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**EU INTEGRATION AND THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY:
SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

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Abstract: A major goal of the Republic of Serbia's foreign policy since 2000 has been the country's integration into the EU. In this respect, in 2012, Serbia became a candidate for EU membership. However, there has been a growing skepticism among the Serbian people about this objective. This ambivalence can be correlated not only with the recent economic crises in some EU countries but also with what are regarded as profound differences in cultural and religious values between Serbia and the EU. This is particularly significant since the majority of Serbia's population are adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is widely regarded as the defender of traditional values, as well as a staunch opponent of Kosovo's independence, secularization and "so called" modern Western values. Nevertheless, my recent research among a sample of Serbian Orthodox believers regarding their attitudes about the cultural ramifications of Serbia's EU integration is far more nuanced than these attitudes might otherwise appear to be.

Key Words: The Republic of Serbia, Serbian Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox believers, EU integration, secularization, Kosovo independence, the West.

1. Introduction

The questions of EU integration and the related process of Europeanization are topics of widespread concern in Serbian society today. In this respect, there is concern that Serbia would be required to adjust its national legal, economic, and political structures to conform to those of the European Union (cf. Olsen 2002, 932). While there is a widespread acceptance of European values—values, however, which have been derived largely from the media—paradoxically, there is at the same time a perceptible rejection of these same ideas. In this regard, there is a common perception that the Serbian Orthodox Church (hereafter Church, Serbian Church) and its adherents are opposed to everything that emanates from the West. This is particularly significant because the majority of Serbs have declared themselves to be Orthodox Christians, and as Orthodox, they have been stereotyped by a number of scholarly observers as Euro-skeptics and Europhobes. Thus, I would like to delve more deeply into this controversial issue, and at the same time, give voice to the views of Serbian Orthodox believers themselves.

With the democratic changes in 2000, the strategic foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia (hereafter Serbia) has been to enter the European Union (hereafter EU). In this respect, over the last decade, many changes directed toward this goal have been introduced (see The Government of the Republic of Serbia 2011). Nevertheless, during this same period, the Serbian government also strengthened its connections with the Church. Among the most significant changes enacted were the introduction of religious education into primary and secondary schools, the restoration of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Belgrade, the enactment of the *Law on Churches and Religious Communities*, the approval of military chaplains, the authorization for the restoration or restitution of nationalized churches, church buildings, monasteries and other church properties which were confiscated during the Communist regime, and correspondingly, new churches are being erected and old ones renovated (Topić and Todorović 2011, 77; Buchenau 2014, 69, 78).

In spite of the government's determination to join the European Union, many barriers and problems remain to be resolved. Among the most significant of these is Serbia's unwillingness to recognize Kosovo's independence. Due to historical, political, religious, and cultural reasons, for many Serbs, Kosovo, as the cradle of Serbian Orthodox Christianity, represents a symbolic ethnic identity marker (Allcock 2000, 315). In other words, the whole idea of Kosovo is laden with historical memory about what it means to be a Serb. Thus, the USA and the EU are very often seen in Serbia "as responsible for 'taking away sacred Serbian land', 'the heart of Serbia' and '15% of its territory'" (Bakić and Pudar 2008, 277). Furthermore, the recent economic crises in EU countries, especially in

Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Slovenia and the current migration crisis, have caused the Serbian public to gradually lose trust in and question the advantages of EU membership (see European Integration Office 2017).

Europeanization is a complex process which brings about modifications in many aspects of people's everyday lives. This is not only the result of the reorientation of governmental and social institutions but also because of changing attitudes about personal and national identity (see Sassatelli 2009, 1). How does religion fit into this changing context?

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the *Lisbon Treaty* which stipulates that state-church relations are regulated on a national level, and thus the EU “only monitors compliance with religious freedoms” (Olteanu and Nève 2014, 186, 184). In this respect, some authors even speak of adaptation of churches and spiritual associations within the EU (Jansen 2000, 109).

Thus, it is quite clear that Churches are also directly influenced by Europeanization, regardless of the wishes of their believers. How did the Serbian Church find its place in the current post-socialist, transitional, EU-oriented Serbia? In order to answer this question, I will draw on a wide range of sources including cultural anthropology, theology, and European studies, as well as draw upon quantitative data. In addition, I interviewed Serbian Orthodox churchgoers about their cultural notions and impressions of the EU, EU integration and EU influence on the Serbian Orthodox Church, and Orthodox faith and dogma.

2. An Orthodox Christian Europe

While the EU is ostensibly a secular organization, it has frequently been asserted that it has been built upon Catholic-Protestant roots from which Orthodox Churches are distanced (see Delanty and Rumford 2005; Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006). Thus, Orthodox Christianity is often perceived as a cultural border between East and West (Nitsiakos 2008, 358), especially with the enlargement of the EU in 2004 by the addition of ten mainly East European countries while the “predominantly Orthodox Balkan region has been constructed as... some sort of a ‘new wild East’” (Perica 2006, 195). It is the opinion of some scholars that “the leaders of today's Orthodox Church see the European Union as a modern echo of a division of Europe that is over 1,000 years old, and they see supranationalism and European identity as potential threats to national religious and political identities that have been forged and defended at tremendous cost” (Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006, 686).

In Serbia, where the latest census has identified 85% of the population as Orthodox (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2013, 39, 47), there is a fairly common belief that the EU poses a threat of loss of

national identity and culture (Radisavljević-Ćiparizović 2013, 89), secularization, and the possible imposition of, or the domination by other religions (cf. Topić and Todorović 2011, 109-110). As a result, Serbian Orthodox Christianity can be seen as a counter-image to the EU. This point of view has frequently been depicted in a very negative light by a number of scholars. Specifically, the Serbian Church is accused of religious and national intolerance (Ramet 2006, 160); EU-skepticism (Vukomanović 2008; Ramet 2006), EU-rejections (Stojić 2006, 326, 327), Islamophobia (Perica 2006, 198), anti-liberalism (Ristić 2007, 191-192) and isolationism (Vukomanović 2008). These notions are in line with the anti-Western attitudes held by some Serbian church leaders. Some prominent church bishops, such as Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović) and Bishops Atanasije (Jevtić) and Filaret (Mićević) have used their positions to express their anti-Western, anti-American and anti-NATO attitudes (see Stojić 2006, 326, 327; Perica 2006, 188, 189). More importantly, during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, these and other clergymen “played a leading role in the nationalist movement” preaching for national unity (Buchenau 1994, 69-70). Currently, many other Church representatives (even some of those mentioned) have voiced opinions in favor of the European Union and cosmopolitanism. Thus, Stojić (2006, 326, 327) notes the existence of both isolationist and pro-European factions among clergymen in the Serbian Church. In fact, like the Serbian public, the Church remains profoundly ambivalent with regard to EU membership. On the one hand, the Church constitutes both a symbol and a repository of national identity, and on the other, a defender of traditional values. Of particular significance is the connection between Serbian ethnic identity and Orthodoxy, a connection so strong that it is commonly assumed that to be Serbian is to be Orthodox, whether this is understood in strictly religious terms or simply in a historical and cultural context.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the relationship between Serbian ethnic identity and Orthodoxy is a rather complex one. In this regard, a distinction must be made between those who are sincere believers dedicated to the life of the Church and who “are educated in Orthodoxy” and those who may be identified as “self-declared” believers who have their own individual understanding of religion, and interpret Orthodoxy according to their own worldview (Raković 2013, 106, 112). Thus, belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church does not necessarily entail believing in, accepting, or even respecting Church dogma. For instance, it is possible to declare oneself Orthodox, as did the majority of respondents in the last Serbian census, and at the same time, to reject Church dogma, to not participate in religious services, and/or to be an atheist. In other words, in such cases, Orthodoxy simply plays a symbolic historical and cultural role in the reaffirmation of kinship ties and personal and Serbian ethnic identity.

After decades of marginalization under Communism, and with the gradual weakening of Yugoslav unity during the 1980s, as well as the recent wars and the dissolution of Yugoslavia during the 1990s, the Serbian Orthodox Church has become a major medium for ethnic homogenization and a proponent of traditional cultural values (Vukomanović 2008, 238; Topić and Todorović 2011, 76, 107, 108; Raković and Blagojević 2014, 150). Related to this, from the late 1980s to very present, the Church has assumed an increasingly visible role in everyday life. For instance, among other such manifestations, can be mentioned radio and TV programs featuring priests, as well as the prominence of Orthodox themes in the media in general. This is especially true after 2000, a time when the strong connection between the Church and the state became evident (Topić and Todorović 2011, 77; Buchenau 2014, 78, 87; Leustean 2014, 11-12).

Thus, on the one hand, while the EU helps Orthodox Churches “via the peace process, humanitarian efforts, and cultural and environmental programs”, on the other hand, the Church is cautious in respect to the secular, materialistic and liberal values of the West (Perica 2006, 196, 197, 201; Byrnes 2006, 304). In this respect, Buchenau (2015 71, 73, 74, 87) explains that the defining characteristic of Serbian Church leadership in the last couple of decades is its “disunity, disorientation and lack of direction”.

3. A European and Orthodox Serbia

Significantly, the Church has manifested no unity regarding EU integrations, a fact that has not helped to clarify the situation for the religious laity. However, there are a few theologians and bishops who have addressed this topic directly. Specifically, among them, the recently deceased Fr. Radovan Bigović, formerly a professor at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, who remains the most prolific academically-based writer on this topic. Drawing on Orthodox theology, Fr. Bigović (Bigović 2000; 2010; Bigovic 2011) argues for ecumenical dialogue, respect, tolerance, and love for all people regardless of their origins, race, religion or ethnicity. He also criticizes religious nationalism (ethnophyletism) and the existence of an “exclusive national Church”, as well as nationalism and cultural homogeneity (Bigovic 2011).

Fr. Bigović’s ideas clearly reflect those of a significant liberal, Western-oriented faction within the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, both within the Church and society there is also strong opposition to ideas such as his. As previously mentioned, both among the public, as well as in academia, the Serbian Orthodox Church is seen as a closed, nationalistic, and homogeneous institution, an anti-EU institution, closely allied with the government.

According to Stojić (2006, 326, 327), the Serbian Church “recently became more open to the latest European developments, taking into consideration that the EU membership is a strategic goal of Serbia”, he concludes that, nevertheless, the majority of the Church representatives have “anti-European, anti-Western and conservative stances”. In addition, few articles have appeared on the topic of Serbian EU integrations in the official newspaper of the Serbian Church, *Pravoslavlje (Orthodoxy)*. These are mainly negative, portraying the EU as a “banker-anti-Christian organization”, a “Freemason Union” (Dragojlović 2008); and a place for “mass manipulation” (Živković 2006). In spite of what may appear to be a predominantly negative attitude on the part of the Church towards the West, this is not an entirely accurate portrayal. For instance, the Serbian Church is a member of the World Council of Churches; it has participated in a number of conferences on ecumenism; its theological students now attend Catholic and Protestant seminaries and universities, and the Church collaborates with the Russian Church, the Church of Greece, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Catholic Church, as well as some Protestant denominations (Bigović 2010, 189; Buchenau 2014, 87). Thus, from 2000 onward, the Church has cooperated with EU representatives and has evidenced a far more “pluralistic” orientation (Buchenau 1994, 74, 87). The Church also has a representative at the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (Leustean 2014, 15). In this respect, several hierarchs of the Church, including Bishop Grigorije (Durić) and the previously mentioned Metropolitan Amfilohije and Bishop Atanasije, have argued that Orthodoxy can act as a unifying force for the spiritual renewal of Europe (Radović 2006; Jevtić 2010; Nezavisne Novine 2006). Like Fr. Bigović, many other Serbian Orthodox theologians argue for ecumenical dialogue, religious tolerance, freedom, mutual understanding, and equality and cooperation with other peoples (see Jablanov Maksimović and Bigović 2010).

In spite of the Church’s favorable position regarding Serbia’s EU integration, substantial theological and cultural barriers remain to the acceptance of many of the European values advocated by the EU. For instance, while Fr. Bigović has criticized Orthodoxy’s rejection of the contemporary world, and has advocated that Orthodox Christians should take their place in the new “postmodern, post-Christian order”, he has also characterized this same world in the eyes of the Church as hyper-individualistic, pluralistic, and secular, characteristics which lead to self-isolation, competition, self-indulgence, hedonism, an excessive focus on youth, and materialism, all of which reflect a crisis in values (Bigović 2010, 9-17, 194). In addition, the Serbian Church does not approve of everything that belongs to the so-called “post-Christian” world in both the West and the East. Among other such issues can be mentioned homosexuality, abortion, and the practice of yoga. What is quite clear is that while the Church is ready to embrace Serbia’s integration into the EU, it is not

prepared to accept many of the EU's values, doctrines, and principles which are often seen as a necessary part of the integration process.

As I previously mentioned, a more critical point of divergence is the still festering problem of Kosovo. As Vukomanović notes (2006, 248), the Serbian Church is "one of the main political protagonists on the Serb side in Kosovo". In respect to the Church, this is particularly significant in the light of several very important issues. Kosovo is involved in a separate process of proposed integration into the EU. However, although Kosovo is a potential candidate for integration, five EU member states have not recognized its independence. Significantly, the presence of the EU in Kosovo is evidenced by the European EULEX Mission which acts as a legal entity. Also, Kosovo participates in the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans (EUR-Lex 2010). With regard to these issues, the Holy Synod (Sveti arhijerejski sinod SPC 2011) has sent the following message to the Serbian government: "EU membership is a good objective and an idea justified by geopolitical, economic, and cultural reasons, but if giving up Kosovo and Metohija... represents the price which must be paid for membership in a union already affected by deep crisis and threatened by dissolution, then we should openly and honorably withdraw from candidacy and look for other models in a multi-polar world that is already a reality."

There is an obvious difficulty in accurately interpreting the often contradictory and ambivalent statements by Church leaders in respect to EU integration. For instance, they have spoken in rather abstract and general terms about a spiritual union with Europe as a precondition for political, legal, and cultural integration. What this probably refers to is the reaching of some consensus with the Europeans about values. However, it is absolutely clear that this does not mean the acceptance of a package of social and cultural traits associated with what is perceived to be a contemporary Western lifestyle. As previously noted, the Church specifically rejects the values represented by conspicuous consumption, consumerism, materialism, hedonism, and the promotion of homosexuality and lesbianism. However, I would add that this ambivalence is mainly due to the unresolved issue of Kosovo. This confusion and ambivalence on the part of the Church have also been borne out by my own ethnographic field research and the responses of my informants whose opinions I judge to be typical of a significant segment of Serbian society.

4. The Serbs as an Orthodox People

Given the importance of Orthodoxy among the Serbs, there remains a basic question regarding how and to what degree the liberal and secular heritage of the EU and its reputed Catholic-Protestant roots will be perceived as a threat to both personal and collective Serbian identity.

These questions are of particular concern because religion and religious identity have historically played such a crucial role in the political and public life of Serbia, and continue to do so today.

Although some scholars such as Ristić (2007, 192) believe that “those who support the [Serbian] Church and its ideology, can hardly favor a Serbian identity oriented toward Western European values and the EU”, other researchers contradict this simplistic point of view. According to a research project on “Religiosity in Serbia” carried out in 2010, of those Orthodox Serbs surveyed, 50% were in favor of EU membership, 32% were against it, 3% were ambivalent, and the remaining 16% expressed no opinion at all (Radić 2010, 20).

What is quite clear from a recent research project regarding the role of the Church vis-à-vis Serbian EU membership is that the opinions of Orthodox believers are quite diverse, contradictory, and often ambiguous. For example, in a mentioned study “Religiosity in Serbia“, the respondents voiced greater confidence in the Serbian Orthodox Church than in any other institution (Radisavljević-Ćiparizović 2011, 32-33). However, a more recent survey in 2013 indicated that trust in the Church had fallen to 41% with a small plurality of 42% expressing the greatest confidence in the army. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know exactly how to interpret these results since questionnaires can be constructed in such a manner as to distort the answers in a variety of ways. While quantitative, mainly sociological, research into the religiosity of Serbs often includes sets of questions dedicated to discovering the depth of personal religious belief, I decided to use a basic ethnographic method, that is, to talk with people who claim to be regular churchgoers, and who thus participate regularly in religious services and accept Orthodox beliefs and practices. Among the most important questions to be explored would be those focusing on Serbia’s integration into the EU and how this might affect the Serbian Church and its associated beliefs, dogmas, and practices. I also wanted to discover the grounds for what may be called “Euroscepticism”. Thus, in order to study these questions, during 2012, I interviewed a non-random sample of 30 highly educated individuals, between 22-47 years of age, who were members of the Serbian Church and who conformed to the above-mentioned criteria.

In my review of a number of academic papers regarding the Church and the EU, I have found that church members had been characterized stereotypically as holding negative views concerning the role of the Church in respect to the EU. Thus, I had expected my informants, due to their education and religious identity, to reflect these same opinions. However, contrary to my hypothesis, I was surprised to discover that their responses were quite varied and did not unanimously replicate the opinions of the Church hierarchy.

One of the most fundamental questions I posed was whether my informants believed EU membership might influence the Church and its

beliefs and dogmas. The answers I received were quite diverse: 16 respondents felt it would have no effect at all, 10 believed it would have a negative influence; 2 envisioned it would have a positive effect; and 2 expressed no opinion at all.

There were different opinions about the accession itself and diverse views regarding the potential benefits of the EU to Serbia. Nevertheless, the majority of my informants held the opinion that the EU could not influence Orthodox Christianity, the Church, or the religious practices of Orthodox Christians. In other words, there was a belief expressed that Orthodox Christians have a personal relationship with God, and, thus, secular organizations such as the EU and the Serbian state cannot have any significant impact on individuals in respect to their faith. Specifically, there was a conviction that worldly affairs could not have a detrimental influence on “the true faith” and spirituality of genuine and sincere believers. In this respect, the following are typical of my informants’ responses:

“Christianity is eternal and so is the Church.”

“True believers will not care in which state they live... There is no Christian state.”

“I believe that political orientation should not influence the role of the Serbian Orthodox religion or that of the Church. These roles depend upon religious consciousness, the love of God, and the consciousness of members of the Church. Regardless of whether Serbia is in the EU or not, as always, it suffers from history; it has always been the Serbian Orthodox Church which has kept the Serbian people alive; it is the pillar of Serbian national identity and its spiritual beacon.”

“For a responsible person, this [the EU membership] should not represent a threat. Also, within the European Union, Christianity can remain in its fullest form, [that is] a Christian can be committed and serve God and His creation.”

Moreover, my informants called attention to the religious freedoms which exist in the EU countries, including those with an Orthodox majority such as Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. Austria and Finland were similarly mentioned in respect to their liberal policies towards the Orthodox Churches. Thus, it is clear that these informants firmly believe that the EU will not jeopardize Serbian religious and national identity. However, without any specific reference to the EU, some of my respondents expressed the opinion that Serbia’s political, educational, and cultural policies, as well as what they described as degradation within the Church itself, had weakened and compromised national and religious identity.

Among those who believed that EU integration would have negative consequences for the Serbian Orthodox Church, this apprehension was expressed for the most part in general rather than specific terms. These respondents expressed more nuanced feelings towards the EU; they were

dissatisfied with the EU integration process; some were afraid of its influence; others were skeptical and suspicious of EU assistance to their country and its effect on the Serbian Church. For instance, a number of respondents drew a parallel between the EU and the NATO bombing of Serbia. Another contention was that EU membership would weaken the Church because it would be obliged to make concessions in order to conform to EU standards. EU-skeptics also made frequent mention of the economic crises in EU member countries. What I found to be particularly significant was the fact that the responses of these informants were largely emotional and lacking any detailed explanation as to exactly what might result with EU membership:

“The purity of faith and belief would be forgotten.”

“Basic Christian values of submissiveness, tolerance, patience, and truth would be lost.”

“Everything would blur. Religion in the West is going backwards. I don't like that idea. I'm not sure what our way would be, but [pause], I just don't like it.”

“With regard to faith, the people and the priests will become slack.”

“Maybe [the EU] will be more attractive to young people than the traditional values of the Church?”

“During the time of former Yugoslavia, we had a competitive technology and exported our goods to the markets of Third World countries. Now when our economy is undeveloped, now especially, there's no way to compete with the countries in the Union! We have the natural and human resources, which means that they will use these to exploit us. [After joining the EU] there will be no borders, and we won't be able to protect our market.”

Thus, what was expressed in general terms was a fear that European integration would result in secularization and the loss of national identity, and that EU membership would also result in economic and political exploitation. As one of my respondents explained: “If we eventually become part of the EU, it would be a little honey and a lot of bile. At the beginning, there will be no changes. But I think that afterward they will demand modernization of the Church... The changes would occur in canonical issues, the introduction of a new calendar and reform of church services. We will see how our Church responds. At the beginning, nobody will force you. They have to prepare people, and it takes time for that.”

In contrast to the above-cited negative predictions regarding the Church, two of my informants held positive views, expressing the belief that Serbia's integration into the EU would bring significant benefits to the Church. Furthermore, one of them described the Church as “already corrupt” and closely tied to the state, a viewpoint they articulated in the following way: “Europeanization should not have to have anything to do with the Church because the Church should be a separate entity... The

priests shouldn't lead the state! The EU ought to introduce secularization to the state... In many ways now the priests lead the [Serbian] state, and this is not as it should be. We have already lost out national identity without Europeanization and EU membership."

Another informant summarizes the issue very succinctly in the following way: "The Church will become better through competition."

5. An Orthodox European Serbia: Preliminary conclusion

Having in mind the already mentioned strong connection between Serbian Orthodoxy and national identity, my research reveals that it is not easy to assume what it means to be a Serb today. What my interviews have revealed is that Serbian Orthodox believers are not an ideologically homogeneous group and that their views are far more complex than many academic critics and the data from survey research have suggested. As one of my informants commented: "Just because you are Orthodox, others think that you practice your faith without thinking."

Such expressions of critical thought and independence of belief were typical of my sample as a whole. While I expected regular churchgoers would quote Church representatives and, therefore, reflect the Church's attitudes; this was not the case. My conclusions reaffirm the results of a study by Raković and Blagojević (2014, 155) which concluded that Serbian Orthodox believers "educated in Orthodoxy" have diverse and often contradictory attitudes toward political, social, and religious issues in Serbia.

The results of my interviews, in turn, suggested two unanswered questions: Why had no informant cited the views of any Serbian theologian? Why had the Serbian Church not expressed any official positive opinion about Serbian integration into the EU? In this latter respect, one might conclude that the Church was somehow less concerned with this issue than were Orthodox believers and the citizens of Serbia. However, on the other hand, one might also speculate that academicians have been far more focused on the Church's attitudes toward Serbia's integration into the European Union than have been ordinary citizens. Furthermore, my informants' responses provide what is not forthcoming from the Church, that is, specific opinions and concrete observations on the topic. In other words, in contrast to the statements of my informants, representatives of the Church have only proffered diffuse, conflicting, and often confusing messages. Moreover, the yet unresolved issue of the Church's attitudes toward and with the EU reflects the diversity of opinion within the Church itself, and as Boeck (2011, 21) has characterized the situation, it is one of "different currents and fractions". What I find of particular importance is that my interviews have revealed that for many the EU need not be viewed as the antithesis of the Orthodox Church. In other words, Europeanization does not necessarily pose a threat to

Orthodoxy nor does secularization mean the curtailment of religious freedom as this has sometimes been implied (cf. Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006). As one of my informants summarized the issue: “The accession of Serbia into the EU cannot in any way jeopardize Orthodox faith among the Serbs or their relationship with the Church as long as they believe in and have faith in Christ as the only true way.”

Even though over half of my informants expressed positive opinions regarding the effects of EU integration on the Serbian Church, my study also revealed the profoundly ambivalent notions on Euro integration held by others. They expressed fear about its secular influence on Church dogma and rituals, as well as about the possible destruction of those Orthodox values related to family values.

Inasmuch as my research was based on a nonrandom sample of well-educated and committed Orthodox believers, the question may well be posed as to how representative my findings may be of the Serbian people as a whole? In this respect, recent survey research indicates that, like those in my sample, the Serbian people are quite divided and ambivalent regarding Serbia's integration into the EU, and their opinions are constantly shifting in response to both domestic and foreign events, just like those of the Church leaders.

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