

## ***The Return and Power of Religion in Public Sphere – the Case of Balkans***

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The debates about the return (and power) of religion in public sphere (Butler 2011; Habermas 2011; Taylor 2011; West 2011) inevitably resonate at the so-called European periphery (e.g. Balkans) as well. Bit more than ten years ago the concluding remarks of the *Reflection Group Report on the Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe* (2005) states that even in Europe, where modernisation and secularisation appear to go hand in hand, public life without religion is inconceivable. Accordingly, in the search for the forces capable of establishing cohesion and identity in the European Union, the question of the public role of European religions is particularly important. But at the same time the Report highlights the questions concerning the public role of religion in Europe that is resurfaced recently because of the Balkan wars, the Muslim immigration into Europe, and (so far less dramatically) the prospect of Turkey's becoming an EU member. Today however, the debates about return (and power) of religion in public sphere are focusing almost solely on the security dilemmas and the problems of refugees and immigrants in the EU. Not much attention has been given to the situation in candidate countries on the road to EU membership, namely those that use to be a part of Yugoslavia once. By default, democracy and the political culture of pluralism, human rights, and liberal tolerance are accepted as basic products of European cultural modernity. Still, the ideas emanating from Europe about what modernity in addition should look like are coming under increasing fire not only by the »new religiopolitical groups« (Keddie 1998) out of Europe, but in so-called European periphery as well. The principal question is whether and what went wrong? Is it a time to re-think how to foster the debate that will result in »verbalizing the unspoken cultural requirements of being European« (Casanova 2004) in societies of European Union and Balkans, and examine the role of new religious politics in that debate?