

From Ummatic Muslims to State-centered Bosniacs: The Case of the Muslims of Bosnia

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolution of the national identity of Bosnian Muslims throughout the 20th century, from an Ummatic-centric focus on their Islamic identity (using the ethnonym “Muslims”) to a state-centered, secularized, and “modernized” identity, adopting the ethnonym “Bosniacs.” This shift is framed as necessary for the biological, religious, and cultural preservation of Bosnian Muslims. The study builds on Bosnian sociologist Sacir Filandra’s typology of the Bosniac national renaissance

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(*Preporod*), which he divides into three phases. The most recent phase emphasizes statehood, while earlier phases focused on religious preservation (during the Hapsburg/Ottoman and Yugoslav monarchy eras) and nationhood (under Communism). Filandra links this third phase to Alija Izetbegović's political movement, which spearheaded the broader Bosniac mobilization for statehood. Izetbegović's "Party for Democratic Action" is seen as the primary driver of this national struggle within the post-Communist political system. The paper provides a historical overview of how Bosnian Muslims transitioned from being part of the Ummah to identifying as Bosniacs tied to a nation-state, alongside an analysis of the Ummatic implications of this transformation.

Keywords: Ummatic, Preporod, Bosniac, Bosnia, National Identity

Introduction

This paper provides a concise overview of the historical evolution of Bosniac strategic positioning within the Bosnian political landscape, spanning from the Hapsburg occupation to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the establishment of the Bosnian state. The analysis is grounded in Bosnian sociologist-historian Sacir Filandra's division of the Bosniac national movement (*Preporod*, meaning "renaissance" or "national awakening") into three stages, culminating in Alija Izetbegović's political project to affirm Bosniac identity through a Bosnian state. Filandra's three-stage framework of the *Preporod* is outlined, followed by an examination of the movement within the broader context of the Ummah and Ummatic political consciousness among Bosniacs. This analysis draws primarily on the works of Muhammad Iqbal and Wael Hallaq, which challenge normative assumptions about modernization and secularization that have shaped Bosniac identity from the fall of the Ottomans to the present day. While Filandra's typology is acknowledged for its descriptive value, this study critically examines whether the normative conclusions drawn from the Bosniac experience in the 20th century hold up to scrutiny. Particular attention is given to the presuppositions

surrounding the modern nation-state and state-bound national identities. Here, the works of Iqbal and Hallaq are instrumental in questioning these assumptions. Additionally, the study explores how Bosniac identity might align with a broader Ummatic identity that transcends the post-Westphalian political order. This aspect of the research is informed by the works of Darryl Li and Lia Merdjanova. Li critiques Islamophobic narratives about pan-Islamic solidarity and proposes alternative frameworks for transnational Islamic cooperation beyond the nation-state paradigm, while Merdjanova delves into the multifaceted nature of Ummatic identity, both within the context of Bosniac historical experience.

From Post-Ottoman Hapsburg Occupation to Post-Communist Bosnian Independence: The Three Stages of the *Preporod*

The three stages of the Bosniac national movement unfold against the backdrop of key events in European history: the Hapsburg occupation of Ottoman Bosnia and World War I; the interwar Yugoslav monarchy and World War II; the Yugoslav Communist era; and finally, the period of Bosnian independence, the ensuing war, and the Dayton Accords, leading up to the present day. Before delving into these three stages of the *Preporod*, it is worth noting that Filandra's classification aligns with broader frameworks, such as Ivo Banac's description of the gradual secularization of Bosnian Muslim identity. Banac outlines three phases: during the Habsburg and early Yugoslav periods, Bosnian Muslims were primarily seen as a *religious community*.¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, under Communist leader Josip Broz Tito, their loyalty was rewarded with the recognition of a secularized Muslim nationhood within the Communist framework. This allowed for the unique coexistence of Muslim national identity and atheism.² Finally, Banac identifies the post-Communist phase of statehood, marked by the emergence of Alija Izetbegovic's political movement.³ It was during this period that the term "Bosniac" was officially adopted as an ethnonym by the Second Bosniac Congress (*Drugi Bosnjacki Sabor*) in 1993,⁴ shifting from its earlier use as a territorial designation encompassing non-Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The evolving meanings of "Muslim" and "Bosniac" are central to understanding the

Preporod. These terms reflect the recurring controversies over the national identity of Slavic Muslims in Bosnia and the interplay between their identity and political status. Rather than offering a rigid definition of “Bosniac” at this juncture, the term’s conceptualization will be explored gradually, tracing its shifts and nuances throughout the narrative. The hypothesis that the transition from “Muslim” to “Bosniac” signifies the secularization of Bosnian Muslim identity provides a useful framework for analysis. Filandra’s (and Banac’s) division of the Bosniac national movement into three stages serves as a pedagogical tool to trace the transformation from “Muslim” to “Bosniac,” highlighting the historical, political, and ideological dynamics at play.

Stage One of the *Preporod* (The Hapsburg Occupation until 1960’s Communist Yugoslavia)

The Bosnian political landscape has long been shaped by the interplay of three primary actors (Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs) amid ongoing interference from major international powers. As argued by Mujanović⁵ and others,⁶ nationalism and ethnic chauvinism have been systematically exploited by these groups’ elites, often with the complicity of international forces, to sustain a corrupt, kleptocratic system rooted in the late Ottoman period.⁷ It is within this context of inter-Slavic rivalry and external influence that the Bosniac national movement unfolds. The Bosniacs’ relationship with one such external power, the Hapsburgs, was marked by ambivalence, oscillating between hostility and acceptance. Initial resistance to Austrian occupation, through military confrontation, economic boycotts, and mass migration to Ottoman territories, gave way to a more pragmatic acceptance, particularly after the dispiriting Young Turks revolution.⁸ During this period, Bosniac elites focused on preserving the Muslim aristocracy’s landholdings and safeguarding Islamic practices. Calls for Bosnian autonomy within the empire emerged as a strategy to protect Muslim interests, but Filandra notes that questions of nationhood, statehood, and language, which was central to Serb and Croat nationalist movements, were notably absent from Bosniac discourse at this stage.⁹ This lack of emphasis left many Bosniacs caught

between competing Serb and Croat nationalist projects,¹⁰ often identifying with one of these groups and thus becoming, in Merdjanova's words, "a nation in search of a name."¹¹

Nevertheless, Bosniacs maintained strong connections with the Ottoman Porte, prompting the Austrians to implement policies aimed at severing these ties. The Austrian-appointed *ra'is al-'ulama'* (Grand Mufti) was one such measure, though the position eventually required accreditation from the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam. Bosniacs continued to study in the Ottoman Empire through grants, preserving cultural and intellectual ties.¹² With the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire and the rise of the Yugoslav monarchy, Bosniacs organized under the *Jugoslovenska Muslimanska Organizacija* (JMO), a politico-religious movement that continued to advocate for religious and land rights.¹³ However, some Bosniacs, uneasy about religious compromises within Yugoslavia, emigrated to Turkey, leading to a decline in the Muslim population of the Balkans.¹⁴ Those who remained prioritized the territorial integrity of Bosnia, viewing it as essential to their survival. The JMO argued that a unified Bosnian political framework was the only safeguard against domination by other groups.¹⁵ During World War II, Bosnia-Herzegovina was incorporated into a fascist Croat state, but post-war Communist rule reversed this arrangement, maintaining the country's historical borders and granting Bosnia-Herzegovina the status of a socialist republic. This reaffirmed the region's territorial and political unity, setting the stage for subsequent developments in the Bosniac national movement.

Stage Two of the *Preporod* (The Communist Period Until the Fall of Yugoslavia)

The second stage of the *Preporod* under Communist rule was characterized by a secularization of the Bosnian Muslim identity. The focus shifted away from the preservation of the Islamic character of Bosniacs and more attention was given to achieving nationhood status within Yugoslavia, on par with the Serbs and Croats. The Muslim identity here is the one described in the literature as a "sociological definition" of a Muslim, i.e., someone who identifies with the name, the history and the culture

of Islam and Muslims, but might be more or less adherent in terms of the theology and the religious practices.¹⁶ This, in short, means that the term during this time became an ethnic rather than a religious marker for the increasingly secularized Muslims of Bosnia. Also, the political dimensions of this sociological identity became intimately tied to Bosnia itself such that it gained the status of a homeland.¹⁷ Organizations such as *Mladi Muslimani* ("Young Muslims") that continued to work for the preservation of Islam amongst the Bosniacs and criticized the docility of the Islamic clerical organization in this regard (given that it had largely become an instrument of the Communist party) were outlawed, with some of its members executed. Alija Izetbegović's activities with this organization earned him his first stint in prison, between 1946-1949.¹⁸

Official recognition of Muslim nationhood in came in 1968.¹⁹ This measure was intended to counter Serb and Croat nationalism (playing national groups against each other, in general, was a way for the Communists to manage intra-party rivalries and to compensate for the lack of democratic pluralism), and to strengthen ties to Muslim countries in the Non-Aligned Movement. It had the effect of legitimizing the Bosniacs as serious political players, particularly since nationality formed the basis for the distribution of resources. This also had the effect of increasing Bosniac self-confidence and easing the grip of the secularization process through a national safety valve, as it were.²⁰ In addition to this, recognizing Bosnian Muslims as a nation was part of a larger strategy of legitimizing regional Communist elites, rewarding the Muslim elites in the Communist party for their loyalty. It was also part of a strategy based on the idea that steering the direction of Muslim national affirmation would help "modernize" the Muslim population and prevent the emergence of subversive, reactionary tendencies.²¹

The Third Stage of the *Preporod* (From the Fall of Communism Onwards): Izetbegović and The Party for Democratic Action

This stage was made possible by the convulsions that resulted from the fall of the Berlin Wall, divorcing the Bosniac national movement from Communist control. In December 1990, during the first congress

of the newly-formed “Party for Democratic Action” (henceforth SDA, the acronym of *Stranka Demokratske Akcije* in the Bosnian original), the process of secularization hitherto described was denounced as “brutal” and “vulgar,” destroying the “essentially religious” nature of Bosniac national consciousness. This third phase of the *Preporod*, then, was to a significant extent characterized by the emergence—by way of SDA—of the more religiously inclined section of the Bosniac intelligentsia, out of their Communist-era underground existence.²² A crucial point in this third phase of the *Preporod*, then, was the adoption in 1993 of the name “Bosniac” as the official ethnonym, such that we have the case of a people who entered the war as Muslims and exited it as Bosniacs.²³

The Bosniac strategy with regard to the newly-independent Bosnia-Herzegovina was based on the understanding that the integrity of the Bosnian geographical unit, in this case in the form of a state, signified the *sine qua non* of Bosniac survival.²⁴ Bosniac political strategy coalesced around the strengthening of Bosnian state institutions with the attendant promotion of a kind of civic nationalism. This accounts for the seemingly paradoxical situation in which the Bosniacs were named “Muslims” during the Communist phase of their national movement, only to adopt a more secular ethnonym as they emerged out of it and returned to their religious roots. Even so, there remains some tension or dissonance in this strategy as it entails adopting an ethnically particularistic *Bosniac* identity in which Islam holds a central position (even if only as a cultural signifier) alongside an identification of a secular, civic and multicultural *Bosnian* identity fixed to a state. Added to this are the complexities inherent in the dual European and Islamic components that come with the Bosniac identity. Bougarel and Clayer have pointed out that the constant insistence on being representatives of a tolerant, European, modern and sometimes even secular Islam (as contrasted against influences from the Arabian Peninsula) comes from the Bosniacs having to justify their existence in Europe.²⁵ This clinging to a “tolerant, Bosnian Islam” trope appears to be part of a general Bosniac strategy for affirmation and legitimacy by the West, tied to their adoption of a secularized ethnonym.²⁶ This is very much accords with Babuna’s thesis, which argues that the political and military crisis in Bosnia pushed the SDA into following a

pragmatic, strategic policy of survival, more or less devoid of political ideology. The shifts between and appeals to the Western and Muslim worlds during the war were made in desperation more so than through deliberation, and in post-Dayton Bosnia a realpolitik-based approach has prevailed in which European integration and a secular Bosnian state are deemed necessary for the survival of the Bosniac people.²⁷

Analysis

What are some of the wider implications of the Bosniac experience for the prospects of Ummatic political cooperation and, indeed, unity? One of the first things that might strike the observer is that the Bosniac identity is multi-faceted or paradoxical, depending on which angle you chose to look at it from. And similarly, this might be a drawback or an advantage depending on how you look at it. With regard to the multi-facetedness of the Bosniac identity, Merdjanova in her study on the relationship between Balkan Muslims and the Ummah points out that the very concept of Ummah is riddled with complexities to begin with. It is of “a dynamic nature and encompasses a plurality of discourses, actors, funds, and ideological and political interests.” It coexists with national identity, but it also interacts and competes with it. Added to this there are the pan-Balkan Muslim identity,²⁸ and the neo-Ottoman identity shared with Muslims (and non-Muslims) everywhere from Turkey, to the Crimea, to the Middle East.²⁹ There is also the identity of the Westernized, secular “European Muslim,”³⁰ making for a potential cocktail of imagined identities. She argues that the Bosnian government’s appeal to the Ummah during the war was primarily tactical.³¹ What we have here, then, might be understood as a tug-of-war between a Westernized secular identity and an Ummatic, religious identity, which Bosniacs have yet to come to terms with.

An original approach to the question of Bosniac positioning during the war with regard to their balancing act between the “international community” (a euphemism for the West) and the Ummah, respectively, has been provided by Darryl Li. He prefers to understand these two imagined concepts as two rivalling universalisms: the liberal Western and the

Ummatic, with the latter in effect defying the conventional understanding of the Westphalian nation-state as a fundamental constituent unit.³² What Li has shown in his work is that Izetbegovic, SDA and the Bosnian government had to juggle three different identities: their civic Bosnian identity, their European identity, and their Muslim identity extended beyond Bosnia itself (as part of the Ummah). These three different identities were utilized strategically depending on which gains SDA sought to achieve. When they appealed for Western intervention, they emphasized their European identity. When they sought to attract civic-minded non-Muslims in Bosnia, they emphasized their Bosnian identity. When they appealed to Islamic solidarity, they emphasized their belongingness to the Ummah. Bosniac identity, in other words, is inherently ambivalent, if not elusive.

The complex nature of this is compounded by the consideration that nationalism itself might serve as an ersatz-religion even if religion-proper is taken out of the equation, making things difficult to disentangle when the national identity is intertwined with a religious identity.³³ At any rate, this account contradicts (or at least nuances) Filandra's more straightforward typology in which there is a steady secularization of Bosniac identity. Whilst Filandra's description might serve as a heuristic tool to understand the general evolution of Bosniac identity during the 20th century, there is some ambiguity. This is a natural consequence of the fact that Bosnian Muslim identity has been negotiated within all of the following phases: a Muslim empire (the Ottomans), a Catholic empire (the Hapsburgs), an Orthodox dominated monarchy (during the first Yugoslav state) and two secular states (the second Yugoslav state and the *de jure* independent Bosnia that is *de facto* a US/EU protectorate, or quasi-protectorate).³⁴

If we do settle upon understanding the above-described aspects of the Bosniac identity as a tug-of-war, then it would naturally follow that the Bosniacs run the risk of losing their Ummatic identity as they tumble down into the secular, Western side of the field. But this is not necessarily how one needs to understand this. Whilst there might certainly be an element of Machavellianism to Bosniac appeals for help, which cater to the recipient in terms of their packaging, Correia has noted

that the Bosniacs whom she has studied feel comfortable, on a personal level, with juggling several seemingly contradictory religious and secular identities.³⁵ In other words, this aspect of Bosniac strategizing might also have arisen as a natural extension of a certain compounded aspect to Bosniac identity. Seen from this angle, the Bosniacs could serve as natural bridge-builders between the Ummatic and Western worlds, which might facilitate civilizational cooperation. One example of this can be found in the pre-presidency writings of Alija Izetbegovic. In *Islam Between East and West* (1993) he provides an intellectual foundation for the Bosniacs' potential role in facilitating East-West understanding by presenting Islam as a balanced synthesis between materialism and spirituality, or civilization and culture. This serves to conceptualize Islam in a way that is intelligible to a Western audience, and these intellectual efforts, in combination with the Bosniacs role as an embodiment of European Islam, has the potential to de-otherize Muslims in Europe. But this then begs the question: how do we avoid a situation in which the Bosniacs find themselves in a tug-of-war between the Western and the Ummatic? For a discussion of this, we need to return to Filandra's analysis. It is clear that his account of the development of Bosniac identity is not merely descriptive, it is meant to be normative. He understands the secularization process to be necessary for Bosniac survival.

*Scarcest are the political forces and actors, most needed in Bosnia, who think through, understand and comprehend Bosniac survival in such a way that they see the preservation of the Bosnian state as a condition for the preservation of Bosniac nationhood and spirituality. Mistaken are those who consider that by only defending the religious or the religious and national aspects, neglecting the defense of Bosnia as a state, will the faith and the nation be adequately defended. Historical experience tells us that it is only through the state and state apparatus that national and spiritual distinctiveness is safeguarded.*³⁶

It is difficult, at first glance, to argue against such an analysis given the difficult political terrain that the Bosniacs have had to navigate in a

post-Ottoman world, as evidenced most recently by the genocide during the 1990s. This is particularly the case given how irrelevant the Ummah has been as a political player in the international political arena, with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) having proven quite toothless. It could therefore be argued that there has been an element of *darurah*, to use a term borrowed from the field of Islamic *fiqh*, to this type of pragmatic strategy that focuses on preserving Bosnia as a political unit in the form of a nation state as other more traditionally Islamic forms of political organization have proven to be unviable. This pragmatic strategy reflects a temporary suspension of idealized Islamic political forms, such as transnational Ummatic governance, in favor of survival within the constraints of the modern international system. However, the accompanying embrace of a secularized national identity, and its anchoring within a post-Westphalian state is fraught with complications that might impede Ummatic political cooperation. The justification that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina need to operate within the political framework that the current world order offers (by way of an appeal to pragmatism), I would argue, loses its cogency when and if one forgets, ignores or fails to acknowledge that this was done out of necessity, and instead understands it to be a permanent measure that one then starts to build one's identity around. Or one doubles-down on this strategy even as new opportunities for Ummatic political cooperation begin to emerge. As pointed out by Sadek Hamid,

*The Umma is nearly two billion strong and youthful, with more than half of its population under the age of 30. We currently make up around 20 percent of humanity, possess numerous resources, and have hundreds of millions of educated people who are globally distributed and connected like never before. Globalization has helped increase ummatic sentiment through the possibilities of instant communications technology, travel and trade.*³⁷

In other words, it is when one goes beyond pragmatism and promotes a secularized Bosniac identity within a post-Westphalian world order as more than a means to an end, promoting it instead as the end in

itself, that one in effect forfeits the Ummatic. On the other hand, denying the European-ness of the Bosniac identity would be equally perilous, as it denies the Bosniacs their natural role as bridge-builders, even as it puts into question European peoples' (even beyond the Bosniacs) right to retain their European identity if they embrace an Ummatic outlook on politics. This impoverishes the Ummah.

Why do I caution against an identity tied to the post-Westphalian world order? Here I would argue that the consequences of a Faustian bargain with nationalism ultimately reach beyond the politics of the day. One of the most eloquent spokesmen for the position that I argue for here was Muhammad Iqbal. In a discussion on his political philosophy Sevea points out,

[T]he Allama rejected the ideology of nationalism and the modern nation-state structure. [... His] view of colonialism as an exercise of power extending beyond physical domination into the realm of intellectual hegemony inspired his rejection of calls for the adoption of western political ideas and institutions. The mere transplantation of western political ideas and institutions, Iqbal argued, would only serve to perpetuate colonial domination, even after de-colonisation.³⁸

Indeed, Iqbal argued that the adoption of the nation-state system infringed upon the very foundation of Islam, endangering the believer's *tawhid*.³⁹ His analysis goes deeper still:

Iqbal recorded in a letter to Edward Thompson that his foray into the realm of politics had been dictated by his interest in Islam as a moral polity and the fear that nationalism would lead to atheism. It was endemic in the nation-state system, he argued, that religion be relegated to the private realm; thus, the only factor uniting the people of the nation-state would be 'irreligiousness.'⁴⁰

He also argued that the overbearing political structure of the modern state "over-organizes" the individual, exploiting him or her for the purpose of the state itself.⁴¹

This very problem, along with others tied to the state, has more recently been discussed by the likes of Wael Hallaq who argues that any notion of Islamic governance, rooted in the Shari'ah (as it has historically come to be articulated through the Sunni and the Shi'i Schools of Law), requires as a necessary condition for its viability that the Islamic paradigmatic way of living and understanding—with its theoretical-philosophical, sociological, anthropological, legal, political and economic underpinnings which have evolved over centuries—remain intact within society. This intactness provides the driving force that animates that society, by constituting its “central domain” (a notion borrowed from Carl Schmitt).⁴² This paradigm is the proverbial canvas upon which the Shari'ah-centered institutional framework can be painted. The central domain contains the “ideal values that remain the distinctive desirata and the locus of purposive action and thought.” The absence of this paradigm and the central domain renders any attempt at applying Islamic governance futile.⁴³ It would naturally follow, then, that any Muslim nationalism within a paradigm that is fundamentally incompatible with an Islamic central domain cannot be a permanent solution to the problems with which the Bosniacs have to contend. It creates new problems, even as it might perhaps solve some others. The main problem it creates, in my view, is that it replaces the Islamic paradigmatic way of living by making it appear as unfeasible or extreme. Hallaq argues (“the genealogy argument”) that the modern state grew out of historical circumstances that are specific to Europe and rooted in its own paradigm shaped by the Enlightenment, and that the imposition of European political structures to societies that do not share the same historical experiences and are based on different paradigms will cause major disruptions to those societies, necessitating violence (physical, psychological, epistemic, and so on) in that process. This describes what colonization of the Muslim world entailed. One particularly insidious aspect to this is that the state “came to be associated with a ‘value-free’ scientific method that was presumably based on universally valid laws” and that it is imagined to be “subject to universal scientific principles that must by definition be as timeless as reason itself.”⁴⁴ This also explains why Filandra considers the Bosniac secularized identity to be more advanced, whereas a return

to a “mere” Muslim, Ummatic identity appears to be either retrograde or unrealistic, if not bizarre.

Hallaq also points out (“the metaphysical argument”) that the citizen, as it were, serves the state, based on the idea that the state derives its legitimacy and sovereignty from an imagined construct, the nation (in the abstract), of which it is an embodiment (in tangible terms): “To be a citizen, therefore, means to live under a sovereign will that has its own metaphysics. It is to live with and under yet another god, one who can claim the believers’ lives.”⁴⁵ The implications of this are devastating, considering that *shirk*, or setting up a rival to God, is considered the ultimate cardinal sin in Islam, rendering the modern nation-state incompatible with Islamic governance on that account alone. A case in point, not provided by Hallaq, but rather by Salman Sayyid in one of his studies on Islamism, is Khomeini who declared that through the doctrine of *vilayet-e-faqih*, a modern innovation in Shi’i jurisprudence developed as a mechanism to guide the Islamic Republic, the political rule of the Iranian state has precedence over the Shari’ah itself. As Sayyid points out: “[T]he Islamic Republic had the right to abrogate any or all of the [Shari’ah], in the wider interests of the *Ummah*. There is nothing traditional about this ruling; it is not derived from any canonical text and it actually makes observations of Islamic precepts secondary to state interests.”⁴⁶ State matters are privileged and everything else is ancillary. This makes clear why the post-Westphalian state model around which a secularized Bosniac identity emerges is fundamentally incompatible with Islamic metaphysics, which is why the earlier incarnation of said identity, manifested in the “capital M *Musliman*” ethnonym by which one can be both *Musliman* and an atheist Communist, strikes us as particularly dissonant and had to be discarded. But the problem does not resolve itself simply through the adoption of another name.

Hallaq then argues (“the legal argument”) that the modern conceptualization of the state falls back upon an integrated and an integrating system that represents, or incarnates, the will of the nation. This is manifested through law. It is law, and the enforcement of law, which becomes the instrument through which this national will is translated from the abstract into the tangible. This, again, is highly problematic

from a Shari'ah perspective, according to Hallaq, as it *de facto* erases the distinction between the legal and the executive or governing spheres of society, which need to be clearly separated for Islamic governance to be legitimate and, indeed, feasible. Hallaq is arguing that the Shari'ah, or rather the process by which it is interpreted and communicated within society through the '*ulama*', needs to be independent from the ruling body, and it needs to emerge out of civil society, bottom-up, rather than top-down from state institutions. In other words, the Shari'ah needs to be an independent "legislative power" that emerges out of a living tradition within a community which accepts the metaphysical premises on which the Shari'ah is based by first practicing its "moral technologies of the self" (the spiritual and ritualistic elements of Islam which constitute a fundamental part of the Shari'ah itself) before it can spill over into the other "branches" of government. Only when embedded within a "moral-legal system" anchored in a particular God-centered metaphysical understanding does it make sense for the Shari'ah to inform judicial power.⁴⁷ In such circumstances where this is the case and that condition is fulfilled, the judicial power and the executive ruler are subservient to the commands of the legislative.⁴⁸

As for Iqbal's contention that nationalism leads to atheism, I believe that Hallaq successfully substantiates this concern. He points out that one consequence of the modern state growing out of an Enlightenment paradigm, wherein reason is instrumentalized, is that an is/ought dichotomy lay at the foundation of modern law, in contravention to the very basis of Islamic governance where the distinction between "moral" and "legal" is completely absent. In fact, the legal is "an organically derivative category of the moral."⁴⁹ Islamic law presupposes a "moral universe," whereas paradigmatic modern law is positivistic. This explains why, for example, usury as condemned in both Aristotelian and pre-modern Christian ethics is now universally accepted in modern economic theory and an integral part of the nation state's economic structure due to the exponential economic growth that it facilitates. Instrumental reason and the is/ought dichotomy at the root of positivistic law is inimical to Islamic governance because it is at least a necessary condition for "a cold universe that is ours to do with as we like."⁵⁰ It therefore follows

that any identity, such as the Bosniac one, which is directly tied to a political system based on the is/ought dichotomy cannot be the ultimate one for a Muslim.

Finally, and crucially for anyone invested in an Ummatic political project, such an identity, given its embeddedness in a post-Westphalian world order, presupposes a Wallerstenian world system which automatically renders the Ummatic incongruous. Hallaq argues that the modern nation state is surrounded, fortified, and upheld by a discursive structure that serves to legitimize it in the minds of those that it encompasses. The nation-state depends for its survival on the ability to, not only organize the lives of its citizens, but to organize their minds through generating “social and cultural consent,” by working its way through various units of society. There is an element of coercive power here (not least through mandatory education), but it is mainly a case of subordination through cooperation, or absorption: “[T]hrough state schools and an education regulated by state law (which destroys earlier [pre-colonial] forms), a paradigmatic scholarly elite is created and re-created as a cultural domain responsive to the state’s overall penetration of the social order.”⁵¹ The state is a contingent reality, yet in the mind of the citizen (as educated by the state) it is taken to be a necessary one. The debilitating problem for proponents of Muslim nationalism is that the paradigmatic (stable and functioning) nation-state is understood to be the Euro-American one, having emerged out of a specific historical context and being sustained by the legal, bureaucratic and metaphysical reinforcements discussed in the previous points. Now, if the Bosniacs are interested in gaining international recognition for their state (and a state is not a state without being recognized as such by other states), it needs to be a part of the community of nation states, which entails being part of a global economic system that reinforces the advantage of the already dominant states (that gained their dominance by way of colonialism). The system is largely imposed on the weaker states. This means that the discourse surrounding the paradigmatic (Euro-American) nation-state is reinforced in the process, since this global system is dominated by the rich, Western states that other states measure themselves against.⁵² The Bosniacs, by way of their Bosnian state, are seeking to enmesh themselves in a world

system that emerged out of colonialism which, in part, was premised on “rooting out the Shari’ah, it having been an impediment to Europe’s political expansion and, far more importantly, economic domination.”⁵³

Conclusion

The above analysis has, I believe, demonstrated why calling the transition from “Muslims” to “Bosniacs” and the adoption of the Bosnian state as a national homeland a “national awakening,” a *Preporod*, might be misdirected. The thesis presented is not that “Bosniacs” as an ethnonym is problematic in itself or that a return to being mere “Muslims” is necessary. Indeed, a multi-faceted identity which accommodates being European Bosniacs and Ummatic Muslims means richness and vividness that is to the advantage of both the Ummah and the West. What I am saying is precisely that this richness and vividness are needed, and are to be sought in embracing an Ummatic identity that is tied together with the Bosniac identity and which transcends the post-Westphalian nation state.

Whilst the political maneuvering of Bosniacs in the 20th century and their identification with Bosnia-Herzegovina as a political unit may have been a *darurah*, a *Preporod* that is more worthy of that name can only be realized when Ummatic sentiments get translated into concrete political gains, i.e., when an Ummatic identity ceases to be viewed as quixotic, becoming instead viable as a foundation for political action. After all, as Bosniacs the people that are the focus of this paper are a mere 3 million strong, but as part of the Muslim Ummah they reach almost 2 billion. Moreover, Hallaq argues that the project of finding alternatives to the *status quo*, which involves reanimating the world and blurring the distinction between is and ought, cannot be a Muslim monopoly. It needs to be a shared human endeavor. It is a general question of shifting the central domain, from the economic and the political to the moral; and for Muslims, specifically, it is a question of what they can bring to the table in this regard. It is a table at which their “Western counterparts” are present. Muslims, therefore, need to develop a vocabulary that suits the context and that Muslims’ interlocutors can understand: “This would

require nonconformist thinking and native imagination, because the social units that would make up the larger sociopolitical order must be rethought in terms of moral communities that need, among other things, to be reenchanting.”⁵⁴ By secularizing and modernizing their identity, along with anchoring it to a nation-state, the Bosniacs are not only doing a disservice to themselves, but to humanity at large.

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Endnotes

- 1 Banac, Ivo "Bosnian Muslims: From Religious Community to Socialist Nationhood and Postcommunist Statehood, 1918-1992." In Pinson, Mark; Mottahedeh, Roy (eds.). *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*. (Boston: Harvard CMES, 1996), 134
- 2 The distinction between the national and the religious identity was made through a shift between the lower and the upper case M: *musliman* being a Muslim in the religious sense, and *Musliman* being a Muslim in the national sense.
- 3 Banac, Ivo "Bosnian Muslims: From Religious Community to Socialist Nationhood and Postcommunist Statehood, 1918-1992". In Pinson, Mark; Mottahedeh, Roy (eds.). *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*. (Boston: Harvard CMES, 1996), 145-147
- 4 Donia, Robert J. & Fine, John Van Antwerp, Jr. *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. (C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1994), 73 and Imamovic, Mustafa *Historija Bosnjaka*. (Sarajevo: Preporod 1998), 569
- 5 Mujanovic, Jasmin (2018) *Hunger and fury: the crisis of democracy in the Balkans* (London, United Kingdom: Hurst & Company 2013)
- 6 Cf. Ramet, P. Sabrina "Introduction" in Listhaug, Ola & Ramet, P. Sabrina (eds.) *Bosnia-Herzegovina since Dayton: Civic and uncivic values*. (Ravenna: Angelo Longo Editore. 2013) and Bougarel, Xavier & Clayer, *Nathalie Europe's Balkan Muslims. A New History*. (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2017), 170
- 7 See Mujanovic, Jasmin (2018) *Hunger and fury: the crisis of democracy in the Balkans* (London, United Kingdom: Hurst & Company 2013), 17-40
- 8 Imamovic, Mustafa *Historija Bosnjaka*. (Sarajevo: Preporod 1998), 361-362 and Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 27-31
- 9 There is a teleological bent to Filandra's analysis here, in that he considers this first stage to be underdeveloped and deficient as its focus was mainly religious. In other words: increasing secularization of the Bosniac identity suggests maturation. Cf. Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 53.
- 10 Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 34-39 and Mujanovic, Jasmin (2018) *Hunger and fury: the crisis of democracy in the Balkans* (London, United Kingdom: Hurst & Company 2013), 37-39
- 11 Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30-34. This, again, takes a secularized conceptualization of a "nation" for granted, suggesting that a religious identity by itself is somewhat lacking. The idea that one might not feel a particular need for, or find much merit in, a secularized national identity does not seem to be entertained.

- 12 Bougarel, Xavier & Clayer, *Nathalie Europe's Balkan Muslims. A New History*. (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2017), 62-64
- 13 Imamovic, Mustafa *Historija Bosnjaka*. (Sarajevo: Preporod 1998), 494
- 14 Carmichael, Cathy *A Concise History of Bosnia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 63-64
- 15 Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 123
- 16 Bougarel, Xavier & Clayer, *Nathalie Europe's Balkan Muslims. A New History*. (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2017), 2-4 and Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xv
- 17 Abazovic, Dino "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina" in Abazovic, Dino & Velikonja, Mita (eds.) *Post-Yugoslavia: New Cultural and Political Perspectives* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 221 & 229
- 18 Velikonja, Mitja *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. (Texas A&M University Press. 2013), 218-219; Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 215-222 and Perica, Vjekoslav *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002) 76-77
- 19 Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 136
- 20 Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36-37; Velikonja, Mitja *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. (Texas A&M University Press. 2013), 225-226 and Grandits, Hannes "Ambivalentnost u Socijalistickoj Nacionalnoj Politici Bosne i Hercegovine u Kasnim 1960-im i u 1970-im: Perspektive Odozgo i Odozdo" in (ed.) Kamberovic, Husnija *Rasprave o Nacionalnom Identitu Bosnjaka: Zbornik Radova* (Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju 2009), 16
- 21 Karcic refers to this as an attempt to create a Muslim nation without Islam. Cf. Karcic, Fikret "Islamic Revival in the Balkans 1970-1992" *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2/3, pp. 565-581 Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad (1997), 578
- 22 Sarac Dzenita "Neuspjeh sekularizacije i jakanje religijskog identiteta pocetkom 1980-ih godina u Bosni i Hercegovini" in (ed.) Kamberovic, Husnija *Rasprave o Nacionalnom Identitu Bosnjaka: Zbornik Radova* (Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2009), 154-155
- 23 Babuna, Aydin "National Identity, Islam and Politics in Post-Communist Bosnia-Herzegovina" *East European Quarterly; Social Science Premium Collection*; Winter; 39, 4 (2005), 419
- 24 Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 380-384
- 25 Bougarel, Xavier & Clayer, *Nathalie Europe's Balkan Muslims. A New History*. (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2017), 215 & 223-224

- 26 Ibid., 193
- 27 Babuna, Aydin "National Identity, Islam and Politics in Post-Communist Bosnia-Herzegovina" *East European Quarterly; Social Science Premium Collection*; Winter; 39, 4 (2005), 437-438
- 28 Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54-59
- 29 Ibid., 76
- 30 Ibid., 110
- 31 Ibid., 58
- 32 Li, Darryl *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity*. (Stanford University Press 2020), 31-32
- 33 Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8
- 34 (Merdjanova 2013, pp. 29; Hasibovic 2013, pp. 261) Merdjanova, Ina *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between nationalism and transnationalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29
- 35 Correia, Sarah "Conclusion" in Listhaug, Ola & Ramet, P. Sabrina (eds.) *Bosnia-Herzegovina since Dayton: Civic and uncivic values*. (Ravenna: Angelo Longo Editore. 2013), 403
- 36 Filandra, Sacir *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*. (Sarajevo: Sejtarija 1998), 392
- 37 Hamid, Sadek "Islam Beyond Borders: Building Ummatic Solidarity in the 21st Century," *Ummatics*, January 25 (2023), 9
- 38 Sevea, Iqbal Singh *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*. (New York: Cambridge University Press 2012), 127
- 39 Ibid., 139
- 40 Ibid., 141
- 41 Ibid., 143-144
- 42 Relatedly, Talal Asad's concept of a discursive tradition emphasizes Islam as a dynamic, historically contingent set of practices and arguments, continuously negotiated through reason, authority, and community engagement, which sustains the coherence of Islamic thought and practice across time. Asad, Talal "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam." *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.
- 43 Hallaq, Wael *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. (New York: Columbia University Press 2014), 6-9
- 44 Ibid., 24
- 45 Ibid., 27-28

- 46 Sayyid, Salman *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*. (London: Zed Books 2015), 12
- 47 Hallaq, Wael *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. (New York: Columbia University Press 2014), 51
- 48 Ibid., 64
- 49 Ibid., 80-83
- 50 Ibid., 89
- 51 Ibid., 35
- 52 Ibid., 140-141
- 53 Ibid., 147
- 54 Ibid., 168