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HETEROGENEITY OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

The Western Balkans is a region inhabited by people of various faiths. In the region, Orthodox Christian, Islamic and Roman Catholic religions are dominantly present among the population. The challenging geopolitical position of this region is reflected through the historical presence of great powers and their aspiration for influence, which had a significant impact on changing the demographic image of the region, but also on mutual relations between the peoples of the region. The complex history of mutual ethnic relations and the collective memory of historical conflicts between different ethno-religious groups significantly affects the future of the peoples of the Western Balkans and the possibility of their peaceful coexistence. The authors' goal is to answer the key research question: *Are religious identities a possible source of new ethnic conflicts in the area of Kosovo and Metohija and Bosnia and Herzegovina?* In order to answer the research question, the authors will employ several methods: case study method, discourse/content analysis and historical method.

Key words: Western Balkans; religious identity; ethnic conflicts; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo and Metohija