Balkan Islam as 'European Islam': Historical Background and Present Challenges

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During the last decade, an important shift has occurred in the way academics and policy makers consider the issue of Islam in Southeastern Europe. In the 1990s, the fall of Communism and the Yugoslav wars had led to the rediscovery of the Balkan Muslims under dramatic circumstances. In particular, the violent "ethnic cleansing" that took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, and culminated with the massacre of Srebrenica in July 1995, reminded the Europeans of the darkest times of their recent history. In 1998 and 1999, a new wave of "ethnic cleansing" occurred in Kosovo. Therefore, in the 1990s, the discussion on Balkan Islam was focused on the victimization of Balkan Muslim populations, and on the role of their political leaders in triggering or preventing ethnic violence. Since then, war has been replaced in the former Yugoslavia by intricate processes of state-building, in which the European Union is playing an ever more important role, and the European integration process has extended to Southeastern Europe, with Romania and Bulgaria becoming full members of the European Union in 2007. Against this background, academics and policy makers show an increasing interest for the specificities of Balkan Islam and for its possible contribution to a "European Islam". One could illustrate this shift of interest by comparing the 1990s, when the most debated text authored by a Balkan Muslim was the "Islamic Declaration" written by Alija Izetbegović, the then president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the 2000s, when the text that gives rise to most questionings and comments is the "Declaration of European Muslims" released in 2005 by the Bosnian *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić.

In this paper, I will try to better define the specificities of Balkan Islam and to assess whether it represents a "European Islam" or could contribute to its emergence. To this end, I will first describe the internal diversity of Balkan Islam and its main historical features since the end of the Ottoman presence in the region.[1] Then, I will focus on the political and religious changes that happened since the end of Communism.[2] Finally, I will compare the situation of the Muslims living in Southeastern Europe and in Western Europe,[3] and examine the context and the content of the "Declaration of European Muslims".[4] In so doing, I hope to

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[1] About post-Ottoman Balkan Islam, see among others Alexandre POPOVIC, *L'islam balkanique. Les musulmans du sud-est européen dans la période post-ottomane*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz (1986).
[2] About Balkan Islam in the post-Communist period, see among others Xavier BOUGAREL / Nathalie CLAYER (dir.), *Le nouvel islam balkanique. Les musulmans, acteurs du post-communisme (1990-2000)*, Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose (2001); Hugh POULTON / Suha TAJI-FAROUKI (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, London: Hurst (1997).
[3] About Islam in both Western and Eastern Europe, see among others Brigitte MARECHAL / Stefano ALLIEVI / Felice DASSETTO / Jorgen NIELSEN (eds.), *Islam in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society*, Leiden: Brill (2003); Nathalie CLAYER / Eric GERMAIN (eds), *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, London: Hurst (2008).
[4] The "Declaration of European Muslims" is available in Bosnian, English, Arabic, French and German on the official website of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina (http://www.rijaset.ba).

contribute to a dispassionate and balanced assessment of the role Balkan Muslims could play in the (re)definition of Islam in Europe.[5]

Balkan Islam: Demographic Data and Historical Background

The large majority of the Balkan Muslims are descendants of local populations converted to Islam during the Ottoman period, and they live in Southeastern Europe since centuries, together with their Christian neighbors. From this point of view, Balkan Muslims are clearly European Muslims, and Balkan Islam is undoubtedly a European Islam. Beyond this very general stance, however, one can not discuss the issue of Balkan Islam as "European Islam" without taking into account its diversity and the main features of its historical experience. To begin with, one has to distinguish four major ethno-national groups among the Muslims living in Southeastern Europe: the Albanians, the Bosniaks (called Bosnian Muslims till 1993), the Turks and the Roma. Despite the displacements of population provoked by the Yugoslav wars, the massive emigration of Albanians from Albania and the absence of recent population census in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo, it is still possible to get an approximate picture of the size and the geographical repartition of these four groups:

-about 4,5 million Muslim Albanians live in Southeastern Europe, mainly in Albania itself (2,3 million), in Kosovo (1,6 million), in Macedonia (0,5 million), in Serbia (60 000) and in Montenegro (30 000). It is important to note that, whereas almost all Albanians are Muslims in Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia, Muslim Albanians represent only 70 % of the Albanian population in Albania and 65 % in Montenegro;[6]

-about 2,3 million Bosniaks live in Southeastern Europe, mainly in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2 million), in the Sandjak region that is divided between Serbia (140 000) and Montenegro (60 000), in Kosovo (40 000) and in Macedonia (20 000);

-about one million Turks live in Southeastern Europe, mainly in Bulgaria (750 000), in Greece (90 000), in Macedonia (80 000) and in Romania (50 000);

-the number of Roma is difficult to assess, since many Roma do not declare themselves as such in population censuses, and many of them are not Muslims but Christians. However, one can consider that there are between 300 000 and 400 000 Muslim Roma in Southeastern Europe, mainly in Bulgaria (c. 150 000), in Macedonia (c. 50 000), in Albania (c. 50 000), in Serbia (c. 40 000), in Kosovo (c. 40 000) and in Greece (c. 10 000).

Smaller groups of Slavic-speaking population exist also, such as the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks in Bulgaria (130 000) and in Greece (30 000), the Macedonian-speaking Torbeshs in Macedonia (80 000) and in Albania (10 000), and the Serbian-speaking Goranis in Kosovo (20 000). In areas where various Muslim ethno-national groups coexist, the ethnic boundaries remain fuzzy, and numerous identity shifts have occurred: for example, many Turks and Torbeshs have been assimilated by the larger Albanian group in Macedonia, and

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[5] About the possible role of Balkan Muslims in Europe, see among others Xavier BOUGAREL, *The Role of Balkan Muslims in Building a European Islam*, Brussels: European Policy Centre / King Baudouin Foundation (2005); Christian MOE, "A Sultan in Brussels? European Hopes and Fears of Bosnian Muslims", *Südosteuropa*, vol. LV, n° 4 (2007), pp. 374-394.

[6] About 20 % of the Albanians of Albania are Orthodox, and 10 % are Catholics. About 35 % of the Albanians of Montenegro are Catholics.

many Pomaks have been assimilated by the larger Turkish group in Western Thrace (Greece).[7]

This summary description of the internal diversity of Balkan Islam reveals the different ways in which religious identity and national identity are related among Balkan Muslims.[8] One can oppose, for example, the way Albanian national identity has crystallized around a common language and despite religious cleavages, and the way Bosniak identity has crystallized around religious markers and despite a language shared with Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.[9] Such an opposition has to be nuanced, however, both historically and geographically: religious belonging has played an important role in the way Albanian identity has been defined in the 19th and 20th centuries,[10] whereas some Bosnian Muslims have identified themselves as Croats, Serbs or Yugoslavs during the 20th century. Moreover, Islam has played a more important role as an ethno-national marker in Kosovo and Macedonia, where Muslim Albanians were facing Orthodox Serbs or Macedonians, than in Albania itself.[11] Finally, the link between religious identity and national identity has been redefined in the last two decades, as will be shown below.

Besides ethno-national ones, additional differences exist among Balkan Muslims. In some cases, they represent the absolute or relative majority of the population of the country they are living in, as it is the case in Kosovo (c. 90 %), in Albania (c. 70 %) and in Bosnia-Herzegovina (c. 45 % according to the 1991 population census, but some experts consider that they represent more than 50 % of the population after the war). In other cases, Muslims represent a sizeable minority (33 % in Macedonia, 18 % in Montenegro, 12 % in Bulgaria) or a tiny minority (3 % in Serbia, 1,5 % in Greece, 0,2 % in Romania) of the total population. At the religious level, most Balkan Muslims are Sunni Muslims, but there is a sizeable Bektashi minority in Albania (about 20 % of the Muslim population) and small Alevi minorities in Bulgaria and Greece.[12] Last, but not least, the level of religiosity of the Balkan Muslims vary from one country to another, between the towns and the countryside, and from one individual to another. Many Balkan Muslims are so-called "sociological Muslims", which means that they have a Muslim family background but are not practicing or religious at all.[13]

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[7] See Hugh POULTON, "Changing Notions of National Identity among Muslims in Thrace and Macedonia: Turks, Pomaks and Roma", in Hugh POULTON / Suha TAJI-FAROUKI (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-102.

[8] See among others Bogdan SZAJKOWSKI, "Muslim People in Eastern Europe: Ethnicity and Religion", *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. IX, n° 1 (January 1988), pp. 103-118.

[9] See Aydın BABUNA, "The Bosnian Muslims and Albanians: Islam and Nationalism", *Nationalities Papers*, vol. XXXII, n° 2 (June 2004), pp. 287-321.

[10] See among others Nathalie CLAYER, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*, Paris: Karthala (2007); Nathalie CLAYER, "Islam et identité nationale dans l'espace albanais (Albanie, Macédoine, Kosovo) 1989-1998", *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, vol. XLVI, n° 115 (July 2001), pp. 161-181.

[11] See among others Nathalie CLAYER, "Islam et identité nationale dans l'espace albanais…", *op.cit.*

[12] Bektashism is a heterodox Sufi order whose religious doctrine incorporates (among others) Shi'a elements. Alevism is a popular religion whose religious doctrine is close to the one of Bektashism. About Bektashism, see among others Alexandre POPOVIC / Gilles VEINSTEIN (dir.), *Bektachiyya. Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Istanbul: Isis (1995).

[13] An opinion poll carried out in 1990 in Yugoslavia shows for example that 70 % of the Albanians and 37 % of the Bosnian Muslims consider themselves as religious, whereas 55 % of the Bosnian Muslims 25 % of the Albanians consider themselves as non-religious. See Dragomir PANTIĆ, "Religioznost građana Jugoslavije", in: Ljiljana BAĆEVIĆ (ur.), *Jugoslavija na kriznoj prekretnici*, Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka (1991), pp. 241-257.

Despite all these differences, Balkan Muslims have some historical experiences in common. Between 1878 and 1923, sizeable Muslim populations have been incorporated into the new Balkan states built on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. In most cases, the Muslim populations have been reduced to the status of religious minorities: such is the case with the Bosnian Muslims, first incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and then into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; with the Albanians, Turks and Roma of Kosovo and Macedonia, incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbia and then into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; and with the Turks, Pomaks and Roma of Bulgaria and Greece. Till World War II, this reduction to the status of religious minorities reflected itself in the fact that these populations were often referred to with a religious name ("Muslims"), and that they organized themselves around their traditional religious institutions such as madrassas (secondary religious schools), waqfs (religious foundations) and Shari'a courts (in charge of family affairs).[14] This transformation of the Balkan Muslim populations into a kind of Muslim "neo-millet"[15] explains why their political and religious elites showed allegiance to the non-Muslim Balkan states, and rarely created political parties on their own: the only Muslim political party with a lasting existence was the Muslim Popular Organization (MNO) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, created in 1906 and replaced in 1919 by the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (JMO). But the most specific case remains Albania, where Muslims represented a majority of the population, and where traditional Islamic religious institutions started to be dismantled in the late 1920s.[16] However, this exception to the rule is only a partial one, since the secularist trends of Albanian nationalism can not be understood without taking into account the fact that the Albanian Muslim elites were fully aware of their situation as a religious minority in Europe.[17]

After World War II, all the Southeast European states, with the exception of Greece, fell under the control of Communist regimes. These regimes implemented religious policies leading to the almost complete dismantling of the traditional Islamic religious institutions: Shari'a courts were abolished, waqfs were nationalized and most of the madrassas were closed. In Albania, all the religious institutions were dismantled and religion itself was banned in 1967.[18] These authoritarian secularization policies, together with the economic and cultural modernization of Balkan societies, explain the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere and the low level of religious practice at the end of the Communist period. At the same time, Communist regimes have contributed to the "nationalization" of the Balkan Muslims. In Yugoslavia, the Albanian and Turkish national minorities have been recognized immediately after the war, and the existence of a Muslim nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been officialized in the 1960s. In Bulgaria, the Turkish national minority has also been recognized after the war, but its existence has been put into question later on, during the "rebirth process"

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[14] See among others Alexandre POPOVIC, *L'islam balkanique…*, *op.cit.*

[15] In the late Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim communities were organized as so-called "millets", i.e. religious communities enjoying a large judicial and educational autonomy. Balkan Muslim populations enjoyed a similar autonomy in the new Balkan states but, since this autonomy was limited to each peculiar state, the term "neo-millet" has to be used in its plural form when talking about Balkan Muslims in general.

[16] See among others Roberto MOROZZO DELLA ROCCA, *Nazione e religione in Albania (1920-1944)*, Bologna: Il Mulino (1990).

[17] See among others Nathalie CLAYER, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais…*, *op.cit.*, pp. 449-474; Nathalie CLAYER, "Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-War Albania or the Search for a 'Modern' and 'European' Islam", in: Nathalie CLAYER / Eric GERMAIN (eds), *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-155.

[18] See among others Alexandre POPOVIC, *L'islam balkanique…*, *op.cit.*; Zachary T. IRWIN, "The Fate of Islam in the Balkans: A Comparison of Four State Policies", in: Pedro RAMET (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, London: Duke University Press (1989), pp. 207-225.

of the late 1980s.[19] Besides, the Communist regimes have destroyed the traditional Muslim elites, but have given rise to new secular elites that have played a key role in the post-Communist period, as will be shown below. Here, the exception to the rule is Greece, where the Muslim minority is still organized as a "neo-millet", and where muftis are still in charge of family affairs (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.).[20] But this exception is once again a partial one: Greece did not experience any authoritarian secularization policy, but the modernization of Greek society has reached Western Thrace and has contributed to both the secularization and the "Turkicization" of the local Muslim population.[21]

Important historical experiences are therefore shared by a large majority of the Balkan Muslims: the creation of Muslim "neo-millets" in the new Balkan states, followed by the authoritarian secularization policies of the Communist regimes on the other hand. Against this background, it is not improper to speak about Balkan Islam. However, do these historical experiences allow us to speak about a "European Islam"? The historical experiences of Balkan Muslims remain quite specific. For example, the transformation of the Balkan Muslim populations into Muslim "neo-millets" at the turn of the 20th century is more reminiscent of what happened at the same time in colonial Empires than of the relationship between state and religion in West European countries. Similarly, Western Europe has not experienced authoritarian secularization policies similar to those of Southeastern Europe.[22] Nevertheless, some aspects of the historical legacy of Balkan Islam are of a great interest for Europe as a whole. First of all, nationwide Islamic religious institutions exist in Southeastern Europe since more than a century, and this experience is especially significant in a period when various West European countries try to set up representative bodies for their own Muslim communities. Second, Balkan Muslims and their religious leaders have been faced in the past with religious issues and debates that are now topical in Western Europe, such as the reform of religious education or the unveiling of women. Islamic reformism has developed in the Balkans since the late 19th century, and has become the dominant current within the Yugoslav Islamic Community during the Communist period.[23] Last, but not least, Balkan Muslims and their political and religious leaders have lived for decades in societies in which religion was limited to the private sphere, and accept quasi-unanimously the principle of the secular state. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, some attempts to give a religious legitimization to this stance have been made by Bosnian ulamas (religious scholars) such as Fikret Karčić and Enes Karić.[24] It remains to see, however, how the political and religious changes of the last two decades have affected these historical features of Balkan Islam.

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[19] See among others Ali EMINOV, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities of Bulgaria*, London: Hurst (1997); Mary NEUBURGER, *The Orient Within. Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2004).

[20] See among others Konstantinos TSITSELIKIS, "The Pending Modernisation of Islam in Greece: From 'Millet' to Minority Status", *Südosteuropa*, vol. LV, n° 4 (2007), pp. 354-373.

[21] See among others Samim AKGÖNÜL, *Une communauté, deux Etats : la minorité turco-musulmane de Thrace occidentale*, Istanbul: Isis (1999).

[22] A comparison between the situation of Islam in Southeastern Europe and in Russia may reveal more historical similarities. See among others Galina YEMELIANOVA, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey*, Basingstoke: Palgrave (2002); Georg BRUNNER / Andreas KAPPELER / Gerhard SIMON (eds.), *Muslim Communities Re-emerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Durham: Duke University Press (1994).

[23] About Islamic reformism before World War II, see Nathalie CLAYER, "Behind the Veil…", *op.cit.*; Xavier BOUGAREL, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bonia-Herzegovina", in Nathalie CLAYER / Eric GERMAIN (eds.), *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, *op.cit.*, pp. 313-343.

[24] See Xavier BOUGAREL, "Trois définitions de l'islam en Bosnie-Herzégovine", *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, vol. XLVI, n° 115 (July 2001), pp. 183-201.

Political Mobilization and Religious Change in the Post-Communist Balkans

After the collapse of Communist regimes in 1989/1990, one of the main changes experienced by the Balkan Muslims has been the creation of political parties representing them on an ethno-national basis. The two exceptions to this rule are Albania, where there is no political party representing specifically the Muslim part of the population, and Greece, where the attempt to create a Turkish political party in 1991 has ended up with a failure. In the other countries of Southeastern Europe, political parties representing the local Muslim populations have been created shortly after the end of Communism, as illustrated by the case of the Movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS) in Bulgaria, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) in Kosovo, the Party of Democratic Prosperity (PPD) and the Turkish Democratic Party (TDP) in Macedonia, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandjak. These political parties are clearly ethno-national and not religious parties, and the initial attempt of the SDA to gather all Muslims of Yugoslavia has failed. They were created by members of the new secular elites produced by Communist modernization, and represent the logical result of the secularization and "nationalization" process that happened during the Communist period. The only exception to this rule is the SDA, which has been created by the members of a pan-Islamist current dating back to the late 1930s.[25] This pan-Islamist current, however, did not put into question the principle of the secular state, and has lost a good share of its influence after the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 and the death of Alija Izetbegović in 2003.[26] Since the second half of the 1990s, most of the political parties representing Balkan Muslim populations have experienced internal splits or have been confronted with new competitors. This has resulted in the creation of new political parties such as the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) in Kosovo, the Albanian Democratic Party (PDSH) and the Democratic Union for Integration (BDI) in Macedonia, the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SzBiH) in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandjak's Democratic Party (SDP) in the Serbian part of the Sandjak.[27] The DPS in Bulgaria is the only political party representing a Balkan Muslim population that still enjoys a quasi-monopoly on the vote of its constituency, despite the fact that some Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks vote for Bulgarian political parties.

All the political parties representing the Balkan Muslim populations have put forward ethno-national demands, but their scope has varied according to the share of the Muslims in the total population on the one hand, to the political organization and stability of the state on the other hand. In countries where Muslim populations represent only a minority of the population and where the state has a strong centralist tradition, Muslim political actors have confined themselves to cultural claims. In Bulgaria, for example, the DPS has required the restoration of the cultural rights suppressed by the Communist regime in the 1980s. The situation is completely different in the former Yugoslavia, where the bloody collapse of the federation has led to the independence of two federal units in which Muslims represent a majority of the population: Bosnia-Herzegovina, independent since 1992 and divided in two

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[25] See Xavier BOUGAREL, "From the 'Young Muslims' to the Party of Democratic Action: The Emergence of a Pan-Islamist Trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina", *Islamic Studies*, vol. XXXVI, n° 2-3 (Summer 1997), pp. 533-549.

[26] See Xavier BOUGAREL, "Fin de l'hégémonie du SDA et ancrage institutionnel du néo-salafisme", *Politorbis*, n° 43 (2007), pp. 39-64.

[27] In the Montenegrin part of the Sandjak, the SDA has split into several political parties and got completely marginalized in the late 1990s, with a majority of the Bosniaks voting for the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) or the Social Democratic Party (SDP). In 2006, a new political party representing the Bosniaks in Montenegro, the Bosniak Party (BS), has been created and has got two deputies elected at the Parliament.

entities since the Dayton Agreement in 1995, and Kosovo, under UN supervision since 1999 and independent since 2008. In other post-Yugoslav countries with sizeable Muslim populations, new constitutional rights have been granted to them, the best example being the Ohrid Agreement reached in 2001 between Macedonian and Albanian political leaders after a short civil war. All these political events have transformed the legal and political status of the Balkan Muslim populations. For the first time since the end of the Ottoman period, these populations are full-fledged political actors participating to the shaping of the constitutional order of their respective countries. Moreover, a majority of Balkan Muslims are now living in countries with a majority of Muslim citizens: in 1990, less than 30 % of them were in such a situation (in Albania); eighteen years later, after the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, it is the case for approximately 70 % of the Balkan Muslims.

The political mobilization of Balkan on an ethno-national basis has gone together with the instrumentalization of Islamic symbols, gatherings and institutions for national purposes.[28] In some cases, the very definition of the national identity has been transformed. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDA has accepted in 1993 to replace the national name "Muslim" with the national name "Bosniak", but has at the same time promoted Islam as the central marker of Bosniak national identity, and has used the Islamic religious institutions in its competition with other political parties.[29] In the Albanian and Turkish cases, political leaders have made a more limited use of Islamic symbols and institutions, but intellectual circles have promoted new definitions of the Albanian and Turkish national identity putting a stronger emphasis on its Islamic dimension.[30] Therefore, religious symbols have re-entered the public sphere after the end of Communism. In no case, however, this has led to a real "re-islamization" of the Balkan Muslims: whereas Islamic symbols have become much more visible, and the participation to religious gatherings and collective rituals has increased, the level of everyday religious practice remains rather low. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the attempts by the SDA to use the army as a tool for the authoritarian "re-islamization" of the Bosniaks has failed, and the public attacks against "mixed" marriages, the celebration of Christmas or the consumption of alcohol has met with the resistance of the population.

Islamic religious institutions, for their part, have experienced an unquestionable "revival", as illustrated by the building of new mosques, the publication of numerous Islamic newspapers, brochures and books, and the opening of new madrassas and of higher Islamic educational institutions such as the Islamic Pedagogical Faculties of Zenica and Bihać in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Prishtina, the Faculties of Islamic Studies in Skopje and Novi Pazar and the Institute of Higher Islamic Studies in Sofia.[31] Islamic religious leaders have also re-entered the public sphere, through the organization of religious gatherings and pilgrimages, the participation to secular public events and the issuing of public statements regarding various social and political issues. During the war, the Islamic religious institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina have played a key role in the setting up of the Bosnian diplomatic apparatus, of the Bosnian secret services and of the ideological control of the Bosnian army, and they still play an important role as a kind of substitute national

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[28] See among others Sabine RIEDEL, "Die Politisierung islamischer Geschichte und Kultur am Beispiel Südosteuropas", *Südosteuropa*, vol. XLVI, n° 11 (November 1997), pp. 539-561.
[29] See among others Xavier BOUGAREL, "L'islam bosniaque, entre identité culturelle et idéologie politique", in: Xavier BOUGAREL / Nathalie CLAYER (dir.), *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-132;
[30] See among others Nathalie CLAYER, "Islam et identité nationale dans l'espace albanais…", *op.cit.*; Nadège RAGARU, "Quel islam en Bulgarie post-communiste?", *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, vol. XLVI, n° 115 (July 2001), pp. 125-159.
[31] About the development of Islamic education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Stepan MACHACEK, "'European Islam' and Islamic Education in Bosnia-Herzegovina", *Südosteuropa*, vol. LV, n° 4 (2007), pp. 395-428.

institution fort the Bosniaks, as illustrated by the numerous political statements of the Bosnian *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić. However, this "revival" of the Islamic religious institutions is not synonymous with a restoration of their previous legal status: in particular, the restitution of the waqfs nationalized after World War II meets with several legal and practical obstacles, and, so far, nobody has seriously required the reopening of the Shari'a courts.

Moreover, the Islamic religious institutions have been confronted with new challenges ensuing from the restoration of political and religious freedom. First of all, they have experienced several conflicts and splits on an ethno-national or political basis. The Yugoslav Islamic Community has not outlived the Yugoslav state, and has split in 1993 into several Islamic Communities. The Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and, more recently, Serbia have experienced serious rifts, leading in Serbia to the creation of two competing Islamic Communities. Internal tensions have also been obvious in the Islamic religious institutions of Albania, Bulgaria and Greece, where the official muftis appointed in Western Thrace by the Greek authorities are challenged by "parallel" muftis elected by the Muslim minority. At the same time, Islamic religious institutions have lost the monopoly on religious life they enjoyed since their creation, and a large array of new religious actors has appeared in the last two decades. Neo-Salafi NGOs, youth organizations and electronic media,[32] Islamist political parties and informal networks,[33] self-proclaimed preachers and Sufi shaykhs all put the monopoly of Islamic religious institutions into question and contribute to the pluralization of religious life. The biggest challenge for the Islamic religious institutions is undoubtedly the development of neo-Salafi movements among the Muslim youth, due to their harsh criticism against local religious authorities and practices and to their aggressive behavior, both within and without the community of believers.

The issue of neo-Salafism in Southeastern Europe is closely related with the issue of foreign religious influences. Such influences are nothing new in Southeastern Europe: in the late 19th and early 20th century, exchanges with the Muslim world had contributed to the development of Islamic reformism.[34] After the end of Communism, new links have developed with Muslim countries. On the one hand, Islamic NGOs, preachers and (in the Bosnian case) mujaheddins have come to Southeastern Europe and recruited local followers.[35] They have been particularly successful in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where young local neo-Salafists have created the Active Islamic Youth (AIO) in 1996. On the other hand, students have visited various universities in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries and have been influenced by the neo-Salafi ideas of their professors or fellow students. This development of neo-Salafism in Southeastern Europe is not synonymous with a "wahhabization" of Balkan Islam, as some authors suggest.[36] In some cases, however, it results in an increased presence

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[32] Neo-Salafism is a literalist movement rejecting many contemporary Muslim beliefs and practices as illicit innovations, and striving to reproduce the way of life of the "pious ancestors" (*al-salaf al-salih*). About the influence of neo-Salafism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see among others Xavier BOUGAREL, "Fin de l'hégémonie du SDA et ancrage institutionnel du néo-salafisme", *op.cit.*

[33] Islamism is a political ideology seeking to elaborate a political project based on Islam and the Shari 'a (Islamic law). There are in Southeastern Europe a few minor political parties that can be considered as Islamist or Islamo-nationalist parties, such as the Bosniak Popular Party (NBS) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Party of Justice (PD) in Kosovo and the Party of National Recovery (PRK) in Albania.

[34] See Nathalie CLAYER, "Behind the Veil…", *op.cit.*; Xavier BOUGAREL, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy?...", *op.cit.*

[35] See among others Jérôme BELLION-JOURDAN, "Les réseaux transnationaux islamiques en Bosnie-Herzégovine", in: Xavier BOUGAREL / Nathalie CLAYER (dir.), *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, *op.cit.*, pp. 429-472.

[36] See for example Stephen SCHWARTZ, "The Arab Betrayal of Balkan Islam", *Middle East Quaterly*, vol. IX, n° 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 43-52.

of neo-Salafi ulamas and in the emergence of new compromises within the Islamic religious institutions themselves. This is obviously the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić has entered into an informal alliance with the neo-Salafi ulamas of the Islamic Pedagogical Faculties of Zenica and Bihać, and has clashed with the reformist ulamas of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of Sarajevo. At the same time, other foreign influences can also be felt in Southeastern Europe: Turkish Islamist networks and neo-Sufi communities are present all over the region, and the Islamic religious institutions of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo have close links with the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*).[37]

The political and religious changes of the last two decades put into question some of the main historical features of Balkan Islam. The fantasies of Serbian, Macedonian or Greek media notwithstanding, the fact that a majority of Balkan Muslims live now in Muslim-majority countries will not lead to the creation of "Islamic republics" or a "Green Axis" in Southeastern Europe. The acceptance of the secular state remains a major feature of Balkan Islam. Nevertheless, this new geopolitical reality represents an important turn in the history of Balkan Muslims, and will probably have far-reaching consequences for their political and religious life. One can even wonder whether the situation of Muslims in Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina is now closer to that of their co-religionists in Western Europe or to that of their co-religionists in Turkey. The restoration of religious and political freedom and the instrumentalization of Islam for nationalist purposes mean also that Islamic symbols and institutions have re-entered the public sphere, leading sometimes to fierce polemics between religious and secularist Muslims. Within the Islamic religious institutions themselves, various ethno-national, political and doctrinal conflicts have broken out, and Islamist and neo-Salafi currents have become stronger, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Finally, Islamic religious institutions have lost their monopoly on religious life and are confronted with new religious actors. All these changes have to be taken into account when pondering whether Balkan Islam can be used as a source of inspiration for the definition of a "European Islam".

Muslims in Europe and the "Declaration of the European Muslims"

In order to assess the role Balkan Muslims could play in the (re)definition of Islam in Europe, one has also to compare the situation of the Muslim populations living in Southeastern Europe and Western Europe. From this point of view, it is tempting to oppose bluntly "autochthonous" Muslims in Southeastern Europe to "non-native" Muslims in Western Europe. This difference, however, is becoming less and less significant now that an increasing number of the Muslims living in Western Europe are citizens of their country of residence, that sizeable Bosniak and Albanian diasporas have formed in some West European countries such as Germany, Sweden, Austria or Switzerland,[38] and that Southeast European countries such as Greece and Romania are home to tens of thousands of non-European Muslim immigrants.[39] What remains obvious, however, is the difference in the way citizenship, national identity and religious identity are articulated in Southeastern Europe and

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[37] See Ann Ross SOLBERG, "The Role of Turkish Islamic Networks in the Western Balkans", *Südosteuropa*, vol. LV, n° 4 (2007), pp. 429-461.

[38] About the Balkan Muslim diasporas in Western Europe, see among others Xavier BOUGAREL / Dimitrina MIHAYLOVA (dir.), "Diasporas musulmanes balkaniques dans l'Union européenne", Balkanologie, vol. IX, n° 1-2 (December 2005), pp. 59-211.

[39] See among others Dimitris ANTONIOU, "Muslim Immigrants in Greece: Religious Organization and Local Responses", *Immigrants and Minorities*, vol. XXII, n° 3 (July 2003), pp. 155-174; Dimitris ANTONIOU, "Western Thracian Muslims in Athens: From Economic Migration to Religious Organization", *Balkanologie*, vol. IX, n° 1-2 (December 2005), pp. 79-101.

Western Europe. As has been shown in this paper, Balkan Muslims have often used Islam in order to reinforce their ethno-national identity, and have reasserted their rights as national minorities or sovereign nations on their own, including by contesting the constitutional order or the territorial integrity of the state they were living in. Muslims in Western Europe, on the contrary, have striven to become citizens of their country of residence, have never put into question its constitutional order, and have used Islam as a way to overcome their own ethno-national divides. This explains also why West European Muslims have never formed political parties on their own, but have organized themselves in cultural or religious associations.

Important differences exist also at the religious level. As already said, Balkan Islam is organized around nationwide Islamic religious institutions. Their cohesiveness is largely due to the fact that they are either mono-national, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania, or clearly dominated by an ethno-national group, as in Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece. Besides, all Balkan Muslims but the Bektashi and Alevi minorities and a few neo-Salafi movements acknowledge the validity of the Hanafi *madhhab* (Islamic legal school). The situation is different in Western Europe, where the competition between various ethno-national groups and between several *madhhab*s represents a serious obstacle to the creation of efficient Islamic representative bodies at the national level. Against this background, one could be tempted to see in the Islamic religious institutions existing in Southeastern Europe a "model" that could be imported in Western Europe. Undoubtedly, the way religious leaders are appointed, imams are trained and selected or religious education is organized in Southeastern Europe can be a useful source of inspiration for Western Europe. However, one has to keep in mind the different definitions of the relationship between the state and religion existing in Southeast European and West European countries, and the new challenges faced in the last two decades by the Islamic religious institutions in Southeastern Europe. The limits of the "Balkan model" can be illustrated by the fact that Balkan Muslim diasporas in Western Europe play only a limited role in the organization of Islamic representative bodies in their respective countries of residence, with the exception of Luxemburg, where Bosniaks represent a majority of the local Muslim community. Together with the rapid quantitative growth of Bosniak and Albanian diaspora in the last two decades, the number of Bosniak and Albanian mosques has increased in Western Europe. In Germany, Bosniaks have created in 1994 the Union of the Islamic Parishes of Bosniaks (VIGB), and a Bosniak mufti for Germany has been appointed in 2007. The German example, however, shows that Bosniaks tend also to organize themselves on an ethno-national basis, just as the Turks and other ethno-national groups have done previously, and that they play only a marginal role in the debates surrounding the German Islam Conference, due both to the limited size of the Bosniak diaspora (in comparison with the Turkish one) and to the lack of qualified staff.

At the intellectual level as well, the Islamic leaders and the ulamas of Southeastern Europe play only a limited role in the discussions unfolding in Europe. Islamic religious institutions of Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia and Kosovo are more oriented towards Turkey than towards Western Europe, as shown by their participation to the Eurasian Islamic Council set up in 1995 by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). The situation is somewhat different in Bosnia-Herzegovina, since Islamic religious institutions such as the Faculty of Islamic Sciences display clear European ambitions, and the Bosnian *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić is playing a very active role at the European level. In order to understand the real role of Bosnian ulamas, however, one has to examine more closely their own doctrinal orientations on the one hand, their links with other religious actors in Western Europe on the second hand. The Faculty of Islamic Sciences, for example, is the main stronghold of Islamic reformism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and gathers high-ranking ulamas having developed

innovative thoughts about the hermeneutics of the Qur'an or the status of the Shari'a (Islamic law) in secular states.[40] This institution, however, seems to have more contacts with academic research centers and inter-religious forums than with Islamic organizations and networks in Western Europe. Mustafa Cerić, for his part, has the advantage of being fluent in English and having a personal diasporic experience, since he has been imam in Chicago and Zagreb before being appointed as *Reis-ul-ulema* in 1993. He has developed a lot of contacts with religious figures and policy makers in Western Europe, and is the only Islamic religious leader from Southeastern Europe participating to the European Council for Fatwas and Research (ECFR) created in 1997 and led by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian alim (religious scholar) close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The case of the ECFR, however, raises the question of the real direction of the religious exchanges developing between Southeastern Europe and Western Europe: do they contribute to the promotion of a "Balkan model" in Western Europe, or to the spreading of new Islamic currents in Southeastern Europe? Although it is probably too early to give a definite answer to this question, one can already note that Yusuf al-Qaradawi is much more frequently translated in the Islamic religious press of Bosnia-Herzegovina (and other Southeast European countries) than Mustafa Cerić is in Western Europe.

It is against this background that one has to consider Mustafa Cerić's "Declaration of European Muslims". This Declaration has been released in London in 2005, shortly after the bomb attacks in the London subway. It begins with a clear condemnation of terrorism and of the islamophobia fostered by the media, and goes on by defining Europe as the "House of social contract",[41] by distinguishing the believer's allegiance to God and the citizen's allegiance to the state, and by emphasizing the commitment of European Muslims to the rule of law, to democracy and to the human rights. All these stances confirm the acceptance of the secular state characteristic of Balkan Islam, and correspond to the feelings of a large majority of Muslims in Europe. Other stances, however, are more problematic and probably less representative of the aspirations of the European Muslims. In particular, Mustafa Cerić puts forward several religious demands such as "the institutionalization of Islam in Europe", "the development of the Islamic schools capable to educate European born Muslims for new challenges of the multicultural societies", "the political freedom that will enable European Muslims to have their legitimate representatives in the European state parliaments" and the recognition of Muslim law "in matters of personal status such as the Family Law". The last two demands are highly communalist in nature, tend to propose the formation of a Muslim "neo-millet" at the European level, and have been criticized as such in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Academician Esad Duraković considers for example that the "Declaration of European Muslims" "acts neither in favor of the integration of the Muslims into the European political and cultural community nor in favor of the affirmation of their full political subjectivity and social articulation", but puts forwards "demands that are essentially against the interests of the Muslims in Europe" and leads to their ghettoization, to the "marginalization of Muslims in Europe, to their voluntary separation and self-branding".[42]

Paradoxically enough, the "Declaration of European Muslims" illustrates the limited capacity of the Islamic religious institutions in Southeastern Europe to offer a "model" for the

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[40] See Xavier BOUGAREL, "Trois définitions de l'islam en Bosnie-Herzégovine", *op.cit.*

[41] The classical Islamic thought divides the world between the "House of Islam" (*Dar al-Islam*) and the "House of war" (*Dar al-Harb*). However, there were already in the Middle Ages attempts to adapt this dichotomy to the situation of Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim states. See Khaled ABOU EL FADL, "Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: The Juristic Discourse on Muslim Minorities from the Second/Eighth to the Eleventh/Seventeenth Centuries", *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. II, n° 1 (1994), pp. 141-187.

[42] Enes DURAKOVIĆ, "Krupan korak u pogrešnom smjeru", *Oslobođenje* (7 May 2006).

institutionalization of Islam in Western Europe or for a (re)definition of the relationship between Islam and the state in Europe. First of all, the Declaration is a mixture of very general statements that a large majority of European Muslims already approved without having read this document, and of religious demands that are hardly compatible with the definitions of citizenship and of the relationship between state and religion that prevail in Europe. Second, this Declaration advocates "the institutionalization of Islam in Europe" and invites European Muslims to "present Islam to the western audience as a universal *Weltanschauung*, and not as a tribal, ethnical or national culture", but does not indicate any practical step to reach these institutional and doctrinal objectives. Finally, it is not clear in whose name exactly Mustafa Cerić is speaking: the "Declaration of European Muslims" has never been officially approved by the representative bodies of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina and, so far, the other Islamic religious institutions of Southeastern Europe have shown no interest in this Declaration. Against this background, one can wonder whether the "Declaration of European Moslems" is an attempt to promote a "Balkan model" at the European level or to give an "autochthonous touch" to the claims of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.

Conclusion

Does Balkan Islam represents a "European Islam", or could it contribute to its emergence? The answer to this question is necessarily a balanced one. If one means by "European Islam" the religion practiced by Muslim populations living in Europe for centuries, Balkan Islam is obviously and eminently European. However, with the permanent settlement of millions of Muslims in Western Europe, the distinction between and "autochthonous" Islam in Southeastern Europe and a "non-native" Islam in Western Europe is becoming less and less relevant, and could even get some racist connotations: nowadays, all Muslims living in Europe have to be considered as European Muslims. The situation is equally ambivalent if one defines "European Islam" as the religion of the Muslims living as religious minorities in European secularized societies. From this point of view, Balkan Muslims have of course a long historical experience that West European Muslims do not have, and this experience is all the more interesting that it has led to the acceptance of the secular state and to rich debates on issues that are now topical in Western Europe. However, the way religious identity and national identity are related in Southeastern Europe has no equivalent in Western Europe, and the fact that a majority of Balkan Muslims are now living in Muslim-majority countries will probably have far-reaching political and religious consequences. If Balkan Islam can not be defined without reservation as "European Islam", what about the role of Balkan Muslims in the (re)definition of Islam in Europe? The existence of nationwide Islamic religious institutions in Southeastern Europe is of course of a great interest, at a time when West European countries try to set up representative bodies for their own Muslim communities. But the institutional forms taken by Islamic religious life in Southeastern Europe are also the reflection of a specific relationship between the state and religion, and they have been confronted with new challenges in the last two decades. Therefore, they can not be imported as such in West European countries. Finally, Balkan ulamas have offered and still offer stimulating answers to various religious questions. Historically, however, they have been influenced by the ulamas of the Muslim world much more than they have been able to formulate a specific "Balkan model" and to promote it abroad. This is still the case today, as illustrated by the growing influence of neo-Salafism. Against this background, one can wonder whether the development of the institutional and intellectual exchanges between Balkan Muslims and West European Muslims will lead to the "rediscovery" of a "Balkan model", or to the further transformation of Islam in Southeastern Europe.