

DRAFT CHAPTER:
Bosnian Muslims and Socialist Yugoslavia's International Relations Program in the
1950s and 1960s

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Introduction

This paper explores the role of Yugoslavia's Muslim population in the country's foreign relations program through the 1950s and 1960s. The study is a component part of my larger dissertation project, which examines the emergence of an officially recognized "Muslim nation" in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1971. The dissertation shows how, in the 1950s and 1960s in particular, Bosnian Muslim politicians worked with intellectuals to formulate an argument for distinct, secular, and "scientific" Muslim nationhood in an effort to achieve official recognition as one of the constituent nations of Yugoslavia, and to secure their rights and position in Yugoslav political life.¹ While writings by the Muslim intelligentsia of this period show that these intellectuals promoted various and often conflict ideas of community and belonging, ultimately the Muslim nation (designated with a capital "M," as opposed to religious identity, designated with a lower-case "m") was recognized on the basis of defining pillars of historical and cultural unity, and linguistic distinctness from other confessional Muslim communities.² National status was formally affirmed at the republic level in 1968 at the 17th and 20th sessions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in

¹ By 1968, a number of Bosnian Muslim Communists had risen through the party ranks who were actively involved in the process of recognition—Hamdija Pozderac, Branko Mikulić, and Djemal Bijedić, among them. With them, senior figures such as Avdo Humo and Atif Purivatra had worked avidly on bringing attention to the Muslim question in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For more see Šaćir Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u XX. Stoljeću [Bosniak Politics in the 20th Century]*. Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998; Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Od tradicije do identiteta: Geneza nacionalnog pitanja bosanskih Muslimana [From Tradition to Identity: The Genesis of the National Question of Bosnian Muslims]*. Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1974; Enver Redžić, *Sto godina Muslimanske politike [One Hundred Years of Muslim Politics]*, Sarajevo: Institute for History, 2000.

² Atif Purivatra and Kasim Suljević. *Nacionalni aspekt popisa stanovništva u 1971. godini*. Komisija za međunacionalne odnose i međurepubličku saradnju Predsjedništva Republičke konferencije Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Bosne i Hercegovine: Sarajevo, February 1971. For a consolidated example of these debates, see the collected papers from a conference held in Sarajevo at the Institute for History in November, 1968 on the theme "The Historical Bases of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (*Istorijske pretpostavke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine*), published in *Prilozi*. No. 4, Institute za istoriju, Sarajevo, 1968.

degrees federally with the inclusions of “Muslims in the ethnic sense” to the 1963 census, and “Muslims in the national sense” in 1971.

However, while this dissertation project largely focuses on domestic perspectives and the roles of intellectuals, the state, and the public in negotiating the definition and future of the Muslim nation in Yugoslavia, it also endeavors to place the subject of Bosnian Muslim nationhood within a broader international framework. On one level, explored in a separate chapter, the dissertation considers engagement with the debates surrounding definitions of Muslim identity from abroad. During the 1960s in Vienna a group of Bosnian Muslim political émigrés headed by former Partisan Adil Zulfikarpašić published a serial journal, *Bosanski pogledi* (Bosnian Perspectives), which advocated strongly for a “Bosniak” national identity.³ Preference for “Bosniak” as a concept expressing a stronger territorial and political affiliation, and an alternative to the “confusing” “Muslim” name was also expressed by several domestic activists as well, the most prominent among them being Enver Redžić.⁴

In addition to considering engagements in these debates from émigré communities and their role in shaping definitions of Muslim nationhood “at home,” my research, and this chapter in particular aims to address some of the ideas that have been presented about the role of international factors in facilitating affirmation, as well as the more general role that Muslims played in the development of Yugoslavia’s international relations program. The topics covered in the chapter are a response to various observations that have been presented by a number of scholars, and reflect my specific archival findings.

This chapter will first briefly outline Yugoslavia’s changing international position and outlook after 1948, and some of the hypothesis that have been presented regarding how this transition impacted Yugoslavia’s position towards its Muslim population. On

³ Mustafa Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji: monografija “Bosanskih pogleda.” 1955-1967*. Sarajevo: Bošnjački institut—Zürich, Odjel Sarajevo, 1996.

⁴ See also Enver Redžić, *Sto godina Muslimanske politike u tezama i kontraverzama istorijske nauke*, Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 2000. In particular, Redžić saw potential for a more inclusive territorial-political patriotism within the republic if “Bosniak” identity, rather than “Muslim” was to be promoted. The official assessment of this argument was forms of “Bosnianhood” were not national, but rather constituted a “state-political and territorial designation,” more akin to citizenship than ethno-linguistic or cultural identity. In 1971 the official view condemned the term “Bosniak” specifically because it was considered potentially either discriminatory or assimilatory towards Bosnian Serb and Croat populations. See Atif Purivatra and Kasim Suljević. *Nacionalni aspekt popisa stanovništva u 1971. godini*. Komisija za međunacionalne odnose i međurepubličku saradnju Predsjedništva Republičke konferencije Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Bosne i Hercegovine: Sarajevo, February 1971.

the basis of my archival findings, it will then focus on the role of the Islamic Religious Community (*Islamska verska zajednica, IVZ*) in Yugoslavia's foreign relations program during the 1950s and 1960s and how this role changed over time, as well as briefly outline evidence of other efforts and ways in which Yugoslav policies towards its Muslim communities appeared in diplomatic encounters. Finally, the chapter will offer some preliminary conclusions.

Overview of Yugoslavia's Changing International Position:

In the aftermath of World War II and the early years of the Cold War the international community broadly viewed Yugoslavia as a loyal ally of the Soviet Union and a pillar of the Eastern Bloc.⁵ Following the election of the communist-led People's Front, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito to power, the newly established Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's first 1946 Constitution was modeled closely after the 1936 Soviet Constitution, and the post-war development of the country's political and economic structure followed along Stalinist lines. The frequent trips of inner-circle Communist Party members to Moscow buttressed the sense of Soviet-Yugoslav tutelage, while the country's allegiance to the Communist Bloc was sharply illustrated by its prominent role in the 1947 Cominform, whose headquarters were based in Belgrade.

In light of the view, expressed by the British Foreign Office, that Yugoslavia was a "prize pupil of all the Eastern European states within the Soviet orbit," the acrimonious rift between Tito and Stalin that erupted in 1948 and culminated in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in June came as a shock.⁶ The exact causes of the dispute have been a matter of significant scholarly debate, and initially, some western observers

⁵ The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) had maintained close relations with the Soviet Union through the interwar period and during World War II, and despite wartime agreements between Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin to establish equal western-Soviet influence in Yugoslavia, after the war it took less than a year for the country to express its position firmly within the Socialist camp. In his 1961 *Conversations with Stalin*, former high-ranking party member turned regime-critic Milovan Djilas describes how the CPY, "considered themselves to be ideologically bound to Moscow and regarded themselves as Moscow's most consistent followers." See Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1962, Pg. 11.

⁶ Beatrice Heuser, *Western 'Containment' Policies in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948-53*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989, Pg. 19.

even doubted the severity of the conflict, describing it as a “family quarrel.”⁷ However, the Cominform resolution, issued on June 28, 1948, made it clear that, “the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia has placed itself and the Yugoslav Party outside the family of fraternal Communist Parties, outside the Communist front and consequently outside the ranks of the Information Bureau.”⁸ In practical terms, the resolution signaled the estrangement of Yugoslavia from the bloc, and the country’s sudden ideological, political, and economic isolation.

Although relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia would relax after Stalin’s death, the interim five years marked an important shift in Yugoslavia’s international position, and spurred dramatic reorientations in the country’s approach to global politics.⁹ Among the first concerns of the CPY leadership was the practical problem of the country’s dependence on international economic support, which led to the establishment of early aid and trade agreements with the west. Viewing Yugoslavia as a potential wedge in the Soviet bloc, from March to December 1948, the United States approved \$12 million in goods (mostly industrial equipment) for export to Yugoslavia, and another \$11 million from January to March 1949.¹⁰

⁷ This was the view especially of the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin in writing to Clement Attlee in June of 1948. See, Ann Lane, “Coming to Terms with Tito: Britain and Yugoslavia, 1945-49,” in *Intelligence, Defence and Diplomacy: British Policy in the Post-War World*, Eds. Richard J. Aldrich, Michael F. Hopkins, Routledge: New York, 1994. Pg. 26. Official Yugoslav historiography and many western accounts based on Yugoslav accounts, including the publicly released correspondence of Tito and Stalin from 1948, suggested that the conflict stemmed from the CPY’s resistance to the Soviet Union’s hegemonic ideological, political, and economic impulses. The significance of this interpretation was that it essentially dated Yugoslavia’s independent path to socialism to at least 1941, established the inevitability of the conflict, and tended to portray the Yugoslav position as one of resistance. (See for example Hamilton Armstrong, *Tito and Goliath*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1951; Ernest Halperin, *The Triumphant Heretic: Tito’s Struggle Against Stalin*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1958; and Adam Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform*, Cambridge, New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1952.) However, studies based on more recently available Soviet archival records argue that, from the Soviet perspective, the conflict was most critically a result of what Moscow viewed as the expansionist foreign policy of Yugoslavia towards its neighbors, in particular Albania, and steps that had been taken towards the formation of a Balkan federation. (See Jeronim Perović, “The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of new Evidence,” in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring 2007, pp. 32-63.)

⁸ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute: Text of the Published Correspondence*, London, 1948. Pgs. 68-69.

⁹ Relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union eased under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, who visited Belgrade in 1955. The parties formally restored relations in 1956. For more on normalization, see Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953-1957*. Routledge: New York, 2011.

¹⁰ Beatrice Heuser, *Western ‘Containment’ Policies in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948-53*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989, Pgs. 86-87. In August 1949 British officials too offered Yugoslavia £8 million in medium-term credit and an additional £5 million in short-term, in addition to subsequent

While British and American policy explicitly attached no specific political demands to aid, there were, however, implicit conditions and implications attached to western assistance.¹¹ However, Yugoslav leaders remained committed to their socialist course and had already staked a great deal of rebuilding their credibility following expulsion from the Cominform in casting the CPY's position in terms resistance to foreign hegemony.

Refusal to align with either bloc quickly became a calling card of Yugoslav foreign policy after 1948. This position was expressed publicly by Minister of Foreign Affairs and prominent party theorist Edvard Kardelj in 1950, in a speech to the UN General Assembly:

“The peoples of Yugoslavia cannot accept the assumption that mankind must today choose between domination by one or another great power. We consider that there is another road, difficult possibly, but the necessary road of democratic struggle for a world of free and equal nations, for democratic relations among nations, against interference from outside in the international affairs of the nations and for an all-around peaceable cooperation of peoples on the basis of equality.”¹²

However, despite Kardelj's early resolve, in general, the early 1950s were a period in which Yugoslavia was still attempting to articulate its position in a bipolar world. In fact, these efforts were first expressed through active engagement in the United Nations, and in particular Yugoslavia's election to the Security Council from 1950-51, a forum where, as Alvin Rubinstein notes, prolonged contact was first established with newly independent states of Africa and Asia.¹³

approval for a \$3 million from the International Monetary Fund in September, 1949, which was supported by Britain, France, Italy and the Netherlands.

¹¹ In particular, strong pressure was applied to Yugoslav leadership to reduce their intervention in the Greek Civil War. (See Beatrice Heuser, *Western 'Containment' Policies in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948-53*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989, Pgs. 88-97.) In general, though British and American officials were careful not to explicitly tie aid to political demands (and even attributed their headway in improving relations with Yugoslavia to this strategy), the fact that approval for aid especially in the United States was granted through public debates in Congress, made “expectations” difficult to mask.

¹² Leo Mates, *Nonalignment Theory and Current Policy*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 1972, Pg. 208-9. Original in United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records*, Fifth Session, pg. 69.

¹³ Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World*. Princeton University Press, 1970. Pg. 20-21.

As early as 1951, Yugoslav officials had identified India as a potential for future cooperative relationships.¹⁴ In particular, Indian President Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policies of "mutual cooperation," non-interference, and anti-colonialism interested Yugoslav officials, and following their observation of the 1953 First Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister Aleš Bebler and Milovan Djilas visited New Delhi. In the winter of 1954-55, Tito made his first trip to Asia, where he met Nehru, and on his return trip via the Suez Canal met with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. In 1956 Tito, Nasser, and Nehru met in Brioni, and in 1961, the first Summit of Non-Aligned Heads of State was held in Belgrade.¹⁵ Attended by twenty-five state leaders and three observers, the more specific resolutions of the conference were, as many observers noted, vague.¹⁶ However, and perhaps more importantly, they were shaped and undergirded by a purview of world politics that had gradually emerged concurrently from a variety of locals over the past decade.

In part, the generalized articulation of the organization's resolutions, issued on September 6, 1961 was an indication of that fact that Non-Alignment did not understand itself as a "bloc," and in fact renounced blocs of any type.¹⁷ In general the division of states into aligned parties was understood to prevent the independent development of countries in ways that were sensitive to the historical, political, economic, and social conditions of each state—a cornerstone of the movement's international goals, and an

¹⁴ In 1950, the two countries had cooperated on a resolution regarding Korea. For more on the development of relations between Yugoslavia, India, and Egypt specifically, see Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953-1957*. Routledge: New York, 2011.

¹⁵ The precise significance of each of these commonly noted "milestones" in the development of non-alignment as a global political outlook, and a formal movement have been a subject of significant scholarly debate. A selection of prominent works on this subject include Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World*. Princeton University Press, 1970; Leo Mates, *Nonalignment Theory and Current Policy*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 1972; Peter Willitts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance*, Nichols: New York, 1978; Rinna Kullaa, *Non-alignment and Its Origins in Cold War Europe: Yugoslavia, Finland, and the Soviet Challenge*, I. B. Tauris: London, 2012; and the edited volume *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi—Bandung—Belgrade*, Eds. Natasa Miskovic, Harald Fischer-Tine, and Nada Boskovska, Routledge, 2014.

¹⁶ Though many of the resolutions referenced specific recent events, declarations including that Cuba's "right to choose their political and social systems in accordance with their own conditions, needs and possibilities should be respected," (referring to the recent Cuban Missile Crisis) and the "call upon all parties concerned not to resort to or threaten the use of force to solve the German question or the problem of Berlin" (in reference to the construction of the Berlin Wall) contributed to this sense. See the *First Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement: Belgrade Declaration of Non-Aligned Countries*, Belgrade, 6 September 1961.

¹⁷ Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World*. Princeton University Press, 1970, Pg. 76.

idea the Yugoslav leadership tended to cast in terms of “independent” or “national paths to socialism.”¹⁸

Although other member-states described their positions in various forms, including non-commitment, co-existence, neutralism, positive neutrality, and others, Yugoslavia took great pains to ensure that Non-Alignment would not be confused with “neutrality.” Though those professing non-alignment differed markedly in their approaches to international issues and regional interests, several common ideas provided unity and cohesion to their approach to global politics. First was the general support for world peace and an end to nuclear proliferation, which threatened global safety. A common opposition to military ideological blocs led by the US and USSR, and the broader dominance of great powers over international affairs also underscored the early Non-Aligned Movement. Positioned in strict opposition to imperialism and exploitation, members also championed the importance of “mutual benefit” in the realm of bi-lateral political and economic development, and given the global context of the Cold War, for many member-states it was considered imperative that the hard-won independence of decolonization not be crudely undermined by new forms of “ideological imperialism.”¹⁹ As a result the movement not only took the end of colonialism as a cornerstone of its general program, but also the political and economic support of newly independent states. Particularly during the 1950s and ‘60s, Yugoslavia provided political support and material aid to various countries and decolonization struggles, and thereafter rapidly advanced political, economic, and cultural cooperation agreements and plans for technical assistance.

For a variety of practical reasons, Non-Alignment served Yugoslav interests, by providing a strategic international flexibility, preserving the independence of national development, and facilitating access to untapped markets and resources. But cooperative efforts were also considered dependent on the realization of mutual respect and common interests among states. In the context of relations with Communist Bloc countries that neighbored Yugoslavia, some years after the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute of 1948 Tito had

¹⁸ In this respect, the decentralizing reforms that occurred inside Yugoslavia over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, including the allocation of more responsibilities to republic levels of administration and the establishment of Workers’ Councils echoed Yugoslavia’s developing view on international relations.

¹⁹ *First Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement: Belgrade Declaration of Non-Aligned Countries*, Belgrade, September 6, 1961.

suggested that, rather than national minorities serving as a point of contention between nations, they might rather foster closer diplomatic ties. Stating that, “in socialism, [minorities] perform the function of bringing nations and states closer together,” the Communist Party opted to relax travel restrictions and encouraged Italian, Bulgarian, Austrian, and Hungarian minority groups in border-matrix communities to engage socially and economically with those across state lines.²⁰

Building on this, a variety of scholars have suggested that the fact that many of Yugoslavia’s new political and economic contacts had large Muslim populations had important consequences, and in particular, that efforts to court the international Muslim community led to a relaxation of domestic policies towards Yugoslavia’s religious Muslim population, and ultimately the reconsideration of Muslim nationhood in the 1960s. This is particularly true in the case of scholars including Noel Malcolm and Francine Friedman, who discuss the role of Yugoslavia’s Muslim communities in international relations in the context of national affirmation.²¹ Attention has also been drawn by scholars including Zachary Irwin, Armina Omerika, and Aydın Babuna to the prominent role of the country’s Islamic Religious Community (Islamska verska zajednica, IVZ) in both sending and receiving both religious and diplomatic delegations in Yugoslavia and abroad.²² As these scholars note, during President Nasser and Indonesian Prime Minister Sukarno’s 1956 visits to Sarajevo, they were introduced to the head and chief cleric of the IVZ, the Reis ul-ulema, and later delegations were taken to various sites of Islamic significance in the country. Such visits were prominently discussed, particularly in the IVZ’s official journal, *Glasnik*, which is often used as the key source in defining the role of this religious organization in Yugoslavia’s international relations program.

²⁰ Qtd. from Tito’s “Opening Address to the Eighth Party Congress,” in *Osmi Kongres Saveza Komunističke Jugoslavije: Praksa i Teorija Izgradnje Socijalizma u Jugoslaviji*. Belgrade, 1965.

²¹ See Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*. NYU Press: New York. 1996 and Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation*. Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado, 1996.

²² Armina Omerika, “The Role of Islam in the Academic Discourses on the National Identity of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1950-1980.” *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal*. Vol 2, No. 2, 2006 and Zachary Irwin, “Yugoslav Nonalignment in the 1980s,” in *Yugoslavia in the 1980s*. Ed. Pedro Ramet, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985. This subject has more recently also been discussed by Aydın Babuna, in “Bosnian Muslims during the Cold War: Their Identity between Domestic and Foreign Policies,” in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*. Ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2012.

While conducting research on the international dynamics of this project, and their impact on Muslims within Bosnia, my main goal was to determine more clearly exactly what the role of this community—both in religious and secular terms—was in Yugoslavia’s international relations program. Attempting to bring archival weight and specificity to this subject, my research drew on the holdings of the Diplomatic Archive and Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, and the Archive of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo. Because the most numerous, and prominent aspects apparent in the archival record was the crucial function of the IVZ, the chapter will now turn to discussing the position towards religion in Yugoslavia, and role of religion and the IVZ in international affairs.

Yugoslavia’s Religious Policies and Islam in International Relations

In the immediate post-war period the new socialist Yugoslav government endeavored to reduce and contain religious influences within the country as much as possible to the realm of faith. Although the first constitution secured the right to religious freedom, it also provided that, “the abuse of the Church and of religion for political purposes and the existence of political organization on a religious basis is forbidden.”²³ Ideologically, the CPY viewed religion as a product and perpetuator of backwardness and an obstacle to socialist progress, and through the 1940s the state broadly nationalized religious properties and religious endowments. Religious educational facilities and Islamic courts were also closed and supplanted by state schools and legal establishments.²⁴ Religiosity and participation in religious rites and rituals served as a barrier to membership in the party and political appointments, and in 1947, the Women’s Antifascist Front launched a campaign to encourage Muslim women to stop wearing the veil—an action supported by the state and passed into law in 1950.²⁵

²³ *Constitution of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, 1946*, Chapter 5, Article 25.

²⁴ Pamela Ballinger and Kristen Ghodsee. “Socialist Secularism: Religion, Modernity, and Muslim Women’s Emancipation in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1945–1991.” *Aspasia* 5 (2011), 12.

²⁵ On the restrictions to party membership see for example, Archive of Tuzla Canton (hereafter ATK), SK SKBiH Brčko, Kut. 10, f. 2, br. I c-101, “OK SKBiH Bijeljina dostavlja SK SKBiH Brčko, Informaciju o problemu religioznosti u SK-a.” For a general discussion on de veiling and its outlaw, see Pamela Ballinger and Kristen Ghodsee. “Socialist Secularism: Religion, Modernity, and Muslim Women’s Emancipation in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1945–1991.” *Aspasia* 5 (2011).

By the late 1940s, acrimonious feelings between religious communities and the government led the party to pursue efforts to “normalize” church-state relations, and, though religion remained under scrutiny, direct interventions began to give way to more subtle systematic and ideological pressures.²⁶ The head of the Islamic Community at that time, Reis ul-ulema Ibrahim Fejić, also took a conciliatory position towards the socialist state by promoting the harmonious nature of Islam and socialism, and cooperating in directives such as the abolition of the veil.²⁷ In turn, the Islamic Community was afforded a greater degree of latitude in its internal religious affairs, including the management of religious properties and the resumption of the Hajj in 1949. Nevertheless, responsibility for religious institutions was handled by the Commission for Religious Affairs (*Komisija za vjerske pitanje*), which meant that despite these relaxations, a high degree of control and surveillance over confessional institutions continued.²⁸

The stringent early post-war policies towards religious institutions and practices created resentment among religious communities within Yugoslavia, but they also attracted international attention as well. In particular, post-war trials of clergy (Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim alike) accused of collaborating with Axis forces during World

²⁶ In 1947, relations between the state and the Islamic Religious Community (*Islamska verska zajednica*, hereafter IVZ) were formalized with the passage of its own constitution. The constitution outlined the general structure of the IVZ, establishing four regional assemblies (*sabors*) for the management of *vakuf* in Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and the collective republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia. The highest organ of the IVZ, the Supreme Council, was based in Sarajevo, also the seat of the Reis ul-ulema, the head of the religious community for the entire country. Though granting certain rights to the community such as the ability to manage its own property, the constitution also upheld the authority of the socialist government and the CPY. The constitution stipulated that the members of the Islamic community constituted a single religious community (and thereby attempted to nullify the legitimacy of separate Islamic religious orders), as well as that the community was to be managed according to the regulations of Islam “within the limits of the Constitution of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia.” (Article 4, *Ustav Islamske vjerske zajednice u FNRJ iz 1947. godine*. Sarajevo, 1947.)

²⁷ On Fejić's support of de veiling, see for example, Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter, ABiH) Commission for Religious Affairs, 1947, Kut. 1, Br. 175/47. In his resolution dated August 27, 1947, the Reis-ul-ulema connected the veil to the suppression of Muslim women, suggesting in a speech given on September 12, 1947 that, “the equality of Muslim women cannot come to the fore, because she is hindered by the veil.”

²⁸ The commission was charged with the responsibility of addressing requests and grievances and monitoring the general activities of religious organizations including travels, meetings and publications. It furthermore maintained regular contact with (and at times exercised pressures against) religious leadership, and reported and addressed situations that suggested an organization or figure was “hostile” or had assumed an “incorrect” position *vis-à-vis* socialist practice. For an example of these pressures in the case of the Islamic Community, see Husnija Kamberović. “Bošnjaci 1968: Politički kontekst priznanja nacionalnog identiteta,” in *Rasprave o Nacionalnom Identitetu Bošnjaka: zbornik radova*. Sarajevo, Institut za istoriju, 2009, pg. 74

War II drew attention from various sources.²⁹ But as a close member of the Soviet Bloc, tightly knit to the Soviet Union, and secure in its position among other socialist states, such critiques were generally considered part of broader forces that stood in opposition to socialism. Feeding into the tendency to anticipate “enemies” both from within the country and without, those who leveraged such critiques were discredited as agents of conservative, monarchal, or fascist forces, and considered part and parcel of the struggle against “hostile” elements. However, critiques of Yugoslavia’s treatment of its religious communities took on new urgency after 1948, as the country’s need for international support brought into sharper relief the need to effectively address its international reputation. Around the same time that Yugoslavia was beginning to navigate these new international situation, heated criticisms began to emerge regarding its policies towards its religious Muslim population, the most prominent of which came from the World Muslim Congress (Motamar-e-Alam-e-Islami), based in Pakistan.

Newly formed after the partition from India in 1947, trade relations between Yugoslavia and Pakistan emerged soon after the country’s independence.³⁰ However, early political relations were strained by Yugoslavia’s burgeoning relationship with India, and compounded by criticisms of Yugoslav religious policies towards Muslims, that

²⁹ Perhaps the most well-studied case of this is the arrest and prosecution of Zagreb-based Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac, who was accused and convicted collaboration with the wartime Ustasha government. The case attracted criticism not only from the Vatican, but Catholic clergy and government officials in the United States, and complicated US assistance after 1948. (See Charles Gallagher, “*Pro Patria, Pro Deo*: The United States and the Vatican in Cold War Yugoslavia, 1945-1950,” in *Religion and the Cold War*, Pg. 135.) However, the Stepinac case was echoed by a petition submitted in December 1950 submitted to Yugoslav diplomat Milan Ristić during a meeting with an Arab-Islamic Congress delegation in Cairo, Egypt, requesting the release of several Muslim clergy who had also been arrested after WWII. Among these were signator of the Sarajevo Resolution of 1941, Kasima Dobrača, who had been arrested and tried in 1947, and ultimately sentenced to 15 years in prison. Dobrača had studied at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, and the diplomat reporting the petition hypothesized that it had been initiated by Yugoslav students at the university. It was signed by the Mufti of Palestine, Amin al-Huseini, considered by Yugoslav officials to be a war criminal. While Ristić reported in his memo that he had refused to accept the petition, he promised to talk to the government about the issue, and accordingly did, though more to assure the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs that they would, “try to talk personally with the prominent signatories of the petition [...] to make them acquainted with the facts of the arrested, the situation of Muslims in Yugoslavia and assure them [that they were] unjustified in their petition.” As relations between Yugoslavia and Egypt warmed, several Muslims were in fact released from jail before scheduled, including Dobrača in 1956. (See Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter DA), 1952, Yugoslavia, Kut. 44, Doc. 32, Br. 42058, December, 26, 1951.)

³⁰ Khalida Qureshi, “Pakistan’s Relations with Yugoslavia,” *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 23 No. 2 (Second Quarter, 1970) Pgs.149; 159-60. A trade agreement was established in 1949, and Yugoslavia was the first eastern European country to provide credits to Pakistan. President Ayub visited Yugoslavia, and from 10-17 January 1968, Tito visited Pakistan for the first time.

though unconnected to the Pakistan government, emanated from the country.³¹ The years between 1949 and 1952 especially were marked by the formation of various Karachi-based conferences and congresses that promoted Muslim interests and international unity and cooperation.³² Among the most prominent of these were the International Islamic Economic Conference, the World Muslim Congress, and the Muslim People's Organization. Though none of these were officially connected to Pakistan's government—all attempts to establish official Islamic conferences failed—the congresses did promote the application of pressure on governments and international organizations on Muslim issues, Pakistani officials often attended them, and they were broadly assumed to have at least some degree of state support.³³

The World Muslim Congress was founded, and held its first conference in Karachi in February 1949, though its largest meeting during this period was its second in February 1951, attended by 100 delegates from 30 countries.³⁴ The Congress placed

³¹ Tito first visited India in 1954, and Nehru Yugoslavia in 1955. Through these meetings, close economic, cultural, political bonds grew, resulting in assistance in various industrial projects. It was due in part to this growing relationship, and Yugoslavia's perceived support of India on the "Kashmir question" and various other issues that Pakistani officials did not view the country as a strict ally.

³² Although the precise historical role of Islam in the governance of post-independence Pakistan is a topic of much debate, independence itself was firmly rooted in the cohesion and representation of the region's Muslim population. The leadership of the country broadly looked to others with large Muslim populations as allies, and various movements centered in the country promoted the role of Islam in governance and administration and took a pan-Islamic approach to regional issues. The Objectives Resolution, promoted by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, and adopted by Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly in 1949 aimed to model the forthcoming constitution on "The principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam..." while also providing "adequate provision" for confessional minorities. Yugoslav officials observed that particularly after the death of Governor-General Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1949, various movements within Pakistan endeavored to assert the country's role as an epicenter of influence in the Muslim world. (See "The Objectives Resolution," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Spring 2009), Pg. 91)

³³ Saad S. Khan, "Pakistan and the Organization of the Islamic Conference," *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 2003), Pg 59. For example, Pakistan's Islamic Economic Conference, held in Karachi in November 1949 opened with an inaugural speech by Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. In his address, the Prime Minister stated that, "Pakistan has one and only one ambition—to serve Islam and humanity... we all belong to the great brotherhood of Islam. Islam alone can solve some of the problems facing the world today." Conferences such as these were born in part out of the sense that in the context of the Cold War and in particular Pakistan's proximity to the USSR, the country faced dual ideological pressures. Along these lines, pan-Islam was presented as a viable option for the formation of a potential "third way" of nations. "Islam," as described by Finance Minister Malik Guhram Muhammed, "is the golden mean between these two extremes; it is a nonviolent method of rectifying unsocial and detrimental inequalities." Qtd. Sisir Gupta, "Islam as a Factor in Pakistan's Foreign Policy," in *South Asian Politics and Religion*, Ed. Donald Eugene Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), Pgs. 436-7. Quotations originally from *Dawn*, Nov. 26, 1949.

³⁴ Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Islam: History and Politics*, Routledge, 1990. Pgs. 280-1. The World Muslim Congress understood itself to be a continuation of earlier congresses held in Mecca in 1926 and Jerusalem

special emphasis on a pan-Islamic approach, and its stated purpose was to serve as an international Muslim body promoting world peace and unity among Muslims.³⁵ The leadership of the conference emphasized that their principle interest was the day-to-day concerns of Muslims around the world and social and cultural issues, and the general topics of the congresses included the promotion of Islamic learning, Arabic as a common language, economic cooperation for matters of education and welfare, and infrastructure development and a stronger network of healthcare in Muslim counties.³⁶ Though denying any official or political character, in addition to an opening address provided by Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan various speeches and topics of discussion that emerged during the conference spoke to political questions.³⁷ The conference's resolutions stated support for the Muslims of Palestine and others in contentious zones.³⁸

Yugoslav observers generally viewed such movements with strong skepticism, but in the case of the World Muslim Congress, particularly concerning was the condemnation of conditions of religious Muslims in various countries, including Yugoslavia. Resolution No. 7 from the 1951 session explicitly stated that the Congress, “was deeply concerned over the sufferings of the Yugoslav Muslims and the attacks on

in 1931. The conference in Mecca had been hosted by King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, though the view that the 1949 congress was a revival of earlier conventions was based on the fact that the principle organizer of the Jerusalem convention (Amin al-Husseini) was also a key founder of the Muslim World Congress and central figure until the early 1970s. Following the 1949 and 1951 sessions (from which the USSR and India were excluded), a subsequent, though smaller meeting was planned for March 1952, and later conventions were held in Baghdad in June 1962, Mogadishu from December 1964 to January 1965, and in Amman in September 1967. Since its establishment, the World Muslim Congress has been one of the longest existing of such organizations. By 1983 it had 36 member states, and branches in 60 countries, with regional offices through the Middle East, South and Far East Asia, West and East Africa.

³⁵ *Islamic Movements in the Arab World, 1913-1965, Volume 4*. Ed. Anita L.P. Burdett. Archive Editions Limited, 1998. Pg. 95. As stated by the then President of the Congress, Professor A.B.A. Haleem in a press conference days prior to opening, among the congress's aims was to, “break down the barriers of racial nationalism and local particularism, and to create a Muslim renaissance by organizing centres of study and research.”

³⁶ *Islamic Movements in the Arab World*, Pg. 95. See also DA, 1952, Pakistan, Kut. 65, Doc. 19, Br. 47530, 11.Xii.1951.

³⁷ Although the Prime Minister's speech was, as observers noted, limited to generalities, it expressed approval of the principle of Muslim unity, stating that it was a key “part of the mission which Pakistan has set before itself to do everything in its power to promote closer fellowship and cooperation between Muslim countries.” Going on to highlight the divisive global conditions of the Cold War, and ideological struggle between Communism and Capitalism, he added that, “The world is in sore need of light. I have no doubt that light can be provided by Islam.” Qtd. Sisir Gupta, “Islam as a Factor in Pakistan's Foreign Policy,” *South Asian Politics and Religion*, Pg. 437. Quotation originally from *Dawn*, Feb. 10, 1951.

³⁸ Jacob M. Landau, “Appendix R: Resolutions Passed on 12 February 1951 by the Muslim World Congress (Second Annual Session),” in *Pan-Islam: History and Politics*, Routledge, 1990, Pg. 371.

their religious freedoms.”³⁹ A Yugoslav legation sent to Pakistan received a more developed letter on these issues in March 1952 from the Secretary of the World Muslim Congress, Inamullah Khan. The letter, it was noted, would also be forwarded to the United Nations, and expressed concern with the deaths of Muslims in Yugoslavia during World War II, the arrest and imprisonment of Islamic religious leaders after the war, as well as the post-war demolition of mosques. It concluded, “the Council of Motamar [the World Muslim Congress] demands of the Yugoslav government that it improve the treatment of Muslims - and release from jail Muslim leaders and Ulema.”⁴⁰

The Yugoslav delegation determined that the World Muslim Congress, dealt mainly in broad generalities, without clear directives and “no obvious means” to implement many of its sweeping resolutions. Furthermore, a legation sent to Pakistan shortly after the 1951 congress determined that it had become clear that organizational fractures were emerging, and that the influence of the movement was beginning to wane.⁴¹ Nevertheless, two letters were sent in response to the leadership of the Congress. One sent by the secretary of the Yugoslav Legation to Pakistan, Ivo Fizir, refuted its claims and drew attention to the past activities of some of its leadership, who he suggested were attempting to sew the seeds of national and religious hostility in the new Yugoslavia.⁴² The second was a reported letter from the IVZ.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ DA, 1952, Pakistan, Kut. 65, Doc. 19, Br. 47530, 26.III.1952. Pg 2.

⁴¹ According to Richard Edmund Ward in *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pg. 86, this was in part due to the secular nature of many governments in the Middle East, but also resistance to Pakistan's assumption of a leading role in Muslim affairs. Yugoslav reports suggest that these efforts were taken much to the dismay especially of Egypt, which, according to reports drafted after the 1951 Congress observed, “looks jealously on any Muslim country aspiring to have a leading role in the Muslim world.” (DA, 1951, Egypt, Kut. 20, Doc. 19, Br. 47874, 1, June 1951).

⁴² DA, 1952, Pakistan, Kut 65, Doc. 19, Br. 47530, 26.III.1952. Pg. 3. Fizir's letter, dispatched directly to Inamullah Khan on March 31, systematically addressed each point of critique. It noted that the specific mosque in question, located in Zagreb, had been constructed by the Croatian Ustasha to increase Muslim support and used as a base of recruitment. As such, its function was considered largely political, rather than a legitimate site of religious significance and its destruction not an act against the Islamic faith per se. With respect specifically to the deaths of Muslims during WWII, Fizir highlighted the multi-directional violence of the war, and isolated actions against Muslims specifically to oppositional forces (i.e. not the Communist Partisans). Moreover, Fizir questioned the motives of the World Muslim Congress' leadership, by pointing specifically to the role of Amin al-Husseini, one of the World Muslim Congress's key organizers and the controversial Grand Mufti of Palestine, who had gained notoriety in Yugoslavia due to his “spiritual support and blessings” for the establishment of a Bosnian Muslim division within the Waffen-SS.” Fizir made this point particularly emphatically, noting that Amin al-Husseini, “did not hesitate to join the officers and men of this unit during their military maneuvers,” while claiming that, “The only positive and

Internally, Yugoslav delegates dubbed the organization “malicious and fascist-minded,” and ultimately concluded that, “there is nothing solid we can do with these people,” beyond the letters already issued.⁴³ Nevertheless, in the heart of an uncertain international situation, the Congress’s resolution did threaten to poison broader public and political opinion against Yugoslavia, and accordingly, efforts were made to conduct a countercampaign to combat “misinformation.” In an effort to arm diplomats to refute such criticisms, delegates in Pakistan requested that, “a special package of material - pictures of all types, individual Muslims in important positions in our politics, economy, sciences, arts, and the like, the magazine of the Islamic community, etc.” be assembled and distributed in areas of concern.⁴⁴ Accordingly, efforts were made to assemble information which would give a favorable view of Muslim life in the country.⁴⁵ Compiling information on demographics, professions, notable figures in the government, the structure of the Islamic Community, and lists and examples of religious journals and texts, through the 1950s, the Yugoslav government would continue to make significant efforts to produce “corrective” propaganda to disseminate it to locations where criticism,

powerfull force, [*sic*] to stop that perfidious and criminalistic physical annihilation of the Yugoslav peoples, was Yugoslav National Liberation Movement under the leadership of Marshal Tito.”

⁴³ Ibid., Pg. 4. The assumed connections between the World Muslim Congress and residual “hostile” elements from World War II was bolstered in the Yugoslav diplomat’s view by the revelation during a meeting held in July 1951 with congress Secretary Inamullah Khan that much of the organizations information had been collected from Yugoslav emigres. As Inamullah Khan explained, “I met delegations of Muslim refugees from Yugoslavia. All have filed various petitions and appeals with us. And these materials that derived from them were reproduced and circulated among the delegates, during the conference of Motamar [World Muslim Congress], and from them and on this basis the resolution on Yugoslavia was made.” Furthermore, it is worth noting that although this letter, and Yugoslav efforts to discredit the World Muslim Congress in other countries emphasized the hostile character specifically of Amin al-Husseini, the report on this meeting also described Inamullah Khan as, “cocky and overly confident in interview. A young, rich, fanatical and invenerate upstart.. [and] like many here, completely Hitler-minded.” See for example, DA, 1955, Pakistan, Kut. 71, Br. 411706, 19.VII.1951. Pg. 5.

⁴⁴ See for example, DA, 1955, Pakistan, Kut. 71, Br. 411706, 19.VII.1951.

⁴⁵ ABiH, Commission for Religious Affairs, 1949/1952, br. 169/51, 15.xi.1951. In November of 1951, the Federal Commission for Religious Affairs sent a request to the Bosnian republic office requesting that they “urgently collect data on Muslims in Yugoslavia, because it is required by our mission in Pakistan...” The request specifically asked for basic demographics on Muslims in Yugoslavia, as well as the organization of religious communities, to be oriented towards the ends that “one can see what religious freedom Muslims enjoy in Yugoslavia.” Asking also for the role of Muslims in economic and political life, the report also noted that, “it would be of great interest if a comparison could be made between the current and the pre-war situation.” Having received the notice on the 20th the report was due back to Belgrade on the 25th or 26th, and so the respondents were not able to complete a comparison, nor provide information on political or economic life due to lack of data. They did, however, provide information based on 1948 figures for demographics, profession, literacy rates, religious institutions and schools, as well as religious texts in circulation in the country.

misinformation, or a lack of information seemed apparent.⁴⁶ By the mid-1950s, the persistent interest in the position of religious Muslims in Yugoslavia was well noted among diplomats.⁴⁷ “It is necessary,” noted one report from 1952, “to use the press and all the personal connections that well-serve a pronounced action to the maximum... We should write more about the position of Muslims from all walks of life and their development in Yugoslavia.”⁴⁸

Integral to these efforts was the active participation of religious authorities as well, who had the potential to serve as authoritative voices in refuting hostile or inaccurate perceptions of religious life in the country, as well as to promote more positive impressions. To give just one example of the early role of the IVZ in these efforts, in Egypt the May 1951 edition of the Islamic newspaper, *Liwa al-Islam* published an article on “Muslims in Yugoslavia,” written by Ahmed Hamza, a Minister in the Egyptian government.⁴⁹ Though the article itself specifically responded to the recently activated law in Yugoslavia that had banned Muslim women from wearing the veil, and charged, as Yugoslav diplomats put it, “the severe persecution of the ‘Mufti of Muslims’ [*sic*, Reisu-ulema] because of some alleged appeal that he sent to Muslim women to abide by religious rules and not remove the veil.”⁵⁰ The article called on Yugoslav officials to either refute the claims, or stop their persecutory activities. Yugoslav officials in Egypt met with the Egyptian Foreign Minister shortly after, in an effort to determine where the information had come from, and whether it represented the position of the government

⁴⁶ ABiH, Commission for Religious Affairs, 1949/1952, br. 169/51, 23.XI.1951.

⁴⁷ See for examples, DA, 1958, Pakistan, Kut. 86, Doc. 23, Br. 49942, 30.3.1958, as well as DA, 1951, Turkey, Kut. 85, Doc. 6, Br. 46601. A report from Pakistan suggesting that informational material on Muslim life in Yugoslavia be prepared for distribution noted that, “regardless of who is visiting you from Pakistan, 95% are obliged to ask you how [Muslims] live, and what kinds of rights Muslims have in our country.”

⁴⁸ DA, 1953, Various-Vatican, Kut. 71, Doc. 18, Br. 41553, 22.12.1952. By 1958, there were plans for a variety of articles, emissions, and films to be distributed in Pakistan and elsewhere, including the development of a brochure on Muslim life in Yugoslavia. Roughly 12-14 pages, it was to include the history of Muslims in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia, their participation in the Partisan resistance during WWII, as well as a “well-elaborated chapter on the freedom of religion and the Muslim place of the church,” with pictures in various significant locations and information on the new Reisu-ulema Kemura. For more see, DA, 1958, Pakistan, Kut. 86, Doc. 23, Br. 49942, 30.3.1958.

⁴⁹ DA, 1951, Egypt, Kut. 20, Doc. 15, Br. 46470, 11.V.1951. The paper is listed as *Lewa al-Islam* in Yugoslav archival documents.

⁵⁰ DA, 1951, Egypt, Kut. 20, Doc. 15, Br. 49180.

itself.⁵¹ For their part, Egyptian officials suggested that Hamze was an, “unusually religious man and that he was probably impressed by the news” that had emanated earlier from Karachi. Assuring that these views did not represent those of the government, they pledged that with the receipt of corrective information, they would attempt to publish an amendment to the article in June.⁵²

Most interesting in this context about the redaction itself, was that it specifically drew on the voice of the Reis ul-ulema Ibrahim Fejić, rather than Yugoslav state authority.⁵³ The article noted that Ibrahim Fejić was already well known in Egypt, given that in 1949 he had visited as the head of a Yugoslav pilgrimage to Mecca, and that during his time there he had met with local ulema, “denying the news that was published from time to time about the abuse [Muslims in Yugoslavia] suffer.”⁵⁴ The report insisted that Fejić had published no appeal to Yugoslav Muslim women to resist the law, “but on the contrary, had published an expose religiously proving that the veil is not counted as a precept of Islam, and that this august religion of tolerance does not prevent Muslim woman from showing the face, hands and feet.”⁵⁵ Though in this case the Reis ul-ulema was responding to accusations which involved him personally, the weight of his religious authority to refute criticisms of Yugoslavia’s religious policies would continue to factor prominently in efforts to recast its international image.

The Developing Role of the Islamic Religious Community

The Islamic Community and Ibrahim Fejić played a key role in refuting critiques against the condition of Muslims in Yugoslavia. But it also served important functions in

⁵¹ DA, 1951, Egypt, Kut. 20, Doc. 15, Br. 48019, 1.6.1951, Pgs. 2-3. Officials belied the intense concern of internal correspondence, by expressing in this meeting their surprise that a government official would issue such a piece, and suggested that perhaps it was a product of the atmosphere created by the World Muslim Congress, and expressed concern that the Egyptian government had been influenced by the activities of the Mufti of Palestine specifically.

⁵² Ibid. Pgs. 2-3.

⁵³ Ibrahim Fejić had become the head of the Islamic Religious Community in 1947, and had generally been regarded as having taken a conciliatory position with respect to the socialist state. It was during his term that the veil was abolished, and many dervish orders closed. However, the Islamic Community, as the official religious establishment in Yugoslavia had restored a degree of latitude in managing its finances and property and publishing journals, and the Hajj was restored.

⁵⁴ DA, 1951, Egypt, Kut. 20, Doc. 15, Br. 48019, 1.6.1951.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

other ways as well. The value of the Islamic Community in efforts to develop positive relationships, and positively portray Muslim life in Yugoslavia was also made evident during the reestablishment of Hajj travels in 1949.⁵⁶ Though the first trip, spanning September and October of that year, only included five members, while on pilgrimage Reis ul-ulema Fejić met both with religious figures and numerous politicians, an opportunity they had used to explain the Yugoslav side of the 1948 dispute, dispel misinformation about the poor condition of religious life in the country, and express the commitment of the IVZ to building socialism.⁵⁷ According to internal notes on the, the pilgrimage was also “convenient,” as it allowed the Reis ul-ulema to explain Yugoslavia’s new international position with respect to the Cominform, and, “contributed to the favorable attitude of the Arab public in [Syria and Lebanon] in terms of voting for Yugoslavia in the United Nations for election to the Security Council.”⁵⁸ After a break of four years, regular pilgrimages were established, although the number of participants in the 1950s was typically capped at around thirty-five, due to fiscal constraints.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ DA, 1957, Yugoslavia, Kut. 51, Doc. 32, Br. 412876. 6.2.1957. During the 1949 Hajj the Fejić established personal contact with, among others, the Rector of El-Azhara in Cairo and the Syrian Grand Mufti (who visited Yugoslavia some years later). After Fejić left office in 1957, these ties were reestablished by Reis-ul-ulema Kemura.

⁵⁷ For more on the first Hajj, see “Prvi hodočasnici iz Nove Jugoslavije,” *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starešinstva*, Br. 1-2, (Sarajevo, 1950), Pg. 57. This first Hajj included only five members, the Reis-ul-ulema Ibrahim Fejić, Deputy Supreme Head Murad Šećeragić, President of the Commission for Religious Affairs for the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and senior official of the Islamic Community Hasan Ljubinčić, an Endowment Officer from Skopje Šuajb Arslan, and Sinan Hasani, an official from Prištine, Kosovo. It was hosted by the Saudi government and participated in an Eid dinner celebrating King Abdul Azis. The pilgrimage and the activities of the Rei ul-ulema were credited in particular with dispelling “the lies and slander that during the Ustasha years was systematically spread about the apparent religious persecution and disenfranchisement of Muslims, calculated to raise doubts about the existence of freedom in our country.”

⁵⁸ AJ, Fond 836, KMJ-II-10/22, report written by representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beirut, Lazar Lilic, Oct. 28, 1949, pg. 8. Yugoslavia was in fact elected to the Security Council on October 25, 1949. Though I was unable to locate exact voting records, Lilic’s report goes on to claim that, “the favorable public attitude in this matter and the general sympathy that exists in the Arab world for Yugoslavia and her position, facilitated the action of the Syrian foreign minister to Syria to vote for Yugoslavia, and under the Arab League come out with a proposal that the Arab states as a block vote for the candidacy of Yugoslavia.” For more on this subject, as well as articles and radio emissions on the visit, official reports on the delegation’s reception and effect, a letter to Marshal Tito from the Reis ul-ulema describing the visit, and specific suggestions by the Reis on possible ways to improve Yugoslavia’s reputation in the Middle East (including sending students for religious study to the university in Cairo, distributing copies of *Glasnik*, and developing closer relationships specifically with Saudi Arabia), see AJ, Fond 836, KMJ-II-10/22.

⁵⁹ After 1961, Yugoslavia’s domestic economic conditions improved, and the cap was abolished, and individual tourist organizations were allowed to submit ‘bids’ to service the trip. In 1966 independent travel

In 1957, Fejić retired, and Sulejman ef. Kemura became the new Reis ul-ulema. Upon his election, information about Kemura was incorporated into informational packets, including pictures and biographical information. In addition, approval and immediate plans for participation in the 1957 Hajj were made through the Federal Commission of Religious Affairs and the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (*Državni sekretarijat inostranih poslova*, DSIP). The complete travels for the 35 members occurred from February 19 through March 19, taking route through Cairo, Egypt. There, they met and exchanged pleasantries with President Gamal Abdul Nasser, who had visited Yugoslavia and Sarajevo, and been introduced to the Reis ul-ulema the year prior.⁶⁰ At a brief reception for the Yugoslav group, Nasser gave a short speech, in which he emphasized the relationship, “deepening every day” between Egypt and Yugoslavia, and suggested that Tito could visit Egypt in December of that year. He wished the delegation a safe trip, and asked them to, “remember him with a prayer when in the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.” The next day a gift from Nasser of a Quran arrived to the delegation’s hotel.⁶¹

Despite an initially tense encounter with a group of Bosnian Muslim emigres in Cairo, the report described the Hajj travels positively in general, and suggested that the delegation, as Yugoslavs, suffered no significant inconvenience or harassment.⁶² “On the contrary, we saw that we Yugoslavs, our country and our President Tito enjoyed a great reputation in this part of the world.” This was noted as particularly true among countries

through tourism organizations was approved. As a result of these changes, and the dropping price of the cost of travel, individual travelers rose dramatically—154 were recorded in the first year after 1961, to 2,211 in 1971. Independent pilgrims traveled by plane, boat, bus, and private car, and often included visits to several Muslim countries, known mosques, and other places of significance.

⁶⁰ During this visit, which included President Sukarno of Indonesia, the delegation not only met with the IVZ, but visited sites of significance such as mosques and the Gazi Husrev Beg madrassa in Sarajevo.

⁶¹ DA, 1958, Yugoslavia, Kut. 63, Doc.13, Br. 416598. Pg. 9.

⁶² Ibid., 12-16. According to the report on the trip provided by Kemura, the only encounter of this type was with a group of Yugoslav émigrés, who frequented a café near the hotel in Cairo where the delegation was staying. In discussions with members of the pilgrimage, the emigres were primarily interested in their relatives, friends and acquaintances in Sarajevo and the provinces, and former teachers, etc. Kemura knew one of the emigres, Dr. Mehmeda Maslić, who had been a colleague when the two were young. According to his account, Kemura was in one encounter asked a series of pointed questions about Muslim life in general in Yugoslavia, waning religiosity among youth, the absence of mektabs, interfaith marriages, and the “serbian-communist” nature of the present government. He reported skillful responses to each of the questions, and despite tensions between the pilgrims and emigres, “typical Bosnian sentiment” meant the emigres nevertheless treated them as their countrymen in a foreign land, helping with Arabic and other needs.

such as, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Libya, Pakistan, India, and Indonesia. The Reis's ultimate assessment of the trip was that it had served to develop a greater appreciation of the culture and significant sites of Islam among the Yugoslavs, but also a clear demonstration that, "the new Yugoslavia is a country of democracy, religious tolerance and wider freedoms." Noting that the Hajj, "enables stronger links with people of different countries and especially countries of the Middle East, which in this day and age are building independence and overthrowing the shackles of capitalist exploitation," he recommended that "it would be useful and necessary to continue such contacts," and "that it would be politically wise and economically justified in order to promote our country and our politics and economy in these parts of the world."⁶³

Accordingly, the following year, plans were made to send a delegation of five members, including Kemura on travels through the Middle East for roughly one month.⁶⁴ Highlighting the political elements of the trip, in preparation announcements were forwarded to Yugoslav diplomats in Turkey, Syria and Egypt for their assessment of the value and possible challenges that might face the delegation's visit. Responses were mixed. In Egypt, it was concluded that "a visit of the High Islamic Council could be very helpful, provided that the choice of persons in the delegation would be such as to guarantee a certain political effect in terms of the popularization of Yugoslavia."⁶⁵ There were also reservations, in particular that due to poor relations between Turkey and Arab countries (in particular *vis a vis* the Syrian Crisis of 1957), "the delegation should not visit both at the same time... This is politically very important, because otherwise [it may] jeopardize the success of the visit to Egypt and Syria."⁶⁶ Given the contemporary political equation, it was ultimately decided that the delegation would visit Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The political importance of the visit was illustrated

⁶³ Ibid., 24

⁶⁴ DA, 1957, Yugoslavia, Kut. 51, Doc. 32, Br. 412876, 17.IV.1957.

⁶⁵ Ibid. The brunt of preparatory materials focused on Egypt and Syria, which had recently unified into the United Arab Republic.

⁶⁶ Ibid. In 1957, changes in the Syrian government caused western observers, and the country's neighbors to suspect that a Soviet-led communist takeover in the county had occurred. Syria's neighbors, and members of the Baghdad Pact including Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon called for intervention, and Turkey sent troops to its Syrian border. The tension between Syria and Turkey escalated as Soviet leaders threatened to intervene in the event of a Turkish attack on Syria, and American leaders in the event to Soviet intervention. Though both sides ultimately withdrew, the potential for war left residual tensions in relations between Turkey and the Syria.

by the fact that the delegation was accordingly issued preparatory materials on the conditions (mostly political) in each country they planned to visit.⁶⁷

The visit itself began in February 1958, and included a wealth of activities—visits to various important mosques and madrasas, and historically significant sites including the pyramids in Egypt, libraries, and universities, a museum of folklore in Syria, and various other cities and sites of historical interest. The delegation was frequently welcomed by both clergy and government officials, and met once again with Nasser, who discussed the growing trend of Non-Alignment at length, and sharing pictures of Sukarno and Tito with the delegation.⁶⁸ In a lengthy, detailed report on the trip, submitted to the Commission for Religious Affairs, the Reis ul-ulema noted various points of political interest, including the apparent satisfaction with the formation of the UAR and the possibility of its expansion beyond Egypt and Syria (though this never occurred), the general public support (regardless of faith) for Egyptian President Nasser, and even the approval of Yugoslavia's break with and independent policies from the Soviet Union. Also of note was the frequency with which the delegation was asked about religious Muslim life in Yugoslavia, which provided an opportunity to promote conditions within the country, and create “overwhelmingly positive impressions of Yugoslavia throughout the countries visited.”⁶⁹ The Reis ul-ulema noted that, “at many receptions and meetings, the delegation [...] corrected many wrong opinions about the religious life of our country, which could have been formed under the influence of our emigres. We were, for example, often asked, whether Russia and Yugoslavia are the same.”⁷⁰ With respect to the overall success of the visit, Kemura stated, “I believe this visit of our delegation to be of major benefit for closer and closer friendship and economic relations between our country and the countries that the delegation visited.”⁷¹

In the coming years, visits continued in earnest, as the IVZ both traveled and received religious and political delegations. In the context of the developing program of Non-Alignment, and in particular decolonization and the state and nation-building projects that accompanied it, the IVZ's role increasingly went beyond just defending

⁶⁷ DA, 1958, Yugoslavia, Kut. 63, Doc. 12, Br. 43055.

⁶⁸ DA, 1958, Yugoslavia, Kut. 63, Doc. 13, Br. 416598. Pg. 12

⁶⁹ DA, 1958, Yugoslavia, Kut. 63, Doc. 13, Br. 416598. Pgs. 3, 6, and 9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Pg. 14.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Yugoslav policies and assuring interested parties of its religious tolerance. Firmly positioned as a pillar of building commonality and friendly relations, the transition into the 1960s saw the increasingly open, and direct political role of the Islamic community, as it actively promoted the harmonious nature of Islam and socialism, and Yugoslavia's church-state relations as a possible model of development in other states.

As a key leader of the Non-Aligned Movement with Egypt, India, Ghana, and Indonesia, numerous officials and political activists in other countries including Guinea, Morocco, and Algeria took interest in various aspects of the "Yugoslav model" of political, economic, and social development.⁷² In 1962 (a year after Tito toured Ghana, Togo, Guinea, Mali, Tunisia, and the U.A.R, and Morocco had joined the Non-Aligned Movement), the Reis ul-ulema made a high-profile visit to Morocco as a guest of the new King Hassan II.⁷³ News of the visit was publicized in newspapers, and on radio and television. During the visit, Kemura again answered questions regarding "the conditions under which Muslims live [in Yugoslavia] (whether they had equal rights with others), and the actual ability for religious life in a socialist society." On these questions, according to diplomatic reports, Kemura had, "interpreted very well our [Yugoslav state] attitudes and emphasized that Muslims, thanks to the revolution [...] live far better than in the old Yugoslavia."⁷⁴ This time, however, Kemura also took with him the Constitution of the Islamic Community, the Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities, and the Agreement on Social Security Officers of the Islamic Community, all of which were translated into Arabic for Moroccan officials.⁷⁵ The Yugoslav take on the visit was that, "The people of Morocco, from our view, from the King to the most ordinary citizen cherishes the greatest sympathy for Marshal Tito and Yugoslavia's peoples. It is interesting that Moroccans are not burdened by any prejudices about communism and how it relates to religion."⁷⁶ Reports surmised that this was in part thanks to, "the affirmation of the Islamic Community via *Glasnik*, visits, and other

⁷² Aydın Babuna, "Bosnian Muslims during the Cold War: Their Identity between Domestic and Foreign Policies," in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*. Ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2012. Pg. 196.

⁷³ DA, 1962, Algeria, Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 42704, 8.X.1962.

⁷⁴ DA, 1962, Algeria, Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 426130, 15.VII.1962.

⁷⁵ DA, 1962, Algeria Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 429526, 4.VIII.1962. Pg. 5-7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Morocco remained a constitutional monarchy, marked by periodic discontent, and relations with Yugoslavia were not as persistent as those with Algeria or Egypt.

publications in Arabic.”⁷⁷ Although it is unclear to what extent Kemura’s visit had any practical influences on Moroccan policy, his report on the visit to the Federal Commission on Religious Affairs, also deemed the visit a success.⁷⁸ Moreover, during the visit contact had also been made with representatives of an Algerian mission in Morocco, which had showed, “an unusual interest on the situation of Muslims in Yugoslavia. They as well as other Islamic countries are particularly interested in the organization of the Islamic Community and its relationship to the state, because Yugoslavia was, in their opinion, the best to have addressed the relationship between faith and the socialist social order.”⁷⁹

In 1969, retrospective report issued by the Federal Commission for Religious Affairs in Belgrade listed the major recent trips of the Islamic Community over roughly the last decade, including the 1958 visit to the United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia; the reception of the Syrian ulama in 1959; attendance at the anniversary celebrations of the Iraqi Revolution in July 1960; the visit to Morocco in 1962; an exchange of visits with Libya in 1964, and again in 1967; attendance to the 1000 year celebrations in Algeria in 1968, and a reciprocal visit to Yugoslavia by Algerian delegates in July 1968; a Sudanese visit to Yugoslavia in 1968; as well as noted the Islamic Community’s attendance to the World Congress of the Islamic League in 1965 in Mecca, the All-Islamic Congress in 1966 in Mogadishu, and all annual meetings of the Islamic Spiritual Academy in Cairo, Egypt.

Based on information collected from delegates in various countries, and periodic debriefings on the activities and travels of the Islamic Community, the report suggested that Yugoslav officials almost universally found the visits to be of exceptional value. “One may say, and these are the assessments of our diplomatic missions, that they have have a very positive impact in fighting prejudices about a lack of religious freedom in our

⁷⁷ Ibid. The Commission of Religious Affairs put enough stock into the importance of publications and press releases that it promoted the development of a pamphlet authored specifically by the Reis, to be printed in Arabic and potentially French on the condition of Muslims in Yugoslavia for distribution. Pending approval, the Commission even offered to provide financial assistance for its publication, and immediately requested that certain articles of *Glasnik* referred to abroad be summarized and printed in Arabic for distribution. On this, see DA, 1962, Algeria, Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 423933, 14.VII.1962.

⁷⁸ A visit to Morocco in 1964 was rejected, because of concerns that it might be used to incite religious fervor in the country during a period of internal turmoil. (DA, 1960, Yugoslavia, Kut. 64, Doc. 26, Br. 416704. 2.IV.1960.

⁷⁹ DA, 1962, Algeria, Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 429526, 4.VIII.1962. Pgs. 5-7.

country, especially about the disadvantaged position of Muslims in Yugoslavia, as well as to have had a positive impact on bilateral relations between our country and the Arab world.”⁸⁰ Even after the very first visit of the religious delegation to the U.A.R., Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia in 1958, and the subsequent Syrian delegation’s visit to Yugoslavia in 1959, the report noted that, “for the first time, [Arab news agencies] recorded a positive impression on religious freedom in Yugoslavia.” In the face of the positive impact of the visits, even the persistent problems with hostile émigré communities, “began to lose influence in these countries, and finally lost all significance.”⁸¹ The report attributed this success, and the future usefulness of continuing such activities to the, “patriotic attitude of the Reis-ul-ulema and his willingness to support all the efforts of our country to strengthen relations with newly liberated Asian and African countries.” It concluded that, “we should make every effort to further the expansion of these ties,” and suggested that the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs reach out to diplomatic missions in Arab and Islamic countries in order to “further spread and use these relationships.”⁸²

For his part, Reis ul-ulema Kemura in his own reports also emphasized the broader usefulness of these visits beyond religious purposes, and pointed to Islam as an important base not only of commonality, but as a crucial element that characterized political and social life in many countries. Particularly in the context of efforts to build relationships with newly decolonized countries, he argued that “It would be quite wrong, not to take into account in [Yugoslav] relations with Islamic nations, the fact that these nations in their recent awakening have remained loyal and faithful to Islamic teachings and look at many things and determine their views through their beliefs.”⁸³

While the IVZ’s role in international relations began by refuting claims that Yugoslav Muslims suffered from discrimination, this role grew and changed over time. In these instances, the very travels and activities of the Islamic Community were intended to illustrate the potential for tolerance under socialism, and show that socialism (or secularism in general) did not necessarily signal the death of religious life and activities.

⁸⁰ DA, 1969, International Affairs, Kut. 107, Doc. 10, Br. 436876, 6.X.1969, Pgs. 1-2.

⁸¹ Ibid., Pg. 1.

⁸² Ibid., Pg. 3.

⁸³ DA, 1962, Algeria, Kut. 3, Doc. 58, Br. 429526, 4.VIII.1962. Pgs. 5-7.

“As these countries are building or intend to build a socialist society,” Kemura argued, “they need the necessary experience of Yugoslavia in this area.”⁸⁴

It is important to note that the IVZ remained under heavy surveillance, and the latitude granted to it should not be overestimated. Its purpose in these affairs, by state objectives was always to illustrate loyalty and patriotism, to show that the Muslim community in Yugoslavia was progressive and supportive of the state under which they lived, and that the church-state arrangement in Yugoslavia had provided a solution to the “problem” of religiosity under socialism. The Islamic Community remained always under the directive of the Commission for Religious Affairs (and in the case of international activities the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs), who approved and rejected travels and required meticulous accounts of their outcomes. Accordingly, there are certainly those who actively contested the “ideal” nature of this arrangement, and the quality of religious life in the country.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, in the realm of international relations, the Yugoslav leadership endeavored at least to portray itself through the activities of the IVZ as having struck a solution to the “problem” of church-state relations, with a Muslim population that was well-tolerated and free, and religious institutions that were valued, progressive, politically active, and supportive of Yugoslav socialism. From selective visits to sites of Muslim cultural heritage, to political visits with the highest officials and religious leaders, the distribution of religious publications and even copies of Yugoslav religious law and policy, Yugoslav officials attempted, through the workings of the Islamic Community, to launch the country from an object of criticism, to a model in the realm of religious tolerance and church-state relations.

Alternative Discussions of the Muslim Community in International Relations

While the IVZ was acknowledged by officials as performing an important function in Yugoslavia’s international relations, it is important to note that efforts to promote the state’s relationship with its Muslim population took various forms outside

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ See for example AJ, Fond 836, KMJ-II-10/22.

the realm of faith as well. As a secular socialist state, relations with domestic religious institutions remained tenuous despite the “normalization” efforts of the 1950s. Yugoslav officials always took the abandonment of religiosity and the secularization of the population as a crucial marker of socialist progress and modernization. Accordingly, at times it was in fact actions against religious institutions and markers of religiosity that were emphasized. For example, in the case of Turkey, the 1950s saw efforts to draw out the “similarities on the position of faith,” between the two countries, “i.e. the separation of religion and state, eradicating religious education in secular teaching, laws abolishing outdated customs such as the removal of the veil, and the like.”⁸⁶ In particular, during a trade delegation visit from Turkey to Belgrade in December, 1952, Tito among other topics, noted the similarities in “difficulties with religion” and Yugoslavia’s recent abolition of the veil, drawing comparison to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s modernizing reforms after World War I.⁸⁷ In later, separate case, during preparations for a visit to Yugoslavia in 1960 it was suggested that it would be good for the delegation to visit Bosnia, “i.e. the areas where there are Muslims,” in light of reported efforts in Tunisia to pursue a governmental path marked by secularism. Yugoslav officials figured that, “the laicism of our Muslims could be instructive for them in further implementing the policy of separation of religion from state affairs.”⁸⁸

A final, much later case can be found during the visit of the Iraqi Communist Party to Yugoslavia in 1972. While meeting with representatives of the Central Committee of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the delegates expressed an interest in the management of internationality relations in the republic. In light of the recent affirmation of Muslim nationhood, and the addition to the 1971 federal census, efforts were made to explain the concept of “Muslims in the national sense.” In 1972, Bosnian republic officials, summarizing their visit with an Iraqi delegation made note of their discussions about the addition of “Muslims” in the national sense to the 1971 census. However, “the delegation showed a certain lack of understanding,” which the summary report on the visit

⁸⁶ DA, 1953, Razne-Vatikan, Box 71, Folder 18, Doc. 41553, 20.xii.1952, Ankara.

⁸⁷ AJ, Fond 863, KMJ-1-2-a/116, 30.XII, 1952, Pgs. 2-3.

⁸⁸ DA, 1960, Tunisia, Kut. 133, Doc. 19, Br. 411401, 22.IV.1960.

suggested was “perhaps a result of the fact that they were in Yugoslavia for the first time, and were not familiar enough with Yugoslav reality.”⁸⁹

Compared to the wealth of materials relating to the IVZ suggesting its crucial role in Yugoslavia’s international relations program, archival records and transcripts discussing and promoting the secular nature of Yugoslav policies, and its Muslim community, particularly in light of the later affirmation of Muslim nationhood, are few and far between, making it difficult to provide conclusive appraisal. Nevertheless, given these instances, and the general position of the socialist government towards religion, it suggests that the country’s Muslim population was employed in diplomatic discussion in various ways depending on circumstances, and that further inquiry along these lines may be useful.

Conclusions

Although I am still working through the significance of my findings, a few observations are worth noting. First, it seems that the ways in which Yugoslavia’s Muslim population was discussed and employed in the country’s efforts to develop and further its international relations and image varied depending on circumstances—a subject I hope to develop further. Furthermore, while some historians have suggested that the domestic elevation of the status of Muslims within Yugoslavia was a byproduct of the country’s attempts to court the international Muslim community, the reality seems to have been rather more complex. In particular, my archival research suggests that Muslims, particularly in a religious sense, became an important subject of international relations for Yugoslavia after 1948, and in this way, efforts to shape the country’s international image were not only proactive, but at times also reactive. As a result of early policies placing heavy restrictions on the activities of the IVZ and other confessional communities, Yugoslavia had come under serious international criticism for policies that were viewed as repressive and anti-religious. The pointed critiques of organizations like the World Muslim Congress forced the country to grapple with its international reputation. Efforts to combat these critiques drew on the authority of the

⁸⁹ AJ, 507, Iraq, 44/I-14, 18.XII.1972, pg. 5.

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IVZ, which over time became an important agent in promoting church-state relations, and positive portrayals of religious Muslim life in Yugoslavia. In this respect, the role of the IVZ, though drawing on the commonality of Islamic faith, was understood by officials more to demonstrate the success of the Yugoslav “solution” to the management of confessional communities under socialism. While the latitude granted to the IVZ in these activities should not be overestimated, over time recourse to its leadership in smoothing international relations also invested the Islamic Community with a particular kind of authority, and blended its mission and activities, which earlier had been constitutionally relegated purely to the realm of faith, with those of politics and diplomacy.