

Religion and cultural nationalism insights – Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian Orthodox Churches

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the dynamics of the rise of cultural nationalism in Southeast Europe with a pronounced nativist and populist overtones. The paper explores into the historical experiences of the region regarding the relationship between state and church, cultural nationalism and religion, critically analyzing how these relationships developed in the last decades of the 20th century under communism and during the period of accession to the European Union of former socialist countries. Analyzing the relevant literature, the paper explores the intertwining of state and religious institutions, a national identity and religion, and how they are mobilized today. The research is based on the Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches. The leaders of the cultural nationalism "lift" the demoralized population, offering positive alternative social visions based on the so-called "golden past". The cultural projects of nationalists are only a means to achieve a political goal, while the goal of cultural nationalism is to activate and defend the historical community, refreshing the past in an appropriate narrative. Cultural nationalism, which reinterprets discarded and re-adopted traditions, acted as a driving force in the process of social change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The pattern of cultural nationalism is seen as a model that is recognized in Orthodox Christian churches in Europe. The example of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the intellectual elite is being shown as a model recognized in other Orthodox Christian churches in Europe that, after emerging from communism, began searching for their place in social reality.

Keywords: cultural nationalism, institutions, orthodox churches, populism