


# Unraveling the Miracle: The Serbian Orthodox Church and the 2020 Regime Change in Montenegro<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper investigate the transnational political engagement of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 2020 regime change in Montenegro. *Methods.* I used in-depth interviews based on purposive sampling of experts that covers three problems: transnational action; success of *litije* movement; and political aspirations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Balkans. *Results.* I found that the Serbian Orthodox Church does have the potential to act transnationally; that its decision to act transnationally in Montenegro was key to the success of *litije*; and that the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Balkans are guided by Serbian Orthodox nationalism. *Conclusions.* Contrary to the dominant paradigm, *litije* showed that the Serbian Orthodox Church is politically ambivalent. Yet, its key challenge remains the lack of church-state separation, as it is only when the Church is independent from the State it can excess its democratizing potential.

**Keywords:** Montenegro, Serbian Orthodox Church, regime change, *litije*

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## Introduction

Late in the night of August 30, 2020, and shortly after the election results were declared, the leader of the winning coalition “For the future of Montenegro” Zdravko Krivokapić was headed to the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica. At the Cathedral, Bishop Amfilofije of the Serbian Orthodox Church greeted him with a warm hug and a smile on his face, followed with a thunderous applause of those who were at the Cathedral that night. At this point it was definite that the 30-years rule of Milo Đukanović and his party “Democratic Party of Socialists” has ended, and that the Serbian Orthodox Church had a massive impact in this process. Or as Emir Kusturica, a famous movie director, said, “A miracle has happened in Montenegro” (Pravda 2020).

“Montenegrin miracle” refers to a fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) managed to mobilize almost half of the Montenegrin population (around 300,000 people) into peaceful protests – *litije* – for eight consecutive months during the COVID pandemic. This political engagement of the SOC was in a reaction to the the Montenegrin government’s Law on Freedom of Religion (2019), which, among other things, provided for the confiscation of all Church property that it acquired before 1918 and for which SOC doesn’t have proof of ownership. The *litije* led firstly to the fall of President Milo Djukanović’s rule in Montenegro after 30 years, and then to the amendment of the Law and the complete protection of SOC’s right to its property with the signing of the Fundamental Agreement (2022) between Montenegro and the SOC in August 2022.

Yet, it still remains unclear how the SOC managed to act as a unified front as it was the case in Montenegro during 2019 and 2020. This problem becomes even more complex as we know that the headquarters of the SOC are in Serbia, and that Orthodox Christian Churches has a very complex internal structure. That is why in this paper I argue that, in order to explain the political engagements of the SOC in Montenegro, we must primarily focus on the transnational political engagement of religious actors. Consequently, I wonder *can the Church overcome inter-diocesan disagreements and differences and cooperate as effectively as when the SOC decides to act within national borders?* Furthermore, *what goal might be important enough for the Church to take the exceptional step of acting in coordination across diocesan lines?*

In order to unravel the Montenegro’s miracle I use a qualitative research design that includes historical analysis and in-depth elite interviews. My primary substantive contribution will be to make the case that regime change could not have been realized without the involvement of the broader SOC in support of

its dioceses in Montenegro, but also to consider whether the SOC is guided by specific political goals in its actions and if so, how can they be understood. I begin this paper by introducing my theoretical framework, and then formulate testable hypotheses accordingly. In the research design section I include details on the methodology used. After testing hypotheses, I dive into discussion and finally, main conclusions of my study.

## Theoretical framework

This paper is a case study of the concept of *transnational action*, defined as a “phenomenon that is not limited to a single country and spreads across borders” (Fox 2018, 200). I contend that religious actors have the potential to act transnationally because religions focus on eternal truth that does not change when one crosses from one country to the next (Ibidem). I also argue that religious actors act transnationally with the aim of achieving certain social, political, and/or economic goals.

The SOC’s actions in Montenegro led it beyond its traditionally national character, thus calling into question one of the main arguments found across scholarly literature on Eastern Orthodoxy, which is that its autocephalous churches lack the potential to influence or initiate political change across geographic borders. Scholars (Berger 1999; Huntington 1996; Prodromou 2004; Stepan 2000) seem to assume that Orthodox Churches do not benefit from some of the same historical and cultural characteristics that have allowed the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant traditions to shape civil society and politics. One of the main arguments has been that the Orthodox Churches’ national character limits their political relevance; that is, they have lacked transnational potential (Stepan 2000). Stepan is also skeptical about the potential of Eastern Orthodoxy to create and influence an open civil society. He characterizes Orthodoxy as a *strong obstacle* to democratization, lacking the potential to mobilize people for social and political change due to the nature and historical context in which the Orthodox Churches exist. He states that “With respect to resistance to the state, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is often organizationally and ideologically in a relatively weak position because the church is a national (as opposed to a transnational) organization” (Stepan 2000, 53).

This relationship between the state and the church is based on historical context, i.e. the practice that in the Orthodox world, with the independence of the state comes autocephaly (Veković and Jevtić 2019), and practically the church and the state are born and developed together, or, as Jevtić explains

"with the development of the state, the church also develops, and these two institutions go hand in hand, that is, the church gives the legitimacy to the state" (Jevtić 2007, 100). This close, mutually reinforcing relationship between church and state is usually referred to as *symphonia*. In the context of the Serbian state and SOC, the *symphonia* had its roots in two specific historical experiences, the first was the period of the Ottoman occupation, and the second was the period under communist rule - usually referred to as the "darkest period for the Church" (Bigović 2022). Since the fall of communism, the SOC has arguably been the most powerful socio-political actors in Serbia, gradually continuing and strengthening its relationship with the state.

However, in November 2019 the Serbian Orthodox Church arose against the state - but not the Serbian state. It acted instead in neighboring Montenegro, after that country passed a Law on Freedom of Religion (hereinafter "the Law"). First, the SOC independently condemned the Montenegrin state for passing the Law, which they labeled "ungodly." Then, after the Church's pressures did not yield results, it called on the people of Montenegro for help, which resulted in mass protests (*litije*) that gathered 300,000 people during the COVID pandemic. These protests led to the fall of Milo Djukanović's government after 30 years, as well as a change in the Law in favor of the SOC. Why, and how, all of this happened?

This paper is based on three theoretical assumptions. First, for its action in Montenegro to succeed, the Church had to have *institutional prerequisites*. Second, the Church had a particular *motivation* for action. Third, the SOC was able to provide *resources* to sustain action and mobilization in Montenegro.

Institutional prerequisites are essential. As Nepstad contends, "for any religious elites to organize and support protests, it is necessary for them to be autonomous from the state" (Nepstad 2021, 3). Achieving such autonomy is difficult in the context of Orthodox Churches because of their traditionally national character and longstanding connections with their national governments. Nevertheless, the SOC in Montenegro did not have close relations with the government of Montenegrin President Djukanović, nor did it depend on him in any way, which enabled the SOC to mobilize Orthodox Christians in Montenegro against his rule. In short, the SOC's political potential in Montenegro was enhanced because its center of power lay outside the borders of Montenegrin territory.

Philpott's (2007) conceptualizations of *differentiation*, *political theology*, and the ambivalence of religion help us understand the SOC's institutional prerequisites, its relationship to the state, and its potential to act politically. Philpott defines differentiation as the degree of autonomy that exists between religious actors and the state in terms of basic/core rights and it may be high or

low (if low, it is labeled integrationism) and may be achieved through consensus or conflict. The specific configuration of differentiation leads the church to a certain type and degree of political engagement (Philpott 2007, 506-507). Philpott defines *political theology* as a set of ideas that religious actors have about political power and justice (507-508). In other words, do church teachings have the potential to support political engagement, liberal ideas and democracy? Appendix 1 represents the potential configurations of church and state in relation to degree and type of differentiation and political theology.

As we see in the upper right corner of Appendix 1, the SOC in Serbia fits into the category of consensual differentiation, which is normatively the most stable category because it is characterized by the absence of conflict. In practical terms, consensual differentiation means that church and state are autonomous from each other in terms of their basic rights and responsibilities, that this arrangement was reached by consensual agreement, and that both parties are satisfied with an outcome. On the other hand, the relationship between church and state in Montenegro is in the category of conflict differentiation (the upper left corner of Appendix 1). This means that church and state are autonomous from each other; that is, the church has *gained* significant autonomy, but because of conflict. Neither the church nor the state is satisfied with the other party or with the relationship between the two. Thus, in Montenegro the SOC has the potential for political engagement because it (a) is autonomous from the state; (b) has a conflictual relationship with the state; and (c) has a political theology that supports the political engagement of the church (e.g., Prodromou 2004).

When the institutional prerequisites are sufficient, religious actors need a clear *motivation* to act (Birbir and Overos 2019, Fox 2018, 50-53, Wald et. al 2006). However, the decision of religious institutions to mobilize is influenced by numerous factors that are difficult to predict. Central to this decision-making process is the presence of an advantageous *opportunity structure*—external political conditions that either facilitate or impede mobilization (Tarrow 1999). These conditions are often assessed through a cost-benefit analysis lens, suggesting that motivations for action are rooted in rational calculations. This perspective aligns with rational choice theory, which posits that actors weigh the potential gains and risks before committing to collective action (Olson 1995).

Social scientists have tended to assume that we should not conceive of religious actors as “rational” (in the context of rational actor theory) because they tend not to act independently to achieve their goals (e.g., Euben 1995). However, Fox (2018) argues that religious actors and institutions *are* rational actors with their own interests that they strive to realize. Such interests often are not strictly political, but most of them can be influenced by the political process.

In this vein, the SOC may be seen as a rational actor with concrete interests and motivations that it strives to satisfy.

Meanwhile, the broader literature on political mobilization and collective action emphasizes that *grievances*—often understood as a sense of injustice or dissatisfaction that motivates groups to act collectively—serve as powerful catalysts for both processes (Birbir and Overos 2019, Gurr 1994). Within religious mobilization, such grievances frequently arise from perceived or actual experiences of oppression, discrimination, or threats to religious identity and values. Some scholars further conceptualize these grievances as rooted in *fear*, highlighting how perceived threats can intensify mobilization efforts (Almeida 2019).

For religious actors, fear might arise from the possibility that their interests will be threatened. Religious actors' most important interests are institutional survival (Gill 2007) and propagation of the religion (Fox 2018). The primary motivation for the SOC's activities in Montenegro was to ensure institutional survival, which was directly threatened by the Law. For the SOC, the Law was "bad news," a concept from the literature on mobilization and collective action that comprises all the information, data, decisions, laws that cause people or actors to feel threatened and therefore fearful (Almeida 2019). The Law provided for the confiscation of all SOC property that the Church had acquired before 1918 and for which it did not have proof of ownership. Because the SOC has so many churches, monasteries, schools, and land in Montenegro, transferring that property to state ownership would mean that the Church would have to exist on state territory rather than its own territory. Simply put, the Church would have been forced to put itself in a subordinate position in relation to the state, which would greatly weaken and even jeopardize its survival in Montenegro. The fact that the SOC would be left without control of its schools, monasteries, and churches would have meant that it would no longer have had places to gather its members, and over time it presumably would have begun to lose them. Thus, it is clear that the SOC's institutional survival was profoundly threatened by the Law. Moreover, the SOC knew that there was a chance that the state would transfer the property to the canonically unrecognized Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC), a longstanding project of President Djukanović that was rejected by the Mother Church, global Eastern Orthodox community and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In Montenegro, there are two distinct Orthodox churches: the larger and recognized Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and the canonically unrecognized Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC). The MOC, re-established in 1993, seeks to assert Montenegrin national and religious independence but remains unrecognized by the broader Orthodox community, including the Mother Church (SOC) as well as Ecumenical Patriarchate. Approximately 90% of Orthodox believers in Montenegro, comprising both ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins, are affiliated with the SOC, while only around 10% are aligned with the MOC.

The SOC's motivation for its action in Montenegro may also be understood through *power devaluation theory*, which claims that when a dominant group (in this case, an institution) in society begins to lose power, it further radicalizes its goals and actions in order to ensure institutional survival (Gill, 1998). For this reason, according to Fetzer and Soper (2004), religious actors act as secular NGOs in the public sphere, and religious leaders often perceive a necessity to lobby the government to achieve their own religious and/or organizational ideals and interests. These interests concern religion as a rational actor rather than one guided exclusively by religious beliefs (see Gill and Pfaff, 2010) and indeed for the SOC in Montenegro, religious interests were secondary. The SOC's core interest was primarily organizational (institutional survival), and its goal was to preserve its property rights.

Finally, *resource mobilization theory* (McCarthy and Zald 1977) teaches that any social movement must have the capacity to generate resources (means) and use them wisely to sustain successful collective action. These resources include communication network, leadership, organization and organizational knowledge, material resources, influence, and connection with other affiliated social groups (Birbir and Overos 2019, Jenkins 1983, Wald et. al. 2006). How might the SOC in Montenegro have managed to maintain even a minimum of resources, and then to mobilize them? It is fair to say that Montenegrins exemplify "belonging without believing and bonding," as rates of worship attendance are low. According to Gill and Pfaff (2010), it is especially difficult for such institutions to mobilize. Thus, it is safe to assume that the SOC in Montenegro could not provide essential resources on its own, nor could it obtain them from the state. What had to happen for the SOC in Montenegro to obtain these necessary resources? To answer this question, I propose the following hypothesis:

*H1:* The Serbian Orthodox Church, although it is a distinctly national church, has great potential to act transnationally.

In short, it was essential for the greater SOC to provide necessary resources for its action in Montenegro. Ordinarily, national Orthodox churches would be denied the possibility of acting transnationally, so would have a difficult time bringing about any change outside their own country. Transnationalism is especially challenging in the context of the SOC, because its dioceses in the Balkans and Diaspora have a long history of tense relations with the SOC's headquarter in Belgrade. Nevertheless, the success of the SOC's initiatives in Montenegro seems to indicate that transnationalism is possible despite these

obstacles. If the SOC is capable of transnational action, I formulate the second hypothesis as:

*H2:* Transnational cooperation between the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia and Montenegro played an essential role in building resource capacity (material and organizational) for the successful mobilization and ultimate regime change in Montenegro.

It is difficult at best to stand up against a 30-year-old regime with a history of permitting high levels of crime, corruption and brutality towards dissenters (Freedom House 2022). However, the SOC in Montenegro did have some preexisting resources as a diocese operating in a country of 607,000 citizens, roughly 72% of whom belong to the SOC (U.S. Department of State 2021), meaning that *religious culture* as important resource for mobilization was secured. According to (Wald et al. 2006) religious culture function as an influential identity marker, reinforcing a shared worldview and establishing norms for behavior. This cultural unity often translates into a powerful motive for mobilization, as members feel a moral or spiritual imperative to act. Additionally, religious institutions like the SOC are high-profile organizations which often have political connections and physical resources for mobilization, including a place to meet (space), organizational and financial resources, experienced leadership, and rank-and-file members (Fox 2018).

When it comes to resources, space serves as a clear *differentia specifica* for religiously oriented political movements compared to their secular counterparts (Wald et al. 2006). As Gautier (1998) notes, ‘Churches have probably the greatest possibility of autonomous existence in civil society, outside the realm of direct influence by the state’ (p. 291). Religious spaces, such as churches and mosques, offer sanctuary and are often regarded as safe havens, providing protection from state interference. Also, despite its national character, the SOC is one Orthodox, conciliar, and apostolic Church. Thus, its dioceses naturally seek support (at a minimum, moral support) from one another, especially the larger, most powerful ones which are located in Serbia (known as central jurisdiction). Additionally, SOC is a vertical organization with a hierarchical arrangement, and its structured nature enables, at least in theory, flow of information and enables coordinated action across both local and international levels (Kalyvas 1996, Tilly 1978). Therefore, I wonder not only whether transnational action took place, but (assuming it did) whether it provided material and organizational resources for the SOC’s action in Montenegro or offered nothing beyond moral support. Because the SOC is a national church, perhaps transnational cooperation across



dioceses could benefit some national idea/vision. This possibility could add an extra dimension to our understanding of the political character of the SOC, which gives rise to a third hypothesis:

*H3*: Transnational cooperation between the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Balkans and those in the diaspora was guided/motivated by the idea of (Serbian) Orthodox nationalism.

The origin of the Serbian Orthodox Church is directly tied to the origin and development of the Serbian state. With independence comes *autocephaly*, which means that church and state develop hand-in-hand. Accordingly, the SOC created and maintained a *national identity*; as Mylonas (2003) argues, Orthodoxy served to sacralize Serbian national identity. Djordjevic (2009) notes that Serbian Orthodoxy is a highly traditionalistic faith with religious rituals – such as baptism, church weddings and funerals, and feast day celebrations of patron saints (*slava*) – that have instrumental value for Serbs because they cement feelings of national belonging and ties to tradition. Similarly, Blagojevic and Radulovic (2013) argue that Orthodox Christians often look to confirm their national, personal, and family identities by practicing distinctively *Orthodox* rituals (as opposed to prayer, reading the Bible, and other broadly Christian practices). Moreover, Serbia's historical experience, few centuries long life under Ottoman rule, made the church an institution that maintained national identity when there was no state. In the years since liberation from the Ottomans, the SOC has enjoyed a privileged position in Serbian society. The Church played an essential role in maintaining a distinctive Serbian identity during the Yugoslavian years. As Merdjanova (2003) states, religion (Orthodoxy) serves as a “catalyst for delimitation, alienation, and animosity towards the ‘Others,’ and at the same time it can be one of the main factors that contribute to the ‘creation and preservation of identity’” (p. 10). Brubaker (2011) also helps establish the connection between nationalism and religion embodied by the Serbian Orthodox Church. He contends that religion and nationalism are *analogous*, that is, that religion allows for group identification and the construction of meaningful, bounded social groups; it also plays a significant role in the development of political claims (Brubaker 2011).

Recent history has highlighted the SOC's role as a unifier of the Serbian people. The fall of communism led the Church to prioritize building unity among Serbs wherever they lived in the Balkans. The SOC used religion to demarcate “who was who” in the multiethnic and multi-confessional environment that was first Yugoslavia, and then Serbia, but also in the various other environments

(republics) where Serbs lived after the breakup of Yugoslavia. The Serbian Orthodox Church teaches that Serbs grew out of Orthodox Christianity, so the national idea and national identity are inseparable from the Church. As a result, the SOC is seen as the spiritual mother of the Serbian people wherever they may live. The Church's foremost goal is to maintain the Serbian *Orthodox* national identity. In short, it has instrumentalized religion by sacralizing myths, traditions, and history, thus making the church and national identity inseparable (Gajić 2020).

However, this nature of SOC, which included elements of nationalism, had to be avoided in Montenegro because, as Slater (2009) says, for religiously inspired protests to be successful, they must take place in a religiously homogeneous environment, which Montenegro was because 72% of the population are Orthodox Christians (Report on International Religious Freedom, 2022), but they are ethically divided into Serbs and Montenegrins. Approximately 90% of Orthodox believers in Montenegro belong to the SOC, with the remaining 10% aligned with the MOC. Ethnic Montenegrins follow the SOC, largely due to its deep historical roots in Montenegro. The SOC has served as the primary religious institution for centuries, embedding itself into the religious and cultural fabric of Montenegrin society. Many ethnic Montenegrins maintain ties to the SOC because they see their spiritual identity linked to the broader Serbian Orthodox tradition, even if their national identity is distinctly Montenegrin. The MOC, seen by some as politically motivated and promoted by nationalist figures like Milo Djukanović, lacks the same historical continuity and legitimacy. Furthermore, many Montenegrins view their religious and national identities as separate, staying with the SOC out of family traditions and community ties, despite their national alignment with Montenegrin identity (Džankić, 2014). Additionally, as previously mentioned, (shared) religious culture is a valuable resource that religious groups can effectively leverage. However, in ethnically divided environments like Montenegro, misusing religious culture can be highly divisive and may exacerbate existing tensions.

Given these factors, Church that propagates Serbian national identity would be doomed to failure in such an environment. Thus, the SOC in Montenegro had to adjust its discourse to build support among Orthodox Christians regardless of ethnic origin, but this does not mean that SOC gave up the idea of Serbian (Orthodox) nationalism.

## Research Design

I use a qualitative research design consisting of in-depth elite interviews, using purposive sampling to select key experts within the SOC hierarchy. Qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, are ideal for obtaining detailed insights and understanding from individuals who possess unique and critical knowledge about the research topic (Biber 2016). In this study, these individuals are the SOC's elites.

The SOC has 39 dioceses, or geographic territories, each of which has an individual leader.<sup>4</sup> My sampling frame includes five experts (three bishops and two priests)<sup>5</sup> from specific dioceses in the Balkans and the Serbian diaspora, selected for their own or their leaders' significant political influence and active involvement in political matters. The selection of only five bishops for this study was intentional, focusing on those who hold key positions within the SOC hierarchy and have played pivotal roles in organizing and conducting *litije*.

In line with the insights from Baker and Edwards (2012) as well as Crouch and McKenzie (2006), the small sample size of SOC bishops in this study is a deliberate choice that aligns with the depth-oriented goals of qualitative research. As Baker and Edwards argue, when researching elite or specialized groups, sample size should prioritize the quality and richness of insights over the quantity of participants. Given the influential roles of SOC bishops, each participant provides unique and detailed perspectives, allowing for in-depth understanding of the SOC's political and cultural influence. This approach also acknowledges the concept of data saturation—a point at which additional interviews yield little new information. By focusing on a small, purposively selected group, the study is able to reach saturation efficiently, capturing meaningful data without the need for a larger sample.

The bishops surveyed represent dioceses across Montenegro, Serbia, and the diaspora. However, to maintain confidentiality, further details regarding their

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<sup>4</sup> The Serbian Orthodox Church is decentralized. Its main administrative unit is the geographic diocese, each of which is headed by a bishop who may have one of four titles: bishop, metropolitan, archbishop, or patriarch. Bishops head dioceses; metropolitans head metropolitanates. There is no significant difference between a diocese and a metropolitanate, except that a diocese is elevated to the rank of metropolitan if it is significant in historical, cultural or political terms as decided by the SOC Assembly. Archbishops head archbishoprics, of which there was one in the SOC until recently: the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, which became a part of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in 2022. The Patriarch of the SOC is the head of the Metropolitanate of Belgrade and Karlovac, which is the most important of the SOC's dioceses.

<sup>5</sup> In this paper, I refer to both the bishops and priests as 'leaders' and 'experts' to reflect their influential roles within the context of the study. Although the two priests are not formal church leaders, they were instrumental in key activities relevant to the study's focus, justifying their inclusion under this designation.

identities and specific dioceses cannot be disclosed.

My interview consisted of ten open-ended questions that focus on three concepts: transnational action (relationships and cooperation between dioceses); the success of *litije* in Montenegro; the political goals and ideas of the SOC in the Balkans.

The information I collected from the participants concerns the potential for transnational political activity by the Serbian Orthodox Church through issues of inter-diocesan relations, political goals and missions of the Church, and SOC activities in the Balkans. In this paper I place special emphasis on (1) the Church's role in recent regime change in Montenegro, and (2) issues related to the current political situation in Eastern Europe, the traditional home of Orthodox Christianity.

## Findings and Discussion

I present the findings of my interviews through six topic codes related to three concepts/problems: (a) transnational action (codes 1-2); (b) success of *litije* in Montenegro (codes 3-4); and (c) political aspirations of the SOC in the Balkans and understanding of such aspirations in Eastern Europe (codes 5-6). Visual presentation of codes and concepts can be found in Appendix 2.

### *Transnational Cooperation*

#### *1. Complexity of Cooperation*

The first topic code, “complexity of cooperation.” reveals a lot about the potential of the transnational action of the Church, but also about the current relationships among SOC dioceses. The Church leaders are not united in their attitudes as to whether cooperation is good or not, and it is very difficult to get an impression of the potential of transnational action from this. However, during the interviews, those leaders who said that cooperation is good and that the SOC functions as a unique organism claiming that “SOC is one functional organism with all its dioceses; cooperation is also functional” gave the impression with their answers that cooperation is not as desirable as they may have claimed at the beginning. One of the interviewees who began by claiming that the cooperation was great later in the conversation said that “we [SOC] need to cooperate more often and have closer relations.” Another respondent who also thought that the cooperation was good, later said that “we should look at SOC as a grandmother who has

many grandchildren; the grandchildren come to the grandmother occasionally to take pictures, but it would not be good for either the grandmother or the grandchildren if they were all to stay together for a long time.”

This grandmother-grandchildren analogy seems to be the best description of cooperation between dioceses and the center. It is a somewhat formal relationship that boils down to the fact that local SOC churches come together for metaphorical pictures - that is, for a performance that is sent to the public about their relationship. More than that, as the respondent claims, overly close bonds are not good for anyone, which largely explains the nature of inter-dioceses relations and is what we can see in practice. If grandmother and grandchildren cannot sit together for a long time – that is, dioceses cannot cooperate continuously – then we should wonder about the stability of relationships in the family. If grandmother and grandchildren meet only to take pictures, then the question arises - what kind of family is this? However, the leaders avoid openly talking about the stability of the larger family, i.e., the SOC. Most everyone said at the beginning of the interview that inter-diocesan cooperation is desirable and that the various branches of the church do function as one.

## 2. *Divided Actor*

The events in Montenegro changed and challenged *both* principle and practice in the SOC. Given that the SOC does not usually show the capacity to act transnationally, and that the Montenegro situation changed that, the second group of my questions related to this concept is about *when* (in which situations) the Church decides whether to cooperate and act transnationally. With this topic code, I observe that Church leaders are divided on the issue of when the church should act and when not. Majority of experts (3 out of 5) believe that the SOC should not interfere in everything or even declare its views about everything. One of the interviewees who was of this opinion claimed that “the SOC should not always react; only in certain situations”. However, other two experts think that the role of the Church is to “die for freedom and to always react when its people suffer and/or its personal interests are threatened.” They claimed that “the Church must always be free and independent, which means ready to react in every situation in which it needs to protect freedom. Not only its freedom, but also the freedom of people”. And while my initial assumption was that the main motive of the Church for cooperation and transnational action in Montenegro was personal interest – institutional survival – it turns out that in fact, motivations are far more complex than I anticipated and involve much more than the straightforward institutional interests of the Church.

The SOC needed several things for its action in Montenegro – and the transnational cooperation of the dioceses – to succeed. According to my interviews, the SOC needed the institutional element (for institutional survival), the spiritual element (the struggle to save the people from a new civil war), and the leader, Metropolitan Amfilohije Radovic, who was described as “Moses who led his people out of slavery” thanks to his “congregational character and an independent personality.” These three elements are inseparable and without each, the SOC would not have been ready to act transnationally and change the regime in Montenegro.

Institutional survival was the first factor that motivated transnational action. Montenegro is a country that until recently was led by one man, Milo Djukanović, a communist and an atheist who himself claims that he does not believe in God and the church, but advocated the creation of an autonomous church in Montenegro (MOC), even though people from Montenegro had their own Church – SOC – for centuries. The respondents are convinced that after the failure of the MOC to be internationally recognized, Djukanović was looking for another way to eliminate the SOC and that the chance for that was precisely in the Law, since the Law on Freedom of Religion would have placed SOC property under state control along with its personnel and finances – interviewees perceived that the SOC would have become “just another department in the Montenegrin state apparatus”. It was clear that if Djukanović implemented this policy, the institutional survival of the church would be questionable.

However, there was also a higher, spiritual dimension that initiated transnational cooperation and SOC action in general. According to one respondent, Djukanović aspired to radically and militantly change the national identity in Montenegro, to divide a unified nation where all people saw themselves as relatives, to allow Montenegro to slide into civil war in order to achieve his ideal – a nationalist, ethnically Montenegrin Montenegro in which there is no place for ethnic Serbs. One interviewee explained this by claiming that “we were aware that Djukanović was trying to artificially and militantly change people’s identity. That would mean the beginning of a civil war.” The interviewees believed that “the duty of the Church under such circumstances is evangelical: to save the people from this kind of evil, and to reconcile the Orthodox relatives and bring them together once again in the Church that has always been theirs in common: the SOC. All dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church recognized the importance of this problem and the necessity of a joint response.”

One additional factor was key to the success of the SOC’s transnational cooperation, and that was the leader of the SOC in Montenegro, Bishop Amfilohije.

As the interviewees said, “he had two important characteristics: a *congregational character* and an *independent personality*.” Amfilohije’s congregational character stemmed from his missionary work, which was practically designed to develop good relations with other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but also with Orthodox Churches everywhere. Across the Orthodox world, he enjoyed exceptional respect. On the other hand, as the interviewees said, Amfilohije had “an independent personality.” This independent personality was formed through his education, which he acquired in both the East and the West, which made him open toward everyone but also independent of any authority and politics outside of his sphere of interest. Precisely for this reason, Amfilohije managed to exclude external political factors from having influence on the *litije* in Montenegro. This accomplishment made Metropolitan Amfilohije a shepherd who enabled the SOC to overcome its limitations and unite in the protection of the Orthodox people and the centuries-old Church in Montenegro.

This supports the principles of social movement theory (SMT), which highlight that “the most effective social movement organizations often owe their success to astute leadership” (Wald et al. 2006 ,133).

## ***Litije* in Montenegro**

### *1. Miracle in Montenegro*

When the prerequisites for action existed, the question arises, how were the *litije* realized? The first group of questions related to the SOC’s capability of independently providing resources in Montenegro, especially the most important resource of all: the people who will participate. The topic code for this group of questions is “Miracle in Montenegro,” which reflects the fact that that my interview respondents thought the only way to explain what happened in Montenegro is to label it a miracle. One of the interviewees explained it by saying “*Litije* were a miracle. It is unlikely that something like that will ever happen again in the future.” In Montenegro, *litije* were a miracle because the mobilization of the people for such an engagement during the pandemic was very difficult, and not just because a life-threatening virus was in the air. In addition, the people were already quite divided along ethnic and religious lines, and Djukanović deepened these divisions daily with his rhetoric.

However, through the interviews, I found out that the Church managed to unite the people because people who participated in the *litije* came to see the SOC as a victim of the Montenegrin regime, but they also realized that if the regime does not hesitate to stand up against the SOC, one of the most

powerful social institutions in the country, then the regime does not hesitate to do anything to anyone and that every individual can become a victim of that regime in one moment.

According to what I learned from the interviewees (primarily from those in Montenegro), three groups of people participated in the *litije*. The first group consisted of Orthodox Christians (regardless of ethnic differences). This group included people who truly believe and go to church on a weekly basis, and those who do not participate regularly (or at all) but are bound to the SOC by traditional cultural reasons. In the second group of *litije* participants were members of religious minorities: mainly Catholics and Muslims who considered this Law, and Djukanović's policy in general, a form of religious discrimination. Although interreligious relations remain tense in some contexts in the Balkans, threats to religious freedom can bring people of different faiths together in a hurry. My interviewees explained this by saying that "members of religious minorities participated in *litije* because they knew that what was happening to us [SOC] was very unfair, and tomorrow the same thing could happen to them. They were aware of the kind of man [Djukanović] we were dealing with." The third group of *litije* participants was made up of people who do not belong to the SOC or in many cases any religion at all. These individuals saw Djukanović's Law as a violation of basic rights and freedom as well as a repudiation of democracy and the concept of the secular state, because the Law would have allowed the state to directly encroach on the life of religious communities. Also, some Montenegrins joined the *litije* solely based on dissatisfaction with the regime of Milo Djukanović.

It is interesting that the existing literature shows that where church attendance is low, the chances for mobilization are small but as the *litije* in Montenegro have shown, though, this is not a necessary rule. Therefore, I sought to find out from the interviewees how it is possible that Montenegro was an exception to the rule. One of the interviewees said that "it is quite problematic to use frequency of worship attendance as a predictor of mobilization because in the Balkans, the wall between believers and non-believers is quite thin." The interviewee claimed that these categories are quite fluid and that those who were non-believers yesterday can be believers today. The relative unimportance of religious participation is reinforced by the fact that the Church, which is the custodian of all Serbian (and Montenegrin) history and tradition, was widely perceived as a victim of the regime both by people who go to church and those who do not.



## 2. *The Power of Orthodoxy*

Although it may have been unlikely, the SOC in Montenegro managed to secure the most basic resource to make its efforts succeed: people. This is how the *litije* were born. However, to keep them going, widespread and eager support was necessary. By simply following these events in the newspapers and social networks, it was difficult to determine how the Church's help and support developed. The interviews revealed that the transnational cooperation provided essential resources without which it is questionable whether the epilogue of the *litije* would have been the way it was. The first resource provided by transnational cooperation was leadership. Orthodox bishops from other dioceses went to Montenegro and gave speeches to the gathered population. Through the interviews, I found out that these some bishops received an invitation from Metropolitan Amfilohije to go Montenegro and provide support. Without Amfilohije's leadership, ordinary Montenegrins would not have realized how deeply opposed the SOC was to Djukanović's announced policy. The interviewees admitted that they were skeptical at first when the *litije* first began, but that they could not refuse a man who was as universally respected as Amfilohije.

According to one interviewee, the scene that greeted them in Podgorica is something he will remember forever: a huge number of people in the middle of the winter who did not have the slightest fear but instead faith, hope, and a desire for change. Everyone stood united and thus overcame all the divisions that Djukanović's regime had been trying to impose on them. At that point, the bishops realized that what was happening in Montenegro was completely different from anything the SOC had faced or done before. It was clear to them that the activism was a miracle, but they also realized that to maintain morale and motivation, additional help was needed. Thus, through transnational cooperation, another important resource was secured - bishops in their dioceses began to organize *local litije*. In their conversations with me, the experts said that their initial invitations to the people to gather were very modest. They avoided including any specially designed rhetoric, instead issuing a simple invitation to come together and pray for the people and the Church in Montenegro. Much to their surprise, a huge number of people responded. People came every Thursday and Sunday regardless of the weather conditions and regardless of how far they had to travel to the place where the *local litije* were held.

This resource – gentle mobilization of Serbian Orthodox believers outside of Montenegro – played a fundamentally important role in maintaining motivation, morale, and faith among the people who protested in Montenegro. Montenegrins and Serbs from Montenegro saw direct evidence that their Serbian

Orthodox relatives outside the country stood along with them in their efforts.

In Milo Djukanović, the people and the Church in Montenegro faced a very serious enemy. However, they had a great advantage over Djukanović because he chose neither the method nor the means in this fight. The Church had the upper hand thanks to the cooperation of all dioceses across the Balkans and the diaspora. Gatherings of local Orthodox members in each diocese at the same time as *litije* were being held in Montenegro sent the message that “everyone is there for each other in this fight and that there is no giving up.” According to one of the respondents, “this highly symbolic display of solidarity was the most important resource of all because it showed the most beautiful dimension of Orthodoxy: the power of spiritual unity that need not have a physical dimension to achieve results.” The indispensable nature of this transnational action indicates that the most important resource SOC leaders provided was to demonstrate that all Serbian Orthodox members were one family, one movement, spiritual and not physical, which resisted all challenges for eight months and resulted in the end of Milo Djukanović’s regime.

Presumably this inter-diocesan cooperation also helped with the provision of another resource, money, to keep the *litije* going for eight months. However, my interviews revealed that money was *not* an essential resource for the maintenance of the *litije*. According to the interviewees, the Montenegrin and Littoral Metropolitanate needed only 50 euros to maintain each *litije*, a sum the SOC could easily afford. Also, as the interviewees said, the main idea of the *litije* was that they should “send an image of modesty, peace, nonviolence, and unity.” It was therefore important to deflect any attempt to connect their maintenance with any material support received from different sources. A top goal was to keep the *litije* completely apolitical, which was very challenging because, according to the interviewees, “everyone tried to have their influence on *litije*; not only Serbia and Russia, but also the West.”

Thus, the *litije* succeeded without money as a key resource, without violence and conflict, and without politicization. And with that, the *litije* were a *differentia specifica* when it comes to social protests.

## The Political Aspirations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Balkans

### 1. Between National and Nationalist

My interviews also dealt with bishops’ perceptions of the SOC as a political actor and examined the extent to which the activities of the Church in the Balkans might be characterized as the spread of Orthodox (Serbian) nationalism. I

included this dimension in my interviews because critics (especially Milo Djukanović) attacked the SOC many times during the *litije* for spreading Serbian national ideas and for being an organization that works on behalf of the Serbian government and its goals (N1 2020). Djukanović's main argument for such claims was a reference to the wars of the 1990s in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, when parts of the SOC truly did espouse a rhetoric that was aimed at spreading a version of Serbian nationalism. However, news accounts of the Church's action in Montenegro indicate that the Church has been avoiding this kind of rhetoric; that is, the SOC has fundamentally changed the tone and content of its discourse since in the aftermath of the wars. (Antena M 2019).

I asked the interviewees whether they thought the SOC in the Balkans nevertheless had one or more political goals in mind and whether it is guided by the idea of Serbian (Orthodox) nationalism. What the interviewees almost uniformly told me is that because the SOC is a national church – a Serbian church, it cannot be separated from the idea of Serbian nationalism. However, this idea does not necessarily have to be a negative one; it can include the goals of cultural, historical, and linguistic preservation as well as a benignly traditional dimension. Nevertheless, in the complex multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of the Balkans, the possibility that such a version of nationalism could exist without any pushback seems quite debatable.

To determine whether the SOC might be attempting to spread some version of Serbian (Orthodox) nationalism in the Balkans, I asked my interviewees to explain what, in their opinion, is the correct role of the SOC in the Balkans, especially in territories characterized by the most complex socio-political situations, i.e., Kosovo, Republika Srpska, and Montenegro. The interviewees' responses concerning the Church's possible nationalist agenda in the Balkans fall into two categories.

Some said the SOC's main goal is to unite the Serbian people and keep them together, while others said it is to preserve identity. These answers seem simple at first glance, but in the still-fraught context of the Balkans, both goals on the part of the church could create a lot of problems. In fact, the idea that the SOC aims to unite the Serbian people and preserve the Serbian identity in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious environments of the Balkans sounds quite controversial. And an additional context must be considered here: the deep and complex connections between religious communities and politics in the Balkans. For this reason, I aimed to find out *how* the interviewees think such goals might be achieved, especially in contested areas such as Kosovo, Republika Srpska, and Montenegro. One of the interviewees said that "being a good citizen and a good SOC member can go hand-in-hand even in environments where there is a

complex social and political situation.”

The goal of the Church, he said, is to bind citizens to a collective, Orthodox identity and not to the state of Serbia, and therefore he claimed that he does not see how such a goal of the Church could be problematic. Other respondents reflected the view that the SOC can exist anywhere without threatening or destroying the state. In order to support this argument, the respondents gave example from Montenegro and said that “SOC in Montenegro was not against the state, it was against the anti-constitutional, anti-democratic and anti-secular Law. The Church even strengthened the statehood of Montenegro in this way.” However, two of the bishops acknowledged the complexity of church-state relations in the Balkans. One leader contended that relations can remain calm as long as a “[certain] state does not stand up against the Church and try to destroy it, [but if] that state is against the state of Serbia ... the Church will not be ready to tolerate it.” Although it seems reasonable that the SOC will not tolerate it if a state threatens its rights and position, its concerns about whether another country is “against Serbia” in principle would seem to exceed both its spiritual mission and its goals of keeping the population together and preserving its identity. It seems that making judgments about which states are for or against Serbia is the point where the SOC’s evangelical mission ends and its political one begins. However, what circumstances might lead the SOC to cross the line between a purely spiritual mission and a political one? The answer depends on political contexts, the nature of the church-state relationship in Serbia, and political relations between states in the Balkans and the roles religion plays in those relations.

I also asked my interviewees about their perceptions of the relationship between the Serbian state and the SOC beyond its formally symphonic relationship, specifically how that relationship affects the formation of Orthodox nationalism and any political pretensions of the SOC in the Balkans. Their reactions to these questions indicate that the relationship between the SOC and Serbia is extremely close, and that this closeness represents a concerning problem. According to one respondent, the Church and the state should never be in such a tight embrace as they are now, because it is dangerous, but the reality today is that church and state are inextricably linked in today’s Serbia. As one interviewee said, “The Church must be absolutely free in surrendering to the state, which means that it must be ready to suffer.” If the relationship is not like this, the church becomes a tool, a slave of the regime. Interviewees were concerned that an impervious relationship between church and state can be disastrous because it risks turning the SOC’s spiritual mission into a political one. The interviewees used the recent action in Montenegro as an illustration of

how to avoid risk and potential disaster, as the *litije* were peaceful, dignified, and above all apolitical. The bishops were clear that the *litije* ultimately succeeded mainly for this reason. The implication is that forceful, unpopular political interventions by the SOC would *not* succeed. In fact, the bishops identified the extremely close relationship between the state and the SOC as one of the biggest threats to the success of the *litije*. They told me there had been attempts from Serbia and the Synod of the SOC (the executive authority of the Church) to exert influence and to introduce “the Serbian factor” (which is certainly not only national but also nationalist).

The first such attempt was embodied by pressure that was placed on Metropolitan Amfilohije to have the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, come to speak at *litije*, on Christmas Day on January 7, 2020. When the Metropolitan refused, Serbian media close to President Vucic started an unprecedented smear campaign aimed at a man who until then had been seen as a living saint and a great unifier of peoples. However, as soon as he tried in even the slightest way to criticize the authorities in Serbia, the media turned him from a hero to a villain. There were also various attempts to intervene in, and perhaps undermine, the *litije* in other ways. One plan was to involve ultra-nationalist groups from Serbia in the *litije* and to present their participation as the position of the Church. Other efforts aimed to use the *litije* to propagate Serbian and Russian interests by bringing in Russian flags and singing nationalist songs. However, none of those plans succeeded because Metropolitan Amfilohije did not allow it, which put him in an unenviable position when it comes to the relationship with Serbia and the SOC headquarters in Belgrade. Also, even the participants were aware that any kind of nationalist provocation must be prevented. According to what one of the interviewees said, “people [*litije* participants] did their best to prevent anyone who would try to behave in a way that introduced any nationalistic ideas and politicized this event. They knew that *litije* have much higher dimension and that they will not allow political influence to endanger them”.

The interviewees believed that any introduction of a national idea would completely make the *litije* meaningless, but also confirm what President Djukanović kept saying: that the movement was the action of a national church aiming to spread nationalist, Serbian ideas and abolish the independence of Montenegro. Amfilohije knew that any appearance of such covert aims could crush the *litije* – and cede the SOC’s property to the Montenegrin state.

However, it is important to emphasize that what happened in Montenegro happened against the odds. Realistically speaking, the relationship between the SOC and the Serbian state is so close that most any form of Serbian (Orthodox) nationalism – even when it is positive or benign – has little chance of *not* being

perceived as a more toxic nationalism. In this context, one of the interviewees said that “The Church always adapts to the model of the state and the regime in which it functions. The church is like water, you can pour it into various vessels.” The fact that the protests were in Montenegro, not Serbia itself, created an important boundary. Moreover, Amfilohije himself – an exceptional person who was independent-minded and critical of the authorities in Serbia – was able to control the narrative around the movement, insuring that people did not wrongly view the *litije* as actions driven by the Serbian state. One of my interviewees said that based on how the Montenegro action turned out, “It does not follow that SOC has any political ambitions ... even if [the religious and the political] cannot be separated today.”

The biggest obstacle to greater autonomy of the SOC from the state is the Synod of the SOC in which, as a rule, the members are close to the state authorities, and its decisions always correspond to the preferences of the regime. For instance, after a meeting between Serbian President Vucic and the SOC Synod during which they talked about the situation in Kosovo, they announced to the public that they would act *together* to protect vital, *national and state* interests. In short, in most cases the SOC is a little spiritual and a lot political, more nationalist than a national Church, due to its *symphonia* with the state. As such, the SOC’s action in Montenegro was the exception to the rule.

## 2. Montenegro Is “Projected to Be a Small Ukraine”

Surprisingly, although the interviewees avoided talking too much about Serbian (Orthodox) nationalism and the role of the SOC in spreading it, new Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, Joanikije II, during one of the liturgies he held in the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica shortly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, pointed out that “Montenegro was projected to be a small Ukraine”, adding that the fraternal people artificially quarreled, as was a case in Montenegro with the Law, but also with Djukanović’s politics and rhetoric (Danas 2022). This contention suggested that the *West* planned to do the same thing in Montenegro as they had done in Ukraine, i.e., to divide the people into Russians and Ukrainians, to found a completely new (and political) church, and thus to diminish or eliminate Russian influence while spreading its own. Milo Djukanović was given such a task in Montenegro. The SOC, aware of all the consequences that the spread of Western influence had on Ukraine, wished to prevent such a scenario. This is the common sense understanding of these relations and events for people living in Eastern Europe, and through conversations with the interviewees, it was clear that some of them

also share this view.

The pervasiveness of this concern is reflected by the fact that some of my interviewees saw the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine as a clash of civilizations between East and West, that is, Russia and the United States. They see the U.S. and the West in general as trying to impose Western values and influence on Eastern Europe, and this concerns them greatly. Although all respondents were against war and unnecessary human suffering, some of them somehow showed an understanding of Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill's supportive position on president Putin's actions.

Thinking a bit about how Serbian Orthodox leaders have been reacting to the war in Ukraine offers an additional window for understanding Orthodox nationalism and church-state relations in Eastern Europe and their potential consequences. The Russian Orthodox Church is the only Orthodox churches in the world besides the SOC that has such an impervious relationship with the state. In Russia today as in Serbia, church and state are tightly bound together (Veković 2021). The two churches also share a similar way of understanding Orthodox nationalism and their political role. (Ivanov 2017)

The ROC and SOC have the same models of behavior because they have the same relations with the state. This relationship is characterized by a lack of freedom for the church, being placed in a position of servitude to the state, and reduction to a simple instrument for the use of politicians. In Russia, the ROC is used in the context of the realization of the broader "Russian World" (Baluk and Doroshko 2021). Similar rhetoric was introduced in Serbia a few years ago suggesting that the SOC should help foster a broader "Serbian World." Such a world would involve unifying all Serbs in the Balkans within the borders of one state. Given that the SOC is a state instrument, it is typically expected that the state can use the church to achieve its goals (up to and including the creation of a unified Serbian state), in a similar way that Russia uses the ROC to justify the war in Ukraine (Morrison and Garcevic 2023).

These two examples actually show us that if the relationship between the state and the church is too close, there is no chance that the church is only national, but it almost always becomes nationalistic. Also, if we look back at what my respondents said, it is clear that the relationship between the state and the SOC in Serbia is so close that it is dangerous, and the same applies to the ROC and the Russian state. For this reason, events in Eastern Europe in the future will largely be determined and dictated by state-church relations in which the ROC and its closest ally SOC will certainly play a significantly important role.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study showed that the SOC *does* have the potential to overcome inter-diocesan disagreements and to act transnationally. However, when the Church will do that is a very complex question, and the assumption of institutional survival is not sufficient motivation for the Church. In Montenegro, the prerequisite for action was institutional survival, the spiritual dimension - the protection of the people from a possible civil war, and the leader, Metropolitan Amfilohije, who actually led the *litije*.

However, all of this would never have happened if the institutional precondition had not been met, i.e. if there had not been a *conflicting differentiation* that both enabled the SOC to stand up against the state, but also to put aside its *political idea* of Orthodox (Serbian) nationalism in order to achieve a much more important goal for SOC at that moment - the survival of the Church and the survival of the people. So, this is exactly what Philpott (2007) was talking about: the political ambivalence of religion. According to Philpott, every religion has the potential to produce positive political change, but in order to do that, it must be separated from the state, which is quite difficult in the context of the Orthodox churches.

Nevertheless, the example of *litije* in Montenegro shows that the Church has the potential to act ambivalently and some of the bishops I spoke with for the purposes of this study agree that the SOC can, should, and must separate itself from the state, even at the cost of suffering because it is its own, spiritual, evangelical role. When the Church and the state are differentiated in this way, the ideas of Orthodox nationalism do not have to be manifested or at least turn into nationalist ones, however, in the context of SOC and Serbia, this situation is difficult to avoid due to the extremely close relationship between the state and the church. This challenge should be considered in all future research about the role of the SOC in the Balkans.



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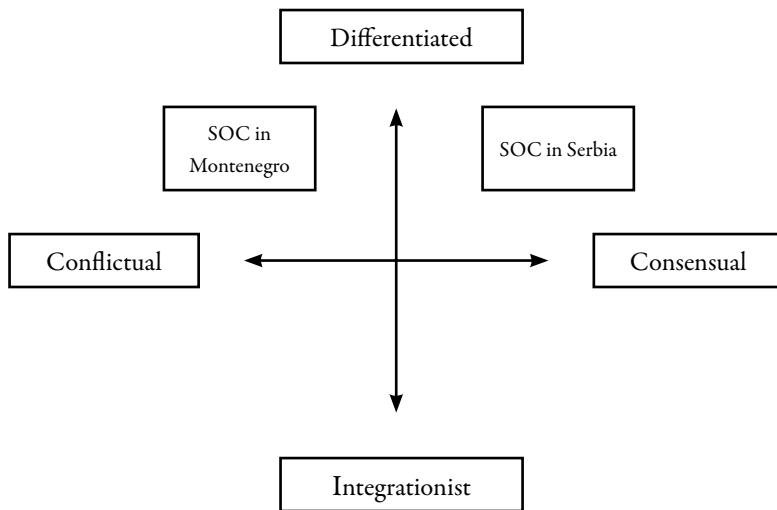
## ***Разоткривање чуда: Српска Православна Црква и промена режима у Црној Гори 2020. године***

**Сажетак:** Овај рад истражује транснационално политичко деловање Српске православне цркве у промени режима у Црној Гори 2020. године. **Методe.** Користила сам дубинске интервјуе засноване на циљаном узорку експерата који покривају три проблема: транснационалну акцију; успех литија; и политичке аспирације Српске православне цркве на Балкану. **Резултати.** Открила сам да Српска православна црква има потенцијал да делује транснационално; да је њена одлука да делује транснационално у Црној Гори била кључна за успех литија; и да су активности Српске православне цркве на Балкану вођене српским православним национализмом. **Закључци.** Супротно доминантној парадигми, литије су показале да је Српска православна црква политички амбивалентна. Ипак, кључни изазов за њу остаје недостатак одвојености цркве и државе, јер само када је Црква независна од државе може искористити свој потенцијал за демократизацију.

**Кључне речи:** Црна Гора, Српска православна црква, промена режима, литије

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Configuration of differentiation between Church and State in Montenegro



Based on Philpott, 2007

## Appendix 2: Table of Concepts, Topic Codes and Example Quotes

Guiding Hypothesis	Concept	Topic Codes	Example Quotes
<b>GH:1</b>	Transnational Cooperation	Complexity of cooperation	<p>“The Church is Orthodox... When essential things are in question, we live with the fullness of Orthodoxy, we act as one church”</p> <p>“Except for the case of Montenegro, I cannot say that good cooperation or potential for transnational work of the SOC is something we normally do”</p>
		Divided Actor	<p>“There are things where the church should intervene and where it should not. The Church cannot declare itself about everything”</p> <p>“The Church must be ready to go to the Cross for the sake of truth...it must be ready to suffer [always]”</p>
<b>GH:2</b>	Litije in Montenegro	Miracle in Montenegro	<p>“Litije were a miracle. The SOC in Montenegro reconciled the people and united the country. SOC prevented a civil war”</p>
		Power of Orthodoxy	<p>“People everywhere recognized the problem... They recognized that something essential was happening for the fate of the church. That is why people expressed their support. Nobody forced them to do anything”</p>
<b>GH:3</b>	The political aspirations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Balkans and the understanding of such aspirations in Eastern Europe	Between national and nationalist	<p>“Church is, in principle, a national Church. However, if it becomes nationalistic it stops to be a Church. The problem with the SOC is that it is always somewhere in between”</p>
		Montenegro is projected to be “small Ukraine”	<p>“It is an inconvenient topic ... But ... I will quote the Pope Francis... he said that NATO barks at Russia’s borders”</p>