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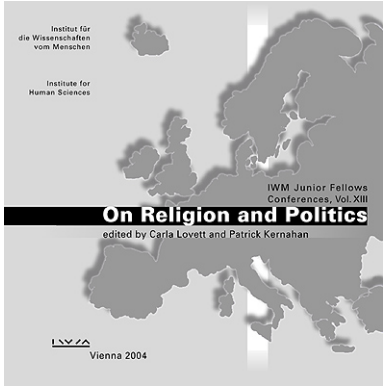


# Considering the Problem of Religion and Collective Identity: Catholicism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia

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*Summary:*

The origins of collectivistic religions in a number of former communist countries have commonly been traced to the post-communist revival of nationalism. Contrasting the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, I will argue that the elucidation of the collectivistic features of religion in some ex-communist societies may not be attained by addressing their similarities but rather their differences; specifically, by asking *why* collectivistic traits characterize religions in some and not in all post-communist societies.

The latter demands a shift in perspective – a transfer of analytical focus from the relationship between nationalism and religion, to the place of *religion* in the general problem of collective identification.

Establishing religion at the center of the study of collective identity has important theoretical and methodological implications. First, it intimates that in an his-

torical context one may appreciate why religion has remained important with regard to nationalism only by locating the role of religion in collective identification prior to the period of national awakenings in the nineteenth century. Second, this line of analysis requires the conceptualization of religion as a phenomenon that did and may still exist as a central element of collective identities. Third, such an historical and conceptual designation of the link between religion and collective identities dictates the employment of both historical and structural analysis and the consideration of religion both on the symbolic and institutional level.

On the basis of these propositions, I will outline the agenda for a further study of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. I will maintain that the quest for the causes of collectivistic/non-collectivistic Catholicism in three societies must be structured around the role of the Catholic Church *and* the place of Catholicism in the *creation* and *recreation* of ideas of collective identities among the Slavs who lived in Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian lands. Such an approach will not only clarify why the decline of public and collective Catholicism in these three societies has or has not happened, but it might also serve as a fruitful introduction for a more comparative perspective on religion in post-communist societies and for expanding the conceptual considerations of religion in general.

## *I. Introduction*

For the longest part of human history religion was the very essence of people's identities. Represented by and organized around religious elites and institutions, religion shaped people's individual and group selves, dominated people's private and public existence, and was pivotal for their perception of salvation and view of social life.

The secularizing effects of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment as two important carriers of modernization, and the rise of national ideologies in the nineteenth century, removed religion and religious institutions from the center of collective and public life. Modernity extolled reason and posited the perfectibility of human kind above faith and transcendental ideas of salvation, aiming at substituting religion with national ideologies.

Modernity's ideals of separation between church and state, religion and social life, faith and reason, as embodied in the American and French revolutions became the supreme and universal model of social organization. The secularization of the Western hemisphere after the Westphalian peace in 1648 seemed so convincing that as late as the second half of the twentieth century scholarly conceptualization of

religion was dominated by secularization theory, which had anticipated a full retreat of religion from the public discourse.

At the beginning of the third millennium the limits of secularization theory were are than evident. From South Asia, East Asia, and Middle East, to Eastern Europe and South and North America, both in traditional *and* in modern societies, students of religion identify the stubborn presence of religious values, beliefs and institutions in the public sphere.[1] The worldwide religious picture reveals that the secularizing waves of modernity did not produce only 'secularized minds,'[2] secularized societies and private religiosity, but their antithesis as well. Moreover, it is clear that the success of national ideologies as a main force for collective integration has not consumed the collective and public power of religion. In some societies religion has become closely intertwined with national cultural and political programs and together with national ideologies remains at the heart of people's collective self-understanding.

The collectivistic trait of religion is particularly visible in some former communist societies. The overriding feature of religious scenes in post-communist Poland, Russia, Serbia, or in Bosnia and Croatia is not the arrival of the new 'alternative' forms of religiosity,[3] but the strength and adaptability of the traditional, 'indigenous,' religions and religious institutions as a dominant mode of collective identifi-

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1 Adam Seligman writes: "…the progress of secularization…is more than called into doubt by contemporary events. More than anyone else, David Martin's work (1991) has documented the spread of evangelical Protestantism, most markedly in Latin America but also in South East Asia, Korea, China, Africa, and increasingly in Eastern Europe…there may well be many comparative cases after all. The point is that we are witnessing a major reorientation of belief structures that puts the lie to any simple belief in the march of secularization…" (http://www.ifbosna.org.ba/engleski/publikacije/bosnae/11-01/index.html).
On the secularization thesis, see Peter Berger's article "Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty" (1998), David Martin's *Tongues of Fire* (1991), as well as Stephen Warner's "Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," (1993), and Jeffrey K. Hadden's "Religion and the Quest for Meaning and Order: Old Paradigms, New Realities" (1995).

2 As historian Henry Chadwick points out, the Enlightenment that challenged the sacredness of religious authorities was the Enlightenment "of the few," while "[s]ecularization [wa]s of the many" (Chadwick 1975, 9).

3 See, for instance, article on alternative religiosity in Croatia by Crpic and Mardesic, where the authors point out that some elements of alternative religiosity are being more and more accepted by the younger generation in Croatia but are on the low side of the European average (1998, 603). Eileen Barker's comparative studies of new religious movements in the former communist societies demonstrate that the traditional religious institutions are understood as directly opposed to the newly arrived religious movements, and within the development of the 'we' vs. 'them' discourse (see Barker 1999, 148-149).

cation. Unfortunately, most studies of religion in the ex-communist countries have been explaining such religious phenomena in terms of the structural and cultural heritage of communism, tracing the causes of the religions' collectivistic features to the (post-communist) revival of nationalism. As a consequence, the focus on the collective and public character of religion in countries that underwent communist rule has offered general truths rather than generalizable concepts. To advance towards more analytical insight it is not sufficient to state that religion is and has been persistent as a collective and public social phenomenon in some societies, or that religion and religious institutions have been important in former communist societies. In order to reach any more systematic understanding of the character of religion in the modern world, and in the former communist world in particular, one needs to move beyond recognition that religion has maintained its public and collective features – one needs to ask *why* it is so.

## *II. The Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia: Diversity versus Similarity*

The comparison of the Catholic Church Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia is an ideal comparative framework for raising the "why" questions about the problem of collectivistic religions in former communist societies. On the one hand, the regions in which the Bosnian,[4] Croatian and Slovenian Catholic Church are situated have always been different – politically, culturally and economically. Slavs in these areas have changed rulers multiple times, and witnessed numerous modifications of territorial borders and civilizations.[5] Dwelling on the periphery of the Old World yet at the very heart of its dramatic political and cultural transformations, Slavs in Bosnian, Croatian, and Slovenian lands developed their own political ideas and ideologies, homogenous (Croatia and Slovenia) and heterogeneous (Bosnia and Herzegovina) religious landscapes, and complex cultural identities.

On the other hand, these three societies also existed together, or next to each other, connected and disconnected at the same time, and in different geo-political forms and shapes. Besides facing their own individual historical destinies they shared common ones. Thus, in 1527, the northern Croatian lands began to partake

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4 For the purpose of clarity in my prose, when I speak about Bosnia and Herzegovina I will use only the term 'Bosnia.' The only exception will be made when I want to emphasize the difference between Bosnia proper and Herzegovina with regard to the problem of Catholicism and collective identity.

5 As Ivo Banac writes, "[t]he history of the Balkans is the history of migrations – not just of peoples, but of lands…" (1992, 33).

in the same political entity with the Slovenian lands when the former joined the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1879 Bosnia became a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with the occupation (and later annexation) of the Bosnian territory. Even Ottoman rule in Bosnia did not interrupt Bosnian cultural and economic interactions with its (particularly Catholic) neighbors.[6] The complex picture of diverse and similar historical experiences, cultural expressions, and institutional heritage of the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian lands – including the differences and similarities in the place and meaning of the Catholic Church – was clearly manifested between 1918 and 1991, when Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia were constitutive of the Yugoslav monarchy (1918-1941) and of communist Yugoslavia (1945-1991).

Despite this long history and complex interplay of 'diverse' and 'similar' in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian cases, the breakdown of Yugoslav communism in 1989 at first unveiled only the common threads in the histories of the three societies. The liberalization of religious life in Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian society also had identical signifiers. First, in all three cases the Catholic Church underwent a transition from the private sphere into the public sphere – a process I identify as a 'deprivatization of religion.'[7] Second, the Catholic Church in each of the studied

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6 On the one hand, the interactions existed because of the connections between the Franciscans in Bosnia and the rest of the Catholic world. On the other hand, the Ottomans were interested in trade and, for instance, granted Dubrovnik special status, keeping their trade relations going whenever possible.

7 Slovenia was the first republic in the former Yugoslavia in which the communists permitted the Church to enter the public realm. Ljubljana's Archbishop Sustar, a Slovene who spent many years abroad and came back primarily for the purpose of negotiating the Church's position in Slovenia, was the first Church episcopal figure in the postwar period "to be allowed to wish his flock a Merry Christmas over public radio" (Ramet 1996, 157). This happened in December 1996. Two years later the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana was the first theological institution in the former Yugoslavia to be incorporated into a public university.
The Catholic Church in Bosnia entered the public scene by issuing documents that discussed the place of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Yugoslav federation in 1990, and in particular the following year, at the time of the first post-War II democratic elections, by sending its representatives to instruct the priests and Bosnian Catholics how to act in the election process. For the Croatian Catholic Church freedom of public activity came with the change of the Croatian constitution in 1990, which proclaimed that the "[f]reedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religion and other convictions shall be guaranteed" (www.vlada.hr/dokumenti/ustav.htm), repudiating therefore the communists' designation of religion as a private matter. The first public celebration of Christmas happened in 1989.
The 'deprivatizaiton of religion' I describe here is not identical to 'deprivatization of religion' as it is mentioned in Jose Casanova's book on *Public Religions in the Modern World*. While I speak of the revolutionary process of transition from the private into the public sphere in the context of the break-up of the communist regime, Casanova addresses deprivatization as the constant but, particularly in the 1980s, strong refusal of religious institutions "to be restricted

societies used its public voice to affirm the ideas of collective identity of the Bosnian Croats, Croatian Croats, and Slovenes respectively – the action through which Church representatives espoused the idea of the intimate link between Catholicism and national identity.

Such a high correspondence in the changes of the religious scene in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian societies was both *a reaction to* and *the legacy of* communism. When the representatives of the Catholic Church in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia asserted themselves as representatives of collective identities, they were reacting against their marginalized position in communist Yugoslavia while also affirming the Church's role as an advocate of collectivities, religious and national, which were (paradoxically) institutionalized during the communist period. The origins of such a role for the Church were in the Yugoslav constitution of 1963. This document defined religion as an exclusively private affair, the stipulation ideologically grounded in the Marxist anti-religious stance, and in the Yugoslav anti-nationalistic policy that opposed the link between Catholicism and nationalism.

The objective of the constitution of 1963 was to remove religion from public life and, ultimately, to root it out. However, the document created the symbolic and institutional infrastructure in which the Catholic Church preserved its presence (and dominance) in the people's life, because it perpetuated and fortified the collectivistic trait of the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian Catholicism. The described developments were possible for two major reasons. Firstly, the confession of faith for most members of the Catholic Church in the post-Second World War Yugoslavia meant a collective rather than individual identification. Secondly, since the Catholic Church was forced to disappear from the sphere of politics, it established and maintained itself in the sphere of private life. Thus, by prohibiting the public nature of Catholicism and the Catholic Church the constitution of 1963 gave the Church direct access to private family life, which together with the parish became the main unit of institutional survival of Catholicism. The consequence was that the Catholic Church – in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia, each society with a different historical bequest – became the main institutional embodiment of the *communities'* religious and national *sentiments* in the *private sphere* of life.[8]

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to the private sphere of religious traditions as different as Judaism and Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism, in all 'three worlds of development'" (Casanova 1994, 6).

8 It must be added here that during the communist rule in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia some individuals partook in the life of the Catholic Church because that was the only non-communist institution and the one that did not allow the communists to control it. In other words, sometimes even the humanistically oriented intellectuals stood by the Church because

The idiosyncratic character of private religion in communist Yugoslavia cannot be overemphasized because it had radically different historical sources, ideological justifications, and outcomes from the private religiosity of the Western European world. The privatization of religion in Western Europe happened as a response to the drama of religious wars, and the exclusion of religion from the public sphere was a way to protect societies from religious disagreements as well as prevent the exclusive political power of any particular religious group.[9] In the centuries of interplay between the philosophical and theological, political and socio-economic processes, the Western European way of the privatization of religion resulted in the utmost individualization of religion.[10]

Quite the reverse, the privatization of religion in former Yugoslavia was enforced by the communist anti-nationalistic ideology, which together with the historical heritage of the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian societies instituted collectivism – the common denominator of public religion – in the sphere of the believers' private religiosity. In the context of the anti-nationalist and anti-religious Yugoslav regime, the private sphere of believers was not dominated by autonomous individual agencies but rather swallowed up by the Catholic Church, whose symbolic and institutional existence became identified first and foremost with national groups. Contrary to the Western experience with the privatization of religion, and hence, its association with the *individual* as its main agent, the sphere of private religiosity in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian societies became connected with the *collective* as its dominant carrier.

The identification of the unique legacy of the Yugoslav model of the privatization of religion – the collectivistic outlook of Catholicism in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia – is relevant for this study because it locates the source of similarities in the role of religion in the post-communist Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia, and the consequences of that commonality – collectivistic Catholicism. More specifically, the common communist episode in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian histories sheds

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of their opposition to the communist regime, and because of their principled support for religious freedom.

9 Gradually, some religious groups came to an understanding that the separation of church and state was a way to preserve religion from its political misuse, as well as a good method to protect religion's metaphysical purpose.

10 The indicator of this individualization of religion in Europe, one of the elements of secularization processes well elaborated by Jose Casanova, is the fact that contemporary Europeans more and more disassociate their religious sentiments from religious institutions, see Casanova's *Public Religions* (1994).

light on the shared roots of the affirmation of religion and nationalism as two aspects of collective identities at the core of the Church's agenda.

However, both the heritage of communism, and the revolutionary reaction to it, lose their explanatory power in the face of the differences among Catholicism and the Catholic Church in the three societies, as traced after the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence in 1992.[11] Subsequent to the enthusiastic and widespread liberalization of social life after 1989 that revived a wide range of ideas and identities previously suppressed during the communist period, the Slovenian Catholic Church has been gradually pushed to the margins of public life, and unsuccessful in promoting Catholicism as the dominant aspect of a Slovenian collective identity. In contrast, the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Croatia – with believers predominantly Croatian by nationality – has continued to be very influential in advocating the idea that religion and nationality are two inseparable elements of the Croatian collective self-understanding.

The Bosnian and Croatian Catholic Churches also differed from one another. The representatives of the Croatian Catholic Church led by the diocesan elite perceived the realization of Croatian Catholicism within a politically independent Croatian state. The leadership of the Bosnian Catholic Church, on the other hand, with the central nature of the Bosnian Franciscan order, endorsed the idea that Bosnian Catholics were not only Croatian but Bosnian as well, envisioning the realization of Bosnian Catholics' identity within Bosnia and Herzegovina as a social and political entity.[12]

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11 In addition to the general emphasis on the revolutionary, that is, reaction-oriented changes in the former communist societies that most who study them emphasize, in the case of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia it was this indigenous Yugoslav model of privatization which underlined the commonalities and shared legacies, consequently overlooking the differences in the internal social structures of the Bosnian, Croatian, and Slovenian societies as well as the differences in the Catholic Church and its expressions of Catholicism.

12 Different interpretations and evaluations of the Church leadership's political engagement in the Bosnian society have appeared in the last few years. It is crucial to distinguish between those analyses that, on the one hand, identify the whole hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina as pro-Croatian and anti-Bosnian (in the sense that they are more turned towards the Croatian political world than towards the Bosnian), and, on the other hand, those who locate such an orientation primarily or only among the Herzegovinian clergy. My analysis belongs in the latter. Since the purpose of this text is limited, I will constrain my discussion of the latter approach to one remark – the role of the Catholic Church in the referendum on Bosnian independence in 1992.
The outcome of this referendum would not have been decisively in favor of the political sovereignty of Bosnia without the votes of the Bosnian Croats/Catholics, which were openly encouraged by the Bosnian Catholic Church leadership in the document "With Referendum We Decide About Bosnia and Herzegovina as Our Homeland." In this document the bishops

One could argue that the public presence of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Croatia, manifested in the affirmation of the collective/national as a dominant social value, and the failure of the Slovenian Catholic Church to have the same role and influence, was shaped by the conditions of the wars in Bosnia and Croatia and the mainly peaceful transition from communism to democracy in Slovenia. According to this argument, the group identity of Slovenian Catholics was a "safe," politically affirmed value, while the collective identities of the Bosnian Catholics and Croatian Catholics were threatened by their situations of conflict.

However, the context of wars in Bosnia and Croatia does not explain the continued relevance of the Church's public presence after the wars were over. Neither previous nor current political situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina can clarify why – despite and against the dominant political faction of these Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina who reject the Bosnian orientation – the majority of the Bosnian Catholic Church leadership, and particularly the members of the Franciscan province Silver Bosnia, insist on the Bosnian facet of the identity of the Bosnian Croats.

Political events and political analysis also cannot explain why only 4.4% of the Slovenes trust the Church (and 41.3% have no trust in the Church at all),[13] and 75% of the Croatian population has more confidence in the Catholic Church than any other authority in society,[14] while both societies are predominantly Catholic.[15]

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of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with the exception of one from the Herzegovinian region, whose specific position on this issue I just mentioned) say: "Our past and our common future encourage us to stay here ... Because of that, with other peoples of Herzeg-Bosnia [the terms sometimes used for Bosnia and Herzegovina], we want to be the witnesses of the Croatian spiritual heritage, nurturing our identity and sharing with other citizens responsibility for our common homeland of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (see Zovkic 1996, 111).

13 See the results of survey done by Tos and others (1997) referred to in Marjan Smrke's text on "Trust in the Church and Clergy in Slovenia": "The level of trust is low, even in comparison to the levels of trust displayed in the majority of other institutions (including schools, the government, family and the president…The level of trust is also low in comparison with other countries. Worse evaluations of the Church and clergy …were given only in three out of the twenty-seven other countries which had been similarly surveyed…" (in Smrke, author's copy, 322-323).

14 See interview with the theologian and historian Anna Maria Gruenfelder in *Slobodna Dalmacija*, August 25, 2001.

15 While the percentage of Catholics in Slovenia is in principle around 70% of the total population, the number of Catholics in the Croatian society oscillated between 1989, when 74% of Croatian citizens identified themselves as Catholic, to 1996, when 90% said they were Catholic (see Marinovic-Jerolimov 1999, 191-192). These changes in the Croatian context must be understood within the post-communist (and war) discourse, which made Catholicism politically desirable and preferable. However, the increase was clearly politically conditioned and as such it may vary in the near future.

The differences in the level of authority that the Catholic leaders managed to maintain in Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia, the dissimilar success with which they managed to affirm the nationalist-religious link, the divergence in *the types of collective* they advocate – none of that can be explained by the communist legacy of national Catholicism or by the transition from communism that causes "re-communization" and "re-traditionalization" of society due to the fall of one totalitarian ideology.[16] The relationship between the public character of religion and its salience for group identities on the one hand, and the centrality of the Church and the way in which *contemporary* Bosnian Croats, Croatian Croats, and Slovenes understand themselves on the other hand, actually raises the questions of *why* and *how* Catholicism has remained relevant in some and not in all studied societies, for some and not all peoples?

The answer to those questions cannot be gained through the description of the similarities among three societies but in an analysis of their distinctiveness[17] – the examination of the unique histories of the Catholic Church and of Catholicism in the three societies, shaped through the totality of their historical and structural existence.

The proposed approach to the problem of Catholicism, to the public authority of Catholic Church, and to collective identities contains important analytical and methodological propositions. First, it suggests that in order to appreciate the foundations of the collectivistic features of Catholicism, its relation to national *and* to other aspects of collective identity (as evident in the Bosnian case), the examination should not be concentrated on nationalism but on Catholicism and the Catholic Church with regard to collective identities within the greater historical context.

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Most importantly for this discussion, the fluctuations in the number of the Catholic population in Croatia does not change the main premise of the comparison between the Slovenian and Croatian cases, that is, the fact that they are *both predominantly* Catholic societies.

16 For that type of explanation see, for instance, Vrcan (2001, 64-66). As it was suggested above, such post-communist phenomena may explain similarities but not the differences and nuances in the different collective identities in the three cases.

17 The institutional and symbolic aspects of these differences came to light only after the first few years and the earliest phase of transition from communism. The fact that older, 'pre-revolutionary' modes of social organization reassert themselves after the revolution is over has already been shown in comparative sociological studies. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt thus writes that the structuring of the new political systems after World War II witnessed the same process: "after the initial phase of independence within many of the new states whose politics were greatly shaped by 'Western-ideological' political models, there emerged a new phase in which older, traditional political modes or models tended to assert themselves" (Eisenstadt 1973, 46).

Second, due to the focus on diverse social, economic and political developments, the approach to Catholicism in these three societies clearly advocates the contextualization of the study beyond the twentieth century, that is, beyond the scope of the shared histories of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia. One possible contextualization, which has been either ascribed to or recommended for this study from its offset, is the analysis of the place of Catholicism in structuring different national ideologies from the nineteenth century on. The historical view I advocate is much broader, for several reasons.

First, the observation of the collectivistic features of the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian Catholicism *through* the prism of nationalism would be conceptually and empirically mistaken. It would be *a priori* and would wrongly take away the symbolic and institutional agency of religion by placing religion in a dependent position with regards to nationalism. Furthermore, all other aspects of collective identity – such as, for instance, the territorial/cultural/regional/civilizational aspect of collective identity in the case of the Bosnian Catholics/Croats – would also be neglected and could not be accounted for. Ignoring the institutional and symbolic potential of religion and of other elements of collective identity in the identification processes would, in consequence, lead towards the evolutionary consideration of nationalism as a form of collective identity – the identity that won *over* all other forms of collective identities. Such an approach would not explain why national ideologies as a main force of collective integration after the nineteenth century have not consumed the collective and public power of religion in some (of the three studied) societies.

For all the reasons mentioned above, the contextualization of the study of Catholicism and collective identity needs to surpass the nineteenth-century's national revolutions. The approach to the problem of the contemporary Church's authority (or the lack of it) necessitates *both* historical and structural levels of analysis, with the former tracking the changes in the Church's position and the importance of Catholicism in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian regions over the centuries, and the latter identifying the continuities in that role. It will be argued below that the most optimal way to do so is with historical sociology.

Furthermore, the answer to the question why and how the Catholic Church sometimes did and sometimes did not preserve its public role, and Catholicism its collectivistic outlook, in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia, calls for the transparent designation of religion with regard to collective identity in general and with regard to nationalism in particular.

## *III. Religion and Collective Identity: Theoretical and Historical Considerations*

Collective identity will be perceived here as any body of ideas, beliefs, values, customs and institutions that define an individual's belonging to some group by ordering and directing his/her actions in the different realms of individual and social life.[18] Collective identity thus has a powerful psychological dimension, as it partakes in the construction of the individual's most personal and most intimate self. At the same time, it has an effective socializing outcome as it posits the individual towards and within some social group. The collective identity concerns us here primarily in the latter sense – in the ways in which it brings individuals into a group, assembles individuals' loyalties around the values, ideas, and institutions of collective, and on that premise organizes, or participates in the creation and change of the social order.

In an analytical sense, collective identity may refer to tribal, ethnic, religious, national, racial, and other group identities.[19] Empirically, in pre-modern as well as in modern societies, collective identity is never consumed by one of these elements but almost always refers to several of them together. Thus, while tribal identity or religious identity existed as dominant forms of collective identification prior to the existence of national identity, or national consciousness, they were not replaced by the latter in some evolutionary fashion but, depending on the specific society, continued to exist as equally, more, or less, important elements of people's collective and individual identification.

The understanding of religion as only one of the possible aspects of collective identity signifies not only that the concern of this study is not exclusively the relation between religion and nationalism, but also two other more general ideas: first, the fact that religion has had and still has its agency in social life, and second, that the category of collective identity conceptually and historically precedes national identity, although the collective is usually erroneously recognized as national identity.[20]

It follows from the above that no aspect of collective identity is appreciated here as a rigid, fixed or, to use the essentialist term, 'natural' element of one's identity. On the contrary, any possible component of collective identity is conceptualized as a category that changes its content, meanings, and relevance, hence, as a *historical*

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18 My definition draws on, but is not identical to, Liah Greenfeld's discussion on the phenomenon of national identity (see Greenfeld's Introduction to *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,* 1992*)*.

19 Others being gender, class, regional identities.

20 For reference see Greenfeld 1992, 12.

phenomenon, and is something that undergoes reconstruction. However, while every element of collective identity, be it religion or nation, *is* conceptually viewed as historical, it is also argued that most people perceive and live their collective identity as something given and unchangeable, as something ascribed or 'natural.'[21]

The claim about collective identity as something that is usually viewed as unchangeable is not a simple theoretical proposition and does not refer only to the ways in which identities, religious in particular, were perceived in pre-modern societies. Indeed, a recent empirical study of the ways in which people perceive their national identity in twenty-three countries shows that the ascriptive/objectivistic criteria relating to birth, religion and residence are more dominant than the subjectivistic civic/voluntary dimension grounded in subjective feelings of membership and belief in core institutions.[22]

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that the view of collective identity as something that has been experienced as a constant and 'natural' element of people's selves faces a serious objection in the face of other empirical evidence, that which describes the character and outcomes of globalization and rationalization in the modern world. The latter processes affect identities by making them transferable, that is, by inaugurating the historically unprecedented possibility that individuals change a wide range of identities – from sex to national identity. This remark is pertinent to our discussion because it is related to the problem of religious identification – a process that, shaped by the globalizing nature of Western religiosity, has become (or is becoming) an object of choice. According to this view, 'religious identity,' as inherited or given, is being substituted with the process (and not the rigid structure) of 'religious identification,' based on individuals' religious preference.[23]

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21 It is important to say that the phenomenon of collective identity *and* its conceptualization as something 'natural' are also perceived as ways towards the recreation of the exclusion of all the "others" and the perpetuation of injustice in social life. Much has been written and said about this in the last couple of years, particularly by the representatives of cultural studies and/or feminist theorists (for different views on identity politics see, for instance, Seyla Benhabib's text "From identity politics to social feminism", and two responses to her text by Nicholas C. Burbulas, Barbara Houston). The series of lectures by Wendy Brown in the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, in the winter of 2001, encapsulated different levels of the 'identity' phenomena and of the critique of 'identity politics,' with the emphasis on the perspectives of gender studies. Such an evaluation of the category of 'collective identity,' while normative in essence, is not only politically oriented but may also be theoretically valuable, as it was for the conceptualization of the concept of 'collective identity' in this text.

22 For reference, see Jones and Smith 2001, 45.

23 It is very important to keep in mind that even if the self-identification process is understood as being a matter of choice, it still does not lose the aspect of social, ascribed criteria. For

Empirical evidence from Western Europe and the United States seriously challenges our proposition that religion in modernity *is,* or may be, an ascribed element of one's self which contributes towards defining collective identity. Yet, at the same time some studies of religion in the United States suggest that precisely religion, even when chosen, may be an essential factor in the construction of someone's belonging to the collective.[24] One's ability to choose or to carry out a change in the religious aspect of his/her identity, it is plausible to assert, depends on two major variables: first, the type of a society in which someone lives, and second, the individual's position in the social stratification.[25]

The conceptualization of religion with regard to collective identity put forward in this text is structured around a simple actuality – that there are societies in which religion either *still* serves as the source of collective identification, or rises in that meaning as "[t]he flip side of secularization" (Seligman 2001), and globalization.[26] In other words, without denying the signs of a greater fluidity of religious (and other forms of) collective identity in the global context, the basic assumption here is that even in modernity religion *may be* important for people's collective self-understanding, and *not only* for individualized forms of religiosity, and/or religious extremism and fundamentalism.

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more on this problem of self-identification in the case of race, see Miller and Rotheram-Borus (1994, 151).

24 See Helen R. Ebaugh and Janet S. Chafetz's book on *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*.

25 The accessibility of changes of religious identity, and the view of their variable character can hardly be the same in the United Kingdom and in Spain, or in the United States and Greece. Moreover, the view of the 'naturalness' of one's national identity certainly does depend on someone's social and economic status – whether someone is a member of the intellectual and economic elite, or the working class; that is, to what extent one can experience mobility – can afford traveling and/or living abroad, and is exposed to circumstances that challenge the major presuppositions of one's belonging to some group, whether national, regional, or religious. The useful reference for this problem is Peter Berger's article on the four aspects of globalization, *National Interest*, Fall 1997.

26 "The flip side of secularization is fundamentalism: both are inventions of modernity. The very institutionalization that brings more and more realms of social life under the rubric of an abstract and universal reason will sooner or later evoke a reaction, as modernity calls forth its own antithesis. This reaction may take many forms – the growth of primordial, racial politics being perhaps the most malevolent. But we see it as well in the blossoming of gender and sexual preference as modes of identity and political statements. And of course, we see it in the return of religious identities and commitments as an increasingly important affective aspect of individuals' lives in different parts of the world." (Seligman 2001, 3; http://www.ifbosna.org.ba:91/publikacije/bosnae/11-01/11.htm).

For the purposes of sociological analysis, it must be underlined here that an element of collective religion and religious institutions may be the *spiritus movens* of social life, the maintenance as well as the change of the premises of some society's existence. The question of when religion does play such a role is relevant because it does not simply address the future of Catholicism in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian societies as they are undergoing complex transitional processes, but the reverse – it speaks to the future of the respective societies with regard to the role and place of Catholicism. Moreover, the conceptualization and analysis of religion in a manner that establishes a link between religion-collective identity-social change/social order raises the discussion on a more generalizable level, which has implications for assessing the place of religion in modern societies in general.

## *IV. The Proposition of A Theoretical and Methodological Framework for the Study of Catholicism and Collective Identity in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian Case Studies*

From the conceptual and historical premises just elaborated it follows that the center of the analysis in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian cases will be the role of the Catholic Church[27] in the *shaping, maintaining and transforming* of the *ideas* and *institutions* of the collective for the Slavic population in Bosnia, Croatian lands, and Slovenian lands,[28] and the meaning(s) of Catholicism within those ideas *in dif-*

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27 The use of the term 'Catholic Church' irrespective of the historical period is intentional. I am aware, for instance, that the Latin Christianity which spread among the Slavs the Balkan area in the early Middle Ages was not the 'Catholic Church.' Likewise, I understand the imprecision of naming the Western/Roman Church as the 'Catholic Church' even after the Great Schism. However, the process of the separation between the Christian East and West was a long one: the split began centuries before 1054, and lasted practically until the end of the pre-Renaissance period. Because and despite all of these historical nuances the invariable use of the term 'Catholic Church' does not take away from the accuracy in circumscribing the phenomenon of the Western Christianity as such, in locating that phenomenon with regard to the main subject of the study – religion and collective identity – and at the same time, it contributes to the clarity and consistency of discussion.

28 I find the use of these geo-political designations acceptable for several reasons. Bosnia and Herzegovina were employed as terms for geo-political entities rather early, and they remained in use throughout the whole period of Ottoman rule despite the frequent changes of the borders. Croatia and Slovenia, on the other hand, had a more complex history as geo-political entities and also as names. Thus, from the Middle Ages until the early twentieth century the territory that roughly constitutes contemporary Croatia was divided into regions – Croatia proper, Slavonia, Istria, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik – which were controlled by different rulers. The name 'Slovenia' as a denominator for a geographic and cultural unit was introduced for the first time only in the nineteenth century. Prior to that period, there were only Carinthia/Koroska, Carniola/Kranjska, Dolenjska/Lower Carnolia, Styria/Stajerska, Primorska.

*ferent historical periods*. The *ideas* and *institutions* of the collective that will be analyzed are those that served as a platform for the modern collective identities of the Bosnian Croats, Croatian Croats, and Slovenes.[29] Nationalism and nationalities will be pertinent only and solely in relation to religion, and not vice versa. They will enter the analysis of the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian cases in the early nineteenth century, at the time when they rise to become the principal element of modern collective identities in their respective societies.

If we paraphrase Agnes Heller, we may say that the study of the origins of the collectivistic traits of Catholicism in these three cases will essentially follow the role of the Catholic Church representatives in the creation of 'cultural memory' of the Slavs from the studied regions and the place of Catholicism in that 'cultural memory.' The latter is comprehended in the widest sense as *shared* "texts…, chronicles,… poetry…monuments, such as buildings or statues, or any material signs or memorabilia…"[30]

The analysis of the place of Catholicism and Catholic Church with regards to the different ideas and institutions of collective identities in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian lands will have equally historical and sociological intentions, and will involve both pre-modern and modern periods. The use of 'thick' concepts and terms such as the 'Slovenian lands' or 'collective identity,' therefore, does not indicate a working hypothesis about the static and evolutionary relationship between Catholicism and collective identities in these three case studies. Quite the opposite. The main premise of the sociological approach to historical investigation of Catholicism and collective identities is the notion that, just as the ideas of group identities undergo transformations as well as display continuities, so does the role of the Catholic Church and the meaning of Catholicism in different ideas of the collective.

The important, if not decisive theoretical and empirical guideline in the analysis of Catholicism and collective identities in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian

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Hence, although I do specify the names of particular regions that constitute the Croatian and Slovenian lands whenever I see it crucial or relevant for the discussion, I generally use terms such are the 'Croatian lands' and 'Slovenian lands.' These terms are useful because they accomplish several goals: they circumscribe the phenomenon specific territories, avoid the crime of historical anachronism by respecting the developments of geo-political realities throughout history, and simplify the discussion on a linguistic level.

29 Defining and analyzing religion both as a system of ideas and institutions avoids the trap, in which some historians and sociologist have fallen, of making the emphasis on either one or the other aspect of religious phenomena, as well as avoids the problems contained in structuralism or idealism (see Greenfeld 1992, 19).

30 For reference see Heller 2000, 1031.

case-studies is given by historical sociologists.[31] The comparative studies of historical sociologists focus on the large processes of transformation (often revolutions) *and* structuration, hence, change and order. That two-fold orientation is indispensable if one wants to grasp the importance of the Catholic Church in the *creation* and *maintenance* of the ideas of collective identity, both in their variations and their continuity.[32] Moreover, the attention that historical sociology pays both to the changing and constant features of some phenomenon is important for initially distancing the study from the oversimplification and reification of social life contained in sociological structuralism.[33]

In the comparative analysis of several cases historical sociology is further relevant because it has a potential to redirect the analysis from simply understanding the differences among and the uniqueness of each case study, towards appreciating their relevance for the broader discussions about religion in modern societies. Namely, historical sociology is open to the use of sociological concepts that raise the empirical to the level of generalizable analysis.

The concept which can provide the basis for a more general discussion about religion and collective identity, and at the same time can offer analytic tools for the study of (*both*) the symbolic and institutional aspects of the relationship between the Catholic Church/Catholicism and collective identities in Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia, is Edward Shils' model of 'center-periphery.'

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31 For reference, see the works of Tiryakian E., *Sociological Theory, Values and Sociocultural Change* (1963), Bendix R., *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (1964), Eisenstadt S. N., *Modernity: Protest and Change* (1966), Moore B., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), Eisenstadt S. N., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Change* (1968), Eisenstadt S.N. and Rokkan S., *Building States and Nations* (1973), Skocpol, Theda. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (1994), Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992).
The studies of Reinhard Bendix, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Barringtone Moore, Theda Skocpol, Edward Thompson, Charles Tilly, and Edward Tiryakian oppose the functionalist and evolutionist modernization theorists demonstrating that modernization, just as any other big process, is not translatable from one society to another but that each society responds to big, general processes of social transformation differently, depending on their tradition and historical heritage. Confirming Joseph Schumpeter's idea that social structures, types and attitudes, once they are formed, do not melt but persist for centuries (in Bendix 1964, 11), Bendix, Tilly and others emphasized the interplay between global processes and the heritage of particular societies. On the most general level, these works in historical sociology intended to explain the problem of social order and social change

32 See Dennis Smith's *Rise of Historical Sociology* (1991).

33 Structural analysis is a vital element in understanding the nature of religion and religious institutions in some societies. However, the sociological structuralism reifies structures while these are only "relatively stable systems of social relationships" (see Greenfeld 1992, 19).

Shils designates the 'center' as a two-fold phenomenon: "a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs, of the order of symbols…which govern the society,"[34] and a phenomenon of institutions. The two aspects of the 'center' are represented in and advocated by the elites. One of the elements of the center, with its respective elites, is religion, and as such it influences the society's ordered existence.

Shils' designation of religion in the symbolic and institutional outlook of society is conceptually and empirically significant because it goes against the dominant trend (in history and sociology) that does not expound on religion as the realm of ideas *and* institutions, and hence underrates the place of religion in the problem of social order and change.[35] Contrary to the latter, Shils' conceptualization of the link between religious ideas and institutions with other social institutions and dominating or revolutionizing ideas in society, positions religion with regard to what orders that society and/or demands its change.

Three other elements make Shils' concept of 'center/periphery' useful for the analysis of religion and collective identities in three cases over a long period of time. First, Shils' recognition of the central institutions of society through the activity of their elite can serve as the point of comparison of the Catholic Church in Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia. The identification of elites in three institutions of the Catholic Church, as they overlap with the political, economic, and cultural elites, can be the basis for interpreting different levels of centrality that the Catholic Church used to have and/or has in the three societies in question.[36] Second, Shils' characterization of the relationship between center and periphery as the source of change in the social order and as the main dynamic in the processes of social integration will provide the framework for tracing the change and continuity, and the role of the Catholic Church in the processes of change at a micro and macro societal level.

Last but not the least, the empirical use of Shils' concept 'center-periphery' in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian case studies creates a conceptual passage for analyzing past and present in concrete historical setting(s) – the place that Catholicism

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34 See Edward Shils' *Center and Periphery* (1975).

35 Barrington Moore has a tendency "to treat religious and political issues as symbolic of the basic, substantial economic conflict" (see Skocpol 1994, 38), and hence neglects the complexity of the social existence of religion. Ivo Banac's historical analysis of the *National Question in Yugoslavia,* does not acknowledge the institutional aspect of religions and, consequently, brings the claim that the nationality question in Yugoslav societies does not originate from religious differences but was formed by the different goals of national ideologies created in the political sphere (1992).

36 On elites and their overlapping as a focus of comparative study, see more in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's *Comparative Perspective on Social Change* (1968).

has had in the creation of different ideas of collective identity in Bosnian, Croatian, and Slovenian lands, and the centrality of Catholicism in the societies' self-definition today, or what Shils describes as a society's symbolic center.

## *V. Concluding Remarks: Religion and Collective Identity at the Center of Social Life*

The conceptual and methodological framework suggested for the analysis of Catholicism and collective identity in the Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian cases has one fundamental goal: to tell us more about the role of religion (ideas and institutions) in the changing former communist societies, rather than revealing more about these societies' contemporary nationalisms and political processes in which religion is only a secondary or contingent variable.

An analytical course that posits religion at the center of examination can accomplish several goals. Tracking the link between religion and collective identities prior to the rise of national ideologies, the above described approach may give useful leads as to why religion did or did not survive the period of national awakenings as one of the foci of modern collective identity in the three societies in question. In doing so, the historical and sociological approach (with the use of Shils' concept of center/periphery) can elaborate on why Catholicism is public and collectivistic in the contemporary Bosnian and Croatian societies, and is not in the Slovenian society, and why Catholicism is or is not central to the collective self-understanding of the contemporary Bosnian Croats, Croatian Croats and Slovenes.

Furthermore, the understanding of religion as both institutional and symbolic phenomenon that has been linked to other spheres of social life will be focal for directing the analysis towards one of the most fundamental sociological problems – social change and order, that is, the place of religion in it. In that regard, the proposed use of Shils' conceptualization of religion with regard to the symbolic and institutional premises of society's existence is particularly interesting in the study of the former communist societies that are undergoing radical (re)definition of the premises of social order.

While keeping in mind that even in structurally similar contexts "there is always some range of possible alternatives, out of which…some choice is made" (Eisenstadt 1973, 68), it is plausible to assert that, the more central and the more continuous place of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in the creation and maintenance of the collective identities in any of the studied societies was, the more likely it is that the Catholic Church will play an important role in their current social and political

transformations. Specifically, Bosnian and Croatian societies, each for different reasons, are more likely to witness an involved and influential Catholic Church that will affect their social life than the Slovenian society. The revisiting of the link religion/collective identity/social order and change, moreover, is not constructive only for the sociological study of religion in post-communist societies, but for the study of contemporary societies in general.

It has been stressed recently that religious changes in the post-communist transitions are so multiple and so diverse that comparisons are difficult and predictions impossible.[37] The suggested agenda for the study of religion and collective identity contains an analytical set-up that enables the parallel historical and sociological comparison of three similar and different (Bosnian, Croatian and Slovenian) cases. Furthermore, it conceptually and methodologically paves the way towards the understanding of religion as it has been and/or still is linked to collective identity, and from there, to the ultimate sociological question – that of social order and social change. Because of these two major attributes, the analytic framework proposed in this text perhaps can enable us to, on the one hand, effectively compare diverse post-communist religious scenes and appreciate their possible developments, and, on the other hand, understand these post-communist religious worlds as a part of global religious phenomena and as one aspect of larger analytical questions.

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[37] See the warnings of Zulehner and Tomka in Vrcan, 2001, 44.

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Management scholarship into diversity and equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina (thereinafter: BiH) can, without a doubt, be described as under-researched (Velikonja, 2017; VinkoviÄ‡ and BeÅ¡lagiÄ‡, 2011).Â  Following the independence of Slovenia and Croatia in the late 1991 which was internationally recognised in early 1992, war began in BiH as an armed insurrection of Bosnian Serbs forces against Bosnian independence. This was marked by wide scale ethnic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, expulsion and mass murder.Â  Ethnic groups are closely affiliated with religion with most Bosniaks being Muslim, Serbs predominantly being Orthodox Christians and Croats being Catholic Christians.