# Intellectual Discourse

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The Intersection of Theory, Identity, and Security in PCVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism)



## Intellectual Discourse

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#### **Intellectual Discourse**

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#### **Transliteration Table: Consonants**

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ب	b	ط	ţ
ت	t	ظ	ż
ث	th	ع	(
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ķ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	اک	k
ذ	dh	J	1
ر	r	م	m
ز	Z	ن	n
س	S	٥	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص ض	Ş	ç	,
ض	ģ	ي	y

#### Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
0	a	اً، اًی	an
Ó	u	ಿ	un
0	i	్జ్ఞ	in
آ، ہٰ، آی،	ā	<i>ِي</i> آوْ	aw
ಿ	ū	<i>ٙ</i> يْ	ay
్ల	ī	<b>ُ</b> و	uww, ū (in final position)
		ِيِّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

## Expulsion of the "Turk" - Contextualising Islamophobia in the Balkans: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### Anja Zalta\*

**Abstract:** This article deals with the issue of Islamophobia in the Balkans, with a special emphasis on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The motive for discussing this topic is the analysis of political discourses and religious mythologies and the rise of nationalisms that arise from them, and which in the 90s of the 20th century led to a brutal civil war with a religious dimension. We do not claim that religious nationalisms alone ignited the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but they are certainly the key factors that contributed to the legitimisation and expansion of various aggressive interventions. The article exposes the issue of Islamophobic discourses as well as the construction of the "Other" in the specific socio-cultural and historical context in combination with the Eurocentric compression of racism that can be recognised in Orientalist discourses in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in certain cases and circumstances in Europe as such. In the second part, the article presents the Islamophobic actions that are the result of orientalist discourses, from the most exposed "expulsion of the Turk" to the fear of neo-Ottomanism, which is spread by some academic and political circles in Bosnia even today. The central motive of this article is to offer starting material for further steps in analysing causes and consequences of religio-political antagonisms and consequently the search for opportunities for creative and peaceful coexistence.

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**Keywords:** Islamophobia, racism, Europe, Orientalism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muslims, Turks, Neo-Ottomanism.

Abstrak: Artikel ini membincangkan isu Islamofobia di Balkan, dengan penekanan khusus pada Bosnia dan Herzegovina. Motif untuk membincangkan topik ini adalah analisis wacana politik dan mitologi agama dan kebangkitan nasionalisme yang timbul, dan pada dekad 90-an abad ke-20 telah membawa kepada perang saudara yang kejam dengan dimensi keagamaan. Artikel ini tidak mendakwa bahawa nasionalisme agama semata-mata mencetuskan perang di Bosnia dan Herzegovina, tetapi ia sememangnya faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada legitimasi dan pengembangan pelbagai campur tangan agresif. Artikel pada mulanya mendedahkan isu wacana Islamofobia serta pembinaan konsep "the Other" dalam konteks sosio-budaya dan sejarah yang spesifik dalam kombinasi dengan pemampatan perkauman Eurosentrik yang telah dikenalpasti dalam wacana Orientalis di Bosnia dan Herzegovina dan juga dalam kes dan keadaan tertentu di Eropah. Di bahagian kedua, artikel itu memaparkan tindakan Islamofobia yang merupakan hasil daripada wacana Orientalis, daripada "pengusiran orang Turkiye" dan ketakutan kepada ancaman neo-Ottomanisme, yang disebarkan oleh beberapa kalangan akademik dan politik di Bosnia sehingga hari ini. Motif utama artikel ini adalah untuk menawarkan bahan permulaan untuk langkah selanjutnya dalam menganalisis sebab dan akibat pertentangan agama-politik dan seterusnya mencari peluang untuk kewujudan bersama yang kreatif dan aman.

**Kata kunci:** Islamofobia, perkauman, Eropah, Orientalisme, Bosnia dan Herzegovina, Muslim, Orang Turkiye, Neo-Ottomanisme

#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Many studies have been conducted on the religious dimension and the role of national mythologies in the war in BiH or Bosnia and Herzegovina (Velikonja 1998, Seels, 2002, Zalta 2020). Our thesis in this paper

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Aspects of this paper were originally published as Anja Zalta (2020), The problem of Islamophobia and its consequences as obstacles to peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Annales: anali za istrske in mediteranske študije. Series historia et sociologia., 30/3, which have been reproduced with permission from Annales.

continues initial research on the mentioned topic by emphasising that the unprocessed understanding of victimisation identity, which derives from Serbian nationalist mythology, following the defeat in Kosovo field in 1398, when the Ottoman army defeated the Serbian army, and without understanding the orientalist discourse, which is directed at Bosnian Muslims as a homogenous "Other" that threatens and betrays the Slavic and including Christian identity from then on, there will be no peaceful coexistence in BiH and beyond. One of the reason for this Islamophobic discourse is religious illiteracy, based on the failure to recognize the heterogeneity of Islamic traditions. It presents Islam as a monolithic block that is static and unresponsive to change, is culturally inferior, undemocratic, even violent and threatens the civilisational standards of the West.

This ignorance generates Islamophobia even beyond borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and enters the bigger European scene, marking various actions and reactions towards Muslim minorities in Europe (an example of Islamophobia in Slovenia, where the majority of Muslims are Bosniaks) (Islamophobia report: Zalta 2017; 2020). The paper defines key concepts: first the Islamophobia as understood and used in the European reports on Islamophobia, and later the concept of Orientalism in the context of new racism, referring to the European attitude towards Islam and Muslims as a consequence of religious illiteracy. Islamophobic actions, which are the consequences of Islamophobic and Orientalist discourses, from the "expulsion of the Turk" to the fear of neo-Ottomanism, which is spread by some academic and political circles in Bosnia even today, will be discussed.

#### Contextualising Islamophobia

In order to narrow down our research and highlight the case of Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to emphasise the necessity of contextualising any report on Islamophobia. The attachment to place, time, space, political actors, socio-cultural, historical, political, economic factors is key in contextualising reports and analyses on Islamophobia. This is important to avoid the simplistic generation of binaries created (probably unintentionally) by various accounts of Islamophobia, which divide "us" and "them" and thereby further divide the public sphere and exacerbate political discourses. Such simplistic reports contribute to reductionist interpretations, based

on the idea of the "clash of civilisations" or the "clash of religions" On the other hand, there is also a danger that they might prevent or labeled as "islamophobic" any well-intentioned constructive criticism, concerns and proposals regarding particular Muslim actions and communities in Europe and their relationship with the wider European societies and policies.

There are many quality and exemplary studies and theoretical approaches that have addressed the topic of Islamophobia based on historical, political, economic, etc., perspectives. Farid Hafez and Enes Bayrakli, the editors of the most comprehensive annual Islamophobia report in Europe since 2015, with the intention to encourage politicians and the general public to discuss Islamophobia on the basis of qualitative data, are proposing the use of the following working definition of Islamophobia:

, 'Islamophobia is about dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of constructed 'we'. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static 'Muslim' identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about Muslim/Islam'' (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2020, 8).

We reiterate the warning that there is a danger that the complexity and diversity of the Muslim identity are many times insufficiently presented even in the reports on Islamophobia, which can generate discourse where Muslims are presented as a monolithic block, thus disregarding the diversity and complexity of Muslim communities. The diversity of these communities involves not only differences in terms of languages and ethnicity but also socio-political characteristics, which are involved in the construction of collective and individual identity.

The contextualisation of the issue of Islamophobia cannot avoid questioning and analysing the dark stains in European history, such as racism and orientalism. Salman Sayyid emphasises the problem of the Eurocentric understanding of the concept of racism, which is according to him associated (only) with the Nazi regime of the 20th century and neo-Nazis' reviving ideology. As such, racism according to Sayvid is regarded as an "exceptional moment", not applicable to European colonial rules, Orientalist notions and other forms of segregation, carried out by colonial rulers and enabled by racial laws (Sayvid, 2010, 12–13).. Sayyid warns that it is possible to think about the Eurocentric concept of racism without recognizable racists, especially in the case of Islamophobia (Sayyid, 2010, 12-13). Regarding the context of Islamophobia and racism, Vlasta Jalušič is referring to the so called "new racism" or so called , 'cultural racism" which differs from the "old" one in that the former is no longer based on , 'given biological research foundations or, in other words, on the concept of race, but above all on cultural dimensions of various groups and characteristics ascribed to their 'members': e.g. nationality, traditional customs, religion, eating habits, dress codes and culture of (everyday) life. The allegedly fixed and unalterable biological basis of racism is thus pushed into the background, and what comes to the fore is a relatively evasive and fluid set of culturally grounded 'characteristics' that can be ascribed to individuals and groups fairly randomly "(Jalušič, 2015, 30).

While biological racism implies rejection, exclusion and unequal treatment of people on the basis of their physical appearance and other physical characteristics, cultural racism conducts discourse based on cultural differences and on differences between various types of nomos or sacred cosmos, between value systems that distinguish arbitrarily between "civilised" values and "inferior barbarian, undemocratic, etc." values. Such types of racism can be recognised in Orientalist discourses, and is enough to rummage through the "treasure trove" of stereotypical "European images" of Bosnians and/or Muslims to find a number of examples. For instance while dealing with the question of Islam and Muslims (in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Europe), one often comes across interpretations of Islam as an alternative to secular politics and a so-called "civilisational threat" posed by political activism to destroy the secular state. Esra Ozyurek (2005) in her article, ,'The politics of cultural unification, secularism, and the place of Islam in the new Europe" is analyzing two positions dominating discussions of the role of Muslims and Islam in the European Union: the right position argues that Islam is external and even antithetical to the culture of the European Union (it is too conservative and uncivilised, it undermines standards of the Western civilisation, etc.), while the so-called humanist-left position is arguing that only secularism allows religious minorities to live safely in the nation-state system.

Several debates and articles have already been written on this topic (Zalta, 2018), yet the challenge for the European Union remains, especially regarding the questions, how to think and live religious pluralism and how to enable different religious minorities to enter the wider public sphere, without discrimination in the workplace, in the media, in education, etc. It is no doubt that Muslims (as well as other believers or members of various religious communities in European Union, who want to live their religion and publicly demonstrate it) need to feel and to live as equal active citizens. However, through educational systems and other systemic solutions it is also necessary to clearly present historical causes and specifics involved in the implementation of secularisation in Europe as well as to defend political needs and necessity of religious pluralism. For more updated examples and recommendations, we strongly recommend to read the European Islamophobia reports, especially the sections on recommendations of good practices and their implementation into policies in different European countries (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2023).

#### Orientalist Discourse and the (Balkan) Muslims

Let us return to our initial research topic on the problem of Orientalism and the new racism that fuels Islamophobia in the Balkans, more specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Edward Said introduces the term Orientalism to designate a constructed prism through which the West gets acquainted with the East and dominates it. Orientalist discourse creates the image of the barbarian, uncivilised, primitive and irrational Other, portraying it as a passive object, which is – just like the Orient – fixed in its own Otherness; it is a passive, inactive, non-autonomous and unsovereign being (Said, 1978). If we reintroduce Sayyid's thought at this point, his understanding of racism comes as no surprise. According to him, , 'racialised bodies were never exclusively biological; they were marked at the same time as religion, culture, history, and territories were marked and used to group socially fabricated distinction between Europeanness and non-Europeanness. The idea that an individual can simply choose a different cultural context ignores the fact that individuals are formed by immersion into specific cultural contexts and that it is not possible to step outside all contexts. These cultural contexts are themselves products of overlapping networks of relations, and the boundaries of one context from another are never clear-cut" (Sayyid, 2010, 13).

Racism is therefore a consequence of the construction of collective identities that are dependent on special social features and contextualisation. As mentioned, Muslims cannot be reduced to only one monolithic or heterogeneous group or ethnic community. Another very problematic aspect appears when religious identification prevails over other forms of identification (e.g. ethnic, sexual, class-related, occupational, etc.). Such stereotyping and portraying of a monolithic Muslim community suits and is successfully practiced by Orientalist discourse and racism, with both being based on identity antagonism that makes a sharp distinction between "us" and "them". Islamophobia is part of such processes.

In the Balkans, Muslims were (and in some areas still are) associated with the Ottoman conquest of Europe. A very negative perception of Islam derives from the term *osmanli*, which means Turkish or Ottoman. The racist Orientalist discourse understands it as Oriental, backward. reactionary, treacherous, inferior and as something that needs to be changed, even exterminated and annihilated. It is very important to understand where such attitude comes from in order to be able to interpret local prejudices in former Yugoslavia (as well as in the wider region) that many Christians hold against Muslims. In the first years of the war in Bosnia, many observers and commentators depicted the conflict between Muslims and Christians as the clash between the "western" and "eastern" civilisations, having been inspired by Samuel Huntington's book The Clash of Civilisations (1996, 174–187). Huntington introduced the notion of "civilization identity" as something stable and unchanging. According to Said (2003, 71), Huntington has most probably borrowed the phrase "clash of civilisations" from Bernard Lewis's essay The Roots of Muslim Rage (Lewis, 1990), in which Lewis argues that Islam has never modernised itself nor separated church and state, and has been unable to understand other civilisations. Said also claims that Huntington has adopted Lewis's ideas of civilisations being monolithic, homogenous and desirous of a distinction between "us" and "them" (Said, 2003, 71) By employing metaphors distinguishing between "our" world, that is a normal, acceptable, domestic and logical world,

and the world of Islam presented as an antipode of all this, Huntington undoubtly uses Orientalist discourse, thus ignoring cultural diversity and complexity of Islamic societies and Muslim communities. In Said's opinion, both Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington are reductive authors: their definition of the Islamic civilisation is limited to the antiwestern sentiment, and their rhetoric is not only based on arguments stemming from the clash; they also generate such a clash (Said, 2003, 71).

The division to the "West" and "Islam" is a manipulation enabling the reduction of religions, cultures, ethnicities, etc., to ideologies that spring up particularly in times of deep insecurity (resulting from war, imperialism, migrations or some other sudden change (Said, 2003, 75). According to Ziauddin Sardar, the Western Huntingtonian fear of Islam is nothing but fear of diversity and plurality and the Western secularism is nothing more than a monolithic ideology that diminishes all diversity, all plurality, and focuses them on the singularity of the European vision. "It's humanism is not universal, but stops at the borders of Europe: it is buried in mass graves of the innocent people killed in Bosnia" (Sardar, 1995, 8). Therefore, it is of key importance to analyse the attitude that generates racist genocidal violence. This is the only way to understand how and on what basis collective memories are transmitted from one generation to another and how racist and/or Islamophobic discourses provoke conflicts in the region and beyond.

#### **Expulsion of the "Turk"**

If one looks deep enough into the collective historical memory in the south Slavic area, one can find a typical example of such (Serbian and also Montenegrin) attitude towards Islam and Bosnians in Petar II Petrović-Njegoš's poem, *The Mountain Wreath*. published in 1847. According to Mustafa Spahić, as early as 1703 when Danilo Sčepčević, the ruler and founding father of the Petrović dynasty, convened a meeting of family leaders, a platform for genocide was formed: "It is in the interest of the preservation of the Orthodox state that all Muslims be baptised, exiled or killed" (Spahić, 1996, 7). Such a decision was adopted in line with the motto "Find all *poturicas!*" (i.e. all those who became "Turks" or Muslims by rejecting or, more precisely, betraying their Christian religion). According to Spahić, stoked by nationalism, such ideology "culminated in Serbian and Montenegrin neo-Nazism and

Orthodox fundamentalism" (Spahić, 1996, 7). The hostility towards the "Turk" or Muslim that can be recognised in the south Slavic area is not unknown to Europe, as it was of key importance in Europe's formation as a political community. According to Tomaž Mastnak, it was the antagonism between Europe and Muslims that facilitated the shaping of European identity and encouraged the construction of the Muslim world as an antithesis of Western Christianity (Mastnak, 1993 16–32). Truth be told, European history witnessed a number of exposed "Others" who helped to shape and consolidate European identity. "Infidels" or "barbarians" were searched for and found not only beyond European borders but also among European ethnic and cultural minorities, be they Jewish or heretical.

Nevertheless, it is very likely that the hostility to Muslims played a crucial role in the formation of Europe as a socio-political entity: the perception of Europe as a political idea sprang up in particular after the fall of Constantinople resulting from the Ottoman conquest in 1453 (more: Cardini, 2003, 181). The idea of war against Ottomans eventually ended under the common denominator "the expulsion of the Turk from Europe" (Mastnak, 2003, 208). The fear of or hostility to Muslims overwhelms the European political imagination even centuries later when Turkish incursions no longer pose a real threat. By analysing the Bosnian war, Tone Bringa points out anti-Muslim and above anti-Turkish prejudices held by Europe: "The presence of Islam in Europe was understood as something that belongs to the past, as a historical remnant of the Ottoman Empire [...] They thought of Islam as a foreign body on the European soil which needs to be (or rather needed to be) eliminated by defeating the Ottomans" (2002, 25). European Muslims living in the Balkans were associated with Ottoman conquests of Europe and perceived as an anachronism. According to Bringa, the very word Muslim brought up such associations as "fundamentalism," "violence," "backwardness" and "hostility to Christians," which was misused by the Serbian propaganda according to which Bosnian Muslims were Turkish conquerors of land that did not belong to them (Bringa, 2002, 26).

It is such ideas that are used as a source of national mythologies of south Slavic nations. In order to encapsulate them, Michael Sells (1996) has coined the term Christoslavism. Their intertwined system of myths portrays Slavic Muslims as the betrayers of Christ's faith (even as his killers – such an idea is related to the Battle of Kosovo in which

Prince Lazar takes over the role of Christ, which is discussed further below) and their own nation. The Christoslavic mythology is based on at least two closely intertwined myths formed in the 19th century. The first ascribes the conversion to the Muslim religion to fear and greed (introducing the character of a "poturica"), the second tries to present the total depravity of Ottoman authority (introducing the character of an evil Turk). It seems that such mythology resonates with Harry Norris, who argues that the "Serbian" attack on Islam was a result of the fact that Slavic Muslims, whom he sees as poturicas, had voluntarily betrayed their nation and religion (Norris, 1993, 295-297). Needless to say, the Ottoman history and its rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina are not only very rich but also extremely complicated. In 1463, Bosnia became the westernmost Ottoman province, called "Bosansko Krajište." The province was granted the status of ejalet, a constituent part or administrative unit of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman rule (1463– 1878) brought about a cultural and religious transformation, which led to changes in social and cultural values and to the formation of cultural patterns that shaped a special ethnic identity. According to Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, what makes Bosnia and Herzegovina special in terms of socio-cultural characteristics is the Bosnian Church that even before Islamisation of the area formed its religious structure independently from the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity (Mahmutčehajić, 2000, 183-190; also: Mulalić, 2014; Fine, 2002; Velikonja, 1998). Having become part of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina underwent gradual Islamisation, which was initially only formal and entailed the acceptance of Muslim names. There are differences of opinion whether Islamisation was facilitated by economic benefits in the form of lower taxation granted to farmers, merchants and others. Harry Norris (Norris, 1993) believes that the major reason of conversion to Islam was syncretism: vernacular Christianity, which had been present in the region before Islamisation, was similar to new, popular Islam, with both of them being different from religious "orthodoxy" of Catholicism and/or the Orthodox Church. "Together with Islam, the Ottomans introduced new cultural and spiritual opportunities to Bosnia," argues Muhidin Mulalić (2014, 56).

For many centuries, Bosnia was regarded as a model of religious tolerance in Europe, mostly owing to different forms of syncretism and the fusion of or passing (i.e. converting or reconverting) between various religions. However, the Ottoman period in Bosnia and Herzegovina should not be romanticised. On the basis of conversations with the local population, as well as on the basis of monitoring political rhetoric and discourses, there are differences of interpretation: while Muslims living there mostly see Ottoman period as the "golden age" of Bosnia and Herzego-vina during which their religious identity was born, the local Christian population mostly perceives it as a period of Turkish occupation. In the latter case we must certainly take into consideration the influences of modern nationalist rhetoric and the intrusion of socalled religious mythology. The negative image of the "Turk" sank deeply into the collective memory of especially Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is closely associated with the bitter memory of their defeat in the Battle of Kosovo. With the Serbian collective memory being focused on the defeat, the "Turk" became a synonym for the enemy posing a threat to the Serbian nation. The Battle of Kosovo took place on 15 June 1389 between the army led by the Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and the invading army of the Ottoman Empire commanded by the Sultan Murad Hüdavendigâr. Both commanders lost their lives. In the aftermath of the defeat, Serbs became Ottoman vassals. This shared memory of the defeat in the Battle of Kosovo formed the so-called victimized identity of Serbs, who view their shared future in Bosnia and Herzegovina with fear and distrust (Sells, 1996, 2002). Together with other social factors, the fear that the "Battle of Kosovo" could be repeated created conditions for a new search for ,'poturice" - those people whom the collective memory sees as Christians who converted to Islam and betrayed the Slavic identity.

Such conditions were indeed created in the recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, the words of the general of Bosnian Serbs, Radko Mladić, were that "the time has come to take revenge on the Turks in this region" (The Mladic Files, 1995). In the following days, Srebrenica witnessed the genocide of 8372 Bosniaks (Nuhanović, 2007). Within the Serbian collective memory, the searching for "poturice", those Christians who converted to Islam and betrayal the Slavic identity, is still very much present even today. Because of this dormant victimized identity of Kosovo defeat (among others), political moves and discourses must be thoughtful and sensitive. Turkish discourse in particular should be especially attentive, since much of the standpoints against Turkey originate from deep-rooted prejudices.

## Contemporary Debate on Neo-Ottomanism and Islamophobic network in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Various definitions accompany the term Neo-Ottomanism, from those that explain the Turkish longing and nostalgia for the great Ottoman Empire with their actions in the expansion of soft-power and integration mainly on the basis of cultural heritage, to harsher definitions in the sense of a Turkish neo-colonial project with clear political goals. As Uğurekinci notes, "some Islamic and conservative circles in Turkey do believe that under Ottoman rule the Balkans lived in peace for centuries and see the Ottoman past as a model for bringing perpetual peace and tranquility to the region" (Uğurekinci 2013, 25-26). It is possible to predict that many Bosniaks or Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed the Turkish spread of soft power at least with sympathy and affection. Perhaps it is more appropriate to start by simply presenting the population census in Bosnia and Herzegovina without drawing conclusions about their religious affiliation or aspiration. The category 'Muslim' was introduced in the 1961 Population Census and was at first intended primarily for those inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina who did not want to describe themselves either as Croats or Serbs and whose national identity was based on their religion; but it was soon adopted by the Muslims from Sandžak as well. The category 'Muslim' was abolished with the passing of the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as this states that its constituent peoples are Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Despite the introduction of the term Bosniak, the category 'Muslim' still appears in census results, but in an analysis the two categories should not be merged as the Muslims originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina now declare themselves as Bosniaks, while those from Sandžak still declare themselves as 'Muslims.' Their national identity is based primarily on religion, Islam, as they consider themselves neither Serbs nor Montenegrins. According to the last census conducted in 2013, , '50.11% (1,769,592) of Bosnia and Herzegovina's inhabitants declared themselves to be Bosniaks (out of a total population of 3,531,159)" (Karčić, 2022, 15).

It is the fear of Turkiye's political influence that worries the Serb and Croat population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although some Bosniak circles in Bosnia and Herzegovina are also not in favor of the expansion and consolidation of power. As an example, after the AKP or Justice and Development Party (In Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkınma

Partisi) won the election, Turkiye's new foreign policy was designed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, from 2009 Turkiye's Minister of Foreign Affairs. As presented by Mitrović, for Davutoğlu bringing back the Ottoman heritage, historical and cultural affinities, does not conceptualize an imperialistic motives of hegemonic role of Turkiye, but it is "relevant due to possibility to build multidirectional and multidimensional foreign policy, for example to develop an active and rhythmic diplomacy as a main mediator and facilitator with the goal of establishing security and stability in bordering regions" (Mitrović 2014, 35). Yet Davutoğlu's speech at the opening ceremony of the conference "Ottoman legacy and Balkan Muslim Communities today" conducted in Sarajevo in October 2009 became widely used in the literature for underlining the change in the Turkive's foreign policy identity and for confirming Neo-Ottomanist stances of AKP government (Tanasković 2011, Türbedar 2011). In the speech Davutoğlu said "Sarajevo is ours" and "İstanbul is yours," and that "the Ottoman centuries in the Balkans are a successful story that needs to be renewed." However, these words should be contextualised, "because Davutoğlu also stressed that he does not mean that there should be a return to the Ottoman state. He mostly alludes to the common Ottoman heritage." (Somun 2011, 38) For Davutoğlu, as analyzed by Mitrović, it was only during the Ottoman time that Balkans had a central role in the world's politics and that Ottoman experience can be a positive example for the establishment of the inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations in the region. Yet, as Mitrović emphasised, "he is not precise about the methods and models to achieve this goal" (Mitrović 2014, 46). And it is precisely in this lack of clear methods and implementations of the old models of empire on new bases that the problem arises.

Although the majority of Bosniaks today support Turkiye's evergrowing influence in the country, there are many who are emphasising the need to preserve Bosnia-Herzegovina's own identity. In the round table discussion, broadcasted by Bosnian national television TV1 on 14 May 2015 with the title "Šta su za Bosnu i Hercegovinu Turska i Rusija" /"What is the meaning of Turkey and Russia for Bosnia and Herzegovina?" (TV1 2015), the problem of Turkish indoctrination was exposed. 24 April 2015 was the "Feast of Children", traditionally celebrated in Turkiye. Turkiye paid 250.000 Bosnian marks to cover participation of 500 children from Bosnian school at the celebration

in Zenica town. Participation of school-children to attend the event was mandatory. They got Turkish books and were forced to wave with Turkish flags. One of the participants at the roundtable discussion, Professor Kazaz Enver from the Faculty of Arts in Sarajevo, found this indoctrination scandalous. Another participant Hajrudin Somun, Bosnian diplomat and journalist, mentioned that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have unified internal policy and that is the reason behind municipal autonomy to cooperate freely with Turkish municipalities. Discussants were of the opinion that the perception of Turkiye in Bosnia and Herzegovina is mainly "osmanophilic" and that sentiments towards Turkiye are very strong among those inhabitants who are expecting from Turkive to help them in the case of turmoil. Somun mentioned the wish for Turkiye to help and support schools in the rural areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop the school curriculum, with the emphasis on Bosnia and Herzegovina's heritage and tradition. Instead Turkiye is financing ultra-modern colleges in Sarajevo, investing in newspapers, internet portals, etc. Yet another participant of the roundtable discussion, Sead Turčalo, Assistant Professor in Geopolitics and International Security for Faculty of Political Sciences, find the promotion of Turkish culture in the Balkans positive, as long as indoctrination is not taking place.

However, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serb and Croat populations (and other religious groups) find the Turkish interpretation of a common historical and socio-cultural ties in the Bosnia and Herzegovina uncomfortable. The memory does not evoke the same positive sentiments, since Christian nations of the Balkans perceive the Ottoman reign as a period of slavery. The leader of the Serbian Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska) Milorad Dodik accused Turkiye of having a "hidden agenda" for the Balkans. He fears that Turkiye is trying to turn Bosna and Hercegovina into a Bosniak state and undermine the autonomy of the Republika of Srpska (Strbac 2010). He found a huge support in the leading Serbian Orientalist Darko Tanasković, a Yugoslav ambassador in Ankara from 1995 to 1999, one of leading anti-Islamists in the region, who was able to influence the official Serbian policy while serving as advisor to the president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Darko Tanasković is very critical towards Turkiye's Balkan policy. In his book entitled Neoosmanizam – Povratak Turske na Balkan ("Neo-Ottomanism –

The Return of Turkey to the Balkans") he claims that Turkiye's actual foreign policy is "Neo-Ottomanism" (Yeni Osmanlılık), driven by Islamism, Turkism imperialism and Ottoman nostalgia. According to Marić, the book was published in 2010 in Banja Luka, the capital city of the Bosnian Serbs, where he promoted it at a conference on "Neo-Ottomanism and Republika Srpska." Under the title "Turska traži nove janičare/ Turkey searches for new janissaries," Belgrade's newspaper Politika wrote that the Bosnian Serb leading politician, Milorad Dodik, had honoured the event and told them that Turkey "exclusively supports Bosniak-Muslim interests" and that "Turkey wants to make an Islamic state out of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Marić 2010). A Serbian activist for human rights Sonia Biserko cited Tanašković in her study on Islamic fundamentalism. She exposed negative stereotypes about Muslims as a "foreign, inferior and dangerous element" in the Balkans were disseminated. In her opinion Tanašković's interpretation of the Bosnian Muslims' appeal to Turkiye for help as 'their furtive return to the oldtime position of *poturice* (converts from Christianity to Islam)': for the Serbs poturice were "worse than Turks," and "to threaten the Serbs with Turks is even worse and more ominous than to threaten them with Germans." (Biserko in: Somun 2011, 35).

In the latest report on Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hikmet Karčić divides central figures in spreading Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina into three categories: 1. academic and semiacademic circles in Serbia and Republika Srpska, most notably Serbian "experts" on security, terrorism, and Islam; 2. high-ranking officials from the Serb Orthodox Church; 3. politicians and includes local Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. (Karčić, 2023, 122). Among the many names listed in his latest report, Karčić singles out Milan Tegeltija, advisor to Milorad Dodik, already mentioned Bosnian Serb leading polititian. In an incident on November 4, 2022, Tegeltija was "mocking Bosnia's ambitions to join the European Union, telling Bosniaks that no one in Europe will forget that Bosniaks are Muslims, even if Bosniaks forget it." (Ibid, 122). Even in the latest report on Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, provocative statements about Muslims by politicians continue. They are using the familiar template of the Muslim threat, warning against terrorism and radicalisation, emphasising Islamist extremists recruiting in Bosnia. These kinds of threats are connected with ever-new conflict hotspots in the world (Iraq, Syria, Gaza, etc.). The problem that needs to be tackled is the fact that the fervent rhetoric has not been contextualized and that it exploits religious illiteracy, orientalist discourse and the new racism to sow hatred on nationalistic grounds. An example is the 27th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, where Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Serbian politicians tried to "undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina with nationalist rhetoric" (Karčić, 2023, 120).

#### Conclusion

At the core of Islamophobia lies the "civilisational threat" from Islam, whose alleged barbarian and undemocratic nature is thought to endanger European democracy, secularisation and modernity. As a result, Islamophobia maintains a "violent hierarchy," as Sayyid puts it, between the notions of the West (and everything that it represents) and Islam (and everything that it stands for) (Sayyid, 2010, 16). Such colonial hierarchy has much in common with the hierarchy that constitutes racism itself, i.e. the distinction between "Europeanness" and "non-Europeanness," or between modernity and backwardness. Such dynamics of identity antagonism, which establishes imaginary boundaries between subjects, results from a complex mental process that involves the identification and stigmatisation of the Other and wants to change or even to destroy the Other. The form of "elimination" of the Other depends on cultural specifics and, fortunately, only rarely is turned into action that requires a combination of complex social circumstances and political measures. Nevertheless, there always exists the possibility of physical "cleansing" as we could observe in relation to Islam and Muslims during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After digging deeply into the collective memory of all three constitutive nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the disclosure of the ambivalent image of the "Turk", which has shaped the historical thinking, appears. This negative presentation of the "Turk", closely related to the bitter memory of defeat in the battle of Kosovo (among others), is a constant threat for renewal of the Serbian victimised identity. Since the idea of the "Turk" as an "arch-enemy" is constantly (consciously or unconsciously) present in the imagination among Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serbs, political moves and discourses must be thoughtful and sensitive. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to (re)shape its common socio-cultural models by political and religious institutions, cultural organisations, civil society and other decision makers, that is why the respect and preservation of Bosnia-Herzegovina's multi-ethnic and multi-religious character is as much important. Unfortunately,

the smouldering cauldron of the Bosnian tragedy has not been extinguished and is waiting for new sparks that could easily rekindle the fire of interethnic and interreligious dimensions, which Bosnia and Herzegovina had witnessed in the bloody war of the 1990s. Therefore, it is important that Islamophobia is systematically prevented by the state, civil societies and political initiatives.

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- (i) direct quotation, write as 30:36
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- (i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the hadīth number)
- (ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

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- (i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). Sahīh al-Bukhārī. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- (ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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