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## Demographic Circumstances in Serbia: Exaltation and Resignation as two Extremes of the National Identity Crisis

### Abstract

One of the far-reaching consequences of Serbia's involvement in crucial global events and regional conflicts of the twentieth century was its demographic re-composition. The unstable geopolitical situation in the Balkans, which was intentional, drove the people living there into confronting situations, in which they had to act accordingly. The politics of the elite that ran the country (mis)used various models for dealing with its population—from traditionalism and sacrificing, through migration and colonization, to modernization and cosmopolitanism. Each of these models has had its highs and lows. The extremes of these models testified more to senseless wanderings than to a responsible demographic policy. This resulted in an unenviable and almost irreversible demographic decline in Serbia. Unlike today, in the early twentieth century the Serbian nation was considered as one of the youngest in the world, relative to its population size. In this paper we shall present numerous warnings of our contemporaries that the issue of preserving the population is far more important than short-sighted social ideas of the emotionally driven. Unfortunately, this attitude is usually interpreted as an unpatriotic act of dubious intentions. It often took very little time to go from exaltation to resignation. Events have shown that the identity often lacked stability. The

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irrational elements in creating the identity in Serbia has been and remained one of the greatest challenges of a responsible population policy.

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### **Identity Crisis and Ways in which it affects the Demographics**

During the twentieth century the demographic circumstances in Serbia also reflected the geopolitics of the country. Although the last century was considered by some (Hobsbaum 2002) as a “short century”, the brief analysis of the censuses conducted during that century shows that Serbia went from the country with the youngest population to one of the countries with the oldest population. The changes in the demographics of Serbia were accompanied by numerous political, economic, commercial, existential, spiritual and religious changes. Serbia went from a monarchy to a republic; from national euphoria to national disintegration; from agrarianism to forced industrialization; from political fragmentation to integrated vision; from subsistence economy to consumer snobbery; from sustainable production to consumer nihilism; from traditional religiousness, through ideological ungodliness, to controversial neo-spirituality; from social revolutionaries to religious fundamentalism; these are just some of the numerous determinants encountered by those researching the identity of this region (Dimić 1998).

The support of the construction of identity was found in the depictions of the past. During the Ottoman slavery people used the oral tradition to instill hope in themselves in order to persevere in difficult times which will be overcome by the renewal of the Serbian state as it existed in the Middle Ages. The duration of heritage was conditioned by the magnitude of sacrifice that has been endured. In this way the subsequent generations are supposed to be inspired by the restoration of the state and the hardships of day to day life are made bearable. The church, in these circumstances, was the center of all social thoughts concerning freedom. Its mission inevitably reflected on the nature of identity. Within the framework of institutional religion among the Serbs, national identity was preserved and carefully guarded, with the intent that the faithful generation, through acquisition by tradition, identify with their past and the aspirations that were then being formed. It was a transition that linked both modernization and the preserved traditional heritage. In this way the church among the Serbs, like the Orthodox churches in other Balkan nations, allowed the infiltration of Enlightenment ideas. “The importance of the Orthodox Church in the history of our nation

is very great. It was for roughly a thousand years, until the 19th century, the almost only carrier and representative of education, and therefore it set the most important foundations for cultural progress ... And most of all, it is because of this contribution, that the national consciousness of our people is so strongly built, developed and preserved, as well as our peoples irresistible urge for freedom and unification..." (Grujić 1995: 1). Even though it guarded its dogmatic integrity and the teachings of the Holy Father, the Serbian Orthodox Church did not prevent the development of rational approaches to scientific development of both natural and social sciences. "It is my deep assurance that science without religion is often one-sided, harsh, and even cruel. On the other hand, faith, theology and religion without science can be usually blind, haphazard, can be converted into a sort of superstition, even, we can say, magic... Modern science is, in the opinion of many scientists, and even scholars of natural sciences, the heritage of Christianity." (Bigović 2010: 132,134) The foundation of national identity, interpreted in this way, met with the modern epoch that came after the French revolution - ready and active.

The beginning of the struggle for national affirmation, as well as the reformation and liberation of the state, called for the modernization of the conceptual and ideological experience. Serbia opened up to Europe. European paragons sought support not in showcasing, but in studying the past. Serbia turned to this direction, and prominent contemporary scientists noticed this (Ranke 1991). However, national romanticism had its own approach on how to view the past. It stimulated research, but also sought a foothold in the emotion that could be offered by heroic rhetoric. "Society was founded on hero-worship. All the dignity of doing, on which human society was based, was, as we might call it a heroarchy." (Karlajl 1903: 16) The past of the Serbs was an inspirational starting point for profiling heroes of the people. The resulting memory was acceptable to the population which has, in anticipation of education, accepted a convenient fiction. A possible problem can be seen in the idea that education could be permanently replaced by a fiction. The risk was acceptable if the elite were responsible, and not self-interested. (Marković 2015) This became a controversy which was not accepted, even though its existence was not denied. The outcome of its own vista of this controversy could have (as in some historical moments has) been the acceptance of exclusivism as a principle for success and encountering other cultures. This breakthrough in the approach to values could have formed an unbearable zealotry that presented its possessiveness as altruism.

## “Kosovo” as a Backdrop and the Temptation of Suggestiveness

Historical memory plays an important role in the development of the identity of a people. All the great European civilizations turned towards the incentives from their past in the hope that they will give them a less painful present and a less uncertain future. By historical memory, it is most often meant the memory of certain historical events that have, in the consciousness of a nation, surpassed reality and offered moral principles whose aim is of an eschatological nature. In this context the narrative of Kosovo was born in the Serbs. Historically focused on the year 1389, when the battle between the army of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and the Turkish army under the command of Sultan Murad, and later his son Bayezid (Pitulić 2012) this narrative assumed, in national folklore the face of a cult that, relying on faith as the bearer of values, determined the devotees of good, i.e. God, and those who have had different intentions. The resulting cultural paradigm, quite understandably, was dependent on Christianity as the origination of the meaning of human life. The central character of faith, Jesus Christ was a martyr for the sake of orthodoxy, and his followers, how the people saw them, were Christians who were willing to even sacrifice themselves for their Christian faith. Hence, the Kosovo tradition as well as the so-called “Kosovo cycle”<sup>3</sup> only made sense in the Christian interpretation, and its influence in the preservation of identity was reflected in the adherence to the faith of their ancestors - Orthodoxy, respectively the Eastern teachings of the Byzantine theology which had its own unique folk expression, ridden with some challenges in its interpretation. Byzantine Orthodox Christianity was so deeply rooted in their lives, that it could not have been removed by neither foreign subjugation, nor by the popular worldly ideology. But this also meant the emergence of “national” churches, especially after the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire in pieces, as Obolenski called it, “Byzantine commonwealth.” (Majendorf 2008: 293,294) The acceptance of this religious doctrine was often faced with the challenge of the independence of the national church, which often, egoistically interpreted, supposed the national interest within the universalism of the Christian doctrine. “Ethnophyletism is a political leviathan which repeatedly tries to adjust religion to its constrained political objectives, while its supporters stubbornly insist that an active po-

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3 See further in: *Косовски циклус*, [http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/usmena/kosovski-ciklus\\_c.html#\\_Toc473119801](http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/usmena/kosovski-ciklus_c.html#_Toc473119801).

litical life is the only way to actualize the ideas of Christianity in society, which in turn, will inevitably collapse without them.” (Marković, Besermenji 2013) This was an introduction to the biased national identity that evolved by restraining and degrading others. “Modern nationalism has globalized national consciousness of the eastern-European people and so has disrupted their sense of Christian universalism.” (Majendorf 2008: 293, 294) The proceeding discourse about values was enthroned on a reduction that reevaluates everything and accepts only that which is convenient.

Reality has long been transfixed into legend - a suitable image that keeps the silhouette of freedom. It was written about by those writers, in the coming centuries, who hoped that freedom may one day come. Lazar became both a victim and martyr who by self-sacrifice defeats a life of servitude. “We can die, but as men. We lose our lives, but with honor ... Let from your mind, from your invincible Slavic blood, escape all thoughts of surrender and slavery.” (Orbin 1968: 142) There has been a continuity of oral tradition and literary style in which Kosovo is only experienced through the “category of Martyrdom.” (Bogdanović 1991: 191) The eclectic approach towards freedom did not leave room for the nuances of human nature. The willingness to sacrifice oneself for freedom was an inescapable path towards an independent state, and this notion was often emphasized. “Every nation is the government of it self; hence the Serbian nation has the right to take care of itself and to govern itself on the hearth which it has redeemed with its blood ... history testifies that the Serbs are characterized by a spirit of freedom and the overall capability for political independence.” (Jovanović 1863: 21) National commitment, defined in this way, was often not acceptable to the leading powers as a political strategy of small nations burdened by the exaggeration of their own geopolitical significance. The Balkans was a synonym of unpredictability, or synonym of “intractable and unpredictable energies of the Balkan people.” (Todorova 1999) Although the criticism was mostly unfounded because the experience of other European nations also faced the challenges of heatedness, sometimes their observations might have produced a more positive effect. This was, in our opinion, an authentic expression of the democratic conscience in moments when the national idea mutated into national frustration. “The Serbian national and state-building idea was so ingrained in the consciousness of the Serbian people that it was ready for mass casualties in an uncompromising bloody battle, even at the cost of self-destruction, in conditions in which the enemy was superior by far.” (Šešelj 2002: 976) The pledge

of Kosovo, in its essence, did not foster this kind of devastating eschatology. It was not the meeting place of odium, but the meeting place of patriotism. In this context, the man who accepts the Kosovo Testament is a Christian crusader and not a secular hero. (Lubardić 2009: 83) He is consistent but not rigid, and he sympathizes with the enemy, his ambition is not based on defiance, but the understanding even of the actions of those who sin. Due to his compassion, he forgives, and others need to accept that they are not right for their own edification and no one's gloating. "Fierce, but never violent" (Randelj 2014) he opposed but was not occupied by hatred. The political ideology that came from him, was supposed to first purify its efforts and then present them to those who contested them, in the hopes of finding a viable compromise acceptable to all... "If you wish to achieve freedom with war, then first wage war against thyself, and if you successfully end this war, you'll see that all other wars are superfluous." (Velimirović 2000: 67).

This thought was shared by many of our prominent thinkers whose words were often foiled or remained cocooned in the memory of their few admirers. It was a prototype discourse that calls out and opposes the identity based on the stereotype of Serbian "folkophilia." This discourse offers the generosity in which "Srbuje samo onaj koji pametno Srbuje" or in other words "a true Serb is a clever Serb." "One ought to be radical only in intelligence, reasonable in kindness. Politics is not found in loaded words but in wise solutions." (Pekić 1991). Today's distinguished artists offer a new perspective in which the discourse of the sanctified Kosovo is transformed into the discourse of the "Stolen Kosovo." "Stolen Kosovo, in our spiritual life, will play a bigger role than that of sanctified Kosovo. The stolen is more important than the sanctified." (Bečković 2015). This matrix remains tightly bound to the "category of Martyrdom" and its political experience can still be seen as exploitation of the basic cultural values and ranges of the Serbian people. This provides the potential for the construction of biases, which results in the continuity of unstable identity, and a possible demographic devastation. Populations with a suggestive approach that prefer emotion, in this context, still have open possibilities.

## **The Temptations in Achieving Identity**

The absence of the continuity of cultural values is immediately apparent when considering the aforementioned characteristics of the so-

cial situation of the Serbs during any period of the twentieth century. This is why at any of these moments the identity, as an expression of these values, remained trapped between the hope in its achievement and failures in reality. Wanderings due to the insufficiently developed expression of values remained the only constant. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Serbian elite sought to express itself in the cultural values it found while studying abroad. The Western influence was predominant (Ković 2003), and it made the essence of the leading social thought of the Imperial Russia, despite Slavophilism (Vuletić 2007). “It is very moving to listen to all those professors, many of whom graduated from the Sorbonne. They know more about our literary movements than ninety-five percent of the literate population of France” (Male 1999: 96). National effort was a common denominator for all these creative accomplishments, regardless of their differences of expression. Social thought was a reverberation of the past. The narrative of the values recognized in historic events was similar to the model used by many European countries. Thus the national expression transformed from romanticism and folklore into an ethically codified approach, which relied on the popularization and expansion of education. “The awakened nation, teeming with creative power and spiritual vigor, could be introduced into a modern civilization only by progressive, educated, and highly moral teachers” (Palavestra 2013: 25).

A schematized approach, underlined with emotions and inspiration, often lost its footing in the rational and analytical assessment when it went from a written context to a political decision. Swept by the environment of populism, and eager to realize the interests of their people, the responsible persons were more inclined towards rashness than deliberation. Warnings, if any, were seldom heard, not to mention heeded. “The true national feeling cannot be the one of hate towards other nations or of overestimation of its own value and rights at the expense of underestimating the characteristics and rights of other nations. Where a nation is concerned, the adoration, cult and overestimation of oneself are as bad as it is in an individual. The jingoistic tendencies correspond to the demagoguery of politics” (Cvijić 1907: 29). In such moments, apart from individual efforts, the intelligentsia did little to direct the guiding principles of the society. Due to its malleability and in order to achieve its narrow-minded individual gains, it conceded to be part of the folklore instead of critical thought. In this context the intelligentsia cunningly wrote about what the political elite expected, instead of what a responsible attitude entailed (Rajs 2005). “Jovan Cvijić was

right when he wrote of superficial and timid efforts of our intelligentsia” (Dvorniković 1995: 111).

The rift between the idea and its execution gave room to arbitrary interpretations. Many protagonists came forward who shaped their vision of modern Serbia based on European social ideas, which they embraced in a modified form, pursuant to their various motivations. Fierce and honest in their intention to understand and define the national interest, the young became liberals, anarchists, socialists, radicals, Bakuninists, religious reformers, etc. All of them shared the thought of decisive actions and of life “inside a crucial historic moment”. For them, waiting was not the result of caution and responsibility, but of weakness and lack of ideological commitment. Drawing from the model of the national and revolutionary Europe of the nineteenth century, a great number of young Serbian intellectuals advocated the realization of the national idea *hunc etnunc*, regardless of any cultural and political repercussions and international circumstances.

In such occasions, the support for often megalomaniacal undertakings was sought within the large family of the Serbian peasant. The high birth rate among Serbs was used as grounds for numerous projects. The revolutionary youth and the national elite that supported them had demands for the realization of the national task that bordered with ruthlessness. In those visions, the size of the population was the first and principal factor that provided security and guaranteed the achievement of the goal. The limits of this particular factor were put to the test as the appetites of the national struggle grew, and its methods became more radical and more explicit. The apotheosis of the Serbian household represented the only clear image in the Serbian national feeling. It was meant to induce an outpouring of national sentiment that was to be more powerful than the undeniably present patriotism, which in turn was indispensable in order to realize the Yugoslav state project.

Despite palpable political instability, the military and political success of the Kingdom of Serbia until 1914 was used as an inspirational starting point for both national megalomania and integration idealists who longed for South Slavic unification. The Kingdom of Serbia achieved great military success during the First World War. However, the loss of life was staggering and, as it turned out, the lives were laid down for an incomplete political construction of a Yugoslav state. From that moment on, the ambivalent nature of the national expression came to the fore. The warnings regarding the priority of cultural integrations

rather than political linkage, which the renowned Slovenian intellectual Tomaš Masarik gave to the Slavs living in the Balkans, proved, in spite of disbelief, to be timely and well-intentioned. The national enthusiasts and naïve idealists showed strong Machiavellian tendencies by accepting any price in order to achieve the goal. Moreover, they were ready to sacrifice even themselves. They justified the disregard for their fallen comrades, regardless of their number, with a unique pledge that connected both the living and the dead. Often those who survived loathed those who had fallen, for they deemed that their dedication will never be equal to that of the fallen. From this cult of heroism grew a form of heroic consciousness that created a dynamic approach to the meaning of life, and left no room for hesitation or change of heart.

Such nature of the revolutionary idealism required singular social circumstances in order to be nurtured and developed. This form of idealism was expressed through militant and poorly disciplined formations that presented themselves as bearers of the national idea, without consideration for any other type of commitment to the Serbian national feeling. Caution and reason were interpreted as dejection, fear, and betrayal. Political crises, diplomatic tensions, and war added to the affirmation of those who were leaning towards this type of idealism. The political support for thus expressed national values was based on a populist approach and simplified demagoguery regarding complex situations. This approach nurtured an irrational motivation that often transformed patriotism into militant nationalism. “Members of the Black Hand were enthusiastic nationalists who believed in the historic mission of Serbia, and were ready to dedicate themselves to this mission. However, this patriotic fervor smothered any form of critical thought. Like sleepwalkers, they became numb to difficulties and dangers. They demanded action at any price, and sooner rather than later. This unbridled dynamism made them so impudent during peacetime that the Government did not know what to do with them, and so audacious during wartime that they paid for it with their lives” (Jovanović 2005: 69). Fuelled by social circumstances that positively affected it, this type of nationalism was experiencing exaltation. On the other hand, any form of harmonized approach led to disappointment and resignation due to failure in realizing the original concept.

This resulted in an uneven amplitude of identity that, simply by being there, revealed essential weakness of an infantile and immature society. “The pace is never slow or constant; a hero breathes only in the

extremes: ultimate strain or ultimate inaction. What was once a virtue is now a flaw” (Dvorniković 1995: 11). These strong opposites in the identity indicated excitation and its resulting imbalance. These states of identity prompted certain researchers, with whom we concur, to write about an “intoxicated” state of our national idea. “Our national sentiment often seems impulsive and explosive. We tend to be occasionally overwhelmed, and thus oscillate between the periods of sanguine enthusiasm and terrible apathy. These changes resemble something that can be observed in alcoholics. There are entire regions that once lived in a state of infinite excitement, but are now representatives of pessimism and skepticism” (Dedijer 1910). This peculiar restlessness of spirit resulted in the elusive nature of our nation’s identity. The people did not have a clear enough impression of themselves, and overwhelmed by the images of heroism they were burdened by the impressions of heroic past, sacrifices, undignified life in subjugation, and the need to lay one’s life for freedom. A person who accepted life and resisted the ingrained mythological images was ostracized as a destroyer of recognized values. This unity, which did not accept other forms of thinking, was transformed in certain religious interpretations into necessary rallying around national tasks of freeing the territories and the people. War was the scene in which those who were committed to the national cause recognized themselves. It was a challenge in form of joy, but also in form of commitment of every citizen of Serbia.

The nation surrendered to that idea regardless of the expected and disproportionate sacrifices, but parts of the elite, the very people who formulated the national identity with the character of tremendous dedication, had reservations towards their own project, but were ready to utilize it once the people had realized it. Those people had an answer to any and all temptations that the country faced, and some called them the know-it-alls. Their pseudo knowledge was something that people readily believed in, due to the unrest that was a direct consequence of the failure to understand the times they lived in. The accepted vision was a simulacrum of the highest values that guide a society, but in reality the accepted norms contained numerous flaws and weaknesses. “Semi-cultural fog instead of cultural illumination – this is the most stimulating environment for the know-it-alls” (Dvorniković 1999: 144).

## **(Un)attainable Identity**

The balanced weighing and rationalization of ideas could subdue the euphoria, and turn the sense of commitment to one's nation and country into a stable continuity of achieved values. A stable social and political environment had a rational and responsible approach to problems, which prevented the enthusiasm of big goals. This represented hope for the longevity of identity and its foundation in the achieved blend of traditional and modern. The demographic circumstances of the Serbian people also depended on this blend. Bringing down the historical discontinuity and precedents to a minimum could stimulate the development of the society and stable demographic configuration. The challenges that came with the twentieth century, which was marked by unattained nationalist goals and ideologies, led to the reexamination of values. Tradition was under scrutiny. It was faced with the desire to be changed. New ideologies offered new values and tried to incorporate them into the already existing traditional framework. Zeal was the main position towards the recent past. Following the Second World War, the identity of Serbs wavered between the unacceptable interpretation of the previous era and requirements of the new era's ideals. The already decimated population was forced into new hardships. The disregard towards its own people remained constant, even within the newly established elite. History recognizes many "encounters" or "collisions" between the traditional and the modern. What can be referred to as a paradigm of such experience can testify to the destructive power and supremacy of one over the other? "We could say that this boils down to the tension between continuity and change; between the tendency to establish lasting and steadfast forms in which human life is to express and renew itself and tendency to dispel any strict schematization of man's relationship with himself and other people" (Đurić 2009: 93). In this concept, tradition was just another name for order, regularity, and existing state of the society, while the energy of the modern age, which was most often transformed into revolutionary demands, wanted to change the existing status quo. As a consequence, the society often found itself in the vicious circle of actions and reactions, the ambiguities and arrogance of which prevented cross-generational dialogue, and only incited conflict. Each new elite hastily sought to impose as authentic its own designs for modifying the society. In this framework, the value that aspired to establish its continued existence and the identity of traditionalism had

to demonstrate practical wisdom, and bear the burden of multigenerational scrutiny.

Ever since the so called “Serbian revolution” at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Serbian society has had a continuous problem of reaching the social consensus regarding the values that the Serbian people incorporated during their history. The last three decades – which have been marked by the attempts at social re-structuring; from the single-mindedness of communism, to blind nationalism, to riotous transition – failed to secure the democratization and culturalization of the Serbian society, and instead reduced those values to their bare essentials. What is left is a dried up echo of the tradition that we failed to recognize, and to which our political elite refers only when attempting to preserve the power, since it is the source of financial prestige. In such a simulacrum of social structure, invariable leadership and ketman subordination dominated, while the charismatic power of political idols was reduced to a mirage - a “phenomenon of the charismatic stylization.” (Stojanović 2014) The result is rigid formality, contaminated customs, paranoid autism infused with depression, and demographic collapse (Đurić 1997).

The restoration of past values happened at the time when the communist social order began losing its identity. It was led by the existing elite, which was adjusting, and hence all of the original ideas had been distorted. The thirst to prove the “repressed” truth crippled the cultural breadth, customs and education, and turned tradition into an unscrupulous instrument of the political elite. The same transformation also awaited the “Socially accepted activities” of returning to religion and national values. “Decades of communist intolerance, even hate towards anything religious in Serbian people, as well as the unjustified smothering of any national tendencies within the Serbs, especially the wealth of Serbian tradition, undoubtedly contributed to the explosion of that same type of intolerance and hate, this time expressed not against themselves but against other nations and their religious affiliations” (Jerotić 2004: 189). The political elite used this spiritual ambivalence of the Serbian intelligentsia. Powerless and antagonistic, Serbian thinkers and their leaders exhausted each other in mutual accusations regarding the return of and search for the lost identity. This created new cultural content that was in part reflection of the past and in part authentic revisionism of available cultural con-

tents. Contemporary values failed to respond to the complexities of reality, and instead mirrored the past without much analysis or reflection. This clash with reality paved the way to a fictional identity. The utilitarian approach inevitably undercut the identity and reduced it to a tool for achieving personal gains. What was ignored was that the “cultural process of mankind is an abstract of a higher order than the development of an individual, and thus harder to present clearly” (Freud 1970: 351). Although the past was glorified, the stereotype of nationalism did not allow it to be rationally fathomed. The provocative self-critical declarations, though well-founded, mirrored the discrepancies between tradition and innovation. Their encounters suggested new quality, and not new sensationalism and mythomania.

### **Instead of Conclusion**

Parallel to this type of political elite, a number of thinkers promoted a syncretism of traditional and modern, and demanded for the Serbs to be part of the modern world and not isolated from it. The outdated historicism or rational nihilism led today’s Serbian society to a crossroads, from where it does not know where to go, because it does not know whence it came. The young live in despair, and are confused by the lack of the well-trodden paths of traditional values. Those that decide to stay in the country often show inclination towards extremes, either nationalism or syncretistic internationalism. Both alternatives are equally destructive, and pose a grave threat to the survival of the society in modern times. A return to a familiar cultural identity should be the path of a society that did not fail itself or its ancestors. “Where a nation’s culture is concerned, one needs to take into account various parts of that society’s spiritual life: not only its science, but also its morals and religion, literature and arts, its politics and laws, military and commerce, customs and entertainment” (Jovanović 2005: 42). Taking into consideration its complexities, the Serbian society needs to discover its identity and on the eve of the twenty-first century demonstrate a consensus on how to interpret it.

The identity of a nation inevitably affects its demographics. The ambivalent identity of the Serbian people affected numerous social phenomena, such as forced and voluntary displacement, conflict, impover-

ishment, social destruction, lack of prospects for the young, ideological stupor, cultural despondency, etc. All these phenomena affect the country's demographics. The negative context of the aforementioned social phenomena cannot promote the prosperity of a nation, nor improve its demographics. A stable and universally accepted identity, free of exaltation and resignation, is a prerequisite of an orderly society that shows demographic progress. Then, eventually, even the Maltus warning (Malthus 1798), over two centuries old, regarding the overpopulation of the planet would be recognized in Serbia – is this not the way out of hopelessness to unhappiness?

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