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**Serbian identity:
reaffirmation or
deconstruction**

Edited book

*Slobodan Antonić,
Ana Vuković and
Zoran Kindić
(editors)*

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reaffirmation or deconstruction
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CONTENTS

- 7 | Introduction
- 9 | *Marjan Aleksić*
Serbian Orthodox Identity Through the Ages:
Some Characteristics and Constants
- 43 | *Snežana Jelesijević*
On the Sources of Domentianus's Life of Saint Sava and the
Translation of Some of Its Sections
- 79 | *Ana Vuković*
The Role of Sava Vladislavić in the Affirmation
of Serbian Identity
- 91 | *Marinko Lolić*
Actualizations and Relevance of Dositej's Thoughts
on Serbian Identity
- 107 | *Zoran Kindić*
Nikolai's Interpretation of the Meaning of Serbian History
- 135 | *Dobrivoje Stanojević*
Biblical Style and Serbian Identity in Borisav Pekić's Novel
"The Golden Fleece"
- 153 | *Vladimir Milisavljević*
The Palanka as an Identity Metaphor and
Its Historical Preconditions
- 171 | *Jelena Miljković Matić*
Science of the Serbian People as a Factor of Identity
- 195 | *Slobodan Antonić*
The Image of Serbia in Inverse Nationalism
- 227 | *Milenko Bodin*
The Philosophy of Identity as a Defense Against the
Destruction of the Serbian Nation and the Serbian State

- 247 | *Ivica R. Todorović*
Deconstruction of Serbian Identity and Possibilities of
Defense (in the field of spiritual culture)
- 271 | *Ivan Zečević*
Reaffirming the Serbian Visual Identity:
Sociological and Cultural-Historical Dimensions
of Contemporary Symbolism

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DECONSTRUCTION OF SERBIAN IDENTITY AND POSSIBILITIES OF DEFENSE (IN THE FIELD OF SPIRITUAL CULTURE)

On this occasion, first of all, in the form of a brief overview, attention is drawn to particularly illustrative ways/models and possibilities of defense (primarily in the field of spiritual culture) in relation to attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity. These attempts are directly related to the phenomenon of Anti-Serb sentiment and genocidal practices being applied against Serbs. From the foregoing, the primary starting points of our approach arise, as well as the corresponding conclusions related to (particularly important and fruitful, but largely neglected) opportunities and specific models of defense. The main intention is to briefly present some of the particularly instructive sub-thematic frameworks, i.e. highlighted aspects and examples related to the issues under consideration.

Keywords: Serbian identity, deconstruction, ways of defense, field of spiritual culture, anti-Serbism, the collective characteristics of Serbs

Serbian identity and attacks against it – elaboration of the introductory framework and basic approaches: Some of the main concepts and starting points. Introductory overview. This text² is a *general overview* and consists of reviews of some particularly revealing conclusions and results

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2 The text was created as part of the project # FSITC 1561 – “Formation of Serbian Identity and Theoretical Controversies Concerning Attempts of Its Deconstruction” within the “Identities” program of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the work at the Institute of Ethnography SASA, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, on the basis of the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research NIO

of the study of Serbian identity, as well as the attempts to deconstruct³ it and the possibilities of its defense, especially in the field of spiritual culture. (More extensive and detailed reflections and extensive literature can be found in the book that emerged from the work on the same project.⁴) From the point of view of our approach and the conclusions of the conducted studies, the main prerequisite for understanding the current situation of the Serbian ethnos is first and foremost a multi-layered understanding of the complex Serbian ethnic identity⁵ and the attempts to undermine it (with particular emphasis on models of anti-Serbism⁶ and genocide, i.e. various violent practices with genocidal undertones applied to Serbs).⁷ In this regard, we point out in a relatively brief form some dimensions of this topic that were of primary importance to us during the work on the relevant project,⁸ while a much more complete picture will be presented in the announced monograph.

The problem of anti-Serbism. The first of these dimensions concerns a problem that has been most evident both in the recent and more distant past and also at the time of writing. It has manifested itself again in recent times under the conditions of the ongoing genocide against the Serbs in the Kosovo and Metohija region and the “silent ethnic cleansing” in other areas, as well as under the conditions of continued cultural and hybrid warfare against the Serbian people, with various accompanying events and processes that are also based on the same principles. In other words, when we talk about multidisciplinary studies of the Serbian ethnos and its culture, one problem of paramount importance emerges above all – why is so little known about the cause and practice of the genocide against the Serbs,⁹ as well as about the circumstances of the deconstruction of Serbian

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- 3 On the construction and deconstruction of identity, see e.g. in: Despotović 2015, 123–134. See also the texts in the collections: Serbian Identity 2019 (Srpski identitet 2019); On the National Identity of Serbs 2020 (O nacionalnom identitetu Srba 2020).
- 4 The title of our book is “Identity Attacked and Possibilities of Defense”, and it is expected to be published around the same time as this text or shortly thereafter.
- 5 Milosavljević 2002, 22–48; see e.g. Bodrožić 2015; Ekmečić 2017.
- 6 See the study Todorović 2021.
- 7 Gaćinović 2017a; Gaćinović 2017b.
- 8 See the introductory (2) note.
- 9 See especially AntoniĆ 2008. Among other things, anti-Serbism is also omnipresent at the level of the “creative elites” – especially at the levels of universities/faculties and the so-called “liberal media” – at the time of writing, with a particular focus on anti-family and anti-Christian actions. For example, “contemporary leftist views, feminism, the promotion of *queer* theory and similar anti-family tendencies dominate in social science faculties”, and “most social science institutes also assume similar posi-

identity (starting from multidimensional ethnic engineering),¹⁰ although *Anti-Serb sentiment*¹¹ is also widespread in the global sense and is a pervasive phenomenon and a problem of the first order? In terms of very concrete indicators, this phenomenon represents, for example, one of the main causes of the First World War as well as other warlike events that characterized the middle and end of the 20th century.

Identity, geopolitics and the phenomenon of Serbism. In connection with the above, the causes, dimensions and characteristics of the *phenomenon of anti-Serbism* can be understood – within the framework of the results and conclusions of the relevant structural-semantic analysis¹² – primarily when the ideological foundations of Serbian *ethnic, civilizational* and *religious identity* are grasped. In this context, it is important to note that these foundations position the Serbian ethnos *geopolitically* and give it unique characteristics based on the specifics of Serbian origin and history, in accordance with the formation of the corresponding ethnocultural pattern. This also results in the accompanying geopolitically motivated hostilities (in relation to the Serbian ethnos),¹³ both in specific and general dimensions.

In direct connection with the foregoing, therefore, it is precisely the recognition of key facts and content related to the shaping of the *phenomenon of Serbdom* that is of utmost importance (i.e. the Serbian idea and

tions, as these are very popular topics among foreign donors (from foundations to the European Union Delegation to Serbia, USAID or various funds with an explicitly anti-family agenda under the auspices of the UN or UNICEF), so that “a number of academics not only promote this ideology, but some of them also act in public as a kind of moral police, pouncing on any attempt by a serious actor in Serbia to point out problems and open ways to solve them” (Đurković 2019, 39). See also Antonić 2019, 55, 61.

- 10 See the collection *Construction of Synthetic Nations 2024* (Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija 2024). In any case, “the creation of *synthetic nations*, due to its great historical delay, has created an insatiable need among the promoters of these processes to deconstruct or rather destroy other national identities in order to create the necessary historical, linguistic, cultural, religious, and symbolic content for the new synthetic identity in the phase of its accelerated construction and consolidation” and “the majority of new synthetic identities emerged in the process of destruction and mutilation of the Serbian national identity on the entire territory of the former SFRY” (Despotović 2017, 117). In other words, “the main content of the identity formation of synthetic nations in our region is connected with the processes of deconstruction of the identity of the Serbian nation” (Despotović 2017, 118).
- 11 See Piper 2004, 57–59, 41–42; Ekmečić 2002, 343–365; Mitrović 1991.
- 12 Cf. Todorović 2009, 29; Todorović 2005b, 23–28.
- 13 It is clear, among other things, that synthetic nations that emerge from the deconstruction of the Serbian ethnos and its identity are a *geopolitical product* (see Despotović 2017, 128–129, 118–119). See also Todorović 2008.

the main elements of the basic Serbian ideological systems, as well as tradition and lore in the broadest sense, with special emphasis on concepts stemming from Serbian ethnogenesis and the phenomenology of a very peculiar and ancient ethnonym).¹⁴ The same applies – in connection with the unique and clearly recognizable phenomenon of Serbdom – to the most influential and archetypal *representations of Serbian history* (all referring to the deepest origins) and *projections of the Serbian future* (starting from ideas about the historical mission of Serbia aimed at the “end times”). In this way, *Serbian time and space* are understood as indicators of a unique cultural-civilizational pattern and model of thought and action that emerged within the framework of Orthodox-Slavic civilization.

Models and methods of defense. *The most important rituals and mythical patterns. Serbian rituals and patterns with mythical prefixes*¹⁵ (among which *vows* are particularly emphasized) are also at the center of the aforementioned conceptual system, which essentially determines the Serbian ethnos. They are directly supported by the system of folk customs and symbols, as well as by the particularly impressive Serbian vow system, which is accompanied by other primary Serbian ideological systems. Thus, we are talking here about structures in the field of spiritual culture that connect the most important (Serbian) ideological matrices, so that they can also be considered as a unified whole. All this is also of great importance because it is precisely in the most impressive Serbian rituals and mythical patterns that we clearly recognize the *basic methods of defense in the field of spiritual culture*.

Awareness (of ideological foundations and their negations) and the revival of positive values as key prerequisites for defense. In connection with the above, it is first and foremost necessary to further reflect on some particularly significant foundations of Serbian identity so that we can recognize and most effectively understand the ways of its defense. More precisely, in accordance with this approach – which is also intended in the direction of applied science – it was necessary to draw attention to the most striking problems and possibilities of their solution (within the framework of “response” to attempts at deconstruction) through already existing content, in the sense of raising *awareness* and *revitalizing* the core of Serbian collective consciousness¹⁶ and deeply rooted Serbian value patterns.

14 Cf. e.g. Kobychew 1973, 25–26; Kostić 2000.

15 Cf. Todorović 2019, 95–100.

16 Indeed, “national identity is in fact a daily referendum, a daily confirmation and affirmation of a system of narratives in relation to all others” (Vladušić 2019, 144).

This refers primarily to the most important ideological systems that operate within the aforementioned affirmative phenomenon of *Serbdom*. It is thus about the realm of the *Serbian idea*,¹⁷ i.e. the essence of Serbian ethnocultural expression (which is particularly expressed in the representation of Serbs as the New Israel and God's people and the patterns associated with it).¹⁸

On the other hand, as already indicated, it is necessary to fully perceive and understand the dimensions and characteristics of *de-Serbization* as a phenomenon based on the negation of Serbdom through various features and a unique occurrence in global dimensions¹⁹ in order to unravel the processes and intentions of identity deconstruction. Moreover, in this context, it is important to emphasize the importance of the renewal of *Serbian values*, as well as the *Serbian right to defense*, because even the awareness of this is suppressed in the public due to the constant pressure and omnipresence of Anti-Serb sentiment, genocidal practices and various forms of persistent pressure, i.e. applied cultural, hybrid and network wars.²⁰

Clearly recognizing and naming one's own ethnic, civilizational and religious identity. What else is central to the defense of identity? First and foremost, apart from the examples already mentioned, it is necessary to understand the foundations and bases of *Serbian ethnic identity* and the corresponding, related, deliberately "obscured" ethno-ethnic-genetic space,²¹ which is under attack from various sides, not only materially but also in terms of identity, in order to reinterpret numerous notorious facts that prove the Serbian primordial presence in the corresponding (large) territory in the near and distant past. All this is primarily directly related to the associated (Orthodox-Slavic and Euro-Asian) *civilizational identity* and the understanding of one's own civilizational space.²²

Furthermore, from the point of view of an identitarian approach, it is essential to understand and clearly identify the *Serbian religious identity*,

17 See Todorović 2015a, 194–199, 274–276.

18 See Blagojević 1994; Domentijan 2001, especially on pp. 375–393.

19 Todorović 2021, 145–146.

20 Moreover, hybrid warfare "primarily aims to change the consciousness of the enemy's population and decision-makers in order to destroy the will to fight" (Vladušić 2019, 143).

21 Cf. e.g. Stepić 2001, 247–266; Terzić 2012.

22 When it comes to the *model of a torn country* in modern times, it is precisely the Orthodox countries, or the countries that should belong to the Orthodox civilization, that exhibit corresponding characteristics related to a constant identity crisis, together with a persistent spiritual and social disorder (Despotović 2019, 420–421; Stepić 2016, 430). In any case, one of the reasons for this state is also the lack of a *clear* and *applied* (in everyday life) awareness of one's own civilizational affiliation and cultural order based on appropriate ideological and civilizational principles.

i.e. the religious aspects that are of utmost importance for the existence of the Serbian ethnos. They (the realm of *faith*) primarily shape the corresponding experience of the world and true reality and represent a powerful shield against attempts to destroy identity.²³ Thus, *ethnos*, *civilization* and *faith* appear as key concepts in the development of identity defense strategies.

Ethno-genetic identity and the meaning of the Serbian ethnonym. The entire preceding semantic framework is directly related to the Serbian *ethno-genetic identity*, which is linked to the understanding of the depth of the Serbian past as well as the correct understanding of – the aforementioned real dimensions of the Serbian ethnic,²⁴ ethno-genetic and proto-ethno-genetic space – regardless of the geopolitically predetermined constructivist practices of change. At the same time, the age and distribution of the Serbian ethnic name (along with representations and data that suggest it) continuously constitute some of the main targets of counter-identity attacks,²⁵ as the very facts that point to ethnic antiquity and greatness in the past, are one of the most important foundations of the affirmative Serbian self-image and the “Serbian superiority model”.²⁶

The mentioned attacks are accompanied by attempts to significantly reduce and dilute the original Serbian ethno-genetic (and identity) space for civilizational reasons, but also as a logical core of ethnocultural collection and connection (groupings with Serbian roots). By understanding the inner nature and dimensions as well as clearly naming the Serbian ethno-ethnic-genetic the creation of the Serbian territory and its permanent connection with the Serbian name and identity is one of the most important prerequisites for adequate identity protection.

Strategic long-term and immediate defense systems. Through the previously mentioned (defensive) elements and elementary relations – a systemic framework is created, which we can call the *strategic-long-term model of identity defense*. Moreover, it is directly related to the formation

23 On the destructive processes at this level, see e.g. Đuretić 2008.

24 Cf. the concept of *Natural Serbia*, presented in: Despotović 2019. In the context of this study, the term *Natural Serbia* was adopted by the philologist Petar Milosavljević, as it “proved to be more than appropriate not only for the subtitle of the book and the titles of the chapters, but also for the explanation of the essence of the entity, which was to emerge as a *linguistic-ethnic* and later as a constitutional community of peoples, and later as a *state-legal community of all Serbs*, regardless of their religious or confessional affiliation, which was not on the path of the Austro-Hungarian and Vatican rulers” (Despotović 2019, 7). On *Natural Serbia* and various aspects of the Serbian national question, see also in the same book, especially pp. 221–354.

25 See also in: Todorović 2021, 153–164.

26 On this and related topics, see in: Todorović 2005a, 241–250; Todorović 2015a, 270.

of another system of elementary patterns on which it is semantically based and which we could provisionally call the primary (Serbian) ethnocultural model. In other words, the mentioned system of basic ethnocultural patterns also served as a practical-methodological basis for the identification and analysis of the basic defense models (in the field of spiritual culture) when it comes to methods of stopping the attempts to deconstruct the Serbian identity.

The mentioned and implied models and examples of defense are directly related to another systemic defense framework, which is composed of elements that we could also call *immediate (urgent and primary) defense methods*. They concern the need for the immediate and final abolition of anti-Serbism and the accompanying permanent *genocidal state* in which the Serbs find themselves, and all related contemporary events (but also corresponding long-lasting processes).²⁷ Some of these “immediate defense methods” will be presented more concretely in the following parts of the text, in the form of a kind of concise intellectual treatise conceived as a framework register of the proposed applied defense options. Of course, the whole topic can also be presented much more precisely, in the form of a concise overview of certain (key) elements of the discussed topic, which we have also tried to do in the announced book as well as in other texts related to the relevant project framework.

Some (additional) examples of identity defense. The importance of Serbian vows. In order to show some immediate ways/possibilities of identity defense in the field of spiritual culture, we will start with an illustrative review of one of the particularly impressive Serbian peculiarities, the phenomenon of *Serbian vows*.²⁸ For in addition to rituals (originating from processions and Slavs)²⁹ and content with a “mythical” prefix – in the sense of the original meaning of the term “myth” as “sacred story”, i.e. “sacred truth”³⁰ – they were also of particular importance for our approach and considerations.

27 Cf. some illustrative examples related to the suffering of Serbs in the past, e.g. in: Ekmečić 2017, 17, 160. For example, in relation to the events of the early 19th century: “Even the folk songs contain the fact, which has also been preserved in other ways, that the Dahijas intended to slaughter the adult Serbian population and convert the rest to Islam” (Ekmečić 2017, 160). However, this is only a concretization of a general paradigmatic situation that is typical of Serbian history.

28 This will be discussed in much more detail in the paper: Todorović 2025.

29 Here one should certainly add the liturgy, which – as a central religious rite – is undoubtedly of central importance for the preservation of Serbian (especially religious) identity as well as for the preservation and progress of the Serbian community as a whole.

30 Lič 1982, 65–66; Todorović 2005a, 57–62.

In this regard, in Serbian culture and tradition, *vows* in particular have a significant influence and complex meaning, primarily according to the importance of the Kosovo and Svetosavski vows,³¹ but also other vows, of which the Jasenovac vow³² has been particularly emphasized recently. When looking at the connections between the basic Serbian vows, especially through a structural-semantic analysis, it is found that they are interconnected. Moreover, it can be said that these vows form a *unified system of Serbian vows*,³³ which is of extraordinary importance for the strengthening of Serbian identity patterns.

Within the mentioned system, several specific relations can be observed, which primarily refer to “spatial” (the context of *Serbian ethnic space*) and “temporal” (the context of the *Serbian chronological-historical pattern*, in direct connection with what we could call the *basic model of the Serbian ideological system*) ideational patterns.³⁴

The role of Serbian vows in the present is also very important because of their significance in defining the main Serbian ideas and representations of the historical mission³⁵ and immediate projections of the future through legacies about supreme goals (which determine the meaning of European and world history). In this respect, the system of Serbian vows, as already indicated, undoubtedly plays a key role in preventing attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity.³⁶

Processions and Slava – The Field of Rituals. A particularly clear and effective effect when it comes to the defense of Serbian identity can be seen in the example of some of the most important Serbian rituals, such as *processions* and *slava*. In any case, this has been written about quite extensively in earlier texts that also emerged from the work on the same project.³⁷

31 On the Kosovo vow, see e.g. in: Bodrožić 2015, 105–116. In this context, it is also pointed out that the *Kosovo resolve of the Serbian people* “is not an ideology of defeat and death, but an idea of freedom achieved through conscious sacrifice” (Bodrožić 2015, 105). On the “messianic idea of Kosovo”, see in: Marković 1998, 27–30; for more on this and related topics, see also in: Todorović 2015a, 277–286.

32 See Dimitrijević 2024a; Dimitrijević 2024b.

33 As already announced, see in: Todorović 2025.

34 In a broader sense, these most conspicuous federal patterns are also connected to the above-mentioned elementary ideological context, which we could call the *primary Serbian ethnocultural model*. However, this is a topic for a more detailed study.

35 Cf. also the terms “old Serbian alliances” in: Janković 2015, 19–21.

36 Furthermore, in the context of the Serbian ethnos and its culture, one can certainly speak of a kind of “cult of the alliance”, which plays a central role at the level of the collective psyche; cf. in this sense Vidović 2009, 344.

37 Todorović 2024; Todorović 2023.

The same importance, only in a slightly different form (with a special emphasis on preserving religious identity), is also given to the *liturgy* – parallel to churchliness and the Christian way of life³⁸ – together with baptisms, weddings, funerals and other customs in line with the Orthodox faith and liturgical practice within the Serbian Orthodox Church. This becomes particularly clear – as a practically necessary condition for the survival of identity – in the example of the Serbian diaspora.

A particularly vivid example of processions were the events in connection with the defense of the (Serbian) shrines in Montenegro. Against the backdrop of the attacks on the Serbian Church and the foundations of identity, it was precisely the “processional uprising”³⁹ of the people that showed the extraordinary vitality that can manifest itself in critical moments and crisis situations in the case of synergy between the people and their Church.⁴⁰ Something similar happened in the Republic of Serbia, especially in Belgrade, in connection with the prevention of the so-called “EuroPride”, which was intended to be a gathering, i.e. a parade, with a large number of participants.⁴¹

Similar to processions and the example of the family *slava* (patron saint’s festival), as well as at the level of the local (village, town) *slava/votive*, an effective method of identity defense is also clearly recognizable here. This ritual is directly related to the passing on of the festival from generation to generation, i.e. from father to son, and in its idealized forms has a clearly defined initiatory dimension of the identity type. In this sense, *Slava* is directly linked to genealogical memory, which has recently been revealed in a very stimulating way and has been revitalized by the results of genetic-genealogical research based on new technologies. Thus, among other things, numerous families have reunited in terms of their identity – precisely on the basis of the patronal feast, accompanied by the confirmation of common genetic origin – thus renewing (and significantly complicating) their Slavic royal identity within the Serbian identity. This undoubtedly created and further strengthened another strong identity shield.⁴²

Representations of the past and the future – another particularly important front of defense. Furthermore, of extraordinary importance for the strengthening of central identity patterns are the mentioned *representa-*

38 Thus, the *Kosovo lore* has imprinted on “the Serbian national essence the moral imperative that the moral dignity of the nation is more important than the state and political freedom” (Bodrožić 2015, 107).

39 See Todorović 2023, 62–64.

40 *Demonja*, Todorović 2021, 250–251, 269–270.

41 See Todorović 2023, especially pp. 69–70; Todorović 2024.

42 On all this, see in: Todorović 2024.

tions of the past and future, with a focus on content defining Serbian origins⁴³ and immediate future projections linked to ideas about the (universal) Serbian mission.⁴⁴ This is directly related to the phenomenon of the existence of specific representations (and “prophecies”) with eschatological overtones concerning the Serbian people and Serbian spaces.⁴⁵

In the mentioned and other contents, the *Serbian land*⁴⁶ often represents a space of essential and global importance, directly related to key events, both in the future and (in parallel) in the deep past.⁴⁷ Thus, this space is seen as a sacred geographical center that unites the most significant, initial and final events, i.e. historical currents in a general sense.⁴⁸ All this is also related to the mentioned representations of Serbs as the New Israel⁴⁹ and other ideological systems that shape and form the structure of Serbian historical existence and Serbian (spiritual, ethnocultural-civilizational and ethnic) space over the centuries, with an emphasis on ideas about the Serbian mission and the role of Serbs – as a specific ethnic personality – in the future.⁵⁰

On the other hand, but in a similar sense in terms of content in relation to the representations of the Serbian future, the representation of the past and origins deserves special attention, as it is an extraordinarily effective tool against attempts to deconstruct identity. Due to the undoubted existence of real facts and circumstances related to the unique Serbian past, it can be said that history is one of the most important Serbian (not only defensive) resources. Its importance of this kind is evidenced, among other things, by the corresponding prefix of frequent inaccessibility and a kind of “forbiddleness” of the mentioned content, which has been strongly imprinted in the Serbian collective consciousness. With regard to the above-mentioned significance and beyond, in our previous studies we have also focused on some related thematic sub-areas, which are also of

43 Cf. Todorović 2021, 161–164.

44 See. Todorović 2015a, 271–273.

45 It has been clearly pointed out that the Serbian people in many respects already in the Middle Ages “developed a special idea of its wholeness and spiritual homogeneity, which was covered by the idea of the ‘people of God’ ” (Bogdanović 1988, 28). See the basic lines of the Serbian projection of the future in: Todorović 2015a, 272–273.

46 On the concept of the “Serbian land”, see e.g. in: Mitrović 1989, 13–15.

47 Todorović 2005a, see e.g. pp. 67–73, 373–376; Todorović 2015a, 200–212, 194–199. On the ideas of the Serbian future and similar topics, particularly instructive examples from earlier editions can be found in: Kazimirović 2006, 365–527.

48 Todorović 2015a, 194–234.

49 Cf. Blagojević 1994; Blagojević 2011, 169–171; Grčić 2011, 191; Bogdanović 1988; Todorović 2015a, 243–286; Todorović 2015b, 71–73. Cf. Domentijan 2001; Camblak 1968, 224; Konstantin Filozof 1997, 158–160.

50 Todorović 2015a, see especially pp. 213–228.

particular importance for the understanding of *Serbian identity formation*, i.e. for a substantial understanding of the origin and ethno-genetic affiliation of Serbs and Slavs.⁵¹

This is directly related to the formation of ideological systems in the Serbian collective psyche that define the deepest Serbian past and historical-philosophical position (starting from those that can be described as a *system of representations about the indigenous people*).⁵² They are also recognized in the analysis as a (potentially) powerful means of identity defense, because the mentioned contents – regardless of different approaches and interpretations – are actually based on old, ever-present ideological patterns and immediate factual evidence. This conclusion is supported⁵³ by both the latest scientific findings and those that were already generally known earlier, but for certain reasons (which we can speak of as causes for the creation of the impression of a “forbidden Serbian tradition” and taboo topics related to the phenomenon of Serbdom) were not adequately evaluated.

Intellectual treatise on the topic of immediate (urgent, primary and far-reaching) methods of defense. Previously, some of the areas and methods of identity defense were presented in the form of brief overviews. While the defense methods indicated are necessary, they are certainly not sufficient. Within the framework of our approach (which includes aspects of applied science),⁵⁴ we have focused primarily on certain (A) *particularly vivid and effective methods and possibilities of defense* in the area of spiritual culture, which essentially determine the identity foundations and starting points of an ethnos.⁵⁵ On the other hand, when it comes to (B) *more immediate or primary methods of defense* – the application of which is necessary to achieve visible results as quickly and directly (and at the same time more widely) as possible – it is necessary to undertake a special review in this direction.

51 Todorović 2020.

52 See the study Todorović 2005a.

53 This is in line with the already mentioned numerous facts/evidence and references to the age and former size of the ethnos, which originally bore the Serbian ethnonym, as a widespread indigenous (ethnic) self-designation. See e.g. Šafarik 1998, 128–134, 48 ff; Kobychew 1973, 25–26; Rudeljev 1992; Kostić 2000; Budimir 1959, 42–43; Vukčević 2007, 76–79; Janković 2015; Todorović 2015a, 206–212; Todorović et al. 2015, 60–61, 144–145. In a similar context, see also Piper 2008, 128–136; Miljković Matić 2023.

54 Cf. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 134.

55 According to some well-reasoned views, “whether or not a person preserves their national identity depends on the ability to maintain states of consciousness” in which “the narratives that constitute national identity persistently maintain their meaning” (Vladušić 2019, 144).

In this regard, given the current situation, there is a clear need to use all available resources and means, including the whole of society, the Church, the state framework (as far as possible, of course), as well as the available material, spiritual and symbolic resources.⁵⁶ This concerns all aspects of culture – from folk characteristics, language, particularly significant *ethnonyms*, historical facts and tradition as a whole, to Serbian legal systems based on their own civilizational foundations,⁵⁷ and the revival of all identity-forming folk institutions that have been created and preserved over the centuries, as well as those that have yet to be created or renewed.

In accordance with the foregoing – and based on the actually existing circumstances and in order to stop the general geopolitical pressure directed against the Serbs, as well as to prevent the accompanying processes of Anti-Serb sentiment and deconstruction of Serbian identity⁵⁸ – it is necessary to adopt/issue, in various situational and legal contexts and at various levels, inter alia, the following resolutions: 1) resolutions on genocide, the genocidal state and the occupation of Serbian ethnic space, 2) laws and resolutions on anti-Serbism (as well as, on the contrary, the inclusion in the legal framework of points related to the affirmation of Serbism and the right of the Serbian people to free cultural development and demographic progress), 3) declarations and proclamations related to ending anti-Serb practices and related models of genocide/cultural murder. It is more than necessary 4) to ensure – the establishment of institutes, centers, laboratories and organizations dealing with the research of genocide, occupation processes (with neo-colonialism)⁵⁹ and anti-Serbism and the development of methods to counter them. In addition, it is necessary to 5) establish or ensure media and initiatives for monitoring genocide, Anti-Serb sentiment and the mentioned occupation processes and for organized struggle against them (and ensure their continuous work) and 6) ensure the consistent application of the aforementioned *anti-Serbism Law* and other related legal acts and frameworks. It is also imperative to 7) raise the fight against anti-Serbism to a global/world-wide level, together

56 For “in order to emerge and survive as a *community of a sovereign people*, the nation had to build a solid common identity foundation capable of integrating, structuring and inspiring”, and “for such an undertaking it was necessary to involve and organize all or almost all capacities, especially the cultural-educational and state ones, in order to successfully construct a complex identity substrate” (Despotović 2017, 114–115). In this regard, “for this important purpose, it was first and foremost necessary to consolidate a common culture, tradition and customs and to cast them into more solid forms of national history as a product of the collective memory of the new community” (Despotović 2017, 115).

57 See the study Demonja, Todorović 2019.

58 See e.g. Despotović 2019, 374–417.

59 See Antonić 2019.

with 8) consistent reparations, compensation and general reparations for the consequences of the application of anti-Serbism, ethnic and socio-political engineering, i.e. the consequences of the occupation and genocide of Serbs.⁶⁰

All in all, it should never be forgotten that as one of the most important and general results of everything that has happened before, 9) it is precisely a comprehensive *return to the original (identity) state* that is necessary, with the previously emphasized rejection of and compensation for all the consequences of anti-Serbism and the prolonged genocide of Serbs (as well as the current *genocidal state*, which continues in some parts of the Serbian ethnic space)⁶¹ as well as the corresponding system of oppression, destruction and deconstruction of Serbian identity, which is primarily based on ethnic engineering, i.e. de-Serbization.⁶²

It goes without saying that various other activities should also be related to the previous strategies and actions. Thus, all these would be individual, particularly indicative elements of a more comprehensive preliminary outline of what is necessary for a lasting solution, i.e. the complete termination and reversal of the processes of deconstruction of Serbian identity and anti-Serbism, which have been going on for an exceptionally long time and have had disastrous consequences. Finally, it should be emphasized once again that this also applies to the prevention of the concomitant application of ethnic, religious, political and social engineering, i.e. the various forms of de-Serbization, genocide, (“soft” and “hard”) occupation⁶³ and other actions directed against the Serbian people and the development of the corresponding cultural-civilizational model, which are carried out with the aim of destroying it.⁶⁴

The central semantic framework of the consideration (or – instead of recapitulation). In connection with the foregoing, it is possible to mention, in addition to the presented overviews and proposed possibilities, a large number of other immediate examples, research results, data and conclusions that deserve the greatest attention, as well as eminent scholars and intellectuals who have made a greater or lesser contribution to

60 It is not possible to write in detail here about (generally known, but mostly concealed) facts that confirm this; see much more on this in the announced monograph and the accompanying literature. An illustrative example in this sense could be the chapter “Celebrating a Great Crime” in: Jovanović 2016, 99–118.

61 See e.g. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 149–151.

62 See, for example, the works in the collection *Construction of Synthetic Nations 2024* (Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija 2024), as well as various other studies that deal with this topic, especially in an urgent and emphasized manner.

63 Cf. Despotović 2017, 123.

64 See again Todorović 2021.

deepening various aspects and doubts related to the whole subject. As shown, our efforts focused on determining the most important Serbian identity patterns, and special emphasis was placed on identifying and naming the models on which the attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity are based, as well as the models on which methods of identity defense can be built. As far as these first models (deconstruction) are concerned, in short, it is essential to comprehensively confront the numerous methods and paradigms of *Serbian inferiority* on various levels. They are implemented together with strong and direct attacks both on the Serbian gene pool⁶⁵ and the material basis of life, as well as on the identity and essence of ethnic being,⁶⁶ with a multidimensional and omnipresent manifestation and promotion of Anti-Serb sentiment⁶⁷ in the sense of a universally projected desirable model (of thought, expression and action).⁶⁸

Among other things, our studies attempt to answer the question of why it so often (as is certainly the case today) appears that Serbian identity and tradition is under attack, completely sidelined/neglected and even banned.⁶⁹ In other words, why does one have the impression that they often have negative connotations and that there is some kind of plan or organized system of imposed processes to make them practically, indirectly or directly, undesirable and even forbidden? If this is really the case, another question arises: – what are the possible responses to defend oneself? This is indeed one of the fundamental issues we have been dealing with.

In this sense, it should be recalled that in implementing the given project framework, we have not touched on all but *certain* methods of identity defense, but with a *particular focus* on those that belong to the realm of spiritual culture and that *often had or still have a certain “taboo”* prefix, i.e. “forbidden” or at least “undesirable”, “neglected”, “hardly accessible”. The mentioned emphasis stems from the fact that it is precisely in these areas, and not in others that are seemingly more visible, that the deepest essences of Serbian identity and the core of the basic *Serbian idea* are hidden. In this sense, – when it comes to methods of identity defense, which we have focused on the most in previous reflections and research – Serbian processions⁷⁰ and Serbian vows, genealogical knowledge and the patronal feast (which is still directly forbidden or deliberately suppressed in various places where Serbs live), then very often specific representa-

65 Gaćinović 2017a; Gaćinović 2017b; Todorović 2021, 141–145, 147–148.

66 Cf. e.g. Stojičević 2018; Stojičević 2021.

67 See various direct examples in: Dimitrijević 2010.

68 Todorović 2021, 146–147, 149–152; cf. Demonja, Todorović 2021.

69 Cf. Todorović 2015a, 275.

70 On the suppression of the Serbian litias, see e.g. in: Radić 1995, 188–196; Radić 2002, 229–234; Todorović 2023, 61–62.

tions of the Serbian past and deeper origins, as well as (Serbian and general) projections of the future based on ideas about the mission and eschatological consciousness⁷¹ are experienced. Similarly, it is especially with the Orthodox Christian faith and its civilizational foundations as a whole⁷² that we most often recognize as the main and final targets of the attacks on Serbian identity and tradition.⁷³

In the given conceptual-analytical context – and this applies primarily to the defense models – it was necessary to highlight certain assertions and conclusions that are of utmost importance for understanding the basic semantic wholes and relations associated with this research approach. At the basic level of consideration, this system of relations organized around the central notion of *Serbian identity* could be represented as follows: *Serbdom* (level of ethnic affirmation = formation) – *anti-Serbism* (level of ethnic negation = deconstruction) and *people* (level of ethnic affiliation) – *civilization* (level of civilizational affiliation), with accompanying consideration of the *areas of ethnogenesis* and the *area of faith*. Particularly descriptive relations belong in the same framework: *Ritual – myth/vow* and *past – future* (*representations of the past – representations of the mission/projections of the future*). [Accordingly, another (additional, to a certain extent synonymous, but primarily tripartite) system of relationships can be singled out in a semantically narrow sense, which are interwoven with those mentioned and are of central importance for our considerations: (*Serbian*) *idea – identity – (Serbian) mission; projections related to the semantic axis past – present – future; (“internal”) ethnic space – basic ethno-genetic space (with border areas of ethnocultural mixing) – (“external”) civilizational space.*⁷⁴]

In any case, it should be repeated, the study of the Serbian ethnos and, above all, its identity and tradition – which (often and due to their complexity) are frequently misunderstood, i.e. completely misunderstood, neglected, underestimated and forgotten, sometimes even directly attacked and forbidden – is necessary and extremely necessary, probably today more than ever in the past.

Concluding summary. The article has listed and briefly presented various *strategic-long-term* and *primary-immediate* methods of defense. They are related to the findings on the possibilities of a direct and permanent abolition of *anti-Serbism* (understood as an antipode in relation to *affirmative Serbdom*). From the point of view of our approach, one

71 Cf. Šijaković 2019, 51–53.

72 Cf. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 134–136.

73 See also the study Stojičević 2021.

74 All this could also be illustrated by suitable schematic representations.

of the basic prerequisites for understanding the current Serbian situation and the possibilities of defense is the awareness and understanding of fundamental ethnic, civilizational, religious and ethno-genetic doubts and issues (starting with those directly related to the problem of ethnic engineering,⁷⁵ but also social and political engineering, as well as cultural and hybrid warfare).

Likewise, the determination is essential in relation to the representations of the *Serbian idea* and, above all, in relation to the meaning and objectives of the *Serbian mission*. In this sense, the foundations of identity based on *Orthodoxy*⁷⁶ and the multi-layered folk tradition, which is often interwoven and connected⁷⁷ with it, are particularly important. In the context of the relevant considerations and analyzes, these phenomena appear to be key when it comes to deciphering the primary foundations of Serbian self-awareness.⁷⁸

In this context, insights into the basic structure of Serbian society, viewed in its diachronic and synchronic perspective, are important, with the primary aim of identifying the *significance of ideological systems and ideologies*.⁷⁹ Therefore, when considering identity – and accordingly, when understanding Serbian projections regarding the *future*⁸⁰ – it is necessary to pay special attention to the *past*, as it is one of the most direct ways to recognize primary elements and circumstances that shape complex patterns of Serbian self-understanding. In other words, precisely the mentioned issues of defining and projecting the (Serbian) past and future are of central importance, because it is through identifying the basic models of the Serbian past and future that we come most directly to understanding the essential elements of what we could call the *Serbian idea* and the *Serbian mission*.⁸¹

75 For the most recent work on this topic, see Đurković 2024; Stepić 2022.

76 As M. Ekmečić states – “the construction of a national identity tied to the Orthodox Church was carried out since the loss of independence” with the duration of Turkish rule until 1912 “in the tradition of the medieval Serbian state”, and “Orthodoxy was the most important and fundamental framework of the spiritual space of the Serbian people” (Ekmečić 2017, 19).

77 See Janković 2015, 17–23 and further, 315–321. Moreover, after the adoption of Christianity, “through the persistent preservation of the national language in the new ecclesiastical organization, its cultivation in all cultural spheres and the constant intransigence in the attainment and preservation of freedom, the national consciousness of Serbs was increasingly strengthened and preserved throughout the centuries” (Mitrović 1989, 21).

78 Ekmečić 2017, 14, 19; Mitrović 1989.

79 See Pavićević 2006.

80 See summarized in: Todorović 2015a, 267–273.

81 See Todorović 2015a; Todorović 2015b.

All this is directly related to the relationship with the (other) key manifestations of spiritual culture, starting with its ritual and “*myth-vow*” aspects, which in practice have proven to be very effective and practical means of identity defense, starting with processions and Slavs⁸² and ending with the Serbian vows⁸³ and the key Serbian ideological systems associated with them.

As far as key ideological systems are concerned, it is of primary importance (especially in terms of identity) to recognize the peculiar ideological foundations that have led to the formation of representations of *Serbs as the New Israel* (the chosen people of the New Testament), as well as more or less narrow, still insufficiently researched patterns,⁸⁴ which include partly related, but also complementary-contradictory *notions of the proto-people*.⁸⁵ Here, as the results of the studies carried out show, what is essential for an understanding of the whole subject and the phenomena related with it is what is (for some reason) suppressed and hidden, so that the impression often arises that it is in fact simultaneously (in a qualitative sense, i.e. essentially) *forbidden*. It is precisely there, in the mentioned spheres of the neglected and forbidden, that – as will become apparent after deeper insights – the essential foundations of the primary Serbian identity and cultural pattern often lie, as well as the main methods of defense against identity deconstruction and ethnic destruction.

In direct connection with the above, another additional question logically arises at the very end: what would be the most “neglected” and “forbidden”? The answer is not too difficult and concerns precisely the search for the “great idea” that is constantly present in Serbian thought and tradition. So the answer could be: neglected and almost “forbidden”, similarly to what has happened several times in Serbian history, especially that of which the archetypal layers of Serbian folk tradition as well as the highlights and most representative figures of Serbian spirituality⁸⁶ clearly

82 Todorović 2023; Todorović 2024.

83 See Ković 2019, especially pp. 13–47; Timotijević 2022, 7–31; Vidović 2009; Vidović 2021; Antonić 2022; Kindić 2017, 193, 201–202, 206–207; Reljić 2024; Todorović 2015a, especially pp. 274–286.

84 See Blagojević 1994; Todorović 2010; Ković 2019, 19–23.

85 See Todorović 2005a.

86 Similarly, “the whole vast oral tradition, in which the Serbs, as a suffering and visionary people, are particularly rich, is a tradition which could not fit into the whole world if it were written down” (Velimirović 2001, 247). According to Justin Popović, for example, the main directions and characteristics of the (Serbian) *enlightenment of St. Sava* “can be formulated as follows: (...) Man is a being that can be most ideally and realistically perfected and completed by the God-Man”, and “every human activity: philosophy, science, crafts, agriculture, art, education, culture, gains its lasting value when it is sanctified and conceived by the God-Man” etc. (Popović 1993, 34).

speak, pointing to the uniqueness, specificity and importance of the *Serbian ethnic personality*.⁸⁷ Thus, St. Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich also says, among other things: “And just as Christ assigned an extraordinarily great task to his beloved disciple John, so he assigned a great task to the Serbian people, a great mission among peoples near and far.”⁸⁸

What would this mean when translated into “secular language”? If the *great idea* of the grand, universal mission of the Serbian people is not renewed and revitalized at the level of the Serbian collective consciousness (from the point of view of the Serbian collective psyche this is immanent and necessary), then it – and above all its diaspora⁸⁹ – will disappear over time. And it is precisely in this – i.e. in the renewal and complete revival of the (previously deeply rooted) *idea of the Serbian mission* – that the essence of Serbian identity defense would lie.

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87 Regarding the *national personality*, see Janković 2015, 19–23.

88 Velimirović 2001, 218. Finally, Dostoevsky (in *A Writer's Diary*, in the chapter “A Dream of Reconciliation Beyond Science”) believes that “every great nation, if it wants to remain long alive, must believe that in it and in it alone lies the salvation of the world, that it lives to stand at the head of all nations, to unite them all and lead them all in a harmonious chorus to the final goal, which is destined for them all” (Skopцова 2021, 68; cf. also pp. 65–82). According to Bishop Nikolai, “the destiny of all righteous peoples generally resembles the destiny of Christ, but none so much as that of the Serbian people” (Velimirović 2001, 247).

89 In answer to the question “What should we do?” in relation to the Serbian diaspora, according to some authoritative views, it is first necessary to “identify the geographical distribution and network of capacities of our new migration (intellectual diaspora) in the world”, i.e., “in which regions and countries they work and live”, “what activities” they carry out, “create an electronic register (treasury) of the diaspora”, “maintain daily communication through Internet networks”, “inform us about what they can contribute to, what are the possibilities of their involvement in the country's development”, “recognize their civil and political rights, vote electronically and be elected/have dual citizenship” and, above all, “work on preserving their national identity” (Mitrović 2015, 290). Furthermore, “it is expected that the Serbian intellectual diaspora should and can play the role of new ‘1300 privates’, new ‘young lions’ for the upcoming games and battles” (Mitrović 2015, 290).

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