THE EXTREMISM OF THE KOSOVO-METOHIJA AREA AS AN OBSTACLE TO DIALOGUE

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The period after the 1990s wars was marked by many difficulties in relations between states established by the dissolution of the former SFRY, and one of the most significant obstacles to the relaxation of interstate, interethnic and interconfessional relations is the fact that extremism in these areas persists even in the advanced third decade since the end of the war conflicts. The example of the southern Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija, in the context of the survival of various varieties of political violence, is certainly considered one of the most blatant in the otherwise "too rich" milieu of the Balkans in these types of violence.

Starting from the hypothesis that the strong extremism of the area of the southern Serbian province represents a serious obstacle to dialogue, the paper analyses some of the most dominant forms of political violence in Kosovo and Metohija, such as extremism inspired by religious and ethno-nationalist narratives, according to the knowledge about variability and development, identity and diversity, opposites and contradictions. The emphasis is placed on their mutual relation in the context of superimposing characteristics, as well as the way in which they are incriminatingly incorporated into the complex dialogue about the final status of the southern Serbian province.

Key words: *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia, aggression, NATO, war, 1999, military strategic problems, defence*

> *"Great conflicts flare up over small differences, preceded by organized hate hours"*
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Introduction

The fourth decade has started since the beginning of the radical accomplishment of dissolute aspirations in which, through wars with tens of thousands of dead and a population of several million expelled and displaced, new borders between the former federal units of the former SFRY have been created in the specific Balkan manner. Regardless of the fact that in some parts of the wider, even academic public, you can often hear explanations that the disintegrating wave was a part of the global disintegration that mostly affected the countries of the Eastern and Central Europe, the fact is that the Balkan scenario of making new cartography was accompanied by the most devastating sufferings on the European soil, unseen since the end of the Second World War. From the first years of the 1990s, when the fire of war "rolled" from Slovenia, through Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, until the end of the last decade of the last century, when the southern Serbian province - Kosovo and Metohija - became the epicentre of geopolitical importance and cruel war interventionism, the common denominator of these areas was *hatred*, which was embodied through crime. The beginning of the new century brought some "new winds", which were thought to bring the new Balkan states a period of difficult, but continuous recovery, gradual establishment of institutions and resolution of accumulated problems in the interest of all countries individually, and also in the interest of the region that took a step towards the proclaimed European integration with the blackest labels.

Where are we today, three decades since the beginning of the first war conflicts in the territory of the former SFRY and more than two decades since the end of the NATO aggression on FRY and the establishment of an international protectorate on Kosovo and Metohija? Have numerous problems and misunderstandings been resolved, and can it be said that extremist narratives with unequivocal messages of hatred are something that no longer occupies primacy in the statements of regional officials, as well as in the media sky of the Balkan countries?

By analysing the content of the statements of a great number of officials in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and by analysing the media space from the same geographical milieu, there is no longer any doubt that the answers to both of these questions are negative to the greatest possible extent. Is extremism, which was believed to reach its highest "peak" in the 1990s, strong enough to legitimize itself as insurmountable and insuperable, or is it a "weed that is constantly watered"? The answer to this question is particularly important when defining a strategy to combat this reflexive form of political violence, both in the Balkan countries individually and in increasingly complex interstate relations.

If we analyse the extremist matrix on the example of Kosovo and Metohija, we will establish certain capillary regularities with some of the hotspots from the area of the former SFRY, and also certain specifics. What can be taken as the initial common denominator of the extremist narratives from this area, and what can certainly be used for the region of Kosovo and Metohija, is the fact that extremists used "two universal sources" which they derive their homogenization from. One is

extremism in the name of religion, and the other is in the name of ethno-nationalist specifics. Both religion and ethnicity act homogenizing in the creation of collective identities and "at the same time provide an answer to the eternal questions of individuals, such as: who am I and where is my place in the community"?[1]

The extremism inspired by religious differences

As it was the case throughout the Eastern European world (especially paradigmatically in the area of the former SFRY), the end of the last century and the beginning of the 21st century are marked by reawakened religiosity. As a capillary follower of various religious and confessional diversities that became increasingly important in this period, the area of Kosovo and Metohija, together with parts of the Raška region and Macedonia (today - North Macedonia), religious renewal was primarily represented in the construction of a great number of new places of worship and other sacred ornaments of Islamic culture. "At the same time, in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, a large number of Christian religious facilities and monuments were demolished, damaged and desecrated, which makes us unequivocally conclude that the renewal of religiosity also has its militant dimension, and that it does not represent only the right to profess one's religion in a civil society. It is obvious that this religious renewal represented through the return to Islamic roots was experienced by a part of the population as participation in a kind of religious war."[2]

In the concrete way of practicing the teachings of the youngest monotheism in Kosovo and Metohija, the Madhhab of the Hanafi type is still dominant, while the rise of the Salafi Islam can be considered significant. According to some estimates, close to ten percent of Kosovo Albanians - Mohammedans have switched to this Wahhabist[3] way of practicing religion. When it comes to the so-called mystical orders in Islam, the Sufi narrative has been dominant for decades in relation to the sporadic influence of the philosophical and mystical discourse of Shiism.[4]

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[1] Milovan Subotić, "Religijski i etnički kontekst strateške kulture Srbije", *Vojno delo* 4/2020, Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Beograd, 30-49, p. 45.

[2] Milovan Subotić, "Ekstremizam kosmetskih Albanaca: Supremacija etnonacionalizma nad verskim ekstremizmom", *Nacionalni interes* 3/2017, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 221-237, pp. 229-230.

[3] The ideologists and followers of this way of practicing Islam insist on the name Salafists, and not Wahhabis. The opposition to those who qualify them as Wahhabis is based on the fact that only the opponents of Islam call them in that way, i.e. it is the pejoration that comes from those who would like to cause division and discord among Muslim believers.

[4] An important role in the failure of the Iranian Islamist narrative in Kosovo was played by the occurrence and spread of the Islamist teaching by the Egyptian "Muslim Brotherhood". This Islamist narrative came through Kosovars educated in Arab countries, especially in Egypt, and the majority of them is now engaged as imams or teachers in madrasas and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Kosovo. According to: Liridona Berkolli, „The Presence of Iran and Shi'ism in Kosovo", *Center for Iranian Studies in Ankara*, March 10, 2021.

The Salafi activists, organized into different groups and financially supported by different Islamist organizations[5] operating in Kosovo, North Macedonia and other countries in the region inhabited by Muslims, have so far organized thousands of different types of education and lectures. All available "provider channels" that enable the presence of a great number of people in one place, such as funerals, circumcision ceremonies, agitation during family and religious holidays, and even penetration into schools and universities, are used as a training ground for spreading their ideas. Poverty, fragile institutions burdened by combined criminal and radical narratives, as well as the general lack of prospects for young people (who are the greatest target of such activities) represent an ideal "habitat" for the indoctrination of the "gullible" and the general extremism of society. Therefore, the extremism wrapped in the "return to authentic Islamic principles" on the soil of Kosovo and Metohija represents an unequivocal threat to national and regional security.

The events from the end of the last century brought the so-called KLA into the pronounced connotation with Islamist extremist narratives. The still important relapses of the Islamic revival based on the principles of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 were a kind of *spiritus movens* for the protagonists of the Islamist wing of the KLA. A step towards open guerilla activity with elements of terrorism followed with the formation of the Mujahideen unit "Abu Bakr Siddiq" in 1998 in the village of Donji Prekaz.[6]

The continuation of the flirtation with the Islamist extremism in Kosovo took place in the twilight of the military intervention against FRY in 1999, when Ayman Zawahiri, the second man in the "algorithm" of Al-Qaeda at that time, after several meetings organized mostly in Baku, by the US, Turkish and Saudi diplomat – was sent to Albania, and then to Kosovo.[7]

Due to the foundation of the so-called Islamic State and the propaganda of radical Islamic ulamas, 403 people left Kosovo for Syria and Iraq in 2017[8], and 74 of them died, while 133 returned, according to the US State Department. These data show that Kosovo is the European territory with the greatest number of volunteers on the side of militant Islamists in relation to the number of citizens.[9] The Kosovo Police announced that in June

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[5] Through the so-called Islamic humanitarian and non-governmental organizations from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Qatar, Kuwait and Turkey, later identified as terrorist financing organizations, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in the establishment of strong propaganda infrastructure, in order to spread radical ideology and incite hatred and various religious conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia. According to: Kolë Krasniqi, „Islamist Extremism in The Balkans: The Case of Kosovo", *Eurasia Review*, February 11, 2021.

[6] More in: Milovan Subotić, "Ekstremizam kosmetskih Albanaca: Supremacija etnonacionalizma nad verskim ekstremizmom", *Nacionalni interes* 3/2017, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 221-237.

[7] Boško Jakšić, „Radikalni islamizam ne pušta Zapadni Balkan", Antidot – Nezavisna medijska mreža Zapadni Balkan, September 26, 2028. https://www.anti.media/medunarodna-bezbednost/stav/bosko-jaksic/radikalni-islamizam-ne-pusta-zapadni-balkan/ 26/11/2021.

[8] The majority of Kosovo Albanians, who joined jihadists, come from the small town of Kačanik and its surroundings. One of the most famous leaders of Kosovo Albanians in the lines of ISIL and one of the most wanted terrorists from the US list - Lovedrim Muhajeri - is from that place. According to: Boško Jakšić, „Radikalni islamizam ne pušta Zapadni Balkan", gen. quote.

[9] Ibid.

2021 there were at least 96 residents of Kosovo in the conflict zones, including 43 men, nine women and 44 children born in Syria or Iraq to at least one parent from Kosovo.[10] It remains an open question to what extent the interim Prishtina institutions can respond to this challenge, although in a formal sense they are declared as capable and functioning.[11]

What makes the problem more complex is the increasingly obvious cooperation of various radical and extremist Islamic groups in the region based on similar motivation, the same religious ideology and shared extremist past. This danger is related to the return of slightly less than 150 people from the war zones in Syria and Iraq, as well as the operational activities of various intelligence services in Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia and other countries of the region. In the operational sense, the risk of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists from the territory of Kosovo and other countries in the region is possible, but at the same time limited. However, if political and social crises break out in Kosovo and Metohija, Albania and North Macedonia, with "simultaneous deepening and intensification of the conflict in the Middle East, rather great polarization in the relationship between Christians and Muslims is possible"[12]. Then, a great possibility of an attack by Islamist extremists in the region would not be ruled out: in Kosovo and Metohija, in Central Serbia, in Albania, North Macedonia, and even in some of the EU countries. In the context of preventing possible terrorist attacks, a comprehensive programme should be implemented, which would primarily refer to treatment with appropriate offers to already indoctrinated and radicalized persons, especially to those who increasingly use the status of "lone wolves" or "sleepers" as their *modus operandi*. Such a programme should not be understood as a "programme for the de-Islamization of Muslims", as it is propagated by some radical structures in Kosovo and some countries in the region, nor as a programme that favours extremists during socialization and employment, as it is generally seen by activists of civic world views.

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[10] „Kosovo Repatriates 11 Citizens from Islamic State Camps in Syria", *Radio Free Europe*, July 18, 2021. https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-islamic-state-syria-camps-/31364421.html 11/11/2021

[11] The Kosovo Police said that since 2013 they have investigated 400 people on the suspicion of terrorist activities (returnees and those who stayed at home), arrested 152 and brought charges against more than 120. 133 returnees have been registered, including several children. The reports referring to Kosovo as the "Jihad capital of Europe" and the like are great embarrassment for the Government that hopes to join the EU and be more closely related to the Western Europe. According to: Helen Nianias, "Lessons from Kosovo? How a European hotbed of Islamist extremism deals with returning fighters", *The New Humanitarian*, March 2, 2018. In line with the fight against the Islamist indoctrination and resocialization and integration of returnees from the Middle Eastern battlefields is also the "Five-year strategy of Kosovo for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism that lead towards terrorism", which has recently expired. The strategy has indicated the steps to be taken, with the focus on early identification, prevention, intervention, deradicalization and reintegration of individuals and groups affected by extremism and radicalism. According to: Serbeze Haxhiaj, „Kosovo Urged to Keep up its Guard against Radicalisation", Balkan Insight, December 14, 2021. https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/14/kosovo-urged-to-keep-up-its-guard-against-radicalisation/. 25/11/2021.

[12] Kolë Krasniqi, „Islamist Extremism in the Balkans: The Case of Kosovo", *Eurasia Review*, February 11, 2021.

A further problem of the regional extremism, in the context of the relation towards religion, is the fact, equally implemented to both progressive and destructive ideas, that they are not meant for themselves, but seek interaction in which they act according to the feedback model. They are reflected in it, they grow in it, they confirm their progressive/destructive beliefs in it.[13] The example of the homogenization of the "Christian Europe" against the Islamization of the Old Continent, which has been embodied in recent years in the example of the migrant crisis[14], is to a certain extent present in the dichotomy of the "Christian north of Kosovo" and the "Islamic south". And it is not religion that antagonises the separated, but precisely the homogenization in its name. As noted by the French academic Amin Maalouf in his book "Deadly Identities" (Les Identités Meurtrières): "I do not dream of a world in which religion would no longer have a place, but of a world in which the need for spirituality would be separated from the need for belonging".[15]

The extremism under the umbrella of ethno-nationalism

There are dispersive reasons why some ethnonational community begins to oppose to a great extent everything that personifies the majority people, and tries to fight for a greater degree of independence - to become, to a greater or lesser extent, independent. Dušan Kecmanović emphasizes as the most common reason "insufficient integration of the minority community into the economic, social and cultural context of a certain territorial (state) entity, as the common denominator of all reasons for the occurrence and spread of ethno-nationalism among the inhabitants of the minority community"[16]. Ethno-nationalism therefore represents a key "provider" that communities with minority characteristics in their efforts to become independent resort to, especially if integration of these communities is considered insufficient for their aspirations to achieve full rights and conditions for the manifestation of some specifics. The post-Yugoslav area contains many examples of institutionally and extra-institutionally promoted measures and regulations that went hand in hand with ethno-nationalists in the struggle for political and administrative independence.

The establishment and spread of ethno-nationalist narratives of an ethnic collectivity within the same state territory necessarily causes defensive homogenization of the other

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[13] "Numerous examples from history, as well as contemporary practice, tell us that religion can (on the basis of the moral teachings of all important world religions) represent an important factor in improving relations between people, and also an important factor in large-scale conflicts." Milovan Subotić, "Islamistički ekstremizam kao paradigma verski fundiranog nasilja", *Kultura polisa* No. 20, 2013, 21-39, p. 24.

[14] On the capillary between militant Islamism and right-wing extremism that "puts on Christian ornaments" in: Milovan Subotić, *Migracije i ekstremizam*, Medija centar "Odbrana" i Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Beograd 2022.

[15] Amin Maluf, *Ubilački identiteti*, Beograd: Laguna 2016, p. 103.

[16] Dušan Kecmanović, *Etnonacionalizam, Izabrana dela; 1-4; Volume 2*, Clio, Beograd, 2014, p. 164.

collectivity. The awakening of ethno-nationalism among members of the other ethno-national group provides a series of arguments for the growth of extremist equivalents as the "countermeasure" against others. The most recent experiences with feedback between ethno-nationalists of different ethnic origin in the territory of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and also on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, show the meaningfulness of the claim that ethno-nationalism in an environment inevitably represents "propellant" for its equivalent in the other one. A series of wrong moves towards the crisis in the southern Serbian province, which the political establishment in Serbia made in the 1980s and 1990s, confirms the point of view that Kosovo and Metohija is not an exception, it could even be characterized as the rule of the abovementioned. The absence of a strategy towards the integration of Kosovo Albanians into the legal and political life of Serbia, and the implementation of primarily repressive methods to counter growing ethno-nationalist homogenization, are just some of the arguments that have given a "wind at the back" to growing ethno-nationalism and increasingly open ethnoseparatist violence.

To what extent can the main narratives of ethno-nationalist ideology from the sphere of theory be "personalized" to the level of ethno-nationalism of Kosovo Albanians? If we take the thematic framework of the ethno-nationalist ideology of Professor Kecmanović, who explains it through ten elements, as a starting theoretical basis[17], and confront it with the practice of the Albanian protagonists of this idea in KiM, we can notice a distinct (we could even say matrix) lawfulness.

The element of *damage* is also recognized on the example of the ethno-nationalist ideology of Kosovo Albanians through the articulation of views that members of their ethno-national community do not have the same rights as members of the majority nation in Serbia. Various forms of discrimination have been mentioned as arguments, from the right to language, culture, religion, education, various forms of association, employment, etc.

The element of *vulnerability* is intensively articulated and promoted in campaigns that are mainly directed outside. Where does vulnerability come from? From the following element: *culprit for everything*, which is unequivocally emphasized by the ideologues of the Albanian ethno-nationalism. "Serbia, the political establishment and Great Serbian nationalism both from Central Serbia and from the Serbian community in KiM are to blame for all the troubles of the Albanian ethnic group in KiM."[18] This element of ethno-nationalist ideology has proven to be a well-established and effective tool for mobilizing the masses.[19]

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[17] Out of ten elements articulated by Prof Kecmanović six of them that correspond to the ethno-nationalist aspirations of Kosovo Albanians are singled out. These are: *damage, vulnerability, clearly defined culprit for everything, victim and sacrifice, recognition of the right moment and finally, revenge and retribution*. According to: Dušan Kecmanović, *Etnonacionalizam, Izabrana dela; 1-4; Volume 2*, gen. quote, pp. 134-143.

[18] Milovan Subotić, "Ekstremizam kosmetskih Albanaca: Supremacija etnonacionalizma nad verskim ekstremizmom", gen. quote, p. 231.

[19] In Iran, for example, it was used in the years preceding the Islamic Revolution, when the US was marked as the culprit for all the troubles of the Iranian population. On the other hand, Israel accuses Iran, while the Serbian authorities in the 1990s most frequently blamed the Vatican for everything.

According to this matrix format, the ideologues of the ethno-nationalism of Kosovo Albanians have articulated and promoted the following element - *the element of victim and sacrifice*. The use of this element of ethno-nationalist ideology was most often supported by the "abuse of the (indisputable) suffering of Kosovo Albanians in the 1990s and the creation of a victim cult that was established together with the manifested ethnoseparatist activity with elements of terrorism by the KLA"[20].

The element of *the right moment* for the Albanian ethno-nationalists can be viewed in two ways and embodied through two dates. One is certainly the one from the time of the NATO aggression against FRY, which has irrevocably changed the course of history in relation to this phenomenon, and the other refers to 2008, when strengthened ethno-nationalism recognized the right moment for ethnoseparatist operationalization.

The element of *revenge and retribution* represents the last link in the chain of ideologues and protagonists of ethno-nationalism and it can rightly be said that it represents the origin of all previous ones. It is mentioned at the moment when ethno-nationalism is already established and has reached many of its goals. On the example of KiM it "covers the period from the withdrawal of the Serbian security forces in 1999, and continues, with greater and lesser oscillations in the intensity of manifestation, to this day. The pogrom against Serbs in Kosmet, which lasted from March 17 to 19, 2004, is considered to be the peak of ethno-nationalist violence."[21]

Generally speaking, ethno-nationalism, which has taken the primacy of a wider cohesive identification from the key unifying factor until that time - religion, has played an important role in the dissolute events and wars in the former SFRY, including the example of KiM. The processes of ethnonational homogenization that have accompanied them were, first of all, motivated by the need to "create simple and unambiguous identities in the population, and to erase the elements of the mixture, 'pollution' and any indeterminacy that would threaten newly created nation states".[22]

Instead of a conclusion

When conducting the comparative analysis of the superiority of the capacities of the ethnic character of extremism with the religious one, it is very important to make a clear distinction between the potential for the manifestation of these extremist narratives on the ground (nationally wider) and the prevailing attitude of the officials of the interim Prishtina institutions, as a key element for the establishment and promotion of this concept. While the Kosovo-Metohija area is still greatly contamina-

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[20] Milovan Subotić, "Ekstremizam kosmetskih Albanaca: Supremacija etnonacionalizma nad verskim ekstremizmom", gen. quote, p. 232.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ger Dejzings, *Religija i identitet na Kosovu*, Biblioteka XX vek, Beograd, 2005, p. 54. in: Milovan Subotić, Miroslav Mitrović: „Hybrid Nature of Extremism: Cohesive Characteristics of Ethno-Nationalism and Religious Extremism as Generators of Balkan Unsecurity", *Vojno delo*, International Edition, 1/2018 (22-33), p. 25.

ted by the "values" of militant Islamism, in the statements of the officials of the interim institutions and, what is even more important and measurable, in the media controlled by the Prishtina establishment, the religious component of identity deserves much less attention than efforts that are almost exclusively from the worldview of an ethnic character.

Taught by the experience of the war in the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the growing Islamization only established the international community so that BiH as a unitary state would be the establishment with pronounced Islamist narratives, as well as the general odium that was created throughout the West towards militant Islamists after the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001, the turn came to extremist narratives based on the teaching of the youngest monotheism. In this regard, the Albanian leadership in KiM increasingly insisted on the authenticity of their belonging to Europe through "centuries of identification with Christianity". Thus, "participation in the battle in Kosovo under the banner of the Christian lords was presented as an important proof that Albanians were on the 'right side' and thus identified as the 'guardians of the gate'".[23] Hence, the subjugation to the Ottoman rule after the defeat in Kosovo Polje was increasingly emphasized as something that Albanians "were forced to experience, but never really accepted".[24] In this kind of revision of mythology, the official Albanian odium towards these issues is characterized by ambivalent feelings towards Islam and neglect of the memory of the Sultan and Islamic cultural topic. Likewise, "reviving the story of the Albanian killer of the Sultan[25] is more in the service of establishing the identity of the new European state of Kosovo on the basis of the pre-Islamic Christian past".[26]

The fact that the problem is largely displaced from the sphere of religion does not show in any way that this framework is easier to solve. The established ethno-nationalist approach from the position of "irreconcilable differences" in terms of ethnicity, language, script, a different vision of the future of the state organization, and different supporting actors in an increasingly complicated international environment has imposed itself, perhaps, as well as being more difficult for reconciliation and dialogue than it would have been a key difference primarily motivated by religious reasons.

If we place reconciliation[27] as the supreme factor of the dialogue on the final status of Kosovo and Metohija or, even better, as the most necessary condition for

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[23] Ana di Lelio, *Bitka na Kosovu u albanskom epu*, Biblioteka XX vek, Beograd, 2010, p. 25.

[24] Ibid.

[25] In support of strengthening the epic pan-Albanian national story with emphasized heroic characters, the claim that "the hero who killed the Sultan in the name of freedom was an Albanian establishes historical continuity with the distant past". According to: Ana di Lelio, *Bitka na Kosovu u albanskom epu*, gen. quote, p. 19.

[26] Ana di Lelio, gen. quote, p. 26.

[27] Many pages have been written on the topic of reconciliation in post-conflict areas. On how the model of reconciliation in the Republic of South Africa can be analysed in a certain way as a model for reconciliation after conflicts in the countries of the former SFRY, see: Dejan Vučinić, Miloš Milenković, Katarina Pavlović, „Reconciliation in South Africa as a(n) (Im)Possible model for the Post-Yugoslav Area", *Teme*, y. XLV, no. 3, July − September 2021, pp. 987−1004.

the implementation of a possible agreement, the question arises as to how to encourage and lead the reconciliation process. Although this concept is considered one of the most frequent in the broad narrative of civic initiatives, the academic public, and even state officials in the Balkans, it is obvious that there are no results.

What is controversial in the frequent use of this concept in the (post)conflict period without corresponding results? It is debatable that the concept leaves the scope of the interstate, interethnic or interconfessional milieu, although even in the mentioned context, from the point of view of contemporary realpolitik, it is already considered archaic. In a wider social context, the concept is also used as transmission in resolving conflicts between the left and the right, the government and the opposition[28], cheerleading groups and factions, etc. From an etymological point of view, the concepts of war and peace are opposed, which implies that warfare and reconciliation are at least equally opposed. How long are we going to have war then peace, warfare then reconciliation? Is peace without war even possible? Judging by experience, we can say that it is not. Does this close our work on creating a framework where peace without war will be possible and where, as a response to antagonisms and unresolved issues, there will be an opposing equivalent at that level of formulation - conversation, compromise? On the contrary, it is the only framework that should be devotedly pursued.

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[28] Let us just remember the "Declaration on political reconciliation and shared responsibility for accomplishing the vision of Serbia as a democratic, free, integrated, economically and culturally developed and socially just country", which was signed by the leaders of DP and SPS after the formalization of the post-election coalition in 2008. See: „Deklaracija o pomirenju DS i SPS – Dokumenti", Peščanik, October 19, 2008.

[9] „Kosovo Repatriates 11 Citizens From Islamic State Camps In Syria", *Radio Free Europe*, July 18, 2021. https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-islamic-state-syria-camps-/31364421.html 11/11/2021.

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S u m m a r y

Are different identities (ethnic, religious, linguistic...) to that extent an insurmountable obstacle for dialogue and is the renunciation of identity on both sides the only way to reconciliation? A coherent answer to this question excludes the binary of this type. The only valid way to relax relations and reach an enforceable agreement has to be based on maintaining one's identities. Namely, as Bregman (Rutger C. Bregman) rightly states, "we need to understand that there is nothing wrong with being different" and that understanding other and different identity features in no way diminishes the commitment to keep our identity features.

In order to talk about dialogue, reaching an agreement and its implementation, it is obvious that this whole path is impossible and ineffective in the conditions of further extremism of society. It should not be believed that the analysed extremist narratives are only typical of the Albanian party in KiM. On the contrary, we have to

be aware of the fact that our current cultural and media space continues to serve as a "provider" of extremist ideas that represent a great obstacle to the aforementioned dialogue, and also to the wider reshaping of the Serbian political identity, which was seriously damaged in the 1990s.

Contemporary culture must not be reduced to populist patterns that uncritically miss the contents of political extremism, intolerance and the relativization of crime. "We are in a vicious circle: until the level of awareness of the average 'consumer' is raised, until political culture is improved and various forms of intolerance are reduced, until war crimes and the hatred that supported them are condemned by national and political consensus and through all media and later relativized, our quality of life and culture will be unacceptably low."

It is often emphasized that international relations are based on interests, and the fact that they are also based on values is overlooked. Whatever values we inherit, such international allies we will have, and consequently solutions.

Key words: *political violence, religious and ethno-nationalist extremism, reconciliation, dialogue, status*