

Errando Discimus: Has Post-Yugoslav Political and Social Science Neglected Religion?

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This article explores the issue of neglecting religion in the post-Yugoslav political and social science literature (1990–2018). Therefore, it offers a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the leading political and social science journals from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. The research question that this article will tackle is: Has post-Yugoslav political and social science neglected religion? The hypothesis of this article is that, although there was an obvious need for in-depth studies of the relationship between religion and politics in the post-Yugoslav region, leading political and social science journals published from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina have neglected religion. In order to test our hypothesis, we employ content analysis by examining the archives of the leading journals published in the above stated states and basic statistics in order to highlight the percentage and extent of published articles dealing with religion compared to the total volume of articles published.

Keywords: neglecting religion, post-Yugoslav literature, political science, social sciences, leading journals, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina.

INTRODUCTION

In the last couple of decades, it became clear and obvious that religion can influence politics, political behavior, and political outcomes. However, relevant political science literature covering the field of the complex relationship between religion and politics shares one important pattern: authors tend to emphasize the fact that religion was neglected, ignored, and/or an overlooked element in the political and social science analysis. For example, Wald and Wilcox analyzed the treatment of religion in *American Political Science Review*, a flagship journal in the field. Their survey covered the 1960–2002 period and showed that *American Political Science Review* produced “just 25 articles titled with a religious term” (Wald and Wilcox 2006:525), while “the *Journal of Politics* found room for 42 articles and *Political Theory*, which began only in 1973, published 47 such pieces. In just 3 years, when it was edited by a political scientist, the interdisciplinary *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* published more articles on religion by political scientists (28) than the *Review* managed in the entire post-1960 period.” Therefore, they conclude: “Apart from economics and geography, it is hard to find a social science that has given less attention to religion than political science” (Wald and Wilcox 2006:523). On the other hand, Fox claims that the history of the study of religion and politics “is overshadowed by a large period of time when social scientists mostly ignored religion as a significant political and social factor” (Fox 2013:3). Moreover, in his study of the role of religion in international relations (IR), Fox added that “the influence of religion has received comparatively little attention in international relations” (Fox 2001:53). A similar conclusion comes from the study of Vendulka Kubalkova,

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who states that modern IR “neglect the role of religions, culture, ideas, ideologies and rules in social science accounts of global politics” (Kubalkova 2003:87, quoted in Haynes 2013:108). Daniel Philpott also did not miss the chance to highlight the fact that political science neglected religion. In his 2009 paper, he claims that “religion’s place in political science scholarship is vastly underproportioned” (2009:184), basing his statement on a previous survey in 2001 when he analyzed four leading IR journals in the period of time 1980–1999. His study showed that “only six or so out a total of about sixteen hundred featured religion as an important influence” (Philpott 2001:9, 2002:69).¹ On the other side, Antony Gill added that most political scientists “consider religion to be a peripheral subject matter” (Gill 2001:118). In his influential work on the theoretical relationship between religion and politics, Jevtić also argued that “[r]eligion was then very rarely taken as subject of political research, and, as a result, political scientist explained political processes, political life, political organizations, political regimes, political parties etc. within a purely materialistic framework, neglecting the influence of religion, even when it should have been acknowledged” (Jevtić 2007:60). And finally, Ron Hassner claims that religion came to the attention of political scientists just after 9/11, arguing that “[t]he number of books under this subject heading in the Library of Congress catalogue has expanded from two or three books per year in the last three decades to an average of fourteen books a year since 2001. More books have been published on Islam and war since 9/11 than ever before in human history. Over 80% of all the articles published on religion in international relations journals appeared after September 2001” (Hassner 2003:68).

The presumption that political science has ignored religion was tested and received its first wide and thorough empirical confirmation in the study of Steven Kettell, whose research tested the extent of the above stated claim by examining leading political science and sociology journals over a 10-year span (2000–2010) (Kettell 2012). His study “involved a content analysis of the 20 highest ranked political science periodicals, based on the ISI’s 2009 measurement of five-year impact factor, for 11 full years from the beginning of 2000 to the end of 2010 (for comparative purposes the same process was also completed for the 20 highest ranked sociology periodicals) (Kettell 2012:94). Kettell’s study not only confirmed that political science ignored religion, but it also offered some striking results. Out of the total sum of 7,245 published items in the 20 highest ranked political science journals, only 97 were coded as articles directly engaging with religious issues (which makes it 1.34 percent of the total number!), and 85 of them engaged with religion as a “secondary issue.” Therefore, the total sum of articles dealing with religion is 184, which is 2.54 percent (Kettell 2012). Analysis of the 20 highest ranked sociology journals showed the total sum of 6,896 articles, of which 242 were coded as “primary,” and 97 as “secondary.” Combined, it makes 339 articles in total (4.92 percent) (Kettell 2012). In comparison, it means that sociologists paid more attention to religion than political scientists.² Anyway, it is important to say that Kettell’s analysis provided relevant empirical data for the claim that political science ignored religion.

However, Kettell’s analysis was solely based on the Western political science literature. Contrary to that, this article intends to test the hypothesis that religion was an ignored and neglected element in political and social science literature from the perspective of post-Yugoslav literature in the field. We argue that this research is relevant and important as it will shed a new light on this important topic, and tends to offer additional evidence for the neglect of religion in political science literature. Although we do not intend to compare the relevance of the Western

¹ Philpott surveyed the following journals: *International Organizations*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *World Politics*, and *International Security*.

² That sociologists paid more attention to religious issues can be also seen from the fact that the International Sociological Association (ISA) founded its Research Committee 22 on “Sociology of Religion” in 1959, while the International Political Science Association (IPSA) founded RC 43 on “Religion and Politics” in 1999, so 40 years later.

and post-Yugoslav political science literature, we argue that the research of the post-Yugoslav region can be a modest asset to the Kettell's study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As Kettell suggested, content analysis of the leading political science journals in a specific academic environment provides a "broadly accurate guide to the character of the academic mainstream, and hence to the scope of its engagement with religious issues" (2012:94). Therefore, in this article, we employ content analysis of the leading political and social science journals in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina since 1990 and intend to measure the level of engagement of published articles with religious issues in a broader sense.

Such research design opens several important methodological questions. First, is the analysis of the post-Yugoslav political science literature relevant? We believe it is due to the fact that the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s had a significant religious dimension,³ and moreover, Balkans is the part of the world where traditionally religion and religious communities are important political actors. Religion and religious communities are important historical, cultural, and, above all, political actors. Therefore, it is logical to presume that political scientists were interested in the intersection between religion and politics and thus published their work in leading political and social science journals. However, if this is not the case and we manage to prove that post-Yugoslav political and social scientists neglected religion, our results will be complementary with the trends in the world, at the same time pointing out the need for future studies in the field. We have decided to cover leading political and social science journals from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina (and thus omit Montenegro, Macedonia, and Slovenia from our analysis), as these three states were most involved in the past conflicts, and they represent the majority of the population of former Yugoslavia. A second important question is related to the methodology of how to determine the most appropriate sample of leading political and social science journals.

The main hypothesis of this article is:

H1: Although there was an obvious need for in-depth studies of the relationship between religion and politics in the post-Yugoslav region, leading political and social science journals published from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina neglected religion in the period of time 1990–2018.

We use two approaches in this article. The first approach considers only the political and social science journals covered and indexed by the two most relevant and important databases: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus.⁴ These include the post-Yugoslav political and social science journals indexed in the following WoS flagship indexes: Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Art & Humanities Citation Index.⁵ Due to the fact that only a small number of post-Yugoslav political and social science journals are indexed in the flagship indexes of the WoS, we include the journals covered in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), which represents a list of journals "submitted for evaluation to the core Web of Science databases and (if successful) indexed in the ESCI while undergoing more in-depth editorial review."⁶ Moreover, we also cover

³The conflict in Yugoslavia that we are referring to was one of the main arguments of Samuel Huntington in his influential, although often criticized work on the "clash of civilizations." See more at Huntington (1996).

⁴Although there are important remarks on the indexing process of these two databases, we consider them as the most relevant for our study.

⁵For more information on the WoS flagship indexes, see: "Journal Selection Process."

⁶What is the Emerging Sources Citation Index.

Table 1: List of political and social science journals from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina indexed in WoS and/or Scopus

Title of the Journal	State	Coverage	Years of Coverage
Politics and Religion Journal	Serbia	ESCI, Scopus	2007–2018
Journal of Regional Security	Serbia	Scopus	2012–2018
Sociologija	Serbia	ESCI, Scopus	2001–2018
Društvena istraživanja	Croatia	Scopus	1992–2018
Politička misao (Croatian Political Science Review)	Croatia	ESCI, Scopus	1990–2018
Bosniaca	BH	ESCI	1996–2017

Source: Authors.

the journals indexed in Scopus and SJR (Scimago Journal & Country rank), no matter the category in which they are indexed (ranging from Q1 to Q4, with Q1 being the highest category).⁷ However, even after covering the journals indexed in Scopus and SJR, the sample of the journals is rather small (six in total). That is why we decided to further expand our analysis, and therefore cover journals from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, which are highly ranked by the specific regulations of these countries. This approach helps us cover a respected sample of the journals (21 in total). And the last methodological question regards the “centrality of religious issues to their content” (Kettell 2012:94), as Kettell suggested. That being said, our coding of articles is based on the use of religion and/or a religious term in the title, abstract, or the keywords.

We cover the publication period of 1990–2018. Covering such a long time span of publications will help us in the analysis of the results. One of the major arguments for choosing such a long time span involves the specific social and political context of the post-Yugoslav region. Due to the fact that this region has witnessed the resurgence of religion in the post-communist era, followed by civil war with a prominent religious dimension and other political and social processes, where religion and religious communities had an important role (i.e., democratization), it is logical to presume that political and social scientists tried to offer explanations from the perspective of religion and politics.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There are only six political and social science journals published in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina that are indexed and covered by WoS and/or Scopus (Table 1).⁸ Besides indicating the level of development of political and social science in this part of the world and the need for future development of the field, this fact also shows the need for additional inclusion of the journals in order to make the sample more relevant and reliable.

The analyzed journals from Table 1, in the covered period of time, published 416 issues in total, with 3,441 articles. Out of this number, only 306 articles had direct or indirect engagements with religion and religious issues, which makes it 8.89 percent. In Table 2, we offer more detailed results of our analysis.

Table 2 indicates that the total number of articles dealing with religion in the journals indexed in WoS and/or Scopus is 8.89 percent. Although one can argue this is not a sufficient number of

⁷For more information on the indexing process and evaluation of the journals in Scopus and SJR, see: “About Us.”

⁸Although we can argue over the fact that coverage in WoS and Scopus cannot be the only measurement of the quality of the journal, the fact that only seven political science journals from the post-Yugoslav space are covered in these two databases is devastating.

Table 2: Detailed analysis of the articles published in the journals covered in WoS and/or Scopus in regard of their engagement with religion

Title of the Journal	Total Number of Issues	Total Number of Articles	Articles Dealing with Religion	Percentage
Politics and Religion Journal	24	177	177	100%
Journal of Regional Security	13	52	1	1.92%
Sociologija	69	439	20	4.56%
Društvena istraživanja	106	1,142	67	5.87%
Politička misao (Croatian Political Science Review)	185	1,562	37	2.37%
Bosniaca	19	69	4	5.80%
Total	416	3,441	306	8.89%

Source: Authors.

articles dealing with religion, if we compare this result with the Kettell's analysis (1.34 percent, with only 97 articles defined as "primary" out of 7,245 published items), we can say that this is not a bad result at all. However, we must point out the fact that almost two-thirds of the articles dealing with religion in the post-Yugoslav political science journals are published in one journal: *Politics and Religion Journal* (177 out of 306, which makes it almost 58 percent!). If we exclude this journal from the analysis, we would have significantly different results. Without the *Politics and Religion Journal* (founded in Serbia in 2007),⁹ the total number of articles published in the rest of the analyzed journals is 3,264, and the number of articles dealing with some aspect of religion is 129, which makes it 3.95 percent. If we put it this way, we can say that post-Yugoslav political science journals neglected religion heavily. In addition to this argument, we analyzed the geographical background of authors who published their work in *Politics and Religion Journal*. It is important to mention that there were 171 authors who got published, and only 22 of them are, of were, affiliated with some educational or research institutions in the post-Yugoslav region. Therefore, the total amount of articles published by authors from the post-Yugoslav region is 12.87 percent. However, we would like to point out the fact that the founding of the *Politics and Religion Journal* makes significant turn in the political science relationship with religion, making it the first, and so far the only, source in this part of the world solely dedicated to the complex relationship between religion and politics.

As we have already stated above, the sample of six covered journals lacks reliability. That is why we analyze an additional set of journals that are not indexed in WoS and/or Scopus, but are regarded as highly ranked journals by the specific regulations used in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. The list of the journals we cover in the second part of our analysis is given in Table 3.

Table 3 gathers 15 journals from the field of political and social sciences published in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and that are by specific national regulations labeled as high-ranked journals. Although this approach has certain methodological objections, we tried to avoid them as much as possible. On one side, categorization of the journals in Serbia is regulated by the state, and particularly by Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. According to the "Regulation act about procedure, method of evaluation and

⁹In order to avoid possible misunderstanding, it is important to highlight the difference between *Politics and Religion Journal*, published in Serbia since 2007, and *Politics and Religion*, published by Cambridge core since 2008. Authors who are not fully engaged in the field of religion and politics tend to mix these two.

Table 3: List of leading journals ranked by specific regulations in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina

Title of the Journal	State	Years of Coverage
Zbornik radova Matice srpske za društvene nauke	Serbia	1990–2018
Teme	Serbia	2000–2018
Filozofija i društvo	Serbia	2001–2018
Sociološki pregled	Serbia	1990–2018
Anali Pravnog fakulteta u Beogradu	Serbia	1990–2018
Srpska politička misao	Serbia	2008–2018
Serbian Political Thought	Serbia	2007–2018
Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta Novi Sad	Serbia	2000–2018
Anali hrvatskog politološkog društva	Croatia	2004–2017
Međunarodne studije	Croatia	2012–2016
Sarajevo Social Science Review	BH	2012–2017
Pregled	BH	2003–2018
Prilozi	BH	2001–2017
Građa o prošlosti Bosne	BH	2008–2017
Politeia	BH	2011–2017

Source: Authors.

quantitative disclaimer of the scientific results,”¹⁰ category M24 marks “national journals of international value.”¹¹ In a more specific act, namely, the “Categorization of the scientific journals 2018 published in Serbia,”¹² there is a list of all journals that have a specific category. We analyzed all journals from the political science and social science categories, which are labeled as M24. On the other hand, we had a problem in dealing with journals from Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, as there two journals do not have a specific national categorization of the journals. When it comes to Croatia, we solely analyzed journals that are clearly covering the field of political science, and that can be concluded from their titles. When it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation is even more complicated. Republika Srpska, the political entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has its own categorization, or to be more precise, journal ranking list.¹³ We used this document and analyzed the journals that are covering the field of political and social sciences. On the other side, when it comes to the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we used a document published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which ranked journals for the purposes of the public call for financial support for the journals.¹⁴ We analyzed only those journals covering the field of political and social sciences.

Content analysis of the journals listed in Table 3 showed that they have published 583 issues in total, comprising 7,877 articles. When it comes to the specific engagement of the articles with the religious issues, our analysis showed that 420 articles dealt with religious issues, making it

¹⁰Pravilnik o postupku, načinu vrednovanja i kvantitativnom iskazivanju naučnoistraživačkih radova istraživača. Službeni glasnik RS no. 24/2016 and 21/2017.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Kategorizacija naučnih časopisa za 2018. godinu čiji izdavači su iz Republike Srbije.

¹³Rang lista kategorisanih nacionalnih naučnih časopisa.

¹⁴Odluka od utvrđivanju konačne rang liste dobitnika sredstava po javnom pozivu za sufinansiranje izdavanja naučnih časopisa u 2018. godini.

Table 4: Detailed analysis of the leading political and social science journals published in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina

Title of the Journal	Total Number of Issues	Total Number of Articles	Articles Dealing with Religion	Percentage
Zbornik radova Matice srpske za društvene nauke	68	853	63	7.38%
Teme	68	1,138	101	8.87%
Filozofija i društvo	55	724	55	7.59%
Sociološki pregled	90	697	27	3.87%
Anali Pravnog fakulteta u Beogradu	75	981	38	3.87%
Srpska politička misao	40	660	38	5.75%
Serbian Political Thought	17	122	5	4.09%
Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta Novi Sad	52	1,345	17	1.26%
Anali hrvatskog politološkog društva	14	203	5	2.46%
Međunarodne studije	13	57	1	1.75%
Sarajevo Social Science Review	8	84	2	2.38%
Pregled	42	490	24	4.89%
Prilozi	17	191	26	13.6%
Građa o prošlosti Bosne	10	115	0	.00%
Politeia	14	217	18	8.29%
Total	538	7,877	420	5.33%

Source: Authors.

5.33 percent of the total number of published articles. In Table 4, we offer detailed results of our analysis.

Table 4 shows that there is a lower percentage of articles dealing with religious issues published in the national journals (5.33 percent), compared with journals from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina indexed in WoS and/or Scopus (8.89 percent). However, as we have already stated above, most of the articles in the latter category have been published in *Politics and Religion Journal*. If we exclude this journal from the analysis, then we would have a lower percentage of published articles dealing with religious issues in the first group (3.95 percent and 5.33 percent).

In Table 5, we combine all analyzed journals (21) into one category, and offer results that could be of use for testing the hypothesis of whether the post-Yugoslav political and social science literature neglected religion. Combined results offered in Table 5 show that in the period of time 1990–2018, the total number of issues published by these journals is 999, comprising 11,318 articles. The main result of our analysis is that 726 articles of the total number of 11,318 dealt with religious issues in some aspect, which makes it 6.41 percent. Serbian journals have the highest number of articles dealing with religion (7.54 percent), comparing with Croatian (3.71 percent) and Bosnian journals (6.34 percent). However, if we once again exclude the articles published in *Politics and Religion Journal*, then the total number of articles dealing with religion is 549, which is 4.85 percent of the total number of published articles in 21 lead journals in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina.

Table 5: Analyses of the 21 leading political and social science journals in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and their engagement with religious issues

Title of the Journal	Total Number of Issues	Total Number of Articles	Articles Dealing with Religion	Percentage
Politics and Religion Journal	24	177	177	100%
Journal of Regional Security	13	52	1	1.92%
Sociologija	69	439	20	4.56%
Društvena istraživanja	106	1,142	67	5.87%
Politička misao (Croatian Political Science Review)	185	1,562	37	2.37%
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Filozofija i društvo	55	724	55	7.59%
Sociološki pregled	90	697	27	3.87%
Anali Pravnog fakulteta u Beogradu	75	981	38	3.87%
Srpska politička misao	40	660	38	5.75%
Serbian Political Thought	17	122	5	4.09%
Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta Novi Sad	52	1,345	17	1.26%
Anali hrvatskog politološkog društva	14	203	5	2.46%
Međunarodne studije	13	57	1	1.75%
Sarajevo Social Science Review	8	84	2	2.38%
Pregled	42	490	24	4.89%
Prilozi	17	191	26	13.6%
Građa o prošlosti Bosne	10	115	0	.00%
Politeia	14	217	18	8.29%
Total	999	11.318	726	6.41%

Source: Authors.

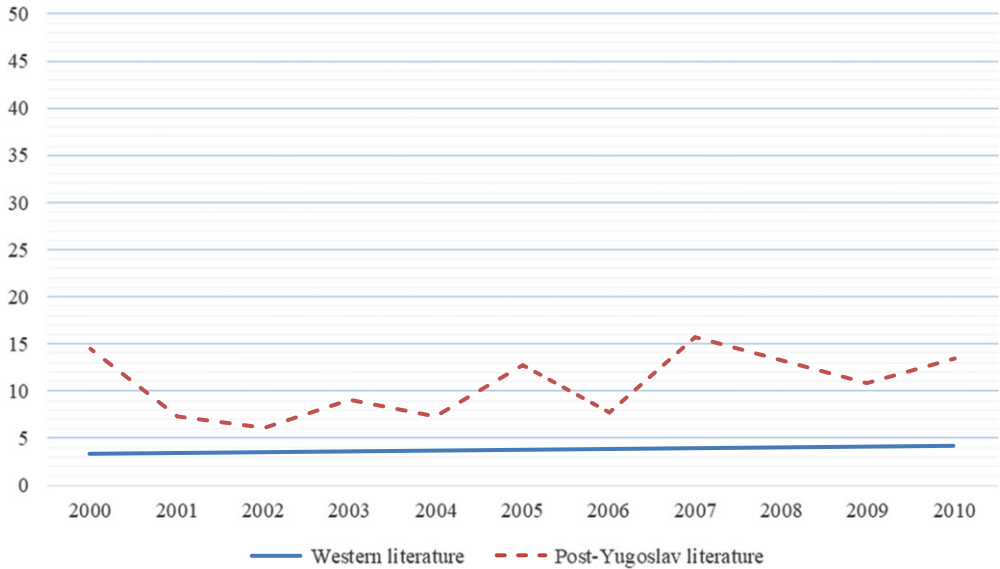
Table 5 gives us the opportunity to compare results with those of Kettell, focusing on the Western literature. However, the only available time span for comparison is 2000–2010. The result of the comparison is shown in Figure 1.

Although the percentage of articles published in the post-Yugoslav political and social science journals dealing with religious issues is slightly higher than that published in the world's 20 top-ranked political science and 20 top-ranked sociology journals, we believe that our results present solid support for the hypothesis that post-Yugoslav political and social science literature neglected religion. If there were only 6.41 percent articles dealing with religion in top-ranked post-Yugoslav political and social science journals from 1990 to 2018, we argue that religion was not in the focus of researchers. What is even more important is the fact that most of the published articles date from the last two decades. The time span of the published articles dealing with religion is shown in Table 6, for every 10 years since 1990.

As we can see, Table 6 shows us that there is a clear rise in articles dealing with religious issues over the years, which is logical as there is a rise of awareness in political and social scientists about the importance of religion. What is very interesting for the post-Yugoslav period

Figure 1

Comparison between Western and post-Yugoslav literature treating religion 2000–2010. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Source: Authors.

Table 6: Time span of the articles published in top-ranked journals in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina 1990–2018

Time Span	Number of Articles	Articles Dealing with Religion	Percentage
1990–1999	1,686	71	4.21%
2000–2009	3,621	246	6.79%
2010–2018	6,024	413	6.86%

Source: Authors.

is the fact that during the 1990s, when we have witnessed the resurgence of religion, as well as civil wars with a prominent religious dimension, followed with democratization processes that took place in the region and in which religion played an important role, there are only 4.20 percent of published articles that tend to provide some answers on these, as well as other, social and political processes. This is additional argument for claiming that post-Yugoslav political and social science literature ignored religion. At the same time, we emphasize the fact that there is a growing body of literature on religion and politics after 2000. It can be understood as the rise of awareness of how religion is important for politics, political processes, and outcomes after the 9/11. Moreover, the rise of studies in the field is also connected with the founding of the *Politics and Religion Journal* in 2007, which is dedicated to publishing original work from the field of religion and politics.

ERRANDO DISCIMUS?

This article intended to prove the hypothesis that the post-Yugoslav political and social science literature after 1990 neglected and ignored religion. The aim of the study is to be a modest contribution to the work of Steven Kettell, who proved that political science ignored religion heavily. Nowadays, most the authors agree on the fact that ignoring religion was wrong, and that religion has a potential to influence political behavior, political processes, and outcomes. As a consequence, there is a growing body of literature in the field, making it one of the most interesting and challenging fields of study in political science (King, Lehman, and Nie 2009).

From the perspective of post-Yugoslav literature, ignoring religion was even more wrong. The breakdown of Yugoslavia initiated different social and political processes in which religion and religious communities played an important role. Thus, it was logical to presume that social and political scientists were interested in this phenomenon. However, besides a couple of examples, it was not the case. Rather than interfering in different explanations of why religion was not taken seriously by the academics (communist legacy being one of the most important reasons), this article showed that religion was neglected in the post-Yugoslav political and social science literature. However, this article also showed that there is an increasing interest in religion and religious issues by post-Yugoslav academics, who are surely able to provide significant insights in this field and contribute to its further development.

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