

THE ISLAMIC DECLARATION AND PAN-ISLAMISM

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Though written in Sarajevo, the Declaration did not direct its attention towards Yugoslavia but towards the Islamic world. Moreover, the Declaration does not even mention Yugoslavia.(...) The problem of the Balkans has been the problem of democracy. (Izetbegović, 2001:35,38)

ABSTRACT

In this article, the author analyzes the content of “The Islamic Declaration” written by Alija Izetbegović in 1970. For the past four decades, anti-Bosnian Serbian propaganda has been endeavored to present this book as its own argument charges of alleged pan-Islamism by Alija Izetbegović and other prominent individuals, and thus the entire political movement he led. This text analysis proves the complete unfoundedness of such insinuations. The basic idea of the mentioned book is the claim that the Muslim world “from Morocco to Indonesia” is lethargic and fragmented. Therefore the reconstruction of it can be based on the integration of the Muslim world and the fact that Islam is Muslim peoples connecting factor. Through the analysis, it has been proven that this book does not mention or point to Bosnian Muslims or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key words: Islamic declaration, Alija Izetbegović, pan-islamism, muslim world

I

Throughout the 20th century, Bosniaks were exposed to attempts of collective stigmatisation made by centres of natio-

nalist ideologies in Bosnian neighbourhood, including various labels for Turkophilia, Pan-Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, Wahhabism and Salafism.

In order to implement anti-Bosnian and separatist activities against Bosnia and Herzegovina and overt chauvinism towards Bosniaks, academic and political centres of the Greater Serbia ideology continued this sort of propaganda. Their most prominent political representatives¹ and academicians² mention *The Islamic Declaration* by Alija Izetbegović, written in 1970s, as an explanation of their insinuations. They hoped that lies and propaganda would lead them towards their goals. One should always have in mind that Dobrica Ćosić, academician and one of the ideologists of the Greater Serbia project from the second half of the 20th century, described this feature in his novel *Deobe*³: “We lie to deceive ourselves, to console others; we lie out of compassion, we lie that we are not afraid, to encourage, to hide our own and someone else’s misery. We lie out of love and humanity, we lie for the sake of honesty. We lie for freedom. A lie is a form of our patriotism and confirmation of our natural intelligence. We lie creatively, imaginatively, inventively (...).”

Unfortunately, similar propaganda towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosniaks is sometimes sent from Croatia as well.⁴

- 1 <http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Dodik-Islamska-deklaracija-uvod-u-stvaranje-Islamske-drzave/309146> (15. 10. 2017.);
<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/dodik-zar-u-sda-i-danas-misle-da-nekome-mogu-da-podvale-pricu-o-zalaganju-za/0wyvwwg8> (15/10/2017)
- 2 <http://www.magazin-tabloid.com/casopis/?id=06&br=293&cl=27> (15/10/2017)
http://www.glassrpske.com/novosti/vijesti_dana/Tanaskovic-Ceric-iznio-Izetbegovicevu-viziju-Islamske-deklaracije/lat/92554.html (15/10/2017)
- 3 Ćosić, D. (2017), *Deobe*, Laguna, Beograd
- 4 Recent cases are propagandist statements by the President of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, regarding the number of persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina at battlefields in the Middle East, which was so exaggerated that they were ignored by official circles of the international community as frivolous, just as the statement by the HDZ BiH President, Dragan Čović, implying that “arguing for a civil

As a statesman, Alija Izetbegović was for a whole decade closely followed by the local, European and global public. It is therefore not necessary to defend his politics here from propaganda of this or that side, as the facts are well known to both the local and the international public. This paper points at Izetbegović's understanding of Pan-Islamism, or what he thereby implies when he talks about necessary reforms in the Islamic world.

II

The term *Pan-Islamism* was coined in European Oriental studies in 1870s and it denoted the ideology of a movement aiming to connect Muslim countries within one block led by the Ottoman Empire. *Pan-Islamism* has the same goal as other Pan- movements of that age, such as Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism, for instance, aiming at uniting the Germanic and the Slavic peoples, respectively, within one political community. All these movements resulted from certain historical circumstances and international constellations, whereas today they are seen merely as historical phenomena. The only exception is this region where, due to the Pan-Islamic movement in the Ottoman Empire in late 19th and early 20th centuries, there is still certain propaganda kept alive, aiming at causing some political damage to Bosniaks, or to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As of the 17th century, the Muslim world had faced internal crises and external challenges. It increasingly pulled back in front of imperial onsets by European countries. Such developments gave rise to a number of movements from India and Persia to the Ottoman Empire, which aimed at moral restauration of society, reorganisation of the military and of civil administration, and at putting up resistance to European colonialism.⁵ One of these movements was Pan-Islami-

principle in Bosnia and Herzegovina means arguing for an Islamic state," was met with ridicule. This entire propaganda relies on the classical propagandist and archaic concept of Croatia as 'the Antemurale Christianitatis'.

- 5 Some ideas and positions expressed in this paper are explained in detail in my book *Panislamizam u Bosni*, Connectum, Sarajevo, 2006 (or its English translation *Myth of Bosniak Pan-Islamism*, Centre for Advanced Studies, Sarajevo, 2015).

sm. The idea behind it is related to the Young Ottomans movement, created in 1865. The Young Ottomans advocated the idea that only unification of Muslims led by the Ottomans could save the Ottoman Empire from a further decline. The phrase *Ittihad-i Islam* (Unity of Islam) was first used in *Hürriyet*, an Istanbul newspaper, of 9th November 1868. A decade later, in 1877, the term *Pan-Islamism* appeared in the European public. It was first used by Franz von Werner in the German language and by Turkologist Ármín Vámbéry in the English language. Following this, the term was often used in the European press. The first texts on the *Pan-Islamic* idea in the Arabic language were written by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh in 1884 in the journal *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* (*the Firmest Bond*). During the reign of sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908), Pan-Islamism was the official political doctrine of the Ottoman Empire.

III

In *The Islamic Declaration*, Alija Izetbegović expresses his thoughts as to what ideas could be used as starting points for the restoration of Islamic world. In his autobiographical book titled *Sjećanja* [*Memories*] of 2001, Izetbegović says that he wrote *The Islamic Declaration* in 1970:

This short text (of approximately 40 pages) attracted attention only after the Sarajevo Process of 1983. It was attacked and defended with equal fervour. Though written in Sarajevo, the *Declaration* did not direct its attention towards Yugoslavia but towards the Islamic world. Moreover, the *Declaration* did not even mention Yugoslavia. The idea that dominated this text was that only Islam could fire the imagination of Muslim masses and empower them to do something in their own history. Ideas imported from the West could not do such a thing. The message was attacked as fundamentalist, which it actually was in certain terms – it advocated the return to original sources. Even though it condemned autocratic regimes, requested a bigger budget for education, advocated a better position of women, non-violence and minority rights, the *Declaration* was received with strong reservations in the West. I believe they could not forgive the fact

that Islam was put at the heart of the problem.⁶

The Islamic Declaration is preoccupied with the Islamic world, its condition and prospects and, in a certain way, its (geo)culture, (geo)economy and (geo)politics.⁷

Do we want for Islamic peoples to come out of the vicious circle, dependence, backwardness and poverty? (...) [T]hen we should clearly point at a way that leads to this goal? The realisation of Islam in all segments of the individual life, in the family and society, through restoring the Islamic religious thought and creating a single Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia.⁸

It is important to note that not even here – in the sentence that is often taken to be the key for proving his positions as Pan-Islamist, even for the incrimination in the 1983 Process, where he talks rather explicitly about “a single Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia” – does he use the term ‘state’ but, rather, the term ‘community’, which is a detail that speaks about Izetbegović’s very nuanced understanding and interpretation of things.

Considering a potential driving force behind the awakening of the ‘community’, he discusses both *Pan-Islamism* and *nationalism* and their potential effects on the masses in Muslim-majority countries. For him, Pan-Islamism is an inclusivist idea of a possible integration of a broad band of Muslim countries, while nationalism is reductionist and fragmenting in nature. Izetbegović has a visionary view of the Islamic world integration, not a utopian one; it is not romantic-

6 Izetbegović, A. (2001) *Sjećanja: autobiografski zapis [Memories: autobiographic notes]*, TDK Šahinpašić, Sarajevo, 35

7 A brief overview of Izetbegović’s understanding of Pan-Islamism can be found in my text titled *Mit o bošnjačkom panislamizmu: pokušaj nametanja kolektivne stigme [Myth of Bosniak Pan-Islamism: an attempt at collective stigmatisation]* published in: *Zbornik radova sa Međunarodnog simpozija „Srednji put u religiji kulturi i politici: misao ravnoteže i umjerenosti u djelu Alije Izetbegovića“ [Proceedings of the International Symposium „Middle way in religion, culture and politics]*, held on 12-13 May 2017 in Sarajevo, published by the Alija Izetbegović Museum in 2018.

8 Izetbegović, A. (2005) *Problemi islamskog preporoda - Islamska deklaracija [Problems of Islamic Revival - the Islamic Declaration]*, OKO, Sarajevo, 131

sed but put in a historic and geopolitical context. He thereby refers to the European integration process through the European Community, the predecessor of the European Union, as a sign that it is necessary to surpass being enclosed within the borders of national states, the same ones where the idea of national states was born, in order to reach global competitiveness. The creation of the European Economic Community, in his words, “was the most constructive event of the 20th century European history.” Izetbegović believes so as “the contemporary world is facing a development (...) that requires an unprecedented and unimaginable concentration of people and resources, objectively giving a chance to big nations only or, more precise, to alliances of nations,” for which he gives the following example:

In terms of its development, Kina is considerably behind France or England but, thanking to a huge concentration of people and resources, it demonstrates overwhelming superiority in the current game. This situation is an opportunity for the Muslim world, which is not developed but is huge.⁹

Considering that Izetbegović wrote the *Declaration* in early 1970s, while the People’s Republic of China still showed no signs of opening up and readiness to implement economic reforms, it could be argued that his words were that of a visionary, and were confirmed by China’s later economic growth and the current status of the second economy in the world.

Referring to the European Community, Izetbegović mentions “a natural tendency for cooperation and unification among the Muslim peoples.”

It seems to us there is nothing more natural and, therefore, more realistic than the request for Muslims to achieve different forms of unity for the purpose of solving their common problems and of gradually begin to establish certain supranational structures – economic, cultural and political ones – for the sake of coordinated and joint actions in some important fields.¹⁰

9 Izetbegović, A. (2005) *Problemi islamskog preporoda - Islamska deklaracija* [Problems of Islamic Revival – the Islamic Declaration], OKO, Sarajevo, 167

10 Izetbegović, A. (2005) *Problemi islamskog preporoda - Islamska deklaracija* [Problems of Islamic Revival – the Islamic Declaration], OKO, Sarajevo, 164

Nationalism, according to him, can never be the foundation of such integration of the Islamic world, as it is opposed to the deepest sentiment of Islamic peoples. While in Europe nationalism “represented an affirmation of national tendencies (music, folklore and, particularly, language), in Muslim countries we generally meet a rudimentary form of nationalism.” The idea of nationalism in Muslim countries is not an expression of Muslim peoples’ tendencies. It is imposed through alienated elites educated in the Western education system, and represents an inauthentic, non-national and artificial construct. In favour of his claim, Izetbegović points out the attitude of the nationalist administration towards the Arabic language, whose status “is not much more favourable than it was during the Anglo-French occupation of Islamic world countries.” Izetbegović emphasises that nationalism in the Islamic world is “conceived as a replacement for Islam and has, as such, represented an anti-Islamic movement,” and is opposed to the sentiment of Muslim peoples that is imbued in the Qur’anic principle that ‘Muslims are brothers’, whereas “In the Muslim world, without Islam there can be no patriotism.”

In addition to the necessary economic and cultural reforms, Izetbegović also explains his realistic perception of the need to integrate Muslim countries through Pan-Islamism rather than nationalism by the fact that there is a sudden population growth in the Muslim world. In this regard, he concludes that the “dramatic demographic development, if not followed by just as rapid economic and social development, is full of potential dangers and uncertainties. In the past 20 years, this ‘demographic inflation’ has mostly absorbed the entire production growth, so that, in a majority of Muslim countries, the gross national income per capita is now lower than two decades ago. Thus, instead of being an element of power in a united Muslim world, the population growth became the source of crises and desperation for disunited Muslim countries. It is clear that Muslim countries cannot cope with this problem individually.”¹¹

The recent mass emigration from the Muslim countries of the Middle East towards Europe also confirms that his hypotheses were well justified.

11 *Ibid*, 168

Izetbegović's ideas of Pan-Islamism as an ideological platform for the economic and political integration of the Muslim world additionally gain in importance when seen within the context of the contemporary globalisation trends. Without the proper understanding of this notion, Muslim countries will long remain objects rather than subjects of the main processes of global politics.

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ISLAMSKA DEKLARACIJA I PANISLAMIZAM

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SAŽETAK

U ovom članku autor analizira sadržaj knjige „Islamska deklaracija“ koju je napisao Alija Izetbegović 1970. godine. Tokom protekle četiri decenije antibosanska srbijanska propaganda nastojala je prikazati ovu knjigu kao argument svojim optužbama za navodni panislamizam Alije Izetbegovića i drugih istaknutih pojedinaca, a time i cijelog političkog pokreta kojem je bio na čelu. Analizom teksta autor dokazuje potpunu neosnovanost takvih insinuacija. Osnovna ideja spomenute knjige je tvrdnja da je muslimanski svijet „od Maroka do Indonezije“ letargičan i fragmentiran, te da se obnova može zasnivati na integraciji muslimanskog svijeta, a da je islam povezujući faktor muslimanskih naroda. Kroz analizu je dokazano da ova knjiga ni u jednoj rečenici ne spominje niti ukazuje na bosanske muslimane niti Bosnu i Hercegovinu.

Ključne riječi: Islamska deklaracija, Alija Izetbegović, panislamizam, muslimanski svijet

