REVIEW ARTICLE

SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF
A HERMENEUTICS OF THE QUR’ĀN:
THE CASE OF BOSNIA

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If von Clausewitz’s definition of war as the continuation of policy by other means is assumed true, then any study of the current genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina demands an analytic view of the political and cultural background of the war.¹ The book *Hermeneutika Kur’āna* by Enes Karić is first and foremost an excellent scholarly interpretation of the Qur’ān, but Karić’s work—written immediately before the first democratic elections in the then little-known republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina²—can also be read as a hermeneutical *signum temporis* of the very complex political relations in the former socialist Yugoslavia.³

Discussing the Qur’ān, Karić, an Associate Professor in the Islamic Theological College in Sarajevo, refers to relevant literature in Arabic as well as in English, German and French, and gives many technical terms in Latin. He cites the most respected authors, from those publishing in Makkah, Cairo, Beirut, Istanbul, Baghdad, Tehran and Lahore, to the Western expert in hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Hermeneutika Kur’āna* provides a useful selective bibliography from the literature in several languages, a five-page summary in English, and an index of names. The text is accompanied by more than fifty fragments of the Qur’ān in Arabic script.

Karić examines in detail several problems in translating the Qur’ān:
the vocalization and the consonants of the Qur'anic archetype; broad "styli-
izations" of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung and the Qur'anic language. Besides that, he analyses "some philosophical problems" of "reading" the Qur'ân and gives a review of traditional and contemporary hermeneutics of the Qur'ân in light of more recent theories of reception.

The book as a whole focuses on the following questions: Must a translation of the Qur'ân convey the words of its original, or the ideas of the original? Must a translation of the Qur'ân reflect the style of the original, or the style of the translator? Should one read a translation of the Qur'ân as its original? Or as a translation? Should the Qur'ân be translated in prose or in poetry? Although Karić states modestly that the title of his book "does not connote a solution but only a posing of the problem", and that he "do[es] not offer any final answers" (pp. 14–15), he nevertheless offers some conclusions or directions towards the answers. The Holy Book of the Muslims is "equally [Qur'anic] in its meaning, in its style, in its sound" (p. 206; all italics are Karić's). While some ideas of the Arabic original (e.g., one God) "can be conveyed without many difficulties into many languages", no single translation can transfer the "essential intentions" of the original words because of religious, political, mythological, cultural and other conventions in understanding and "reading" the Qur'ân in the Arabic language and the Islamic world. "Therefore we cannot make final demands of a translation", concludes Karić (p. 220). A translation of the Qur'ân cannot be read as the original; it should be read rather as a translation, which is always the result of a "dialogue" between the Qur'ân and the translator's concrete historical situation. A translation can hardly convey the rhythm, beauty, and rhyme of the original. Therefore, the translation necessarily reflects the translator's style. "The Qur'anic archetype (without vocals, without diacritical marks, without interpunctuation) is a book which leads one to silence" (p. 248).

Probably the only "final" answer Karić offers is apparently contradictory and itself almost untranslatable: "Kur'ân nije moguće prevesti, Kur'ân se mora prevoditi" (p. 86; see also pp. 15, 39, 221). Karić's conclusion seems to be contradictory because both the Slavic verbs (prevesti, prevoditi) mean the same—"to translate"—but the former is a perfective one and the latter imperfective: The Qur'ân cannot be translated [once and forever]; the Qur'ân must be translated [many times, as a process].

The corpus of the Qur'ân can be (and has been) interpreted not only as a holy text but also as a literary, legal, rhetoric, allegorical, economic, social, political... and even an apocalyptic text. In his Introduction, Karić emphasises that over the centuries the reception of the Qur'ân has been marked by three "arts": the art of reciting or the reception of the Qur'ân by ear; the art of writing and translating the Qur'ân for the eye and the human imagination in general; and the art of interpretation of the Qur'ân,
by its hermeneutics and exegesis, ta'wil and tafsir. Karić finds that reception of the Qurʾān by hearing is "undoubtedly the most ancient and originates from the dawn of Islam" (p. 17).

Karić notes that the Qurʾān does not contain the central philosophical term Being (wujūd), but the Holy Book speaks about the world, God, life, death, man, soul, time, eternity, cosmos, and these topics are "common objects of religion, philosophy, higher poetry and the arts" (p. 198). On the basis of concrete examples Karić shows that philologically-oriented hermeneutics is congruent with philosophical hermeneutics of the Qurʾān. If, for instance, insan has the connotation of a "being of forgetfulness," then its translation by čovjek "man/person" (as the "being of time") is not faithful to the intentions of the original. Numerous Qurʾānic expressions for time are often substituted by a few temporal words of ours rather than translated in a terminologically appropriate way. Fortunately for the translator of the Qurʾān, the Slavic language of the Sunni Bosnian Muslims took over (through Turkish) many Arabic words in their original meaning: "Even the Arabism vakat ["atoms of time; temporal beings"] in the Serbo-Croatian language preserves its Qurʾānic intention" (p. 203).

Each interpretation of the Qurʾān is a "translation of the Qurʾān into history" (p. 30) and vice versa: every translation into a language (including contemporary Arabic) is a historically marked interpretation. Referring to some modish approaches to the Qurʾān (from the viewpoints of Darwinism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, Marxism, etc.), Karić correctly notes a "certain reductionism applied to the Qurʾānic message" (p. 36).

The fact that the original text of the Qurʾān was not vocalized and that there were seven, ten or even fourteen vocalizations contributes to the high untranslatability of the Holy Book. As Karić points out, "Time vocalizes the Qurʾān, Time reads out its 'eternal' meanings, never transferring them completely" (p. 263). But even though the transferred is not the complete Qurʾān, it is the Qurʾān too.

Thousands and thousands of translations of the Qurʾān testify to the Sisyphean task of "finding the real meaning of this text" (p. 106; italics are Karić's). Even attempts at reconstructing the primordial meaning from the circumstances of the first recipients of the Qurʾān can hardly be fruitful because "a reconstruction is always a reconstruction of someone's past from someone's present, which is foreign to that past" (p. 106).

The chapter entitled "Resistance to Translating the Qurʾān into the Serbo-Croatian Language" is—from a socio-political viewpoint—probably the most interesting part of Karić's book. Study of "Serbo-Croatian" trans-
lations is especially promising if one keeps in mind the fact that the native language of the Slavic Muslims has also developed two different non-Islamic theological terminologies, one Orthodox Christian (Serbian) and the other Roman Catholic (Croatian). Karić's analysis implies that lexical interrelations between Serbian, Croatian and Turkish (including Arabic and Persian) vocabulary in these translations correspond with the respective political positions (pro-Serbian, pro-Croatian, pro-Muslim) of the translators or publishers.

The first sentence of the chapter on “Serbo-Croatian” translations has a strong political message: “In the beginning it is necessary to state the following: *Islam does not know linguistic nationalism; one reads in the Qur’an about God who directs his message to all peoples in their own languages*” (p. 43; italics are Karić's). Nevertheless, Arabic as the “language of paradise” is inseparable from the Qur’an. Karić points out that there is a “minimal part of the Qur’an that the Indonesians, Pakistanis, Syrians, Azerbaijani or Bosnian Muslims know by heart, regardless of whether they know what it really means” (p. 46). The language of the Muslim Holy Book is *lingua sacra* and this sacredness led to a “sacralization of the very letters of the Qur’an” (p. 47). Some Bosnians, predominantly Muslims, used the Arabic alphabet to write texts even in their own Slavic language.

Karić writes that some fragments of the Qur’an were translated into Latin by Hermannus Dalmata (from the Croatian province of Dalmatia) as early as the twelfth century. However, “this first translation of the Qur’an in the West” was “intentionally deformed and adapted with the goal to refute Islam”, according to Muhamed Hadžijahić's evaluation of Hermannus's translation (p. 58).

There have been more than a dozen Serbian and Croatian translations of the Qur’an, but many of them are either incomplete or unpublished. The first complete translation of the Qur’an into “Serbo-Croatian” was printed in the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet in Belgrade in 1895. This translation provoked many controversies. The Serbian translator Mićo Ljubibratić was, according to Hadžijahić, a voice “in favor of brotherly collaboration of the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims” (p. 59). Immediately after mentioning Hadžijahić’s portrayal of Ljubibratić’s “brotherly” relations to the Bosnian Muslims, Karić notes (in the same sentence) that Ljubibratić’s translation was preceived by the Muslims, and especially ‘ulamā’, as an “anti-Islamic move par excellence”. Karić then describes the comments of the Sarajevo newspaper *Bošnjak* [The Bosnian] and other Muslim publications of the time on Ljubibratić’s translation. Karić’s scholarly explanation is written in an Aesopian-diplomatic language which in itself demands a new hermeneutics. He writes:
The newspaper *Bosnjak* [in 1896] more warns than informs its readers on the new [Ljubibratić] translation of the Qur’ān in this way:

*Carigradski glasnik* [The Istanbul Herald] in its latest issue brings the news that the Ćupić Foundation in Belgrade has published a translation of the Qur’ān and that it [the Foundation] resents the official newspaper of the Shkodër wilāyet [today’s Albania], which says that the translation would not be correct, because it is not everyone’s job to translate the Qur’ān and to establish its basic tenets.

The inclinations of *Bosnjak* are on the side of the Shkodër wilāyet’s newspaper, and they may be interpreted in part by the pro-Croatian policy which this newspaper mainly conducted. However, according to Hadžijahić, the idea of translating the Qur’ān into Serbo-Croatian has its roots as early as 1868: “According to all [the facts], it seems that this undertaking [Ljubibratić’s translation] was motivated primarily by political reasons, with the intention to achieve certain national-political effects among the Bosnian Muslims through an edition of the translation of the Qur’ān. . . .” According to the same author [Hadžijahić], the newspapers *Srbija* [Serbia] and *Vila* [The Fairy] informed their readers about that undertaking. [Serbian literary critic Jovan] Skerlić, in his work *Omladina i njena književnost* [Young People and Their Literature], refers to *Srbija*, which had written that some “learned and honest Serbian priest is translating the Qur’ān into Serbian”. *Vila* again suggested to the [pan-Serbian organization] “United Serbian Youth” that they print that translation and “in that way it [Serbian Youth] would demonstrate most clearly its opinion about its [Serbian Youth’s] Turkicized brothers” (pp. 59–60).

The fragment quoted above may demonstrate how Karić tries (successfully) to create a *balance* in a scholarly-theological discussion with far-reaching political consequences. First he himself, as a Muslim, emphasises the “pro-Croatian policy” of some critics of Ljubibratić’s translation. After that—trying to maintain the balance—he quotes another Muslim scholar, Hadžijahić from Sarajevo, who speaks about the *pro-Serbian policy* of Ljubibratić’s “undertaking”.*7 The portrayal of Ljubibratić’s “brotherly” relations towards the Muslims sounds somewhat ironic if one knows that many Serbs have looked upon the Bosnian Muslims as Turkicized Serbs, that is, linguistically or by origin potential Serbs but confessionally real Turks. Ljubibratić himself was the “Serbian government’s commissioner who worked on preparing an uprising in Herzegovina. He participated in the 1875 Herzegovinian uprising as one of its leaders.”*8 Of course, this anti-Turkish uprising was *eo ipso* an anti-Muslim act.
Karić also notes that, besides the newspapers mentioned, many other Muslim publications were critical of Ljubibratić's translation. Karić shows that Muslim criticism of the Serbian translation was based not only on an allegedly "pro-Croatian policy" but also on scholarly facts. The journal 

Hikjmet from the northern Bosnian town of Tuzla described Ljubibratić's translation metaphorically as a watery "soup of a soup's soup" (Čorbine čorbe čorba) because Ljubibratić translated the Qur'ān "from Russian", and the Russian translation had in its turn been "translated from French" (p. 60). The leader of an anti-Turkish uprising, Ljubibratić "did not know Arabic" (p. 92), but as a Serbian Orthodox priest he did know the Bible very well. He introduced "purely Christian words or words very characteristic of the Christian liturgy" into his Serbian version of the Qur'ān (p. 211). Ljubibratić's translation contains Biblical forms of the Qur'ānic names and is written in a Biblical style (e.g., use of archaic and markedly Orthodox Christian words such as vaistinu "in truth"). Such a Christianization of the Qur'ān is especially striking in a culture which already has a well-developed Islamic (linguistic) tradition.9

Despite these and numerous other shortcomings of Ljubibratić's translation, Karić does not reject it. Just the opposite—Karić writes that the "value of Ljubibratić's translation rests precisely in the fact that it is one of many Christian receptions of the Qur'ān" (p. 212). Moreover, Karić mentions "praise of the style of Ljubibratić's translation" (p. 61). To be sure, Ljubibratić's style is good, but it is a good Biblical, not Qur'ānic style. It seems that Karić here makes a subtle politically balanced concession for the sake of "peace in Yugoslavia". Praising Ljubibratić's style, Karić in fact repeats the statement of Belgrade Professor Darko Tanasković, who describes Ljubibratić's work as "linguistically and stylistically the best" "Serbo-Croatian" translation of the Qur'ān (p. 59). Karić's book is based primarily on his doctoral dissertation, which he defended in Belgrade in 1989. Tanasković was one of three members of the committee for Karić's dissertation. Karić must have had compelling reasons for defending his dissertation precisely in Belgrade, rather than in Sarajevo—where he had studied—or somewhere abroad. It seems to me that he chose Belgrade precisely because during the late 1980's the Serbian media were waging a fierce anti-Muslim propaganda campaign, and some of the best-known Serbian orientalist scholars were leading this anti-Islamic action. For example, Dr Miroljub Jevtić, justly portrayed by the Belgrade magazine Duga [Rainbow] as one of the "best Yugoslav experts on Islamic currents in the world", declared in an interview that "the local Muslims [in Yugoslavia] have been perpetrators of genocide, from the 'cutting of the princes' [by Turkish janissaries, in the beginning of the nineteenth century] to the present day".10 Some Serbian scholars developed theories of racial inferiority of the non-Serbian nations of the former Yugoslavia, stressing especially the Slavic and Albanian Mus-
The Croats, feminized by the Catholic religion, suffer from a castration complex. . . . As to the Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina and neighboring regions, they are victims, as Freud might have said, of anal frustrations which incite them to amass wealth and to seek refuge in fanatic attitudes. Finally, the Serbs, Orthodox, an oedipal people which tends to liberate itself from the authority of the father.”

In short, the anti-Muslim attitudes freely expressed in the Serbian press in the late 1980’s made it especially important for Karić’s dissertation to be defended there, to respond implicitly to the theories on their own ground.

However, an anti-Muslim position is characteristic not only of Serbian chauvinistic leaders like Rašković. What is more, even the most pronounced Serbian critics of Great-Serbian genocide against Christian Croats demonstrate some anti-Muslim prejudices. These prejudices are a product of Serbian national consciousness, which is determined by mutually dependent ideological, religious and mythological factors.

Karić criticises Western portrayals of Bosnia and this resembles his implicit criticism of some former Yugoslavs’ less-than-objective description of the Bosnian Muslims. When Karić reveals some inaccuracies (in the description of a translation of the Qur’an by two Bosnian Muslims) in the new edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (p. 64), he criticises implicitly the Encyclopaedia as a whole. Unlike the first edition, the new edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam offers an unbalanced and very biased text about Bosnia-Hercegovina. The author of the new text, Professor Branislav Djurdjev of Sarajevo, offers a revised, pro-Serbian version of Bosnian history. Describing Bosnia, Djurdjev often compares it to Serbia and mentions even a medieval “attempt to unite the Kingdom of Bosnia and the Despotate of Serbia” (p. 1263). Djurdjev describes pre-WWI non-Serbian historical works on Bosnia as “out of date” (p. 1269) and refers instead to two books printed in Serbia. Unlike Krčsmárik, who in the first edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam wrote about Bosnia’s historical-cultural ties with Serbia and Croatia, Djurdjev does not mention Bosnian-Croatian relationships. The period from 1941 to 1945 is not examined at all in Djurdjev’s text, perhaps because it marked such a low point in Muslim-Serbian relations. In several places Djurdjev writes that the heretical Bosnian (Bogumil) Church—the hypothetical Slavic substrate of the eventual Bosnian Muslims—was persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church (pp. 1263, 1264, 1266), passing
in silence over the fact that the Serbian Orthodox rulers too persecuted members of the Bosnian Church, a fact noted in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (p. 755). Probably most disturbing, Djurdjev relies on works by some Serbian advocates of genocide against the Muslims in pre-WWII Serbian-dominated Royal Yugoslavia. For example, Djurdjev portrays the Serbian Academician Vasa Ćubrilović as a respected "Yugoslav historian" (p. 1264) and refers to Ćubrilović's works (pp. 1269-1270). Ćubrilović was a member of the terrorist group "Young Bosnia" which carried out the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the event that provoked World War I. Ćubrilović is also the author of one of the most famous Great Serbian (anti-Muslim) political programmes, "Expulsion of the Albanians" (1937).16 It is also worth pointing out that Djurdjev's text, published in 1960, had by 1989 been representing Bosnian Muslims to the world for nearly thirty years. This more than explains why Karić might be critical of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

Hermeneutika Kur'âna sends a deep symbolical-political message. Karić's book is dedicated to Hilmo Neimarlija, Karić's Muslim friend from Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital; the book was printed in Zagreb, Croatia's capital;17 and it was defended as a doctoral dissertation in Belgrade, Serbia's capital. Karić's choice of a Muslim "middle" political way between Belgrade and Zagreb is reflected even in his vocabulary. Karić uses both Serbian and Croatian terminology. For example, he writes first in Serbian, *Hrist* “Christ” and *hrišćanin* “a Christian” (pp. 156, 211), and after that, on the same pages, in Croatian, *Krist* “Christ” and *kršćanski* “Christian” (pp. 156, 211). He even alternates using the Serbian phonological orthography of foreign names (e.g., Zevs, Avgustin, Mirća Elijade, Tomas Karlajl) along with the Croatian morphological (etymological) orthography (e.g., Izutsu Toshihiko, de Saussure, Shelabear, Tibawi).

Karić's work is a sad monument of an attempt to maintain a European Muslim culture through peaceful coexistence of people in multiethnic Bosnia.18 Written by an erudite specialist, *Hermeneutika Kur'âna* deserves to be translated into English or Arabic. Such a translation, perhaps accompanied by a scholarly explanation of the social background of Karić's book, would be a great contribution both to Islamic studies and to study of the culture of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is threatened by Serbian aggression and Western indifference.19 (The consequences of the West’s betrayal of Bosnia are not all yet clear.20)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


On September 17, 1993, the United Nations General Assembly selected eleven judges for a U.N. war crimes tribunal established to hear charges of atrocities in the “Balkan fighting”. The judges are from Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United States. “Although Muslims have been the victims of many of the atrocities committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, none of the members of the tribunal are Muslim.” (“War Crimes Panel Chosen”, The New York Times, September 19, 1993, p. 6.)

2. Misinformation about Bosnia, including the Bosnian Muslims, is so widespread that it has become locus communis: For instance, in the end of the nineteenth century, János de Asboth published An Official Tour through Bosnia and Herzegovina (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890). Asboth’s work contains “twenty traditional songs of Bosnian Mahamedans [sic]”, as the representative bibliography of the 1967 Literatures of the World in English Translation notes. And precisely these Muslim songs are listed under “Serbian Literature” in the same bibliography. [The Literatures of the World in English Translation: A Bibliography, vol. II, The Slavic Literatures, compiled by Richard C. Lewanski (New York: The New York Public Library et al., 1967), p. 405.] Another example: Monica and Robert Beckinsale in their book Southern Europe (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975) state that Bosnia-Herzegovina is “the only [Yugoslav] republic that is not established on a nationality basis although nearly half its population is Serb, and one quarter are Croats. Most of the remainder are of Turkish descent [sic]. The Serbs are mainly Orthodox by religion, the Croats Roman Catholic, and the Turks [sic] Moslem” (p. 280). According to the last official census of 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s population was 43.7 percent Muslims, 31.3 percent Serbs, and 17.3 percent Croats. (See Anto Valenta, Podjela Bosne i borba za celovitost [Partition of Bosnia and Struggle for Its Integrity] (Vitez, Bosnia: Napredak, 1991), p. 17.) Many misrepresentations of Bosnia have been analysed in the weekly Euro Bosna, edited by Ibrahim Halilović in Germany (see, for example, No. 14. of June 25, 1993).

The author of this review approaches Hermeuutika Kur’âna as a philosopher and Bosnian citizen whose intellectual formation has been in a significant part influenced by Muslim cultural heritage, although he himself is not a Muslim.

4. Here Karić uses the Croatian noun sunja (equivalent to the Serbian čutanje) meaning not “absence of any sounds or noises” but rather “a person’s conscious refraining from speech”.

5. Or, “One cannot (completely) translate the Qur‘ân; one has to be (occupied with) translating it”.

6. Karić’s “necessary” statement that Islam does not know (linguistic) nationalism attempts to neutralize Belgrade propaganda claims of the “dangers of Muslim nationalism and fundamentalism” in the former Yugoslavia. In the second sentence Karić admits that Islamic theology through the centuries has contained such a nationalism. He does not elaborate how it can be possible that Islam does not know (linguistic) nationalism if Islamic theology based on the Qur‘ân contains it. This logical contradiction is the price of the politically “necessary” statement. Of course, Belgrade has gone on to use claims of alleged fundamentalism in attempting to justify genocide against the Bosnian Muslims. However, as the well-informed Jerusalem Post pointed out, such claims were baseless: “Serbian propaganda is replete with dark hints that the hitherto harmless and peaceful Moslems of Bosnia were planning some sort of fundamentalist Middle East-style Islamic dictatorship. There is no evidence for this.”
7. Ljubibrat’s translation was a part of Great Serbian policy outlined by Serbian Minister of Interior Ilija Garašanin in 1844. Garašanin proposed publication of books for “Bosnians who converted to the Mohammedan faith” because “through the printing” of important books “Bosnia will be liberated from the influence of Austria and incline more to Serbia”. (Cited from Paul N. Hehn’s “The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism—The 1844 Načertanje [Outline] of Ilija Garašanin: An Analysis and Translation”, East European Quarterly (1975), vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 168–169).


9. Abdullah Skaljić in his Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom/hrvatskosrpskom jeziku [Turkish Words in the Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian Language], 5th edition (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1985) notes 8,742 basic Turkish/Arabic/Persian words (including 670 religious terms and 503 Muslim personal names) and 6,878 related expressions. Karić shows that even some Slavic words were changed in order to express specifically Islamic realia. For example, the Slavic (both Croatian and Serbian) reflexive verb klanjati se “to bow [to]; to respect” has become in Muslim texts a non-reflexive one, klanjati, with a new meaning, “to pray [namaz]” (p. 211). In few cases, possible Slavic translation solutions have been excluded because of their apparent similarity with some key Christian words. Bosnian Muslim theologians reject translating Arabic be’ase with either Serbian vaskrsnati or Croatian uskrsnati (both meaning “to be resurrected”) because of their false resemblance to Serbian krst “cross” or Croatian krst “baptism” (p. 66).

10. Dr Miroljub Jevtić, “Rezervisti Alahove vojske: Sta se kuva u bosanskom muslimanskom loncu” [The Reservists of Allah’s Army: What’s Cooking in the Bosnian Muslim Pot], Duga, December 9–22, 1989, p. 19. At that time Jevtić was an Associate Professor in Political Sciences at Belgrade University. One may suppose that Karić was familiar with Jevtić’s political views of Muslims in general and Yugoslav Muslims in particular. Karić himself graduated in Political Sciences (as well as from the Islamic Theological College) at Sarajevo University. In 1989, Jevtić published in Belgrade a book entitled Savremeni džihad kao rat [Contemporary Jihad as War]. Darko Tanasković described Jevtić’s book as “the most complete and most consistent [Yugoslav] scholarly contribution to Marxist-based study of religio-ideological complex of radically politicized Islam” (see “Rezervisti Alahove vojske”), p. 18.) It seems that Tanasković as an orientalist praises (for “scholarly” reasons) with superlative terms the works by those Serbs—from Ljubibrat to Jevtić—who either deny the identity of the Slavic Muslims or accuse them of “genocidalness.”

11. Allegations of the genocidal nature of Yugoslav Muslims were evidently in part created to deflect attention from acts of genocide committed by Serbs against the Muslims in Serbia (since 1804), Macedonia (during the Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and during the Serbian-dominated royal Yugoslavia, 1918–1941), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sandžak and Montenegro (1941–1945). During World War II, between 80,000 and 103,000 Muslims died, or about seven percent of their population. (See Bogoljub Kočović, Žrtve drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji [World War II Victims in Yugoslavia] (London: Veritas Foundation Press, 1985), pp. 107–109; Vladimir Jeravić, “The Losses of Yugoslav Population in the Second World War”, Geographical Papers, vol. 8, Geopolitical and Demographical Issues of Croatia (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Department of Geography, 1991), p. 96.) Most of the Muslim victims were killed by Serbian Chetniks, who openly collaborated with the German Nazis and Italian Fascists. (See Vladimir Dedijer, Antun Miletić, Genocid nad Musliminima, 1941–1945. Zbornik dokumenata i svjedočanstava [Genocide Against the Muslims, 1941–1945. A Collection of Documents and Testimonies] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1990.) The Chetnik terror against the Muslims as well as other non-Serbian nationalities was so appalling that even some Fascist commanders strongly protested against it. Italian Army General Mario Roatta warned the Chetnik officer Ilija Trifunović in October of 1942:

If the Chetnik violence [in Herzegovina, western Bosnia, and southern Croatia]
against the Croatian and Muslim population is not immediately stopped, we will stop supplying food and daily wages to those formations whose members are perpetrators of the violence. If this criminal situation is prolonged, more severe measures will be undertaken. (J. Popović, M. Lolić, Bk. Latas, Pop izdaje [Treacherous Orthodox Priest] (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1988), p. 174.)

12. Mark Burdman, “New light on Serbia’s Nazi psychiatric mafia. Profile: Dr Jovan Rašković”, Executive Intelligence Review, February 26, 1993, pp. 43–44. Here Burdman quotes and comments on Rašković’s statements according to the French weekly L’Express. Rašković announced in Belgrade in May of 1990 that the Serb nation may make war against the other nations of former Yugoslavia, but that this would be to the benefit (!) of the other nations: “However stupid that might appear: the Serb nation, according to the state of things today, will go on carrying out, if not wars, then that liberating thought which will be directed towards other nations, as a contribution to them and for their own good.” (See “42 applause za Jovana Raškovića” [42 rounds of applause for Jovan Rašković], Duga, May 26–June 8, 1990, p. 20.)

Professor Mirko Djordjević from Belgrade is one of these critics. Djordjević sent his manuscript (written in French) to a colleague of his in Moscow to be published. His colleague translated it into Russian. However, the text was not printed in any newspaper in Russia but rather in Paris, in Russkaia mysl’ [Russian Thought], the weekly of the Russian emigrant community of France. Djordjević writes:


However, Djordjević writes,

I recalled a forgotten book by Bertrand Russell, Practice and Theory of Bolshevism, which was published in a French translation in Paris back in 1921. “Among the religions”, writes Russell, “Bolshevism should be assigned to the religion of Muhammed rather than to Christianity or Buddhism.” There is something really Turkish [sic] in our heads! The war is right next door. in Bosnia, in Croatia, and we are the occupiers. We, Serbo-national-communists. . . . (M. Dzhordzhevich, “Otryvki o nashem bezumii”, Russkaia mysl’, October 16, 1992, p. 16.)

If one accepts this kind of logic, then genocidal Spanish conquistadors, Nazis, etc., etc., also had “something really Turkish,” i.e. Muslim, in their Christian heads.

13. Serbian scholar Radomir Konstantinović in his book Filosofija palanka [Small-Town Philosophy], 3rd edition (Belgrade: Nolit, 1981) offers a well-founded psychosocial analysis of Serbian national consciousness. According to Konstantinović, the spiritual place of Serbian national consciousness is the small town (palanka). The essential characteristics of Serbian small-town existence are infantilism (p. 10), will for annihilation (“the will for destruction, which is here undoubted”, p. 39), “searching for the culprit ‘outside’” (p. 32), “violence which is brutality taken to its extreme” (pp. 87, 88), “sensual animality” (p. 139), tribal consciousness (“Acceptable in my tribe, and by my tribe, possible as a Serb I am now impossible as a person”, p. 237), the medieval Serbian Orthodox Christian “Nemanjic tradition” as “authentic monstrosity” (p. 249) and faith in the defied Serbian nation (p. 375). All these components end in Serbian Nazism: “Serbian Nazism is not an ‘import’ from the German National Socialism, which it served and imitated, but rather the extreme expression of the spirit of the small town” (p. 366). For more details, see also A. Knežević, An Analysis of Serbian Propaganda (Zagreb: Domovinatt, 1992), pp. 209–221.
During World War II, Serbia had two pro-Nazi governments, the short-lived “Council of Commissars” of Milan Aćimović (April 30—August 29, 1941) and General Milan Nedić’s government (August 29, 1941—October 1944). From December 1941 on, Nedić advocated the formation of a Great Serbia. That was one of the main issues during Nedić’s meeting with Hitler and von Ribbentrop (September 18, 1943). Even before Nedić’s visit to Hitler, the Serbian ideologue Milosav Vasiljević, in his Deutsch-serbische Verständigung (1943), advocated a Great Serbia formed from the “former Serbia [including Macedonia and predominantly Muslim provinces of Kosovo and Sandžak], Vojvodina, Srem, Slavonia [in Croatia], Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia [in Croatia], Montenegro, with the cities of Shkodër [in Albania] and Thessalonica [in Greece],” including of course a “solemn declaration of the gratitude and respect of the Serbian people towards the Führer.” (Mladen Stefanović, Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934—1945 [Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1984], pp. 230—231.) In 1943, Nedić requested “organization of the Serbian people on the National Socialist [Nazi] basis”, but Germans delayed any discussion until after the war. However, German military leadership, including Hitler, approved a proposal for a “Great Serbian Federation which would encompass Serbia, Montenegro, and Sandžak,” elaborated by Nedić and German Plenipotentiary in Serbia Hermann Neubacher. (Mišošević’s Yugoslavia consists precisely of these three regions, although largely Muslim Sandžak does not have any autonomous status.) Similarities between the two Serbias, Nedić’s and Mišošević’s are obvious in both their tactical means and their strategic goal. In both cases the goal is creation of a Great Serbia with Serbian military forces under foreign protection in a “new world order”. And in both cases the means are the same: ethnic cleansing and concentration camps.


16. This document is deposited in the Military-Historical Institute of the Yugoslav People’s Army in Belgrade (Archive of the Royal Yugoslav Army, No. 2, Fasc. 4, Box 69). I cite the text of the “Expulsion of the Albanians” from Izvori velikoperske agresije [Sources of Great Serbian Aggression], ed. Božè Ćović (Zagreb: August Cesarec and Školska knjiga, 1991), pp. 106—123. According to Cubrilović, Royal Yugoslavia could achieve political stability through two parallel processes: Serbian colonization of lands with non-Serbian population and destruction or expulsion of some nationalities from the country. The Serbian Academician saw the predominantly Muslim Albanians as the most dangerous nationality who should be expelled to Albania and Turkey. The expulsion of the Albanians would solve at the same time the problem of another “dangerous” nationality, Slavic Muslims: “With the removal of the Albanians, the last link between our Muslims in Bosnia and Novi Pazar [Sandžak] and the rest of the Muslim world is cut” (p. 110).

17. At that time (1990) in Croatia there was quite a bit of talk about a desirable “anti-Serbian” coalition (consisting of the Slovenes, Croats, Muslims, Albanians and Macedonians), but the idea was entirely unrealistic because no one of these nationalities (except to some degree the Slovenes) had enough arms to resist the eventual Great Serbian aggression. On February 29, 1992, an internationally monitored referendum for independence was held in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most Serbs boycotted the referendum but Bosnian Muslims and Croats voted. “Overall, 63% of eligible Bosnians vote, 99.4% of whom choose independence.” (See Breakdown in the Balkans: A Chronicle of Events. January, 1989 to May, 1993. Compiled by Samantha Power (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), p. 36.) Croatia was among the first countries which recognised the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Facing the same aggressor, in June of 1992, Croatia and Bosnia formed a short-lived alliance “against the common enemy”, Serbia. Later the Presidents of Bosnia and Croatia issued several “joint communiques.” (See Breakdown in the Balkans, pp. 47, 67.) The anti-Muslim sentiments that began to appear in Croatia in 1992 resulted in part from the arrival in Croatia of hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees escaping Serbian ethnic cleansing, in part from the widespread opinion that Serbia intended to destabilize Croatia and change the ethnic structure of the two-thirds of Croatian territory not
occupied by Serbs, by driving the Muslims in that direction. Muslim-Croatian military conflicts in central Bosnia and Croatian-Muslim fighting in Herzegovina intensified in 1993 with enormous losses on both sides. These conflicts appeared after the Serbs had already captured about 70% of Bosnian territory, when it became absolutely clear that the international community would not militarily intervene against the Serbian aggressor. So the 61% majority of the Bosnian population, Muslims and Croats, started to fight each other for the 30% of Bosnian territory which had not been occupied by the Serbs. The upper hierarchy of the Catholic Church in both Bosnia and Croatia has appealed to stop the Croatian-Muslim fighting. The Croatian "Cardinal Kuharic issued a statement in May [1993] that was clearly aimed at the Herzegovinian Croatian leadership. In it he refused to take its side against the Muslims and implied that the Croats might be responsible for the violence and for war crimes." (Patrick Moore, "Endgame in Bosnia and Herzegovina?", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report, vol. 2, no. 32 (August 13, 1993) p. 23.) Several months later, the Croatian opposition parties issued a statement rejecting the internationally-sponsored destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They declared inter alia: "We reject the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as demanded by the Geneva peace plan." ("Opposition Grows Against Croat Policies", The Croatian Voice, September 27, 1993, p. 4.)

18. Branka Magaš, a Croatian historian from London, concludes her article criticizing official Croatian policy towards Bosnia ("Croat Catholics Divided", The Tablet, July 17, 1993, p. 910) with the following words:

The last word here must go to Mustafa Ceric, head of the Bosnian Islamic community, who recently appealed to Muslim imams, Christian clergy, Jewish rabbis and Buddhist monks throughout the world, to help "open up a path to Sarajevo and thus save hope and belief in the dignity of man and universal divine and human values". In his message, the Naibu Reis appealed to "all of you who have God in your hearts, who are able to distinguish truth from lies, good from evil, joy from grief, love from hatred, sincere humanity from shameful religious discrimination" to come to Sarajevo "to halt the evil which spread its shadow over my people." Who can refuse his call? For, as the imam says, "If we turn a deaf ear to our consciences, every human creature and the very spirit of all God's words will be the victim. Our voice of faith against faithlessness, of love against hatred and of justice against violence, must be most powerful here and now in Sarajevo, city of mosques, cathedrals, churches and synagogues, in which an oath is sworn of fidelity to one and the same God." [The Naibu Reis] says that "alive or dead we remain loyal to God's words and loyal to our Bosnia, and it is up to you to decide whether you will help us live or watch us die.

Moreover, one could state that the international community has allowed the ongoing destruction of Bosnia and especially its Muslim majority. As a Sarajevo official said in a recent interview to the American National Public Radio, "Our tragedy is that we are too European to be helped by Muslim countries, and too Muslim to be helped by Western countries. But we are not going to apologize to anyone because of our Muslim faith." (I paraphrase him according to my memory.) The presence of United Nations soldiers in Bosnia has not prevented the genocide, but it has served as an argument against international military intervention. Moreover, there is growing "evidence of UN profiteering and drug-smuggling in war-torn Sarajevo", a recent report from the Bosnian capital says. (Maggie O'Kane, "The soldiers out of control: they are feasting on a dying city", Guardian Weekly, September 5, 1993, p. 4.) U.N. soldiers stationed in Sarajevo are from two European (Christian) countries, France and Ukraine, and from one African (Islamic) country, Egypt. The cited report notes that the Europeans are involved in criminal activities: "The Ukrainians are the masters, trading in cigarettes, cars, petrol, alcohol and women", while "The French specialise in wine, Coca-Cola, gold and sex". Although the report says that "The Egyptians operate on a small scale", not one example of Egyptians' wrongdoing is mentioned. "So far, 22 UN soldiers—19 Ukrainians and 3 French—have been sent home for war profiteering", though apparently not a single Egyptian. Unfortunately, no deeper analysis is offered of possible
reasons for the behaviour of U.N. soldiers. Do the Egyptian soldiers abstain from criminal activity because they are much richer than their colleagues from Ukraine and France who must “trade” in order to survive in the dying city? Or because of the Egyptians' compassion with the suffering citizens of the largely Muslim city of Sarajevo? Do distinct Islamic moral attitudes towards women, alcohol and drugs play any role in the behaviour of the Egyptian soldiers?

20. Two Croatian scholars, Slaven Letica and Stjepan G. Mestrovic (“War-watching in the Balkans”, The Croatian Voice, September 27, 1993, p. 17) write about that:

We have listened regularly to Muslim sermons at Friday prayer services at the mosque in Zagreb. Most of the listeners were refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The sermons convey a straightforward message: Muslims are oppressed all over the world simply because they are Muslims. Is all this suffering merely God's punishment? No, Islam is called to be the conscience of the West, that cultured, technologically advanced and mighty West that is full of hate, decadence, and evil. Islam is fighting for its survival. It is the West that opened the door to jihad. When Europe allowed the first Muslim virgin to be raped by a Serb, and did nothing about it, it showed its desire to eliminate Islam. 1993 is [the year] 622. Islam must respond with faith, and it must win.

The Islamic world is not yet unified politically, but it is beginning to draw the conclusion that it is being oppressed by the entire, postmodern West: in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, and now Bosnia. So, soon after the end of the Cold War, it seems that Islam will take the place of the “Evil Empire” [the former Soviet Union] as the object of Western fear and animosity. If this “unintended” consequence (at least consciously unintended) comes to pass, the West will have brought it on itself. It is still not too late to avert this dangerous scenario, which leads ultimately to world War III.