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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NORTH MACEDONIA AND MONTENEGRO

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Introduction

This dissertation will endeavour to illustrate the connection between Orthodox church and nationalism in Southeast Europe by examining two case studies, the Montenegrin and the Macedonian. It is crucial to analyze whether the cases followed the region's pattern of a different type of nationalism, including the national churches, having an essential role in creating the national ideas. However, from the breakdown of the findings, we can make the hypothesis that 'In the case of Montenegro, as well as the case of North Macedonia, the involvement of The Church to their national state had a multidimensional impact on their sustainability and created nationalism.'

Before starting the chapter-by-chapter analysis, we should place the study chronologically. The beginning of national ideas in Southeast Europe is set in the 19th century when we observe the creation of two national movements, the Greek and the Serbian. In the first chapter, the diversity of South-Eastern Europe will be analyzed, compared with the West, where we have national movements, intending to perceive the difference with the case studies subsequently. The study will also focus on the creation of the autonomous states of Montenegro and North Macedonia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia until today, with references to events during these years to prove the working hypothesis.

For the purposes of the analysis, the names of the countries may differ according to the period examined. At the same time, we should clarify that the term 'church' may refer to the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) or the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) or Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC). From June 2022, the Macedonian OC will be an autocephalous church with canonical and liturgical unity with the Church of Constantinople. It means that, at the moment, the Macedonian OC is no more part of the SOC. Till then, the orthodox church in North Macedonia was divided into two entities, the one under the SOC and the self-determined as the official church of Macedonia. In Montenegro, the SOC is the official church that represents the vast majority of Orthodox Christians in Montenegro. There have been unsuccessful attempts to create a Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Still, they did not succeed since it does not represent the majority of the people and is not in a normative union with the Patriarchate.

In order to prove the working hypothesis, I will analyze the structure of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its influence on the creation of the new states after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. With examples and references to facts, I will explain how the SOC opposed the cases of national revolutions of the 20th century. In fact, the SOC maintained a status of reference to Serbia as the center of the former Yugoslavia while the states tried to support their self-determination against Serbian nationalism.

In the continuation of the thesis, I will analyze the term nationalism as it has changed and prevailed in the 21st century. After explaining the main differences with the traditional definition of the term, I will study contemporary events according to which the orthodox church interfered

and influenced the national issues of the states, differently from the 19th and 20th century, adapted to the new ‘layout’ of nationalism. Specifically, I will analyze the case of the national elections of Montenegro and the involvement of the SOC in the overthrow of the government, as well as the case of the MOC's position in the name issue of North Macedonia.

With this analysis, an attempt will be made to convey to the reader how the orthodox church can, in different cases, get involved in national issues other than what historians formulated in the 19th century and give birth to internal matters. In addition, it is essential to emphasize that the pattern of creating nation-states and creating a national church is not always valid, resulting in a problem in the sustainability of the state.

Discussion of the methodology followed, and the choice of sources used.

This dissertation undertook two basic methodology approaches during the bibliographic research. The first one, used for the first part of the study, is the inductive method, the logical model in which general principles are developed from specific observations. The second approach is the deductive method, the rational model in which particular expectations about hypotheses are generated based on general principles, used in the second part of the research concerning the case studies.

The first part of the study concerns the church's involvement in the creation of nation-states with an emphasis on the example of North Macedonia and Montenegro. In this case, I hypothesize that the possibility of Montenegro and Macedonia does not coincide with the usual pattern established and recorded by historians for Southeast Europe. Then with arguments through the further study of the cases, I realize that it is indeed not valid, and thus we confirm the hypothesis.

Instead, in the second part, I choose the definition of nationalism for the 21st century that is appropriate for the topic under consideration and create the hypothesis that the church today in these countries again affects national issues and produces nationalism but in a different way than that of the first part. I study the cases through real examples and compare observational data with theory, ultimately accepting the hypothesis from the results.

In this way, two theories are presented in this thesis; one concerns the traditional definition of nationalism in Southeast Europe, and the other is the modern definition of the 21st century. Accordingly, the examples used by the two countries are adapted to the different time and theoretical periods to help further support the working hypothesis.

To do this, I have chosen books on political ideologies and history for the theoretical framework. At the same time, I used academic studies and publications in scientific journals for the individual analysis of Southeast Europe. Precisely because there is not sufficient bibliography related to the fundamental research, which simultaneously asks the above theories and the case studies, I followed a different method of finding and selecting a bibliography.

In addition, for the aims of each case study, I used news from authoritative newspapers and magazines from both countries and Europe. The articles selected result from cross-sourcing and do not include reports from unreliable or unverified sources.

Review of the existing literature

I used three prominent and other supplementary books to prove this hypothesis. The first one is *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (1997), by Adrian Hastings¹; the second is *The Balkans* (2000), by Mark Mazower²; and the last one is *Political Ideologies* (2005), by Andrew Heywood³.

In chapter five, entitled *The South Slavs*, Hastings asks if there are so many nations and when, why, and how they became so. He connects nationalism with specific characteristics such as religion, language, and ethnicity. He is speaking about the ‘*normative pattern of a particular close integration of church and state.*’⁴ Basilius J. Groen in his article, entitled *Nationalism and Reconciliation: Orthodoxy in the Balkans* articulates similar positions regarding the connection between nationalism and the church in the Balkans⁵. In this article, Groen, the author, analyses the situation in the post-Yugoslav region with references to the new states of the former Yugoslavia. It explains the strange balances between the new forms and the Serbian Patriarchate, as well as the church's involvement in the birth of conditions after the dissolution. Correspondingly, Karin Hofmeisterová, in her article *Ecclesiastical nationalism and importance in world Orthodoxy: the case of the Serbian Church at the pan-Orthodox Council in Crete*, presents the relations between the Serbian church and Montenegro and North Macedonia. He is addressing that ‘*The SOC was more successful in drawing attention to ecclesiastical conflicts with unrecognized Orthodox churches in Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro*’⁶

Mark Mazower advances a more literary view in his chapter on nation-state building. Although he does not discuss the church's role in the same way that Hastings does, he addresses the issue of national formation after the death of Tito with an emphasis on Macedonian and Montenegrin issues and ethnic minorities. Regarding Montenegro in particular, Erin K. Jenne & Florian Bieber, in their article *Situational Nationalism: Nation-building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox*, describe the components of nation-state creation during and after the breakup of Yugoslavia.⁷

Last but not least, Andrew Heywood, explains the creation of separated natio-states in

¹ A. Hastings (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

² M. Mazower (2000) *The Balkans*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson

³ A. Heywood (2021) *Political Ideologies*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Volume 7, Chapter 6: Nationalism

⁴ A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 129-30

⁵ : B. J. Groen (1998) “Nationalism and reconciliation: Orthodoxy in the Balkans, Religion, State and Society”, *The Keston Journal*, Volume 26, No 2, pp. 111-128

⁶ K. Hofmeisterová (2019) “Ecclesiastical nationalism and primacy in world Orthodoxy: the case of the Serbian Church at the pan-Orthodox Council in Crete”, *Religion, State & Society*, Volume 47, No3, pp. 348-9

⁷ : E. K. Jenne and F. Bieber (2014) “Situational Nationalism: Nation-building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox”, *Ethnopolitics*, Volume 13, No 5, pp. 431-460

former Yugoslavia, as well as Mazower, as a policy of violent expulsion of minority groups.⁸ In the same chapter, he describes the term nationalism in the 21st century as a change of the traditional term into a globalized model. On the same level, Aleksander Zdravkovski & Kenneth Morrison, in their article *The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: The Quest for Autocephaly*, explain the role of nationalism in the cases of the recognition of autocephalous in the national churches in Serbia and Montenegro during the centuries. As they mention, ‘*In both Macedonia and Montenegro, for example, the Serbian Orthodox Church has blocked recognition of the autocephaly of the local Orthodox Churches—in short, negating the existence of those respective nations.*’⁹

⁸ A. Heywood, Political Ideologies, op.cit.

⁹ A. Zdravkovski and K. Morrison (2014) “The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: The Quest for Autocephaly” in S.P. Ramet (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe. Palgrave studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 240-1

Chapter I: The timeline of Nationalism in the region

Before starting the case study analysis, it is essential to make a short timeline of the nationalism in the region. Nationalism and thus the creation of national states in the area, extends across different stages, most of which The SOC played a significant role. This chapter's aim is not to analyze the term nationalism in SEE or the narration of the past but to create content in which the following chapters will develop.

During the 19th century, the upsprings made by Serbs and Greeks were the leading national movements in South-Eastern Europe. In this region, nationalism followed a different pattern, as the '*Eastern Orthodox Churches were involved drastically and grievously and acted like carriers of nationalism.*'¹⁰ In both countries the intelligentsia of 19th century consist mainly of priests and church leaders; this way, national Churches and national movements were interdependent. Thus, we have a different type of nationalism compared with western ones, which was a battle against the power forms represented by the state and The Church.

The French Revolution also influenced the ideological direction of South-Eastern Europe during the 19th century. With the French Revolution, the masses became a political factor, and thus inspired the uprisings in the region. As the basic principles of nationalism were the identification of the state-nation and the common language, race, religion, and culture of the members that make it up, a different model of nationalism was formed in Southeast Europe that could not be based on all these elements. Hastings wrote that the ethnic and language barrier in the Balkans was crucial; as a result, the formation of a common nation couldn't be based on common linguistic characteristics as an interface. It also connects with the minority issue in the region. The Hungarians in Vojvodina and the Albanians of Kosovo, along with the widespread Serbo-Croatian language spoken among south Slavs, create complexity in ethnic and linguistic linchpins.

At the same time, culture and religion in the region were connected in a particular way. On the one hand, the western influence of the Catholic Church combined with the Habsburg historical and cultural influence and on the other hand, the Orthodox Church connected with the Byzantine influence. These two different approaches interplay and create complexity in the separation of each and every national idea coexisting in the region. This proved to be a problem in the years following and especially during the 20th century.

Considering the above, we understand that borders in south-eastern Europe were created by the specific socio-political circumstances of the time and not as a result of strict nation-building methods and characteristics. Even the uprisings made by Serbs and Greeks back then cannot be characterized only by nationhood standards, like common ethnic, linguistic, and religious background, but more by the willingness of the people to save themselves from the foreign enemy,

¹⁰ D. Livanios (2002) "Nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Balkans", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Volume 2, No 2, pp. 173-4

aka Ottomans.

It goes without saying that creating one national idea and one state in the region was far more straightforward than creating many different states. The common characteristics were extremely important and thus the creation of a state that would combine these characteristics and in which the distinct national elements of the region could coexist was the ideal solution. The concept of Yugoslavism, the notion of a shared national identity of the Slavs, expressed in various forms, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, etc., and aimed to unite the Slavs against the Empires in a common language, a common national identity, and one state. The above idea of nationalism dominated the region for a significant part of the 20th century. The big problem was that was supported mainly by members of intellectuals and elites in Europe and gradually entered the region through Illyrism, described by the Croat Ljudevit Gaj. Illyrism was based on the unity of the South Slavs within the Habsburg Empire. Those who subscribed to this ideology they would set linguistic, religious, and cultural differences aside to claim rights. In the course of the agreements and public discussion on the issue of the creation of a common nation among the South Slavs, the Serbian representative was Vuk Karadzic, one of the most influential intellectuals during this period¹¹. The common language was fundamental to the Serbs, so they tried to establish Serbo-Croatian. This common south Slavic dialect is spoken by Serbs, Croats, Slovens, Montenegrins, and Bosnians. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, they separated the common language into national languages for every state.

Therefore, only after World War II and the victory of Tito's Red Army did the common South Slav nation become a reality. According to Tito, the main thing that unites South Slavs is that they fought together against the enemy during the World Wars. Thus, Tito created a different form of nationalism in a united Yugoslavia. Tito's Socialist Federal Republics of Yugoslavia and the national minorities living in the region are equals and should live in peace together.¹² Furthermore, he was the first to encourage the use of the term 'Yugoslav' in order to describe the common Yugoslav nation. Tito, himself, was the first who declared that he was Yugoslav and supported the unity among the ethnicities.¹³ Tito claimed that he solved the problem of the region by uniting the separate ethnicities and creating a 'home' for all of them¹⁴. The above means that Tito clearly understood that creating a common national idea was far more accessible in the region, and it was going to solve, in a way, the problem of arrogation by Serbs and Croats.

After the death of Tito, the separation of Yugoslavia and the creation of different types of nationalism in the region was a slippery slope. The two prominent types of nationalism that formed

¹¹ It is important that during 19th century Vuk Karadzic was also one of the few intellectuals of Serbia, because, unlike Greece, Serbs were mainly peasants without a big intelligentsia in the country and not important diaspora.

¹² S. Mesic (2004) *The Demise of Yugoslavia: A Political Memoir*, Budapest: Central European University Press

¹³ "Background: Tito's Yugoslavia", Center for European Studies, downloaded from <https://europe.unc.edu/background-titos-yugoslavia/>

¹⁴ J.C. Campbell (1980) "Tito: The Achievement and the Legacy", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 58, pp. 1045-1059.

during the previous years resurfaced again to claim their national prestige. In that way, the Serbian National Church played (and still plays) a significant role in creating the peripheral of Serbian nationalism. The states achieved to develop their national state. Still, they failed to build their national church, which became a problem in the future of their sustainability as the Serbian Patriarchate penetrated the national issues in.

We conclude that nationalism in the region diversifies from time to time, but the influence of the church is the only consistent factor in the area. From the 19th century until today, the creation of national states in the Balkans, especially among South Slavs, connected with the church in different ways, which I will analyze in the following chapters.

Chapter II: The connection between Serbian Orthodox Church and the ex-Yugoslavian South Slavs

1. The Serbian Patriarchate

The Serbian Orthodox Church composed of one patriarchal eparchy, four honorary metropolitanates, thirty-five bishops, and one autonomous archbishopric, which is based on Article No. 14 of the Constitution of Serbian Orthodox Church¹⁵ and subsequent decisions of the Holy assembly. This structure included the local orthodox churches of Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, and North Macedonia. All these local churches were canonical with the Serbian Patriarchate and established under the SOC. So, the federal republics of ex-Yugoslavia and the Autonomous Provinces were administratively part of the SOC. This means that the responsibility over the decision-making in the organization, function, and existence of the local churches was under their religious leaders, which are attached to the Serbian Patriarchate.

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, SOC was involved in the political and social life of the new states and their connection with Yugoslavia (at the time, Serbia-Montenegro). The church's leadership supported the Serbs' attempts in Bosnia and Croatia to achieve a national union with Serbia itself. For the church leaders, due to artificial borders created by totalitarian regimes for administrative purposes, Serbs found themselves in new republics outside of Serbia. Thus, they could not acknowledge these borders as permanent, and the church had the duty to unite Serbs under Serbia. So, the SOC has been highly involved in the wars following the breakup of Yugoslavia, with the pinnacle of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, which was considered the historical centre of the Serbian Orthodox Church, where the SOC fully supports the non-recognition of the state.¹⁶

A big part of the creation of the national state is the creation of national political, social, and religious institutions to defend the rights of the state itself and the people living in it and thus support its political institutions. In the case of ex-Yugoslav republics, SOC, even from the wars of Yugoslavia, made it clear that the priority was to defend the rights of the Serbs, which was a natural barrier to the efforts to create a national identity in the new state. It does mean that in their

¹⁵ "Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church, II edition of the Holy Synod of Bishops", Belgrade, 1957. ["Устав Српске православне цркве, II издање Светог архијерејског синода", Београд, 1957.] Downloaded from http://srpskaenciklopedija.org/doku.php?id=%D1%83%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%81%D1%80%D0%BF%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%86%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%BB_5_1957

¹⁶ For more about Serbian Orthodox Church from the creation till today: "The Orthodox Church of Serbia" by CNEWA, <https://cnewa.org/eastern-christian-churches/orthodox-church/the-autocephalous-churches/the-orthodox-church-of-serbia/> and "Serbian Orthodox Church" by World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches-serbian-orthodox-church>.

attempt to create a federal state, each of the ex-Yugoslav republics clashed with SOC which, even after the political recognition of the state, remained the leading national church and had a significant role in the social and political life of the new state.

In both wars of Croatia and Bosnia, the Serbian Church called for peace, but at the same time, they supported the Serbs in the region and their effort to unite with their motherland. Also, in the case of Kosovo, the SOC rejected the recognition of the new state, which was supported acutely by the international community. The case of Montenegro and Macedonia, which will analyze in the subchapters following, differed from the other republics as they seemed to break away from Yugoslavia peacefully. But, even in these cases, the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in creating the national state was determinant, and the involvement in national politics was a paradox compared with other subjects.

Usually, the role of the religious entities must be conjoiner and supranational. In the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church, during and after the Yugoslav wars, the influence of the church in politics and the connection between political parties and the church was significant for the creation of national states and even further in the retention of nationalism and national movements in the region.

2. The case of Macedonia

The contemporary Republic of North Macedonia was under the Serbian Orthodox Church until 1941, when the country was occupied by Germans and Bulgarians and they broke it off with anticanonical means.¹⁷ After the withdrawal of the German-occupied army, the Church in the Federal Republic of Macedonia was reorganized with a different base and thus created an ad hoc committee by clerics and laity to re-establish the local Church. In their effort, they had the support of the central communistic government in Belgrade, which had already recognized the state as the federal republic of Yugoslavia with the name ‘Македонија’.¹⁸

We should keep in mind that the secession of the Serbian Patriarchate was the engine of the creation and recognition of the national state. The new state had to create political, social, and ecclesiastical institutions in order to sustain itself. The existence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church affirms the presence of the Macedonian nation itself, which was really important for the local leadership in Macedonia and, at the same time, for the central government in Belgrade. In fact, under the constitution of Yugoslavia which states that each and every nation and nationality in the federation has ‘equal rights’¹⁹ and thus the Macedonian nation had the right to have a

¹⁷ R. Daskalov and D. Mishkova (2013) *Entangled Histories of the Balkans - Volume Two*, Netherlands: BRILL

¹⁸ J. Pettifer (1999) *The New Macedonian Question*, London: MacMillan Press LTD

¹⁹ M. Pavičić (1974) *The Constitution of The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. Ljubljana: Dopisna delavska univerza Ljubljana, Volume 39, pp. 53-4

national church. However, at the same time, this was against the ecclesiastical rules, in which the duty of church organization is liable only to the church leadership, which till the time of autocephalous sub tend to, aka the Serbian Patriarchate, in cooperation with Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In Skopje, in 1945 the first Ecclesiastical-National Assembly convened in order to reorganize the local church as the Autocephalous Macedonian Church. They pleaded for the long existence of the church in Macedonia, as well as the nation's recognition by the central government and other ecclesiastical and political reasons. They asked for an Autocephalous Macedonian church in which the clerks would be ethnic Macedonians, and they would use the Macedonian language in the worshipping and administrative life of the church. With that movement it was apparent that the will was to connect the creation of the national state with the national church as an integral part of the new state. The result of the church creation supported the sustainability of the state and thus connected it for the first time with political rather than theological issues. The Serbian Patriarchate rallied to denounce the Ecclesiastical-National Assembly and the decisions they made about the autocephalous and the organization of the church as anticanonical²⁰. The Patriarchate called for Church Congress in 1945, which asked for the return to the 1941 regime in order to normalize the relations between them. For the Serbian Patriarchate, the ecclesiastical affairs and farther more, the autocephalous shouldn't be a political objective, and thus the representation of the new church only by ethnic Macedonians was a matter of ethnophyletism, which the Orthodox Church condemned from the 19th Century regarding Bulgarian Exarchate in the 1872 Council of Constantinople.²¹

From 1950 and for some years onward, the relations between the two churches improved, with the Macedonian clerics being part of the elections of the new Serbian Patriarch and Macedonians assuming bishops of the Serbian Patriarchate. Furthermore, the Serbian Patriarchate approved the use of the Macedonian language in the administrative duties of the local Church, which was really important for the Macedonians. The problem was that the Ecclesiastical-National committee, which was taking the decisions in the name of the Macedonian Church, was anticanonical to the ecclesiastical rules. Thus, for the Serbian Patriarchate, the decisions they made were invalid. In October 1958, the Second Ecclesiastical-National Assembly convened, which declared itself a Legislature and established the boundaries of the ecclesiastical province to extend as far as the borders of the new state of "Macedonia" recognized by the central authority of Belgrade. The Head of the so-called "Macedonian Orthodox Church" was appointed a bishop based in Skopje. The Assembly agreed that this Church should have a normal relationship and unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church through the Serbian Patriarch, whom it also recognized as its own Patriarch. In this way, the Assembly of the committee was officially recognized, which

²⁰ The terms 'canonical' and 'anticanonical' are referring to the relations between the churches. The term's origin is from Greek language and means 'according to the rules'.

²¹ Orthodox Christian Laity (2012) "The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism", downloaded from <https://ocl.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/>

the Serbian Patriarchate considered anticanonical. At the same time, it made the Macedonian Church partially autonomous under the Patriarchate. The Serbian Church was forced to recognize these changes and give the local Church some autonomy.

A few years later, a third Ecclesiastical-National Assembly met in November 1964 and overturned the agreement with the essential goal of a full Autocephaly. This would authorize the Bishop of Skopje to negotiate with the Serbian Patriarch for further rights and mediation so that the "Macedonian Orthodox Church" would be recognized by the rest of the Orthodox Churches. Until July 1967, the above issue did not seem to have any prospects, both on a bilateral and Orthodox level, when the fourth Ecclesiastical-National Assembly was convened in Ohrid, which declared the Macedonian Orthodox Church autocephalous.²² The Macedonian archbishop Dositheos in his letter to the patriarch of Serbia, asked to respond to a 'legitimate request of the Macedonian people'.²³ Even from that sentence, we understand that the creation of the national state was fully connected with the design of the national Church as a part of its existence and sustainability. The creation of the MO Church has been seen as a request of the Macedonian people who wanted their Church within the borders of the newly recognized state.

The reaction of the Patriarchate of Serbia to the irregular Autocephalous of his Province was immediate. This decision did not concern the believers who lived in the province but the administration of the Church. In September of the same year as his annulment (1967), an extraordinary Synod of the Hierarchy of the Serbian Church was convened, which declared the leadership of the Macedonian Church schismatic.²⁴ Despite this, the respective vicar, of the Serbian Patriarchate, of the Metropolis of Skopje, was prevented from communicating with his flock as the political and ecclesiastical authorities of Skopje put up obstacles.²⁵ Thus, for many years, there were two churches in the state, the one recognized by the Serbian Patriarchate and the one recognized by the state leadership.

In the effort to create an independent state in the context and after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, North Macedonia clashed with the Serbian Church even if it had the support of the central leadership. Although Tito himself placed Macedonia as one of the components of Yugoslavia and equal to the other Federal Republics, the Serbian Orthodox Church did not recognize its right as a state to have its national church, which is consistent with the conclusion of non-recognition of the state itself and its institutions. The Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia fought from the first moment to create stable institutions of which the church is a part. During the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Patriarchate showed its bias in favour of Serbia very strongly.

²² S. Barišić, "Serbian Orthodox Church and Yugoslavia", Yu historija, downloaded from https://www.yuhistorija.com/culture_religion_txt01c2.html

²³ D. Gonis (1996) *History of the Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria and Serbia*, Athens: Symmetria, pp.275-6. [Δ. Γόνης (1996) *Ιστορία των Ορθοδόξων Εκκλησιών Βούλγαριας και Σερβίας*, Αθήνα: Συμμετρία, σελ. 275-6.]

²⁴ G. Katsovska-Maliggoudi (2004) *The Slavs of the Balkans. Introduction to their history and culture*, Athens: Gutenberg, p.278-79 [Γ. Κατσούβσκα –Μαλιγκούδη (2004) *Οι Σλάβοι των Βαλκανίων. Εισαγωγή στην ιστορία και τον πολιτισμό τους*, Αθήνα: Gutenberg, Αθήνα, σελ.278-9]

²⁵ D. Gonis, *History of the Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria and Serbia*, op.cit., pp. 277-9

Supporting the rights of the Serbs in the deposed Republics showed that it did not defend the rights of the flock but of the Serbs. At the same time, from the beginning of the creation of the new state, the church's involvement in the exercise of politics was prominent. The church was used by but also used itself political means and managed to become a point of friction with the Patriarchate. At the same time, the Serbian Patriarchate worked for a long time to be the opposition to the recognition of Macedonia and its institutions, which was not the central government in Belgrade. The Serbian Church got involved in the country's internal politics and delayed the creation of a National Church. Accordingly, with the support received from the world church, the community delayed the recognition of one of the most important institutions of a newly founded state. In this way, the church managed to become an influential factor in implementing politics at an internal and external level, creating obstacles to the orderly functioning of the country.

3. The case of Montenegro

Montenegro is a distinctive case, as it has a lot in common with Serbia which makes it difficult to separate them and create a different nationalism. The cultural and political gap is small especially because they are both Orthodox Christians unlike, for example Slovens and Croatians, and speaking the common Serbo-Croatian language, unlike Macedonians. That's why '*Serbs and Montenegrans were divided by no more than territory and political history*'²⁶ and thus they stayed together even after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and fight in the Yugoslav wars alongside Serbs²⁷.

Furthermore, as Erin K. Jenne & Florian Bieber describe in their research:

*'The history of Montenegrin nation-building goes against the expectations of many institutionalist theories of nationalism, which generally hold that national institutions increase collective sentiments of national identity. Although during the period of socialist Yugoslavia, Montenegro had an institutional endowment similar to that of other republics—including a constitution, parliament, government, flag, republican borders, and academy of arts and sciences—the proportion of self-identified Montenegrins actually declined from 91% at the start of the socialist period to 44.5% in the most recent census. This occurred despite the fact that Yugoslav elites built up Montenegro's national institutions over these decades; it also runs against the expectations of many institutionalist theories of nationalism that predict constant—or even heightened—national consciousness as a group's institutional endowment increases'*²⁸.

As we understand, the creation of a nation-state within the borders of today's Montenegro was even more complicated, with the above problems accompanied by the Serbian Church issue. Every time the national leaders in Montenegro tried to create their church, the only institution was under

²⁶ A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, op.cit., pp.142-4

²⁷ S. Rastoder and N. Adzic (2021) *The role of Montenegro in the wars of the 1990s 'From a consistent warrior to an (un)willing ally'*, Podgorica: Human Right Action

²⁸ E. K. Jenne and F. Bieber (2014) "Situational Nationalism: Nation-building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox", *Ethnopolitics*, Volume 13, No 5, pp. 431-2

Serbia; even inside united Yugoslavia, they found reactance by the Serbian people in the country and the Serbian Church as peoples' representative.

To make the long story short, for the supporters of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church the creation of their national church made by '*Balša III since he had been appointing the bishops at the Zethian bishopric*' and not Saint Sava as Serbians claim.²⁹ The Bali dynasty's independent state (starting in 1360) and independent church policies are the first indications of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church's independence. From 1603 to 1766, when the All-Montenegrins assembly (Obtocrnogorski Sbor) was choosing the Montenegrin metropolitans, Montenegro's church was autocephalous. Ottomans did not include Old Montenegro in the areas under their control, as Montenegrins made another administrative model in the mountains of the region, highly theocratical, under the Petar II Petrović-Njegos, by 1879; hence the Montenegrin Bishopric was not a part of its administrative system of Patriarchate of Constantinople.³⁰ That way, for them, the church in Montenegro never in history, until the 1918 annexation, was part of the SOC. Nevertheless, the relations between the two countries, even at this time, were really close. For example, Bishop Gavrilo Dožić had in 1920 just become the Metropolitan of Montenegro, where he remained until 1938 when he became Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church until he died in 1950.³¹

In the years following, especially after the World War II, the situation with the church in Montenegro was very challenging. The socialistic regime left the church in an exiguous condition with frugal churches, monasteries, and clerics and monks. It was until '*Metropolitan Radović Amfilohije(1938–) took office in Montenegro in 1991. He faced a challenge much similar to his predecessor, but he arrived at a watershed. As Blagojević (2008) has highlighted, religious communities across Yugoslavia became revitalized during this intense period – perhaps most noticeable in the SOC that assumed a stronger position in Serbia and those republics with a majority of Slavic speaking Orthodox population. Amfilohije has become one of the leading figures in this revitalization – not only in Montenegro, but across the lands in which the SOC are present.*'

³² Until the 1990s, there weren't significant facts and events regarding the creation of the national church in the state, despite the fact that Montenegro had all the other institutions sat and was an equally recognized republic in Yugoslavia. It was mainly because the communistic government was against every religious influence and existence in the federation, as well as the willingness, especially by Tito, for Yugoslavia above all regime, in which people are not divided by religions, nations, etc., but united under Yugoslavia. But, even in this case, the church in Montenegro was still highly connected with the SOC, and the state of Montenegro was associated with Serbia.

²⁹ S. Zahova (2012) *Rewriting the Past in the Present: Politics of Identity in the Montenegrin Historiography*, London: ADAM AKADEMİ, pp. 43-60

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 49-50

³¹ E. Saggau (2019) "The revival of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro from 1990", *Sociološka liga - Montenegrin Journal for Sociology*, pp. 14-15, downloaded from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342329880_The_revival_of_the_Serbian_Orthodox_Church_in_Montenegro_from_1990

³² E. Saggau, "The revival of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro", op.cit., pp 14

As in every Yugoslav republic, the 1990s was the decade of change and national movement. Countries fought against Slobodan Milosevic's view of Serbian nationalism, which, after Tito's death, was in ebullition. Even though Montenegro took part in the wars defended Serbia, in the country, especially in '*the early 1990s, when the war in Croatia and Bosnia created a sharp contrast between the supporters of Serb nationalism, who mostly supported the war in its early stage, and the supporters of Montenegrin nationalism, who opposed it. In these confrontations, the Serbian Orthodox Church played a particularly pronounced role due to the extreme nationalism of Amfilohije Radović, the Montenegrin archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church*'³³ In that point church played a significant role in the political movements of the time, but at the same time, in the country we had meagre national movements, most of them '*neither advocated the use of force, nor did it express hostility towards minorities*'³⁴ Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (Liberalni savez Crne Gore, LSCG)³⁵ was one of the main actors supported the independence of Montenegro in the public dialogue, having in their political agenda the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC)³⁶ in top priority.

Given the above situation and the country being in the middle of public dialogues, in 1993, the Montenegrin Orthodox Church was re-established by Bishop Antonije Abramović. Unlike Macedonia, in the case of Montenegro, the establishment of the local church wasn't recognized by the local authorities and didn't gain many followers. Most of the people stayed in SOC, but all the same, it created a problem for the SOC. The situation remained complex with two churches and thus two political sides in the country, '*the Liberal Alliance endorsed the re-establishment of the MOC and the SDP called for the church's recognition during the 1990s, whereas the People's Party and the pro-Serb wing of DPS (after 1998, the SNP) opposed recognition and supported the claims to exclusivity of the Serbian Orthodox Church*'.³⁷ The church remained unrecognized till the early 2000s as any government wanted to take the political risk of recognition. But even after the award by the government of Montenegro, MOC remains a canonically unrecognized church. In contrast, the SOC stays in power in the country with most of the believers and the canonical relation with the other Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The above deduces that in Montenegro, we have a unique case in which, unlike Macedonia, there wasn't a significant movement on the creation of the national church. Even after the recognition, most Montenegrins stayed in the flock of SOC. However, the church was in the middle of the country's political life for two main reasons. Firstly, it was at the top of the opposition's plan for an extended period of time and became a threat to the SOC, especially after what happened in Macedonia. Secondly, the relations between the republics are based on the

³³ F. Bieber (2003) *Montenegro in Transition. Problems of Identity and Statehood*, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden-Baden, pp. 19

³⁴ F. Bieber, Montenegro in Transition, op. cit., pp. 20-21

³⁵ For more on the party see the self-presentation

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170805153303/http://www.lscg.org:80/content/index2.asp>

³⁶ For more on the church see the self-presentation in Montenegrin

<https://www.cpc.org.me/>

³⁷ F. Bieber, "Montenegro in Transition", op. cit., p.p. 27-28

church to a great extent. As mentioned above, some of the leaders of the Serbian Patriarchate were Bishops in Montenegro before they were declared Patriarchs mainly because the region was important strategically and religiously. But at the same time, the influence of the Serbian Church on the state was affiliated with racial division in the country.

Chapter III: Nationalism in 21st century

In 1848 Marx said that the national differences and fights between people are dying daily. The same is supported by different theories of nationalism which frame that nationalism will fail because the national ideas are breaking from time to time. Globalization has a significant role in the dominance of multiculturalism and the disappearance of nationalism. But at the same time, nationalism itself refutes the above theories. As Andrew Heywood mentioned, if the nation-state can no longer produce the interface made that, ethnic, religious, and cultural differentiation may aggressively form nationalism accented and created again.³⁸ This type of nationalism is widespread in Europe at the moment and especially in the Balkans, where ethnic tensions dominated social life for decades after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and still do. At the same time, because of globalization, states try to re-establish their existence in the new natural order. Thus, they are focusing again on their common qualities such as ethnicity, religion, culture, language, etc.³⁹

So, nationalism is an ideology proven by the history of the states that reshapes itself from time to time. Even though nationalism today has nothing in common with nationalism in the 19th century, it remains important. At the end of the 20th century, the world saw the violent face of nationalism. Nationalisms of every kind, including those associated with minorities, sub-states, terrorism, democracy, irredentism, and post-communism, have been cited as examples of the latter phenomenon. Some have led to deadly, violent battles, such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Nowadays, global politics are still shaped by nationalist ideology, but nationalism in the twenty-first century faces a particular set of difficulties. As an illustration, diaspora, and migration foster the development of cultural, economic, and social networks that now unite people across entire continents. Regional integration and the start of globalization have compelled governments to change their rhetoric on nation-building. While some nation-builders view globalization as a potential threat, others believe it will significantly increase their nation's power and influence. The ramifications for nation-state authority and legitimacy are significant since nation-states strive to balance national sovereignty with substantial participation in regional alliances, trading networks, and international organizations. Sub-state nationalists are still fighting for the allegiance and support of the population. *‘Today, nationalists must reconsider the meaning of self-determination, independence, autonomy and sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected world.’*⁴⁰

³⁸ A. Heywood, “Political Ideologies”, op.cit., Subchapter: “Nationalism in 21st century”

³⁹ ibid.

⁴⁰ C. Sutherland (2012), “Nationalism in the 21st Century”, E-International Relations, E-international 18

In the Balkans and the rest of Europe, the reasons causing wars in the 20th century, for example, the ethnic divisions and the minority rights issues, became reasons for securitizing the borders or policing their region to live peacefully in the state. As Mark Mazower mentioned, the new threat for the ex-Yugoslav states wasn't the Empires, as in the 19th century, nor the rivalry and hostility of the neighbouring countries, but the changes in international politics and economy.⁴¹ In the same wavelength, Thanos Veremis mentioned that '*the Yugoslav crisis proved, we have witnessed the reduction of the sovereignty of medium and small nation states and the aggrandizement of the economic power of the US, the EU, Russia, and China. The Balance of Power principle that sustained nation-states and the effect of international law as a guarantee against the abuse of international power are being replaced by a tripolar system of power in Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea region*',⁴² and he continues '*Nationalism that was responsible for the creation of Balkan nation states in the nineteenth century became an important factor in the disintegration of the Soviet Empire and Yugoslavia and even the velvet break-up of Czechoslovakia. Europe is still gravitating between a supranational EU and the national priorities of its larger members. Yugoslavia was torn apart by aggressive nationalisms of its federated units, while the rest of the Balkan states will retain their unity only as multicultural entities. The homogeneous, unitary nation-states of the nineteenth century are already things of the past*'⁴³. He explains the theory mentioned before on nationalism as a political ideology that changes over time but simultaneously remains and joins hands with the existence of the states.

21st-century nationalism is a widespread phenomenon in the region. The ethnic tensions, especially in Kosovo and Bosnia, risk the sustainability of the state. At the moment, the Dayton Agreement is contested by many scientists regarding the role of peacekeeper between the ethnicities of Bosnia.⁴⁴ At the same time, the non-recognition of Kosovo by Serbia brings inner conflicts between Albanians and Serbs in different aspects of social and political life, which end up in complicated tensions in the Serbian municipalities.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in Croatia, the hostility with Serbia seems to flare up with every excuse bringing the countries into diplomatic tension.⁴⁶ Even though the Balkans, especially ex-Yugoslavia, is no longer in the post-war period and seems to move on regarding their European and democratic features, nationalism plays an essential role in the coexistence in the region. The war traumas are still open, and states, governments, and people create forms of aggressive nationalism to defeat their sovereignty.

relations, downloaded from: <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/01/17/nationalism-in-the-21st-century/>

⁴¹ Mark Mazower, "The Balkans", op.cit., pp.235-6

⁴² T. Veremis (2010) *Nationalism & Identity in the Balkans*, Harvard: Harvard University, Center for Hellenic studies, Volume 10, No 1

⁴³ T. Veremis, "Nationalism & Identity in the Balkans", op.cit.

⁴⁴ For further information on the revival of Dayton Agreement:

<https://balkansinsite.pollsandpolitics.gr/mia-atermoni-dielkystinda/>

⁴⁵ For further information on the plate dispute in Kosovo:

<https://balkansinsite.pollsandpolitics.gr/the-licence-plate-dispute-threatens-the-stability-of-kosovo-and-the-balkan-region/>

⁴⁶ For further information on the Croatia-Serbia diplomatic tension:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.rferl.org/amp-serbia-vucic-croatia-jasenovac/31947346.html>

At the same time, the Serbian Orthodox Church still plays a significant role in the region, as the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople for years refused to recognize the local churches. Thus, the ecclesiastical leadership of the area is still under the supervision of the Serbian Patriarchate. The church's leadership has officially supported SOC's national character. At the moment the Serbian Orthodox Church is the only representative of the Serbs outside Serbia and, at the same time, is the only thing that remains from the Yugoslav glory of Serbs. In parallel, the SOC has an institutional connection with Serbian statehood, which makes it more complex, as it officially supports Serbs and Serbia. In parallel, the local churches, especially the MOC, played their role in creating nationalism in the new state, both by disputes with SOC and involvement in the inner issues of the countries.

In the next chapter, I will analyze two case studies, the one of North Macedonia from the Prespas Agreement to Autocephalous and Montenegrin elections, the religious law, and the impact of the Serbian Orthodox Church on local politics. These two cases are essential for mainly two reasons. The first one is that both current issues have arisen in recent years and are still going along. The second is their importance for the local politics and the region, as matters of years of division in and outside the country.

Chapter IV: Church and Nationalism in 21st century: The case of North Macedonia and Montenegro

1. North Macedonia: From Prespas Agreement to Autocephalous

The year 2018 was significant for the church in North Macedonia for two main reasons. First, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, brushing the Russian contradictions away, mentioned that it would recognize Autocephaly in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.⁴⁷ The above was very important as it created a precedent for recognition of other Orthodox Churches, such as the one in North Macedonia, which was in schism with the Serbian Patriarchate and Orthodox Church in general regarding the Autocephaly, as we mentioned in a previous subchapter. For MOC, the aspiring recognition of the Ukrainian Church opens the road to canonical relations of itself with the Orthodox churches. At the same time, in 2018, FYROM and Greece signed the Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a strategic partnership between the Parties, so-called Prespas Agreement. According to the Agreement, FYROM takes the name 'Republic of North Macedonia.' The above should use *erga omnes* (for all purposes), which means domestically, in all bilateral relations, and in all regional and international organizations and institutions.⁴⁸ These issues influenced the ecclesiastical affairs in North Macedonia and created the ground for the rapprochement of the relations with the Orthodox Church after the failed efforts of the MOC for recognition by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as the Mother Church.⁴⁹

Thus in 2018, Prime Minister (PM) Zoran Zaev sent a letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeus in which he asked for his intervention in the church dispute to return to canonical relations with orthodox churches. Indeed, the Ecumenical Patriarch agreed to consider North Macedonia's autocephaly appeal. It was an essential step because it was the first time Constantinople approved talks with the schismatic Church, with the excuse that all matters regarding the Church in Macedonia were under SOC. At the same time, once again, the ecclesiastical problem became a political problem. A Greek religious newspaper, 'Romfea,' wrote that MOC and Zoran Zaev asked for recognition disclaiming the term 'Macedonia' in the name of the Church. Both MOC and Macedonian Government denied the publication, "*No one in the MPC will give it up, nor has he ever demanded it give up its constitutional name, of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid,*" Bishop Timotej said, the request sent to the Patriarch

⁴⁷ The official announcement of Ecumenical Patriarchate on the Autocephalous of Ukrainian Church (in Greek), downloaded from: <https://ec-patr.org/nakoinothen-gias-kai-er-s-synodoy-11-okt-2018/>

⁴⁸ The text of Prespas Agreement in English, downloaded from: https://s.kathimerini.gr/resources/article_files/symfwnia-aggliko-keimeno.pdf

⁴⁹ S. J. Marusic and M. Chereshova (2017) *Macedonia's Lonely Church Seeks Bulgarian 'Parent'*, Skopje and Sophia: BIRN

did not ask for the scrapping of the word ‘Macedonian’”, the government added.⁵⁰ In the framework of the interstate dialogue between the countries the name of the church became in the middle of the discussions in the countries. At the same time, *‘in the letter from Constantinople, cited by the Macedonian newspaper “Sloboden Pecat”... the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople informed the MPC that it would not to address the Church’s demand for autocephaly because the Ohrid Archdiocese, its formal name, falls under jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Pec, i.e. the Serbian Orthodox Church’*⁵¹ The name dispute with Greece ended with the Prespas Agreement, in which the use of the term ‘Macedonian’ is acceptable, in different ways, in both Greece and North Macedonia. Thus, the church is not necessary to change its name. In parallel, a road to conversation opened after the recognition of the Ukrainian Church in January 2019⁵², and the resolution of the dispute with the Agreement with Greece.

After the recognition of the Ukrainian Church the recognition of self-Autocephaly seemed to be within reach for the Macedonian leadership. In 2020 Stevo Pendarovski asked the Ecumenical Patriarch once again for recognition; *“I turn to you, on behalf of a large portion of my fellow citizens, who identify themselves as Orthodox Christians and whose only wish and need is to reconcile with their close ones and focus on a common future, coexistence and true freedom”*⁵³. In the above context, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeus agreed with the situation with the schismatic church and thus he offered to play a mediating role between SOC and MOC. With that decision the Patriarch showed that there is indeed an appetite of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the restoration of the relations between the Churches with a recognition. Furthermore *‘the return of the MOC-OA into regularity as an autonomous church represents a big leap of faith and a decision of high risk for the MOC-OA hierarchs who agreed to be placed back “temporarily” under the Serbian church administration’*⁵⁴. At the same time, the ecclesiastical issue became a political issue and created political disputes between Serbia and North Macedonia. Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic called the MOC to respect the rules of the Orthodox Church, *“We want to see a deal reached, but we surely must respect the rules of the Orthodox Church, and we also expect the Ecumenical Patriarch to be on the same side, just as he was when he pleaded against the formation of a so-called Montenegrin Orthodox Church,”*⁵⁵. This statement is essential for two reasons. The first is that the Serbian Government and SOC were not ready to give in in

⁵⁰ S. J. Marusic (2018) *Macedonian Church Gets Entangled in ‘Name’ Dispute*, Skopje: BIRN

⁵¹ S. J. Marusic (2018) *Ecumenical Patriarch Rebuffs Macedonian Church’s Plea for Recognition*, Skopje: BIRN

⁵² The official announcement by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (in Greek), downloaded from: <https://ec-patr.org/patriarchikos-kai-synodikos-tomos-chorigiseos-aytokefaloy-ekkliastikoy-kathestotos/>

⁵³ Kathimerini Newsroom (2020), “North Macedonia requests church autocephaly from Ecumenical Patriarch”, downloaded from: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/257212/north-macedonia-requests-church-autocephaly-from-ecumenical-patriarch/>

⁵⁴ A. Bogdanovski (2022) “A change of heart -The Serbian Orthodox Church recognition of the Macedonian autocephaly”, Religion in Praxis, downloaded from:

https://www.academia.edu/79892033/A_change_of_heart_The_Serbian_Orthodox_Church_recognition_of_the_Macedonian_autocephaly_Religion_in_Praxis

⁵⁵ S. J. Marusic (2020) *North Macedonia Leaders Renew Campaign for Church’s Independence*, Skopje: BIRN

the case of Autocephalous MOC. The second is that the issue of autocephalous for MOC was connected with the Montenegrin Orthodox Church, which is disappointing for the autocephalous path of the church of Montenegro.

Finally, in May 2022, the leader of the SOC, Patriarch Porfirije, announced that he would recognize the total independence of the MOC. He made the announcement at a combined liturgy with Archbishop Stefan of North Macedonia, which was performed at the Cathedral of St. Clement of Ohrid in the country's capital Skopje. With that move, he ends the long-time dispute which was analyzed in this dissertation and brings back the canonical relation of MOC with the Orthodox churches worldwide. As he said the reasons why he did such action is that "*God is one, his church is one and our faith is one. That is why we are rejoicing today. A miracle is happening before us. We are part of that miracle*"⁵⁶. The official name of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is Ohrid Archbishopric, and for full recognition, Ecumenical Patriarchate had to approve the Autocephaly too. Indeed, the church of North Macedonia, headed by Archbishop Stefan, was deemed canonical and valid in the Orthodox world by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, which was presided over by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeus. This established canonical and liturgical unity between it and its members. At the same time, the announcement by the Ecumenical Patriarchate mentioned that recognizes as the name of this Church "Ohrid" (meaning the area of its jurisdiction only within the borders of the territory of the state of North Macedonia), as promised in writing by the church to the Ecumenical Patriarch and its Primate, excluding the term "Macedonian" and another derivative of the word "Macedonia."⁵⁷ It means that the political criteria involved in the ecclesiastical issues. The avoidance of recognizing the church as 'Macedonian' is deeply problematic as it brings the church into the middle of an already state-solved political issue. After the recognition of Autocephaly, the only thing that should figure out were some administrative issues between SOC and MOC, and as Ecumenical Patriarch said in his speech, '*your path (aka MOC) from now on depends solely on your own behaviour and choices*'⁵⁸ and he added that the MOC should respect and follow the orders of its Mother Church.

With the announcement of willingness for recognition of MOC the Bulgarian Patriarch expressed his concerns regarding the name of the church. He said that '*we (Bulgarian Orthodox Church) must defend the historical truth*'⁵⁹ and added that the BOC believes in the canonical

⁵⁶ Kathimerini Newsroom (2022), "Churches of Serbia, North Macedonia, end decades-old dispute", downloaded from: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1185151/churches-of-serbia-north-macedonia-end-decades-old-dispute/>

⁵⁷ The official announcement by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, downloaded from: <https://ec-patr.org/%ce%b1%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%86%ce%ac%cf%83%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%82-%cf%84%ce%b7%cf%82-%ce%b1%ce%b3%ce%af%ce%b1%cf%82-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%b9%ce%b5%cf%81%ce%ac%cf%82-%cf%83%cf%85%ce%bd%cf%8c%ce%b4%ce%bf%cf%85-3/>

⁵⁸ The video of the Patriarchal and Synodal Liturgy in which the speech made (in Greek), downloaded from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxRGPE54_BY&ab_channel=BigorskiManastir
In the same speech, Ecumenical Patriarch mentioned that there is only one Orthodox Church and there is no division between Slavic and Greek speaking Church, clearly implying the issues with the Moscow Church.

⁵⁹ Rosinka Prodanova (2022), "Metropolitan Seraphim of Neurokop: We must defend the historical truth", Radio Blagoevgrad (in Bulgarian), downloaded from: <https://bnr.bg/blagoevgrad/post/101652758>

procedures and that was why they denied the support of the MOC back in 2017. At the same time Metropolitan Seraphim declared that the Church is one and all the local churches are under this One Orthodox Church. In June of the same year and after the recognition by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople the press service of the BOC reported that according to Synod '*The Bulgarian Orthodox Church -the Bulgarian Patriarchate- welcomes with gratitude to God and spiritual joy the decision to cease the schism, and enters into canonical and Eucharistic communion with the Orthodox Church of North Macedonia. The question of the name of the Orthodox Church of North Macedonia is to be considered*'.⁶⁰ It means that for BOC, the name issue is still on because both the words 'Macedonian' and 'Ohrid' should be out of use, as the Archdiocese of Ohrid was created as Bulgarian and for Bulgarians.

Last year the Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was traced as a central political issue and influenced the relations with neighbouring countries. Even after the solution came by Prespas Agreement, the name dispute regarding the Church's name was for a long time active and undermined the bases of good neighbours. At the same time, even after the recognition of Autocephaly, the relations with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church depended on the name of the MOC and not on the canonical ties with the Ecumenical Patriarchate to a considerable extent. The SOC fought the MOC for decades using the self-recognized Autocephalous for political and not canonical reasons, as they did not want to give up on their role as an ecclesiastical regulator in the region. All these matters can cause nationalistic delirium, as we saw during the sign of the Final Agreement with Greece when the Macedonian Church was the first state institution denied changing the name of Church and state. Furthermore, Autocephaly itself created a new wave of nationalism. From the one part the recognition was a betrayal for a part of Greek orthodox society which was against the Prespas Agreement⁶¹ and from the other part was a denial of use the terms, which Prespas Agreement clarify, creating problem in the Macedonian society⁶². In the 21st century, the existence of a nation-state may be out of the question, especially after the end of the Yugoslav wars and the recognition of the ex-Yugoslav states (except Kosovo). Still, in the

⁶⁰ Orthodox Christianity (2022), "Bulgarian Orthodox Church restores canonical communion with Church of Northern Macedonia", downloaded from: <https://orthochristian.com/146841.html>

⁶¹ Orthodoxos Typos (2022) "The recognition of the schismatic church of Skopje by the Ecumenical Patriarchate is ecclesiastical and national betrayal" (in Greek), downloaded from: <https://orthodoxostypos.gr/%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BD%CF%8E%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%87%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%C%F%82-%CE%B5%CE%BA%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%AF/>

⁶² Q&A by Government of North Macedonia on understanding the use of the terms:
Q: I am going to write a story about food in your country. Should I talk about North Macedonian cuisine?
A: No. When describing anything related to our ethnic or cultural identity the adjective Macedonian alone is correct while North or Northern Macedonian would be wrong. Some correct examples include: Macedonian culture, Macedonian history, Macedonian literature, the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet, Macedonian churches, Macedonian ethnic identity and so on.

In that Q&A, government clearly stated that according to Prespas Agreement the use of the phrase 'Macedonian churches' is fully correct which comes in contrast with the fiat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the use of the term.

Downloaded from: <https://vlada.mk/node/16897?ln=en-gb>

Balkans, the involvement of the church in politics and the opposite may create a nationalistic preceding which can construct tenses and subvert the peaceful co-existence in the region.

2. Montenegro: The last 'fortress' in the region

Montenegro became an autonomous state, breaking the unity with Serbia apart, in June 2006, by a referendum, in which 55% of Montenegrins voted 'yes' to independence. The absence of an ethnic majority means that the Serbs, and not only the SOC, had, and still have, a voice in Montenegro, which creates a non-sustainable environment for peacekeeping and decision-making in the country.

The Ukrainian Autocephaly, as in the case of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, opened a road for recognition for the church in Montenegro. Following the giving of Autocephaly Tomos in the Ukrainian Church, by passing a controversial Law on religious liberty in December 2019, Montenegrin President Milo Đukanović set the autocephalous Montenegrin church plan into motion. According to this Law, if the religious organization using the land cannot present proof of title, all religious property constructed before 1918 should become the state's property. According to Montenegrin, President Serbia, through the church, undermines the national independence of Montenegro, and thus the Autocephaly is a one-way road.⁶³ As a result of the Serbian Orthodox Church's perception that this Law is intended to undermine its existence in Montenegro and is a means by which the state wants to seize much of its property, it has caused widespread protests throughout Montenegro. On the one hand, SOC believed that through this move Montenegrin Government wanted to take the SOC's property and give it to the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC), a smaller in value and believers church, and thus forced the SOC's leadership to recognize Autocephalous. On the other hand, MOC believed that this property belonged historically to MOC and that this Law was the first step toward realizing Autocephaly.

While the majority of the population in Montenegro belongs to the Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church has widespread support there. Following the independence vote in 2006 and the official severing of links with Serbia, the political elites of Montenegro decided to become more actively involved in identity politics, in which the Church has long played a significant part. Indeed, SOC played an essential role in opposition to Milo Đukanović, such as the recognition of Kosovo's independence (2008) or accession to NATO (2016). At the same time, SOC running their political agenda in Montenegro with decisions against the national government indicates that the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro has established itself as a potent opposition force capable of opposing Montenegro's President Milo Đukanović, who has been Europe's longest-serving ruler.

The tensions regarding the new Law brought massive protests, which lasted for several

⁶³ UNIAN Information Agency (2018) "Montenegro to seek autocephaly for country's Orthodox Church", downloaded from: <https://www.unian.info/world/10388376-montenegro-to-seek-autocephaly-for-country-s-orthodox-church.html>

and RTCG (2019) "I expect recognition of the autocephaly of the MOC" (in Montenegrin), downloaded from" <https://rtcg.me/vijesti/politika/244203/ocekujem-priznanje-autokefalnosti-cpc.html>

months, in different towns of Montenegro and the capital Podgorica. The demonstrations and the social instability ultimately resulted in the toppling of the ruling party in the August 2020 parliament elections. In fact, in August 2020, elections took place in Montenegro in which the electoral victory went to the ruling party of Đukanović, with 34.8%. In second place, with a minimal deviation and a percentage of 32.7%, is the pro-Serbian party of Krivokapić. It is followed by the centrist party MNN, with 12.5%.⁶⁴ From the result of the elections, it was clear that the SOC had great power in Montenegro. The main goals of the opposition and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro were to overthrow the ruling DPS and overthrow Đukanović. His Bishop Amfilohije Radović, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, voted for the first time in his life and called on citizens to vote against the ruling party. Corruption, ties to organized crime, his anti-Serbian policies, and the recent appropriation of the Serbian Orthodox Church were elements comparable to the political coalitions instigated against him. The controversy was the final blow for Đukanović's party.⁶⁵ It means that the fall of Đukanović is a combination of the strong wills of the society for political change but at the same time shows the intense power of the SOC in the Montenegrin community. At the same time, the SOC was involved so flagrantly in Montenegrin politics for the first time.

The day after the elections, the leaders of the two major alliances: Zdravko Krivokapić from the ZBCG Alliance (27 seats), Alekса Bećić from the MNN (10 seats), as well as Dritan Abazović from the URA party (4 seats), who together secured the 41 seats needed for a majority, they agreed to join forces to form a technocratic coalition government. On September 9, the three leaders signed the agreement on the cooperation government with Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapić and Speaker of the Parliament Alekса Bećić. The deal envisages, among others, that the new democratic government in Montenegro will continue the country's European path, fight organized crime, not recognize Kosovo, revise laws to EU standards, and include minorities in parliament.⁶⁶ The new established government decided to apply the controversial ecclesiastical law, which indeed applied at 8 January 2021, and thus the protests continued during the new year, with a pick on September when '*Police fired tear gas and began to take down barricades Sunday (5th September) in Cetinje, Montenegro ahead of the inauguration of the new leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the country*'⁶⁷. The SOC lost its patriarch, the head of the Church, and the head of its branch in Montenegro, known as the metropolitan, last October and November. Both of them contracted COVID-19. For this reason, hundreds of Montenegrins gathered in Cetinje on Saturday

⁶⁴ Analytical elections result (in Greek), downloaded from:

<https://balkansinsite.pollsandpolitics.gr/koinovouleftikes-ekloges-2020-sto-mavrovounio-scholiasmos-ton-eklogikon-apotelesmaton/>

⁶⁵ V. Neofitidis (2020) "Change of Baton in Montenegro: the "Fall" of Đukanović" (in Greek), Balkans in site, downloaded from <https://balkansinsite.pollsandpolitics.gr/allagi-skytalis-sto-mavrovounio-i-pt/>

⁶⁶ Article and video of the announcements made by the government and the sign of the Agreement (the video is in Montenegrin), downloaded from:

https://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2020&mm=09&dd=09&nav_id=109204

⁶⁷ DW news (2021) "Montenegro: Tensions erupt over Serbian church leaders", downloaded from: <https://www.dw.com/en/montenegro-tensions-erupt-over-serbian-church-leaders/a-59087415>

to build barricades with large stones and car tires to block roads and prevent the new metropolitan from being anointed. With an Instagram post, the newly crowning Patriarch Porfirije criticized the incident and he added that he enthroned a metropolitan according to the will of the Church and the people of this diocese.⁶⁸

After almost one year later the Montenegrin politics are not yet back to normality. The new government by Dritan Abazovic, member of the coalition, also collapsed, leaving the country without government for one more time since 2020's election, this time because the Government signed a controversial 'fundamental agreement' with Serbian Orthodox Church on August 3, 2022. The Agreement '*recognizes Serbian Orthodox subjectivity six centuries further back than the church is afforded in Serbia itself, extends extraterritoriality of religious buildings, opens the possibility of religious teaching in public schools, and gives the church legal status that in some areas is equal to state institutions*'⁶⁹. Abazovic signed the agreement on 8 July after more than four hours of discussion. Thirteen ministers voted favourably for accepting the deal, five voted against it, and three were absent. After voting, they must send the basic agreement to the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, which must also accept it, the last step of the agreement's path to come into force. At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister Rasko Konjevic said that the contract is not following the constitution, the preamble was not under historical facts, and he asserted that the text was not adopted adequately because 13 votes was not a two-thirds majority of the 21 ministers.⁷⁰

The last crisis shows that the political stability in Montenegro connected with the Serbian Orthodox church and the relations with the state of Montenegro. At the moment, Montenegro is the last 'fortress' of the SOC and, in parallel, is the previous link between Serbia and Montenegro. In the above, we should add that according to article 24 of the law passed in 2008, it is expressly prohibited to maintain dual citizenship. The same law in Article 18 excludes countries that Montenegro has concluded interstate agreements with. According to this article, international treaties and agreements can determine the possession of dual citizenship under the condition of reciprocity, but such an agreement with Serbia has never been sought. It means that if you are a Serb in Montenegro, the only thing you can officially refer to express your identity is SOC. Thus, for Serbs in Montenegro, it's essential to keep the SOC in the leadership of the church in Montenegro as a way to express their national identity. At the same time, for Montenegrins, Montenegro should have a national church. The denial of SOC to recognize it undermines the Montenegrin national identity.

In the case of Montenegro, the connection between nationalism and religion is more

⁶⁸ The Instagram post by Patriarch Porfirije regarding the enthronement of the leader of SOC in Montenegro and his strong criticised to the incidents happened between police and citizens, downloaded from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CTcfCi6ieVX/?utm_medium=copy_link

⁶⁹ RFE/RL's Balkan Service (2022) "Montenegrin PM Signs Basic Agreement With Serbian Orthodox Church", downloaded from: <https://www.rferl.org/a/montenegro-serbian-orthodox-church-basic-agreement/31935776.html>

⁷⁰ ibid.

substantial than in North Macedonia for two reasons. The first one is because the ethnic identity in Montenegro is fluid, which creates ethnic tensions which last years turned into religious issues and fruitless, nationalistic delirium from both sides. The violent form of nationalism is also apparent in this case, marked by the protests ending in violent conflicts across the state, as explained by Ivan Videnović, associate professor at the University of Belgrade⁷¹:

"The SOC with its 'one faith, one people' doctrine was an important political actor in all phases of the modern history of the Balkans it had any influence on... This doctrine doesn't recognise the existence of Muslim Serbs or Catholic Serbs, just like it doesn't recognise the existence of Orthodox Montenegrins or Orthodox Macedonians... This leaves the majority Montenegrin population in a civic state like Montenegro either without its own church or in a situation to bow down to the church that doesn't recognise their ethnic origin or their language. The denial of Montenegrin identity in the past years was often accompanied by outbursts of hate speech by the SOC dignitaries toward the Montenegrin ethnic group or the government of Montenegro" ⁷²

For this reason, some Montenegrins feel strongly in favour of having their own autocephalous or recognized independent Church. They want their Church as SOC has numerous times proven the bias in favour of Serbs, even from 1990s wars in Yugoslavia, as explained in the previous chapter.

In conclusion, the separation of united Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 enlarged the already underlying issues that were under Serbian pressure for a long time. Montenegro is still the last fortress of SOC, which made it clear that it is not ready to give up on the issue of recognition. Unlike North Macedonia, where the self-Autocephalous Church was the main Church in the country, the Montenegrin Autocephaly is more complex. It needs a lot of abandonment on SOC's part, as the second is the dominant Church. At the same time, the state of Montenegro still fights to create a national state, national institutions, and last but not least common national identity and awareness. Recognizing a new language, national anthem, and other political standards is not enough. The recognition of the Church, or the deposition of SOC in the country, is part of the creation of the national state.

⁷¹ For more on Ivan Videnović I cite the official website of the University in which there is analytical CV, Publications and his academic thesis: http://bmw.ff.bg.ac.rs/Personal/I_Videnovic/home.htm

⁷² A. Brezar (2021) "Why it's not just religion inflaming tensions between Serbia and Montenegro", Euronews, downloaded from: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/09/09/why-it-s-not-just-religion-enflaming-tensions-between-serbia-and-montenegro>

Conclusion

In this dissertation, an attempt was made to prove that the church and nationalism in the 20th and 21st centuries are connected in various ways and create stability issues in states. The case studies of North Macedonia and Montenegro were used to prove this hypothesis. Both cases are unique since they do not follow the model of other Southeast European countries and have occupied the academic community many times with their attempt to claim Autocephaly or control the Serbian Orthodox Church. In fact, their very national status at different times rested on this recognition. For this reason, we do not chronologically comment on the whole course of their church but, on occasion, on different periods.

In both cases, ecclesiastical issues have monopolized political interest for a long time. For example, in Montenegro, for about a year, the church issue was the first topic in most national and international news in the field of politics, along with the elections, which were even presented as an offshoot of the church issue. The above is confirmed by the fact that Montenegro has not yet managed to form a stable government, even though street protests have stopped. Only recently, after several governments, did it work to reach an agreement with the Serbian Church. Accordingly, in North Macedonia, Autocephaly went hand in hand with the creation of a state in the context of Yugoslavia and created political tensions at a time when religious issues had by no means a political sphere of influence. Even after the Prespa Agreement, the case remained pending, causing unrest, which ended only in 2022. The ecclesiastical question was transferred to the political sphere of influence of the 21st century.

These religious issues in both countries, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, although seemingly classic Balkan disputes, raise some critical questions about religion, independence, and national identity, but mainly about the interaction of the three over the centuries. Especially since the Serbian Orthodox Church is the 'Mother' of Serbs everywhere, it is evident that it cannot represent Macedonians and Montenegrins, who consider themselves an independent and equal national identity. Therefore, especially for Montenegrins, who have not yet managed to win their ecclesiastical independence, the fact that they are under the Serbian Church undermines the foundations of their cultural and political autonomy. Accordingly, for North Macedonia, the achievement of Autocephaly solves yet another big national problem, along with, of course, solving the name issue with Greece.

It is also important to comment on the fact that these states, now Montenegro after N. Macedonia gained Autocephaly, may have gained full sovereignty but have not gotten rid of Serbia completely. Also, through Serbia's overt influence in the SOC, the Serbian leadership continued to exert power directly or indirectly on these states. At least according to the political way of thinking, an independent state should have its church since the church is, among other institutions, a cohesive national bond for its citizens.

Especially for Montenegro, the creation of a national church implies the end of a long

period that wanted the two states to be one, and which was maintained through the church, as the last link, until today. Accordingly, the achievement of Autocephaly on the part of North Macedonia and Ukraine creates a precedent for the recognition of the Montenegrin Church. Although it was made precise many times by the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Patriarchs of Serbia that these cases are not connected, we cannot disconnect them politically.

The important thing is that in the case of Montenegro, in contrast to North Macedonia, the policies that supported the strengthening of the separate national identity already in 2006 and the secession from Serbia have not succeeded with the country remaining deeply divided and the religion to be a compassionate political issue. However, politically we see that the local churches are gradually moving towards autocephaly as a unique solution in a period of recognized independent states worldwide.

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