOC makes is sometimes perceived as those provoked by the Serbian state itself.

¹²⁷ 72.07% of people in Montenegro declared as Orthodox Christians. Since the SOC is the biggest Orthodox Church in Montenegro most of the people declaring as Orthodox Christians are actually the SOC followers. “Uprava Za Statistiku Crne Gore (Statistics Directorate of Montenegro).” MONSTAT. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=322&pageid=322>.

For the reasons presented above and encountering the influence that the SOC has in Montenegro, the statement could be made that their status on the religious market is privileged since with the highly developed and numerous infrastructure, significant financial resources, and a high number of followers the SOC can influence the society of Montenegro and therefore, change the political dynamics in the state.

The Law has shaken this special status of the SOC, which often slows down or obstructs certain actions enacted by the Montenegrin government, which leads the state closer to the secular, European, and more liberal values, but also spreads and strengthens the national feeling among the Montenegrins.

The most problematic provision of the Law is Paragraph 62. which affects the property rights of the religious communities in Montenegro.¹²⁸ There are other debatable and problematized provisions regarding the nominations, financial matters. However, since the focus on my thesis is on the discourse, I will focus on the most problematized, emphasized, and addressed ones. The provision on property rights gives the right to the Montenegrin state to become the owner of the property of the religious community, that has been built before December 1918, if the community cannot legally prove the ownership. As the largest religious community in Montenegro, the SOC is the most affected by this provision as it has many monasteries, churches, and other properties in Montenegro that have been confiscated from the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC) in 1920 during the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Some of these monasteries and churches are of great financial importance for the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Član 62 (Paragraph 62). Zakon o slobodi vjeroispovijesti ili uvjerenja i pravnom položaju vjerskih zajednica (Law on Freedom of religion and confession and legal status of religious communities). Sluzbeni list CG (Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro), br. 74/2019.

¹²⁹ Jankovic, Srdjan. "Koliko SPC Zараđuje Od Ostroga." Radio Slobodna Evropa. Radio Slobodna Evropa, June 4, 2013. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/koliko-spc-zaradjuje-od-ostroga/25006770.html>.

The profit that SOC collected in 2013 on the annul bases from one of the most touristic monasteries (Ostrog) was not less than 600.000 euros and not more than 50. million euros since annually more than one million people visit

This provision was the most debated part of the whole Law that caused massive religious protests and because of which the whole Law has been characterized as discriminatory towards the Serbs and the SOC. The Government and those MPs who voted for the Law have been characterized as a communist by the Church officials.

Metropolitan Amfilohije, who is the head of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, is one of the most influential SOC officials who have been in this current position for almost thirty years (since 1991). When addressing the issue, Metropolitan Amfilohije uses mostly non-sacral, politicized discourse which usually characterizes the Montenegrin state with the negative attributes:

The modern and contemporary state has a role and obligation to guarantee peace, the rule of law and to protect the property of all, and guarantee justice among people and that all citizens in that state have a feeling of prosperity and security. Here, something different is happening- the state that should guarantee peace with its acts is causing conflicts. It seems that out of this need to keep citizens in constant tension, the law on freedom of religion arose.¹³⁰

The Montenegro state in this statement has been positioned in contrast to what is an ideal state with all the required features. However, according to Amfilohije, Montenegro is not close to that idea since the state is “causing conflicts.” Moreover, the essential role of the state has been in question as its function has been described as the state that needs to “keep citizens in constant tension” to maintain its power. Apart from these negative attributions prescribed to the

the monastery. Since the beginning of the year, the number of visitors and the profit have increased as the followers of the SOC reacted towards the Law with visiting these monasteries and helping them financially as well.

¹³⁰ “Mitropolit Amfilohije: Sve Što Tražimo Za Sebe - Tražimo i Za Druge (Metropolitan Amfilohije: Everything We Ask for Ourselves - We Ask for Others).” Mitropolit Amfilohije: Sve što tražimo za sebe - tražimo i za druge | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], December 18, 2019. http://www.spc.rs/sr/mitropolit_amfilohije_sve_shto_trazhimo_zh_sebe_trazhimo_zh_druge.

Montenegrin state with the usage of the predication strategy, we can locate topos of a threat as well. Two particular words, “conflicts” and “constant tension” combined, are pointing to the fact that there is a threat coming from the Montenegrin state and against which particular actions have to be taken.

The continuation of the secular and highly politicized discourse usually puts Montenegro in comparison with the European states. However, this comparison usually serves for delegitimizing the Montenegrin state and its actions:

Such a dangerous, ill-intentioned, and maliciously prepared law does not deserve to be discussed and debated in the Montenegrin Parliament until it does not get consent from all traditional churches and religious communities in Montenegro, in accordance with the opinion of the Venice Commission and with the highest international standards. Orthodox Church persistently keeps the door open for professional, transparent, and comprehensive dialogue based on the positive experience of modern, secular states in Europe and the world, preserving the principle of equality and- everything we ask for ourselves, we ask for others.¹³¹

The clear intent of delegitimization of the Montenegrin state and the Law on Religious Freedom can be seen at the very beginning of the statement. The argumentation has been set in a way that characterizing the Law as “dangerous, ill-intentioned and malicious” the audience can perceive it as senseless and threatening. However, the SOC in this statement has been described positively as an institution open for the potential dialogue as it “persistently keeps the door open” for the transparent and comprehensive talks on solving the rising issue. Once again, the predication strategy has been used in the argumentation as both the Montenegrin state and the SOC have been

¹³¹ Ibid.

discursively qualified with evaluative attributions that will propagate a particular perception of these actors to the public.

Following Amfilohije's path priest Gojko Petrović, rector of the Theological School in Cetinje currently has an influential role in the current events in Montenegro, but also in Serbia. Petrović has given many interviews and attended a few of the TV debates in Serbia and Montenegro, but more importantly, he is addressing the protestors in the towns of Montenegro very often. His discourse does not differ from the official discourse of the SOC since the Church has been the historically homogenous institution when it comes to its ideological and political affiliations. Therefore, the pattern of secularizing the discourse is present in the statements given by priest Gojko Petrović:

It (the Law) violates Article 14. of the Constitution and officially announces in Parliament and outside of Parliament that he (Milo Djukanovic) and his party will re-establish the Church. I do not go into details at all about what kind of church it is in his idea, who would make that church, what kind of believers they are, according to which canons - but I ask you: Does the constitution of this country allow the president of a civil, multi-confessional state to claim announces that he will re-establish a church? That is the atmosphere in which we are talking about this Law.¹³²

Before analyzing this statement, it is important to point out what is Article 14. of the Montenegrin Constitution. This part of the Constitution refers to the religious freedom and secularity of the state as the religious communities are separated from the state, and religious communities are equal and

¹³² "Prota Gojko Perović: Vlada Da Povuče Predlog Zakona o Slobodi Vjeroispovijesti (Prota Gojko Perović: Government to Withdraw the Bill on Freedom of Religion)." Prota Gojko Perović: Vlada da povuče Predlog zakona o slobodi vjeroispovijesti | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], December 23, 2019. http://spc.rs/sr/prota_gojko_perovitsh_vlada_da_povuče_predlog_zakona_o_slobodi_vjeroispovijesti.

free in the performance of religious rites and religious affairs.¹³³ The main focus of the statement is precisely on this part of the Montenegro Constitution since the argument is that it has been “violated.” Moreover, it has been violated by the Montenegrin state since it intends to “found and re-establish” the Church (referring to the MOC). The hypothetical question in the statement, combined with the previous claim of violating the Constitution, contributes to the general atmosphere of insecurity and threat that the SOC officials are creating through their discourse. Therefore, again the same pattern can be recognized, firstly delegitimization through the negative evaluation of the Montenegrin state, which has been followed by the topos of threat.

Apart from these two SOC officials, a highly active opponent of the Law and the Montenegrin regime is the Bishop of Buva and Nikšić, Joanikije. His popularity among the followers of the SOC was already high. However, it even increased after he was arrested on June the 13th, 2020, after being accused that he violated state-imposed, preventive measures during the Coronavirus crisis, by organizing a public protest in the town of Nikšić.¹³⁴ Joanikije’s influence and the current events in Montenegro presented as repressive towards the SOC caused numerous protests during March 2020. However, the discourse of Joanikije regarding the Law has been as the previous ones characterized by the politicized and legal language:

Our people from the bottom of its soul had felt when this monstrous legal act was passed, which is not in compliance with the Constitution of Montenegro and with internationally set standards that regulate freedom of religion. It is not in compliance with the law and justice, which our lawyers proved numerous times.

¹³³“Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro.” USTAV CRNE GORE, 2007. <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/ustav-crne-gore.html>.

¹³⁴ Radio Television of Serbia. “Protesti Zbog Privođenja Sveštenika u Više Gradova u Crnoj Gori, Policija Koristila Suzavac (Protests Because of Arresting the Priest in Few Towns in Montenegro, Police Used Tear Gas).” RTS, May 13, 2020. <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/11/region/3952628/vladika-joanikije-svestenici-crkva-crna-gora.html>.

(...) Adopting this monstrous Law is a humiliation of Montenegro and its entire order, it is especially sinister that it introduces divisions among the brothers, which introduces inequality between religions in Montenegro. (...) This law, as we have noticed, is unilaterally directed towards the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is a matter of a discriminatory act and evil will. However, the Church is accustomed to suffering from injustice and persecution.¹³⁵

The Law in this statement has been presented as being unlawful since there is an emphasis that it “is not in compliance” not just with the domestic law, but also with the “internationally set standards.” Furthermore, the negative perception of this law continues with the highly negative adjectives (“monstrous” and “sinister”) attached to it. This framing has been mentioned twice in the statement, which shows intentional repetition to emphasize its negative character, which should consequently be more likely to be internalized by the public. Furthermore, the sense of SOC being a victim in the ongoing crisis has been created by stating that the Law is “discriminatory” and “unilaterally directed towards the Serbian Orthodox Church.” However, the strength of the victimization argument raises as the statement is ending. In the last part of it, Joanikije states that “the Church is accustomed to suffering from injustice and persecution.” Interestingly, being “accustomed” to suffering has a clear meaning that refers to an already established perception of the Church as a victim through its eighth-century long history and through all the conflict that Serbia was involved in.

The last example that will be analyzed comes from the highest among the SOC officials, the Serbian Patriarch Irinej. The head of the Serbian Church problematizes the Law and the

¹³⁵ “Episkop Joanikije: Donošenje Ovakvog Nakaznog Zakona Je Poniženje Crne Gore (Bishop Joanikije: The Adoption of Such a Monstrous Law Is a Humiliation of Montenegro).” Episkop Joanikije: Donošenje ovakvog nakaznog zakona je poniženje Crne Gore | Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva [Zvanični sajt], January 2, 2020. http://spc.rs/sr/episkop_joanikije_donoshenje_ovakvog_nakaznog_zakona_je_ponizhenje_crne_gore.

Montenegrin state policies on religion matters in a traditional way, which includes usage of predication strategy and topos of threat. However, this statement, as it brought up the historical argument, is based on the connection of the SOC with the Montenegrin statehood:

What Djukanovic did is not only illegal, but it is against all reason, he attacks the greatest shrines of Serbia and Montenegro. (...) The Serbian Church gave birth to and raised Montenegro, without the Serbian Church, Montenegro would not even exist today. (...) The only solution is to withdraw that law, about the so-called religious freedom, there is no talk on religious freedom in which there is a desire to confiscate the shrines and the monastery property, and to give it to the current, so-called, Metropolitan Miras Dedeic.¹³⁶

Firstly, I will address the legitimization of the Montenegrin state and the Law in this statement. It is not difficult to notice that the Law has been mentioned in a negative connotation as being “illegal.” Moreover, the action it prescribes has been described with a war metaphor, as the President of Montenegro, who enacted and supported the Law, is “attacks” the greatest shrines of the SOC. This formulation reminds us of the frequent usage of the topos of threat, which in this case points that Serbs and the SOC are attacked, which urges the people to react. In addition to this argument, the Serbian Patriarch uses specific words to describe the intended action enacted through the Law as it implies that the shrines and monastery property will be “confiscated” and given to the opponent, the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

Moreover, even the name of the Law has been in question as to the action it prescribes cannot be characterized as those propagating religious freedom. Finally, the Serbian Patriarch

¹³⁶ Rtrs. “Patrijarh Irinej: Ima Indicija da moze da se prolije krv u Crnoj Gori (VIDEO) (Patriarch Irinej: There Are Indications That Blood Can Be Shed in Montenegro (VIDEO)).” СРБИЈА - ПТПС, March 6, 2020. <https://rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=373272>.

made a strong claim that ties the SOC firmly to the Montenegro state by claiming that the SOC “gave birth to and raised Montenegro” and that “without the Serbian Church, Montenegro would not exist. Claiming this, Irinej uses the topos of history, which proposes that there should be a continuity of the well-established and deeply rooted ties between the SOC and the Montenegrin state. This argument is even more relevant if we consider the way it has been constructed as the Montenegrin state has been born and raised by the SOC, which refers to the emotional relationship of a mother and a child, which is not easy to break.

4.2. Reactions of the Serbian State regarding the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedoms

Although secular, the Serbian state and its officials were deeply concern and frustrated because of the Montenegrin Law on Religious Freedoms. These negative feelings and strong reactions came as the Serbian state has to defend the Serbian people and their national identity, which is inseparable from Orthodoxy and, therefore, the SOC. This interconnection was reestablished during the 1990s, after the collapse of communism when the nationalistic political elite saw a potential that religion and tradition have for the mobilizing purposes during elections and later during regional conflicts. Therefore, to prove the dedication to preserving the national identity, the state and its officials had to protect the SOC. I will emphasize the reaction of those state officials who are on high political positions, who have space in the media outlets, and who have the support and can influence Serbs in Montenegro and Serbia.

One of the first reactions came from the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, who interpreted the Law as discriminatory towards the Serbs and Serbian Orthodox Church.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ N1 RS. “Dačić: Treba Li Onaj Ko Podržava Podgoricu Da i Dalje Ima Srpsko Državljanstvo.” N1 Srbija. N1 RS, January 5, 2020. <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a557978/Dacic-Crnogorci-u-Srbiji-da-se-izjasne-o-Zakonu-o-slobodi-veroisповesti.html>.

However, the more controversial statement showed the perception of the importance of defending the SOC in Montenegro and therefore, the Serbian people: “Those who earned everything they have in Serbia, have the obligation not to be quiet regarding this question, and those who support the Montenegrin regime regarding this question are fighting against Serbian people, it is a huge question whether they should still have the Serbian citizenship.”¹³⁸ Firstly, by analyzing this statement, we can see that there is a clear attempt to polarize and distinguish two social groups by the usage of the nomination strategy. The polarization has been established between those who “support Montenegrin regime” and those who do not. Complementary to the nomination strategy, the predication strategy finds its purpose in this statement since certain adjectives have been attached to these social groups. Logically, the supporters of the Montenegro regime have been described negatively as those “fighting against Serbian people.” This formulation is the example of how the topos of threat has been used in the discourse of the Serbian state officials as the verb “fighting” has been used to describe the actions of the Montenegrin state and its supporters. Moreover, referring to the Montenegrins living in Serbia as “those who earned everything they have in Serbia,” there is an emphasis on the position they have in Serbia as being “privileged” compared to the position of Serbs in Montenegro. Therefore, by having the privileged treatment in Serbia, according to the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, these people are “obliged not to be quiet.”

Addressing the Law, Serbian Minister of Defense, Aleksandar Vulin, accused the Montenegrin state of denying the fundamental rights of Serbs in Montenegro.¹³⁹ The way this

¹³⁸ N1 RS. “Dačić: Treba Li Onaj Ko Podržava Podgoricu Da i Dalje Ima Srpsko Državljanstvo (Should the One Who Supports Podgorica Continue to Have Serbian Citizenship).” N1 Srbija. N1 RS, January 5, 2020. <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a557978/Dacic-Crnogorci-u-Srbiji-da-se-izjasne-o-Zakonu-o-slobodi-veroisповести.html>.

¹³⁹ “Vulin: Nisam Bio u Privatnoj Posjeti, Srbi u CG Nemaju Pravo Na Jezik, Pismo, Ni Da Se Mole u SPC. (Vulin: I Have Not Been in a Private Visit, Serbs in Montenegro Have No Right on their Language, Letter, or Praying in the Serbian Orthodox Church)” Vijesti.me, February 12, 2020. <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/politika/vulin-nisam-bio-u-privatnoj-posjeti-srbi-u-cg-nemaju-pravo-na-jezik-pismo-ni-da-se-mole-u-spc>.

argument has been constructed shows an already established and effective pattern of the usage of the topos of threat in the discourse of the Serbian state officials when addressing this issue. One of many examples is the statement given by the Serbian Minister of Defense: “I do criticize the regime that tries to wrest from Serbian Orthodox Church its temples, its monasteries, its shrines, and from Serbs in Montenegro their rights to decide on their churches and shrines.”¹⁴⁰ The threat in this statement has been emphasized through the characterization of the action of the Montenegrin state since it “wrests” the property of the SOC. Moreover, in the statement, it has been emphasized how significant is the loss of the SOC since there is a gradual depiction of all “temples,” “monasteries,” and “shrines.”

In the same manner, Vulin gave another statement and emphasized the rising threat to the Serbian people and the Serbian national identity in Montenegro:

Nor the Serbian state is a theocracy, nor Montenegro is a role model of the European values. If it is, then the Serbian Orthodox Church and its followers would not have to defend their shrines from the state from which they are coming from. (...) It is not hard for me to understand that someone decides not to be a Serb anymore, but it is hard for me to comprehend why he/she has to become an anti-Serb

The predication argumentation strategy in this statement has been imposed on the characterization of these two societies. The Montenegrin state, as the opponent side, has been negatively described as not begin a “role model of the European values.” Therefore, by attaching this attribute to the Montenegrin state, the basis for its further delegitimization has been set. For that reason, the topos of threat could be used in the argumentation as Serbs have to “defend” from the Montenegrin state.

¹⁴⁰ “Vulin: Zašto Vlasti u Crnoj Gori Imaju Problem Kad Dolazi Neko Iz Srbije (Why Do the Authorities in Montenegro Have a Problem When Someone from Serbia Is Coming).” RTS, February 12, 2020. <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/3848523/vulin-zasto-vlasti-u-crnoj-gori-imaju-problem-kad-dolazi-neko-iz-srbije.html>.

However, the last part of the statement points to the Montenegrin identity politics and the ongoing creation of the unique national identity for which national church would be required as one of its integral parts. This phenomenon has been connected to the SOC as well since “stop being a Serb” implies detachment from the SOC. Finally, the phrase “anti-Serb,” used for describing supporters of the Montenegro regime and its current actions, contributes to the threatening atmosphere that has been created in the Serbian state official discourse. This claim could be made since there is a negative “anti” prefix, which, combined with the topos of threat, implies to whom these threatening actions have been directed.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to point to the reactions that came from the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić. His statements prove the premise on the constantly imposed topos of threat in the discourse of the state officials, but the uniqueness of Vučić’s statements are we can recognize the victimization of the Serbian people more frequent than in statements of the other state officials:

For us, especially important fact is that politics interferes in the internal organization of the church, and, I would say, in spiritual things, because as we do not do it here in Serbia, I think it is not common for Montenegro to do that as well. (...) We cannot understand that politicians are establishing new churches and that they are not stopping there but think that it is necessary to wrest the property of the church which, in the worst scenario, has centuries-old factual ownership, and not to mentioned the proofs based on different documents that the property belongs to it. Therefore, this is something that is very difficult for the Serbian people.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ “Vučić Sa Patrijarhom: U Crnoj Gori Politika Se Meša u Unutrašnje Uređenje Crkve (Vučić with the Patriarch-In Montenegro, Politics Interferes in the Internal Organization of the Church).” YouTube. RTS Sajt - Zvanični kanal, June 20, 2020.

Even giving this statement together with the Serbian Patriarch and after the discussion with him on how the Serbian state can help to this problem be resolved, President of Serbia emphasized the secularism argument on the separation of the state and the church. This feature can be recognized in the parts of the statement where it has been stated that “politics interfere into the internal organization of the church,” but also “in spiritual things.” This argument has been strengthened by combining it with the topos of threat for the Serbian people since the Church property has been “wrested” by the Montenegrin state. Lastly, the sense of being a victim in this issue is has been created by characterizing it as “very difficult for the Serbian people.”

The defensive and victimizing discourse of the Serbian President is usually concentrated on the fact that the Montenegrin regime sympathized the MOC and promoted the idea of a having their national Orthodox Church:

Someone is trying to create a new church in Montenegro, with only one reason, to call it the Orthodox Church in Montenegro, as they saw that the Montenegrin Orthodox Church could not get any popularity nor attract anyone, (...) and ostensibly unite everyone, but in fact that in the next ten years to make Serbian people disappear. That would happen since nowhere you would hear the word Serbian, nor there would be any discussion on the Serbian people, as now.¹⁴²

However, the focus in this statement is on its end, which leaves the impression of the nation being in danger because of the acts of the Montenegrin state. Firstly, the predication strategy has been imposed to delegitimize the Montenegrin Orthodox Church as the opponent of the SOC on the Montenegrin religious market. The MOC in this statement has been described as a tool for

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SH0ALiF0qR4&list=PLf8rX530F4yUMewHPcz9yhegvncR0wSsqo&index=19&t=2s>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Montenegrin national awakening and, more importantly, for endangering Serbs in Montenegro. However, the MOC capacity has been in question in this statement since it “cannot get any popularity nor attract anyone.” After the delegitimization of the MOC and the Montenegrin state, the topos of the threat came to its turn. In this statement, there is a drastic increase in how the threat has been described. This intense depiction of a threat implies the sense of being a victim that goes with it as Vučić claims that “in the next ten years Serbs will disappear” in Montenegro. This dramatic argument can causally fuel the already complicated situation in Montenegro, which in the past two months was marked by the police intervention and physical conflicts between the protestors and the Montenegrin police.

To show the seriousness of the situation the Serbian President Vučić has emphasized the potential repetition of the same issue and threat not just in Montenegro but in all the neighboring countries which parts are components of the Serbian nation:

This has to do only with Serbian people, this has to do only with that some people from the region think that the Serbian Church, and the Serbian people as well, need to be limited only on Central Serbia and maybe Vojvodina and that the rest should be some other Orthodox people that do not have any connection to Serbs. This is just a beginning, after this, you will have an attempt of creating the Orthodox Church at Kosovo, after that, you will have the beginning of the Orthodox Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Orthodox Church in Croatia.¹⁴³

The topos of threat is playing a significant role in this statement since, according to Vučić, there is a regional intention that Serbs should be “limited” to a certain territory and do not exist in other regions where they live today. However, it has been stated that Serbs would then be transformed

¹⁴³ Ibid.

into “some other Orthodox people that do not have any connection to Serbs.” More importantly, in the argument, it has been added that all the neighboring countries where Serbs live will establish their Orthodox Churches and alienate Serbs living there from their spiritual and national basis the Serbian Orthodox Church. Moreover, by emphasizing the potential repetition of the scenario, Vučić’s argumentation again creates a dramatic and speculative sense of raising threat not just for the Serbs in the region, but also for the Serbs living in Serbia since they would be limited only on Central Serbia.

4.3. Conclusion

Since the SOC is not just an ordinary religious community, but a national Orthodox church and a specific political actor in Montenegro to lose its privileged status would be a significant loss for the Church itself, but also the Serbian state. However, the reaction from these two actors in the current events differs since there is a discrepancy between the goals of these two institutions. The SOC has a primary goal to stop the implementation of the law. Nonetheless, the OSC has the other political demands that have been raised during the protests if we reconsider the analyzed statements and remember constant delegitimization of the Montenegrin regime based on the negative evaluation. Apart from the strategy of predication, the SOC discourse regarding the Law has been characterized by the frequent use of the topos of threat, which usually is combined with the emphasized victimization of the Serbian people. This argumentation scheme serves the purpose of unifying the Serbs as there is an urge for reaction on the actions of the Montenegrin state.

Contrary to the SOC position, the Serbian state officials are emphasizing the urge to protect the discriminated and oppressed Serbian people and its Church. Being protective towards the SOC, the Serbian state officials show the sincere dedication to the preservation of the Serbian national identity that has been closely tied to the SOC. The main characteristics of their discourse is an

emphasis on the Serbian people in the region and the potential threat for them, not just in Montenegro but in other post-Yugoslav countries where Serbs live. The other features of the Serbian state officials' discourse are othering with the combination of the topos of threat and an increased sense of victimization. However, a similar pattern to the SOC's discourse is the frequent usage of the predication strategy, which also serves the purpose of delegitimizing the Montenegrin state and the Law. Lastly, being delegitimized by both actors in these events, the Montenegrin state, and its actions could and are easily presented as a threat against which certain actions are required.

Conclusion

This thesis intends to contribute to the extensive literature on the relationship between nationalism and religion, but also to the literature focusing on the politicization of religion. However, the main focus of the thesis is the current events in Montenegro that perfectly depicts the interconnection of the nation and religion in Serbia and Montenegro. By firstly setting the historical basis that follows the re-establishment of the connection of religion and nationalism in Serbia and Montenegro, I intended to introduce the reader to the whole process of desecularization of the Orthodox countries that started after the fall of communism and at the beginning of the late post-communist transition. When the basis for comprehending the current political, religious, and social dynamics in Montenegro has been set, the intent was to point to the shift in the discourse of the SOC high officials regarding the current Montenegrin case. Therefore, the main argument I have tried to prove is that religion has been differently instrumentalized in the Montenegrin case by the SOC that in other cases when its position was jeopardized. To be more precise, since the

composition of the Montenegrin society is mainly Orthodox with the one-third of the general number being Serbs then the SOC, while achieving political and secular goals, does not use religion as a marker of someone's national identity as it has in multi-confessional and multi-ethnic societies like Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. The main shift in the discourse on which analysis I am proving my hypothesis is the lack of the emphasis of the national character of the Serbian Church and its tight connection to the Serbian nation in Montenegro, but the trend of internationalizing the SOC and presenting it as the Church of all the nations and not being attached to any earthly concept as a nation.

Proving the hypothesis, I have relied on the critical discourse analysis and discourse-historical approach that enabled me to observe this discursive shift by evaluating and analyzing the semantics of the statements of the Church officials, but also by placing them into a relevant political and social context. The findings to which I came through this analysis are that the SOC officials are often using topoi of a savior, history, and threat in order to strengthen their arguments on the interconnection between the Serbian nation and the Serbian Church. Apart from topoi, in most of the analyzed statements, we can locate argumentation strategies of nomination and predication. Contrary to the discourse from the 1990s, analysis of the statements from the 2019 and 2020 on the Montenegrin issue, kept the frequent usage of strategies of nomination and predication, and the topos of threat. Interestingly, the usage of the topos of history has not been used that often as it is in the discourse from the 1990s since there is no intention from the SOC officials to emphasize their national character, which usually comes with the usage of this topos. Lastly, the analysis showed that there is an intentional change of the SOC discourse, which has been directed towards achieving certain political and secular goals now, then the public and political space are open more than ever for the SOC.

The second part of the analysis deals with the phenomenon of the politicization of religion. However, the thesis tries to depict this process from the angle of both actors, the Serbian state, and the Serbian Orthodox Church. The purpose of this twofold analysis was to show the distinction of this process or, in other words, to show differences in instrumentalizing religion by these two actors. The analysis showed a clear distinction in the approach to the ongoing issue in Montenegro since these two actors do not have the same goal to achieve. Therefore, the Serbian state officials addressed the Serbian people and their religious rights as being violated, which in most of the cases has been strengthened with the usage of the topos of a threat after firstly negatively characterizing the Montenegrin state and its current regime. Moreover, their discursive reaction is urged by the interconnection of the religion and nation, so the state officials have to act and support the SOC, with any means, in order to show their dedication to defending the Serbian national identity and the institutions being crucial for its creation and preservation. Contrary, the SOC officials have been changing their discourse from mostly religious and sacral to more political and legal, which also help them to participate in the political scene in Montenegro. However, their argumentations have been marked as well with the strategies of nomination and predication, which serve to firstly establish a boundary between them as a social group and those who support the state and then discursively qualifying these two groups with the positive and negative attributions.

However, even with the changes in the discourse of the SOC, its interconnection with the Serbian state and the Serbian nation stayed strong. The foundation of this relationship has not been shaken, but even strengthened throughout the events that occurred in Montenegro. Moreover, the political and social influence of the Serbian Church with the present discourse is increasing in the region. The Law on Religious Freedom and the current acts of the Montenegrin regime created a space within the public and political sphere for the SOC to occupy it and consequently to mobilize

masses that are not just protecting their Church from the “discriminatory Law,” but also the Serbian national identity rooted in it. Lastly, “if there were no Serbian Church, Serbia and Montenegro would not exist.”

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