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**RELIGION AND LANGUAGE IN THE FUNCTION OF
(DE)CONSTRUCTION OF MONTENEGRIN IDENTITY**

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Abstract: In the 19th century Montenegrins had all that was necessary to round up their national identity: centuries of statehood, their unique linguistic features, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, awareness of their own origin, their true heroes, unique folk costume, national coat of arms and national flag. The process of creating Montenegrin nation was interrupted by losing the country and Autocephalous Church in the early years of 20th century. Awakening of the Montenegrin national consciousness, rebuilding the statehood, making Montenegrin the official language, adopting the Law on freedom of religion and the need to rebuild Montenegrin Autocephalous Church alarmed the creators of projects oriented towards creating “the big nation” to reopen their rhetoric and intentions from 1918 and generally 1920s whilst using the well know model referred to as “endangerment”. The model consists of fabricating myths, creating lies and application of ethno-confessional model of assimilation in unlimited proportions by the media and politics.

Key words: religion, language, nation, identity, myth, Montenegrins, Serbs.

1. Introduction

Opposite of the understanding widespread in Yugoslavian countries, nations do not have a long history: the first European nation, which was French, appeared in the late years of 18th century, and not until after that, the process of making nations started in Europe; the example of that is German nation formed in the middle of 19th century (Kordić 2010, 226).

After that, the process of creating nations spread across Europe. It was a specific kind of workshop. Collective production of national identities which occurred in the 19th century did not work by one unique pattern. The researchers conclude that nations are not 'objective communities', meaning that they are not made an example of clear, objective criteria which are satisfied by all of nation members; on the contrary, nations are, using the term of Benedict Anderson, 'imaginary communities' (Billig 1995, 24). By the words of sociologist Orvar Löfgren, some sort of "do-it-yo-self" instructions were made for this purpose (Löfgren 1991, 104). A nation must have history which determined continuity with its famous ancestors, multiple role models which represent the national characteristics and furthermore – language, cultural monuments, folklore, special mentality, national anthem, national flag and folk costume.

Looking up to the West European nations, nation forming began on the grounds of South Slavs as well: 'In South-East Europe, forming nations developed with different starting and ending phases during the 19th and 20th centuries' (HöschNehring/Sundhaussen 2004, 391). Respectively, the process of forming nations began in different time periods during the 19th century and continued deep into this century – the author wrote in 20th century – (somewhere until today the process is not finished or its result is uncertain) (Sundhaussen 1993, 44). In the light of these findings, the claim about primordial existence of the nation is uncovered as a myth. That myth, which is preserved in Yugoslavian countries, is known as primordial access to the nation: 'primordial access comes from the nationalists themselves. The basic idea is that nation exists for a long time now and that its history can be tracked for centuries back (Breuilly 1999, 241).

No matter how much did popular ideas suggest the opposite, in the 19th century in Balkans ethnos of today did not exist yet: the analysis of maps from 19th century which were made by geographers in service of Austrian Monarchy shows that "geographers created ethnos and nations, which in that era – whatever criteria one takes – did not exist yet, on painting table" (Riedel 2005, 232; Kordić 2010, 226-228).

The question of Montenegrin ethnic, linguistic and statehood identity was not disputable for centuries, just the opposite. All South Slavic people, and not just them, watched Montenegrins and country

Montenegro, along with its battles and liberty, with unhidden admiration. Montenegrins talked and wrote in their national language centuries before Vuk Karadžić. They were also conscious about their origin, had widely recognizable folk costume, flags, long history of statehood and their Autocephalous Orthodox Church. However, in the 19th century – the century of creating nations in Europe, therefore on Balkans as well, Montenegrins did not have enough educated people to carry out that European fashion. Heroes from battle fields were fed with myths and lies. Guided by the instructions from Garašanin's "Načertanije" and his followers "Serbs" appeared in Montenegro. Montenegrins got a "new origin" from "famous, invented Serb royalty" and the priority in Serb genus (they have been promoted into Serbian Sparta) and Serbs filled holes in history in order to rewrite the centuries under the Ottoman Empire. The mission of Vuk Karadžić with slogan "Serbs everyone and everywhere" is just one of numerous, almost identical examples of creating a national language and stories between which the difference is almost indistinguishable. Of course, the ethno-confessional model of creating nations, inherited from the centuries of living under Ottoman Empire, was added to it.

The same scenario repeated once again after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Those were the times when Yugoslavia fell as well, and the new "Serb consciousness" in "Serb countries" was born. Today is no different – Montenegro is being bombarded with the same weapon - myths and lies. The way that people see and acknowledge origin, history, language and religion is the result of the decisions of political elite, which assigns the concrete view point and enhances it, that is moves it, using political steps. Concerned 'elite took care of spreading the group identity, whose image it made corresponding to the political goals which it strived to, and then expanded it with the help of media (Riedel 2005, 248; Kordić 2010, 232).

2. Language and Identity

For centuries Montenegro bordered with Ottoman Turkey on three sides, and on the fourth with Republic of Venice, later on Austria-Hungary. Montenegrins were, firstly, warriors, and Montenegro was an army camp. In rare periods of piece, they did jobs in animal husbandry and agriculture. In order to become governors in their fraternity or tribe, they had to prove themselves on battlefield, but be eloquent as well.

Daniel Grabić says that language and religion are the foundation of Montenegrin nation. National identity and nation itself, in Montenegro, are based on categories like battle for liberty that lasted for centuries, long state independence, tribe community and heroic-martial model of culture (Grabić 2010, 1; Marić 2016, 12). Montenegrin language was forged and enriched for centuries. The educated layer was missing among the

warriors in Montenegro in order to standardize the language and its grammar.

However, there were those from Balkans and Europe, who emphasized Montenegrin ethnic and linguistic uniqueness: count Pyotr Andreyevich Tolstoy, French paper *Moniteur* (1790), prince Anton Sorkočević, Jacques Louis Violla de Sommières, marshal Auguste Frédéric Louis Viesse de Marmont, Henri Delarue, Austen Henry Layard, *John Gardner Wilkinson*, M. Musin-Pushkin, Franz Ludwig Baron von Welden, M. Majer, Lady Georgina Muir Mackenzie (1868), Fran Kurelec, József Ignác Bajza etc (Krivokapić 2017, 90).

Navigator Pyotr Andreyevich Tolstoy notes in his diary in 1698 that near Kotor and Perast live "free people who call themselves Montenegrins (...) of Orthodox beliefs and Slovenian language and a large amount of them; they do not serve anyone, occasionally they war with Turks, and sometimes with Venetians as well". Russian empress Catherine II in proclamation (January, 1788): "Svim Srboem, Crnogorcami i proćem žiteljem slavnoga naroda", calls for uprising against Turks, in the name of Orthodox and Slovenian solidarity (Ićević 2015, 164-166). French paper *Moniteur* starting with 2nd February 1790 writes the following: "Montenegrins are Slovenian nation which lives in the mountains located between Dalmatia and Albania." First, so far known, book in French language, about Montenegro and Montenegrins is called "Mémoire sur le Montenegro", a book by Adrien Dupré, who speaks about Montenegrins as an individual nation and marks them with ethnonym Montenegrins (Adžić 2010, 353-355). Marshal Auguste Frédéric Louis Viesse de Marmont, Napoleon's general and governor of Illyrian Provinces, the man against whom Montenegrins and people from Bay of Kotor along with Russians fought from 1806 to 1807, wrote in his 'Memoirs' that Montenegrins are "of Slovenian origin and Orthodox beliefs", that Montenegrins speak in the purest form of Slovenian language and that they have lived in isolation since their arrival (12th or 13th century) and in that way preserved their qualities. For Jacques Louis Violla de Sommières Montenegrins are autochthonous or native people which inhabited Praevalitana, from Bay of Kotor to Drina, and for a certain time even to city Durrës. He explicitly speaks about national independency and claims that the ancestors of today's Montenegrins gained 'precious national independency'. Montenegrins are "nation that jealously guards its freedom" in which "the spirit of national independency" lives permanently. They are the only ones amongst all inhabitants of Balkans who preserved the "national feeling of independency". Frenchman Henri Delarue wrote about Montenegrins in 1857: "With highly developed social consciousness, they help their national administration, today, when it transitions from a tribe to nation, with the same love that was given when helping its tribes" (Ićević 2015, 164-166). The president of Censor Committee, M. Musin-Pushkin has sent a letter which states: "The manuscript written in

Montenegrin language, which contained the Montenegrin code and legacy of bishop Petar I, with his approval to print it, has been given to consideration of the Saint Petersburg Censor Committee (...)" (Jovanović 2016, 277-278; Krivokapić 2017, 90-92).

Diplomat from Dubrovnik and prince, Anton Sorkočević, suggests that Montenegrin language should be the unique language for all Slavs. Prince Sorkočević, in articles published in 1838 in *La Revue du Nord*, remarking that Italian literary dialect is the speech of Tuscan hill people, that Germans adopted mountain and north Upper-German language with the identical purpose, where foreigners never entered and where nothing foreign could not have influenced the pureness and development of the language, therefore, he suggests for all Slavs to use one language – language of Montenegrin highlanders. Their language, “melodic as all southern languages, pure and clean as the original mountain language, and energetic” is the most qualified for common language for Slavs (Kovačević 1925, 192, 193; Krivokapić 2017, 92).

Unlike other South Slavic people, Montenegrins were always members of exclusively shtokavian dialect (which represents the base for Montenegrin, Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian language), whilst Croatians, Bosniaks and Serbs used or are still using other dialects as well: torlakian, kajkavian and chakavian.

In the favor of proving that Montenegrins were not given the language from anyone and that Montenegrin language did not arise from Serbian, testify the words of writer Lady Mackenzie. In the middle of 19th century she notices that “the written language of Serbs which is being processed now in Serbia was taken from the mouths of shepherds and hill people, its vocabulary is the vocabulary of folk songs and its pronunciation taken from poets and heroes of Herzegovina and Montenegro ” (Mackenzie 1868; Krivokapić 2017, 92). Furthermore, “Gorski vijenac” by the Montenegrin prince-bishop and poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš was, because of its incomprehensibility, paraphrased on Serbian language by Dušan Bogosavljević in 1927 (Bogosavljević 1927).

On Vienna agreement in 1850, in which Montenegrins did not contribute, southern dialect with ijekavian pronunciation has been accepted (which was used by all Montenegrins and parts of Croatians, Bosniaks and Serbs). In that time, the language was not named, but, however, two of the most numerous South Slavic nations – Serbs and Croatians, adopted the name Serbian-Croatian across the border areas of that common language. By force, Montenegrins entered the Kingdom of Serbs, Croatians and Slovenes, later Kingdom of Yugoslavia, whose spoken language was named as (imaginary) Serbian-Croatian-Slovene language, further known as Serbian-Croatian. In SFR Yugoslavia, Serbian-Croatian was also the official language. It was not until 2007, Montenegrin language was declared an official language.

Table 1: Population of Montenegro, based on mother language in 2011

	Montenegrin	Serbian	Bosnian	Albanian	Croatian
%	36.97%	42.88%	5.33%	5.27%	0.45%
Num.	229251	265895	33077	32671	2791

Uniqueness of Montenegrin language was denied, but nevertheless, from 1948 to 1981 making Serbian-Croatian the official language did not, in most cases, influence the choice of Montenegrins. However, starting with the 1920s, under the influence of assimilation politics, the number of Serbs and speakers of Serbian language grew. Number of speakers of Serbian language on census in 2011 is evidently bigger than number of Serbs for 14%, whilst number of speakers of Montenegrin language is smaller than number of Montenegrins for approximately 8%. Although Montenegrin language is the official language since 2007, part of Montenegrins has not accepted it as part of their identity yet.

3. Montenegrin Identity

The loss of Montenegrin statehood, followed by the confusion around the national identity, is, firstly, the consequence of political decisions made without any legal grounding. The fact that Montenegro lost its statehood in the moment when a lot of other countries gained theirs, when the right to self-determination was the dominant doctrine in international relationships, represents an additional paradox (Jelić 2015, 217). It is important to emphasize that Montenegro had lots of advocacies of statehood on the international scene, who met Montenegro due to diplomatic activities of their sending countries in Montenegro or Montenegrin ministers abroad. One of them is Alexander Devine (1865–1930), who was proposed to be ambassador in London by the Montenegrin government in exile but, however, British government refused the agreement. Devine unequivocally accused France, whose “diplomacy wants to create Great Serbia as guarantee for billions borrowed to Serbian government, for the disappearance of Montenegrin statehood (Adžić 2014, 10, 26; Marić 2016, 16).

The loss of nationality brought strife to well placed foundations of Montenegrin national identity, because of which the denial of contemporary dominant right to self-determination resulted in “denial of Montenegrin nationality, nation, Church, Montenegrin identity” (Jelić 2015, 217). The main ingredient in dilution of Montenegrin ethno-linguistic tissue was the creation of the Serbian nation using ideology engineering in the 19th century. In the gap between truth and myth, the

core of Montenegrin country, nation and language, even crooked, preserved (Krivokapić 2017, 94). Montenegro renewed its statehood in 2006, and a year later made Montenegrin the official language, furthermore, became a member of NATO, and is currently in negotiations towards membership in European Union. However, years 1918 and 1920 have made their mark on the population of Montenegro. Loud rhetoric which potentiate on “returning to state before 1796, when Montenegro and The Hills were separated. The threat about demolishing unity of under-Lovćen Montenegro and Montenegrin Hills which was formed two centuries ago by their liberating unification, under the wise government leadership of Petar I Petrović Njegoš (Saint Petar Cetinjski)” (see: Šuković, Mijat), is once again part of Montenegrin everyday life. It is threatened by separation of Montenegrin “Herzegovina” and Bay of Kotor as well. Advocacies of that politics are evidently forgetting that neither in 1796 nor in 1813 (when Montenegro and Bay of Kotor united) Serbia did not exist on the map of Europe.

Censuses in Montenegro from 1879 and 1948 covered only religion orientation. It was not until 1948 that orientation based on nationality appeared.

As main reason of social and political division Bieber (2003, 39-40) points out to lack of continuity in country area caused by Turks – Montenegrin-oriented areas are mostly ones that cover the oldest national territories, whilst Serbian-oriented population comes from areas lastly appended to Montenegro. However, the situation has changed along with migrations in the second half of 20th century, especially with the arrival of the Serbian population from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s (Marić 2016, 12). In the last 50 years the highest number of migrants is noted in 1990s. In the period between 1990 and 1999 almost 42 thousand of current population of Montenegro settled on its grounds. Most of the migrants in Montenegro came from Serbia (around 55 thousand). Less than 22 thousand migrants came from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Monstat 2012).

Table 2: *Censuses 1948-1991*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Montenegrins</i>	<i>Serbs</i>	<i>Bosniaks</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Albanians</i>	<i>Croatians</i>	<i>Yugoslavs</i>
1948	342009	6707	-	-	19425	6808	-
1953	363686	13864	-	-	23460	9814	6424
1961	383988	14087	-	30665	25803	10664	1559
1971	355632	39512	-	70236	35671	9192	10943

1981	400488	19407	-	78080	37735	6904	33146
1991	380467	57453	-	89614	40415	6244	26159

Table 3: Censuses 1948-1991 (percentage)

Year	Montenegrins	Serbs	Bosniaks	Muslims	Albanians	Croatians	Yugoslavs
1948	90.67 %	1.87 %	-	-	5.15 %	1.80 %	-
1953	86.62 %	3.30 %	-	--	5.58 %	2.34%	1.53 %
1961	81.37 %	2.99 %	-	6.50 %	5.47 %	2.26 %	0.33 %
1971	67.15 %	7.46 %	-	13.26 %	6.74 %	1.74 %	2.47 %
1981	68.54 %	3,32 %	-	13.36 %	6.46 %	1.81 %	5.67 %
1991	61.86 %	9.34 %	-	14.57 %	6.57 %	1.02 %	4.25 %

Table 4: Research from 2000 (see: Lazić 2001)

Montenegrin	Monte negrin- Serb	Serb- Montenegrin	Serb	Muslim	Muslim- Montenegrin	Albanian	Yugoslavs
44.2%	13.5%	13.1%	2.7%	8.7%	5.6%	4.8%	7.4%

Data from research from 2000 shows that “national self-awareness in Montenegro is not yet completely crystallized – one part of population represents the thesis about ethnic uniqueness of Montenegrins, whilst others emphasize ethnic connection with Serbs” (Lazić 2001, 281). If one adds percentage of Montenegrin-Serbs (13.5%) and Serb-Montenegrins (13.1%) to the percentage of Serbs (2.7%) from 2000, it results 29.3%, which is practically identical as the results of census from 2003 (31, 39% of Serbs) and 2011 (28.73 % of Serbs). It is obvious that Serbian assimilation politics influenced Montenegrin-Serbs and Serb-Montenegrins in order to declare themselves as Serbs. That fact has, mostly, affected the growth of the number of Serbs in Montenegro, which is recorded on the censuses from 2003 and 2011.

Table 5: Censuses from 2003 and 2011

Year	Montenegrins	Serbs	Bosniaks	Muslims	Albanians	Croatians	Yugoslavs
2003	267669	198414	48184	24625	31163	6811	-
2011	278865	178110	53605	20537	30439	6021	1154

Table 6: Censuses from 2003 and 2011 (percentages)

Year	Montenegrins	Serbs	Bosniaks	Muslims	Albanians	Croatians	Yugoslavs
2003	43.16 %	31.39 %	7.78 %	3.97	5.03 %	1.10 %	-
2011	44.98 %	28.73 %	8.65 %	3.31 %	4.91 %	0.97 %	0.19%

The number of Montenegrins compared to the number of Serbs from World War II varied greatly, not as the consequence of eventual migrations, but exclusively the consequence of undeveloped national consciousness and susceptibility to desired national labels (Greenberg 2005, 19). After the 1990s and rush of nationalism, the national structure of Montenegrin population changed drastically, which was the consequence of dramatic events which took place on the grounds of former Yugoslavia and Montenegro. The evidence of this are the censuses from 2003 and 2011, where it is noted that in 2003 number of Montenegrins decreased and counted 43.16%, and then in 2011 increased slightly, reaching 44.98%, whilst number of Serbs drastically increased (31.99%) and later mildly decreased (28.73%).

4. Religion and Identity

The conflict of powers of Serbian Orthodox Church and Montenegrin Orthodox Church on the grounds of Montenegro, along with question of language, is the key indicator of division of the Montenegrin population. Having in mind that in Orthodox communities statehood lies on the autocephaly of the national Church, it becomes clear that the question of Serbian orthodox Church overcomes the religion boundaries. The question of acknowledging the Montenegrin or Serbian autocephaly among Montenegrin population is hardly measured, because the census from 2011 offered only one choice considering Orthodox beliefs, without any signs about the autocephaly (Whether they belong to Montenegrin or Serbian Orthodox Church). On the last census, from the total of 278.865 Montenegrins, 246.733 (88.48%) of them is of Orthodox beliefs, whilst from the total of 178.110 Serbs, 175.052 (98.28%) of them is of Orthodox beliefs (Marić 2016, 23).

Historic facts say that Montenegrin Orthodox Church has been independent since 1766. In the Catalog of bishoprics of Tsargrad Patriarchy from 1797-1798, in which bishoprics of former Patriarchate of Peć are noted, Montenegrin Metropolis was not, which means that it was treated as independent (Jovanović 2016, 52). Sokolov comments the Catalog of bishoprics of Tsargrad Patriarchy from 1797, establishing that in it there is no mention about Montenegrin Metropolis, as the fact that it was not under the jurisdiction of Tsargrad's Patriarch in that time and that it was autocephalous (Sokolov 1904; Radojević 2010, 74). Montenegrin Orthodox Church was characterized by extraterritoriality in relation to the Tsargrad Patriarchy, which was the branch of interest of Turkish Empire. "Tsargrad Patriarchy did not claim over Montenegrin Church, holding on to the canonical rule that Church borders of one independent country have no right to enter the borders of another independent country" (Marinković, Igumanović 1934, 131).

The official Catalog of Russian Church from 1851 states Montenegrin Orthodox Church as autocephalous. In the official document – Catalog of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches "Sintagma", which is, by the approval of Tsargrad Patriarchy, announced in Athens in 1855, on the 9th place Montenegrin Orthodox Church is mentioned as autocephalous (Jovanović 2016: 45, 51). Status of Autocephalous Church is defined in the Constitution for Principality of Montenegro from 1905 as well, in which in act 40 it is stated that national religion in Montenegro is eastern orthodox, whilst the Church is autocephalous and it does not depend on any foreign Church (Ustav 1907, 12).

Serbian Orthodox Church claims that it has been autocephalous for 800 years. The problem with this approach is that it is very contradictory to the facts. Unlike Montenegrin Orthodox Church, Orthodox Church in Serbia is nonexistent in Russian Diptih from 1851 and in Nomocanon "Sintagma" from 1855; it gained its autocephaly in 1879.

However, from annexation of Montenegro in 1918 and the disappearance of Montenegrin Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox Church has the monopoly over orthodox believers in Montenegro. The political association of South Slavs was followed by religion unification. The consequence of creating the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was also the unification of so far known autocephalous orthodox churches, amongst which was Montenegrin Orthodox Church. The decision about promulgation of the united Orthodox Church has been made on the conference of bishops in Srijemski Karlovci in December of 1918 (Petranović 1990, 51), whilst the implementation of unification came after Sinod of Tsargrad Patriarchy and the government of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes signed an agreement. The royal government has confirmed the unification of all orthodox churches in the newly-formed country into the unique united Autocephalous Serbian Church of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in June of 1920 (Petranović 1990, 52).

In the Canon letter from Ecumenical Patriarch Melentius IV and Holy Sinod of Ecumenical Patriarchate from 24th February 1922 (number of protocol 1036) by which the rise of Serbian Orthodox Church of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the degree of patriarchy is acknowledged, is written: "Having consulted with our Holy Sinod on that question by duty, we praise the willing of the Church and country and have admitted the benefit that orthodoxy can have from such an uplift, and we have found that the way of act is more in agreement with Church economy (opportunism) than with the precision of the Canon Law". The government of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes has paid the Patriarchy of Constantinople million and five hundred thousand gold francs (Jovanović 2016, 63).

Table 7: Percentage of the share of Orthodox Christians in Montenegro
(see: Imeri, 2016)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Orthodox</i>
1948	90.67%
1953	86.61%
1961	81.37%
1971	67.15%
1981	68.54%
1991	61.86%
2003	74.23 %
2011	72.07%

In the context of state-nation implemented language standard plays the key role, but in the case of orthodox communities Autocephalous Church as well (Malešević 2017, 73, 206). The "Church question" in Montenegro causes controversies, especially in the last hundred years. It has long stopped being a spiritual question and turned to a sphere of political and national impact (Marić 2016, 23). This happened in the 1920s but nothing has changed to this day.

"Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral as part of Serbian Orthodox Church tends to marginalize Montenegrin national uniqueness (...) Hence religion, following the principle *volens nolens*, has a very disintegrative influence on Montenegrin population, frequently coming out of the frame of spirituality and universality" (Bakrač, Blagojević 2013, 67). Recently passed Law on freedom of religion caused the coordinated action of Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian-

oriented opposition, with more than heartfelt help from political and media machinery from Serbia and Bosnian entity Republic of Srpska. Serbian Orthodox Church refuses to be registered in Montenegro (however it is in Croatia and North Macedonia) and by that it demonstrates that it does not admit Montenegro as country, and it acts as a country inside of a country.

5. Final Considerations

Along with fabrication of myths, language and religion are the two main mechanisms for creating nations on Balkans. Surely, language to a much smaller extent. The creators of Serbian nation in Balkans have tried to assimilate neighboring nations by language, but that did not come upon a suitable soil. At least not in the expected measures. Therefore, they turned to a well-known recipe taken from the era under the Ottoman Empire. The religion, embodied in Serbian Orthodox Church is the main mechanism for assimilating nations in Balkans. Ottoman Empire was divided into Millets (religion nations). In the time of Ottoman Empire, Orthodox Church within Ottoman system of Millets seemed like the only legitimate representative of Orthodox Serbian regiment for centuries. Orthodox Church acted like the only national institution which in some way connected Serbian population scattered under the government of various states for centuries, because of the common exoduses and mass migrations (Vrcan 2001, 206). Serbs as a nation have come from Srb Millet (prior to this they have belonged to Rum Millet for centuries), and that very principle is the one they have practiced on the surrounding nations in the late 19th and early 20th century. In that way, they have created a nation of united Orthodox believers under the leadership of Serbian Orthodox Church.

The same scenario is seen in the 1990s on the grounds of former Yugoslavia. At that time the new plan was, apparently, forged for Montenegro as well. Montenegro accepted numerous migrants, mostly Serbs, from war affected areas. The new habitants, along with agile media propaganda, have notably contributed to the rise of the number of members of Serbian nationality. The number of Serbs in Montenegro has significantly increased from the wars in 1990s in former Yugoslavia, whilst the number of Montenegrins came close to the historical minimum (from 90.67% in 1948 to 44.98% in 2011).

Although the number of Montenegrins halved and the number of Serbs increased tenfold, “endangerment” of Serbs and Serbian Orthodox Church is fabricated. With the growth of number of Serbs and fall of number of Montenegrins, “endangerment” of Serbs, their language and Church is growing. Under the excuse of peaceful protests against Law on freedom of religion, which has the intention that Montenegrins, same as

Serbs, have the right on their Church and sacral heritage, it is attempted to, through the Church institution and Canon jurisdiction, achieve the “big nation” project and territorial aspirations.

The big challenge lies in front of Montenegro. The following question remains opened: will the Montenegrin national identity be empowered, will the number of speakers of Montenegrin language rise and will Montenegrin Church renew its autocephaly, or will Montenegro return to the state from 1990s, or (even worse) 1920s and Montenegrins will become the national minority in their country.

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