Society, Ethnicity, and Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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In his memoirs, general Sefer Halilović pays considerable attention to his part in preparing for Bosnian war during the winter of 1991-1992. Halilović organized and led the PL (Patriotic League), a paramilitary organization associated with the SDA (Stranka demokratske akcije – political party organized and led by Alija Izetbegović). The PL formed the core of the ABH (Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Halilović therefore became the first commander of Bosnian Muslims' armed forces in the summer of 1992.[1]

In the appendices to his memoirs, Halilović even included two documents pertaining to the SDA's preparations for war in late 1991 and early 1992.[2] In the first of these documents, would be general enumerated various tasks to be completed before the onset of war, including the creation of a military organization and the identification of Bosnian communities according to their ethnic makeup. "The ethnic structures of villages, local communities, urban and suburban neighborhoods are to be marked on maps," the documents reads, "(Muslim and Croatian villages — full green circle, with a letter H adjoining Croatian villages, Serbian villages — blue circle)".[3] In the second document, which is dated 25 Feb 92 — almost two months before large scale fighting broke out — Halilović defined the aim of the paramilitary organization he had just formed as protection of Bosnia-Herzegovina's Muslim population. "The basic task of the forces of the PL of BiH," he wrote, "is the protection of the Muslim people, [and the] preservation of [the] integrity and wholeness of BiH."

These two documents, written by the leader of the PL and the future commander of the ABH, illustrate the mentality that shaped the way that Bosnia's Muslims prepared for and waged war. When the first document was written in 1991, the full outbreak of hostilities was still several months away, but the Patriotic League was clearly preparing for an ethnic conflict, given Halilović's order to categorize settlements according to ethnic criteria. His assumption

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[1] Sefer HALILOVIĆ, *Lukava strategija* (The Clever Strategy), Sarajevo 1997, passim.

[2] S. HALILOVIĆ, ibid., pp. 165-167.

[3] The document was dated by the author as having been written "at the end of the 1991".

that most settlements in BiH could be defined according to ethnic criteria reflected the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population into compact ethnic groups. But this assumption was also based on the other one, that these groups tended to live separately in a "tacit segregation" in rural settlements and urban neighborhoods, where each group displayed symbols and practiced customs characteristic of their ethnic and religious affiliations.[4] In such a culture, few embraced the concept of a liberal, "civil" society favored by current Western European leaders. In early 1992, before the outbreak of war, and long before the conflict between Croats and Muslims, it was natural for Halilović to conceive of the "protection of [the] integrity and wholeness of BiH" not as the "protection of citizens of BiH", nor even of the "victims of aggression", but as protection of the "Muslim people." Although there was a nationality implied, at the time the document was created, Bosnia's Muslims were officially classified only by religion, as "Muslims," not as "Bosniaks," a term that implies an ethnic identity that is territorial.[5]

It is possible that Halilović was exceptional in his bias, but it is more likely that he was a typical product of Bosnian society. Before he became active in the organization of the SDA's paramilitary "Patriotic league," he was a professional officer in the JNA with the rank of major.[6] So he was educated at military schools where he acquired a particular view of the world that should have predisposed him to adopt an ethnically neutral "Yugoslav" identity. But he did not do so; he saw himself as Muslim, just as general Ratko Mladić identified himself as a Serb and general Slobodan Praljak as a Croat. Halilović's professional training shaped his military decisions, but his ethnic identity overrode the indoctrination he received in the JNA, just as it did for other Muslims, and for most Croats and Serbs. Indeed, his projections regarding war in Bosnia as an *ethnic conflict* appear to have coincided with the views of the Muslim people and their political leaders.[7]

With the exception of the ABH, the inclusion of national references in the names of the military organizations that were formed on the territory of BiH in 1992 showed the tendency to construe the function of such organizations as narrowly ethnic.[8] Indeed, although its name did not implie an ethnically

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[4] For a discussion of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population over the past hundred years, see Franjo MARIĆ, *Pregled pučanstva Bosne i Hercegovine izmedju 1879. i 1995. godine, Zagreb, Katehetski Salezijanski Centar*, 1996., passim.

[5] For a discussion of efforts to define and create of a Muslim nationality in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s, see Wolfgang HÖPKEN, "Yugoslavia's Communists and the Bosnian Muslims," in Andreas KAPPELER, Gerhard SIMON, Georg BRUNNER, and Edward ALLWORTH, eds., *Muslim Communities Reemerge. Historical Perspectives on Nationality Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Durham: Duke UP, 1994.

[6] The acronym "JNA" stands for "Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija" (Yugoslav National or People's Army).

[7] See discussion of the history and attitudes of the Muslims of Bosnia, especially the evolution of the JMO and the formation of a Muslim 'nationality' during the twentieth century in Enver REDŽIĆ, *Sto godina muslimanske politike u tezama i kontroverzama istorijske nauke* (Hundred years of Muslim policy in the thesis and controversies of scholars), Sarajevo 2000.

[8] The Croatian militia was named "Hrvatsko vijeće obrane - HVO" (Croatian Defense

oriented organization, like the other armed forces in Bosnia, the ABH was also dominated by a single nationality and formed to protect the members and interests of a particular ethnic group – Bosnia's Muslims. That the authorities in Sarajevo decided to call their military forces the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and not the "Bosniak" or "Muslim" Army, was politically necessary to win over public opinion abroad and reflected the belief held by Halilović and SDA leaders that to protect the "Muslim people" was to preserve the "integrity and wholeness of BiH." The Bosnian Muslim political elite saw its religious/ethnic group as the dominant nationality in Bosnia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina as *their* state, in the same way that the Croatians saw Croatia as their homeland and the Serbs saw Serbia as their fatherland. Indeed, the Muslims seem to have viewed themselves as a "core" Bosnian people in much the same way that the Serbs had viewed themselves as a "core" Yugoslav people, and this was clearly a major reason for their differences with the region's other ethnic groups. Friction with other ethnic groups was to be expected, given that in the former Yugoslavia a similar assumption of dominance by the Serbs had also generated problems with other ethnic groups, including the Muslims.[9]

So the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Muslims were not more tolerant nor more ethnically open than members of other ethnic communities in the former Yugoslavia. Nor was this surprising. It would have been surprising had the Bosnian Muslim leaders held different general views from their Croat and Serb neighbors and the average Bosnian Muslim. It is problematic to what extent Alija Izetbegović's writings and growing support for Islamic fundamentalism in the early 1990s showed that Muslim leaders and youth had a radically different understanding of the state and the functions of political organization. However, it is clear that the Muslims alarmed their Christian neighbors when they appropriated the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as their own, assigning to themselves the role of the new state's "core" group. Nor was this surprising, if one accepts the ideas of Samuel Huntington regarding the discrete nature of religiously-based civilizations.[10]

The political structure and ethnic segregation of Bosnia was the result of its singular history. After the collapse of the medieval Christian kingdom, Bosnia ceased to exist as a political community with an autochthonous and indepen-

Council), while the name for the Serbian militia was "Vojska Republike Srpske - VRS" (Army of Republika Srpska).

[9] For discussions of "Serbian hegemony" – the tendency for Serbs to appropriate the levers of political, economic, military, and financial power in the former Yugoslavia -- and its negative ramifications, see the pro-Serbian apology by Alex DRAGNICH, "The Anatomy of a Myth: Serbian Hegemony," *Slavic Review* (1991); an analysis of Dragnich's position by James J. SADKOVICH, "Serbian Hegemony Revisited, or Blaming the Perpetrator, not the Victim," *Journal of Croatian Studies* (1993-94); and a detailed discussion of the roots of the ethnic problems in Yugoslavia by Ivo BANAC, *The National Question in Yugoslavia. Origins, History, Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1984.

[10] Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

dent political life. It became part of the Ottoman Empire and was divided into a number of provinces. The evolution of local political and social attitudes was therefore strongly influenced by outside factors. This evolution and the problems it generated are often subsumed under the phrase "national question" or analyzed under the rubric "inter-ethnic relations." The scholarly literature on these problems is immense, but it is also unsystematic, and the conclusions drawn by their authors are so divergent that it is impossible to find a denominator common to the range of phenomena discussed as part of the "national question." Indeed, historians, ethnologists, sociologists, and political scientists in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and abroad have not even been able to agree on precisely what these terms mean. Nonetheless, there are a number of books and articles that are useful in trying to understand the problematic history of the creation of ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unfortunately, they vary greatly in quality.[11]

Of these, there is a consensus among scholars that one of the most basic is the study by a German historian of Bosnian origin, Srećko Džaja.[12] Works by Robert Donia are also useful, but his failure to cite Džaja's work indicates less than a thorough knowledge of the literature on the subject, and its absence in his works and testimony seriously vitiates the validity of his conclusions.[13]

Despite the wide range of methodological approaches adopted and conclusions drawn by those who have dealt with the question of ethnicity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is possible tentatively to summarize the problems involved in discussing ethnic and national identity, and doing so should help to understand the historical background of Bosnia-Herzegovina's national communities. The most obvious conclusion to draw from the various studies is that most national communities have their roots in ethnic communities that originated in pre-modern societies.[14] Those ethnic communities served as basis for the situational construction of the modern national identities, performing the role of their "historical cradle". Real history of ethnic communities is disregarded and through the work of intelectuals, especialy historians, they were transformed into modern nations living in the distant past. Their more or less fictious new history now became "Nation's history" trumpeted through the

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[11] Djordje PEJANOVIĆ, *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine* (The Population of Bosnia and Hercegovina), Beograd 1955.; Dominik MANDIĆ, *Etnička povijest Bosne i Hercegovine* (A History of Ethnicity in Bosnia and Hercegovina), Toronto-Zurich-Roma-Chicago 1982; Muhamed HAĐIJAHIĆ, *Od tradicije do identiteta - geneza nacionalnog pitanja bosanskih Muslimana* (*From Tradition to Identity – The Making of Bosnian Muslims*), Sarajevo 1974; Mark PINSON, ed., *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Cambridge MA, 1993.

[12] Srecko DŽAJA, *Konfesionalität und Nationalität Bosniens und der Hercegovina - Voremanzipatorische Phase 1463-1804* München 1984, translated as *Konfesionalnost i nacionalnost Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo 1993.

[13] R. DONIA and W. LOCKWOOD, *The Bosnian Muslims: Class. Ethnicity and Political Behavior in a European State,* 1978; Robert DONIA, *Islam Under the Double Eagle: The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1878-1914,* New York 1981. Dr. Donia's collaboration with J.V.A. FINE in *Bosnia and Herzegovina - A Tradition Betrayed* (New York 1993) cannot be considered a serious scholarly work for a number of reasons, not least because of biased rendering of facts.

[14] Anthony SMITH, *The Ethnic origins of Nations,* Oxford 1986.

educational system and capable of serving very important function, that of mass political mobilization. In contemporary societies characterized by mass production, mass consumption, and mass politics, the ethnic group writ large – the nation — became the fundamental "political vessel" and during the 19th century the nation became the core around which modern political realities were built. Throughout Europe, the dominant ethnic group (or Nation) identified itself with and appropriated State, which then became synonymous with the Nation.[15]

This modern identification of State and Nation emerged gradually, beginning in the 1500s.[16] It could occur within the framework of those old, medieval states, like England, which managed to control the systems of mass communication within their borders and adopt modern forms of mass political identity, gradually evolving a conservative national identity. Or it could occur through more a revolutionary process, as politically fragmented communities of kindred ethnic origins, like the Serbs and Croats, or the various Italic peoples, formed alliances, overthrew existing states, and erected their own "national" states, like Yugoslavia (the union of "south Slavs") and Italy (the union of "Italian" peoples). While historians broadly agree regarding the steps leading to the creation of modern nation states, they are unclear as to why some premodern state entities collapsed in these processes and why new ones emerged. They also disagreed regarding the inevitability of the process, the desirability of certain variants of nationalism, and the taxonomy of nationalisms.[17]

Since the end of the 19th century, the pressure of "national problems" in Central and Eastern Europe spawned revolutionary and "terrorist" movements, including Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia), a Serbian-sponsored organization that triggered World War I by murdering the Austrian Archduke, Ferdinand, and Bulgaria's IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization), which operated in the Ottoman Empire and then in Yugoslavia and collaborated in the assassination of King Alexander in 1934.[18] Such orga-

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[15] A. SMITH, op. cit; Eric HOBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge 1990. Croatian translation: *Nacije i nacionalizam*, Zagreb 1993. Hagen SCHULTZE, *Staat und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte*, München, Verlag C. H. Beck 1993, Serbian translation: *Država i nacija u evropskoj istoriji*, Beograd 2002.

[16] For a discussion of early modern nationalisms, apart from Schultze, op. cit., see Liah GREENFELD, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,* Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1992, passim.

[17] For a discussion of nationalism and a sampling of nationalists, see the introduction and excerpts by Mazzini, Mussolini, and Nehru in Hans KOHN, ed., *Nationalism. Its Meaning and History* (Malaga, FL: Drieger Publishing Company, 1982/1965), passim. Kohn was an early theorist of nationalism and distinguished good ("Western") from bad ("Eastern") variants. On the taxonomy of nationalism see Anthony D. SMITH, *Theories of Nationalism,* London, Duckworth, 1971.

[18] Such movements could take non-violent forms, e.g., the Yugoslav Committee, which was formed during World War I and sought to use diplomatic pressure to destroy Austria-Hungary, which ultimately succumbed to military pressure from Italy that coincided with an internal political collapse. Although old, the most comprehensive discussion of the Yugoslav Committee is Milada PAULOVA, *Jugoslavenski Odbor. Povijest jugoslavenske emigracije za svjetskog rata od 1914 do 1918,* Zagreb: Prosvjeta, 1925.

nizations were integral parts of the drive by Balkan ethnic groups to overthrow existing multi-ethnic states and establish their own ethnically homogeneous entities. These movements played a major role in the collapse of states established and organized on the pre-modern principle of multiethnic kingdoms, from Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in 1918, to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Russia (USSR) in the 1990s. A gaggle of modern nation states has emerged in their place, from Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania in the late 1800s, to Albania, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, USSR, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey in the early 1900s. Beginning in 1989, many of the successor states to pre-modern European empires have themselves disintegrated because they still embodied older concepts of multiethnic societies, among them Czechoslovakia, which divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Yugoslavia, which fractured into a number of states — Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a rump Yugoslavia, itself under pressure owing to large numbers of non-Serbs in Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Montenegro.

Historians have observed a certain type of regularity in the process of building small nation states out of the ethnic groups, and they have noted various stages in the evolution of contemporary states, from cultural "revivals" to political movements with clearly formulated demands for a distinct territorial and state structures.[19] However, there is no consensus regarding the process, in part because it has not occurred everywhere and has displayed no uniformity in its pace or manner of implementation. Indeed, despite experiencing ethnic problems similar to those troubling Central and Eastern Europe, long established states organized as "multi-ethnic" political entities have survived in Western European, among them Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, and Great Britain. Spain has recently decentralized to the point of granting de facto independence to its non-Spanish areas, and there are separatist movements through the European Union, including pressure by the Scots in Great Britain. Government of Great Britain spent much of the century fighting the Irish Republican Army to retain Northern Ireland, which the British settled with Protestants in the early modern era. Even the United States has also experienced ethnic revival and even conflict to some extent. But the outcome appears to be dependent on a large variety of historical, political, social, and cultural factors.

In sum, the "national question" represents a complex system of phenomena and social changes that are typical of modern societies, but linked to historical traditions and saturated with forms of collective identity dating from pre-modern periods. It is clear that phenomena and changes typical of the "national question" played a crucial role in stoking the fires of the 1992 - 1994 war, even though the war was initially set in motion by the political, military, and state organizations controlled by a Serbian leadership headed by Slobodan Milošević. So this research paper will attempt to describe the funda-

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[19] Miroslav HROCH, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe,* New York 2000.

mental components of the social fabric of Bosnia-Herzegovina with regard to this broad framework.

Silent Segregation

Because the Christian kingdom of Bosnia ceased to exist in the 1400s, the medieval period appears to have relatively little to do with the emergence of modern collective identities in what is now Bosnia-Herzegovina. What was left of the spiritual heritage of the medieval Christian kingdom appeared to decay and disappear under the new Islamic regimen imposed by the Ottomans after 1463. The complex collective identity of the population within the area ruled by Bosnia's medieval kings and bans lost its fundamental political character after the Ottoman conquest.[20] The political *and religious* framework that had defined and preserved a collective identity in the period between the 12th and 15th centuries was not replaced by similar autochthonous structures appropriate to preserve the existing Bosnian Christian identity as distinct from newer Ottoman and Muslim identities.[21] It is therefore impossible to "apply to Bosnia's entire history the terms state and people" in a cultural sense, since three ethnic identities emerged after 1463. Rather than a global Bosnian cultural identity, the geographical categories put forward by Džaja seem most appropriate. For Džaja, Bosnia is neither a state nor a people, but an "historical landscape" where events occur; a "place of historical synthesis" where civilizations meet and clash; and a "melting pot of people and society," which did not realize a homogenous ethnic identification.[22]

Such an approach is supported by the disappearance of Bosnia's medieval nobility, who, as "good Bošnjani," were the most important vehicle of Bosnian identity in the centuries when the contours of modern Europe first began to emerge. Some fled to Croatia and Dalmatia, where they were quickly integrated into local population; some were killed during the fighting in 1463 and while fighting the Turks under the banner of the Hungarian-Croatian king; and others were integrated into the new Ottoman political, social, and religious system as "spahije".[23] The last group quickly embraced the new religion of Islam, because only in this manner could they preserve their privileged social position and participate in the political life of the Ottoman Empire.

Gradually, conversion to Islam, the loss of their own kingdom, and integration into the Ottoman Empire resulted in the loss of uniquely "Bosnian" characteristics in the "good Bošnjani," including their consciousness of being a separate, unique social group. During the initial Ottoman occupation, only

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[20] On those questions, see Marko ŠUNJIĆ, *Bosna i Venecija* (Bosnia and Venice), Sarajevo 1996, pp. 380 ff.; Mladen ANČIĆ, *Jajce. Portret srednjovjekovnoga grada* (Jajce. Portrait of Medieval City), Split 1999, pp. 29-63.

[21] Historical sources from this period use the term "Bošnjani" to describe inhabitants of territories ruled by a Bosniana rulers. This is at length described in ŠUNJIĆ, op.cit., pp. 386-8.

[22] S. DŽAJA, op. cit., p. 13, footnote 1.

[23] "Spahija" was a professional mounted soldier who financed his services out of the income from a plot of land granted him by the Ottoman Sultan.

one institution with medieval roots and traditions survived intact — the Franciscan Province; and only one social group directly linked to medieval traditions – the urban Catholic artisans and merchants. So the traditions of the Bosnian kingdom were preserved only in these specialized environments until the late 17th century mass flight of Catholic merchants and artisans from Bosnia-Herzegovina's urban centers.[24] With their leaving, all traces of Bosnia's secular medieval tradition disappeared. Only the Franciscans remained as a link to Bosnia's pre-modern past.

Two extremely important phenomena conditioned the circumstances and manner in which collective identities would be built in Bosnia-Herzegovina after 1463. The first was the chronic warfare between Christian and Muslim states from 1463 to 1699. The constant fighting brought about profound social changes, including the creation of military frontiers, or march lands, on both side. The second was the introduction of the Ottoman political system and the Islamic religion, which altered the administrative procedures in the region, reshaped the religious makeup of the area, and changed the customs and mores of the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The extent of the impact of the war between the Islamic Ottoman empire and the Christian European forces can be gauged from the duration of the conflicts, which continued for twice as long as the devastating Hundred Years' War between England and France. Hungary, the Habsburg monarchy, and Venice bore the brunt of the Christian effort, and the repeated encounters with Ottoman forces completely changed the appearance of the area later incorporated in the former Yugoslavia. The longevity of the war was attributable to its religious nature; in effect, this was a clash of civilizations, and Bosnia-Herzegovina lay square on the fault line between Islam and Christianity. The Ottoman empire was shaped according to Islamic theology, including the idea that the fundamental task of the state was the permanent expansion of the "land of Islam" (*dar al-Islam*) into the "land of war" (*dar al-harb*) — the territories of neighboring Christian countries. The conflict was suspended only by temporary truces and would end in the 18th century when the Ottoman empire resigned itself to accepting certain territorial limits and accommodating itself to the more powerful European political and diplomatic system.[25]

The manner in which this war was waged created a systematic chaos that distorted the cultures of the region. Retaliatory raids and marauding sorties by both sides filled in the time between large-scale campaigns. Borders moved regularly, resulting in migrations by both sides. So the medieval political and cultural boundaries were obliterated and the early modern frontiers were

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[24] Catholic artisans and merchants fled Bosnia's urban areas during the retreat of the Christian army of Prince Eugen of Savoy. In October and early November 1697, Savoy's forces had ravaged and laid waste much of Bosnia-Herzegovina, so fears of Turkish reprisals drove this mass emigration. For the details, see S. DŽAJA, op. cit., pp. 127 ff.

[25] Peter SUGAR, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804* (A History of East Central Europe), Seattle 1993 vol. V, p. 8; M. S. ANDERSON, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450-1918*, London: Longman 1993, pp. 71-3.

fortified and constantly shifting. The medieval Croatian kingdom, subsumed within the lands of the Habsburg empire, lost large chunks of its Eastern territories. Known as "Turkish Croatia", these territories fell to the Ottomans at the end of the 16th century and were incorporated into the Ottoman march lands that later became known as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Consequently, when Bosnia-Herzegovina appeared for the first time as a discrete political entity in the contemporary era, in 1878, it included large tracts of "Turkish Croatia," and a large Croatian population.

Mass migrations, caused by flight before the ravages of war, emptied large areas occupied by the Ottoman Turks. Subsequently, these area were resettled with new inhabitants, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, who arrived from the peripheries of previously conquered territory.[26] A specific way of life, a "border culture," evolved along the boundary between the two warring worlds, characterized by an ethos of violence and plunder, ostensibly in the service of exalted religious and political goals.[27]

The changes caused by the establishment of Ottoman rule in the conquered territories were even deeper and more far-reaching. As a religious state whose institutions reflected the injunctions found in the Koran, the Ottoman empire did not recognize or attribute any importance to the ethnic identity of its subjects. However, all subjects were considered to be members of a religious group, or *millet*, and this identity was the basis for their relationship to each other and to the Sultan, the Ottoman head of state, who also appropriated the title of Caliph, the descent of Muhammad and the leader of Muslims everywhere.[28]

The organization of life within the religious group (*millet)* was arranged by the millet's members, and representatives of each religious hierarchy assumed the leading role within these semi-autonomous entities. Significantly, religious affiliation was not relevant only in the political sphere, but in the cultural as well. After the final conquest and the consolidation of the new authorities, the political and social life of Bosnia was increasingly ruled according to the religious principles, a natural occurrence in a state whose laws were based on the Shari'a. The change was most visible in the transformation of existing

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[26] For an example, see Milan VASIĆ, "Etnička kretanja u Bosanskoj krajini u XVI vijeku" ("Ethnic Movements in Bosnian "Krajina" in the 16th Century"), *Godišnjak društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* (Yearbook of Historical Society of Bosnia and Hercegovina), Sarajevo 1962, vol. 13. Vasić's study is based on Ottoman sources and gives a clear picture of what was going on in the newly acquired Ottoman provinces.

[27] In his report, p. 112, Dr. Donia states that "there was a lot of violence in the region through history but, until the 20th century, only a small portion of that violence could be described as violence between national or ethnic groups." This is misleading, because ethnic violence was ideologically masked by the struggle between the two religiously based civilizations, Islam and Christiandom, both of which would prove important during the formation of modern nations, as religion became the line dividing the Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim communities.

[28] The concept of organizing according to millet is discussed in Hallil INALCIK, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600,* New York, 1973. Translated as *Osmansko carstvo. Klasicno doba 1300-1600*, Beograd 1974.; Josef MATUZ, *Das Osmanische Reich*, Darmstadt 1985., Translated as *Osmansko carstvo*, Zagreb 1992.

medieval urban settlements which quickly assumed Ottoman characteristics as they became the strongest supporters of the new regime.

Bosnian medieval urban areas had been developed haphazardly with ethnically mixed districts, but the new Ottoman towns and cities were segregated, with followers of Islam living in the *mahala*, the Muslim quarter, which invariably centered on a mosque whose minaret was used to call the faithful to prayer three times daily. Newly arrived Muslims, together with local converts to Islam, rapidly assumed a dominant role in urban life. Their social superiority was reflected in their physical separation from the remaining Christian population, which included living in a different area *and* in a different manner. Their appearance, their food, their house types, their entire way of life were distinct. As a result, a "silent segregation" gradually set in, as the new urban *mahala* developed along religious lines. Where there Muslims, there could be no Christians. The latter were restricted to those neighborhoods in which they had been living at the time of conquest. Over time, many of these would disappear too.[29]

Segregation by religious affiliation did not apply only to the living, but to the dead as well. Cemeteries were separated according to religious denomination, continuing the mundane separation of different religious groups in daily life into the grave. This rigid segregation, a sort of religious apartheid, generated a system of social relations in which affiliation with a religious group became the primary, and only really important, identifying feature for an individual. All other forms of social communication were derived from and adapted to this confessional allegiance, from clothing to writing. For example, a rule was issued in the 17th century defining the colors of clothing to be used by Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The rule was based on both secular and religious authority — the "high edict of the Emperor and the Shari'a regulations [of Islam]." Such rules became customary and were followed by the population until the last decades of the 19th century to such a degree that members of various religious groups could still be clearly identified according to the color of their clothing.[30]

There were also tacit understandings and customs. An unwritten law required Muslims in the Western-most parts of the empire to write their spoken language using Arabic letters, giving rise to a unique Bosnian "arabica" whose text was Slavic but whose alphabet was Arabic, a phenomenon similar to that of Cyrillic, which uses a Greek alphabet to write Slavic languages. Until the middle of the 19th century, in both Serbia and Bosnia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and therefore all literate Serbs, used an archaic form of old church Slavonic, similar to the language of the first translations of Christian texts into Cyrillic during the 9th and 10th centuries. Bosnia's Catholics also

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[29] John ARMSTRONG, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill 1982, p. 124, writes that, "It remained for Islam to raise the segmented city to the standard type."

[30] Svetlana BAJIĆ, "Gradski kostim i drustvene promjene" ("Urban Costume and Social Changes"), in *Urbano biće Bosne i Hercegovine* (Urban Essence of Bosnia-Hercegovina), Sarajevo 1996, pp. 122 ff.

used this script, but their texts reflected the current spoken language; and the grammatical works written by Bosnia's Franciscans during the 17th and 18th centuries set the standard for the Croatian language.[31] Most social communication occurred within the framework of a given religious community or *millet*, while one's confessional affiliation became the cornerstone for one's identity, making Bosnia similar to other environments with similar social structure.[32]

Physical separation of the members of different religious denominations into distinct neighborhoods would survive in urban centers, oriental *kasaba* (backwaters), and *čaršija* (downtown market-places) until industrialization initiated the first mass migrations to new industrial centers in the 20th century.[33] Only then would new integrated neighborhoods arise in a few towns like Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Banja Luka. But this was a belated and a slow process, owing to the late modernization of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1921, the region had only eleven settlements with more than 5,000 inhabitants. But even these towns would eventually become the real centers of social integration only in the socialist period, after 1945.

Although it furthered some inter-confessional, and therefore inter-ethnic, mixing, there was a downside to modernization and the cultural changes engineered by Yugoslavia's socialist regime. The crude ideological approach to social reality adopted by the communists excluded all but the faceless individuals comprising the "Yugoslav industrial proletarian" and did its best to obliterate historical markers of ethnic identity or class privilege. Medieval traditions, ethnic customs, imperial monuments, and anything else that might compromise the new Yugoslavia was ignored or hidden. Mixed marriages were encouraged and ethnic identification frowned upon. In Sarajevo's National Theater, the new rulers "painted over with gray paint the beautiful gold-plated ornaments and replaced the two-headed eagle Habsburg coat-of-arms with the symbol of socialist Bosnia — a huge factory, with black smoke belching from its smokestack."[34]

Rapid implementation of socialism's goals of "industrialization and electrification" triggered mass migrations from rural to urban areas, forcing the construction of cheap mass housing projects by the state.[35] Migration continued into the 1980s, despite a grave economic crisis and a shortage of money that

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[31] The first grammars of the Croatian language, written by Bartol Kašić and Jakov Mikalja in the 17th century in Croatia proper, also took the "Bosnian" dialect as the basis for their "standard literal" language. See. Eduard KALE, *Hrvatski kulturni i politički identitet* (Croatian Cultural and Political Identity), Zagreb 1999, 57.

[32] ARMSTRONG, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.

[33] Ilijas HADŽIBEGOVIĆ, *Gradovi u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878-1918* (Towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sarajevo 1989.

[34] J.V.A. FINE and R. DONIA, *Bosnia and Herzegovina - A Tradition Betrayed,* New York 1993, p. 146.

[35] On this process se Husnija KAMBEROVIĆ, *Prema modernom društvu. Bosna i Hercegovina od 1945. do 1953. godine* (Towards Modern Society. Bosnia-Herzegovina 1945-1953), Tešanj, 2000.

made it impossible to provide adequate housing for the new arrivals. So a new type of settlement with features typical of rural areas appeared on the outskirts of Bosnia-Herzegovina's urban areas in the decade preceding the war. Rather than the financially strapped state erecting apartment buildings, the newly arrived settlers slapped together small houses, helping each as they would have in the village. So these displaced villagers created an environment similar to the one they were accustomed to in Bosnia's rural areas — nationally and religiously homogenous shanty-towns, each distinct and each ethnically segregated from adjacent neighborhoods. They also obviously brought their rural values with them.[36] It was this type of "suburban" settlement that led Halilović to assume that it would be possible to identify both villages and "parts of towns and suburban neighborhoods" according to their ethnic composition. The peripheries of Bosnian towns became similar to ethnic neighborhoods in American cities during the early 1900s, with one important difference — in Bosnia-Herzegovina the economy was not strong enough to override ethnic differences and integrate the new arrivals into an urban matrix by providing a modicum of social mobility for members of *all* ethnic groups.

By building new cities where socialist culture dominated, the authorities hoped to suppress existing ethnic and class divisions in Yugoslav society and promote global integration. Their attempts included efforts to transform the institution of marriage and the basic social unit of the family. By stripping the country's clergy of their prerogatives, the authorities gave civil marriage a social monopoly. By gutting the religious content of the ceremony, they opened the door to more ethnically mixed marriages. And by encouraging a new "Yugoslav" identity, the state encouraged marital partnerships across ethnic lines. A marriage contract between members of different national groups became a "positive example" and conferred an advantage upon couples who married across ethnic and religious lines. As a result, during the 1960s and 1970s, a large percentage of the ruling elite, at least in Bosnia-Hercegovina, were members of mixed marriages.

The significance of this change should not be underestimated, because mixed marriages either privilege one partner's ethnic group or obliterate the ethnic and religious heritage of both partners. In the early 20th century, when ethnic identifications were strong, marriages that occurred between members of different religious or national groups actually caused social disturbances, a fact noted by scholars who dealt with Bosnian society.[37] Although mixed marriages increasingly became the norm among Bosnia-Herzegovina's ruling and professional classes, they remained almost unthinkable in the towns

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[36] No modern scholarly study deals with this sort of problems so the remarks are a part of author's own experience of living in Sarajevo until 1993.

[37] DONIA, *Islam under Double Eagle*, passim.

[38] Fear of "strangers," at times to the point of xenophobia, is a general characteristic of rural societies. See. Henri MENDRAS, *Sociétés paysannes,* Paris 1976, translated as *Seljačka društva,* Zagreb 1986, pp. 107-128, esp. pp. 223-225. In the case of Bosnia this general attitude was magnified by religious and ethnic differences.

and villages of the countryside, where large housing projects were unknown and older patterns of settlement endured.[38] Even in large cities like Sarajevo and Mostar, mixed marriages frequently caused tensions and tragedies within families, because the spouse was viewed as an "intruder" to be shunned.

The transformation and modernization of *some* urban areas under socialism occurred within parameters that limited the role and influence they had on the social life of the country at large. The impact of *urban* changes on the traditional organization of Yugoslav society was therefore also limited. On the eve of the outbreak of war in 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina was still a rural, agricultural region in which sixty percent of the population lived in rural settlements.[39] Save for Sarajevo, which had 500,000 inhabitants, cities like Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Mostar did not exceed 150,000 inhabitants. The combined population of Bosnia-Herzegovina's major urban areas, including Sarajevo, accounted for only a quarter of the total population of the country. But even this is misleading, because it is impossible to determine exactly what part of the urban population was first-generation newcomers from rural areas, and this is an important caveat, because these people, living on the edges of urban life in a literal and figurative sense, preserved in the cities their rural ways of life, which included segregation from those who belonged to different ethnic groups and religious confessions. It is this phenomenon that leads serious historians to distinguish the *deagrarization of a population* (leaving a rural environment) from the *deagrarization of a society* (losing traits typical of rural life), and to note that the process occurs over time, often with a considerable delay between leaving the countryside and adapting to the city.[40] In short, simple population statistics are misleading, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where society was still largely rural and segregated in the 1980s, *even* in the suburbs of the region's major urban areas.

The "Yugoslav way to socialism" did cause changes in Yugoslav society and promoted the development of a specific socialist culture. By disassociating itself from the West in 1945, then distancing itself from the East in 1948 and championing the creation of a nonaligned movement in 1955, Tito made Yugoslavia a politically and ideologically autarkic country whose population found itself isolated at the same time its nonalignment seemed to open it to contact with both camps in the Cold War. In reality, Yugoslavs found it difficult to communicate with the rest of the world, because autarky had its own set of values and its own assumptions, largely shaped by the need of the ruling elite – what Milovan Djilas labeled the "new class" — to retain power. This was especially true in Bosnia-Herzegovina and can be seen most clearly in the domain of international scientific and scholarly communication. In 1982, the SCI (*Science Citation Index*), listed 2,505 papers published in Budapest, 520 in Zagreb, but *only* 22 in Sarajevo. Since the ratio of papers published

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[39] Husnija KAMBEROVIĆ, "Deagrarizacija i urbanizacija u Bosni i Hercegovini poslije Drugoga svjetskog rata" ("Abandonment of the Village and Urbanization in Bosnia and Hercegovina after the Second World War"), in *Urbano biće Bosne i Hercegovine*, op. cit., p. 162.

[40] KAMBEROVIĆ, op. cit., p. 164.

in Budapest and Sarajevo was obviously not 100:1, the most obvious explanation for the disparity is that the members of the academic community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to a lesser extent, Croatia, had a communications problem that reflected the languages in which Yugoslav papers were written and the subject matter of the papers, which often had little relevance outside Yugoslavia.

Rural settlements and their social environment were much more indicative than urban areas of Bosnian society in the last two decades of the 1900s. There, attitudes, forms of social organization, and the daily round of life were often not much different from what they had been hundreds of years ago. A "silent segregation" was characteristic of rural communities, a leftover from the periods of mass migrations and the *millet* system. The situation was described by Robert Donia. "Villages are most commonly ethnically homogenous although some villages are mixed," he wrote some 20 years ago. "In the latter case," he continued, "ethnic groups are usually segregated into district neighborhoods or hamlets."[41] Donia concluded that "national" [ethnic] communities

"tend to constitute distinct social systems superimposed on the same geographic region. Contact is limited primarily to the economic sector, especially among the peasants, and this is reflected in marriage patterns, visiting patterns, communication networks and world views."[42]

This picture of ethnic communities living next to, but apart from, one another can also be found in the writings of Ivo Andrić, a Nobel laureate in literature from former Yugoslavia. Andrić was born and raised in BiH, and his writings describe a land in which even time is measured differently by the region's three communities, who divide the day and the years into distinct segments unrelated to those of their neighbors. Indeed, Bosnia's three major ethno-religious groups lived in different years and eras – the Catholic Croats following the Gregorian calendar, the Orthodox Serbs the older Julian calendar, and the Muslim Bosniaks counting the years after Mohammed's Hejira.[43] Each group, of course, also had its own religious days, celebrations, rites, and seasons. Even the clergy were distinct – from the legalistic Muslim ulema to the married Orthodox priests and the celibate Catholic prelates.

Three Bosnias

The bases of the differences in the collective identities of Bosnia-Herzegovina's main ethnic groups go back to the years following the Turkish conquest in 1463. Beside the migrations that brought large numbers of people to the region from the lands previously occupied by the Turks, especially medieval Serbia, state support for Islam helped redefine the identities of the

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[41] DONIA and LOCKWOOD, op. cit.

[42] DONIA and LOCKWOOD, op. cit.

[43] Jacques ATTALI, *Histoires du temps,* Paris 1982, translated as *Povijest vremena,* Zagreb 1992, pp. 10 ff., stresses how the ordering of calendars and measurement of time define societies and civilizations, both functions usually the preserve of political authorities.

local population that remained. The most direct effect of this vast change was a prolonged process of Islamization, during which some of the Catholic and Orthodox Christians gradually embraced the new faith and the social and political customs and attitudes ancillary to it. The Ottomans considered it their duty to spread Islam wherever they ruled. So the authorities favored conversion to the new faith, which was effectively the "state religion", as a *conditio sine qua non* for any form of social advance or political participation. However, the Ottoman authorities and local elites were content to let large numbers of Christians retain their faith and customs, because non—Muslims paid more taxes and were excluded from professional and political life, assuring less competition for existing elites. Today, historians generally agree that there were many reasons to convert, among them the perception of Islam as a religion of winners.[44] What is clear is that the process of Islamization fundamentally altered Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The subsequent existence of three socio-religious systems in the same region has its roots in the process of Islamization and the creation of a *millet* system. However, what appeared as tolerance was really segregation, not unlike that of the Edict of Nantes, which allowed Huguenots in France because it was convenient to do so. Moreover, only two of the three systems were identified with ethnic groups — the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs. The Muslims were subjects of the Sultans and members of an inclusive religion that had no ethnic or national boundaries in the modern sense of these terms.

The historical consequences of the introduction of Islamic civilization was the creation of three distinct, and incongruent, collective images of Bosnia as members of the three major religious groups came to perceive their environment and their place within it differently.

The first of these images might be called Catholic Bosnia, a virtual reality that harked back to the medieval Bosnian and Croatian kingdoms. This Bosnia was nurtured through the institution known as *Bosna Srebrna* (Silver Bosnia), the name given the collective activity of the region's Franciscans, the only Catholic clergy allowed in areas occupied by the Turks. This Bosnia also survived in the minds and hearts of those Catholics who remained despite the physical destruction of their world, and the subsequent segregation, discrimination, and physical abuse attendant on Ottoman rule and the continuous warfare that characterized the Bosnian march lands. This Bosnia's manifestations took the forms of stories, myths, and legends – making it something quite different from the actual reality of the Ottoman border province. It was a mixture of memory and myth that conjured up the Medieval world of the "noble Bosnians" on one hand and integrated those elements of modernity brought by the Franciscans returning from their education abroad on the other.

There was also another virtual Bosnia, that of the recently settled Orthodox population who had followed the Ottomans into Bosnia-Herzegovina and

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[44] P. F. SUGAR, op. cit; also Colin HEYWOOD, "Bosnia Under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800," in PINSON et al., *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

were granted certain privileges by the Sultan in return for populating the areas emptied by warfare and flight. This Orthodox or, more precisely, Serbian Bosnia also had even less to do with history and current realities than the Catholic Bosnia. The source of this Bosnia was the Orthodox hierarchy of the Serbian church, which had accompanied Serbian migrants as they moved into formerly Croatian and Bosnian lands. In order to root itself in its new environment, this Bosnia created legends to explain and justify the creation of permanent Serbian communities in areas where neither a Serbian state nor a Serbian people had previously existed.

The Bosnia of the area's Muslims, both immigrants and converted natives, was the "real" Bosnia. With the support of Ottoman governmental and military authorities, they could repress any opposition to their vision of Bosnia. With the support of the ulema, the integration of the Shari'a into civil institutions, and the monopoly of power they enjoyed, the local begs, spahijas, and Janissaries could, and did, shape Bosnia to their image of it.[45] Only in Bosnia, on the boundary between two warring civilizations, could a class of professional warriors succeed in adapting the Ottoman feudal system to its needs and transforming itself into a local land-owning nobility. They drew strength from and resisted control by the imperial government in Istanbul, and they gained in strength as the Ottoman government weakened. Their triumph was the triumph of the third Bosnia, which finally emerged as that of the new "Bosniak," a neologism that has little to do with the medieval "noble Bosnians" or the Ottoman "Bosniak." This Bosnia's heterogeneous roots and tendency to eclecticism was best illustrated by their use of the Arabic script to write their spoken language, which was distinctly Slavic.

Although in a state of latent tension and conflict during the 18th and 19th centuries, these three Bosnias usually interacted only when the situation became unbearable for Bosnia's "raya," the area's Catholic and Orthodox inhabitants. This happened when the imperial government and the local Muslim elite jointly or concurrently used their political and economic dominance to overburden the region's Christians, triggering mass rebellions. These uprisings followed a unique pattern and generally ended in widespread and vicious ethnic and religious violence. It was just this sort of violence during the uprising of 1875-1878 that was used to rationalize the imposition of a protectorate over Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Habsburg monarchy.[46] Although religious and ethnic affiliation did not always coincide with social and economic class – not all Muslims were rich landowners, nor were all Christians poor peasants — in moments of crisis, loyalty to one's religious community overrode social status.[47] As a result, Bosnia never hosted a genuine social

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[45] All were professional warriors, landowners, and, for the most part, city dwellers.

[46] See the text by Prof. Dalibor Čepulo, passim.

[47] Anthony BLACK, "European and Middle Eastern Views of Hierarchy and Order in the Middle Ages: A Comparison," in Jeffrey DENTON, ed., *Orders and Hierarchies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe,* London: Macmillan, 1999., p. 27 ff,, argues that in Islamic societies, especially in Ottoman lands, stress was on vertical (religious) rather than on horizontal (class) affiliation. If so, the Bosnian case is not that unique.

movement or political rebellion that integrated all three religious, and, by extension, ethnic communities. The mechanisms for joint action across religious and ethnic lines were simply never created during Ottoman rule. There were no political institutions that encouraged the cooperation of the leaders of Bosnia's major religious groups and so no sense of belonging to a territorial entity. Instead, Muslims remained loyal to the Sultan, Islam, and their own interests, while Catholic and Orthodox elites were loyal to their religious and linguistic communities which preserved their medieval ethnic identities as Croats and Serbs.

Because their ethnic identities were rooted in Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Croats and Serbs could not easily absorb Muslims within their ethnic groups. Indeed, their religious exclusivity prompted them to reject the Muslims. But the Muslim elite was too heterogeneous in origin to conceive of itself as a separate *collective* identity, as opposed to privileged individuals and families. It comprised members of at least three distinct groups prior to the 20th century: the descendants of settlers from the time immediately after the conquest of the land, of Turkish ethnicity; the descendants of local Slavs who had converted to Islam; and refugees who had arrived from Ottoman territories lost to the Christians during the 17th century, including the descendants of Croats, Serbs, and Hungarians who had embraced Islam.[48]

As a result, both the Muslim elite and the lower echelons of Muslim society were split by internal tensions and conflicts. Those who had converted most recently were in the most awkward position. Prior to the 1600s, contemporary reports indicated that many of those who had converted to Islam were vacillating, effecting a public adherence to the new religions and regime, but secretly maintaining the traditions of their Christian ancestors – not unlike the dilemma faced by the *conversos* in Spain during the same period.[49] Throughout the 1500s century and during the first half of the 1600s, it appears to have been common for the Franciscans to christen the children of converted Muslims, even though the penalty for doing so was death. "Old" Muslims, mostly of Turkish and Albanian origin, were aware of this practice and used derogatory terms like including *balija* and *potur* to refer to the recently converted population. The practice ended in the second half of the 17th century, as the success of the Christian counteroffensive provided an opportunity for lukewarm converts to flee to the newly conquered Christian areas and return to the faith of their ancestors.[50] Subsequently, the descendants of those local converts who remained within the Ottoman empire earned the status of "old Muslims" and were completely integrated into the Muslim religious community.

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[48] S. DŽAJA, op. cit., pp. 50 ff.

[49] D. MANDIĆ, op. cit., pp. 269-287.

[50] The last large-scale Ottoman threat was turned aside when the siege of Vienna was lifted in 1683. With two decades, the Christians had re-conquered much of Hungary and Croatia proper, and through the early 1700s, Christian were on the attacks, successfully seizing and consolidating their hold on territories previously conquered by the Turk in a process reminiscent of the Spanish reconquista.

Membership in the Islamic community, acceptance of the values it espoused, and loyalty to the Sultan were the cornerstones of Muslim identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their sense of being a collective entity was reinforced by the idea that the Muslims of Bosnian *pašaluk* were unique compared to the empire's other subjects, owing to their social status and privileges — primarily the right to hereditary holdings – derived from their military service on the border. This notion of uniqueness grew in the 1800s, as local Muslims began to perceive reforms proposed by the central government as antithetical to the true Islamic tradition. This conviction was strengthened in the aftermath of successful Christian uprisings in neighboring Serbia and Greece, which were beginning to develop their own political identities and institutions. The creation of new political entities was accompanied by brutal mass expulsions of Muslims from the territories of the new Christian states. Disputes between the local Muslim elite and central government culminated during the middle of the 19th century in a ruthless suppression of dissention in Bosnia by Omerpaša Latas, further strengthening the feeling of uniqueness among local the Muslim population there.

The situation began to change in 1878, with the arrival of the Austrians. The new environment provided an opportunity for the two virtual Bosnias to try to apply *their* idea of Bosnia. Their search for a place under the Austrian political sun opposed their ideal historic-mythic images of Bosnia to the real Muslim Bosnia of the time. As Bosnia modernized and came under increasingly strong European influence, it became vulnerable to the new nationalist currents. The example of the creation of the new national states of Germany and Italy was particularly strong, as was the appeal of pan-slavism. So the process of national emancipation was embraced here, as everywhere else in the Balkans. However, it soon became clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina was too small an area to contain three opposing views regarding its identity, especially since they were based on opposing models of civilization. Due to the simple lack of physical space, each of the competing concepts of Bosnia had to claim for itself the right to a monopoly over the history and people of the region.[51]

Conflict had not occurred before 1878, because one group had a monopoly of the instruments of coercion. But after 1878 conflict became inevitable as the three groups sought to occupy the political vacuum left by the Ottomans. Two phenomena characterized this period and defined the direction of development in the 20th century. For twenty years, under the administration of the historian B. Kállay, the new rulers tried to create a "Bosniak" political identity in the province.[52] But despite control of Bosnia's political system and the prohibition of the use of ethnic names (Croats and Serbs), the effort to build a Bosniak identity failed. Rather than embrace an imposed and arti-

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[51] It has to be noted here that the modern name of "Bosna i Hercegovina" was coined actually only in 1878 in German (Bosnia und Hercegovina), within the process of definition of constitutional status for areas that belonged neither to Austrian nor to Hungarian part of the dualistic Monarchy.

[52] The period was analyzed in detail by Tomislav KRALJAČIĆ, *Kálajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Kállay Regime in Bosnia and Hercegovina), Sarajevo 1987.

ficial Bosniak identity, Bosnia's Croats and Serbs fought for religious and educational autonomy, that is, for the opportunity to develop their collective identities. Even the Muslims, who had been expected to provide the main support for the effort to create a Bosniak identity, demurred, preferring to identify themselves as Croats or Serbs or Muslims. Rather than a Bosniak people, during the first decade of the 1900s, Bosnia's ethnic groups created political organizations designed to further the interests of specific ethnic and religious groups.[53] Following Bosnia's annexation by the Dual Monarchy, elections for the area's first parliament clearly showed that the population favored those political organizations that articulated the interests of the region's main religious and national groups.[54]

Although both Croats and Serbs claimed the Muslims as members of their ethnic groups, there was an important distinction between the Croatian and Serbian national parties on the one hand, and the political organizations of the Muslims on the other. This distinction manifested itself in qualitatively different demands and might be considered a typological distinction stemming from the fundamental differences in the formation of the collective identity of each of these communities. Using some of Dr. Donia's findings, Mark Pinson recently described a crucial distinction between the development of Slavic and Muslim national identities.[55] He saw the Bosnian Muslims as diverging from the pattern of national revivals undergone by other small nations in East-Central Europe, simply because they lacked an ethnic state with which to identity and a pre-existing *national* culture that could form the basis for such a revival. The only identifications of Bosnia's Muslims were with the Ottomans and Islam.

"Bosnian Muslims," he argued, "had no 'Greater X' myth [e.g., the Greek Megale Idea, Velika B'lgaria, or Buyuk Turkye] suggesting or dictating borders, which in other cases in Eastern Europe were often as generous as they were vague. This absence of an earlier prototypical state with borders that had enjoyed at least some kind of recognition might have contributed in later periods to anxiety over recognition of boundaries and border areas."[56]

He defined this process among Bosnia's Muslims not as a national revival, but rather as a "political awakening." Pinson's typological distinction means that Muslim political organizations in the 20th century can be best described as *religious* political parties (the closest counterpart would be the Islamic par-

[53] DONIA, *Bosnia under Double Eagle*, passim, described in detail the creation of the Muslim political organization. The scholarly literature on early political organizations of Bosnian Croats and Serbs is enormous and without exception in Croatian or Serbian language.

[54] In 1878 Austro-Hungary received a mandate to occupy the Turkish province in order to pacify it and to establish some kind of provisional conduct of local affairs. After thirty years of occupation, the status of Bosnia-Hercegovina changed in 1908 with the unilateral Act of Annexation by the Austro-Hungarian Government. After this, the province was no longer even under the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan.

[55] Mark PINSON, "The Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina Under Austro-Hungarian Rule, 1878-1918," in PINSON, et al., *The Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina*, p. 89 ff.

[56] PINSON, op. cit., p. 91.

ties in today's Turkey) rather than as *national* (nationalist) parties. In political terms, this means that while Bosnia's Croats and Serbs sought to create a state based on ethnic identity, its Muslims wanted to build a *society and state* grounded on Islam. But these distinctions were of only minor importance in practical terms. The pretensions of the competing ethnic communities to the same territory were mutually exclusive and generated conflict. Similarly, any attempt to build an Islamic state and society in an area where the adherents of other religions lived was also exclusionary and likely to provoke conflict. In short, while Muslim nationalism was distinct in being religious, not ethnic, it was not less likely than Croatian or Serbian nationalism to generate conflict because its view of the world was as parochial and its goals as exclusionary as those of ethnically-based movements.

Regardless of the typological differences between "national" and "Islamic" political parties, from 1911 to 1997, ethnically and religiously based parties won the vast majority of the votes cast in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the exceptions of those periods when such parties were banned.[57] In other words, it is clear that Bosnia's people were divided along ethnic and religious lines. So long as Bosnia-Herzegovina was a province within a larger political structure, the potential for violent conflict was contained as each group jockeyed for power, position, and influence within a larger political space. But any relaxation of constraints and the disappearance of existing systems for relatively peaceful resolutions of social conflicts threatened to unleash the bitterness underlying Bosnia's segregated, competing religious groups.

The breakup of any larger political entity within which Bosnia functioned more or less as an autonomous province, has repeatedly led to explosions of violence that have spiraled out of control. This was the case in both World Wars, especially World War II. After Yugoslavia's military collapse in 1941, the Axis occupiers and newly formed Croatian state could not contain the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was stoked by ethnic animosity, by a racist Nazi occupying force, *and* by an Allied policy which sought to turn Bosnia into a battlefield to disrupt Axis supply lines to the Mediterranean and Aegean and siphon off Axis troops from other theaters. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the result was the transformation of peacetime political disputes into a bloody internal war. Although the reasons for their actions varied, a large number of individuals from all three national/religious communities eventually joined in the violence, attempting to physically eliminate members of other ethnic/ religious groups and finally realize their own image of Bosnia.

Such behavior can be attributed to the failure of Bosnia's political elite to build the mechanisms and procedures needed to resolve their conflicts without appealing to an outside power, whether the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul,

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[57] National parties were banned by king Alexander in 1929. The ban was lifted in 1937, but the region was then divided between Serb and Croat in 1939. During the war, there were no parliamentary elections, and after 1945, ethnic and religious parties were again banned. Only after 1990 were they able to operate openly. In effect, given the corruption of Yugoslav elections *prior* to 1929, there had never been a truly *free* election in the region before 1990.

the Austrian Emperor in Vienna, or the Communist dictator Tito in Belgrade. Historically, arbitration and pressure from larger and more powerful state institutions, not some inbred tendency to toleration, had ensured the illusion of stability and tolerance by assuring the dominance of one group at the expense of all others. This preserved a given political system and its elite in the short run, but it created deep, unresolved, and largely irresolvable, tensions in the long run. In short, it created the preconditions for internal wars once restraints were removed, as the repressed groups sought to "settle the score" *and* establish themselves as the dominant group in Bosnia.

Given this analysis, it is clear that some of the conclusions popular among the modern scholars need to be reconsidered and largely rejected. It is certainly correct that "ancient tribal hatred" did not cause the war in Bosnia, but it is also undoubtedly an error when someone describes Bosnian society as some sort of multi-ethnic idyll. In reality, smoldering inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts had always burned up a certain amount of social energy, and they could not be resolved by the Bosnians themselves. Similarly untenable is very popular assertion that inter-ethnic conflicts in Bosnia tended to break out because they were instigated by an outside factor. Certainly, outside factors meddled in Bosnian politics, but they could only make latent conflict actual. The real role of outside actors, which in almost all cases was a higher state authority exercising sovereignty over the region, was to control and exploit conflict by preserving the potential for violence, creating room for arbitration and the preservation of their own political domination. In effect, they stoked the embers of ethnic competition, but kept it from bursting into flame. The highly-charged political environment that resulted lasted for over 120 years. It burst into flames between 1992 and 1995, as the region's ethnic and religious groups struggled to establish themselves as distinct territorial entities and realize their competing visions of Bosnia.

In the Wake of the Flood

The events which led Bosnia's political organizations to press their national claims to sovereignty are obvious in hindsight. They involved the collapse of the old world order, an event that created both international and domestic political vacuums. The Serbs were the first to perceive the collapse of the existing order, which also threatened to dissolve Yugoslavia, as an opportunity to resolve the "Serbian question" by creating a Greater Serbia on Yugoslavia's ruins. Serbian politicians manipulated potential inter-ethnic disputes and revivified old conflicts in an effort to mobilize Yugoslavia's Serbs. The first notable effort to do so was the *SANU Memorandum* of 1986. Their final goal was to seize large tracts of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the support of and assistance from the JNA. Their problem was that it was difficult to move from their avowed role as champions of Yugoslavia to their actual goal of creating a Greater Serbia. Unable to do both, they opted for the former during their attack on Slovenia, and attempted to cloak aggression as a defensive reaction in their war on Croatia. Unable to pursue their goal openly, they lost

the opportunity to consolidate their gains in 1991. After 1992, they sought to secure their gains in Croatia by occupying and cleansing 70% of Bosnia-Herzegovina, even though they accounted for only a third of the population there. Such a demand might seem presumptuous, until it is recalled that they demanded a third of Croatia, even though Serbs were only 12% of the prewar population there. The atrocities they committed in the attempt to realize their goals compromised whatever legitimate demands the Serbs had to self-determination in these areas.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Europe's other socialist states opened the way to war in Yugoslavia. In Kosovo and Vojvodina, mobs organized by Serbian leaders forced the elected authorities to resign and then proclaimed the annexation of these formerly autonomous provinces to Serbia, thereby overturning the 1974 constitution and fatally compromising the authority of the federal government. The same procedure was used in the Federal Republic of Montenegro, where a candidate acceptable to Serbia's leaders was levered into office. These small *coups d'etat* were engineered and staged by the Serbian government with the support of federal agencies and the JNA. Ideologically, they reflected the goals of an exacerbated Serbian nationalism. Their primary objective was to preclude democratic reforms that might lead to a confederal reordering of the state and a multi-ethnic and multi-party parliamentary system in which the Serbs would lose their ability to dominate Yugoslav politics. With the support of the JNA, control of the federal banking system, and the ability to manipulate such political institutions as the police and the media in Montenegro, Serbia, and the autonomous provinces, Serbian leaders hoped to be able to suppress growing demands for democratic reforms. Republics where Serbs were in a distinct minority and had to compete with nationalist movements that controlled the levers of power and had the support of the majority of citizens, were more problematic for Belgrade's leaders, who sought to incite separatist rebellions rather than orchestrate coups d'etat. In Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina, non-Serbian communist elites opted to work with those promoting democratic reform. Their decision to do so checked Serbian ambitions and led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia's League of Communists, which no longer had a function. The divergent paths pursued by Serbian leaders, who sought to hold together a centralized state under their control, and leaders in other republics, who preferred a reorganization of the state on a confederal basis, was paralysis of the country's federal institutions, as Serbian leaders used their control of the federal banking system to embezzle billions of dinars, their seats on the collective Presidency to block access to power by other nationalities, and their influence with the JNA to browbeat political leaders from other republics.

The political crisis was accompanied by a rapid deterioration and collapse of communist ideology and socialist practice. Because the phenomena were interdependent, there is no easy way to trace cause and effect. Changes seemed to be sudden and unexpected, and for those who had grown up during the Tito era of forced "brotherhood and unity," often unreal and grotesque.

Overnight, criminals and political dissidents emerged from the country's jails to became the leaders of mass national movements and special forces. So topsy-turvy did the world become that having been in prison or ostracized as a dissent seemed to be necessary credentials for political success. Even those prosecuted for embezzlement and fraud, like Radovan Karadžić and Mate Boban, emerged as political leaders, claiming to have been the victims of political repression. Structural reforms designed to introduce a market economy merely destroyed the older system and paved the way for a anarchic capitalism reminiscent of the roaring nineties, in which success was directly proportional to lack of scruples. Large and once profitable factories failed, throwing tens of thousands of people out of work. Destitute, they saw petty officials, peddlers, and criminals transformed into owners of large companies and, touted by the media, buy their way into government.[58]

The collapse of the party state seemed to free Yugoslavia's media. But they lacked both a professional ethos and secure financial support. So they quickly came under the control of the new political elites, who used them to mobilize their respective communities.[59] As the existing political system collapsed, so did the ideology and values associated with it as the Yugoslav view of the world, their *Weltanschauung*, was shattered, creating a vacuum that was filled by older ethnic and religious models of reality. It was both natural and under-standable for people to turn to religious images and national myths from earlier eras for security. In Bosnia, this led to an effort to reconstitute the three legendary Bosnias that forty-five years of socialism had driven underground, but never managed to obliterate completely.

It is still to early for a definitive study on the dissolution of Yugoslavia, because we do not yet have access to the original and primary documents necessary to reconstruct the period analytically. Nor do we have the monographs needed to provided conceptual models and detailed analyses of key questions. What we do have is official documents *intended* for publication, often to rationalize a policy or mislead the general public; memoirs and first-person accounts by journalists, diplomats, and others whose credibility is as suspect as their memories; accounts in the media, which at best are second and third hand reports and analyses; and fragments of self-interested testimony by various participants.

The nature of our current data base makes it difficult to understand such phenomena as how the new national elites were created, to what extent they relied on existing networks, and to what extent they were merely a continuation of the old communist elite. It is also difficult to discern to what extent they actually controlled events and identify the mechanisms they could use

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[58] For example, Fikret Abdić was involved in a major financial scandal; Željko Ražnjatović rose to a powerful position in Serbia, despite being on Interpol's list of criminals; and Alija Delimustafić apparently "bought" the post of Minister of the Interior in the Bosnian government in 1990.

[59] Although biased, Mark Thompson's *Forging War, The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina,* London 1994, is the only survey of the media in Yugoslavia during the early 1990s.

to counter challenges to their power and discipline the lower levels of their parties and movements. In order to answer similar questions regarding the emergence of Muslim political organizations during the late 1800s and early 1900s, Robert Donia had to read and analyze hundreds of confidential police files, newspaper articles, and private letters from the period.[60] So it seems absurd for the same author to rely on a few newspaper articles and chose a single event (the alleged ultimatum by the HVO in April 1993, pp. 41-4) as the key to the Muslim-Croat clashes in Central Bosnia. The most a serious historian could offer at this point in time is a general outline of events, constructed from the fragmentary evidence enumerated above, and seriously tainted by personal perception and experience, including his own.

Among the phenomena which Donia fails to discuss is the crucial one of choosing Bosnia's coat-of-arms in 1990. As a historian, I personally participated in this decision and came to appreciate the intolerance and ignorance of basic democratic procedures of those in Bosnia's new political elite. I was invited to participate in the work of a commission formed to propose the new coat-of-arms, which would become Bosnia's official symbol. I was told that the commission had been formed by the Bosnian Assembly, whereas in fact it was convened and controlled by single political party, the SDA. When I expressed surprise that there were no Serbian historians on the commission, I was told that they had refused to participate. This was true, but I was not told the reason for the refusal – their objection to working on a commission convened by a party rather than the parliament. Their reservations were borne out when it came time to adopt a proposal for the new coat-of-arms. Instead of seeking consensus among all ethnic groups, which would have appeared basic if one wanted to build loyalty to the new state simbol, the SDA simply imposed its will by manipulating the commission.

Because symbols played such an important role in ethnic identification in Bosnia, this cavalier and partisan approach was potentially disastrous. Symbols were closely identified with particular ethnic and religious groups and therefore crucial forms of social communication. This was true not only for Bosnia's coat-of-arms, but for everyday language as well. When Muslims became to use archaic words and expressions of Turkish origin and to proclaim them characteristic of the "Bosnian language," they inevitably alienated those Croats and Serbs who considered these words and expressions symbols of the enslavement of their ancestors by the Ottomans. Even everyday greetings became means of religious and ethnic identification, for example, the greeting *dobar dan*, a literal translation of the German *guten Tag*, introduced by Habsburg officials in 1878. This greeting was standard in Serbo-Croatian grammars and used throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina until 1992. But many viewed *dobar dan* as a symbol of an older era, associated with the Habsburgs and a hybrid Serbo-Croatian language that privileged the ekavian dialect. So various forms of archaic religious greetings replaced it, even though most people were not practicing believers. Muslims adopted the Islamic s*elam alejkum-*

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[60] DONIA, op. cit. (1981), for a more scholarly approach than his testimony.

alejkumu selam; Serbs, *pomoz bog-bog ti pomogao*; and Croats *hvaljen Isus-na vijeke*, or simply *bog*. Such changes, although apparently trivial, were as crucial as the adoption of *tu* in place of *vous* during the French Revolution or *tovarishch* in place of *gospodin* during the Russian. But in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they did not denote a shift in class consciousness; they signaled identification with a national community, defined historically as descendents of specific ethnic or religious community.

Archaic markers of affiliation with a certain community began to reemerge in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the such mundane things as dress and food. One of the most obvious was the increasing use by Muslim women of the veil and kerchief (*zar* or *feredža*), which urban women of all religions had worn until 1878. Such attempts to demonstrate one's affiliation often appeared incongruous when they occurred side-by-side with modern technology. For example, after 1990 the acronyms of the political parties, and national and religious symbols appeared along Bosnia-Herzegovina's roads on signs whose colors mimicked traffic signs, as local settlements began to mark their territory. Something similar happened with license plates, as ethnic groups, including those displaced by the war, used different symbols for the same area. At one point, Jajce had a Bosniak-Muslim plate and a Croatian, both issued by their respective administrations in exile, and a Serbian, issued after the Serbs took Jajce in 1992.

Affiliation with one's national community was manifested by the use of symbols, which also reassured people whose lives had been turned upside down by rapid and profound social, political, and economic changes. The media, who shaped the perceptions of most people, exploited such symbols. This was to be expected, because in the aftermath of the collapse of socialism and Yugoslavia, only collective national identities remained as viable building blocks for a new social system. Unable to depend on the state, people turned to political movements and parties organized on ethnic and religious lines. But because such organizations were mutually exclusive, people quickly came to view other symbols and members of other communities as threats – a result of collective memory and chaos as much as a product of the media and any given political elite.

How this groping for security in ethnic identity led to ethnic violence can be understood from an incident that occurred in Sarajevo on 1 March 92, a month before the outbreak of war on April 4. The incident began when a group of guests at a Serb wedding arrived in the Baščaršija, an old, traditionally Muslim, part of the city where old crafts were concentrated.[61] After 1990, it was regarded as a symbol of the Ottoman golden age. But it also had the oldest Serb-Orthodox church in town.[62] Why the newlyweds had chosen this

[61] According to the 1991 census, community of the Stari grad (Old city), which included Bascarsija, was 77% Muslim and only 10% Serb.

[62] The church was built in the 1500s, when the town was just beginning to expand and still had an important Serbian mahala. See Mladen ANČIĆ, "Razvoj srednjovjekovnog naseobinskog kompleksa na mjestu danasnjeg Sarajeva" ("The Development of a Medieval Settlement

particular church to celebrate their marriage is not clear. But, given the degree of ethnic hostility in Sarajevo, it could be seen as a provocation, all the more so because the long motorcade included a large number of Serbian national and religious symbols. Such wedding processions were routinely accompanied by honking of car horns and discharging firearms in much of Yugoslavia, and the noise drew many onlookers. As the motorcade moved into a parking lot, a man got out of the lead car and, as was customary, started waving the Serbian flag he was carrying. His actions evidently was perceived as a provocation by two of the onlookers, who would later attain the status of heroes and a defenders of Bosnia by their exploits. One of them pulled out a revolver and shot the man with the flag, then melted into the crowd, perhaps an indication that the other onlookers were too stunned to react, or that they were indifferent to the shooting of a Serb in their neighborhood. The shooting transformed the celebrations into a tragedy and triggered a Serbian reaction. That night, members of Serbian paramilitary units, supported by the JNA, erected blockades throughout Sarajevo, cutting the city in half.

In later analyses, local media, both Serbian and Muslim, tended to point to this incident as the spark that triggered the war. To some extent, this was an accurate assessment in that this was one of many possible triggers for an internal war whose preconditions had long existed. The murder showed that previously routine behavior (displaying national symbols at a wedding celebration) had assumed a new meaning (provocation by an ethnic group) as ethnic tensions increased. Just a few years earlier, the incident could not have occurred, because the wedding guests would have gone to a municipal building where part of the ceremony would have been performed, and merry-making and toasts would have included passers-by. But now, the wedding had become a *Serbian* event, not a civil compact with some religious and ethnic overtones. So it could trigger latent ethnic hostility. The rapidity with which Serbian paramilitary groups and the JNA reacted showed that the Serbs were waiting for just such an incident to act. The emotional charge of the incident was strong on *both* sides because a *Serb* wedding procession, displaying *Serb* symbols, on its way to the oldest *Serb* church in Sarajevo was stopped by a *Muslim* bullet. Depending on one's affiliation, this was either an unprovoked attack by a Muslim extremist or an understandable reaction to a arrogant Serb provocation.

Had armed hostilities broken out on March 1, they would not have been caused because the Serbs, inclined towards myths and epic literature that exalted extreme male images and violence, were chaffing to avenge the murder of a single Serb wedding guest.[63] The reasons and real motives went much deeper, and it is clear that Bosnia's Serbs were psychologically mobilized for

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Complex on the Site of Modern Sarajevo"), in: Idem, *Na rubu Zapada. Tri stoljeća srednjo-vjekovne Bosn*e (On the Verge of the West. Three centuries of Medieval Bosnia), Zagreb 2001.

[63] For the impact of myth on Serb political behavior, see Miodrag POPOVIĆ, *Vidovdan i časni krst. Ogled iz književne arheologije* (Feast of St. Vitus Day and the Holy Cross. Study of the Literary Archeology), Beograd 1977.

the outbreak of war. But no one had foreseen the results of this mobilization – a war marked by a level of brutality that was inconceivable in peacetime.[64] The outbreak of the Muslim-Croat conflict and the war crimes committed during it cannot be attributed to a Croatian predisposition to violence based on myth, nor to the writings and public declarations of Franjo Tudjman.[65] In fact, as was shown at the beginning of this paper, general Halilović clearly intended to defend only Muslims, and as early as end of 1991 the organizer of the SDA's paramilitary organization and would be Supreme commander of the ABH had marked non-Muslim settlements as hostile. Having determined the main goal of his organization to be the "*protection of Muslim people (and) preservation of integrity and wholeness of BiH*", the general identified the threats to *his* people and *his* country in a list of "total enemy forces" compiled fifteen months *prior* to what happened in the village of Ahmići in April 1993. Among those on the list are the "extremist forces of the HDZ," which he estimated to be "one-to-two brigades strong."[66] Such a small military force was a threat to nobody. Moreover, this was the same HDZ that had encouraged Croatian voters to support the EU-mandated plebiscite for a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nonetheless, Halilović, and his collaborators in the ABH

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[64] The barbaric violence of Serb paramilitary units employed during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, reported by almost all independent sources, was closely connected with the nature of Serbia's national mythology (see preceding footnote). However, the Serbian media the Serbian government and political establishment also bear responsibility for the manner in which the war was waged.

[65] Donia argued that Tudjman's views on Bosnia were the ideological basis for the Muslim-Croat war. (Report, pp. 34-6.) But in *Nationalism and Contemporary Europe* (Boulder CO, 1981), pp. 113 ff., Tudjman argues for the economic and national unity of Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, not for the partition of the later. Donia also cited Warren Zimmerman to argue that the Croatian President retained those views through 1990. This is, at best, hearsay by a diplomat whose failed policies desperately needed a scapegoat. In April 1992, Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed a letter of intent pledging their countries to cooperate, and two years later they formed a confederation. Tudjman did not advocated Bosnia's partition nor the forcible recreation of the Croatian Banovina. He did, at least publicly, advocated something quite opposite, that is cooperation with Bosnia, while at the same time was just waiting to see what will come out of the actions taken by "international community". The point is vividly ilustrated in the newly published transcript of his talks with the leaders of Bosnian Croats on the November 17th 1991 [the transcript is published in Ciril RIBIČIČ, *Geneza jedne zablude* (Making an Error), Zagreb-Sarajevo-Idrija 2000, pp. 113-171]. It also must be added that in "Tudjamn's cabinet" on such occassions intersected two different levels of action, one beeing the "international arena", in which he was a "small player" as President of Croatia with enormous influence amog the Bosnian Croats, the other one the "Bosnian arena", where he tried to forge alliances and manipulate the events in the manner possible and in concordance with the means at his disposal. Something quite different is true of the SDA leader, Alija Izetbegović, who only reluctantly cooperated with Croatia, and who publicly called for stronger ties between Bosnia and Islamic states, the fact that has to be connected with his wievs stated in the Islamic Declaration, reissued in Sarajevo in 1990, where he argued that Muslim states be based on the teachings of the Ko'ran. He has not recanted his ideas, arguing that he need not do so because Muslims are a minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But with 44% of the population and the highest birth rate in the region, they would have been the majority within a generation – this was the argument never openly stated.

[66] S. HALILOVIĆ, op. cit., p. 166.

and SDA, viewed the HDZ – and by extension, Bosnia's Croats – as "enemies." I myself am unaware of any official or official document issued by the HDZ before the end of 1992 that considered "Muslims" or "Bosniaks" or the SDA as "enemies."

Conclusions

Although Bosnia-Herzegovina was not a land in which ancient tribal hatred had led to repeated war and massacres, by 1990, the region did have three distinct ethnic and religious communities that competed for preference. In the second half of the 19th century, the modern national identities of Croats and Serbs were formed, as were, to a lesser extent, that of Bosnia's Muslims.

Until 1992, when it gained formal recognition as a sovereign state, Bosnia-Herzegovina had always functioned only as a province of a larger political entity, with varying degrees of autonomy. It therefore never developed autochthonous institutions and procedures for the peaceful resolution of political and social conflicts across ethnic and religious lines. Such conflicts, unavoidable in all societies, were articulated here as conflicts between members of national and religious groups. They were both indigenous to the region and occasionally instigated by outside political centers, e.g., Vienna and Belgrade. But these outside players *always* resolved the conflicts. As a result, throughout this past century, the most important role in the political life of BiH was played by political forces which sought to protect national and religious rights, but operated within a larger national or imperial context.

Given the competition among ethnic and religious groups, the exclusive nature of each group's claims, and the lack of mechanisms to channel and resolve conflict, it appears that the outbreak of war in Central Bosnia during 1993 was almost unavoidable. The political elite of all "warring parties" were to a great extent swept along on a tide of uncontrolled events in which latent social tensions and conflicts surfaced in a brutal form, even though the blame for initiating the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not equally distributed. The largest share of responsibility undoubtedly lay with Serbian political leaders who, counting on their initial military superiority, had opened Pandora's box, expecting to win quick and relatively easy victories. Muslim and Croatian political leaders had no effective way to stop what was essentially a territorial grab by the Serbs, short of force.

Because the Serbs initiated war before the new Bosnian state could be consolidated, there was no viable central authority and no cohesive social fabric to contain or control violence. Nor, given Halilović's vision of the PL and ABH as Muslim organizations created to defend Muslims, was there a military force that would defend all of Bosnia's ethnic groups. The creation of the Croatian Communities of Herzeg-Bosnia and Bosanska Posavina were therefore attempts to defend areas in which Croats formed a largely plurality of the population and to provide them with a modicum of civil administration, functions that Sarajevo and the ABH could not, or would not, undertake.

Any assessment of the motives and actions of Bosnia's Croats needs to take into consideration two obvious facts: Croats were the smallest national group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, at the same time lot of them lived adjacent to a state whose population was over 80% Croatian. From the second fact stems the conclusion that they were naturally pulled toward Croatia, but because they were unevenly spread throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, they did not comprise a compact mass that could easily be incorporated into Croatia. It was therefore in their interest, as well as that of Croatia, for them to cooperate in realizing a multi-ethnic Bosnian state friendly to Croatia. But as the smallest group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they could not initiate or influence events. Instead, they reacted to conflicts and agreements between the larger Serb and Muslim communities. With less than 18% of the population, they were simply not in a position to undertake political or military initiatives. In other words, the preservation and partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina were Serb and Muslim prerogatives. The Croats could adjust to either outcome, but they could not determine the course of Bosnian politics. So they attempted to cooperate with those who would guarantee the preservation of what they saw as Croatian rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their position, while not strong, was consistent – too weak to realize their virtual Bosnia, they were content to avoid open conflicts and to support a Bosnian state in which the rights of its three constituent nationalities were guaranteed. Unfortunately, neither the Muslims nor the Serbs initially accepted this position, because both seemed to have the ability in 1992 to realize their Bosnias.