

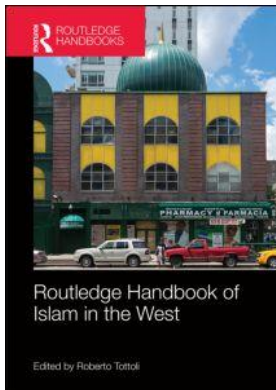
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### **The Muslims in southeastern Europe**

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# The Muslims in southeastern Europe

## From Ottoman subjects to European citizens

*Nathalie Clayer*

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When one speaks about Islam in Europe, one generally has in mind the presence of Muslims migrants in Western Europe or the ancient past of al-Andalus. One refers rarely to the long-lasting presence of Muslims in the southeastern part of the continent since the fourteenth century and the beginning of the Ottoman conquest of the region. Yet, today three Balkan states have a (relative or absolute) Muslim majority: Albania (with 1,950,000, that is, 70 percent of the total population), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1,800,000, 45 percent), and Kosovo, which proclaimed its independence in 2008 (1,600,000, 90 percent). There are also sizeable groups of Muslims in Macedonia (700,000, 30 percent), Bulgaria (900,000, 12 percent), and Montenegro (100,000, 16 percent), and less sizeable but significant groups in Greece (450,000, 4 percent), Serbia (250,000, 4 percent), Slovenia (50,000, 2.5 percent), Croatia (60,000, 1.5 percent), and Romania (70,000, 0.3 percent), all these figures being only estimates.

It is true that Europe is often conceived as Western Europe, another factor in the “invisibility” of these other European Muslims being the fact that they were for half a century behind the Iron Curtain – except those in Greece and those who joined the ranks of the “*Gastarbeiter*.” More generally, southeastern Europe, labeled as the Balkans since the nineteenth century, has always been considered by (West) Europeans as the “Other within,” or as an intermediary space between the “West” and the “East” (Todorova 1997; Allcock 2000; Neuburger 2004). Of course, here, we are facing the issue of the always subjective definition of Europe, as an artifact. There are debates on the rightness of considering “southeastern Europe” separately from Anatolia, with which political boundaries have existed only for the last hundred years (Vezenkov 2009). In any event, when the existence of the Balkan Muslims is taken into account in the Muslim landscape of Europe, it is often as disappearing Muslim islands or as an example of Muslims claiming a “European Islam,” that is to say a non-fundamentalist, non-fanatic Islam, or a Sufi Islam, very different from the Arab and even the Turkish Islam, or, on the contrary, as fundamentalists threatening the Balkan and European order and values. The first type of allegation is only partly true, because it is bound to the idea of Balkan Muslims always undergoing events and suffering since the end of the Ottoman rule. They seem not to act themselves. The second type of discourse is quite essentialist,

and does not help us understand the complexity of Muslim societies and Islam in this part of Europe.

Indeed, the political, social, and religious dynamics which have shaped the history of the Muslims in the Balkans from the fourteenth century up to the present are quite diverse according to time and space. To understand the main dynamics, however, it is necessary to consider first the establishment of Islam and Islamic rule in the region, and the (non-)specificities of Balkan Muslims within the Ottoman realm. Then we will analyze the mechanisms of transformation which accompanied the end of Ottoman rule during the long nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, three ruptures affected the Balkan Muslims and their non-Muslim fellow countrymen alike: World War I and the end of the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires, which had a direct influence on the region; World War II and the establishment of socialist regimes (except in Greece); and the end of these socialist rules in 1989–90, followed by the enlargement of the European Union. These ruptures did not hinder continuities, as we shall see, but they are significant enough to help us understand the main evolutions of Muslim populations and Islam in the region in the last hundred years.

### The establishment of Ottoman rule and of Islam in southeastern Europe

The presence of Islam in the Balkans is mainly due to the Ottoman conquest of the region. Some Balkan Muslims insist on an Islamic presence before the Turks in order to disconnect “Islam” from “Turk” (or “Ottoman”). Contacts have existed indeed between the *dar al-islam* (Islamic countries) and the Balkans through commerce and travel (see, for example, the Arab geographer al-Idrisi and the travel of the famous Arab travelogue Ibn Battuta). Some groups of Muslims have also lived in different regions of the Peninsula since the tenth century, such as the Turkomans settled in the mid-thirteenth century by the Byzantine emperor in Dobruja in order to protect the frontier, but who later went back to Anatolia. Nevertheless, an enduring presence of Muslims in the region began only with the passage of the Ottomans from Anatolia to the Balkan Peninsula around the mid-fourteenth century, one hundred years before the fall of Constantinople, at a time when the Byzantine Empire was already considerably weakened by regional powers.

The Ottoman conquest of a large part of southeastern Europe is a long and complex process which, especially in the first phase, was the result not only of military campaigns launched in the name of the Holy War (*gaza*) or military raids made by the *akıncı* (frontier warriors), but also of alliances with local Christian landlords. With time, and despite losses and rebellions against it, the Ottoman dynasty affirmed its power, from the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea in the east, to the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic in the west, and from the south of the Peninsula to the Hungarian lands. Ottoman troops even besieged Vienna twice, in 1529 and 1683, but in vain. Moreover, the second siege was the starting point of a “Christian reconquest” of different parts of the Peninsula: the Ottoman parts of Hungary and Croatia, notably; parts of Serbia and Bosnia, but for a very short time; Morea also, this southern extremity of the Peninsula being placed again under the Ottoman rule between 1715 and 1821.

The remaining European territories of the Ottoman Empire were, however, slowly, not in a linear way, considerably weakened during the long nineteenth century, that is to say from the end of the eighteenth century till the Balkan Wars (1912–13), when only eastern Thrace around Edirne remained in Ottoman hands. Different interrelated factors have played a role in this evolution: the imperialist policies of Russia, France, England, and later on of the Habsburg Empire and Italy; the balance of power in the Ottoman provinces and its evolution following a series of military, fiscal, and administrative reforms; the autonomization of territories, a

phenomenon which was only partly the result of the development of the nascent Balkan nationalisms. Therefore new states appeared on the regional scene, putting large Balkan territories under new non-Islamic sovereignties. Greece, with a limited territory, was officially recognized as an independent state in 1831 and later acquired new lands to the north. An embryonic Montenegro had already had a kind of self-government, with the help of Russia, since the end of the eighteenth century, but became officially independent only in 1878. The Pashalik of Belgrade gained autonomy in 1815, and, as the principality of Serbia, was recognized in 1830 as a vassal state. Its independence was also recognized in 1878, with a larger territory. As for the Romanian provinces, Moldavia and Wallachia, from 1829 they were put under joint Russian and Ottoman authority, before gaining independence in 1878. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 created also an autonomous Bulgarian state, enlarged in 1885 by the annexation of Eastern Rumelia, and declared independent in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. The political map of southeastern Europe changed again following the Balkan Wars (1912–13) with the recognition of independence of an Albanian principality under the guarantee of the Great Powers. However, this time, the new entity was to be the first European political entity with a Muslim majority.

With these heterogeneous phases of territorial expansion and decline, the different regions of the Balkan Peninsula remained for various periods of time under Ottoman rule. While Thrace, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, and parts of Albania were part of the Empire for more than 500 years (sometimes even almost 550 years), Hungary remained Ottoman for 150 years. But, above all, the form of integration into the Ottoman realm has varied from one region to another, the more remote zones often being governed indirectly. As for the classical period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), for example, Gilles Veinstein (1989) has defined three circles. The most outlying of these circles was composed of the Ottoman possessions north of the Danube (Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Hungary), the integration of which, defined by relations of protection, tribute, or administration of military defense areas, remained limited. In these provinces there were no or few Muslims. The second circle was formed by the territories that were in the border areas with Venice and Austria (Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Greece). They were more integrated into the Empire through the implementation of the *timars* system (temporary distribution of lands by the sultan to the military chiefs for their service in the army). But in many cases they benefited from special regimes (notably concerning taxes). The presence of Islam in this second circle was generally greater than in the first, due to conversions to Islam. Finally, the first circle was formed by the regions closest to the Ottoman capital (Bulgaria, Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Dobruja), where central government control was the longest standing and the most direct – even if some areas enjoyed considerable autonomy within this ensemble. Muslim populations, especially Turkish-speaking Muslim populations, were more numerous in this first circle.

The Ottoman imperial system relied very strongly on adaptation to local features. However, beyond recognition of the authority of the Ottoman sultan, integration generally constituted the implementation of Ottoman military and fiscal institutions, based on the *timars* system and on a complex set of special taxes or exemption of taxes against services. Governors, as well as *qadis* judging in the *shari'a* courts, were in charge of respect for the Sultan orders, the *kanun* (Sultanic Laws), and Islamic law (local laws were also taken into account). *Qadis* belonged to the religious hierarchy which was progressively established, also made up of *muftis* (Islamic legal authorities who give a formal legal opinion in answer to an inquiry by a private individual or judge) and *müderris* (professors in madrasas). Ottoman subjects were divided into the “*asker*,” people exempted from taxes (the military and religious hierarchies), and the “*reaya*,” people paying taxes, be they Muslims or Christians. As for religious relations, according to the *dhimma*

pact, if they had accepted the authority of the sultan the Christians were to pay a special tax (the *jiziyé*), but were free to profess their religion.

Another aspect of the Islamicization of the Peninsula was the establishment of a Muslim presence beyond the ranks of the Ottoman military and religious administrations. Indeed, directly or indirectly the Ottoman power favored the installation of groups of Muslim populations, particularly in the first phase of the conquest and in the eastern part of the Peninsula. Beside these settlement policies, which were also sometimes exile policies, Islamicization was also due to conversions to Islam of local people. This process is vividly debated to this day, because it is linked to the issue of autochthony and legitimacy of the Balkan Muslims. In fact, it is difficult to know precisely how and why people individually or collectively became Muslims, because the sources generally remain silent on this topic. At the beginning of the establishment of the Ottoman powers, only landlords converted, in order to be integrated into the system and to keep their lands (at the very beginning they were not obliged to). Then the rhythm and scale of conversions changed. It was first a mainly urban phenomenon. From the end of the sixteenth century, however, it began to touch also rural areas. In some areas, such as Kosovo and Northern Albania, conversions occurred till the end of Ottoman rule. The process was particularly strong on the western fringe of the Peninsula, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Albania, while on the eastern fringe and in the central part, migrations contributed more to the formation of local Muslim groups of population.

Be they descendants of Muslim settlers or of converts, what were the specificities of Muslims and their Islam in “European Turkey” compared to Muslims and Islam in the rest of the Ottoman Empire? As in Anatolia and in the Arab provinces, they were members of the dominant stratum of the society, while the Christians and other non-Muslims were not. They could aspire to social mobility within the Empire’s institutions. Istanbul was for many the political, economic, religious, and intellectual center. The religious networks they belonged to, whether Sufi or not, very often had their center in the Ottoman capital, sometimes in Anatolia, more rarely in the Arab provinces. Islam in the Balkans was extremely diverse, with the development of a wide range of trends: from the more “heterodox” (such as the *Kızılbaş*s and the *Bektashis*) to the more “orthodox.” However, in contrast to Anatolia and the Arab provinces, European Turkey was a place where Muslims remained less numerous than non-Muslims. Just before the Balkan Wars, Ottoman statistics found 51 percent of Muslims in the remaining territories in Europe, at a time when the proportion of Muslims was much higher than before, because of migration; however, the figure is very doubtful. Nevertheless, contacts with Christians – which existed also in the rest of the Empire – and with Europe due to geographical proximity, were greater in the Balkans. Another specificity was the diversity of vernacular languages the Muslims spoke, beside their use of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian as written languages: Turkish, Albanian, Slavic languages, Romani languages, Greek. Above all, their political and social environment changed considerably with the important Ottoman territorial withdrawal which began at the end of the eighteenth century and the formation of non-Muslim sovereignties in the region.<sup>1</sup>

### **Balkan Muslims between the new Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire**

The creation of the Balkan states changed radically the situation of Muslims living in southeastern Europe. For many of them, until the Congress of Berlin of 1878, the conflicts, the rebellions, and the emancipation of Balkan territories from the Ottoman authority led to death, exile, or very difficult life conditions. Very few international acts guaranteed their rights. The result was that only a few Muslims remained under the rule of these first non-Muslim powers in

Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece. Those who survived preferred to flee to the Ottoman Empire, as *muhacir* (following the model of the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina), doing as other Muslim refugees from the lands conquered by Russia in Crimea and Caucasus had. This, with other factors – such as the urbanization of Christians, the *Tanzimat* reforms decided by the Ottoman authorities, the greater presence of Western European powers in the Ottoman economic sphere – provoked important changes in the demographic and political balance between Muslims and Christians, not only in the new entities, but also in the Ottoman territories.

However, with the Berlin Congress, which established the independence of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania, and the creation of a Bulgarian autonomous Principality, things changed considerably. Despite the massacres and the forced departures which occurred during the conflicts that broke out between 1875 and 1878, large groups of Muslims henceforth stayed in the new territories gained by these countries, and in the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina occupied by Austria-Hungary. The main reason was that rights were officially given to Muslims – as well as to Christians in the Ottoman Empire – by the treaties which followed the Congress. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, some local *'ulama'* even issued *fatwas* stating that the province remained part of the *dar al-islam* and therefore there was no reason for Muslims to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire (a theme that will be taken up by the reformist Egyptian Rashid Rida in 1909, certifying that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are not obliged to emigrate if they can perform their religious duties without hindrance).

This desire of the Great Powers to guarantee the rights of what were not yet called “minorities” was important for the maintenance of Muslim populations in the new Balkan states. Furthermore, in all these new Balkan countries, laws were passed which concerned Muslims; decisions and actions were taken at the national level regarding their political and civil rights, their property and religious institutions, their schools and the *shari'a* courts, creating specific conditions in each state. But these actions were often driven by “nationalizing,” “de-Ottomanizing,” and “civilizing” projects, which might violate international terms. In particular, their application depended on the willingness and constraints of different types of actors at different levels (national, regional, local): hence the obvious differences with the legal order, politically, economically, and in religious matters; hence the difficulties daily faced by Muslims, and so the departure of many of them.

As for the religious sphere, in particular, there was a tendency of state authorities to control religious hierarchies (which they also did with Christian hierarchies) and to weaken their links with the Ottoman Empire. This was generally accompanied by control of the income of the *waqf* properties, and the appointment and payment by the state of the highest religious officials, previously paid by the Ottoman state. In the case of Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the new authorities tried to create *de facto* independent religious institutions from Istanbul, tensions appeared. Especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Muslim notables formed a movement for religious autonomy.

Indeed, even in Bosnia-Herzegovina, during this period the Muslims of southeastern Europe who came under non-Muslim sovereignty were still tied to the Ottoman Empire, and the efforts of non-Muslim authorities to cut them off from Istanbul were partly in vain. In fact, if the “pan-Islamism” of Abdülhamid was largely a fantasy of the Great Powers, the sultan did inaugurate a policy *vis-à-vis* Muslims from outside, and especially *vis-à-vis* Muslims of the lost territories. For François Georgeon (2003), the Caliphate, which was an important institution for Abdülhamid, was also an ideological response to the territorial decline of the Empire. This was a mirror-image of the Great Powers' and the Balkan states' policies towards the Christians of the Empire. More generally, many actions were taken by the Ottoman authorities to link the

Muslims of the Balkan states to ideological and cultural developments that were taking place in the Empire. Beyond the spiritual and political ties that still bound them to the *Şeyhülislam* and the sultan-caliph, other unofficial channels enabled the Muslims of the Balkan countries to maintain relations with the Empire. First, networks were created because of migration. On the other hand, the press that developed in and outside the Empire helped to create a public space beyond the Ottoman borders and to circulate information.

How were the Balkan Muslims seen and how did they see themselves in this changing space and these transforming societies where reforms and state building processes were at work? Before the Berlin Congress, an image of the Balkan Muslims as having a Christian origin, converted by force or by interests, and to be (re-)converted to Christianity developed in the Western and Balkan literature. Some Christian nation-builders nevertheless conceived of the integration of the Muslims speaking their language in their nation, without envisioning their conversion. Among the Balkan Muslim elite, the Ottomanism of the Young Ottomans, synonymous with patriotism, constitutionalism, and exaltation of Islamic values, met with a favorable response. Patriotism, however, meant, both at the level of the Empire and locally, introducing local specificities, especially among the Bosnians and the Albanians. A part of these elites came also to be influenced by a nascent Turkism inspired by European research on the Turks. Concerning the Albanians, the development of Albanianism among the Albanian-speaking Christians affected by Hellenism (in southern Italy and then in the Balkans) led to the spread of this idea among a few young Muslims also concerned by Hellenism and by the issue of reforms in the Empire.

After the Berlin Congress, the Muslims of southeastern Europe, like their Christian neighbors, were facing more directly the development of Balkan nationalisms which were more concretely implemented through state policies inspired by a desire to join the “concert of civilized nations” and to “de-Ottomanize” their national space, as well as through the activity – violent or not – of nationalist and irredentist groups. Balkan Muslims also faced the sultan’s policy of building an Ottomanism strongly tinged with Islam, and, directly or indirectly, the consequences of the policies of the Great Powers. This context favored a gradual politicization of identities among the Muslims, a population still overwhelmingly rural and illiterate. But this was a fairly hesitant, non-linear, and heterogeneous process, which often knew peaks in periods of violence, the latter favoring the polarization of identities. This politicization developed in two main registers – national and religious – the two often intermingling. However, the national register was still relatively little used by the Muslims of southeastern Europe and, paradoxically, in the Ottoman Empire it was more important.

Indeed, among Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, many intellectual and political currents developed concurrently and combined: Ottomanism, Islamism (sometimes in a version of pan-Islamism), and Turkism (also in a pan-Turkist version). But in the European part of the Empire, including in the capital, Albanianism was also spreading, in close connection with the question of the fate of Ottoman Balkan territories. Among Muslims in Bulgaria and Romania, who maintained close relations with the Empire, the politicization of identities was also stimulated by resentment of mistreatment and by failure to respect the rights of Muslims, but also by the ongoing process of nation building. This was often bound to a reformist spirit, especially for a younger educated generation, emerging from the 1890s on, who were challenging the authority of the traditional elites (including the religious elite). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Muslim elite was hesitating between Serbian and Croatian nationalism, and a Bosnism, promoted by the Austro-Hungarian authorities around the Bogomils thesis (the thesis of the heretical Christian origin of the Muslims and of the immediate conversion to Islam at the beginning of the Ottoman period of this heretical group).

However, the decade of wars that began with the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), went on with World War I, and ended with the Greek–Turkish war (1919–22) changed considerably the balance of power in southeastern Europe.

### The interwar period and the building of Muslim “minorities”

The successive fall of the Russian, Austro–Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires represented a major turn in world history. In southeastern Europe the consequences were also very important. Beyond the trauma of wars and forced displacements, a new political order was established in the aftermath of the Great War. During the Peace Conference which was held in the French capital, a new political map was drawn up by the various treaties signed in 1919 and 1920. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, whose existence was proclaimed on December 1, 1918, was recognized. Moreover, the borders of the Albanian state established in 1913 were confirmed, while the Greek and Romanian territories were expanded considerably at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. At the end of the Greco–Turkish war, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) sanctioned the loss of territories that Greece had conquered in Asia Minor and on the European side, leaving to Turkey Istanbul and eastern Thrace.

Outside of the Albanian state, which included a majority of Muslims, the Muslim populations remained minority groups in the Balkan states. From a politico–social point of view, these groups (though to a lesser extent in Bosnia–Herzegovina) were affected by two major processes: emigration – as in earlier periods – and minority constructions. Indeed, Muslims were becoming “minorities,” as this new concept took shape with the treaties of 1919 and the creation of the League of Nations. The two processes were closely related to the legal status granted to Muslims and the gap between this legal status and daily realities. They also depended strongly on agrarian reforms, especially since the latter were often conceived according to national lines. Even if we can see continuities with the previous period, the policy of the nationalization of society that guided interwar leaders – including politicians in Turkey – enhanced their migration policies in relation to the Muslims. After 1923, the exchange of populations – despite how traumatic it was – remained a solution to address what was perceived as a security issue. In the late 1930s conventions were concluded between Turkey and two Balkan countries for the emigration of “Turks” to Turkey: Romania in 1936 and Yugoslavia in 1938. However, emigration was a far more complex phenomenon, because policies as they were realized were the result of a complex relationship between various local actors, including Muslims.

The links with Turkey had also changed. The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate and of the charge of the *Şeyhülislam* in 1924 changed the situation considerably. The new Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs now depended directly on the Turkish Prime Minister and was no longer supposed to have authority over Muslims outside Turkey. However, in the case of Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece especially, the debates and controversies that emerged during the interwar period have often been interpreted as an opposition between “Kemalists” and “old Turks,” that is to say between supporters and opponents of reforms carried out by Mustafa Kemal in Turkey (adoption of the Latin alphabet, education reform, dress reform – abolition of the veil for women, wearing of hats for men – abolition of the *shari‘a* courts and adoption of the Civil Code, etc.). It has also been considered that the “Kemalists” were supported or even encouraged by Turkey, and the “Old Turks” by local governments eager to cut ties with Turkey.

It is true that there were contacts between the Balkan Muslims and the new Turkish Republic. Turkey was, under certain conditions, interested in the migration of Muslims from the Balkans. Thrace was the target of Turkish irredentism. The Turkish government and



diplomacy tended to support the adoption of reforms similar to the Kemalist reforms by Muslims in Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria, particularly. But the action of the Kemalist authorities was primarily guided by the desire to eliminate the development of any opposition that could spread from Bulgaria to Turkey, for example (Boyar and Fleet 2008). It is also true that opponents of the Kemalist regime (the famous “hundred and fifty” people expelled by Mustafa Kemal, members of the Ottoman dynasty, and others) were to be found in some Balkan countries, where they sometimes held important positions in Islamic religious institutions or in the press, because the local authorities, on the other hand, did use Balkan Islam against the development of a Turkish nationalism. This was particularly the case in Bulgaria and Greece, where the presence of Muslims in border regions rendered these authorities very sensitive to the issue.

However, this vision of an opposition between “Kemalists” and “Old Turks,” or “reformists” and “conservatives” in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, downplays the importance of local issues, local competition for power, and the integration of Muslim actors in the local and national arenas. Religious and secular reformisms, nationalism, and conservatism had their own historicities in these areas and were forged through transnational circulations that were not necessarily the result of state policies. In general, if the issues of internal reforms were addressed with multiple positions in the debates, they were inextricably linked to the questions of the political and civic integration of Muslims (or their elites) in the states of the region, based on existing social and political relations. In Yugoslavia, where the Turkish-speaking Muslims were a minority in the southern provinces and were absent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation was different. But, in the same way, the issues of internal reforms were inextricably linked to questions concerning the political and civic integration of Muslims (or their elites), based on existing social and political relations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was often translated by a choice between the different national options (Yugoslavism, Serbism, or Croatism), while, in the 1930s, some Muslims of the younger generation were attracted by Communism (like many other young people – Muslims or not – in other regions of the Peninsula).

The case of Albania is, of course, special because of its Muslim majority (69 percent of the million people recorded in 1930). However, from its creation the Albanian state had no official religion, neither Islam nor any other religion. After World War I, this principle was reaffirmed, while the liberty of every cult was guaranteed. It is interesting to note that the two countries of the region having a Muslim majority – Albania and Turkey – always put a strong emphasis on their supposed secularity (“*afetarizmi*” in the case of Albania, “*laiklik*” in the case of Turkey), which was also an emphasis on their Western or European character (which the countries with a Christian Orthodox majority did not do). But, in contrast to Turkey, neither the political opposition nor the construction of the nation and citizenship was mainly expressed in terms of opposition between “reformists” and “conservatives” or “reactionaries.” Of course, Zog (who became king in 1928) launched a package of reforms, including reform of Islam (Islamic religious institutions were reformed in 1929, the *shari'a* courts were abolished in 1929, the veil was banned in 1937), but the main opposition to its power was not perceived as religious opposition. Rather, it was denounced as Bolshevik, and Muslim reformist circles were rather close to power. To prevent future generations from being attracted to Communism and to strengthen their loyalty to the king, in 1937 the latter even ordered the reintroduction of religion classes at school. Then in 1938 he married a (non-Muslim) Hungarian countess, but he reinforced the image of his dynasty by building mosques, such as the new mosque in the port of Durrës, which bore his name.

From a more specifically religious perspective, the interwar years saw major changes related to local circumstances, but also to transformations in the Islamic world. The treaties of 1919

reaffirmed, in the various Balkan countries, the rights of Muslim minorities in terms of education, exercise, and religious administration. In most cases, the context of nationalization and modernization was also driving nationalization and institutionalization of Islamic religious institutions, and there was a kind of beginning of nationalization of Islam (especially with the use of vernacular languages and the foundation of local reformed schools for the education of Muslim clerics). Nevertheless, two interesting phenomena are to be noted here.

During the interwar years, the networks of Balkan Islam were also redefined at the international and transnational level. Indeed, the closure of the *madrasas* and of the dervish lodges (*tekkes*) in Turkey led to the reorientation of the training and scholarly networks, mainly towards Cairo in Egypt, where young Balkan Muslims went to study. But some Balkan Muslims also had connections with the Islamic transnational network of the Lahori Ahmadiyya. This proselytizing network, founded by Muhammad Ali in the late nineteenth century in British India, gave birth to two groups: the Lahoris and the Qadiyanis, both very active groups of missionaries. As for the Lahoris, they were preaching the compatibility of Islam and modernity and wishing to contribute to rebuilding the image that Muslims had of themselves. During the interwar period they were present in Berlin and London, where they were managing mosques and publishing journals. From the end of the 1920s they had an important impact on some leading religious Muslim leaders in Albania, both directly and throughout Turkey (translation of their production, sending students to Lahore), but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina (use of the Qur'an commentary of Muhammad Ali for the commentary elaborated by two local 'ulama', connections with Muslim in Prague through the Berlin mosque).

Some Balkan Muslims were also connected to other transnational networks which were established between Europe and the Muslim world, such as, for example, the network of Shakib Arslan, the Arab activist who published in Geneva the famous newspaper *La Nation arabe*. When he organized the European Muslim Congress in 1935, Muslims from the Balkans were present, except from Albania, because the Albanian government did not recognize the Congress. Yet Shakib Arslan's new notion of "European Islam," or rather "Islam in Europe," was also developing in Albania, where Muslims' religious leaders tried to reform Islam to make the country an acceptable European state with a Muslim majority.

### Secularization and nationalization under socialist rule

The outcome of World War II in southeastern Europe was dramatic because of huge human losses. Politically, it was also fraught with consequences since socialist regimes were established by the Partisan movements and/or the Russian army in all the countries of the Peninsula, except in Greece. There the Civil War lasted till 1949 and was won by the monarchical forces, helped by Great Britain and the USA. At that time, Yugoslavia had already broken with the Soviet Union (1948) and taken a special path within the Eastern Bloc. In 1962, it was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the internal level, its leaders opted for the decentralization of political structures. The socialist regimes' policies led to significant political, but also social, transformations. Changes were important, for example, in the fields of economy (collectivization, industrialization), of education, of transport (electrification, means of communication), and at the social level (consumption, rural exodus, demographical transitions, emancipation of women).

Concerning religion, the socialist regimes adopted from the beginning anti-religious policies similar to Stalinist policies: confiscation of property, purging and control of hierarchies, campaigns in favor of atheism. However, contrasting changes occurred in the 1960s. While in Yugoslavia there was liberalization, in Romania and Bulgaria the religious policies remained the same, and in Albania there was a hardening of policy with the ban of religious practices in 1967

(and the inscription of atheism in the Constitution in 1976). These policies, as well as social transformations, produced an important secularization of Balkan societies. Even in Greece, where there were no such anti-religious policies, the secularization that Western Europe experienced was also experienced there.

As for the Muslims, these policies resulted in the abolition of the *shari'a* courts, as had already happened in interwar Albania, but also in the nationalization of the *waqf* properties, the closing of religious schools, as well as in the banning of the veil. In Greece, where the clauses of the Treaty of Lausanne remained valid, religious institutions and practices were not abolished or constrained in an authoritarian way, as in the rest of the Peninsula. However, the Greek authorities succeeded in suppressing some *mufti* positions outside Thrace and restricting the competences of the local Muslim institutions (*cemaat*), obliging the Muslims to create their own organization for the management of religious life.

Among Muslims, policies of collectivization and imposition of schooling for girls were difficult to accept. This and the general situation led many of them again to migrate to Turkey. Migration waves were particularly strong in the 1950s from Bulgaria (150,000 people) and Yugoslavia (200,000 people). From these two countries, they went on, accompanying flows also from Greece and Romania. However, from the 1960s on, from Yugoslavia and Greece, Muslims migrated to Western Europe and to America as well, just like their non-Muslim fellow countrymen. This significant shift is proof of the integration of Muslims as citizens in Balkan countries. This integration was facilitated by the disappearance of former elites and the emergence of new elites linked to the Communist parties and produced by social transformations (teachers, doctors, engineers). These new secular elites played a key role in the crystallization of national identities, a prominent phenomenon of the period.

During the socialist period, the Balkan state apparatuses introduced new principles to manage the national question. But these principles varied from one country to another and sometimes over time too. For example, a Turkish national identity was promoted in Bulgaria and Greece in the 1950s, while it was repressed in the 1970s and 1980s, and a Muslim nation was recognized in Yugoslavia only in 1968. This is also because the Muslims were not passive objects of state policies: through their elites, they participated in the assertion of new national identifications, or opposed the policies of assimilation or marginalization. Moreover, national identifications were henceforth largely shared outside the elite circles. From this point of view, the Balkan Muslim populations were also expressing their citizenship.

In the Yugoslav federation, where the Soviet system of nations and national minorities was implemented, the recognition of a “Muslim nation” (or nation of the “Muslims”) by the League of the Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1968 is to be seen in the context of the use of national identities by republican and provincial elites who wanted to legitimize their own project at the expense of a common Yugoslav project. This recognition led to tensions and ambiguities, because of the name which had a religious connotation, regarding its scope (in 1971 it was finally recognized for the whole Yugoslav territory) and the guarantor institutions (political or religious). The recognition was also used by some Bosnian Muslim intellectuals who expressed their desire to have their own cultural institutions, which provoked a hostile reaction of Croats and Serbs. In the southern part of the federation Albanians were recognized as a national minority and, from the end of the 1960s, they really enjoyed greater political and cultural rights. Nevertheless, in a context of economical stagnation, Albanian demonstrations broke out in Kosovo in 1968 and in 1981, around the claim for the transformation of the autonomous province of Serbia into a republic. From 1981, the socialist authorities of Kosovo and Macedonia fought everything they suspected of being “Albanian nationalism,” and paradoxically contributed to increasing it.

In Bulgaria there was no such federal system, but, with the establishment of the new regime, a Turkish nation was recognized. From the mid-1950s, however, the authorities feared a “Turkish nationalism” which was also appealing to the Pomaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims). In 1956 Bulgarian political leaders returned to a definition of Bulgaria as a homogeneous nation-state (the new Bulgarian Constitution of 1971 no longer mentioned the existence of national minorities). As a consequence, Turkish schools were closed down, and from the beginning of the 1960s campaigns of forced assimilation of the Pomaks and Gypsies were launched, with the imposition of Bulgarian names and a fight against “backward” religious and cultural traditions. In December 1984 the authorities decided to extend these policies to the Turkish population and launched the famous campaign called the “revival process.” With the support of the police and army, the names of some 800,000 Turks were changed and their religious and cultural practices were prohibited. The Turkish language was also banished from the public sphere. This policy provoked strong resistance, with several dozen deaths and hundreds of people imprisoned. In the second half of the 1980s, clandestine organizations were formed, and Turkish intellectuals joined the nascent Bulgarian dissident movement. The “revival process” led paradoxically to the crystallization of a Turkish national sentiment and the politicization of Turkish elites.

During this period, the networks of Islam in the Balkans and the connections with the Islamic world were considerably weakened, mainly in the first two decades and particularly in Albania, where religion was banned and international connections cut. The Islamic networks were also transformed because of the monopoly the official hierarchy was given over the religious sphere (Sufi orders were even banned in Bosnia-Herzegovina). However, the monopoly was not complete. In Bosnia-Herzegovina notably the pan-Islamist network of the Young Muslims (*Mladi Muslimani*), formed in 1941, re-emerged in the 1960s and was to play a central role in the political and religious reconfigurations of the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, the contacts formed with the Arab world from the 1960s onwards, through the exchange of students from Yugoslavia and Greece – who went to al-Azhar and other Islamic universities – and from Arab countries, were a factor in the spread of new Islamic trends in the Balkan realm, such as Neo-Salafism. This happened in the 1980s, when religion became increasingly present in the public sphere, in a context of growing political and social tensions.

### **Muslims as political actors and citizens in the turmoil of the post-socialist era**

Perestroika and the fall of the Berlin Wall contributed to an increase in tensions and to the fall of socialist regimes in the Balkans. In Yugoslavia it led to the dissolution of the federation and to a succession of bloody wars in Croatia (1991), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–5), Kosovo (1998–9), and Macedonia (2001). Among the dramatic events that went with these changes in the region were the massive exodus of the Turks from Bulgaria in 1989 and the civil war which broke out in Albania in 1997. More generally, social and economic hardship and migration became the fate of many Balkan people.

In the new political context, which put the region in a new position *vis-à-vis* NATO and the European Union (Romania and Bulgaria became members in 2007) but also enabled the introduction of multiparty systems, a significant evolution occurred for the Balkan Muslims: their political organization. Indeed, while Muslims had had their own political party only in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the first three decades of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the 1990s they emerged everywhere as an independent political factor. Stimulated by the strengthening of their national identification, they founded their own political parties, except in

Albania and Greece. In Albania, the political structure is independent of religious belonging, while in Greece Muslim mobilization remained at the religious level. Elsewhere, however, the new political parties are led by secular elites and religion does not play a central role, except in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There Alija Izetbegović and the “Young Muslims,” with their pan-Islamist ideology, succeeded in creating the Stranka Demokratske Akcije (SDA; Party of Democratic Action) and in being at the center of the local political scene. This new phenomenon, which is synonymous with full citizen status for the Muslims, is reinforced in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo by the fact that in these two new sovereign entities Muslims are henceforth in a numerical majority position.

If Islam is not at the center of the political restructuring among the Balkan Muslims, the political evolutions led to a complex redefining of the relationship between Islam and national identity. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the war, there was a re-Islamization of national identity. Among the other groups of Muslims, ties between Islam and national identity also became closer. Within the Albanian space, debates broke out on this issue. In Kosovo and Macedonia, Muslim belonging is used to bind Turks, Roma, and Slavic-speaking Muslims to the Albanians. In Albania, the new political leader Berisha made the country a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. However, Islam did not supersede national identifications. Pan-Muslim mobilizations, for example, remained marginal, even during the conflict. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the key role of the SDA, the re-Islamization of national identity, and the use of Islam as an ideology of substitution after the fall of Communism in war time, the SDA is more a nationalist party and lost its position on the political scene after the conflict. Besides, the party itself had decided in 1993 to rename the “Muslim nation” the “Bosniak nation,” in order to underline its sovereignty and to increase its international legitimacy.

This partial and complex re-Islamization of national identities is also partly due to a clear increase in the activities and in the visibility of Islamic religious institutions. Indeed, with the fall of the socialist regimes the liberty of religion was re-established; the official Islamic religious hierarchies could reorganize themselves – often with the help of diasporas and foreign Muslim networks (be they state sponsored, NGOs, or other proselytizing groups) – and recover some of their property. However, the new situation led to the end of the monopoly these official hierarchies had over the religious scene. New Muslim actors – foreign as well as local – began to act independently. Even within the official institutions tensions and conflicts appeared. In particular, young people influenced by Neo-Salafism (after their return from Islamic universities or their contact with Neo-Salafist groups in the Balkans) began to oppose, from within or from outside, the older generation leading the official institutions. Among them, we should distinguish two different trends: the jihadists (mainly foreign *mujahidin* who came to fight in Bosnia-Herzegovina or to take refuge in the Balkans, and who were violently anti-Western and sometimes involved in terrorist acts); and the Pietists (primarily students returning from the Muslim world, who are more concerned with the re-Islamization of morals). Sufi networks also developed within the Balkan realm, as well as the neo-Brotherhood movements coming from Turkey. In general, it is interesting to notice that after 9/11 cooperation with Turkish Islamic actors was favored over contacts with actors coming from Arab countries. The network of Fethullah Gülen, very active in the educational field and already present in the Balkans in the 1990s, experienced a significant diffusion in the region in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This also provoked debates about the feature of Balkan Islam, but also the role of Balkan Muslims in the shaping of a “European Islam.” Thus, in 2005, Mustafa Cerić, chief of the Bosnian ‘*ulama*’, published a “declaration of the European Muslims,” in which he condemns terrorism, but which is in line with some claims of the Muslim Brotherhood in Western Europe.

Despite the increased visibility of Islam in the public sphere, through the activities and declarations of these religious actors and the building of new mosques, *madrasas*, etc., the post-socialist era is mainly characterized for the Balkan Muslim population by the long-lasting effects of socialist secularization and by individualization of the faith. Regular religious practice remains exceptional. Even in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the attacks made during the war by the SDA and the Islamic official institutions against mixed marriages, consumption of alcohol, and the celebration of Christmas and New Year faced strong resistance within the population and have been abandoned. Moreover, as elsewhere in the world, the faith and the way of believing is increasingly individualized. Among the more popular religious works among Balkan Muslims are books referring to personal concerns (Islam and the family, Islam and sexuality, Islam and health). So, the more perceptible Neo-Salafism should be seen as one form of religiosity among others in a much diversified religious landscape where conversions to Christianity also represent a possible choice (as is particularly the case among the Albanians in Albania or in the diaspora in Greece and Italy).

## Conclusions

The political trajectories of the Balkan Muslims since the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire during the long nineteenth century reflect a complex and difficult passage to a non-Islamic sovereignty. Often driven directly or indirectly to migration, the Balkan Muslims have experienced very diverse situations, related to their socio-economic status, to the state they were living in, and to the period. Their place in the Balkan states follows two conflicting tendencies: rejection, which experienced its peak with the ethnic cleansing during the wars of the end of the twentieth century, and the integration made possible in different ways (granted rights, “minoritization” policies or citizenship). This place was and is not only shaped by state policies, but also by socio-political changes that also affected their fellow non-Muslim countrymen, and by their own agency. By the way, at the beginning of the twenty-first century three of the Balkan political entities have henceforth a Muslim majority (absolute or relative).

As for religious aspects, Balkan Islam cannot be reduced either to a Sufi or to a fundamentalist component. There has always been in the region a diversity of Islamic currents, and their evolutions have always been tied to evolutions in the Islamic world, first at the Ottoman level, and then, already since the interwar period, at a more globalized level (even to a lesser extent during the socialist period). Beyond the evolutions of Islam, Balkan Muslims, as European citizens, experienced and are experiencing also more general changes.

## Note

- 1 This chapter is largely inspired by the following book: Xavier Bougarel and Nathalie Clayer (2013) *Les Musulmans de l'Europe du sud-est (XIXe–XXe siècles)*, Paris: Karthala, where details are to be found.

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