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# A SPECIAL PART OF EUROPE:
# NATION, STATE AND RELIGION
# AMONG ORTHODOX SOUTH SLAVS

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*DIIS Working Paper no 2005/15*

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Web: www.diis.dk
Cover Design: Carsten Schiøler
Printed in Denmark by Vesterkopi as

ISBN: 87-7605-097-1

Price: DKK 25.00 (VAT included)
DIIS publications can be downloaded
free of charge from www.diis.dk

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# Abstract

The paper studies how nation, state and religion – in particular: churches – are related among Orthodox South Slavs: Bulgarians, Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins. The close relations between (self-conceived) nations and churches go back to the Ottoman Empire, and seem to have been strengthened by the conflicts in Former Yugoslavia since 1990. The close relation between state and nation go back to how the Ottoman empire was dissolved and have also been strengthened by the same conflicts, even though all states proclaim themselves as non-discriminatory in this respect. The close relation between church and state also has long historical roots, but is more ambiguous today, with elements of competition as well as cooperation – and the latter is seen by many as having gone too far under communism. It is notable that where there are attempts to stabilise a separate identity – in Macedonia and Montenegro – establishing separate churches is a part of this on par with defining separate languages, rewriting history, etc. and the churches are seen as important national symbols even among quite secularised groups; and the same is true for the resistance against separation from the Serbian Orthodox Church.

# A Special Part of Europe: Nation, State and Religion among Orthodox South Slavs

Prof. Dr. Håkan Wiberg and Prof. Dr. Biljana Vankovska

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at understanding the roles of religion – and in particular churches – in relation to political phenomena, such as states and nations, in a situation where both the world and Europe are seen as changing rapidly. What seems to be new and what seems to be old – and to what extent are such impressions reliable? How have these roles been affected by "globalisation" and "Europeanisation"?

The term "globalisation" is often used to vaguely indicate that the world is changing rapidly. Yet major cultures have for several millennia disseminated and received influences by peoples moving across continents and oceans; by empires temporarily putting their stamps on peoples far away from their core areas before collapsing; by tradesmen carrying ideas and innovations in both directions together with their products; and by missionaries of several different religions travelling further than the empire builders and sometimes even the traders. In Europe, the boundaries between (predominantly) Catholic and Orthodox areas have been largely unchanged for many centuries; and those between Catholic and Protestant Christianity are also a few centuries old.

The trade proportions of the GDP of major economies are about the same as a century ago, having first declined and then resurged. The transition time for long distance information has been cut from months to seconds, but this was largely done by telegraph lines already in the late 19th century, soon followed by telephones and by the ether mass media, radio and TV. The Internet Revolution is not a matter of velocity as such, but of permitting an accelerating number of individuals and organisations an affordable exchange of information that is quite difficult for states to censor without great costs - and that bypasses the gatekeepers in the traditional mass media. This has permitted buyers and sellers to agree, pay and in many cases even to deliver the products sitting at their computers - and made it possible to coordinate 10-15 million people in 700 cities all over the world to demonstrate simultaneously against the coming US attack on Iraq in 2003. Many religious organisations, including the branches of Orthodox Christianity we focus on, have demonstrated their ability to use the options opened by this revolution to further their purposes. There are indeed churches and sects that shun any new technology; but they are hardly typical. We may find more contradictions if we focus on areas of globalisation that are also central to religions: norms and values. Those seen as disseminated by globalisation are largely capitalist ones, and to an increasing degree from the neo-liberal dialect of capitalism. To what extent we get clashes depends on "dialects of religion" as well as "dialects of capitalism". In some cases, the relationships have relatively harmonious, as argued by classical and more modern authors concerning early Protestantism and periods of medieval Catholicism as well as phases of Judaism, Islam and Confucianism. In other case, religious authorities have objected, from Protestant sects to the Vatican warning against "the cult of the market".

If "globalisation" tends to be a vague and ambiguous term, the same may be said of "Europeanisation". Yet here, too, specific aspects can be indicated where we find qualitatively new phenomena. For the first time, at least under the Westphalian system, it is true of a large part of Europe, the European Union, that war seems to have become unthinkable – or, more cautiously expressed, extremely unlikely – within this part. For the first time, again: at least under the Westphalian system, do we have a binding system of norms that were created by peaceful agreements rather than based on military conquest, and that go beyond the traditional limitation of international law to relations between states, the bulk of them being norms valid within states and some of them – the Copenhagen Criteria – stating what others have to fulfil in order to be even considered as new members. Some of the competences of states are delegated upwards, to EU organs. Some of them are rather delegated downwards, to regions, organisations and even individuals, whose rights vis-à-vis the state are fortified. The state is given increased priority before the nation (where the latter term is not used in a way making it synonymous – see below!) and is increasingly de-linked from religion, to be secular (whether or not its citizens are getting secularised) and non-discriminatory in terms of religion as well as several other categorisations: gender, country of origin, etc.

By contrast to this image, the end of the Cold War saw another part of Europe where boundaries became more, not less, important; where nations were heavy competitors to states for allegiance and loyalty; where religion played an increasing, rather than decreasing, role in politics and even became central in the self-identifications of nations; and where war became not only imaginable, but in several cases a very brutal fact, and in some still a non-negligible threat.

The present paper tries to elucidate some aspects of the background to these developments in a limited part of this second part of Europe, dealing with one corner of Orthodox Christianity.

Like other religions, its churches had to adapt to the social, political and cultural conditions in their host societies. It was also able to affect and influence these societies, but hardly in the same way everywhere. Visiting churches in Kerala (where Christianity came a millennium before the Portuguese), one of the authors noted that some features, e.g., pictures, resembled those in churches in Cyprus or Serbia, whereas others, e.g., the liturgical music were clearly Indian. Some aspects of "Orthodox civilisation" may be common to its European core area of Orthodox Christianity, yet a civilisation is not a bloc: the group of predominantly Orthodox states in Europe is unlikely ever to appear as a united political, military or economic actor. Some pairs of them are traditional allies, others traditional adversaries, others again have relations that vary from time to time.

More specifically, we treat Orthodox South Slavs: Bulgarians, Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians. We name peoples rather than political units, since the overlap is far from perfect. All units have sizable minorities with other languages (primarily Albanian and Turkish) and/or other religions (primarily Islam) than the titular nations – which in turn form minorities outside their unit: one third of the ethnic Montenegrins live in Serbia, one third of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina are Serbs, etc. Nor are the titular nations entirely homogeneous in terms of religion. Small Catholic minorities of Serbs and Montenegrins, especially at the Adriatic coast, go back to the middle ages. There are Moslem speakers of all South Slavonic languages, the Bosnjak minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina (while having been the biggest group there since a couple of generations) being the most well-known.

The chapter does not deal with theological issues, but unavoidably has to look at some ecclesiastical ones. The focus is on how state, religion and nation were interrelated historically and what changes created the present situations. When we talk about religion, the primary focus is on its institutions, although cultural aspects may also be important for these relations. To go further, we must first have a brief look at these fundamental concepts.

## 2. THE NOTION OF A NATION

Historians of nationalism mostly see it as about two centuries old, a child of French Enlightenment and German Romanticism. Given the different or even opposed characters of the parents, thinking (official, popular and scholarly) about nations varies much between different countries and eras, depending on the relative weight of two basic components.

French Enlightenment essentially thought of "nation" as closely related to the more fundamental concept "patrie", with two essential components: that of a state and the notion of its being the state of all citizens. Generations of French dictionaries have defined "nation" as the totality of citizens or denizens under (and loyal to) a common government. As Ernest Renan put it, if you are willing to die for France you are French. This sense of "nation" virtually makes the concept analytically redundant by linking it so closely to that of a state.

Herder thought of a nation (Volk) as a cultural community, primarily in linguistic terms. Followers from Fichte and onwards added the idea that a nation calls for a joint state if it does not have one. This legitimised the German, Italian, etc. unifications in the 19th century, as well as several separatist movements with national projects. Language did not remain the sole basis for thinking a nation. Nations may define themselves – or be defined by others – in terms of language, religion, territorial myths, kinship myths, state, and other historical myths or other cultural features. (The word "myth" is used in its epistemically neutral sense, leaving open all issues about truth.) Different nations were constructed (not necessarily by conscious design) by different combinations of these elements with different relative weights – which could vary over time: Croatian national consciousness went from differentiating oneself from others with the same religion but different language (German, Hungarian) to the case of essentially the same language but a different religion (Orthodox Serbs). When notions of nation entered political arguments about the drawing of boundaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, and especially in the vast redrawing after World War I, statistics on language or religion were mostly used.

Language, however, is not as objective a category as it might seem, as hinted at in Sir Ernest Gellner's quip, "A language is a dialect with an army". In some conflicts, one heavy issue was whether, as centralist thinking would suggest, one had two or more dialects of the same language or – a frequent position of separatist nationalisms – two or more different languages. The predominant answer sometimes agreed with criteria of mutual intelligibility, sometimes not. The Novi Sad compromise of 1953 divided Serbo-Croat into an "eastern" and a "western" version; and the Croatian that became official language of the Republic of Croatia in 1974 was far from the same as the recognised "Western Serbo-Croat". In 1992, the Sarajevo government proclaimed Bosnian to be official language of Bosnia and Herzegovina – where, however, the majority insist that they speak Serbian or Croatian. Some intellectuals call for a separate Montenegrin language, not seeing themselves as speaking Serbian or western Serbo-Croat. Whether Macedonian is a separate language or a dialect of Bulgarian defines a highly controversial issue between the two states.

We may sometimes encounter a parallel issue: whether two faiths should be counted as sects of the same religion or as separate religions. Our area has little of this, the Uniates of Ukraine being rather far away, but is replete with ecclesiastical issues, to which we return.

So how should we define "nation" for the purpose of our analysis? The simplest answer is to leave that to others. Modern scholarship increasingly sees a nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991), rather than as "objectively" defined by state, language, religion, etc. Simply stated, a nation consists of those who think that they belong to it. That it is "imagined" certainly does not mean that it is fictitious, but that what objective reality it has is defined by an intersubjective agreement of images. What nations we have, and in what terms they define themselves, will then become a set of empirical issues, the answers to which may change over time. Our general hypotheses about the weight of religion are as follows. Where the language of a group is clearly distinct from that of the Other (the group it wants to distinguish itself from) – for instance Albanians, Hungarians and Slovenes in Yugoslavia – religion will be less needed to define national identity. Where the group is internally religiously divided (the same three examples), it may even be dangerous for national unity to give the predominant religion too much weight. Where other aspects of national identity, such as language, history and territory, are under challenge, then religion and in particular ecclesiastical organisation may be expected to become important. As we will see below, the relations between Serb, Montenegrin and Macedonian identities can be seen in this light.

## 3. THE STATE OF THE STATE

For the present purpose, we need not enter the encompassing debate about "the nature of the state" – which is about theoretical approaches to what we find inside state boundaries. The international notion of state is simpler: a territory under a government that is a personality under international law. We might also use the term "sovereign", but it recently became too ambiguous. Scholars who make lists of states usually make recognition (e.g., by both Britain and France, the League of Nations, the United Nations) their criterion, which empirically comes quite close to the theoretical connotation.

We did not always have a clear-cut division between sovereign states and non-self-governing territories. The "Westphalian system" emerged a few centuries ago from the much more complex medieval system; the innovation spread slowly from Western Europe, only becoming truly universal about a century ago. It is important to understand the present situation that South Eastern Europe long remained in the area with no clear-cut dichotomy, "sovereign state" being the highest value on a scale that had forms of suzerainty, vassalage, autonomy, etc. lower down.

## 4. THE RELATION OF RELIGION TO STATE AND NATION

There is a very great number of definitions of "religion", and we see no reason to pick one of them. It is more important where such a concept may belong in a more overarching analysis of societies. For instance, in the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons (1966), institutions are located in terms of the functions they fulfil. Religion is seen as related to that of "pattern maintenance", i.e. the tradition of fundamental world views and value orientations from one generation to another whereby the identity of a society is preserved. This function is also seen by him as fundamental and "cybernetic", in relation to other functions and legitimisation of the institutions fulfilling them. The state is seen as related to the function of "goal achievement", i.e. making possible common decision making for common goals. In some parts of the world, religious and political institutions were differentiated very long time ago, in others this is recent or incomplete; the term "theocracy" often includes cases where the institutions are differentiated, but religious institutions heavily influence the political ones. In the Byzantine Empire, political power sometimes primarily or exclusively rested with the emperor and institutions around him, but in its final centuries the Church increasingly assumed great or even predominant political power, referred to as caesareo-papism. Moscow established itself as "the Third Rome" after the fall of the Byzantine Empire and kept some of this tradition: Peter the Great was the first to unequivocally establish the Czar as sovereign over the Church – and built a new capital. The role of religious institutions in defining reality and value orientations often gives them a strong position in establishing group identities, also supported by, e.g., the social position of the clergy (Ramet 1998: 147f). Let us begin by looking at our peoples in the light of the relations between church and state.

The Catholic Church has a single apex in the Pope; the Orthodox Patriarchies are autocephalic, as are a few lower units (some others are autonomous under a Patriarchy). The Patriarch of Constantinople can therefore claim no more than being primus inter pares. We may therefore expect closer relations with states and nations. Their different character may also be affected by all Orthodox peoples having had long periods as subjects of religiously foreign overlords (Moslem Tatars or Turks, Catholic Genoese, Venetians, Hungarians or Austrians), whereas Poland/Lithuania and Ireland are among the very few Catholic areas to have experienced this and Finland and Estonia among the few Protestant nations to have done so. Orthodox churches therefore have a history where they "spoke for the nation" in the absence of a state, or even defined the nation. By the "millet" system in the Ottoman Empire, "peoples of the Book" (i.e. monotheistic religions: Judaism, Zoroastrism and Christianity) were recognised and granted some autonomy, though primarily defined in religious administrative rather than territorial terms. The Patriarch, Cardinal, etc. were also the highest legal authorities to their co-religionists in some areas of (e.g., family) law, and politically represented their peoples vis-à-vis the High Porte. The number of recognised religious communities of this kind increased rapidly during the last century of the Ottoman Empire, from three to seventeen, national characteristics increasingly added to religion in defining each millet. This proliferation also opened for increased penetration of the Empire by European great powers, and it has been argued (Jung 2004) that the way in which the Ottoman Empire thus disintegrated, including nationalist rebellions with occasional great power support, made the European successor states (including Turkey) prone to see minorities as security threats, not to be recognised and even less granted any collective rights.

The Orthodox churches saw the Patriarch, and sometimes the Archbishop, as the "ethnarchos" (ruler of the people). Echoes of this could be heard long after the Ottoman Empire, e.g. when Great Britain tended to regard Makarios III as a priest meddling into politics. When the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) stated, a propos the Vance plan, that "No one has the mandate to represent the entire Serbdom without the consent and blessing of the SOC" (Glasnik January 1992), the message was that Milosevic was merely President of Serbia and could not speak for all Serbs.

Since the "millet"/ "ethnos" was defined in religious, not linguistic terms, coincidence between people (in that sense) and language was accidental, even if it became more normal with the 19th century proliferation of millets. Already before that, however, the way in which the High Porte arranged its relations to the Orthodox churches and repeatedly rearranged their ecclesiastical administration did have a component that can be seen in linguistic or even (proto)national terms. The Phanariote Greeks (of Constantinople) were the only exception from the rule of secular administration by either Ottoman officials or local nobility, and the "Greek" parts of the Church were also often favoured. In some non-hellenophone areas, Greek priests played an important role, with occasional disputes between them and the lower clergy with another vernacular, or even lithurgical, language.

## 5. THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE BALKANS

The Byzantine and Ottoman heritages are shared by several Orthodox peoples: South Slavs, Greeks and Romanians. All but the Greeks share a more recent heritage, somewhat similar to religiously foreign overlords: the post-war Communist regimes. Yet these differed in important ways, as did the religions they faced: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Warsaw Pact states mostly tried to subordinate, penetrate and control churches – or else suppress them. The first was often the case with the autocephalic Orthodox and Protestant churches, the second with Catholic churches (neither really succeeded in Poland).

There is one more thing in common to the post-communist Balkan countries with Orthodox majorities or large minorities: a multidimensional crisis. All experienced great reductions in GDP per capita, and even where there was later some recovery, large groups still have a lower standard of living than they had seen before. All countries faced identity problems after the fall of Marxism-Leninism as legitimising ideology. Some of them also suffered from collective violence and war: Romanians very briefly 15 years ago, Macedonians quite recently, Montenegrins repeatedly but marginally and Serbs worst of all. We should therefore expect the traditional types of "answers". Deep economic crises tend to engender political radicalism, whether right wing, left wing (least likely in our area), nationalist or populist. Loss of identity tends to lead to search for a new one, whether offered by religion, nationalism or political ideologies. Great hardships and sufferings also tend to lead to a search for meaning; again religion is a strong candidate by providing precisely that. Ceteris paribus, we may therefore expect an increase in religiosity and in the influence of churches.

Among our four cases, Bulgaria lies closest to the Warsaw Pact pattern. In the longer time perspective, too, there was considerable correspondence between political and ecclesiastical developments: An autonomous Bulgarian archbishopric was created in 870 and soon declared itself an autocephalous Patriarchy, which was eventually recognised by the Byzantine Empire. After its swallowing Bulgaria in 1018, it reduced the level to an archbishopric in Ohrid, but left its autocephalous status alone, as did the Ottoman Empire until 1767 (History n.d.). The re-creation of the Bulgarian kingdom was followed by another autocephalous Patriarchy in Trnovo in 1235, which was again subordinated to that in Constantinople after the Turkish conquest in 1393 (Enciklopedia 2002). An independent Bulgarian church was granted by the ferman of the Sultan eight years before the autonomy of Bulgaria in 1878, and also covered Macedonia through 1913. Subordination under secular power continued when Bulgaria became independent a few years later – and also when it fell under Communist rule in 1944.

The new regime generally expelled Catholic and Protestant priests, whereas persecution of Orthodox clergy was limited to executions or imprisonment of individual dissidents. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church was even elevated to a Patriarchy in 1953, assisted by the Russian Church, but political pressure sidetracked the most likely candidate, exarch Stephan, in favour of the more docile Cyril, later succeeded by the equally docile Maxim, who remains in office after the fall of Communism. There were attempts to set up a "new church", electing its own Patriarch, but they failed when the Patriarchs of the most important sister Churches supported Maxim. A split had emerged, however, which also divided political parties, the Union of Democratic Forces distancing itself from Maxim and the Synod while the Socialist leadership demonstratively attended the Easter Service in 1990. Tradition eventually prevailed, as signalled when the former Czar Simeon invited Patriarch Maxim to his inauguration as Prime Minister in 2001. Apart from that, the Bulgarian Church seems to have had about as small a political role after Communism, when it was divided, as during it, when it was subordinated – unless we interpret attempts to convert Moslems (primarily the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks) as a support for the brief Bulgarization wave in the last years of the Zhivkov era.

The three other Orthodox churches in Former Yugoslavia add a different and more complex background to the common Byzantine and Orthodox heritage. Orthodox Christians were about two fifths, Catholics two fifths and Moslems one fifth, each of them comprising groups with two or more mother tongues; on the other hand, speakers of Serbo-Croat could have any of these religions, as could speakers of Albanian. In First Yugoslavia, the SOC had a clearly privileged position, which contributed to Catholicism getting increased weight in Croatian identity as well as to the frequent waving of religious flags by several of the armed forces that alternately fought each other, Tito's partisans or the German, Italian, etc. occupants during the horrible carnage during WWII. The post-war Communist regime therefore faced a much more complex and sensitive situation than its neighbouring party comrades, since repression risked to be interpreted in national terms to the detriment of the Yugoslav project. Religion could neither be heavily subordinated like in Bulgaria, nor prohibited like in Albania. The Yugoslav solution soon became to recognise the religious organisations and give them some latitude, but on the strict condition that they stayed out of politics and in particular out of nationalist mobilisation. In addition religion temporarily became less of an issue, due to large secularisation: by a sociological study in the 1970ies, only some 15 per cent were both believing and practicing. Later, however, the development moved in the opposite direction as relations among nations grew worse and religion more important in defining national identities.

## 5.1 Former Yugoslavia: The Serbian Orthodox Church

Since much of what happened in other religious communities was related to the development of Serb Orthodoxy, we start with a historical outline of it (Vukomanovic n.d.) Close links between church and state were found here too. The Serbian Patron Saint, St. Sava, was the brother of the first king of the Nemanjic dynasty around 1200. When Dusan assumed Czar title, the already autocephalic SOC also proclaimed itself a Patriarchy in 1346, with seat in Pec; it was first expelled by Constantinople, its reconciliation and recognition coming later. After the Turkish conquest of the entire Serbia in 1459, the Pec Patriarchy was first left alone, then subordinated to the Archbishopric of Ohrid –which meant heavy Greek influence—until recovering by a decision in 1557 by Sultan Suleiman, who wanted Serbian help to expand in Catholic Europe. For centuries, the Serbs and the SOC then became pawns in the belligerent game between Turkey, Austria, Venice and Russia, repeatedly switching allegiance and facing sanguinary retribution and a repression leading to mass exodus. This, together with Austrian expansion, meant large Serb groups on Austrian territory, where they faced discrimination unless converting to Catholicism, and also that the ecclesiastical administration was split between the Patriarch in Pec (until the Patriarchy was terminated in 1766) and the Metropolitan in Karlovci (definitely subordinated to the Austrian state in 1779). Only after WWI was the SOC re-united, with Belgrade as the new seat of the Patriarch. Its privileged position in the interwar years was soon followed by new tribulations: one quarter of the clergy was killed during the war years and most SOC property confiscated during the first decade of Communism (Vukomanovic 1998). The SOC was less dependent on the state than its sister churches in Warsaw pact countries, but its later proclamations of loyalty to it weakened its credibility among believers; and when various kinds of nationalism could again be openly expressed in the 1980ies, the Synod of SOC supported the Serb variety. Whereas Second Yugoslavia was never predominantly Serbian (the Serbs were the largest minority), what remained after successive secessions became more and more so, both in terms of population and ideology, at the same time as the situation reverted to that before WWI, the Serb nation spread over several states. This created an entirely new – or very old – situation for the SOC to locate itself in; and it chose an old position, quite close to the state but at the same time competing with the state about the position of speaking for all Serbs.

During the dissolution of Second Yugoslavia, all religious leaders were under difficult cross pressures: was religion to be part of the problem or part of the solution? On the one hand, Patriarch Pavle, as well as Cardinal Kuharic and Rais-ul-Islam Selimovski represented religions of peace; on the other hand, many among their peoples, also including zealous nationalists among the clergy, expected them to "speak for the nation" and defend it against others, which in extreme cases meant blessing the atrocities committed in the name of religion. In 1992, the three leaders managed to formulate a common peace message on Bosnia-Herzegovina, and all of them were criticised by hard liners among their own groups. Pavle and Kuharic survived, both of them later gradually distancing themselves from Milosevic and Tudjman, respectively; Selimovski, however was replaced as Rais-ul-islam by the more militant Ceric. The SOC in fact oscillated between a declarative ecumenical anti-war position in several documents (Steele 1994: 164-66) and actual support, at least in a part of it, for Karadzic and other ethnonationalist politicians in Republika Srpska. A communiqué from the SOC hierarchy (Glasnik December 1992) even denied any Serbian crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When, in 1993, Patriarch Pavle celebrated Mass in Trebinje (where Moslems and Serbs had defended themselves against a Croat attack before Serb paramilitary groups arrived to drive the Moslems out), that could be read as support. When, in August 1995, he was present at the meeting in Belgrade where a joint RS-FRY negotiation team was formed immediately before the major NATO bombings of Republika Srpska, this could be read as a signal that Karadzic could not count with SOC support after thus being overruled by Milosevic, who was suspected of being ready to sell the Bosnian Serbs out. It also led to strong reactions, several bishops calling for his resignation (Sells 1996).

Theoretically, secular rule is one thing and ecclesiastical jurisdiction another, as illustrated both by history and by some of the present Orthodox Patriarchies having eparchates all over the world. On the other hand, it is also a historical experience that secular rulers may intervene heavily into the latter. In spite of all the guarantees in various peace proposals, the SOC Synod has been leaning in this direction, as witnessed by its defining as unbearable any territorial division that would put a list of Orthodox churches and monasteries in Croatia or in the Federation (Glasnik October 1994). This also seems to be one of the issues in its ecclesiastical relations to Macedonia and Montenegro.

When great power political pressure on FRY eased between Dayton and the preparations for the attack on FRY in 1999, more room for the opposition emerged, as seen in its successful challenge of the official (and faked) election results in 1997. Patriarch Pavle then also started to indicate domestic political positions, formulated in terms of democracy and human rights; this was seen as a criticism of the government and a support for –what was then—the united Democratic Opposition of Serbia. The Albanian rebellion in 1998 and the NATO attack in March 1999 created a new emergency situation and kept Milosevic in power for another period. After its end of in October 2000, the DOS was soon de facto split into parties with quite differerent positions on, inter alia, nationalism; later elections have favoured the more nationalist parties inside and outside DOS. This has created a more difficult landscape for SOC to navigate in, and its hierarchy seems to be split, with relative caution at one end and the other extreme represented by one of the gatherings in February 2004 to celebrate the bicentennial of the First Serb Uprising, where, after the blessings of Patriarch Pavle were read out, a member of the Orthodox Youth Organisation called for a return to theocracy and Vladika Amfilohije was quoted as asking, "Gentlemen, who came in visit by tanks in 1914? Europe! Who came again in 1941? Europe! Who came in 1999? Europe! Is it that Europe that we long for? It will take two more centuries for us to liberate ourselves from such a Europe. We shall have more unprisings!" (Anastasijevic, 2004).

The Other for Orthodox Serbs has mostly been people with other religions, whether or not that was what defined them as peoples in their own eyes. There is also an intra-Orthodox dimension, of which we have already shown historical examples above. Today the SOC is a direct party to two ecclesiastical conflicts that both have relations to wider national projects: Montenegro and Macedonia.

## 5.2 Former Yugoslavia: The Orthodox Churches in Montenegro

We have already seen some of the ecclesiastical arrangements and re-arrangements during the past millennium. Ecclesiastical and political maps did not always agree, the ecclesiastical lines of authority were repeatedly changed. In addition, some of the places with strong symbolical loadings, such as Ohrid and Pec, have different connotations for different peoples. All over Former Yugoslavia, history was rewritten or reinvented in the 1990ies, occasionally by serious historians but more often by what Ivo Banac has aptly called "parahistorians". This gives us another reason for our offering no judgment of our own on medieval history.

Montenegro used to be an extreme example of the closeness between church and state: From the early 16th through the mid-19th century, the highest church dignitary, the Vladika, was also the political ruler of Montenegro. From around 1700, the office remained in the Petrovic dynasty, the successor often being the nephew or the former Vladika; the most famous one, Petar Petrovic Njegos (Vladika 1830-52) also went to history as a great poet. The last ruler, Nikola, proclaimed himself King in 1910 at the semicentennial of his accession. Montenegro was the only Serb area that managed to preserve its independence from Turkey throughout the period, even though it was theoretically a Turkish vassal in some periods and most of it was occasionally occupied by Turkey. In WWI, Montenegro´s Thermopyle style defence in the battle of Mojkovac in December 1915 (epitomised in Djilas 1963) permitted the bagged Serbian Army to escape to the Adriatic to be sailed to Corfu by the entente and eventually return to liberate Serbia via Saloniki. After WWI, it joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; the referendum on this was heavily controversial and led to years of armed conflict. To put it somewhat facetiously, Montenegrins agreed that they were the bravest and noblest

Serbs, but approximately equally many drew the conclusion that it should remain indendent ("the Greens") or that it should belong together with Serbia ("the Whites"). It has been argued (Banac 1991) that the high Communist vote in Montenegro in the 1920s was primarily anti-Serbian. Armed struggle on this issue also having been one of the many components of the Yugoslav carnage during WWII, Montenegrins (and Macedonians) were quickly recognised as nations by Second Yugoslavia and as a consequence got their own republics within the new federative state.

After earlier signals, the issue was definitely reopened in the early 1990ies, when the West succeeded in making Montenegro oppose the Milosevic regime in Serbia in various ways (after its cooperation in plundering the Dubrovnik area, later apologised for); this was mistakenly believed to be a support for independence. Among the ethnic Montenegrins (then some 60 per cent of the population), there was still an approximately equal split, whereas Albanians and Moslems were for and Serbs (then some 10 per cent) against independence. The separatists mobilised at several levels. Rewritten history proclaimed that Montenegrins were not Serbs, but arrived a century before them. This was followed by a great change in individual self-classifications between the censuses in 1991 and 2003, Montenegrins decreasing to 40 per cent and Serbs increasing to 30 per cent. A possible interpretation of this is that many of the previously self-defined Montenegrins regarded themselves as also being Serbs, with no contradiction; but when they had to choose, they opted for Serb. When the Serbo-Croat language disappeared, there was another choice to make: the typical choice was "Serbian", though there were also voices calling for "Montenegrin", so far without government support.

Ecclesiastical issues have also been involved, argumentations going centuries back when there were attempts in the 1990ies to become autocephalous. The argument for this was that Montenegro had only come under the Patriarchy in Belgrad when that was created in 1920, the argument against that it had never been autocephalous. The attempt was strongly opposed by SOC (see Durkovic-Jaksic 1991), which excommunicated the initiator, and seems to have had very limited following among Montenegrin clergy at that time. Since the SOC has not limited itself to purely church matters, but also generally opposed Montenegrin independence, this may create a backlash and reopen the issue.

There are other reasons to believe that ecclesiastical arrangements may get increased weight in the struggle for Montenegrin distinctiveness. There is indeed old statehood; yet it is only the core territory that is very old and much of the present one was conquered during the last half century of independence and might get challenged. The idea to create an own Montenegrin language may not go further – and would be challenged. It would be adopted by about a quarter million and become a minority or a narrow majority in Montenegro, possibly even a minority among the ethnic Montenegrins (one third of whom lives in Serbia). Full independence may continue to be discouraged by the states that would presumably have to finance it. Orthodox Christianity does not distinguish Montenegrins from Serbs; hence organisation would matter much, an autonomous or even autocephalous position being a potentially strong element in Montenegrin distinctiveness.

## 5.3 The Macedonian Orthodox Church

Macedonia is replete with insecurity. Ten years ago, Bulgaria recognised a Macedonian state but not a Macedonian nation; FRY the nation but (following the EU) not the state; Greece neither; and Albania would only recognise the state if it was not the state of the Macedonian nation (Wiberg 1993:107). Unlike Serbia and Montenegro, it has no relatively recent state tradition. Seeing continuity from Alexander the Great is for the most fanciful, whereas seeing a Macedonian state a millennium ago is more widespread; but this is claimed by Bulgarians as their Second Kingdom. What – if anything – was named "Macedonia" varied with the vicissitudes of various empires and their administrative arrangements; the present state has about half the territory long claimed by nationalists such as VMRO, making for difficult relations with Greece and Bulgaria. In Serbia it was "South Serbia" and in First Yugoslavia "Banovina of Vardar"; the "Republic of Macedonia" was created in 1945 as one of six republics with equal status making up Yugoslavia, but when, after its declaration of independence in 1991, it was finally widely internationally recognised several years later, that was under the imposed name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". It was the worst victim of the economic sanctions against FRY, losing several billions of dollars, in addition suffering a Greek blockade when Germany had cheated Greece (which accepted the EU recognition of Croatia in 1992 when promised that one of Macedonia would call for Greek acceptance, which was later circumvented by Germany by individual recognition). The West pressured it to take in a flood of refugees from Kosovo, but only promised to receive a small fraction (and only honoured a fraction of that). When ten years of peace ended in 2001, the West first exhorted Macedonia not to negotiate with terrorists (many were from Kosovo), then did so itself, starting with the OSCE ambassador Frowick (from USA but unauthorised by OSCE) and finally pressured Macedonia to do so under Western guidance and to pretend to trust the outcome, including a largely fictitious disarmament of the rebels. Ohrid tends to be seen as "cradle of the nation", like Kosovo (now almost entirely Albanian) by Serbs and Knin (with a great Serb majority until the ethnic cleansing in 1995) by Croats; it differs from these by Ohrid itself having a great Macedonian majority, even if its surroundings have significant Albanian populations. One facet of this is its history as capital a millennium ago; yet Bulgarian and Macedonian views differ as to what it was capital of. Macedonian is mostly seen in Bulgaria as a Bulgarian dialect and used to be seen by Serbs as a Serbian dialect that was so weird that the population had to be taught proper Serbian; only in 1945 was it recognised by Second Yugoslavia as an official language.

Since most elements of Macedonian identity are contested by somebody and many of them quite recent, we would expect religion to become an important part of it. Christianity came more than a millennium ago and the Schisma in 864, made final in 1054, left Macedonia on the Orthodox side. Another facet of the symbolic importance of Ohrid is as ecclesiastical centre. Yet here too, the history we can read depends on who wrote it. The main Macedonian source we use for history (Council 1993 – for the MOC version, see www.m-p-c.org/History/history.htm) emphasizes the respect with which the Archbishopric of Ohrid was treated by the Bulgarian Emperor Ivan Asen II (13th century), the Serbian Emperor Stefan Dusan (14th century) and the Ottoman Empire from the 15th century, when for a period both the territory of Serbia and a part of Bulgaria came under its ecclesiastical jurisdiction. When its financial difficulties were used as a pretext and it was discontinued by agreement of the Patriarchy of Constantinople and the Ottoman authorities, the comment is that this "dealt a grievous blow to the centuries-long ecclesiastical and cultural traditions maintained in Macedonia and the neighbouring regions". Bulgarian writing of history, however, rather sees the Archbishopric of Ohrid in terms of Bulgarian continuity. And a Serbian source (Vukomanovic n.d.) gives a third story: the subordination of Pec under Ohrid in 1459 put Serbian Christianity under Greek dominance, liberated a century later by Pec again becoming an autocephalous Patriarchy.

When the struggle for cultural and political emancipation in Macedonia started by the mid-19th century, the issue of reviving the Archbishopric of Ohrid was included, also seen as a matter of language. There was no external support, however, from Constantinople (Sultan or Patriarch) – and even less from Bulgaria or Serbia. When Macedonia shifted secular ruler, it soon fell under the new Patriarchy in Belgrade. Parallel with the successful struggle for an own language and a republic, issues of ecclesiastical independence re-emerged. This was manifested in October 1944, when a Preliminary Committee for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia was formed. The first Church-and-People Assembly in Skopje in March 1945 declared itself in favour of an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church, but this met with no understanding from the Synod of the SOC. A second Church-and-People Assembly was held in Ohrid on 4-5 October 1958, passed resolutions on reviving the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and elected Dositej its Archbishop and supreme head. As to what happened after that, Macedonian and Serbian sources do not agree completely. There is agreement that further negotiations led to the SOC agreeing to make the three Macedonian eparchies form a Macedonian Church, after Serbian archbishops took part in the consecration of their first Macedonian colleagues and Patriarch German was styled Patriarch of Serbia and Macedonia. They disagree as to exactly how autonomous the Macedonian Church had thus been agreed to become, which depends, for instance, on how "and" is interpreted. The MOC Synod convened its third Church-and-People Assembly on 17-18 July 1967 in Ohrid and abolished the personal union of the two Churches, thereby definitely proclaiming autocephaly. This was rejected by the SOC, which does not categorically reject the possibility, but insists that it was done in contravention of canonic law. MOC faces an uphill struggle: no other church has recognised its proclaimed status and when the Russian Orthodox Church was to celebrate its millennium in 1988, the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian churches told it that if MOC was invited on a par with them, they would stay away.

This development has an interesting timing: it begins soon after the recognition of language and republic and culminates long before there was any movement towards an independent state. Once that came when Second Yugoslavia was falling apart, the MOC was strongly supportive. It also became privileged: every government has been sympathetic and supportive, the MOC being seen as a very important identity mark of the Macedonian nation. Already the 1991 Constitution contained the inconsistency that while guaranteeing all religious communities equal status, it explicitly mentioned the MOC only, the others merely listed by their generic names. It was, however, always seen as closer to VMRO ('the most Macedonian political party') than to SDSM (seen as pro-Serb), and its privileged position became most marked during the VMRO government in 1998-2002. The Law on MOC and Religious Communities of March 2001 (i.e. during the armed conflict; it was later withdrawn) stated Orthodoxy to be the foremost state religion and that there could be just one registered religious community for each religion (Bejkova 2001). The election of a new Patriarch took place in the VMRO period and was affected by party politics and interference. MOC priests were often seen at presidential campaign meetings, supporting the VMRO candidate Trajkovski (who was, ironically, a priest of the Methodist Church in Macedonia). The VMRO government built a huge Millennium cross on the Vodno hill overlooking Skopje. At its impressive inauguration, the new Patriarch Stephan used VMRO's electoral slogan ("Glavata gore" - keep your head up), but in a way that left the audience uncertain whether it was done intentionally. The reforms called for in the Ohrid Agreement in 2001 included amendments of the constitutional provisions on freedom of religion and the position of the religious communities. The compromise reached in November 2001 named five institutions: MOC, the Catholic Church, the Islamic Religious Community, Evangelist-Methodist Church and Jewish Community). Yet it remains unclear what "other religious communities" in its text means and this is potentially controversial. Religion and secular political power were always constitutionally separated, yet the actual degree of closeness has been politically determined. The new reforms were very painful for the MOC, which had been 'active' during the armed conflict by blessing the special forces and the 'defenders', especially the controversial "Lions", which were seen as VMRO party police forces (cf. Vankovska & Wiberg 2003:263f.). In November 2001, MPC threatened to ban MPs voting for the amendments that changed its special constitutional status.

The tense relationship between SOC and MOC has worsened since 1991. The SOC has replaced its old argument (that Macedonia was never an independent state and had no elements of statehood within the Federation) with the new one that Macedonia is a 'communist creation' (Nikolic 2004). During the VMRO-led government, a solution seemed close, at least by optimistic statements from Prime Minister Georgievski and President Trajkovski after some of their meetings with dignitaries from the Greek and Constantinople Churches. In mid May 2002, the Macedonian public was surprised by a meeting between SOC and MOC in Nis (which had, however, the prior approval of Georgievski and Archbishop Stephan) and the so-called Nis Agreement resulting from it, where MOC agreed to be named the Ohrid Archbishopric, enjoying the widest possible autonomy, but temporarily remain within the SOC. This was approximately the solution suggested by the Ecumenic Patriarchate in Constantinople (Bajic 2001), but led to a fierce public rejection, VMRO being openly accused of sinister plans to give up national identity; some believe that the Nis Agreement was an effect of the blow on morale caused by signing the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Nikolic 2002). The wide alliance of critics also included people and circles that had never been particularly interested in the status of MOC and its international non-recognition (Bajic 2002). Under this public pressure, the Synod of MOC claimed that it was only a draft Document, which it eventually neither adopted, nor rejected. That was the beginning of a looming schisma in the Holy Synod. The Vladika of the Vardar-Veles Eparchy, Jovan Vranishkovski, welcomed the call of the SOC patriarch Pavle and announced its joining SOC in canonic and liturgical unity. In order to create a Holy Synod of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the SOC quickly inaugurated two more Vladikas, one of them 23 years old and neither of them with the canonically higher education. Jovan's decision to serve as Exarch of the Serbian Patriarch Pavle was positively received by the Constantinople Patriarch Vartolomey and the Russian Alexej II. After some hesitation, the MOC Synod expelled Jovan; in addition, criminal charges were levelled against him for alleged misuse of church funds. The Nis adventure was inspired by the politicians, but put the MOC between the anvil and the hammer. Jovan´s expulsion – and in particular the harsh police action at his arrestation and the criminal charges, investigations, etc. – made him a martyr, seen as a victim of the hardline nationalist and dictatorial regime. Yet not to expel the 'Macedonian Judah' would also have had ominous effects (Joksic 2002).

By late 2003 Jovan had rallied around him group of younger priests, monks and nuns ready to publicly pursue the new course. In his Christmas message, Patriarch Pavle openly questioned the existence of the Macedonian nation and referred to the 19th century exarchs in "Southern Serbia". All these moves have been perceived as a "crusade" against Macedonia, its Church and identity in general, named a 'Second Tanushevci' (the village where the 2001 conflict started). Public declarations in support of MOC were soon issued by the Parliament and Government, other official bodies, universities, etc. Prime Minister Crvenkovski stated: "The Church can rely on the support from the state, i.e. the Government. It's very clear that SOC is not only trying to diminish the dignity of the Church's dignity but also to negate Macedonian national identity". (*Utrinski Vesnik*, 30 December 2003). The Serbian attention to these developments even overshadowed the stalemate in forming the new Government, but critical voices were rare, the most explicit one was the Serbian Helsinki Committee accusing SOC of "cherishing old illusions about Macedonia being a part of Southern Serbia" (Nikolic 2004).

Jovan and his followers publicly accused the MOC of being unable to "get out of the ghetto" and declared that a temporary compromise (accepting an autonomous status of the Ohrid Archbishopric) would bring the Macedonian Church back to the family of sister Churches and convince them that it deserves an autocephalous status and the name of MOC (Dnevnik, 10 January 2004). They accuse the current Holy Synod of enjoying its isolation and political games and caring more for its privileges by being close to the political elites than about the spiritual situation of the population (Makedonija denes, 9 January 2004).

In the Macedonian 'virtual reality', even the virtual autocephalous Church is only of value for the 'imagined' state and nation. Its critics ask why yet another compromise on the Church issue could not follow all those already made by the Macedonian state, such as the Ohrid Agreement, the name of FYROM and the language agreement with Bulgaria (Makedonija Denes, 21 January 2004). Jovan takes a kind of vanguard position based on a risky and probably unfounded faith in a pan-Orthodox community of churches, united in Christ but separated from states, regimes and nations – a vision of which the other churches have given little proof. Macedonia is very sceptical, this issue merely being one piece in the complex puzzle of unresolved dilemmas affecting the fragile state since 1991 (or even earlier). In the words of a Macedonian historian, "The change of the name into Ohrid Archbishopric may appear very attractive to some circles in Macedonia as it involves a great myth. However, among the Orthodox peoples in the Balkans, the Church was always a mark of nationhood.

Thus any change of the official name of MOC will, unfortunately, have implications for the name of the nation. Since the Macedonian-Greek negotiations are underway, I believe that this proposal is to serve as a test of the readiness of the Macedonian public to compromise in these talks" (Utrinski vesnik, 13 February 2002).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Among the Orthodox South Slavs, the mutual linkages between state, nation and religion seem to be as strong as ever. In some respects, they have even been strengthened, inter alia by the sufferings during the post-communist period, and notwithstanding the constitutional provisions to the opposite effect that can be found everywhere under the influence of Western demands.

In particular, the links between state and nation were strengthened by the progressing dissolution of Second Yugoslavia, a process that is not yet completed. All groups in that Yugoslavia were minorities in the state as a whole, even if some of them were majorities in lower political units. And the legitimising language of that state was a political ideology that was antinationalist as well as anti-religious in theory and tolerated religious organisations and expressions of national identity to a certain degree in practice, tolerance ending when they became political. With the demise of this state and the creation of a series of new ones, none of them had much of a similar abstract ideology that could be used to legitimise the state (Slovenia and democracy come closest, but fall outside the present paper). What remained was essentially to legitimise the state as the rebirth of a previous one with the same name (adding suitable myths about it), or as the state of the majority nation in it (sometimes diluted in constitutional formulations demanded by the West), or a combination of both, resulting in considerably stronger links between state and nation than before.

The links between state and religion have been strengthened by mutual interests. The churches found the new regimes more congenial than the communist ones (except in Bulgaria, where the problem eventually became that the church was seen as having been too close to the old regime; but it will probably not last long). Where the new regimes were looking for national legitimisations to replace the old ones, the churches could be important providers due to their important roles in history, their close and sometimes even defining relations to nations, and the new reversal of secularisation. And where the regimes were focusing on historical state tradition, the churches were again important, having been for a long time the primary or virtually only repositories of the very histories of these states, which included giving the church itself an important role in these histories (which was, furthermore, no major distortion of actual history in some cases).

This was also reflected in increasing identification between churches and (titular) nations. This was especially so in Former Yugoslavia, where the preconditions were strong: states and nations indeed coincided much more than before, but very far from perfectly, several nations having big minorities outside their titular republic (now made a state). At the same time, states as well as nations were in a transition that was often surrounded by existential uncertainty, making them need more fundamental legitimisations than the secular level seemed able to offer. As one indicator of this we may offer the de-secularisation in much of Former Yugoslavia. Another sign is what we repeatedly noted: that a national church was seen as an important symbol of national identity even by members of the nation that were highly secularised.

Given the circumstances – and as long as they continue to prevail-, these tighter links between state, nation and religion are likely to last for some time, even if they are certainly not ultimately irreversible. Some aspects of them are also likely to be problematic, as the governments in these states want to adapt constitutions and legislations to improve their chances of ultimately joining the Western Clubs, primarily EU and NATO – or had such changes forced upon themselves when having to submit to Western demands to mediate in intra-state conflicts. How different our cases are from the states in the EU is very much a matter of how we make the comparisons: between constitutions and constitutions, or between realities and realities, or – in the absolutely worst case – by comparing Western constitutions with South Eastern realities. But this falls outside the scope of the present paper.

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