

# ETHNORELIGIOUS POLITICAL DISPUTE, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND CIVIC INCLUSION: THE BALKANS AND GLOBALLY

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses theoretically and conceptually ethnoreligious identity politics of dispute, globally and regionally, defining conflict management, leadership, and civic development, describing development conditions and the normative framework for conflict resolution. It argues that identity politics emphasizes ethnoreligious attitudes among the bearers of political decisions in the Balkans, resulting in more deficient public policies and political instability, and changing the ideas and opinions of an individual and group-elite can open a new area of political communication. The animosity among the ethnoreligious groups is based on polarized identities that see no way to collaborate. Observing the innovation and reinterpretation of narratives and types of collective action that shape fundamental identities can provide us with an essential view of the transformation of polarized ethnopolitical relations. The idea that the development of cooperative ties within the group and between groups in the organization, exchange of information, and expression of different opinions is the basis of moving from destructive to constructive conflict. The system reproduction model should be socially constructed dimensions of cultural and ideological differences that are the product of structured social relations. Working on understanding the emergence of deep division but with a critical view of mutually reinforcing structures, practices, and schemes that sustain „group division and antagonism“ is vital. Establishing a sufficient level of interest in the new negotiating policy

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arrangement thanks to changes in the local and global sense, such as a declining economy, inequality, and injustice due to the reinterpretation and revaluation of people's resumes is critical for political leaders. The public sphere is created by creating a communication space for civil discussion of common interest, putting an ethic sign in the background. Changing the ideas and opinions of an individual and a group-elite can create new interests-identities of a religiously divided community-nation. It certainly opens opportunities for establishing radically different interethnic relations.

**Keywords:** *Ethnoreligious Identity, Ethnopolitical Dispute, Conflict Management, Leadership, Civic Inclusion*

## **BALKANLAR'DA VE DÜNYADA: ETNİK-DİNİ SİYASİ AYRIŞMAZLIK, ÇATIŞMA YÖNETİMİ, LİDERLİK VE SİVİL KAPSAYICILIĞI**

### **ÖZ**

Makale teorik ve kavramsal olarak etnik-dini kimlik uyuşmazlık politikalarını küresel ve bölgesel olarak tartışıyor, çatışma yönetimini, liderliği ve sivil gelişimi tanımlıyor, kalkınma koşullarını ve çatışma çözümü için normatif çerçeveyi tanımlıyor. Kimlik siyasetinin Balkanlar'daki siyasi kararların taşıyıcıları arasındaki etnik-dinsel tutumları vurguladığını, bunun daha yetersiz kamu politikalarına ve siyasi istikrarsızlığa yol açtığını ve bir bireyin ve grup elitinin fikir ve fikirlerini değiştirmenin yeni bir siyasi iletişim alanı açabileceğini savunuyor. Etno-dinsel gruplar arasındaki düşmanlık, işbirliği yapmanın hiçbir yolunu görmeyen kutuplaşmış kimliklere dayanmaktadır. Temel kimlikleri şekillendiren anlatıların ve kolektif eylem türlerinin yeniliğini ve yeniden yorumlanmasını gözlemlemek, bize kutuplaşmış etnopolitik ilişkilerin dönüşümü hakkında temel bir bakış açısı sağlayabilir. Grup içinde ve örgüt içindeki gruplar arasında işbirliğine dayalı bağların geliştirilmesi, bilgi alışverişi ve farklı görüşlerin ifade edilmesi, yıkıcıdan yapıcı çatışmaya geçişin temelini oluşturur. Sistem yeniden üretim modeli, yapılandırılmış sosyal ilişkilerin ürünü olan kültürel ve ideolojik farklılıkların sosyal olarak inşa edilmiş boyutları olmalıdır. Derin bölünmenin ortaya çıkışını anlamak için çalışmak, ancak „grup bölünmesini ve düşmanlığını“ sürdüren karşılıklı olarak güçlendirici yapılara, uygulamalara ve şemalara eleştirel bir bakışla çalışmak hayati önem taşımaktadır. Düşen ekonomi, eşitsizlik ve insanların özgeçmişlerinin yeniden yorumlanması ve yeniden değerlendirilmesi nedeniyle adaletsizlik gibi yerel ve küresel anlamda meydana gelen değişiklikler sayesinde yeni müzakere politikası düzenlemesine yeterli düzeyde ilgi oluşturulması siyasi liderler için kritik öneme sahiptir. Kamusal

alan, arka plana bir etik işareti koyarak ortak çıkarların sivil tartışması için bir iletişim alanı oluşturularak yaratılır. Bir bireyin ve bir grup elitinin fikirlerini ve fikirlerini değiştirmek, dini olarak bölünmüş bir topluluk-ulus için yeni çıkarlar-kimlikler yaratabilir. Kesinlikle kökten farklı etnik gruplar arası ilişkiler kurma fırsatları yaratır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Etno-Dini Kimlik, Etnopolitik Anlaşmazlık, Çatışma Yönetimi, Liderlik, Sivil Kapsayıcılık*

## INTRODUCTION

History is full of conflicts, and the nation is, as E. Renan (1828) put it, a „daily plebiscite.“ Historical controversies are often the main topics of such plebiscites. Stable and more robust nations overcame them. Moreover, when nations become embroiled in interstate conflict and war over historical controversies, it usually means that they are unfinished nations, unarticulated identities, entangled in territorial conflicts, building walls and barriers, forming sectarian societies. The number of ethnic conflicts that the author observes for years, even decades, has barely decreased in the Balkans. The conflict potential of the Balkans remains significantly high. The most brutal conflicts, that is, the most difficult to overcome, are ethnonational conflicts. Members of different groups have different perceptions and customs, which leads to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Some see the „politicization“ of ethnicity as its dominant role, while others even see the *raison d'être* of contemporary ethnicity in „ethnic-politicization.“ It can be observed that ethnicity is a way of political mobilization in both developed and developing countries, contrary to the predictions of most contemporary theories of social change. More than that, ethnicity is a factor that cannot be negotiated through the usual political processes, aiming to turn political competition into a group conflict. However, there is little agreement on that topic either. According to some authors, ethnicity is inherently conflicting, so ethnic political conflict is inevitable in plural societies. According to others, ethnicity is a contemporary variant of nationalism, expressed by „ethnonationalism.“ It is fluid nature and the ability to adapt to socio-economic and political situations. (Markakis, 1991)

We can problematize that one needs to be accepted and socialize with other people, to get emotional support from other people when we talk about it, mentioning a national identity that can cause intense conflicts. When we talk about conflicts, it should be mentioned that according to some explanations, national conflicts are divided into the following classes, economic and political. It means that conflicts are manifested on all possible levels: class, cultural, generational, gender, ethnic, religion. Due to the absence of a culture of tolerance

and multicultural awareness, conflict is a model for solving various problems. The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia led to the dissolution of the socio-political structure, followed by a general economic, cultural and moral stumbling block. Their democratic consolidation will be doomed in advance, or the process will remain permanently unfinished if it persists, as before, in the widespread tendency to discredit the issue of culture. Of course, in this neglected problem area, political culture occupies a significant place, understood as a time-changing set of beliefs, values, knowledge, feelings, and attitudes of members of society towards political objects, processes, and goals the actions of historical tradition are responsible, the structure of political institutions and principles of functioning of the political system. A vacuum was created, in which new collective identities began to be created, based, among other things, on the principle of conflict. Thus, a culture of conflict was born.

In understanding the causes of social conflicts, we have to pay additional attention to political factors, and in the first place, undemocratic political systems, exclusive national ideologies, and intergroup policy and political elites.

On the other side, economic factors, especially in societies prone to frequent political and economic reforms, significantly contribute to the pause of different intergroup and intragroup conflicts. In that sense, three economic factors appear as the most common path potential causes of internal social conflicts: economic depression and crisis, discriminatory economic systems, and various attempts at economic development and modernization. (Milašinović, 2012: 138).

The approach to resolving conflicts within a society is determined primarily by the type of conflict (class, racial, ethnic, confessional) and institutional possibilities for expressing different, opposite, and opposing interests of conflict bearers. Today, there is a ready general agreement in principle on the „philosophy“ and the necessity of negotiation, mediation, the use of peaceful, acceptable, and other nonviolent methods to prevent and resolve social conflicts. These general principles are accepted at the declarative level and the national level of most countries. Hence the development of specialized institutions and institutions of the state and non-profit sectors and very different ways, techniques, and instruments resolve conflicts within states.

In ethnically and confessionally complex societies, the approach to conflict prevention and resolution is undoubtedly much more complex and uncertain. The complexity of preventing and combating conflicts fueled by ethnic differences and reasons is best illustrated by the experiences of regional conflicts in Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans during the 1990s. The regional conflicts that arose in Southeast Europe after the Cold War resulted from the collapse of regulatory mechanisms and the emergence of extreme ethnic nationalism, which was successfully suppressed during repressive real-socialist

rule. When there is a breakdown of regulatory mechanisms, there is a distance between ethnic and confessional communities— their different treatment by the state in terms of greater or lesser discrimination. The escalation of nationalism occurred on the one hand as a reaction to communist repression, and on the other hand, due to the need for the then political nomenclature to retain power and authority by transformation into a nationalist elite. Similar processes took place in Chechnya when Chechen nationalism emerged as a reaction to Russia's long-standing repression of Chechen state identity. Conflicts that break out in these circumstances if an attempt is made to stifle awakened nationalism by force (military-police methods) are accompanied by a high degree of violence and are characterized by a willingness to make great sacrifices. It is often the case that in these circumstances, interethnic conflict mixed with elements of religious conflict is transformed into a civil war that escalates with crimes committed in the name of national goals. An accompanying phenomenon is the questioning of identity and the development of the psychology of collective sacrifice in all those peoples whose state-political aspirations are called into question. The perception of other ethnic groups, which can be enemies of war, is colored by the animosity that it is practically the only way out of the conflict-related to complete defeat or complete victory. Since such a desired outcome, due to the similarity of the resources available to the parties to the conflict, is unlikely, the conflict leads to „the last drop of blood,“ i.e., to a decisive intervention from abroad. (Brown, 1996)

Hence, the structure of disintegration of former real-socialist federations (USSR, Czechoslovakia, former Yugoslavia) based on ethnic antagonism can be presented as a controlled explosion of the system in a specific direction, with national elites determining the direction of the explosion and the parts of the system most exposed to it. From conflict prevention and resolution, it is essential to mention that, as a rule, ethnic conflicts are most easily generated between pre-political and tribalistic societies or societies that have not matured to the level of modern parliamentary democracy. Unlike the reconciliation model between Germany and France, former Yugoslav countries took thirty years after the war to start reconciliation processes. Circumstances were also favorable because there were no extreme nationalists in power, defeated in the just-ended war; nationalism as an ideology has been historically discredited, and anti-fascism recognized as a value of civilization. War criminals and servants of the occupiers were drastically punished, not only in the part of Europe under the communists.

If we look at Belgium, its political system developed by fighting three political divisions: ideological (between Catholics and free thinkers), class, and linguistic-regional divisions. These fissures' institutionalization regulates these schisms, and the development of a consensual model is called consociational democracy. Thus, after the government's change in 1968, it was possible (albeit after two years of efforts) to compile a Belt of Belgians that included minority

rights, cultural autonomy, and economic decentralization. That is how unitary Belgium disappeared. Without the illusion that the problems have been resolved. The discussion was conducted outside the public eye, and only an agreement in principle has been reached. The intensity of the conflict has decreased (for example, the popularity of ‚language issues‘ is declining) in the extended Belgian parliamentary and consensus policy.

If the state is democratically more robust, the possibility of ethnic conflict is reduced, and if an ethnic rivalry exists, it is channeled through the work of democratic institutions. On the other hand, authoritarian regimes produce a greater possibility of ethnic conflict. However, there are opposite examples. The Kurdish liberation movement in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, which has a long history, was less present, the greater the state repression. The same was true in Burma. In the above cases, the democratic opening freed forces that were suppressed for a long time and are now being liberated through ethnic conflicts. Not every democratic order is free from ethnic conflicts. Some are perpetuated by local violence and separatist movements (e.g., conflicts in India, the civil war in Sri Lanka, ethnic-regional problems in Western Europe and Canada). The greater or lesser visibility of conflict is determined by the criterion of democratic authoritarianism and other contextual and structural factors. In addition to situations in which modernization distances people from their traditional communities and cultures so that their traditional identities disappear or are modified, ethnic conflicts can also be expressed through party politics. Members of ethnic parties belong exclusively to the same ethnic group that expresses only that particular ethnic group’s political interests. It can generally be said that „the more developed the institutions of civil society within a democratic political system, the greater the possibility that they will direct the interests and gain the loyalty of different ethnic groups.“ (Cacic, Winter, 1991: 162)

Civic space is the political, legislative, social, and economic environment that enables citizens to come together, share their interests and concerns, and act individually and collectively to influence and shape policy-making. Civic space encourages people to pursue multiple, at times competing, points of view. An open, plural, and dynamic civic space is a central feature of democratic societies because it allows citizens to be an active part of the political sphere beyond elections. It also encourages governments to be transparent and accountable. Some societies are characterized by the unchecked power of a narrow circle of people in whom civic values are so excommunicated that it is impossible to form the way of thinking of citizens through state policy. Like most countries that went through the civil war’s bloodshed, the former Yugoslav republics were such societies. The establishment of peace in such circumstances is linked to the reintroduction of civic values, and since they have been destroyed within the social system, the only way to reaffirm them is through the international community’s involvement

in various ways. It is vital, however, in what way this inclusion will take place. Moreover, nationalism unites communities under the leadership of, admittedly, democratically elected, but leaders who act autocratically.

In the end, we return to one of the basic ideas advocated by psychologists: that conflicts, no matter how socially colored, are psychological problems. Moreover, the psychological core of the conflict is the frustration of basic needs. In modern organizations in recent years, it has been shown that conflicts can also play a constructive role in recognizing and resolving problems. Conflicts that affect the improvement of effects occur in the context of cooperation; in a situation where groups and individuals trust each other, they can be open to exchanging information and opinions.

## **AIM AND METHOD**

The paper discusses theoretically and conceptually ethnoreligious identity politics of dispute, regionally and globally, defining issues regarding conflict management, leadership, and civic development, describing development conditions and the normative framework for conflict resolution. The paper starts with a theoretical framework within which the concepts are defined: ethnic-religious group, ethnic identity and conflict, leadership, and civic inclusion.

The paper's hypotheses are: In the former Yugoslav republics, the influence of ethnicity on political decision-making is permanent and harmful. Identity politics emphasizes ethnoreligious attitudes among the bearers of political decisions in the Balkans, resulting in more deficient public policies and political instability, and changing the ideas and opinions of an individual and group-elite can open a new area of political communication.

The research is based on theoretical and empirical bases within a few fundamental methods: Content analysis, Critical literature analysis, Comparative method—moreover, the author's past and present experience in the conflict-affected region is a general observation part-time ethnographic fieldwork.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Ethnoreligious Conflicts and Conflict Management**

The phenomenon of increased countries with developed democratic institutions and standards with authoritarianism leads to a closed circle of global „legitimate-democratic“ violence, in which democratic institutions and standards, human and minority rights, and freedoms will be a danger. (Hadžić, 2020: 1) Ethno-political conflicts hinder political and economic transformation in most former Yugoslav countries. The Freedom House 2018 reports stated that some indicators such as national democratic governance, the electoral process, civil society, and media

independence have deteriorated in the Region since 2014. (URL-1) Moreover, parallel memory politics and revisionist historical narrative within the politics of fear spread influence among young people where ethno-political indoctrination has reception and is left to chance, creating solid preconditions for hostilities in future generations escalate into violence in specific political-economic circumstances. (Hadzic, 2020)

The ethnic conflict goes through different phases that require different levels of intervention. The first phase is the early warning phase. Then it is possible to identify ethnic conflicts, but it is impossible to mobilize means to prevent them. In the second phase, the conjunct takes an exact form. Then there is the possibility of the involvement of eminent persons and delegations who will establish the facts. The third phase is the problem-solving phase; then, there is a need to involve a third party from within or outside. Moreover, that third party defines the actors, program, and scope of work and discusses existing institutions and the protection of minorities. Military conflict and violence is the fourth phase in which the state ceases to be responsible and reliable, which reduces the possibility of peaceful transformation. Then a new situation arises that needs to involve global action. Conflict can be mitigated or removed but not resolved. (Cacic & Winter, 1991)

For the very transformation of ethno-political conflict, political negotiations are of great importance, but they are also inevitably connected with the community's fundamental relations. Political leaders' ability to compromise and embrace new initiatives depends on the legitimacy and authority emanating from their constituencies, which may be concerned that their traditions and sense of identity are at stake. The persistence of opposing identities remains a significant issue addressed by scholars.

Identity can be understood as changing and subject to further change as individuals and groups experiment with new identifications and limitations. Ethnic categories are not discrete or always mutually exclusive. According to Todd, experimentation is a slowly changing cultural background that can serve as a basis for more radical category changes. (Todd, 2005) It is necessary to address how different categories of identities and their reflective practices are created and shaped by social and political changes (Smithey, 2011, p. 27). Fear of losing identity within global communities, such as Yugoslavia, after disintegration led to the sudden „emergence“ of antagonistic individual national identities, becoming indivisible and exclusive. A specific (extremely negative) characteristic of the post-Yugoslav spaces is that religions are identified with nations (majority). That is why religious ideologies were globalized and reached out to people in the most remote areas with their long arms, conquering their beliefs and intentions. Their messages consolidated a political order in which very few people, connected mainly by bloodlines, ruled over the majority. These were ideal frameworks - for those in power. It took a long time, but the world progressed little by little, so new illusions were needed. (Misak, 2013: 3)

The history of violence and atrocities among national groups has destroyed trust among them. Thirty years after the wars, discourse on political society as if war leaders are still present is just another reflection of multiculturalism stalemate syndrome. However, democratic consolidation will be doomed in advance, or the process will remain permanently unfinished if it persists, as before, in the widespread tendency to discredit the issue of culture. No pure model can succeed in multiple and divided countries, but patiently building a mixed model will respect both national and civic. (Hadžić, 2020) A special kind of division between nationalism and liberalism, in which nationalism is the primary form of shaping collective identity, and liberal universalism in shaping individual autonomies and constitutionalization of political power, has never taken root in this region.

The relationship between collective action in conflict situations and collective identities is a central element of ethno-political conflicts. Because ethnic identity is a familiar concept, it has meaning only when it is recognized by those who participate in it and consume it, which happens when people participate in cultural events or attend. The aim is to create an emotional connection of the audience with the actor and the text. Thus provide the conditions for projecting cultural meaning from its performance. Authentic performances that reach cathexis can „merge“ standard cultural references so that actors and audiences participate in constructing a shared reality. The experience of conflict largely depends on the methods used by opponents. It thus affects the nature of the conflict, which can then take a destructive or constructive form - intimidation, threats, and violence incite fear, mistrust, and despair, while nonviolent methods, on the other hand, provide more significant opportunities for communication and thus opportunities for the development of trust and relationships. Deutsch (1973) points out the difference between destructive and constructive conflict at the core of violence. Destructive conflict is characterized by violence, and the desire of one group to hurt another, where the original forms of conflict are most often forgotten, and their competitive relationship is placed at the center. Although violence polarizes groups, those less violent forms of conflict open up the possibility of developing an effective form of conflict in which opposing parties consider the other party's goals and try to reach an acceptable solution for mutual benefit conflict is transformed.

Fundamental changes in ethnic identity are possible and often represented through fundamental changes in collective action, primarily through symbolic and ritual representations. In the transformation of conflict, the first step is to understand that conflict, which we mostly associate with violence, continues to exist even after it has ceased. It continues through political and symbolic struggles, unlike those of the armed. We are talking about the transformation of conflict through a continuum, moving from violence and intimidation to other forms of conflict that require a greater degree of communication and even cooperation.

„Conflict transformation“ has the advantage of retaining the concept of conflict for those who, and with good reason, cannot just move from a state of war to a state of peace. With the intensification of ethnic violence and the country's political disintegration, the disintegration of its institutions, the national economy undoubtedly also suffers tremendous damage. For example, economic growth will decline if the infrastructure is damaged or destroyed; the free movement of goods and services becomes restricted; industrial and agricultural production is declining. The onset of ethnic conflict negatively affects export earnings, foreign direct investment, and food production and distribution. Rising unemployment, hunger, and poverty in such circumstances can further exacerbate ethnic violence.

The primary characteristics of the conflicts that arose after the Cold War are the intensity of local animosities and irrational hatred between the parties to the conflict; participants in a regional conflict usually have similar resources at their disposal. The awareness of the need for a peaceful solution has been reduced due to all parties' conviction to the conflict that „only a little more“ effort is needed to make critical progress that would determine the domain of the peace solution negotiations themselves. Since they are primarily underdeveloped countries, the participants' diplomatic skills in regional conflicts are relatively low, affecting the effectiveness of the negotiations they conduct. It is reflected in the unwillingness to make real compromises, reliance on force, and abstract legal arguments stemming from outdated constitutional and other provisions. Regional conflicts cause a narrowing of the participants' international political perspective in the conflict, then the security crisis in the surrounding countries and hinder regional integration processes.

On the other hand, ethnic-confessional conflicts are most present where there is a so-called „fake democracy“ or „low-intensity democracy,“ as reputable theorists (Held, 1997) call it. In these societies, instead of political elites and fights between them with „established rules of the game,“ as N. Bobbio believes, there are quasi-elites, cliques, and clique conflicts for raw power and resources. (Bobbio, 1997)

Prospects for social conflict in a country depend to no small extent on the type of socio-political system. Closed, authoritarian systems generate a large amount of dissatisfaction over time, primarily if they serve the interests of certain narrow social groups or use violence to maintain such a system and social tension regulation. In such circumstances, an authoritarian type of politics is created, where „politics manifests itself as power overall, naked force and violence in the service of individual and special egoism, with abuse community and common life.“ However, even in a democracy, dissatisfaction can accumulate if some groups (ethnic, religious, minority) are not adequately represented in state and political institutions (government, courts, army, police, political parties). Thus, the legitimacy of the system as a whole can be, over time, significantly brought

into question, which generates antagonism and as an introduction to more intensive inter- significant conflicts. b) Exclusive national ideologies - except the political system, very significant, if not a crucial factor in social conflicts in ethnically complex states to the nature of the prevailing national ideology, that is, the existence of extreme nationalism and chauvinism.

The presence of civic conceptions of nationalism is certainly not a guarantee of stability nor a decisive factor of national and confessional harmony. However, the emergence of conflict is much more likely when ethnic concepts of nationalism prevail, especially in conditions authoritarian political regime, which mainly generates them. Social conditions for the emergence of two concepts of nationalism differ and the consequences from the result. Economic depressions and crises and the modernization processes, as established by social theory, naturally produce various socio-economic problems that can create crisis hotspots, intra-social and inter-state tensions. In some post-socialist societies, the transition from centrally planned to market economic systems has created many economic and social problems: from falling social product, high unemployment rates, and social inequalities to galloping inflation and the misery of a large part of the population. In doing so, many of these countries, which are considered developing, appear to be in a permanent state of economic crises, while some are in economic free fall and marked social regression. Unemployment, inflation, poverty, i.e., socio-economic crisis, and competition related to control, i.e., ownership of production and material resources, contribute to the emergence of various social frustrations and tensions, which creates favorable conditions for the emergence of various social conflicts. Economic reforms often generate dissatisfaction and social tensions, especially if economic shocks are large and government subsidies for goods, services, and social security are reduced. Then preconditions for the emergence of conflicts between the poor and the rich, containing all the elements of „classic“ class conflicts, occur. In short, the economic slowdown growth, stagnation, economic crises, and economic collapse are socially deeply destabilizing and conflict factors.

Simultaneously, unstable societies, including the societies of the former socialist countries of Central and Southeast Europe, are mainly marked by discussions about the political structure and political processes. The foundation of modern democracies is trust. Public service ethics are a prerequisite to and underpin public trust and are a keystone of good governance. The legitimacy of the government presupposed the existence of absolute fundamental democratic values that needed to be instilled, established, developed, and changed in order for institutions to function. Such values are social and political capital. In public duties, the primary relationship is trust between the official and the community he represents and on whose behalf he acts. The relationship of trust is not limited to political responsibility towards its voters but the sovereign people. It cannot be reduced to a test of confidence in the elections but is a permanent obligation. Therefore,

different norms should encourage persons of higher moral qualities, knowledge, and experience to engage in politics. In parallel, there are codes of ethics, legal principles, norms, individual declarations, acts of unclear legal nature, strict norms that prescribe principles and often refer to the interpretation of unique bodies with legal and moral authority. Through the secularization of society and law, it has been shown that such norms cannot be based on the ecclesiastical authority and appropriate norms (ex-communication, curse). New political communities are half-confessional and multicultural, based on a consensus on the foundations of „social morality as the foundation of a legal community“ (Rawls, 1971: 474). Codes of ethics are not legally neutral; they establish specific conduct standards, even in social anomic conditions.

The question that arises today is why the governments of democratic nation-states are obsessed with ethnic issues rather than the political-economic problems that plague a good portion of their populations. However, an example of former Yugoslavia shows that the citizens did not seek disintegration, but reforms would restore their economic security. War violence contributed to this goal in several ways: the events of the war themselves completely captured the public's attention and prevented any discussion of economic reforms (which would undoubtedly lead to a change of government), direct opponents of the government were marginalized, intimidated or liquidated. Regime control citizens who disagree with the governing policy are discouraged and „convinced“ that there is no alternative to the current situation (which is why their dissatisfaction manifested itself in low turnout - indicative, but pragmatically speaking, insignificant).

In terms of developing a political culture of participation, historical narratives that affect voters' awareness of the country's processes are critical. The fundamental characteristic of civil society from the socialist-communist period is that it was functional in resolving specific common issues and served as a means of political control. One of the preconditions for the creation and functioning of democratic public opinion relies on personal autonomy, which makes every citizen a political subject, able not only to resonate critically but also to participate in the community's political life. Thus, the definition of one's identity includes his view of moral and spiritual issues and his relationship to a defined community. The constant fabrication of dangers (a stimulant) that threaten the alleged survival of an ethnic group creates a psychosis of fear and uncertainty, defensive internal cohesiveness, making it impossible to discern the dangers to the existence of peoples coming from that group. It is rapidly transferred from one religious group (nation) to another in which the same processes take place, creating a chain of imaginary interethnic threats. According to Integrated threat theory, ingroup members who are relatively unfamiliar with the outgroup tend to experience threats than those who know each other (Stephan & Stephan, 2016). Because of all of the above, national identity is an essential component of integrated threat theory.

## **Political Leadership and Civic Development**

Leadership is the process in which a leader influences others to achieve a common goal. The notion of influence in leadership requires that the leader impact the lives of those he leads. Creating change in followers carries a great deal of responsibility and ethical burden and requires a relationship of dignity and respect. Respect for followers requires leaders to be sensitive to the interests, needs, and issues of conscience (Northouse, 2007: 346). Discuss ethical issues; dilemmas arise regarding what good leadership is and how it differs from lousy leadership? Scholars believe that this is the area where empirical political science encounters normative political theory. Good leadership should be fair, both ethically and instrumentally. Destructive leadership can be labeled as such if it is a moral evil, rests on a violation of human dignity and rights (or some other variant of moral orientation), or serves the ruler's selfish whims and private interests solely. It can also be deficient in the sense that it is ineffective due to, for example, incompetence, rigidity, or intemperance in leaders or followers who hinder the use of appropriate means to achieve the desired goals (Masciulli et al., 2009).

Ineffective leadership, the leader successfully chooses the means that bring about the desired goals. If the chosen tools are redesigned - rather than being taken from an arsenal of time-tested routine responses to typical problems, effective leadership fits innovative adaptation patterns (Masciulli et al., 2009). Complex leadership can be both practical and ethical, i.e., the leader successfully chooses the means that are most likely to achieve the desired goals but also seeks to embody the ultimate values (equality, freedom, justice, human rights, environmental sustainability) and modal values (honesty, reliability, confidentiality, justice) in the process. Leadership effectiveness is determined by the actual short-term and long-term consequences of leaders' actions. The assessment of a leader's effectiveness can be revised in historiographies, given the long-term consequences (Masciulli et al., 2009). Leaders must offer moral leadership. They can express the values that hold society together. Most importantly, they can imagine and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above conflicts that tear society apart and unite them in achieving goals worthy of their best efforts.

Furthermore, groups often turn to „bad „corrupt leaders because even bad leaders often provide critical benefits, maintain order, ensure cohesion and identity, and take care of common interest jobs. (Kellerman, 2006) One reason may also be the need for authorities that followers can admire and obey. According to Freud, this intense need could be attributed to „the longing for the father, which we all carry within us from the earliest childhood“ (Kellerman, 2006). Having someone as an authority means we have someone we can follow, who knows what he is doing, and who is responsible for everything that happens. It is present in collectivist countries, whose political system arose from a totalitarian or communist system.

Hofstede's national cultures study explored the „distance of power“ dimension. According to research, many collectivist countries such as the Republic of Croatia (score 73), China (score 80), Serbia (score 86), Albania (score 90), Ukraine (score 92), Russia (score 93), Romania (score 90), Saudi Arabia (score 95), Slovakia (score 100), have a high score which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everyone has their place but in which inequality reigns and subordinates expect to tell them what to do. (URL-2) Thus, an autocratic leadership style is considered ideal.

A dynamic and plural civic space ensures that governing bodies consider the interests, needs, and concerns of society at large. On the contrary, when civic space shrinks, governments and institutions are less likely to be responsive to citizens' requests. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: „If space exists for civil society to engage, there is a greater likelihood that all rights will be better protected. Conversely, civil society space's closing, and threats and reprisals against civil society activists, are early warning signs of instability. Over time, policies that delegitimize, isolate and repress people calling for different approaches or legitimately claiming their rights can exacerbate frustrations and lead to instability or even conflict.“ (URL-3) At the global levels, radical democracy remains the ideal of leftist and progressive forces worldwide, an idea that takes different forms depending on the specific social and political conditions of the place (state, region, institution, workplace) applied. Radical democratic practices should be seen as an alternative and applicable model that could serve as a much-needed corrective and counterbalance to the dominant model of representative electoral democracy today affected by a crisis of legitimacy. Natural democratic practices remain an indispensable part of the struggle to achieve or influence wider social, economic, and political changes.

An example of post-Yugoslav spaces is that democracy has not been won by independent and robust social groups that can act as a counterweight to the state structure, with formed interests that act „transformatively,“; not directing political change from the basis of political pluralism. (Hadžić, 2020) Ethnonational party elites dominate the political scene; there are sharp attitudes of the government and the opposition with a minimal role of non-members in party affairs, a limited direct role of party members in decision making, lack of party factions, weak influence within groups by functional groups like youth and retirees, lack of affiliated organizations, hierarchical internal order; simple organizational patterns. M. Hein and A. Frustorfer (2016) analyzed several statistics and indicators that measure democracy according to different parameters: developmental, social, and the rule of law. All the countries of Southeast Europe, except for Kosovo, regardless of whether they are members of the EU or not, have recorded a constant downward trend over the past ten years. It concerns a physical deterioration. However, even in the case of subjective parameters, such as citizens' trust in society's parliaments

and institutions, the same tendency is shown. Moreover, in this confusion, strong leaders often provide vital support with simple messages derived from national history. Interestingly, most citizens of the region think that politics and politicians are a problem of society.

Conflicts and transition crises are inextricably linked to social weaknesses such as poverty, inequality, the rise of radical populism, and especially the lack of economic prospects that have escalated into protests against governments worldwide.

Bentley emphasizes that politics is a struggle for groups to realize their interests. Thus he identifies interests with activity, with group behavior. It causes even greater conformism, moral mimicry, submissive mentality, fears, self-censorship, giving up the fight for the affirmation of the common good, determining the public interest. With the phrase „spiral of silence,“ Elizabeth Noel-Newman (1980) points to the phenomenon that people tend to adhere to the majority opinion and refrain from expressing their own opinion, which is different and, therefore, minority, over time in society, there is a dominant opinion. Of any different opinions. Thus, a „spiral of silence“ grows into the culture of fear until every opponent's voice is wholly silenced and unanimity prevails. In the book „Culture of Fear,“ B. Glasner talks about how certain political groups encourage feelings of fear to achieve their goals more quickly.

The government that controls society with fear does not have to account for the results because society's fear is enough and the illusion of stability, not necessarily real progress. That is why the word stability is so much used and abused in public space. It is a widespread attitude that is determined based on media reports, community discussions, and superficial monitoring of political debates and current events, which can in no way be a sufficient basis for critical thinking about modern political life. Rawls (1971) sees society as a social pact that encompasses all citizens and is based on fair play. Society needs to be designed to advance its members' well-being and be effectively regulated by a public understanding of justice. Democracy is the search for a common interest, a discussion of communal politics. The common good takes precedence over the interests of the individual. Public, state, or general interests are used in political debates when one wants to denote the benefits/advantages instead of private personal interests.

We can problematize authoritarianism in the form of a soft authoritarianism, which is based „not so much on coercion as on manipulation of consensus, on the semantic transformation of reality, on control of opinion, on persuasion and social pressure through new objects of collective desire.“ (Lloyd, 2011: 54) We can distinguish five types of manipulative content: integrative content without criticism of existing social and political circumstances; the absence of placing

individual destinies in the social framework; politically relevant information is quantitatively irrelevant to entertainment; the boundaries between information and entertainment have been erased; qualitative depoliticization by providing unrelated detailed information without context.“ (Kunzlik & Zipfel, 2006: 42)

Through a discussion of public resources, collective management, and the creation of social organizations according to new principles, the idea of the common good provides a new perspective and ways of ethnic demobilization, showing that space can go beyond the binary principle of public and private and the state and market dichotomy. Thus, the discourse of socialization and resocialization of services and resources managed by a society for the benefit of that same society for social justice and sustainability is critical.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ethnic conflicts and movements, in various ways, have become essential elements of the political life of many countries. Mostly, neither bureaucratic-totalitarian states, ethnocentric nation-states, nor the so-called economy of the free market could not solve the fundamental problem of freedoms and human dignity, nor the problems a consequence and part of inequality and injustice in the modern world. The case of Belgium instructs us that a democratic tradition makes it possible to resolve ethnic conflict.

The animosity among the ethnoreligious groups that encountered nothing but violence and intolerance is evident through the overall negative interaction. These features can only be based on polarized identities that see no way to collaborate. The idea that the development of cooperative ties within the group and between groups in the organization, exchange of information, and expression of different opinions is the basis of moving from destructive to constructive conflict. Furthermore, overcoming constructive conflicts is the basis of modern leadership. Thus, more positive interaction would allow a completely different view of „others.“ Authentic performances that reach catechesis can „merge“ standard cultural references so that actors and audiences participate in constructing a shared reality. As the expressions of a common identity begin to acquire new qualities, so do the boundaries of identity itself can redefine itself. The transformation of collective performance identities may be most effective when moving within communities. Given all that has been said, the ethnic identities and strategies, and methods of resolving ethnic conflict in itself is not a negative phenomenon if it leads to problem-solving. The trouble is if the conflict becomes an end in itself.

Observing the innovation and reinterpretation of narratives and types of collective action that shape fundamental identities can provide us with an essential view of the transformation of polarized ethnopolitical relations. Establishing a sufficient level of interest in the new negotiating policy arrangement thanks to changes in

the local and global sense, such as a declining economy, inequality, and injustice due to the reinterpretation and revaluation of people's resumes is critical for political leaders. The system reproduction model should be socially constructed dimensions of cultural and ideological differences that are the product of structured social relations. Working on understanding the emergence of deep division but with a critical view of mutually reinforcing structures, practices, and schemes that sustain „group division and antagonism“ is vital.

The public sphere is created by creating a communication space for civil discussion of common interest, putting an ethic sign in the background. We can problematize a pattern of oppression of the „majority by the minority“ within the discourse of elites and collective patterns. Moreover, the majority's very oppression by the minority is an integral part of constitutional orders and social reality. It will be so long as social and civic consciousness is activated by a politically oriented collective and majority consciousness.

Starting from the hypothesis that changing the ideas and opinions of an individual and a group (elite) can create new interests/identities of a religiously divided community (nation). It certainly opens opportunities for establishing radically different interethnic relations in conflict-affected areas.

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