

# THE ROLES OF RELIGION IN CONFLICTS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA<sup>1</sup>

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The diversity of the peoples and cultures in the former Yugoslavia render an understanding of the complex and ongoing conflicts there extremely difficult. This paper focuses on the little understood aspects of religion in the conflicts, examining the significance of the roles played by both individuals and groups, giving primary consideration to social and cultural forces rather than doctrinal claims. As an important definer of communal loyalties and a principle ingredient of ethnic identity, the essay documents how religion has contributed to the conflict and suggests that it may yet be one of the keys to an eventual settlement.

"Yugoslavia has seven neighbors, six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two scripts, and one goal: to live in brotherhood and unity" (a fable from the 'old days').<sup>3</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The scope and intensity of conflicts raging in the former Yugoslavia have presented the world community with myriad complex dilemmas within a variety of domains. The effect of this complexity has widespread implications from foreign policy to intervention strategy and involves a range of questions concerning the concepts of identity, ethnicity, morality, pluralism and nationhood, to name a few. This observation, and the evidence which follows, attests to Ramet's (1992:1-2) assertion that the people who comprise the former Yugoslavia are at once multi-national, multi-political, multi-cultural and multi-confessional.

One implication has been the extreme difficulty in gaining even a rudimentary understanding of the drama which is unfolding. The images and summary encapsulations presented in the media have done little to explain the diversity of claims and descriptions with respect to issues, positions, interests, people, nations, or events (including the occurrence of atrocities) which have characterized the conflict. As Burnett (1994:286) notes in reference to the earlier conflict in Lebanon, many of the reports and interpretations have thus far failed "to understand the character of the parties to the conflict, especially the meaning and nuances of the religious beliefs involved." This essay focuses on the little understood aspect of religion in the conflicts, examining the significance of the roles played by both individuals and groups, giving primary consideration to social and cultural rather than doctrinal aspects.

## WHY RELIGION?

In addition to the individual interests of the author, religion, despite a more "widespread tendency to slight [its] significance. . . in conflict resolution as in other secular affairs" (Luttwak 1994:17), is recognized by anthropologists as a significant cultural and ethnic marker. Scholars have for some time been challenging the 'political realist' view, to select one paradigm, as giving inadequate consideration to cultural and social factors alongside "technical and technological concerns in reaching a satisfactory understanding of world events" (Rubinstein 1988:22). The repudiation by the realist school of such factors as religion and spirituality was a mere part of its disavowal of all cultural factors as significant in their contribution to understanding the behavior of states.<sup>4</sup> But does insight into religion provide for such an understanding in general and, specifically, in the former Yugoslavian context? There is ample evidence for the contention that it does.

As a central feature in larger cultural systems and processes, religious organizations are repositories for significant rituals, symbols, and symbolic action. Rightly or wrongly characterized as nonpolitical,

organized religion is recognized for its potential ability to wield substantial political power. In fact, Cohen (1979:87) notes the inverse relationship which often accompanies this characterization for institutions such as religion: "Often, the less obviously political in form symbols are, the more efficacious politically they prove to be." However, in arguing for its significance, I do not intend to suggest that the armed conflicts which have emerged from the disintegration of Yugoslavia are wars of religion per se.<sup>5</sup> Even *overtly* religious conflicts cannot be portrayed as simply that. But as an important definer of communal loyalties and a principal ingredient of ethnic identity, religious elements have contributed to the conflicts through alignment with political parties (and in some cases through the taking up of arms) and may yet be one of the keys to an eventual settlement as both Johnston (1994:330) and Shenk (1993:2, 52) have suggested.<sup>6</sup> In any case, religion, as Luttwak (1994:16) insists, must not be ignored, marginalized, diminished, trivialized, nor rendered as a purely political, social, economic, or ethnic phenomenon in religious guise in the former Yugoslavia as it has been elsewhere.

Before moving to a more precise analysis of religious roles in the former Yugoslavian context, I will make one final comment of a more general nature. It may not yet be obvious that to *focus* on religion in these conflicts is not to somehow attempt to *isolate* it from other domains of society. The present essay is also an attempt to come to terms with the broader concept of ethnicity and with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia as ethnic. Ethnicity, as Nash (1989:113, 5) has noted, is a "multifaceted phenomenon" consisting of crucial elements of identity which are inextricably intertwined and organically interactive, with religion as one of its building blocks. While it is conspicuous that an examination of religion does not provide an exhaustive understanding of every aspect of the conflicts examined here, we can certainly assert that the character of the conflicts raging in the former Yugoslavia is *misunderstood* when religion is *not* taken into account.<sup>7</sup>

#### SITUATING THE CONFLICTS

If analysis along these lines is to be done here, an adequate recounting of the events and figures leading up to the former-Yugoslavian conflicts will largely need to be left to those who have provided such descriptions elsewhere (Bookman 1994; Crnobrajica 1994; Ramet 1992; Seroka and Vukasin 1992). In order to avoid becoming detoured by consuming the bulk of this limited essay with historical prologue, my intent is that a sufficient understanding for situating the conflicts and the religious roles in them will emerge from the analysis along the way. At the risk of an initial oversimplification, a few observations are offered below.

The roots of the former Yugoslavia's religious communities and its conflicts go back centuries and find expression among the three main traditions of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam. Though present much earlier, Christianity may have been formally recognized in the region as early as the seventh century, prior to the split between Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic) Christians around the turn of the first millennium (Singleton 1985:15-16). The early struggle for the souls of the South Slavs, who first appeared in the Balkans sometime between the fourth and seventh centuries, along with other groups of raiding and settling marauders, culminated in the Rome-Byzantine split which cut directly through the middle of their territories, separating Serbs (predominantly Eastern Orthodox) from Croats and Slovenes (predominantly Roman Catholic) (Crnobrajica 1994:17; Shenk 1993:7). One consequence, as will be seen below, is that the equations Serb=Orthodox and Croat=Catholic which continue today have become a more accurate indicator of ethnicity than religious affiliation. Likewise, Bosnian Muslims, whose Islamic ancestors appeared in the region in the 1300s, "are the only Muslims in the world considered so by nationality" (Shenk 1993:43).<sup>8</sup> From the early periods of rule by the Ottoman and Habsburg empires through the two World Wars and beyond, each of the three religious groups enjoyed a measure of privilege afforded by shifting alliances with ruling powers sufficient to generate suspicion of unfair collaboration to the disadvantage of the other two.<sup>9</sup> How these alliances and perceptions assert themselves in the present conflicts will be explored further below.

#### ETHNIC AND NATIONAL PHENOMENA

Tambiah's (1989) focus on the "politicization of ethnicity" formulates ethnicity as a major paradigm for interpreting social conflict and change that is useful for understanding ethnic and religious phenomena in the former Yugoslavia context. In an attempt to offer an additional perspective to other theoretical approaches he finds to be inadequate, such as primordialism, instrumentalism, perennialism and modernism, Smith (1994) outlines a model which underscores the historical and symbolic aspects of ethnic groups and their accompanying ideologies of nationalism. Aligned with Tambiah's analysis of ethnic politicization, Smith's historical-symbolic perspective provides insight into the religious dimension of the conflicts addressed here. I will draw from these and complementary concepts of other theorists, giving particular consideration to the notion of religion as a key dimension of statecraft (Johnston 1994).

Drawing attention to the fact that collective violence is occurring not among people who are distant aliens but enemies intimately known, Tambiah (1989:335) asserts that something has gone seriously awry with the center-periphery relations of people and nations in multi-cultural regions throughout the world. This description, offered prior to the full-scale unleashing of war in Yugoslavia, perhaps describes no other place more accurately. Despite centuries of recurring hostility between ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans, the diverse peoples of the region have had a considerable degree of interaction.<sup>10</sup>

As first and foremost a collective identity, ethnic groups self-consciously *substantialize* and *naturalize* certain attributes such as language, religion and territorial occupation (Tambiah 1989:335-336). These processes serve to reify these and other collective qualities as enduring, innate, bounded claims and possessions which set apart their group from the other for purposes of sociopolitical action. Having undergone a period of diminished importance, religion survived its expected demise under communist and socialist rule to become more than a social irritant or novelty. Its growing recognition in the 1980s as a social force to be reckoned with emerged from its criticism of the secular system (and its failure) and the growing expectation that the social and moral gaps created by the Tito regime could be filled by religious renewal (Shenk 1993:12-15). For the different peoples of Yugoslavia, this process engendered a return to the significant common myths of origin and descent, historical memories, and sense of solidarity which characterize attributions of identity, a crucial feature of what Smith (1994:709) terms the "ethnic community" or *ethnic*. Adopted according to context and precise calculation of advantage, these myths take on the character of "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm 1983). These traditions comprise "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which *automatically implies continuity with the past*" (Hobsbawm 1983:1, emphasis mine). Mutual blame and recrimination over war crimes in World War II is but one particularly salient negative form appearing in the Balkans.

While communism remained in effect in Serbia under the guise of a different name (the Socialist Party), its collapse in Slovenia and Croatia left political means for attracting and motivating the masses impotent. Instead, in a process reasserting what Smith (1994:727) describes as a "surrogate religion," an appeal was made to nationalism as a way of mobilizing ethnic uniqueness. If in the former Yugoslavia, as in other places, "[n]ationalism has, to a great extent, replaced religion as a source of arousal" (Foster 1993:68), religion has nonetheless been susceptible to being used by forces favoring a nationalist, chauvinistic political vision for their own purposes.<sup>11</sup> Religious and non-religious persons and institutions alike moved to manipulate the dominant religious traditions to foster nationalistic ideologies. This entails the "strategic efficacy" (Tambiah 1989:343) of ethnicity, the use and manipulation of collective ethnic markers (in this case, religion) in political action.

#### STRATEGIC EFFICACY

The strategic efficacy of ethnicity and the churches in the former Yugoslavia can be understood along two trends within Tambiah's (1989:347) broader model: a *universalizing* and *homogenizing* trend (the attempt to make people more and more alike) and a *particularizing* and *separating* trend (a claim which emphasizes differences). Their dialectical relationship is evident in the events which unfolded in the region.

The death in May 1980 of Josip Broz Tito, whose regime ruled Yugoslavia for thirty-seven years, initiated the collapse of Yugoslavia's political institutions, viz. the ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia

(LCY) party, which eventually led to the secession of the provincial party organizations in Albanian-dominated Kosovo and Vojvodina (Ramet 1992:8). The Serbian party organization proposed a comprehensive reform package intended to roll back the autonomy of these two autonomous provinces, a clear homogenizing trend. Meanwhile, rising ethnic tensions within Kosovo and Bosnia also contributed to the straining political fabric and heightened the call "for a 'return' to some imagined pristine centralism" (Ramet 1992:21). However, it was already too late. For all practical purposes, Yugoslavia had ceased to exist. In seeking to consolidate his power, Serbian Communist functionary Slobodan Milosevic attempted to assume Tito's role. Several of the leaders of the republics indicated an unwillingness to remain associated with a united Yugoslavia under Milosevic's rule. Milosevic responded by declaring that if the federation as a whole broke up, Serbia would seek to annex portions of other republics, such as Croatia and Bosnia, which were inhabited by Serbs. *Within* Bosnia, "Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Serbian Democratic Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, promised that if Bosnia seceded from Yugoslavia, the Serbs of Bosnia. . . would secede from Bosnia, in effect plunging Bosnia into serious chaos" (Ramet 1992:47). Serbian nationalism was being matched by other homogenizing claims, such as those made by former Yugoslavian army general and Communist Party member Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, which ultimately had a particularizing and separating effect, one group from another. Fragmentation occurred along economic, political, cultural, and religious lines. Thus, what initially began as a universalizing and homogenizing struggle over whether to preserve the union or grant the republics' right of secession moved quickly to a particularizing and separating war over how to partition the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).<sup>12</sup>

#### Catholic and Croat

Within Croatia the initial pursuit of sovereignty as part of a confederacy was occasionally expressed as a desire for independence, which carried the horrifying connotation of the type of independent Croat state created by the Nazis and administered by the *Ustasha* militia, whose wartime atrocities against Serbs are well-known (Crnobrnja 1994:65-66; Ramet 1992:150; Shenk 1993:20-21<sup>13</sup>). Also, the Yugoslav flag was replaced by the Croat flag, with the Croat coat of arms--considered by many Serbs as an *Ustasha* symbol--substituted for the red star. In an ironic yet understandably efficacious move, the newly-elected Tudjman reached out to the Catholic Church in a television interview in which he argued that the Catholic Church "had been the only organized force which had provided consistent resistance to communist rule" (Ramet 1992:121).<sup>14</sup> Emerging from a long period of harassment in which the Communist Party constantly pressed the Catholic hierarchs to break step with the Vatican while alternately attempting to sow seeds of division and discord within the Church over, for instance, differing interpretations of Vatican II, the Catholic Church leadership began to play an important role in the quest for Croatian sovereignty (Shenk 1993:41), hoping at least to be in a position to influence legislation governing religious practice (e.g., vis-a-vis education).

The relationship of the Church to the present crisis is intimately connected with its role in relation to previous regimes, in particular the Communist government. While some undoubtedly saw the Catholic Church as intimately involved in social and political life (as disclosed in the pronouncement of Tudjman noted above and represented by persons such as Cardinal Stepinac), others, such as Catholic Archbishop Franje Franic, interpreted Church involvement as largely *inactive*. Ramet (1992:122) quotes Franic as saying that the Church is called upon "to administer the sacraments and to conduct Church services, but political and social revolution should be left to others. That is not our calling."<sup>15</sup> As Serb-Croat polemics intensified in the course of 1989-90, the Catholic Church was ineluctably drawn into the fire by first serving as one of many targets intended to fan the flames of nationalism and then responding in an accusatory manner which only escalated the partitions being nurtured (Ramet 1992:143). Significant cultural symbols, such as associations with Nazism and the desire to include Roman Catholic catechetical instruction in the state-run schools, were pressed like buttons on a machine in order to manipulate nationalist sentiment. Some, hoping to insulate themselves from involvement, declined to endorse any particular party or plan for the confederation. Others offered virtually unconditional support for the new government, making the phrase *Crkva u Hrvata* ("the church among the Croats") a definitive statement of linkage between ethnic identity and religion. Shenk (1993:42-43) has observed some of the unmistakable forms of this Croatian Catholic linkage:

As in Serbia, this linkage between religion and nationality can be seen in the war effort through the use of religious symbols, targets, and leaders. Symbols include soldiers, weapons, and vehicles decorated with rosaries, crosses, and other religious ornamentation. Targets include places of worship and sacred objects, as well as threats to non-Catholic clergy.... Croatian Catholic priests, many of whom are refugees from Serb-occupied territory in Croatia, have been sent as army chaplains who bless soldiers and weapons on the front lines. A few priests... have carried guns and accompanied troops into battle.

#### Orthodox and Serb

In the same way that being Croat means being Catholic, being a Serb means to be Orthodox. The phrase, *Srpska Crkva* ("the Serbian Church") strongly suggests the relationship expressed in the 1920's patriarchate saying, "One who is not Orthodox is not Serb" (Shenk 1993:38). The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Yugoslavia had been a diverse community, lacking centralized authority within the larger Serbian kingdom. Recognized under the Serbian constitution as the official state religion, the SOC enjoyed privileges in the early part of the twentieth century that it later lost following World War II and during Communist Party rule. Increasing social activism on the part of clergy led some to become involved in Serbian party politics, unwittingly opening the door to greater state involvement in, and control over, ecclesiastical affairs. Its growing identification with Serbian nationalism put the SOC at odds with (Croatian) Catholics and also served to validate it as a target during World War II.

The combination of the systematic destruction during World War II and the ensuing Communist assault on the Church intensified the more recent victimization fears of the church (and all Serbs). As Crnobrajina (1994:63) notes, the fascist Ustasha, under the leadership of Ante Pavelic and protected and financed in Italy, was responsible for a "campaign of terror, mass arrests, detention, deportation, and extermination" of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and "uncooperative Croats," which included hundreds of Serbian Orthodox clergymen and at least six of the Church's top hierarchs. Also destroyed were hundreds of monasteries and church buildings (Ramet 1992:150). These great tragedies left an enduring mark on the national relations of Serbs and Croats and help to situate an understanding of more recent events in Croatia (Crnobrajina 1994:65).

Having participated in the resistance against occupation, the clergy of the SOC viewed their involvement as a nationalist cause of Serbian people against traitors (Croats) and imperialists (Nazis). This, of course, initially put them at odds with the Yugoslav communists, who viewed the war as a struggle of national liberation in which divisive ethnic interests were subordinated to joint class interests "through which exploitative 'vestiges of the past,' such as the Serbian Orthodox Church" (Ramet 1992:151-152) would be overcome. Each has its homogenizing and separating elements. As "nationalist" interpretations, both attempt to *bring together* groups of people on the basis of shared identity (though on different grounds, or, based on different markers) *over and against* a perceived out-group. In spite of the adversarial, and occasionally ambivalent, church-state relationship with the communist party,<sup>16</sup> at least until the late 1980s, the Serbian Church prospered, with both adversity and growth setting the stage for the state's strategic and efficacious use of the SOC as a key aspect of the current war.

Understanding the efficacy of myths of origin, secular Serbian writers have sought to interpret contemporary events by using the Orthodox tradition as a means for framing the conflicts as a modern day *jihad* (holy war).<sup>17</sup> As Vendley and Little (1994:308) note, this draws upon a principal religious resource expressed through two related and highly creative sets of activities. First, a turning back to the roots of the community's tradition to consult the central religious stories in order to interpret the situation. Second, the religious community moves forward by speaking anew to the conflict at hand. Hobsbawm (1983:4) anticipates this *inventing of traditions* where "a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed."

As with the Catholic Croatian Church, the utilization of religious symbols, the identification of religious targets, and the deployment of religious leaders in the Serbian cause of nationalism has been blatant. Again, Shenk (1993:39-40) notes: "Religious symbols appeared in many forms--on military weapons and vehicles, in the use of the three-finger *Chetnik* sign (symbolizing the Trinity), and in cross marks carved or burned into the bodies of Muslims." In addition, priests have been involved in blessing both weapons and soldiers

at the front. The practice of such rituals (conferring of blessings) and the deployment of symbols serves to significantly manipulate the religious cultural marker in a kind of strategic efficacy intended to politicize ethnicity for the mobilization of national causes. As will now be seen, this process applies to Islam as well.

### Muslim and Bosnian

The Islamic community, not unlike the Vatican-directed Catholic Church, has a kind of supra-national sense of self-identity that seems to leave it particularly susceptible to theories of conspiracy. Ramet (1992:165) tells of a visit to a Belgrade cafe in which two journalists were redrawing maps of the Balkans, "showing a menacingly large arrow projecting northward from Istanbul through Serbia" and up into all of Europe.<sup>18</sup> Seen by some as a foreign implant to the region, the national status of Bosnian Muslims is disputed, as are several of the other 'nations' of Yugoslavia, as a constitutionally created notion of Tito's regime (1963, and later in the revised constitution of 1974) intended to acknowledge the Muslim majority in BiH while preserving ethnic peace (Crnobrnja 1994:21; 174). Since then, in local linguistic usage the muslim faith is designated with a small *m*, while Muslim nationality is designated with a capital *M* (Shenk 1993:25). The salient feature of this contention over Muslim nationality is that *there are no ethnic markers associated with Bosnian Muslims other than religion* and the culture which developed from it.

The diversity of the republic was masterfully played off of "Muslim intentions," particularly by appeals from Serbian leader Milosevic to minority Bosnian Serbs in territories in which Serbs were a majority. This strategy tapped into the worldwide phenomenon of Islamic resurgence as providing an alternative to secular ideologies (Cox 1994:274).<sup>19</sup> For over forty years the Reis-ul-ulema (the chair of the Islamic Council, located in Sarajevo) had been a political appointee of the Communist regime, reflecting Flere's (1991:159) assertion that "[a]mong the 'principal' faiths, Islam seems to have coped the best in the socialist context." In the Fall of 1990 Alija Izetbegovic (leader of the Bosnian Muslims) was elected president of a coalition government of BiH. Although they were written twenty years earlier, statements appearing in Izetbegovic's newly published manifesto, *The Islamic Declaration*, raised concerns about religious exclusivism and intolerance within the republic as part of a larger pan-Islamic movement. These perceptions, coupled with the assumption that, when in the clear majority, Muslims feel a sense of obligation to implement Islamic

law (as intimated in Izetbegovic's statement), gave religious elements a more prominent place as a distinguishing ethnic marker among Bosnians. Increasing isolation of the Muslim community in the conflicts, which is in part a result of shifting political alliances throughout different phases of the war, has resulted in Muslims of all kinds characterizing the war as a *jihad*, a powerful symbol of motivation and mobilization to action (Shenk 1993:46). Tragically, this isolation has also meant that the Muslim community has suffered a disproportionate amount of the systematic brutality carried out in BiH at the hands of more than one enemy. The concept of the *jihad* reinforces the "myth of ethnic election" (Smith 1994:710) which, while promoting a sense of separate group identity and centrality, also conveys sentiments of group centrality and superiority. Paradoxically, and contrary to their own sense of identity formation (or affirmation), the Bosnian Muslims have issued public denials of the religious character of the war in order to gain support from the West in light of their rapidly deteriorating position (Shenk 1993:44-45).

### CONCLUSION

The small percentage of protestant and independent religious groups in the former Yugoslavia reflect both similar and alternate patterns as those within the three main traditions. While religion is often "one of the few ways--sometimes the only way--the distinct culture and history of national groups [can] be manifested" (Rubin 1994:23), to the extent that some of the smaller religious groups have a minimal or nonexistent role in ethnic identity formation in the former Yugoslavia, they have the potential to bridge ethnic divides on the basis of their religious claims (Shenk 1993:60). The predominant assertion here is that religion has thoroughly permeated the cultures of Yugoslavia and become a significant marker of ethnic/national identity,<sup>20</sup> and as such a central, non-material aspect of the conflicts. In the former Yugoslavia, this aspect of ethnic identification has made possible the strategic efficacy of the churches described by Tambiah

(1988) whose symbols, rituals and narratives have been used as manipulable objects not only by outside groups but from within each of the three major traditions.

The churches seem to have backed off from earlier, more enthusiastic support of the war efforts. Some leaders are beginning to speak out against the manipulation by all parties of religious aspects of social life for the purpose of fueling ethnocultural and national rivalries, and are exploring ways to contribute to peacemaking efforts. At the risk of presenting an entirely *negative* view of the religious roles in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, it has not been the explicit purpose of this paper to focus on these important aspects of conflict *resolution*. Instead, it has focused on the ways in which the newly awakened nationalism of Yugoslav peoples has drawn on the ethnic and cultural marker of religion for its own ideological purposes, and on the ways in which the three religious traditions of Roman Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy and Islam have willingly cooperated in the reassertion of national and ethnic identity. In this context, religion may be described as both a social, cultural and political object of strategic efficacy and as a salient conflict-inducing factor (Sluka 1992:31) in a situation of violently contending ethnicities. As such, it must be given adequate attention in the as-of-yet unforeseen process of resolution.

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In a personal reflection, Shenk (1993:15) notes that "[t]he most frightening characteristic of persons I know in the Balkans in general and in the former Yugoslavia in particular is that, for the most part, they are just like us." Ramet (1992:175) suggests that "the excitement that Yugoslav politics has long generated in the West was. . . attributable to the awareness. . . that here were people struggling to find a way to make something work which seemed incapable of working." One might also contend, in light of the disturbing turn of events in the last five years in the former Yugoslavia, that the *anxiety* of the West (even if at times expressed in the form of apathy) may be attributable to the awareness that our own context, with its plurality of cultures, diversity of religions and contending ethnic claims, is increasingly and frighteningly seen as containing the seeds of unspeakable horrors not unlike those which have occurred among the people of Yugoslavia.

## NOTES

1. The title, borrowed from the subtitle of Gerald Shenk's (1993) publication, indicates that neither the role of religion nor the type of conflict occurring in the former Yugoslavia are monolithic in nature.
2. I am grateful to John Burdick, Bruce Hemmer, Robert Rubinstein and Gerald Shenk for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
3. Mihailo Crnobrnja (1994:15).
4. On this view, see Burnett 1994:293. A more nuanced interpretation of the realist view suggests that some of its proponents saw religion and other cultural elements as yet another source of power to be manipulated "in the national interest." I am indebted to Bruce Hemmer for this alternate interpretation.
5. Mojzes (1992:997) suggests that the conflict, though initially not religious, has indeed become a religious war: "It is not unusual to hear people who yesterday had little regard for religion (often only contempt)... make the most absurd and offensive charges about the demonic intentions of the other two religions and the purity of their own." Whether or not one regards this as evidence that the former Yugoslavian conflicts have become religious wars, it nonetheless gives evidence to Cohen's (1979:104) observation that "under some new political circumstances, interest groups that in the past articulated their organizational functions in terms of ethnicity may now resort to religious symbolism as a substitute to articulate the same functions."
6. As I have already noted, the *resolution* of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia is not the primary focus of this paper. While I would hope that the analysis of (religious and cultural) factors in the attribution and

escalation of the conflicts might be relevant to a subsequent discussion of their resolution, that task is beyond the limited purview of this project. In that vein, Luttwak's (1994:12, 20) point is worth noting: "false diagnosis [is] inevitably followed by false prescriptions.... incorrect analysis and erroneous policy responses."

7. See Burnett 1994:287.

8. According to Shenk (personal correspondence, January 1995), one of the most intriguing aspects of Bosnian Islam is that it has its origins in the conversion of these Slavic Christian ancestors to Islam around the 14th-16th centuries. At that time in Sarajevo during the Protestant and Radical Reformations, children of the religious controversies between Christians were becoming Muslim. That Bosnian Muslims have Christian ancestors, for the most part, and not Islamic parentage, reinforces the notion that their peoplehood to a great extent consists of choices associated with conversion and religious affiliation.

9. Ramet's (1992:121-174) section on "Religion" provides a more detailed summary of church-state relations for each of the three traditions considered here.

10. An obvious example is the ritual of marriage which involves culturally reinforcing and solidifying celebrations (often religious) that employ symbols as a means for maintaining identity and structuring political perceptions. On this use of ritual and symbols see Kertzer 1988:18, 40. In the Yugoslav context, inter-ethnic marriages are particularly salient.

11. Rubin (1994:29) raises questions about this phenomenon in relation to the former Soviet Union.

12. See Mojzes 1992:997.

13. From a letter to the annual conference of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, Washington, October 1991, by Endre Langh.

14. Shenk (1993:22) points out that it was not unusual, given the increasing identification of Croat with Catholic, to find many former communist party officials prominently attending Catholic mass as a display of Croatian loyalty.

15. In 1966, 25 years to the day before the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, Belgrade and the Vatican exchanged representatives and signed a Protocol which guaranteed the Roman Catholic Church "free conduct of religious affairs and rites" (Ramet 1992:133). *The Vatican* responded by admonishing their clergy not to "misuse their religious and Church functions for aims which would have a political character" (ibid.).

16. For instance, recognizing the strong identification of Serbian nationality with the Orthodox Church, the Communist regime would occasionally seek out cooperation with the church as a means for countering accusations that its homogenizing nationalistic program was somehow anti-Serb (Ramet 1992:153).

17. The presence of multiple interpretations and applications of the term *jihad* needs to be acknowledged as potentially problematic. The complication immediately evident here is the secular usage of a fundamentally religious concept further represented across numerous settings.

18. As indicated, this phenomenon is not projected solely towards Islam. Steele (with Shenk 1993:56) notes that conspiracy theories about the roots of the conflicts abound: "Serbs spoke of both a Catholic plot masterminded by the Vatican, and Muslim fundamentalist domination of Bosnian politics. Muslims spoke of a Christian plot to rid Europe of Islam. Croats spoke of a Serbian communist attempt to exert control over them, aided by the United Nations."

19. As both a statesman and a creator/reformer of religious community, the Prophet Muhammad modeled a distinctive dual role in his struggle to establish a monotheistic faith and create an ethical public order. The Sharia, the divinely enacted legal system, reflects a premodern world order whose universal norms are directly confronted by the existing modern international order made up of nation states.

20. The tendency among Gypsies to change their religious affiliation as they move from place to place, as noted by Shenk (1993:36), supports this observation.

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