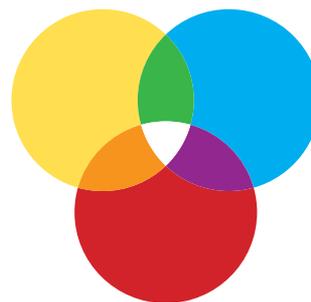




# MANAGING DIVERSITY



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## The quest for ethnic and religious tolerance

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By Andreja Durdan, Croatian Security Intelligence Agency

“No man is an island,” wrote English Catholic cleric and poet John Donne in the 16th century. Today, this is more evident than ever. Nowadays we live in the age of identity politics. According to social identity theory, we are inclined to define ourselves by certain objective measures such as ethnicity, religion, race, gender and sexual orientation. These measures define our place in the community and society in general and are liberating and restraining at the same time. Socio-demographic changes and globalization are not optional, but rather the reality of our past, present and future. In the globalized world, states and societies face increasing permeability and fluidity, resulting in a challenging quest to manage diversity.

Multiethnic states are now the norm; the traditional nation-state (a distinct national group corresponding to a territorial unit) has become almost eradicated in the melting pot of today’s world. Except for cases such as North Korea, it is now unrealistic to expect monoethnic countries and societies. An inability to reconcile the territorial integrity of the nation-state and a desire by minorities for cultural autonomy caused the failure of nation-states. If a nation-state doesn’t recognize minority rights and attacks a minority’s sense of distinct nationhood, it may increase the desire for secession and breed disloyalty. Globalization resulted in porosity of borders and improved technology transfer. It provoked, as the political scientist Michael Keating put it, “the three-directional erosion of the nation state” from above (by the rise of transnational institutions), from below (by demands of subgroups for control over some of the state’s responsibilities), and laterally (the market erodes its permanency and superiority).

Despite the aforementioned, there are still attempts to impose monoculturalism in multiethnic environments at the expense of minorities, which often lead to intensification of minority efforts to protect and preserve their identity with a single goal — avoid marginalization. Assimilation on the one hand, and the urge for preservation of minority identity on

Protesters in the parliament building in Skopje, Macedonia, in April 2017 voice frustration over talks to form a new government. Turmoil in the country is rooted in ethnic tensions.

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the other, often cause intolerance, or worse — ethnic conflict. Would building a Pan-European identity be a silver bullet for ending ethnic tensions and discrimination, or are ethnically diverse societies the source of instability? Is the European “united in diversity”

idea feasible in an era when globalization and migration have put a strain on European Union societies, causing collective fear after numerous terrorist attacks?

The course of the 20th century confirms that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it, as the philosopher George Santayana said. Because historical events have caused tectonic shifts that altered societies, new multiethnic societies have developed more integrative attitudes. Nevertheless, all EU member states face the challenges associated with capitalizing on that diversity and including all minorities in their societies. The inability to manage this emerging abundance of diversity is often rooted in ignorance and stereotypes, which result in defensive exclusion scenarios such as ultranationalism, the increase of right-wing radicalism, racism, shifts in populist policies concerning migrants and asylum seekers, re-animation of older conflicts in minority/majority relations, fundamentalism and anti-Semitism. This is reflected in anti-globalization and anti-EU feelings, as well as anti-Islamic propaganda. In these scenarios, state actors and the international community should act as arbiters and managers of diversity challenges. The quest for ethnic and religious tolerance is a precondition for the functioning of multiethnic states as predominant structures of globalized societies. For much of the 20th century, it seemed that religious tolerance and, up to a certain point, ethnic tolerance were prevalent in Western liberal democracies. However, recent events prove that much progress is needed to achieve harmony in ethnically and religiously diverse societies.

Diversity management is a voluntary organizational action designed to create greater inclusion in formal and informal social structures through deliberate policies and programs. Diversity management is also a prerequisite of a stable society. While like-minded groups may try to maintain equilibrium by banishing ideas and people they disagree with, diversity management helps to keep a social balance and harmonious coexistence. When ethnic groups feel disadvantaged, ethnic tensions and conflicts often follow. These conflicts are about more than ethnic differences. They are about territorial, political, social, cultural or economic issues that can result in the destabilization of states and whole regions. They are often accompanied by crimes against humanity, grave human rights violations, state failure and refugee flows. The role of external players can also deepen social cleavages. George Washington University Professor Michael Edward Brown underlined four levels of conflict triggers: internal mass-level factors (bad domestic problems), external mass-level factors (bad neighborhoods), external elite-level factors (bad neighbors) and internal elite-level factors (bad leaders). Neighbors and neighborhoods can

cause cleavages when radicalized politics lead to diffusion, contagion and a spillover effect, or when governments decide to provoke conflicts in weak neighboring states for political, ideological, economic or security reasons. A successful management of diversity helps states and societies become less vulnerable to destabilizing threats from inside as well as from outside.

## Tolerance

One key concept in diversity management is tolerance. The term connotes the acceptance of an action or a practice, or the foregoing of an opportunity to interfere in that activity or practice. It refers to a character trait or virtue of a person disposed to perform acts of toleration. These acts imply an intentional and principled decision to refrain from interfering when possessing the power to interfere. The latter is important to distinguish tolerance from resignation; hence it includes aspects of voluntarism. Its intention is to ensure both the individual's right to autonomy and individuality as well as social progress and democratic governance. The paradox of tolerance, as many philosophers have stated, is presented through the concept of objection as a precondition for tolerance — meaning tolerance is required only for the intolerable. Which

raises the question: Why tolerate something we consider to be wrong?

There are many types of tolerance and, accordingly, many types of intolerance. Tolerance can be political and social. Political tolerance is an important democratic value because it refers to the willingness to extend

A billboard advertises an Anne Frank exhibition in Šibenik, Croatia, in February 2017. Religious tolerance is critical to fostering peaceful societies.

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civil liberties to groups considered objectionable. Social tolerance involves lack of prejudice, rather than one's ability to overcome such prejudice. Prejudice is a negative intergroup attitude based on false, simplified or overgeneralized beliefs. As Bruce Hunsberger wrote in his 1995 article, "Religion and Prejudice: The Role of Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Right-Wing Authoritarianism," prejudice consists of three components: a cognitive one (involving a set of beliefs or stereotypes about a derogated out-group), an affective component (entailing disgust or visceral dislike for the out-group) and a disposition to behave in a socially aversive way toward members of the out-group.

These types of tolerance tend to occur more often in societies and political systems where exposure to diversity is emphasized. There seems to be a positive correlation between tolerance and exposure to diversity (racial, ethnic, religious), while diversity tends to provide an incentive to lessen the reliance on established beliefs and predispositions. To underpin this argument, some researchers, such as University of Quebec at Montreal Associate Professor Allison Harell, have shown that exposure to ethnocultural and other diversity decreases prejudice among social groups, primarily due to identification with out-group members. Racial and ethnic diversity may decrease tolerance for intolerance by fostering identification with the minorities at which intolerance is aimed. This kind of diversity may also foster cognitive skills that increase tolerance for objectionable groups, a phenomenon demonstrated by the fact that people living in diverse networks tend to exhibit multicultural tolerance.

Exclusionary intolerance is enhanced when a group interested in reinforcing its distinctiveness wants society to respect its right to be intolerant of other groups. On the other hand, inclusionary intolerance arises when minority groups are trying to fully participate in society (e.g., preferential hiring regulations). As for ethnic intolerance, it can refer to ethnic hatred, ethnic conflict, discrimination, racism and ethnic nationalism. These deviant forms, if tolerated by the state, lead to demonization of minorities and, as recently seen in Europe, the rise of nationalism, wider enthusiasm for racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-migrant and anti-refugee rhetoric and attitudes. Europe is currently in a paradox. It is experiencing its greatest diversity ever — a result of greater mobility, more contact and intermarriage. Yet, simultaneously, there is an increase in the number of people who find this diversity to be a problem. They believe the chance for democratic progress and prosperity is greatly reduced when minority concerns are given acknowledgment and affirmation. A deep polarization in European society is occurring, requiring an immediate and comprehensive reaction and approach.

What can be done to promote tolerance and concurrently breed further diversity in modern liberal states? To this end, good governance based on a functioning rule of law is crucial. It plays a vital role in including minorities in societies and protecting their rights and interests through dialogue and recognition of problems. Political representatives and community leaders play an important role, as do the media and educational institutions. In this respect, social networks tend to be significant factors, especially for the younger population. Legislative measures should criminalize different forms of intolerance and institute tougher penalties for violators. Monitoring minority employment should be enhanced in areas where they are underrepresented. Forming advisory bodies that include minority representatives should be considered. Raising public awareness through the media and government

campaigns and establishing institutions to monitor and prevent discrimination should be a priority. Promoting the empowerment of minority rights through education and ensuring adequate national and local social networks should be encouraged.

As for a comprehensive approach, the international community should be involved, provided the intervention occurs in due course. To avoid ethnic conflict and wars, it is essential to avoid repeating historical scenarios seen so many times in different areas of Africa, Europe and Eurasia. The role of external powers in ethnic conflicts is indisputable and can be manifested through conflict pacification mechanisms and democratic consolidation mechanisms, reconciliation and economic recovery.

Traditional peacekeeping is obviously insufficient, and a new approach is required to maintain international stability and prevent spillover effects in unstable areas and fragile states. International efforts should be initiated by the United Nations at a global level, by relevant bodies at a regional level (the EU, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), and by all other actors included in peace building, peacekeeping and international cooperation. Syria, most recently, and the Western Balkans only a few years ago are good examples of failed preventive diplomacy and late international engagement. The late international community response caused things to move in an unwanted direction — the emergence of terrorist and radical groups, migration waves, demographic shifts, unstable and unsustainable political systems, and instrumentalization of conflicts by superpowers.

The goal of minority integration policies should be to foster long-term stability, rather than the belligerents merely appeasing the international community while monitored by international actors. The most prominent example is Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The way the coexistence of BiH's three main entities works — or rather does not work — is the

Exclusionary intolerance is enhanced when a group interested in reinforcing its distinctiveness wants society to respect its right to be intolerant of other groups.

Kosovo Serbs watch in January 2017 as bulldozers tear down a concrete wall in Mitrovica that raised tensions between Kosovo and neighboring Serbia. The removal followed an agreement between the government and the ethnic Serb minority.

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cause of constant clashes and instability. BiH is a state of great differences that lacks unity and where exceptions are rules. As the novelist Ivo Andrić stated: Where logic ends, Bosnia begins. With its three states within a state (Federation of BiH, Republic of Srpska, Brčko District), BiH is haunted by recent war traumas and numerous diverging interests, while yesterday's victims and assailants must coexist in coercive conviviality.

Integration failure leads to fragile states, with societal and institutional dynamics being the main drivers of that fragility. These fundamental dynamics frame how more formal institutions and processes work and thus determine the quality of government and the inclusiveness of the economic and political systems. Fragility is a (dys)function of social cohesion and institutionalization. Combined, they determine the capacity of a population to cooperate and to direct this cooperation toward national-level challenges. Fragile states, if left in status quo, tend to collapse.

### Southeast Europe/Western Balkans

One of the most prominent examples of the aforementioned diversity is the Western Balkans region in Southeast Europe. History defines the Balkans as a political region. A peripheral European location, divergent population distribution and historical migrations concurrent to emerging new states affected the region's formation and ethnic and religious structure. Several ethnic areas were formed based on their spatial identity (Christian culture) and dominant language (Slavic, Latin and Greek). Efforts to establish autonomous national identities or rigid concepts of autonomous states, cultures or geographic space often resulted in conflicts (the Albanian movement, Kosovo independence, the war in BiH) and evident intolerance for diversity, especially ethnic and religious. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, this area became ethnically and religiously diverse, making the situation even more complex. The lack of stability caused the development of geographically-shifting states, migration of endangered populations and socio-demographic changes.

As a reflection of this diversity, there are Albanian, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Roma, Greek, Croatian, Macedonian, Hungarian, German, Italian, Russian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Romanian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Slovak, Czech, Slovenian, Turkish, Tatar, Gagauzian and Jewish minorities living in Western Balkan countries. A nationality may be a disadvantaged minority in one state while forming the majority in a neighboring country. The movement to absorb Kosovo into a new Albanian majority state in conflict with Serbian interests — along with the Macedonian-Greek dispute and the inability of entities in BiH to coexist — could lead once again to severe fragility across the region. Because of conflicts, these struggles are associated with minority issues and a reluctance to embrace diversity as an asset rather than an obstacle. The author Andrew Heywood defines the term “balkanization” in political science as fragmentation of a political unit into antagonistic entities. This term defines the Western Balkans.

As far as religion is concerned, religious participation plays a major role in the identification of communities. Christianity (Catholics and Orthodox) and Islam are the predominant religions in the Western Balkans. Historically, Turkish influence since the Ottoman Empire made the spread of Islam in this area an important factor in creating ethnic identity and restructuring, especially in BiH. In certain parts of BiH or Sandžak, religion has become symbolic of spatial reservation, which leads to further homogenization and segregation. Religious intolerance is becoming more blatant and raising alarms in certain areas. It is fueled by poor social, economic and educational standards, such as in Sandžak, where 70,000 Muslim Bosnians are the largest minority. It leads to ghettoization, redefinition of ethnic lines and further conflicts. Concurrently, it leads to an increase of orthodoxy and religious fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism, often encouraging terrorism and giving rise to the foreign fighters' phenomena. The spread of radical religious ideas led not only to intolerance, but to micromigrations of people leaving areas under rigid religious laws and causing further homogenization

of religious entities. Furthermore, religious identity in these situations is strongly connected to national identity. In areas where there are two or more conflicted religious communities, religion tends to take over the role of cultural protector. Hence, religious identities become their way of expressing and emphasizing ethnic identity.

In the post-conflict countries of the Western Balkans, diverging war memories and experiences, trauma and economic weakness threaten regional stability. Although efforts are made to overcome ethnocentrism and religious homogenization, it seems the instrumentalization of differences overrules the reconciliation process. In addition to bilateral and regional issues, most Western Balkan countries have Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations, and some must contend with (not so) latent Russian influence. Given the historical and socio-economic context and unequal policies, managing diversity poses a great challenge for regional governments. It is indisputable that societal and political transformation have gained ground in the Western Balkans and that people must learn to live with diversity and perceive it not as a threat to their identity, but as a catalyst for their progress and development. Excessive adherence to all aspects of the nation-state in this era of globalization means disregarding international cooperation and reversing progress toward regional cooperation and coexistence. Western Balkans countries, such as Croatia, with more experience fostering democratic equilibrium and economic stability, are working to develop and manage diversity — ethnic, religious, cultural and otherwise.

## Croatia

The treatment of minorities in the Western Balkans and the rights and accommodations accorded to them vary by state. Croatia is an EU member and a multicultural state. Its multicultural structure is visible in the relationship between the Croatian majority (90 percent of the population) and the 22 officially recognized minority groups geographically dispersed across the country. The largest minority is Serbian, represented by 4.3 percent of the population. Regarding religion, Catholics are dominant (86 percent) followed by Orthodox Christians (4.4 percent). The dominant language is Croatian (96 percent).

To some extent, Croatia is still experiencing the adverse effects of systemic transition and is dealing with minority issues in the context of relations with neighbors burdened by the war in the 1990s. This effect is especially present near the borders. Croatian multiculturalism is primarily based on cultural diversity among minorities. Migration flows haven't really affected the Croatian demographic structure yet, since Croatian immigrants are mostly Croats previously living in other Southeast European countries. But what might be concerning is the recent economic emigration out of Croatia.

Croatia has established a solid legal framework for dealing with minority issues — full expression of minority identities is protected through constitutional provisions, laws and adopted international legislation supported by media

pluralism and state and local policies. Croatia's legislation is fully harmonized with European values and standards and derived from key international legal instruments dealing with human rights. The Croatian Constitution, as a paramount legal act, guarantees rights and freedom for all, regardless of ethnic or religious origin. It ensures free expression of national/ethnic/religious identity, use of their language and writing, as well as cultural and educational autonomy. Also, minorities are represented in the parliament (eight representatives) and at the local level (councils of national minorities and individual representatives). Preferential hiring regulations for minorities are applied. To help further diversity, two state organizations are in charge of minority issues — the Council for National Minorities and the Government Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities. Minority organizations are numerous, especially in the media and culture. Government and local administrations are investing in media campaigns, workshops and campaigns aimed at raising awareness.

In general, Croatia's minority communities appear well integrated into Croatian society, especially the Muslim community. The Roma community is making noteworthy progress in its assimilation. Still, Croatia is not a country with a perfect minority record. The recent war has put a strain on the perception of certain nationalities, especially the Serbs, who are the largest minority. Returnees and communities on the Serbian border often fail to assimilate, invoking past conflicts and misusing their lawfully granted rights for personal gain. In addition, some minority organizations and nongovernmental organizations are perceived as existing primarily to siphon state financial support. Another issue is the instrumentalization of minorities for political purposes by their home countries.

## Misusing ethnicity

Ethnomobilization, according to the authors Antonija Petričević and Mitia Žagar, is the instrumentalization of ethnic identities — the misuse of ethnicity by elites to mobilize the masses for the realization of their political (and even personal) objectives and interests. The most prominent example in the Western Balkans is the era of Slobodan Milošević, former Yugoslav and Serbian president. After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the grouping along ethnic lines and re-emergence of ethnic cleavages resulted in social segmentation. Many politicians of the Serbian establishment manipulated public opinion by employing distorted pre-existing narratives and myths, rearranging historical facts and intentionally fostering insecurity and fear. Milošević mobilized the masses to legitimize his rise to power, install allies in Montenegro and deny autonomy to the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. Instrumentalization of ethnic media (to serve the interests of stakeholders rather than the public) was used to generate intolerance. Milošević's establishment used the Orthodox Church to spread the idea of a "greater Serbian statehood" and intolerance toward all who didn't want to live in that nation. The education



During a day of remembrance in April 2017, relatives visit the graves of family members killed by Serb forces near Gjakova, Kosovo, during the war between ethnic Albanian rebels and Serb forces.

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system was used to spread official political propaganda and to control the thinking of future generations. Politically reliable faculty made sure that ethnic or religious diversity was reported and punished.

In the deeply divided societies of the former Yugoslav republics, different issues occurred based on religious and ethnic origin. The role of religion in the Balkan wars was evident but not in the forefront. Conflicts were nationalist-based. Symbols of Croatian ethnic and religious presence were destroyed in predominantly Serb-populated areas to rewrite history and claim it belonged to the Serbian majority. Milošević's propaganda was stark and comprehensive, intended to spread radical nationalist ideas and the separatist claims of Serbs in Croatia. Even after the international community became involved, it took a long time to achieve relative stability in the Western Balkans. The international community's efforts to perpetuate existing regimes, rather than facilitate transition and transformation, prolonged the conflicts and proved that no state can survive without the support of its citizenry, which in this case consisted of multiple ethnic and religious groups.

Even today, attempts by radical actors to instrumentalize minorities, the media and the religious establishment can incite general intolerance and bad relations. Although there has been significant improvement in minority policies (mostly due to conditions imposed by international organizations), minority issues still pose a great stumbling block in bilateral and multilateral relations of former Yugoslav countries. Without the ability to learn from history and use it to manage diversity, the region will be doomed to repeat history.

## Conclusion

It is undeniable that people in advanced democracies will become more diverse. But diversity management can only succeed with a determined effort at the international, local, political and social levels. The quest for ethnic and religious tolerance emerges from historical and social changes that pave the way for diversity. Managing this diversity has proven difficult even for established democracies.

Tolerance should be proactive, engaging and comprehensive in a way that involves all state and nonstate actors, members of the community and minorities. States should have a functioning system based on solid and consistent legislation. Local communities should engage in different projects and programs to include minorities in all aspects of life. Political tolerance alone is not adequate; it should be accompanied by social tolerance, which is crucial for integration. As far as religion is concerned, states should refrain from interfering in religious practice and act as a neutral arbiter between competing groups within society. The state should prevent attempts by any group to interfere with the practices of others. Inadequate social integration and a lack of tolerance leads to segregation, imbalance and serious complications.

As contemporary democracies become more diverse ethnically, racially and linguistically, serious questions must be answered about the balance between social equality and individual liberties among marginalized groups. Tolerance should be used to ensure both individual rights to autonomy and individuality, as well as the larger goals of social progress and democratic government. Strong and inclusive societies are less prone to destabilization. □