Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina
Islam of the Global West

Series editors: Kambiz GhaneaBassiri and Frank Peter

*Islam of the Global West* is a pioneering series that examines Islamic beliefs, practices, discourses, communities, and institutions that have emerged from “the Global West.” The geographical and intellectual framing of the Global West reflects both the role played by the interactions between people from diverse religions and cultures in the development of Western ideals and institutions in the modern era, and the globalization of these very ideals and institutions.

In creating an intellectual space where works of scholarship on European and North American Muslims enter into conversation with one another, the series promotes the publication of theoretically informed and empirically grounded research in these areas. By bringing the rapidly growing research on Muslims in European and North American societies, ranging from the United States and France to Portugal and Albania, into conversation with the conceptual framing of the Global West, this ambitious series aims to reimagine the modern world and develop new analytical categories and historical narratives that highlight the complex relationships and rivalries that have shaped the multicultural, poly-religious character of Europe and North America, as evidenced, by way of example, in such economically and culturally dynamic urban centers as Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Madrid, Toronto, Sarajevo, London, Berlin, and Amsterdam where there is a significant Muslim presence.

*Amplifying Islam in the European Soundscape: Religious Pluralism and Secularism in the Netherlands*, Pooyan Tamimi Arab
In memoriam, Esad Hećimović (1963–2017)
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Maps</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note on Terminology</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The Origins of National Indetermination (1878–1914)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Disillusions of Yugoslavism (1914–41)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 A Winding Search for Security (1941–5)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Emergence of the Muslim Nation (1945–90)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Caught in the Mortal Embrace of Nationalism (1990–5)</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 A Bosniak Nation Centered on Islam (1990–5)</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 On the European Fringes of the Umma (1992–5)</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Dreams of a Nation, Search for an Empire (1995–2013)</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFŽ</td>
<td>Women’s Antifascist Front</td>
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<td>AIO</td>
<td>Active Islamic Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>APZB</td>
<td>Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARBiH</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-SDA</td>
<td>Party of Democratic Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVNOJ</td>
<td>Anti-Fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPS</td>
<td>Bosnian Patriotic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFJ</td>
<td>Democratic Federal Yugoslavia</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOMDO</td>
<td>Home Guard Volunteer Regiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUFOR</td>
<td>European Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNRJ</td>
<td>Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDZ</td>
<td>Croat Democratic Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKU</td>
<td>Croat Catholic Association</td>
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<td>HNZ</td>
<td>Croat People’s Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Croat Revolutionary Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRSS</td>
<td>Croat Republican Peasant Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSS</td>
<td>Croat Peasant Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVO</td>
<td>Croat Defense Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICTY</td>
<td>International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFOR</td>
<td>Implementation Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHH</td>
<td>Humanitarian Relief Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>JMNO</td>
<td>Yugoslav Muslim People’s Organization</td>
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<td>JMO</td>
<td>Yugoslav Muslim Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNA</td>
<td>Yugoslav People’s Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNS</td>
<td>Yugoslav People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRZ</td>
<td>Yugoslav Radical Union</td>
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<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPJ</td>
<td>Communist Party of Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>MBO</td>
<td>Muslim Bosniak Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNO</td>
<td>Muslim People's Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNS</td>
<td>Muslim Progressive Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNVS</td>
<td>Muslim National Council of Sandžak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO HSS</td>
<td>Muslim Organization of the Croat Peasant Party</td>
</tr>
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<td>MSS</td>
<td>Muslim Independent Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDH</td>
<td>Independent State of Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOF</td>
<td>People's Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Patriotic League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBiH</td>
<td>Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Party of Democratic Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Serb Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFOR</td>
<td>Stabilization Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFRJ</td>
<td>Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKBiH</td>
<td>League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
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<td>SKJ</td>
<td>League of Communists of Yugoslavia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKOJ</td>
<td>League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLS</td>
<td>Slovenian People's Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNO</td>
<td>Serb People's Renewal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNSD</td>
<td>Alliance of Independent Social Democrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Socialist Party of Serbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRJ</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRNAO</td>
<td>Serb National Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRSJ</td>
<td>Alliance of the Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSRN</td>
<td>Socialist Alliance of Working People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TİKA</td>
<td>Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Territorial Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWRA</td>
<td>Third World Relief Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UÇK</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMO</td>
<td>United Muslim Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPROFOR</td>
<td>United Nations Protection Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAO</td>
<td>Unified League of Antifascist Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRS</td>
<td>Army of Republika Srpska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAVNOBiH</td>
<td>Provincial Anti-Fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Maps

Map I  The Yugoslav space, circa 1870  8
Map II  The Yugoslav space from the Congress of Berlin (1878) to the Balkan Wars (1912–13)  11
Map III  The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1918–41  30
Map IV  The Yugoslav space between 1941 and 1945  52
Map V  Partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina proposed in the 1942 memorandum  61
Map VI  Communist Yugoslavia (1943–91)  71
Map VII  Ethnic breakdown of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991  113
Map IX  The Vance–Owen Plan (January 1993)  122
Map X  Frontlines in Bosnia-Herzegovina (April 1993–March 1994)  124
Map XI  The Owen–Stoltenberg Plan (July 1993)  126
Map XII  Frontlines in Bosnia-Herzegovina (April 1994–October 1995)  137
Map XIII  Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Dayton Agreement (December 1995)  139
In Bosnia-Herzegovina, three main communities have traditionally lived side by side: the Muslim/Bosniak community, the Orthodox/Serb community, and the Catholic/Croat community, as well as a small Jewish community. Until the 1960s, the term “Muslim” was written in Serbo-Croatian indifferently with a capital or lower-case “m,” and depending on the context, referred only to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina or to all members of the Umma (the community of believers). In 1968, the League of Communists officially recognized the existence of a Muslim nation and established a strict distinction between the national name *Musliman* (with a capital “M”), applying only to Muslim Slavs speaking Serbo-Croatian, and the religious name *musliman* (with a lower-case “m”), which designated all followers of Islam. In this book, for the period before 1993, I use the term “Muslim” with a capital “M,” both for its religious and its national meaning. In 1993, the national name “Muslim” was given up in favor of “Bosniak,” and I adhere to this new usage. However, when discussing periods that extend before and after 1993, I use the term “Muslim/Bosniak.” Moreover, a distinction must be made between the term “Bosniak” (noun *Bošnjak*, adjective *bošnjački*), which applies only to members of the Bosniak nation (i.e. people of Muslim cultural tradition) and the term “Bosnian” (noun *Bosanac*, adjective *bosanski*), which refers to all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina regardless of their nationality or religion. While these rules may seem complex, they are necessary in order to grasp the political and religious history of the Muslims/Bosniaks.

X.B.
Introduction

On December 21, 2002, the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina held an event in Sarajevo to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the office of the Reis-ul-ulema (the head of the ‘ulama’), a religious institution created in 1882 following a decision by the authorities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which occupied the country at that time. Mustafa Cerić, the Reis-ul-ulema in office in 2002, reminded his audience how his distant predecessor, Džemaludin Čaušević, had written a prayer for the Emperor of Austria-Hungary Franz Josef, to be read in mosques on the Emperor’s birthday. In this prayer, Čaušević praised this Christian emperor who was favorably disposed to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Cerić went on to say that since then, many emperors and kings had come and gone, more or less favorably disposed to Bosnian Muslims, yet this community had survived and defended its Islamic identity. Then he turned to Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and he said:

I do not believe that Lord Paddy Ashdown expects the current Reis-ul-ulema to write a prayer or for the imams to read it for his birthday, because we no longer live in the era of emperors, this is no longer the age of subjects and masters, but rather the age of democracy and human rights in Europe, and so I hope, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Today we pray to God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, asking Him to protect Europe and Bosnia-Herzegovina from war, misery and poverty, and so that each individual, each people and each faith can find its place in a European Community of nations and religions with equal rights.¹

Cerić then turned the floor over to Paddy Ashdown, who held considerable powers to enforce the peace agreement signed in 1995. Lord Ashdown reminded the audience that the creation of the office of Reis-ul-ulema in 1882 had initially sparked strong opposition within the Bosnian Muslim elites, adding wittily that “it’s good to know that even so long ago, impositions were not universally welcomed!”² Then he described how Bosnian Muslims gradually came to accept the existence of a Reis-ul-ulema, who was eventually chosen on a more democratic basis, and who contributed to the coexistence of religious communities. Ashdown then praised the return of religious freedoms after a half-century of communism, and pleaded for separation between religion and politics.

This exchange between the Reis-ul-ulema and the High Representative illustrates why we must take account of the longue durée if we are to understand the current
situation of the Muslims/Bosniaks. It also casts light on certain historical continuities. Admittedly, the High Representative is neither Emperor Franz Josef, nor an avatar of the British Raj, and the European Union may not be an empire. Nevertheless, the positioning of the Bosniak political and religious elites vis-à-vis the international players currently present in Bosnia-Herzegovina can also be explained by certain expectations and political strategies that appeared in the Austro-Hungarian context and were used throughout the twentieth century, with greater or lesser degrees of success. As for the Reis-ul-ulema, this office continues to the present day, even though the Islamic religious institutions and religious life in general underwent profound, sometimes brutal, transformations over the twentieth century.

In the present book, I intend to return to the issue of the political and religious transformations affecting the Bosnian Muslim community in the post-Ottoman period—i.e. from 1878 to the present day—with particular emphasis on the 1990–5 war period, which saw particularly rapid and dramatic transformations. The first four chapters of this book deal respectively with the Austro-Hungarian occupation (1878–1918), the first Yugoslavia (1918–41), the Second World War (1941–5) and communist Yugoslavia (1945–90). The following three chapters focus on the 1990–5 period from three standpoints: the attitude of the Muslim/Bosniak elites during the breakup of Yugoslavia; the reshaping of Muslim/Bosniak national identity during the war years; and the international context underlying these two processes. Chapter 8 resumes the standard chronology by focusing on the political and religious transformations of the post-war period (1995–2013).

Throughout these various chapters, I aim to reconsider the commonly accepted idea of a linear shift from an imperial order to a nation-state order, by showing that in the case of the Muslims/Bosniaks, the transition from a non-sovereign religious minority to a sovereign political nation was a particularly belated and paradoxical process that remains uncertain even today. Against this backdrop, I endeavor to better understand the causes and actual forms of the “national indetermination” that characterized the Muslim community until the 1960s, which can be attributed not only to a certain nostalgia for the Ottoman imperial order, but also to the enduring allegiance of the traditional Muslim elites to the central power, until these elites were sidelined by the communist regime. In this approach, I have been inspired by the research of Nathalie Clayer, Mary Neuburger, and Burcu Akan-Ellis on other Balkan Muslim populations; by approaches to imperial and nation-state building in the Balkans in terms of loyalty or political allegiance; and by the notion of “national indifference” put forth by Tara Zahra, a historian of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

I am also interested in the actual forms of Muslim/Bosniak nationalization, given that, until the mid-twentieth century, Muslim intellectuals tended to identify with the Serb or Croat nations. Then, beginning in the 1960s, the promotion of a new Muslim nation went hand in hand with cultural and political paradoxes that Muslim intellectuals and politicians attempted to resolve by reasserting their allegiance to communist Yugoslavia. The breakup of the Yugoslav federation in the 1990s placed the Muslim political and intellectual elites in an almost inextricable situation, given the impossibility of building a Muslim nation-state in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, the past half-century should be regarded as the period when Muslim/Bosniak elites attempted alternately to
find their place in a political order dominated by the nation-state principle, or to escape its most dreadful consequences. To date, these attempts have not been successful. While I consider my approach to be similar to the interpretations of nationalism elaborated by Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Rogers Brubaker, I attempt to cast light on the haphazard, uncertain nature of the Muslim/Bosniak nation building.

Against this backdrop, I return to the main cultural markers of Muslim/Bosniak national identity. Indeed, while there is some degree of continuity between the cultural markers produced in the late nineteenth century, the 1960s, and the 1990s, there are also many points of divergence. In particular, the intellectuals of the 1960s sought to minimize the importance of Islam to Muslim national identity. Thirty years later, as the national name “Bosniak” was adopted, Islam's place in the new Bosniak identity was, paradoxically, gaining greater importance. Unless this reversal is taken into account, we cannot grasp the political and religious transformations affecting the Muslim/Bosniak nation over the past few decades. This observation is similar to Vjekoslav Perica and Klaus Buchenau’s analyses of the place of religion in the Serb and Croat national identity, and echoes Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Patrick Michel and Antonela Capelle-Pogacean’s investigations of the ties between religious identity and national identity in Europe as a whole.

Islam's place in the Muslim/Bosniak national identity explains the enduring centrality of Islamic religious institutions for the Muslim/Bosniak community. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, this community withdrew into its status as a religious minority, structuring itself around its traditional religious institutions: madrasas (religious schools), waqfs (religious endowments) and Shari'a courts. The communist regime dismantled all these institutions in the 1940s, contributing to the Muslim population's rapid secularization. However, this did not prevent the Islamic Community from becoming a proxy national institution two decades later—a position that it still holds today, albeit in a different context. Thus, the political and religious changes within the Muslim/Bosniak community are closely connected, despite the secularization process that began in the interwar period, gathered pace as part of communist modernization, and has not been fundamentally challenged by the religious revival of the last two decades. So we find in Bosnia-Herzegovina the same religious trends that Patrick Michel and Detlef Pollack have already analyzed in other Eastern European countries, and that Danièle Hervieu-Léger and Grace Davie have already described at the level of Europe as a whole.

Lastly, these political and religious changes cannot be understood unless we take account of the pan-Islamist current, which first appeared during the dramatic events of the Second World War, was repressed by communist Yugoslavia, but successfully positioned itself at the heart of the Muslim/Bosniak nationalist mobilization in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1995, the establishment of a new one-party state and the use of Islam as a new discriminating political ideology shaped the political and religious realities of the territories controlled by the Bosnian army, even though the post-war period has seen the pan-Islamist current return to the same marginal position it held before 1990. The ties binding Islam and politics have grown looser and more complex given the growing pluralization of both political life and religious life. My thinking on political Islam has been enriched by Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel's research on the
“failure of political Islam,” the “decline of Islamism,” and “post-Islamism,” and Bosnia-Herzegovina may be one of the places where these concepts remain the most relevant. This is all the more true since most research published about Bosnia-Herzegovina has failed to take account of political Islam. This failure is attributable sometimes to simple ignorance, and sometimes to a well-intentioned form of self-censorship that is no longer necessary today, as the war ended two decades ago and the pan-Islamist current has been considerably weakened by the death of its main representative, Alija Izetbegović, in 2003.

While the present book intends to contribute to the debates about the political and religious history of the Muslims/Bosniaks, it makes no claim to answer all the questions raised by this particular case. It adopts a “top-down” perspective, focused on the political, intellectual and religious elites of the Muslim/Bosniak community. This approach grew out of my initial interest in the Bosnian pan-Islamist current, a small minority that a largely secularized Muslim population brought to power in 1990. Even regarding these elites, a more detailed analysis would be possible, for example with a prosopography of Muslim members of parliament from the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods, or of Party of Democratic Action (SDA) cadres in the 1990s. Likewise, this book is based mainly on existing academic literature, press archives, and less directly, fieldwork carried out in the 1990s and 2000s. My focus on written sources can be attributed to the unique conditions of the war period, when studying the local press was the best means to grasp the debates unfolding within the Muslim/Bosniak community. This approach has its limitations, however; it cannot replace an anthropological analysis of the forms that national identities and interethnic relations take on a daily basis, the clientelistic and corporatist practices underlying Bosnian political life, or the transformations of everyday religious practice. Nevertheless, this approach enables me to illustrate certain political and religious realities with examples that cannot simply be dismissed as “imaginary” or “marginal.”

Before presenting the findings of my research, I must clarify the usage of a few terms. Firstly, I use Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank’s definition of “empire” to refer to a political entity that is generally (but not always!) large, characterized by the religious and ethnic diversity of its populations that it aims to leverage rather than suppress; it thus prefers to exercise power in indirect, decentralized ways. By “search for empire”—a term I borrow from Ghassan Salamé—I mean the process whereby a political group aspires to place itself under the protection of an imperial power (or any power perceived to be an empire). Partly (and only partly) inspired by Rogers Brubaker’s research on nationalism and ethnicity, I distinguish between national identity, i.e. the whole set of myths, symbols, and other cultural markers that delineate the variable contours of a nation, and national identification, namely the equally fluid way in which individuals recognize themselves in a particular national construction. In this context, nationalization is the always reversible process whereby one national identification becomes predominant in a given population, whereas “national indetermination”—a term I prefer to “national indifference”—refers to the situations in which a given population remains far removed from national categories, whether or not this distance is deliberate. In present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina, these terms bear a negative connotation: “nationalization” (nacionaliziranje) refers to Serb and Croat attempts to assimilate Bosnian Muslims, and the latter’s “national indetermination”
(nacionalna neopredeljenost) is presented as the result of an authoritarian negation of their “true” national identity. I use both terms in a more neutral, less specific way. In my view, the “national indetermination” shown by Bosnian Muslims until the 1960s was admittedly a reflection of a certain balance of powers, but was in no way merely the result of constraint. Moreover, the recognition of the Muslim nation in 1968 and its renaming as the Bosniak nation in 1993 are eminent forms of nationalization.

Regarding the ties between Islam and politics, I favor the concepts generally used in contemporary Islamic studies, such as Islamic reformism, Islamic revivalism and neo-Salafism. The concept of “pan-Islamism” is more problematic. Why use this term to refer to a political and religious movement present in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the 1940s, whereas all the specialists of the Muslim world agree that pan-Islamism disappeared as an organized movement in the late 1930s? First and foremost, because “pan-Islamism” was the name used by the Young Muslims in the 1940s and by Alija Izetbegović in the 1970s for their political ideology. Moreover, the concept of “Islamism” is not very relevant in the Bosnian context. Islamists aspire to an Islamic state governed by Shari’a (Islamic law), whereas this was only marginally present in the thinking of the Young Muslims and their heirs. These groups aspired mainly to having a large Muslim state connecting Bosnian Muslims with the rest of the Umma. In this regard, they were indeed pan-Islamists. However, this gives no indication of how (or even if) this political ideology influenced the choices of these Bosnian pan-Islamist activists once they came to power. It also offers no justification for the way that communists and Serb and Croat nationalist propaganda used the term “pan-Islamism” to stir up fears. Yet the mysterious persistence of pan-Islamism in Bosnia-Herzegovina until the end of the twentieth century must be taken seriously, because it reveals the specificities of the Muslim/Bosniak case and has a logical explanation in this context, which I intend to demonstrate in this book.

To close this introduction, I would like to thank a few people who have supported me throughout my research. First of all, I would like to honor and remember the late Rémy Leveau, who was the first to encourage me to work on Islam in Yugoslavia. I would also like to thank Gilles Kepel, who was my thesis director and who has shown constant interest in the progress of my research. I extend thanks to the late Alexandre Popovic and Nathalie Clayer, my colleagues at the Centre d’Etudes Turques, Ottomanes, Balkaniques et Centraasiatiques; they have shared their extensive knowledge, advice, and friendship with me. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, I would particularly like to thank Esad Hečimović, Ahmet Alibašić, Husnija Kamberović, Dino Abazović, and Fikret Karčić for their thought-provoking ideas and practical assistance, even if we do not always share the same opinions. Thanks also go out to Armina Omerika in Germany, to Iva Lučić in Sweden, and to Zlatko Hasanbegović in Croatia. I am grateful to Emmanuel Szurek and Benoit Fliche for carefully reading my manuscript and suggesting changes both minor and major, and to Christopher Mobley for the English translation of this book. Any factual errors or stylistic mistakes still found in these pages are entirely my own responsibility. My warmest thanks go to Ariane, Aurore, and Anouk. In 2005, I drove Aurore and Anouk to Bosnia-Herzegovina for the first time, to convince myself that the war was indeed over. We ate pistachios in Sarajevo, fed a horde of cats in Mostar, and went pedal-boating in Jajce. Suffice it to say that none of my other fieldwork was as fruitful.

Paris, April 2017
The Origins of National Indetermination
(1878–1914)

The beginnings of national ideas among South Slavs

Nationalist ideologies like to anchor themselves in the distant past. In the area inhabited by South Slavs—which we will call the “Yugoslav space” for the sake of convenience—such ideologies frequently refer to the medieval kingdoms of Croatia, Serbia, or Bosnia. However, these kingdoms were less important than empires in shaping the human realities of the Yugoslav space: first the Byzantine Empire and the Venetian Empire, later the Ottoman and the Austrian empires, which became the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867 (see Map I). These empires all made use of the existing confessional divisions in the Yugoslav space, while modifying them on a lasting basis. The rivalry between Constantinople and Venice mirrored the rivalry between Eastern Christianity (Orthodoxy) and Western Christianity (Catholicism). Ottoman expansion led sizable autochthonous populations to convert to Islam. And the Austrian Empire, a Catholic entity, encouraged Orthodox peasant soldiers to settle at its borders. Thus, centuries of migrations and religious conversions explain the religious diversity of the Yugoslav space. This is especially obvious in Bosnia-Herzegovina, home to large Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic communities, as well as a smaller Jewish community.

The confessional lines of demarcation in the Yugoslav space were more or less stabilized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, their persistent importance is attributable to the ties that developed between religious belonging and national belonging. Indeed, nationalist ideologies began to appear in the Yugoslav space in the early nineteenth century. In the Ottoman Empire, the Serb insurrections of 1803 and 1815, followed by the formation of the autonomous principality of Serbia in 1830 (see Map I), established the material conditions for the development of a Serb national project. In the Austrian Empire, the Illyrian Movement led by Ljudevit Gaj in the 1830s was a forerunner of the Yugoslav idea: the project of uniting all South Slavic people (“Yugo-Slavs”). Yet in the first half of the nineteenth century, the nascent nationalist ideologies held sway only in limited circles of the cultural and political elites. National identification was a foreign idea to the general population, which defined itself mainly in confessional, provincial, and local terms.

Faced with the emergence of modern nation-states in Western Europe and growing social and political tensions internally, the Ottoman and Austrian Empires attempted
to reform their military and administrative systems, while reorganizing their linguistic and religious diversity. In the Ottoman Empire, these modernizing reforms were symbolized by the Edict (Hatt-ı Şerif) of Gülhane of 1839 and the Imperial Reform Edict (Hatt-ı Hümayun) of 1856, which granted legal equality for Muslims and non-Muslims in the Empire, and strengthened the organization of non-Muslim populations into millets, i.e. non-sovereign religious communities that enjoyed broad autonomy in legal and educational matters. In 1867, the Austrian Empire became the Austro-Hungarian Empire, after a compromise (Ausgleich) divided it into two entities with equal rights: the Austrian Empire and the kingdom of Hungary. A year later, an agreement (nagodba) gave Croatia-Slavonia limited autonomy within the kingdom of

Map I  The Yugoslav space, circa 1870.
Hungary. The rivalries between South Slavic nationalisms are partly attributable to the fact that they arose from two different imperial frameworks. Over the nineteenth century, Serbia asserted its autonomy and extended its territory to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire, while also showing strong interest in the South Slavic provinces of the Austrian Empire. Alongside the principality of Serbia under Ottoman tutelage, the Vojvodina under Hungarian domination was another important hotbed of the Serb national idea. Vuk Karadžić, the main intellectual figure of Serb nationalism, considered all speakers of the Štokavian dialects to be Serbs, whether they were Orthodox Christian, Catholic, or Muslim. In the Austrian Empire, Bishop Josip Strossmayer and his People’s Party (Narodna stranka, founded in 1860) defended the idea of a union of South Slavic peoples, whereas Ante Starčević and his Party of Rights (Stranka prava, founded in 1861) called for the restoration of Croatia with its historical rights and were in favor of pan-Croat nationalism, claiming that the Muslims of Ottoman Bosnia were also Croats.

The main nationalist ideologies of the Yugoslav space—Serb, Croat, and Yugoslav—thus developed in an area spanning two empires, and crystallized on the basis of linguistic and confessional criteria. On a linguistic level, the main nationalist actors worked for a convergence between the various Štokavian dialects. Ljudevit Gaj and Vuk Karadžić both chose the Herzegovinan dialect as the reference, and the Vienna Literary Agreement signed by Serb and Croat writers in 1850 laid the foundations for a common language. However, the former called the language “Serbian,” whereas the latter called it “Croatian” or “Illyrian.”

On a confessional level, Vuk Karadžić’s pan-Serb views and Ante Starčević’s pan-Croat ideas denied that confessional belonging held any national relevance. In reality, though, Karadžić and Starčević had to recognize the strength of religion in the national identification processes. In the nineteenth century, in the regions where nationalist ideologies spread beyond the small circles they were initially confined to, Orthodoxy and the Serb national identity largely overlapped, as did Catholicism and the Croat national identity. Moreover, certain currents of Serb nationalism were characterized by strong hostility to Islam; they instrumentalized the legend of the Battle of Kosovo waged against the Ottomans in 1389, regarding local Muslims as apostates who should leave their homeland for Asia Minor as the Ottoman Empire receded. Already in this era, the linguistic criterion thus proved to be a potential unifying factor, while the religious criterion was a factor of division; this made the forming of national identities in the Yugoslav space a particularly complex, conflictual process.

Located in the heart of the Yugoslav space (see Map I), the Ottoman vilayet of Bosnia held an important place in the nascent nationalist ideologies of the nineteenth century, with Serb and Croat authors both aspiring to incorporate this province into the state that they hoped would be formed. In their eyes, Bosnian Muslims were Serbs or Croats who had converted to Islam. As Bosnian Muslims represented 42.5 percent of the Bosnian population in 1870, and Orthodox and Catholic Christians 41.7 percent, and 14.5 percent respectively, Bosnia could be presented as a majority Serb or majority Croat province, depending on whether its Muslim population was considered to be Islamicized Serbs or Croats. However, although Bosnia was the target of conflicting nationalist aspirations as early as the mid-nineteenth century, Bosnian
society of the time ignored national categories. Religious intellectuals or urban notables claiming a Serb or Croat national identity were few and far between, whereas the Bosnian population continued to identify in ethno-confessional terms: “Turks” (Turci) for Muslims, “Christians” (Hrišćani), or “Greeks” (Grci) for the Orthodox, “Christians” (Kršćani) or “Latins” (Latinci) for Catholics. Furthermore, as a peripheral province of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia was resistant to Ottoman reforms. The modernization of the army faced strong resistance from the ayans (local notables), as illustrated by the revolt led by Husein-kapetan Gradaščević in 1831, and the Ottoman reforms did not begin to take effect until Ōmer-paşa Latas harshly took control of the province in 1850. Among other effects, these reforms resulted in a loss of influence for the ‘ulama’ (religious scholars): Shari’a (Islamic law) no longer applied outside family law matters, and state-managed schools were created alongside Muslim religious schools, the mektebs (elementary schools) and madrasas (advanced schools). At the same time, the first newspapers began to appear in the province, and the first modern political institutions were established, with the creation of a provincial assembly in 1865, including Muslim and non-Muslim notables.

The revolt of Bosnian ayans in the 1830s and the first attempts at formulating a provincial identity in the 1860s are often presented as early signs of a Bosnian national identity. Yet forms of affirmation of a Bosnian identity that surpassed confessional boundaries were rare, and the strong Bosnian feeling among Muslim ayans or certain Franciscan priests hardly expressed more than a feeling of regional belonging, while retaining an obvious confessional aspect. For Christians, this feeling was compatible with a Serb or Croat national identification. For Muslims, it was connected with the defense of local privileges, but did not put into question their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. Against this backdrop, their use of the term “Bosniak” (Bošnjak) to describe their regional origin had no national meaning, and when the Ottoman period in Bosnia-Herzegovina ended in 1878, any national identification was still foreign to Bosnian Muslims.

The Muslim elites show allegiance to the new central power and turn inward

In 1875, a revolt by Orthodox peasants in western Herzegovina triggered one of the most important geopolitical shifts in the Balkans. Indeed, in 1876, Serbia and Montenegro used this revolt as a pretense for declaring war on the Ottoman Empire, and the Russian Empire followed their lead a year later. The Ottoman defeat led to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when the map of the region was redrawn. Serbia and Montenegro officially became independent and enlarged their territories, while Bulgaria gained de facto independence, marking an essential step in the emergence of Balkan nation-states. Bosnia, for its part, moved from one imperial order to another: apart from the sanjak of Novi Pazar, the Bosnian vilayet was placed under Austro-Hungarian military occupation, while formally remaining under Ottoman sovereignty (see Map II). In April 1879, the Novi Pazar Agreement signed by the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires reaffirmed the latter’s formal sovereignty, specifying the
framework for the Austro-Hungarian occupation to occur. In particular, this agreement granted the Muslims of the Bosnian vilayet—renamed the Province of Bosnia-Herzegovina—free exercise of their religion and, more concretely, the right to maintain ties with Ottoman religious authorities, to fly Ottoman flags at mosques during religious holidays, and to hold khutbas (Friday sermons) in the Sultan’s name.

Austro-Hungarian troops in the province initially came against armed resistance from a portion of the Muslim population. Austro-Hungarians took Sarajevo in just a few days, but they needed three months to take control of the entire province. This armed resistance reflected Muslim hostility to the idea of being subjects of a

Map II  The Yugoslav space from the Congress of Berlin (1878) to the Balkan Wars (1912–13).
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

non-Muslim power. Generally speaking, however, the secular and religious Muslim elites saw the Austro-Hungarian occupation as a lesser evil, and sought to protect their own material interests. They were therefore opposed to any armed resistance, and quickly gave allegiance to the new imperial power. This did not prevent them from harboring a deep nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire, or even secretly hoping to return to it.

More than armed revolt, emigration expressed the refusal of some Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina to submit to a non-Muslim power. This Muslim emigration continued throughout the Austro-Hungarian period, with peaks during moments of political tension, such as when Bosnia-Herzegovina was annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1908), ending the fictitious Ottoman sovereignty over this province. Austro-Hungarian records indicate around 65,000 departures for the Ottoman Empire between 1878 and 1914, and the estimates of 100,000 or 150,000 emigrants are therefore probably too high. This question of emigration was at the heart of the first doctrinal debate of the post-Ottoman period. Indeed, some of the ‘ulama’ presented emigration as hijra (religious emigration), and therefore a religious obligation. The Şeyh-ül-İslam of Istanbul—the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire—even issued a fatwa (religious decree) stating this in 1887. However, several Bosnian ‘ulama’ were opposed to this interpretation, believing that it was permitted to submit to a non-Muslim power. In 1884, in particular, the mufti of Tuzla Teufik Azapagić affirmed that Bosnia-Herzegovina had not become part of dar al-kufr (the realm of the infidel), but continued to belong to dar al-İslam (the realm of Islam), since Muslims could freely carry out their religious obligations. For Azapagić, Muslims therefore did not have an obligation to emigrate to Ottoman territory. 2

As a result, a large majority of Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their secular and religious elites stayed where they were, and the emigration of a minority did not threaten the Muslim community’s continued existence. However, Muslim emigration helped the Orthodox community achieve a relative majority. In 1879, according to the official census, Bosnia-Herzegovina had 1,158,164 inhabitants, of which 496,485 Eastern Orthodox (42.9 percent of the population), 448,613 Muslims (38.7 percent), 209,391 Roman Catholics (18.1 percent), and 3,426 Jews (0.3 percent). Thirty-one years later, in 1910, Bosnia-Herzegovina had 1,898,044 inhabitants, of which 825,418 were Serbo-Orthodox (43.5 percent), 612,137 Muslim (32.3 percent), 434,061 Roman Catholic (22.9 percent), 11,868 Jewish (0.6 percent), and 14,560 belonged to other confessions (0.7 percent). Thus, the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina were the first sizable Muslim community to survive the Ottoman Empire’s decline in the Balkans, as the Austro-Hungarian imperial order offered them protection that their fellow Muslims did not enjoy in the rising Balkan nation-states. As the newspaper Vatan (“Fatherland,” close to the Austro-Hungarian authorities) wrote in 1884:

If we look at the destiny of Mahometans in the various new states created in the Balkan peninsula, we must be grateful to Providence for having entrusted us to the just and wise administration of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, and that we can keep our faith, our customs and our goods, and at the same time gain access to everything that the creativity of these new times offers to our social life. 3
Yet it was still up to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their elites—both secular and religious—to define their place in the Province of Bosnia-Herzegovina, now separate from the Ottoman Empire.

Before addressing the political aspects of this new challenge, we must take a closer look at the social and cultural transformations triggered by the Austro-Hungarian occupation. Beginning in the 1850s, the Ottoman reforms had started to open Bosnia up to Western-inspired modernization. The Austro-Hungarian period magnified and accelerated this trend. In the span of four decades, Bosnia-Herzegovina saw major changes. Economically, the Austro-Hungarian authorities encouraged the growth of industry and banking, developed the road and railway networks, set up a modern postal service, and other public services. The civil service also experienced spectacular growth, with the number of civil servants rising from around 1,000 at the end of the Ottoman period to 14,330 in 1914. This increased state presence was also visible in the school system. Alongside religious schools that dated back to the Ottoman period, the Austro-Hungarian administration opened elementary schools (the total number of such schools rose from thirty-eight in 1880 to 401 in 1914), secondary schools for vocational training, and six high schools (gimnazije), two of which were in Sarajevo. Lastly, on a broader scale, the Austro-Hungarian period was marked by the introduction of new cultural norms from the West, ranging from town planning rules to forms of civility, and including architectural styles and dress codes.

However, this Austro-Hungarian modernization had its limitations. In many respects, the Austro-Hungarian Empire administered Bosnia-Herzegovina in a way that some have described as “quasi-colonial.” Thus, the proportion of civil servants native to Bosnia-Herzegovina was only 27.6 percent in 1905 and 42.2 percent in 1914. Given this composition of the civil service, until the early 1910s, German and Hungarian had official language status, alongside the vernacular. In many fields, the Austro-Hungarian administration simply standardized norms that had been established under the Ottoman Empire. This policy had important implications for land ownership. In 1910 around 87 percent of the Bosnian population earned their living from farming. However, this population was still divided into begas and agas (landowners) on the one hand, free peasants and kmetes (sharecroppers) on the other. These social divisions largely corresponded to and reinforced the confessional divides in Bosnian society, as shown in Table 1. By preserving structures of landownership from the Ottoman period, the Austro-Hungarian authorities sought mainly to avoid losing support from the Muslim landowning elites. However, this approach weighed on the relations between communities and created divergences between urban centers that saw rapid modernization and rural areas that held onto old social structures.

This urban/rural divide was also visible on a cultural level. Despite the opening of elementary schools in rural areas, 87.8 percent of the Bosnian population was still illiterate in 1910, including 94.6 percent of Muslims. While the Austro-Hungarian period was undoubtedly one of modernization, this process was skewed by the way in which the Austro-Hungarian authorities based their own domination on social structures inherited from the Ottoman system. These specificities of the modernization of Bosnia-Herzegovina partially explain the behavior of the traditional Muslim elites. On the one hand, these elites sought to defend their landowning privileges, and avoided
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Table 1 Confessional belonging of landowners, free peasants and kmets in Bosnia-Herzegovina according to the 1910 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landowners with kmet</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>9,537</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>10,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.0%)</td>
<td>(91.1%)</td>
<td>(2.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowners without kmet</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>3,023</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>4,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.8%)</td>
<td>(70.6%)</td>
<td>(10.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free peasants (mainly)</td>
<td>35,414</td>
<td>77,518</td>
<td>22,916</td>
<td>136,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25.9%)</td>
<td>(56.6%)</td>
<td>(16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knets (mainly)</td>
<td>9,322</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>6,418</td>
<td>16,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(55.0%)</td>
<td>(7.2%)</td>
<td>(37.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knets</td>
<td>58,895</td>
<td>3,653</td>
<td>17,116</td>
<td>79,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(73.9%)</td>
<td>(4.6%)</td>
<td>(21.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


the new sectors of economic activity. In the civil services, Muslims were substantially underrepresented: in 1914, only 1,644 civil servants were Muslim, out of a total of 14,330. On the other hand, the Muslim elites were still attached to the former Ottoman imperial order, and most of them were reluctant to send their children to the new Austro-Hungarian schools. This reluctance was even greater with regard to girls, and when primary school became compulsory in 1911, the representatives of the Muslim community were granted an exemption so that this rule would not apply to Muslim girls. Hence the Muslim community showed allegiance to the new central power, while at the same time turning inward—a trend that influenced how the Muslim elites would respond to political and religious challenges during the Austro-Hungarian period.

Bosnism: a political failure with a cultural legacy

In the South Slavic provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1878–1918 saw the creation of newspapers, cultural associations, and political parties that represented the various currents of Croat, Serb, and Yugoslav nationalisms. However, this situation did not yet indicate that national identities were predominant within the broader population. Even the nationalist elites showed a strong provincial bent and were divided in their strategies for allegiance with Budapest or Vienna. Moreover, as Croat and Serb national identities took shape, tensions arose that the imperial authorities used to their own advantage. However, these tensions did not put an end to the idea of a political union among the South Slavs, either through the creation of a third South Slavic entity within the Empire or—the approach favored by the most radical parties and youth movements—through a union with neighboring Serbia. In 1905, a Croat-Serb coalition was formed in Dalmatia and Croatia-Slavonia, giving renewed impetus to the idea that Croats and Serbs were in fact a single people under two different names. Thus, Bosnia-Herzegovina was part of an Austro-Hungarian Empire in which national boundaries were uncertain and shifting.
In 1878, the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire aimed mainly at containing the territorial expansion of Serbia. Yet the Austro-Hungarian authorities had little enthusiasm for incorporating another million South Slavs into an Empire increasingly torn apart by nationalist claims. In this context, one of the preoccupations of the Austro-Hungarian authorities was to prevent Serb and Croat nationalist ideologies from taking hold in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Benjamin von Kállay, who served as the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Finance from 1882 to 1903 and as such drove Austro-Hungarian policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, attempted to promote a provincial identity shared by all inhabitants: Bosnism (bošnjaštvo). To support his project, Kállay combined numerous repressive measures with cultural initiatives. Thus, in the 1880s, cultural associations were prohibited from using the terms “Serb” or “Croat” in their names. Beginning in 1883, the vernacular was officially called “the Bosnian language” (bosanski jezik). In 1888, a Provincial Museum (Zemaljski Muzej) was founded to lay the cultural foundations for a Bosnian provincial identity by studying and promoting the pre-Ottoman history of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its ethnographic heritage.

For his Bosnism project, Kállay relied mainly on the Catholic community (whose members did not yet identify massively with Croat nationalism) and the Muslim community (which he sought to distance from the Ottoman Empire by emphasizing its Slavic identity and pre-Ottoman roots). In reality, however, Kállay’s project only won support within a small circle of Muslim notables who favored the Austro-Hungarian policy. The figurehead of this group was Mehmed-beg Kapetanović. A former Ottoman official and member of the Ottoman parliament, Kapetanović became the main promoter of Bosnism through the newspaper Bošnjak (“The Bosniak”), which he founded in 1891. Like most Muslim notables, Kapetanović viewed the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the new protector of Bosnian Muslims. Nevertheless, for this former Ottoman official, the Austro-Hungarian occupation was also an opportunity to implement the type of modernizing reforms that had barely been sketched out before 1878, thus becoming thoroughly modern and European. He called on his fellow Muslims to break with any nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire and to accept their new situation fully:

We Mahometans of Bosnia-Herzegovina, if we work and make efforts as the current period so requires, if we learn and accept everything that does not harm our faith, then there is no doubt that our future will be better and safer. . . . Look around us, where we are and in what period we are living, and we shall see that we are living in the nineteenth century in the heart of Europe.\(^5\)

Thus, in Kapetanović’s view, the Austro-Hungarian occupation was an opportunity to be seized, and Bosnian Muslims should take an active part in European economic and cultural modernity in order to ensure their survival in post-Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina.

However, the proponents of Bosnism were faced with the same ambiguities as the partisans of various South Slavic nationalisms. Was Bosnism meant to include all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or even all those of the Yugoslav space, or was it
reserved for the Muslim community alone? In February 1892, the newspaper Bošnjak proposed a union of South Slavs around the common name “Bosnian” (Bosanac) because:

The name Serb is closely linked to Orthodoxy, and the name Croat to Catholicism, whereas Bosnian would be a neutral ground, not connected to one or the other, and would therefore not offend the religious convictions of the first group, the second or the third.  

Yet a year and a half later, the same newspaper stated that:

Bosnism, the idea of a Bosnian people, has its roots and its foundation, hard as the heart of a stone, in the history of our homeland, and we Mahometans have always been the main representatives and bearers of this sublime idea.

In reality, the Bosnism project came up against the hostility of the Orthodox and Catholic elites, who were increasingly influenced by Serb and Croat nationalist ideologies. Kapetanović himself had to acknowledge the obvious, and although in 1886 he proclaimed that “the Bosniak, regardless of his religion, is still attached to his nationality,” seven years later he stated that “in truth, some time ago our neighbors began to divide into two separate camps, based on religion; the Orthodox assert that they are Serbs, and the Catholics that they are Croats.” Yet the final blow came from the Muslim elites: whereas the newspaper Bošnjak argued in favor of full acceptance for Austro-Hungarian modernity and a supra-confessional provincial identity, the traditional Muslim elites remained profoundly attached to the Ottoman Empire and mobilized for autonomy for their religious institutions, as we shall see later on.

Bosnism’s failure as a political project should not overshadow its importance in creating modern identity markers for Bosnian Muslims. By seeking to justify their presence in a Central European and Christian empire, the newspaper Bošnjak linked the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the family of South Slavic peoples, promoting their pre-Ottoman past. More specifically, Bošnjak borrowed a thesis formalized by Croat historian Franjo Rački in the nineteenth century, asserting that Bosnian Muslims were descended from Bogomil heretics who had voluntarily converted to Islam when the Ottomans arrived. This thesis gave the Muslims a historical continuity that they had been lacking. As Bošnjak wrote in April 1892:

A great majority of us Bosnian Muslims are the descendants of the ancient Bosnian Bogomils who made up the mass of the Bosnian people, . . . and our ancestors realized that the Islamic faith was pure and rational, and they wanted to adopt it rather than emigrate, and we have preserved the treasure of local traditions in the best and most faithful way possible.

The Bogomil thesis thus helped legitimize the presence of Bosnian Muslims in Europe in opposition to those, especially among the Serbs, who regarded them as “Turks” and wanted to expel them to Asia Minor for having “betrayed” the faith of their ancestors.
Bosnism did indeed sketch out the contours of a nationalist ideology, with a founding myth, an affirmation of historical continuity, and more specifically, a justification for the Islamization of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and for their presence in Europe. The related cultural productions—from the collection of Muslim epic songs published by Kosta Hörmann in 1888 to the first Bosnian grammar guide published in 1890—were later reused and expanded, and the themes raised by Bošnjak would constantly fuel debates about the national identity of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The best illustration of this cultural legacy is the case of Safvet-beg Bašagić, the son of an Ottoman official and one of the first Bosnian Muslims to study at the high school of Sarajevo and later at the University of Vienna. Bašagić was a young contributor to Bošnjak in the 1890s, quickly becoming the most influential Muslim intellectual of the Austro-Hungarian period. In his *A Short Introduction to the History of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, published in 1900, he repeated and expanded on the thesis of a widespread conversion of Bosnian “Bogomils” to Islam, and emphasized that Bosnian feudal elites continued to enjoy broad autonomy in Ottoman Bosnia. Likewise, in 1912, he published an anthology of writers from Bosnia-Herzegovina who had written in Oriental languages, thus helping build a literary corpus specific to Bosnian Muslims. Bašagić was thus the first to arrange the various markers of a specific Bosnian Muslim cultural identity in a systematic fashion. However, like many Muslim intellectuals of his generation, for reasons we shall see later on, he identified as Croat.

The movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions

In their attempts to preserve Bosnia-Herzegovina from outside nationalist ideologies, the Austro-Hungarian authorities gave considerable importance to their control of religious institutions. Hence the Austro-Hungarian Empire signed an agreement with the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1880 and with the Vatican in 1881, allowing it to appoint the main leaders of the Orthodox and Catholic churches in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Setting up an Islamic religious hierarchy under the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s control proved more complex, as the Novi Pazar Agreement guaranteed Bosnian Muslims the right to maintain their ties with Ottoman religious authorities. In March 1882, however, the appointment by the Austro-Hungarian authorities of a Reis-ul-ulema (head of the ‘ulama’) for Bosnia-Herzegovina, advised by a four-member ulema-medžlis (council of ‘ulama’), signaled the establishment of an Islamic religious authority specifically for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and ushered in a period of reorganization for Islamic religious institutions under Austro-Hungarian tutelage. In 1883, a provisional commission for the management of *waqfs* (religious endowments) was tasked with identifying all existing *waqfs*, supervising their management, and centralizing their revenues. In 1894, this provisional commission was superseded by a Provincial Waqf Commission (*Zemaljsko vakufsko povjerenstvo*) with twenty-one members, and by a three-member Provincial Waqf Board (*Zemaljsko vakufsko ravnateljstvo*). These centralization and streamlining efforts are shown by the fact that the number of *waqfs* identified by the Provincial Waqf Commission rose from sixty-eight in 1878 to 250 in 1883, 622 in 1899, and 995 in 1904.
At the same time, the Austro-Hungarian authorities began a reform of the Shari’a courts in charge of matters of personal status (family law). In 1883, a law incorporated these courts into the Austro-Hungarian judiciary, creating a Supreme Shari’a Court (Vrhovni šerijatski sud) based in Sarajevo. Furthermore, to foster modernization of Shari’a courts, a School for Shari’a Judges (Šerijatska sudačka škola) opened in 1887, and several collections of Shari’a jurisprudence were made available to judges. Lastly, the Austro-Hungarian authorities attempted to improve the system of religious schools by opening in 1893 a Muslim Pedagogy School (Muslimanska vjeroučiteljska škola), and by encouraging the opening of reformed mektebs (mekteb-i ibtidai) that used more modern teaching methods. In all, between 1879 and 1914, the number of mektebs rose from 499 to 1,436 (of which 203 reformed), and the number of madrasas from eighteen to thirty-two.

In light of this record, it may appear surprising that, from 1899 to 1909, the grievances of the traditional Muslim elites of Bosnia-Herzegovina crystallized around the issue of Islamic religious institutions. This mobilization paralleled that of Orthodox/Serb elites, who had begun demanding religious and school autonomy since 1896. The event that caused the Muslim elites to mobilize for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions took place on May 5, 1899, when Muslim notables from Mostar convened following the conversion to Catholicism of Fata Omanović, a young Muslim girl. Following their meeting, a committee was created under the direction of Ali Fehmi Džabić, the mufti of Mostar, and tasked with presenting the Austro-Hungarian authorities with a demand for autonomy for the Islamic religious institutions of Herzegovina. In the following months, this demand was rejected, and Ali Fehmi Džabić was removed from his duties. Yet the mobilization of the Muslim elites remained strong, and in December 1900, an assembly of notables from all of Bosnia-Herzegovina met in Mostar to approve a memorandum to the Austro-Hungarian authorities.

This memorandum was something of a manifesto for the movement for autonomy of Islamic religious institutions. It began by stating that following the disappearance of the Ottoman imperial order in 1878, “the Islamic element has lost not only its dominant political and social position, but also its moral and material backing.” Then, the memorandum described the situation of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina in dramatic terms, mentioning “mosques destroyed, cemeteries overturned and sacked, the foundations of pious Muslims annihilated,” was indignant that due to Catholic proselytism, “children are being taken away from their parents, women from their husbands,” finally citing an “outcry from the people who have matured for more than four hundred years with Islam . . . and who now, after twenty-two years of occupation, see their religious survival threatened in the country that they defended with their bodies and washed with their blood for centuries.”14 More precisely, the memorandum denounced the Austro-Hungarian Empire for failing to respect the Novi Pazar Agreement, and the religious leaders appointed by the occupying power were accused of not properly fulfilling their functions. To resolve this situation, it presented a draft statute regarding Islamic religious institutions, whereby these would be designated by the Muslim community itself, with the Reis-ul-ulema only being allowed to take office after obtaining a menšura (accreditation) from the Şeyh-ül-islam of Istanbul.

The alarmist tone of this December 1900 memorandum may seem surprising, given the development of Islamic religious institutions and the very small number of Muslims
converting to Christianity. Many historians thus view Muslim elites’ mobilization on behalf of their religious institutions as nothing more than a strategy to gain support from the Muslim population in a conflict actually aimed at preserving the landowning privileges of the *begs* and *agas*. Hence Robert Donia writes that “the Muslim activists were careful to cloak their goals in the garb of religious devotion, but their real objective was to preserve or increase their own power.”15 Yet while a substantial share of the notables involved were indeed landowners, and although agrarian claims were mixed with religious demands between 1905 and 1910, we should not conclude that the religious demands were a mere tactic.

For the Muslim community, the focus on a few cases of conversion and the description in dramatic terms of the state of religious institutions reflected a more general feeling of insecurity and decline, as the community confronted a non-Muslim political power and chose to turn inward in the face of European modernity. From this standpoint, the feelings of Muslim notables were diametrically opposed to Mehmed-beg Kapetanović’s optimism as he celebrated the opportunities made possibly by the Austro-Hungarian occupation. The demand for autonomy for Islamic religious institutions also showed the attachment of most Muslim elites to the Ottoman Empire, as illustrated by the request for a *menšura* from the Şeyh-ül-islam. In addition, the movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions gained strength at a time when Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid was using pan-Islamism as a means to bolster his legitimacy, both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire, and the Muslim notables had frequent contact with émigrés settled in Istanbul and with Ottoman authorities.

By focusing on religious demands, the Muslim elites of Bosnia-Herzegovina were inspired by the way the Ottoman Empire managed its non-Muslim *millet*s. Unlike the Orthodox and Catholic communities, which were increasingly under the sway of Serb and Croat nationalist ideologies, the Muslim community regarded itself as a non-sovereign religious minority, trading its allegiance to the central imperial power in exchange for assurances of physical and material protection, on the one hand, and autonomous religious institutions, on the other. The movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions resulted in Bosnian Muslims withdrawing into their religious identity. Significantly, in the late-nineteenth century, the Orthodox and Catholics of Bosnia-Herzegovina were increasingly referred to by the national names “Serb” and “Croat,” while the Muslims continued to be described as “Mahometans” (*mohamedanci*) and then, beginning in the early 1900s, as “Muslims” (*muslimani*). The movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions, combined with its allegiance to the Austro-Hungarian imperial power, is thus an essential explanatory factor for the national indetermination of the Bosnian Muslim community, both during the Austro-Hungarian period and afterward.

Although Benjamin von Kállay also believed that the Muslim notables were mainly interested in defending their landownership privileges, he was aware of the larger stakes involved in the movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions. In a letter to his representative in Sarajevo about the 1900 memorandum, he distinguished between specific demands for autonomy for *waqfs* and religious schools, which he considered possible to accept, and more general demands aimed at “making the Mahometans an autonomous national political unit with an administrative body, and
thus a political factor equivalent to a state within the state.” Obviously, Kállay rejected the latter possibility, and recommended that his representative should avoid any action that could favor the formation of a “Mahometan political nation” (*mohamedanische politische Nation*). Moreover, Kállay was very much opposed to a rapprochement between leaders of the Muslim movement for religious autonomy and their counterparts in the Orthodox/Serb community. Therefore, the Austro-Hungarian authorities implemented repressive measures, notably banishing Ali Fehmi Džabić after he travelled to Istanbul in January 1902. The Muslim movement for religious autonomy then stagnated for several years before regaining momentum around 1905 and giving birth in 1906 to the Muslim People’s Organization (*Muslimanska narodna organizacija*—MNO), led by landowner Ali-beg Firdus. Soon thereafter, a new series of negotiations began between the Austro-Hungarian authorities and the MNO leaders, and a compromise slowly started to take shape. On April 15, 1909, a Statute for the Autonomous Administration of Religious Affairs, Waqfs and Islamic Schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina was adopted. This statute called for the election of the members of bodies in charge of managing waqfs and appointing the *Reis-ul-ulama* following a complex procedure: an electoral curia would select three candidates, then the Emperor would choose one of these as *Reis-ul-ulama*, and this choice would be confirmed via a *menšura* from the *Şeyh-ül-islam*. More generally, the 1909 statute officialized the transformation of the Muslim community into a non-sovereign religious community that implicitly renounced any national project of its own, and as such, this statute played an important role well beyond the Austro-Hungarian period.

**The nascent Muslim intelligentsia and early Islamic reformism**

As in the rest of Europe, the emergence of the intelligentsia—a new literate elite that had enjoyed a modern, secular education—was an important factor of social and cultural transformation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Despite its low level of school attendance, the Muslim community was no exception to this rule. Beginning in the 1890s, a small Muslim intelligentsia emerged in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its members attended the high schools opened by the Austro-Hungarian authorities and went away to study in Vienna, Budapest, or Zagreb. This nascent Muslim intelligentsia initially gathered around the newspaper *Bošnjak* and its idea of Bosnism, then became involved in other newspapers such as *Behar* (“Flourishing,” 1900–11), *Gajret* (“Zeal,” 1906–8), or *Biser* (“The Pearl,” 1912–14). In 1903, it took part in the creation of the first Muslim cultural society, *Gajret* (“Zeal”).

Like their predecessor Mehmed-beg Kapetanović, the young intellectuals Safvet-beg Bašagić, Edhem Mulabdić, and Osman Nuri Hadžić emphasized the need for Muslims to give up their Ottoman nostalgia, to take hold of European economic and cultural modernity, and to begin by sending their children to modern schools. The first Muslim intellectuals were generally from the families of notables or Ottoman officials, but the underlying conflict between those who described themselves as “progressive Muslims” (*napredni muslimani*) and the rest of the Muslim community soon became quite apparent. The young Muslim intellectuals criticized the conservatism and apathy of the
traditional Muslim elites, and in turn, they were accused of cutting themselves off from their own people and accepting anything that came from the occupant. Culturally, one of the stumbling blocks was the issue of language. The traditional elites were attached to the Ottoman language, as shown by the publication of an Ottoman-language weekly (Vatan—“Homeland”—from 1884 to 1897, then Rehber—“The Guide”—from 1897 to 1902). The leaders of the Muslim movement for religious autonomy also requested that the Ottoman language remain the language of Shari'a courts and religious schools. The intellectuals, however, promoted the vernacular written in the Latin or Cyrillic alphabet, favored translations for religious texts written in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish, and explored new literary forms such as novels and plays. In so doing, they became key players in beginning the cultural modernization of the Bosnian Muslim community.

The conflict between the nascent Muslim intelligentsia and traditional elites was also political. The Muslim intellectuals were sympathetic to Austro-Hungarian initiatives to modernize Islamic religious institutions and kept their distance from the Muslim movement for religious autonomy, which they considered to be backward. On this topic, Bašagić wrote:

Each movement, each upheaval by Bosnian Muslims these recent times has deliberately avoided anyone who thinks with one's head, anyone who moves along the path of progress, anyone who has absorbed some modern knowledge, anyone who can handle a pen, anyone who knows and can represent and defend Islamic interests, anyone that could help, in speech or in act, to bring order to Islamic affairs. In short, every Islamic movement has avoided the intelligentsia, viewing it askew as if it were an enemy of the people and the homeland.  

Conversely, Musavat (“Equality”), the MNO’s mouthpiece, was of the view that the educated Muslim youth:

has never shown much of a spirit of sacrifice for its oppressed people, because it has grown away from its brothers, has become what might be called too “modern”, and has sometimes shown through certain signs that it was ashamed of the traditions of its fathers, that the ideals of the people matter little to it, that it was unable to sacrifice itself for the rights of the people and to courageously defend what is sacred to it.

The Muslim intelligentsia, having remained outside the movement for religious autonomy, nevertheless took on many religious issues, importing into Bosnia-Herzegovina some reformist authors from the Ottoman Empire (e.g. Namık Kemal, Musa Kazım, and Mehmed Akif) or other parts of the Muslim world (e.g. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Ismail Gasprinski). Borrowing the major themes of Islamic reformism, the Muslim intellectuals of Bosnia-Herzegovina denounced the taqlid (uncritical imitation) practiced by the ‘ulama’ and called for renewed ijtihad (effort at independent reasoning) intended to reconcile Islam and European modernity. Thus, in a brochure entitled The Muslim Question in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Osman Nuri Hadžić wrote that:
All the apathy, negligence, idleness, the refusal of education and progress and the fear of any “innovation”, and thus the total indolence of our people must be attributed solely to our hodžas [religious men] of all kinds and sorts. They are therefore guilty for the fact that the population is so ruined spiritually and materially.¹⁹

The secular Muslim intelligentsia thus disputed the monopoly on interpreting Islam that was held by the ‘ilmiyya (body of ‘ulama’). It launched numerous debates on the management of waqfs, the reform of Shari’a law and religious teaching, the licitness of banking, and already at this early stage, education and work for women—a question that would become central after the First World War.

In the same vein, instead of the Ottoman pan-Islamism promoted by some leaders of the Muslim movement for religious autonomy, the reformist intellectuals supported another form of pan-Islamism, religious and modernizing in nature. Thus, in 1913, the newspaper Biser promoted pan-Islamist ideas in these terms:

The awakening that we observe today in the Islamic world is nothing other than the natural consequence of European aggressiveness, and Europe’s arrogance in the East as well as in the West. If Europe regards this awakening of Muslims as a harbinger of unity, or even as an already-achieved pan-Islamism, we proclaim that it is only a unity of ideas that tests and applies the means and conditions for today’s cultural progress, and these means are nothing more than freedom and education . . . So it is nothing other than a thought shared by all Muslims, borne of their aspiration to enter the concert of progressive, cultivated nations.²⁰

For Biser, the pan-Islamist movement was therefore not an expression of nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire, but a way for the Muslim world to appropriate European political and cultural modernity.

During the Austro-Hungarian period, Islamic reformism remained the prerogative of secular intellectuals who, as such, had only a limited influence on religious institutions. A majority of the ‘ulama’ were still holding fast to conservative stances. Nevertheless, during this period, one atypical figure appeared who would play a crucial role in the changes that would affect Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Džemaludin Čaušević.

Having studied law in Istanbul and discovered Muhammad Abduh’s reformist ideas while in Cairo, Čaušević was partway between the ‘ilmiyya and the secular intelligentsia. Thus, he took part in the founding of the cultural society Gajret in 1903, became a member of the ulema-medžlis in charge of teaching issues in 1905, was editor in chief of the newspaper Behar in 1906–7, and founded the Organization of the ‘Ilmiyya in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1912. During the Austro-Hungarian period, Čaušević’s main combat was to promote the vernacular written in the Arabic alphabet (arebica) because in his view, Arabic writing must remain the shared writing of all Muslims in the world. Čaušević published several newspapers written in arebica, in which he translated many reformist authors. However, although arebica textbooks were introduced in the mektebs in 1912, arebica failed to assume a lasting place alongside the Latin and Cyrillic
alphabets, and its usage would decline and disappear during the interwar period. Nevertheless, Čaušević’s intellectual and institutional influence persisted, and he was appointed Reis-ul-ulema in October 1913.

More generally, the nascent Muslim intelligentsia was unable to pose a serious challenge to the traditional elites. Nevertheless, it laid the first milestones for cultural modernization in the Muslim community by imposing the use of the vernacular in writing and by spreading Islamic reformist ideas. Lastly, as another important consequence of the Muslim intelligentsia’s activism, the term “Turk” was no longer used to refer to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Seeking to return to an Islam purified of its Ottoman “dross,” intellectuals such as Osman Nuri Hadžić were opposed to the use of the name “Turk” — in a religious sense — and the expression “Turkish faith” (turska vjera), as well as the term “Mahometan” (mohamedanac) introduced by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. For these intellectuals, these terms were in contradiction with the very essence of Islam, and they preferred the terms “Muslim” (musliman) and “Islamic faith” (islamska vjera). The Austro-Hungarian authorities officially approved the term “Muslim” in 1902 and used it in the population census of 1910. However, at a time when the national denominations “Serb” and “Croat” were increasingly used in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the fact that a religious term became the main term for identifying the Muslim community highlights how it was reduced to the status of a non-sovereign religious minority that had implicitly renounced any national project of its own. Hence the emergence of the name “Muslim” cannot be understood without taking account of the attitude of the intelligentsia and the traditional elites towards the issue of the national identity of Bosnian Muslims.

The intelligentsia, the traditional elite, and Muslim national indetermination

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the mobilization of the Orthodox/Serb and Muslim communities for their religious and school autonomy caused Benjamin von Kállay’s idea of Bosnism to gradually be abandoned. In 1903, Kállay died. The arrival of his successor, Baron István von Burián, marked a major turning point in the policy of the Austro-Hungarian authorities, who began to encourage Bosnian society to organize along communitarian lines. Significantly, the Austro-Hungarian authorities renamed the vernacular “the Serbo-Croatian language” (srpskohrvatski jezik) in 1907. At the same period, cultural societies were formed for the various communities: Serb (Prosvjeta — “Education”), Muslim (Gajret — “Zeal”), Croat (Napredak — “Progress”), and Jewish (La Benevolencia — “Benevolence”). Political parties were formed to represent the three main communities of the province: the MNO was created in 1906, with the Serb People’s Organization (Srpska narodna organizacija—SNO), and the Croat People’s Union (Hrvatska narodna zajednica—HNZ) following a year later. Lastly, in 1909, a clerical group led by the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Josip Stadler, created a second Croat party, the Croat Catholic Association (Hrvatska katolička udruga—HKU). In 1913, communitarianism’s hold on the modernizing Bosnian society was reflected in the fact that, out of 833 associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 227 were Serb,
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

167 Croat, and 139 Muslim. However, the finishing touch to this communitarianism came in 1910 with the adoption of the provincial constitution, just two years after its annexation to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This constitution gave Bosnia-Herzegovina consociational institutions: the seats of the new provincial parliament were divided up along a strict communitarian basis (thirty-six Orthodox, thirty Muslims, twenty-three Catholics, and three Jews), and twenty of ninety-two seats were reserved for unelected members, namely religious dignitaries or local notables. In 1910, the first parliamentary elections heralded a victory for the three major communitarian parties: the SNO won thirty-one of the seats reserved for Orthodox deputies, MNO twenty-four of the seats reserved for Muslims, and the HNZ twelve of the seats reserved for Catholics, with the remaining four going to the HKU. However, the communitarianism of Bosnian political life was neither total nor rigid. On the one hand, some political forces sought to go beyond communitarian divisions, including the Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratska partija—SDP) created in 1909, or the semi-clandestine organizations that appeared in the 1910s among the student population, who were close to socialist and anarchist ideas and favored a union of South Slavs. On the other hand, in the provincial parliament elected in 1910, the parliamentary groups of the three main communitarian parties quickly broke into rival factions participating in increasingly complex government coalitions.

For the Orthodox and Catholic communities, the growing communitarianism of social and political life went hand in hand with the crystallization of the Serb and Croat national identities. Yet no similar process occurred in the Muslim community. Indeed, many historians emphasize that in the Austro-Hungarian period and even later, a large majority of Bosnian Muslims did not identify in terms of nationality, and the few who did sometimes changed their national identification over their lifetime. Most often, this national indetermination is explained either in terms of political opportunism, with the emphasis being placed on the complex itineraries of certain intellectuals or political leaders, or in terms of proto-nationalism, where the simple fact of not identifying as Serb or Croat is interpreted as the sign of an underlying Muslim national identity. Historian Robert Donia combines these two approaches when he writes: “Thus the declarations [of nationality] were mostly tactical and political in character; some Muslims changed from one camp to the other on several occasions. Simply stated, a separate Muslim identity was too advanced to be easily renounced by any significant number of Bosnian Muslims.” However, while there was indeed a strong feeling of belonging to the Muslim community during the Austro-Hungarian period, this feeling was simply not a national one. The essential question is thus not to know who in this community identified as Serb or Croat, but who considered national identity to be a pertinent category. Yet from this standpoint, a deep, lasting divide separated the nascent Muslim intelligentsia from the traditional Muslim elites and, furthermore, the rest of the Muslim community.

For the Muslim intellectuals, national identity was an indispensable part of political and cultural modernity. This conception can be found, for example, in the brochure On the Nationalization of Muslims published on the eve of the First World War by Šukrija Kurtović, a student with ties to the cultural society Gajret. In this brochure, the author regrets that “our people are still in the shadows of religious fanaticism and ignorance.
They do not know and cannot conceive what a national community is. They only know the religious [community].” In Kurtović’s view, this withdrawal into religious identity created the risk of turning Bosnian Muslims into “Muslim Jews,” namely, a religious minority stripped of any political power. Yet Kurtović—and this is a feature he shared with all Muslim intellectuals of the Austro-Hungarian period—was not in favor of forming a nation specifically for Bosnian Muslims:

Separating into a distinct group, being only Muslims, fighting only for our specific “Muslim interests”, would mean creating in Bosnia-Herzegovina a new political nation, a Muslim one. This would mean defying and turning against us the entire Serb and Croat nation[s], it would mean that we would really become this “insolent parasite” in the body of the other. Naturally, they would all rise up together against us, and they would surely annihilate us, for we have neither the numerical strength nor the cultural strength for such a combat.  

Kurtović thus shared the feelings of insecurity and weakness that existed in the Bosnian Muslim community, but far from calling for the community to turn inward and accept a non-sovereign and protected minority status, he recommended a rapprochement with Christian South Slavs and, even more specifically, opting for “a pure, complete nationalism, and this is Serb [nationalism] today.”

Muslim intellectuals shared this common principle—adhering to the principle of nationalism while refusing a national identity limited to Bosnian Muslims alone—but then separated into two camps, with partisans of a Croat national identification on the one hand, and partisans of a Serb national identification on the other. This divide within the Muslim intelligentsia made it even more isolated and powerless, and may have prevented it from playing the role that nationalism theories attribute to the intelligentsia in the gestation of national identities. However, this divide was not a mere question of opportunism: while there were changes in national identification over time, these were mainly due to the fact that the contours of Serb and Croat nationalisms were not set in stone during the Austro-Hungarian period, and the hopes for emancipation of the South Slavs alternated between creating a South Slavic entity within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and expanding Serbia to the detriment of the Empire. Apart from the wide range of individual trajectories, there were some generational phenomena affecting the national identification of Muslim intellectuals. As Robert Donia notes, “more Muslims declared themselves as Croats prior to the turn of the [twentieth] century. They tended to be young intellectuals schooled in Zagreb, Vienna, or elsewhere in the Monarchy. After 1900 more declared themselves Serbs, probably drawn by the magnetic military and political successes of independent Serbia.”

Safvet-beg Bašagić can be regarded as the main representative of the first generation, while Šukrija Kurtović is representative of the second.

The attitude of the traditional Muslim elites towards the national question contrasted sharply with that of the intelligentsia. Indeed, among the traditional representatives of the Bosnian Muslim community, the dominant feeling toward the national question was either indifference (without ruling out a tactical usage of Serb or Croat national identifications), or a deeper reticence to be included in one of these
categories. For example, reacting to the interminable parliamentary debates on whether the vernacular of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be called Serbian or Croatian, Member of Parliament Derviš-beg Miralem wrote in 1911:

> Although some of our young people have sympathies with one or the other party on this question, I am convinced that the large majority of our people is indifferent to the matter, as they feel themselves to be simply Muslims, and for this reason alone, this subject should not be decided by [Muslim] members of parliament whose electors feel no need to think about or decide on this question. My stance, to tell the truth, is that this question must be resolved by the Serbs and Croats, and I declare beforehand that I will enthusiastically support any mutual agreement, assuming that it is not achieved at the price of significant concessions on an economic or other level.  

This quote shows how Bosnian Muslims’ withdrawal into their status as a non-sovereign, protected minority went hand in hand with their national indetermination, while also giving their political representatives certain possibilities for political bargaining and tactical alliances. Moreover, at the end of the Austro-Hungarian period, the opposition between Muslim intellectuals and traditional Muslim elites on the very principle of national identification did not prevent the two sides from coming together to demand autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. But what exactly did this demand mean?

**Demand for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a “search for empire”**

In the early 1900s, the question of autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of the subjects of disagreement between the traditional Muslim elites and the nascent intelligentsia. During that period, the leaders of the Islamic religious autonomy movement were allied with the Orthodox/Serb elites, who were also fighting for their own religious and school autonomy. Together, they demanded that “Bosnia and Herzegovina shall obtain autonomy under the supreme authority of their sovereign the Sultan,” after which “the people shall, of its own free will, define the internal order of the province.” The nascent Muslim intelligentsia was mainly in favor of the Austro-Hungarian occupation and a Croat national identification. It therefore denounced this project for autonomy as a sign of the traditional elites’ nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and as a ruse by the Orthodox/Serb elites to make it easier for Serbia to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other. To counter the MNO, and with the support of wealthy merchant Adem-aga Mešić, the pro-Croat intellectuals created the Muslim Progressive Party (Muslimanska napredna stranka—MNS) in August 1908. In its program, the MNS rejected any idea of autonomy under Ottoman sovereignty, and stated that it would use every means available to oppose Bosnia-Herzegovina being attached to Serbia or any other Balkan state. Barely a month later, the MNS leaders approved the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whereas the MNO leaders vigorously denounced it. The conflict between the pro-Croat Muslim
intelligentsia and the traditional Muslim elites was at a peak. Precisely during this period, the MNO took control of the Muslim cultural society Gajret away from the pro-Croat intelligentsia, placing pro-Serb poet Osman Đikić in charge.

However, over the following years, several factors led to a gradual rapprochement between the MNO and the MNS, which was renamed the Muslim Independent Party (Muslimanska samostalna stranka—MSS) in 1910. On the one hand, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina—which the MNO finally acknowledged in February 1910—made the plans for autonomy under Ottoman sovereignty obsolete. On the other, the religious and school autonomy awarded to the Orthodox/Serb community in 1905 and the Muslim community in 1909 halted the convergences around their demands for cultural and religious autonomy. Lastly, in the May 1910 parliamentary elections, the MNO won a landslide victory, with all twenty-four seats reserved for Muslim deputies. The conditions for a vast political shakeup had been brought together. Hence the MNO and the MSS merged in August 1911 to form the United Muslim Organization (Ujedinjena muslimanska organizacija—UMO), and the Muslim deputies formed an alliance with Croat deputies in the provincial parliament. Within this context, the Croat deputies supported a law giving kmeti the option of buying the land they farmed, whereas a majority of Serb deputies wanted to make such purchases mandatory. In turn, the Muslim deputies supported a law that described the vernacular as “Croatian or Serbian,” whereas the Serb deputies wanted the term “Serbian” to appear first. This shift from a Serbo-Muslim coalition in the 1900s to a Croato-Muslim one in the early 1910s illustrates how the Muslim political representatives’ national indetermination gave them possibilities for political bargaining, and heralded the changing alliances throughout the interwar period.

The formation of a Croato-Muslim coalition in 1911 did not prevent Muslim politicians from continuing to insist on autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. This demand, which was increasingly becoming the common denominator for all political representatives of the Muslim community, is presented by some historians as a form of Muslim proto-nationalism. But through this demand, Muslim politicians were not seeking to grab as much power as possible from the Empire, but to place their community under its direct protection to compensate for their relative demographic weakness in Bosnia-Herzegovina and within the larger Yugoslav space. From this point of view, the demand for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the expression of a “search for empire.” Indeed, we must not forget that the Muslim community at the time was smaller than the Serb community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and too much autonomy for this province could result in it being annexed by Serbia, similar to the way that Bulgaria had annexed the province of Eastern Rumelia in 1885. Conversely, if Bosnia-Herzegovina were to be absorbed into a political entity grouping together all the South Slavic provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the relative weight of the Muslim community would shrink. This fear of demographic marginalization contributed to a more general feeling of insecurity and decline that characterized the Muslim community. Thus, the UMO newspaper wrote in 1911 that “with the attachment of Bosnia-Herzegovina to any other part of the current Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Muslims would be entirely lost, they would become a quantity that each party could neglect or despise.” Opposed to the Croato-Muslim coalition, independent deputy Derviš-beg Miralem attributed his stance to his fear that the Muslims would be
marginalized politically if Bosnia-Herzegovina merged with Croatia. In his view, “We Muslims would, in a unified Croatia, become a minority doomed to disappear, in much the same way that the Jews are in our current parliament.” Here again, the Jewish community was used as the negative example of a marginalized religious community, albeit in a period when the idea of a Jewish nation was beginning to emerge. The Muslim political leaders’ emphasis on the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina thus coincided with a search for a direct, lasting link to the imperial center, and with a demand for imperial protection. From this standpoint, at least during the Austro-Hungarian period, the demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina should not be regarded as a form of Muslim proto-nationalism, but rather as one of the ways in which the Muslim community expressed its allegiance to the imperial power.

The “call for empire” by the Bosnian Muslim elites explains the difficulties they faced confronting the crisis of the imperial order and the rise of nationalisms in the run-up to the First World War. In 1912, the Balkan Wars initially pitted the Ottoman Empire up against Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia, before setting the Balkan states against one another. These wars ended with the Ottoman Empire being kicked out of the Balkan peninsula (see Map II). At the time, the UMO showed its support for the Ottoman Empire, appealing to the Austro-Hungarian Empire to provide assistance, while some Bosnian Muslims volunteered to fight in the Ottoman army. A smaller number of young Muslim intellectuals joined the ranks of the Serbian army. The partition of the sanjak of Novi Pazar between Serbia and Montenegro, followed by numerous exactions, sparked strong reactions among the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. More generally, the Balkan Wars killed all hopes of the province returning to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the rise of Yugoslav sentiment within the Austro-Hungarian Empire fostered new political realignments. In the Bosnian provincial parliament, the language question was finally resolved in 1913, with a consensus being reached around the term “Serbo-Croatian” and equal treatment for the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. In summer 1913, a new governmental coalition was formed with the Muslim deputies, the Croat deputies and some Serb deputies. Together, they asserted that “the Serbs and Croats are one people with two different names, equal in rights,” and “in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims are of one blood and have one official language, Serbo-Croatian.”

In an uncertain international context, the newspaper Biser wrote:

> We belong, through our language, to this Slavic group of around ten million souls. It is a tribe [including] the Serbs, and the Croats, and us the Bosniaks. One people, but three names, as well as three religions. But no matter how many names there are, it changes nothing. It is a single people. And regarding the other components, our compatriots, we must maintain ties of sympathy with our fellow countrymen and love with our fellow citizens. Our house is united. If it catches fire—God forbid—we will all suffer the damage.

On June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo, however, the young Serb Gavrilo Princip, a member of the revolutionary organization Mlada Bosna (“Young Bosnia”) shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, acting in the name of South Slavic unity and sparking a fire that would engulf the entire European continent.
The Disillusions of Yugoslavism (1914–41)

The first Yugoslavia, between empire and nation-state

The First World War caused 19 million deaths between August 1914 and November 1918 and led to the collapse of the central empires. The Russian Empire was swept away by the Revolution of 1917, and replaced five years later with another plurinational, federal empire: the Soviet Union. The German and Austro-Hungarian Empires disappeared in 1918, replaced with more or less homogenous nation-states that dealt with their national minorities in an often brutal, conflictual way. Lastly, the Ottoman Empire was cut off from its Arab provinces in 1920 and gave way three years later to a modernizing, secular nation-state: the Republic of Turkey. Whereas the nation-state principle gained ground in Central and Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav space stood as a special case, as shown by the complex process leading to the creation of the first Yugoslav state. Indeed, as early as 1914, the Kingdom of Serbia decided that its war aim was the unification of the South Slavs. Joining it in this project was the Yugoslav Committee, created in April 1915 in Paris by Croat and Slovene politicians in exile. In Corfu in July 1917, the representatives of the Kingdom of Serbia and the Yugoslav Committee adopted a declaration calling for the creation of a joint state with a constitutional monarchy. Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the South Slav deputies formed a separate parliamentary group in May 1917. Then, in October 1918, a National Council of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs proclaimed a State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs in the South Slavic provinces of the Empire. Lastly, on December 1, 1918, this short-lived state merged with the Kingdom of Serbia—to which the Kingdom of Montenegro and the province of Vojvodina had recently been attached—to give birth to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (see Map III). The Serbian Karadžorđević dynasty was given the crown. Internationally, the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye signed on September 10, 1919 made the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of the new Yugoslav State official. But was this a nation-state similar to the other states of Central and Eastern Europe, or was it a plurinational South Slavic state built on the ruins of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, and reproducing some of their imperial practices?

The creation of the first Yugoslav state went hand in hand with the thesis that the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes constitute three “tribes” (pleme) of a single nation, and there was even the question of a “Serbo-Croato-Slovenian” language. In 1921, according to the official census, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had 8,911,509 speakers
of Serbo-Croatian and 1,019,997 speakers of Slovenian, representing 82.9 percent of the total population. If we adhere to the official thesis that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes formed a single nation, then the new Yugoslav state was a nation-state in which national minorities did not represent a larger share of the population than in other Central and Eastern European states, such as Romania or Poland. But the real issue at the heart of the first Yugoslav state’s difficulties was the form of the institutional ties between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and, indirectly, the nature of their national identity. For if we consider the Serbs, the Croats, and the Slovenes to be three distinct nations, then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was a plurinational state dominated by the Serbs. The state’s heterogeneous makeup is highlighted by the fact that, according to the 1921 census, it had a population of 5,593,037 Orthodox (46.7 percent of the total), 4,708,657 Catholics (39.3 percent), and 1,345,271 Muslims (11.2 percent).
In reality, the first Yugoslav state was a hybrid partway between an empire and a nation-state, with demographic and political context that varied substantially from one region to the next. Thus, in the regions annexed by Serbia following the 1912–13 Balkan Wars, the Slavophone Orthodox of Macedonia were considered Serbs and were subjected to a policy of forced linguistic assimilation, whereas the Muslim populations of “South Serbia,” which mainly spoke Albanian or Turkish, were deliberately impoverished and pushed to emigrate. In these regions, the Yugoslav state’s attitude was not really different from the national homogenization policies implemented by the other states of Central and Eastern Europe. However, in the former Austro-Hungarian provinces attached to the Yugoslav state in 1918, the population could still affirm its provincial identities and its Croat, Slovene, or, to a lesser extent, Bosnian Muslim political subjectivity. There, the Yugoslav state thus perpetuated some of the practices of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In addition to these differences by region, there were also variations over time that were just as important. When the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was founded, the idea of a single nation divided into three different tribal names was broadly supported by the country’s political and intellectual elites. Yet very quickly, political life came to be dominated by opposition between Serb political forces in favor of a centralized state, and Croat political forces in favor of a confederal state. In November 1920, the election of the Constituent Assembly in charge of drafting the kingdom’s Constitution led to a victory for the People’s Radical Party and the Democratic Party among Serb voters, whereas the Croat electorate favored the Croat Peasant Republican Party (Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka—HRSS). Seven months later, on June 28, 1921, deputies from the HRSS, the Slovene People’s Party (Slovenska ljudska stranka—SLS), and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije—KPJ) boycotted the vote for a new centralist Constitution. This text was adopted with just 223 votes out of 419, thanks to support from the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija—JMO), representing the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the party Džemijet, representing the Muslims of South Serbia. In the following years, Yugoslav political life was characterized by unstable governments and recurring debates about the Constitution. The HRSS—which in 1925 became the Croat Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka—HSS)—and, to a lesser extent, the SLS and the JMO denounced the Constitution’s centralism, along with the Serb control of state apparatus. This confrontation between Serbs and Croats, the dominant theme in political life of the time, took a dramatic turn on June 20, 1928, when Serb deputy Puniša Račić assassinated HSS leader Stjepan Radić, as well as two other HSS deputies, in the middle of Parliament.

On January 6, 1929, faced with the worsening political crisis, King Alexander I decided to suspend the Constitution, to dissolve the Parliament, and to ban political parties. Ten months later, a law changed the name of the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” to the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia,” dividing it into nine banovinas in a bid to erase the historical provinces that had constituted the kingdom (see Map III). The king imposed a new Constitution in September 1931 and, two months later, parliamentary elections were held. The opposition boycotted these elections, which were won by the Yugoslav People’s Party (Jugoslovenska narodna stranka—JNS), a party created to give
a semblance of popular legitimacy to King Alexander I's dictatorship. The king's objective was to impose by force a Yugoslav national identity shared by all South Slavs. However, this attempt at "integral Yugoslavism" (integralno jugoslovenstvo) came after the hopes created by the unification of Yugoslavia had been quashed and the national divides between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had deepened. As a result, the dictatorship failed to resolve any of the political problems facing the first Yugoslav state. In particular, the HSS continued to denounce Serb hegemony, and in 1932, it called for the transformation of the Yugoslav state into a confederation of autonomous entities guaranteeing "progress and fulfillment for the material and moral life of the Serb nation, the Croat nation and the Slovene nation." Thus, the HSS rejected the official Yugoslavism, asserting instead the existence of three clearly separate nations: Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

The dictatorship ended with the assassination of King Alexander I on October 9, 1934. The May 1935 parliamentary elections ushered the traditional political parties back into power. The next month, the Yugoslav Radical Union (Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica—JRZ) was created when the Serb Radical Party, the Slovene SLS, and the Muslim JMO merged. The JRZ governed until February 1939, but it too was unable to resolve the crisis affecting the Yugoslav state. To the contrary, the Serb opposition parties joined with the HSS in 1937 to call for the "Croats, Serbs and Slovenes [to be given] the possibility to agree on the organization of their state community for the equal satisfaction of the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes," thus turning their backs on the official Yugoslavism as well. However, it was not until August 26, 1939 that the new Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković and the HSS leader Vladko Maček agreed to the creation of the largely autonomous Banovina of Croatia, which grouped together Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, and parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Map III). While the Cvetković–Maček Agreement satisfied the Croat demand for turning the Yugoslav state into a confederation, it sparked sharp reactions from representatives of the Serb community, who demanded that all the territories with Serb settlements should be grouped together. The representatives of the Bosnian Muslim community, for their part, refused to see Bosnia-Herzegovina split between the Banovina of Croatia and a future Serb national entity. While the Second World War was breaking out in Europe, the national question thus continued to dominate Yugoslav political life.

The authors who have looked at the national question within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia tend to present this kingdom as an artificial construction that was doomed to fail. In this context, historian Dejan Djokic is right to focus on the shifting alliances between political forces representing the various communities that constituted the first Yugoslav state, and to emphasize that its disappearance is also due to unpredictable geopolitical contingencies. But this may not be the most important aspect of interwar Yugoslav political history. Indeed, the interwar period simultaneously saw the first Yugoslav state experiment and the consolidation of the Serb, Croat, and Slovene national identities. In the Serb case, this process was visible not only in the Radical Party's expansion into the former Austro-Hungarian provinces, but also in the regrouping of church structures inherited from the Kingdom of Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire into the Serb Orthodox Church, or in the appearance of powerful veterans' associations. In the Croat case, the HSS rapidly
expanded into all regions with Croat settlements—including Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1923—and created various mass organizations, including paramilitary groups in the 1930s. Under the first Yugoslav state, the Serb, Croat, and Slovene nationalist ideologies finally spread throughout the population, and this is undoubtedly the main paradox of the Yugoslav political history in the interwar period.

By taking account of this nationalization of the Yugoslav space in the interwar period, we can better understand its political cleavages and institutional stalemates. In particular, the Cvetković–Maček Agreement in August 1939 was less the result of a gradual political rapprochement between Serbs and Croats than the belated officialization of their separation into two distinct nations. Moreover, the 1930s also saw the rise of extremist nationalist movements, the best known of which was the Croat Revolutionary Movement (Hrvatski revolucionarni pokret—HRP) headed by Ante Pavelić and generally referred to as the Ustasha movement (from ustaša, insurgent). Created by nationalist militants who had taken refuge in Hungary and Italy, the Ustasha movement claimed to belong to the Croat nationalist ideology as formulated by Ante Starčević and radicalized by Josip Frank in the late nineteenth century, but it was also largely inspired by Italian Fascism. Faithful to Starčević’s ideas on this point, it considered the Bosnian Muslims to be Croats of the Islamic faith, and aspired to create a Croatian state that would incorporate Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak. In parallel, on the Serb side, various movements such as the Serb National Youth (Srpska nacionalistička omladina—SRNAO), or the Serb Cultural Club distanced themselves from the Yugoslav idea and considered creating a Serbian state that would get rid of its national minorities. Hence Serb nationalists devised various plans for expelling the non-Slavic Muslims to Turkey. Paradoxically, the only political party to rediscover the Yugoslav idea at that time was the KPJ, which had previously denounced the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in the 1920s as an artificial creation of the Great Powers. All these changes and contradictions taking place in the twenty-three years of the first Yugoslav state’s existence must be kept in mind if we are to understand the delicate situation of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a province wedged between Serbia and Croatia, and whose population included in 1921 829,162 Orthodox (43.9 percent of the population), 588,247 Muslims (31.1 percent), 443,914 Catholics (23.5 percent), and 28,606 people of “other” religious identity (1.5 percent).

The JMO between allegiance to the center and tactical alliances

With the outbreak of the First World War, the interethnic balance linked to the Austro-Hungarian imperial order began to totter. Some of the Bosnian Muslim leaders perceived this and, in August 1914, Reis-ul-ulema Džemaludin Čaušević condemned the anti-Serb riots that followed the Sarajevo assassination, and reminded his fellow Muslims:

We live in our homeland alongside other non-Muslim citizens, with whom we were born and with whom we live and die. This is why it must never be forgotten that any bad action towards them can have very unpleasant consequences.
Yet the Muslim elites continued to show their allegiance to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and after the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Čaušević even rejoiced that, “by serving in the courageous and heroic army of our monarchy, we are given such an appropriate occasion to offer up our bodies in the service of jihad [holy war].” As the war unfolded, the Muslim political and religious leaders were taken off guard, because until 1917, they had wagered that the Central Powers would win, and they had continued to call for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Therefore, no representative of the Bosnian Muslim community took part in the Yugoslav Committee, created in 1915 by Croat and Slovene politicians in exile. It was not until the final year of the war that some Muslim notables—most remarkably Mehmed Spaho, the secretary of the Sarajevo Chamber of Commerce—came out in support of South Slavic unity. The Muslim elites’ attitude partly explains the fact that they were in a weak position at the end of the war and were under-represented in the political bodies that gave birth to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes: of the eighteen representatives from Bosnia-Herzegovina in the National Council of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (created in October 1918), the only Muslims were Mehmed Spaho and Hamid Svrzo. Spaho was also the Minister of Artisanry and Commerce of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, the short-lived state formed in 1918 in the South Slavic provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This under-representation in the National Council was even more damaging for the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina given that the initial post-war years were quite difficult for them. Firstly, the land reform launched in February 1919 gave the (mostly Christian) kmet ownership of the lands that they cultivated, while providing for a low level of compensation for the begs and agas, thus leaving the land-holding Muslim elites in financial ruin. Secondly, the post-war period saw substantial pillaging and a large number of murders against the Muslim population, committed by Serb paramilitary formations. This wave of violence peaked in 1924 with the massacre of several hundred Muslims in the villages of Šahovići and Pavino Polje, in the Sandžak region.

Thus, with the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bosnian Muslims lost the ties of allegiance and protection that had bound them to the imperial power, and their physical and material security was threatened. Nevertheless, the Bosnian Muslim community was one of the few communities not to experience an armed revolt in the immediate post-war period. The Muslim political and religious elites preferred to give their allegiance to the new central power in exchange for a minimum of physical and material security, on the one hand, and religious autonomy, on the other. Thus, they appealed to the Great Powers to exert their influence on the young Yugoslav state to achieve this end. In 1919, the Reis-ülema, Džemaludin Čaušević, attempted to influence the peace talks underway at Saint-Germain-en-Laye by telling French journalist Charles Rivet:

Since the arrival of Serbian troops, the underlying hostility that our Orthodox compatriots felt for us has become active hatred, under the apparently benevolent watch of the occupying troops . . . Yet we are Slavs, but the Orthodox refuse to view us as such. We are regarded as intruders . . . With the new state of affairs, we have barely been given the right to send two or three delegates to the committees
These words reveal Bosnian Muslims’ aspiration to recover the status as a non-sovereign, protected religious minority that they had enjoyed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In response to this demand, Article 10 of the annex on minority protection of the Treaty of Saint-Germain guaranteed Muslims the right to judge family affairs under Shari’a law, to manage waqfs autonomously, and to elect the Reis-ul-ulema, the head of their religious institutions.

The difficult situation facing the Bosnian Muslim community in the initial post-war years did not prevent it from organizing politically. In February 1919, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija—JMO) was founded. Ibrahim Maglajlić, the mufti of Tuzla, presided over it until October 1921 when Mehmed Spaho replaced him, thus becoming the main Muslim political leader of the interwar period. In November 1920, in the election for the Constituent Assembly, the JMO gained twenty-four deputies by winning 110,895 votes, which represents a large majority of Muslim voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These deputies were initially part of the parliamentary opposition but as of March 1921, they gave their support to Nikola Pašić’s radical government. Mehmed Spaho then became Minister of the Industry and Commerce. Three months later, the JMO agreed to vote for the centralist Constitution of June 28, 1921, in exchange for better compensation for the beg and aga affected by the land reform, continued autonomy for Islamic religious institutions, and the preservation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a distinct territorial entity. The provincial government that had been formed in 1918 was gradually dismantled, but Article 135 of the new Constitution stipulated that the administrative breakdown into oblasts would respect the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the JMO asked in vain for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions, which the Austro-Hungarian authorities had granted in 1909, to be extended to other regions with Muslim populations. The 1909 status remained limited to Bosnia-Herzegovina alone, and the Reis-ul-ulema of Sarajevo only held authority within the borders of this province.

The JMO’s foundation coincided with a broad renewal of the Muslim political elites, as the begs and agas were sidelined in favor of representatives of the professional classes and civil servants. Yet by voting for the centralizing Constitution of June 28, 1921, the JMO reproduced the strategies of allegiance to the center that the Muslim elites had started in the Austro-Hungarian period. This allegiance to the Yugoslav state, which continued unabated for the following decades, did not prevent the JMO leaders from frequently changing alliances, alternating between periods of participation in the government and periods of opposition. As early as February 1922, Mehmed Spaho resigned from the Pašić government due to its refusal to unify Islamic religious institutions within the kingdom and the continued anti-Muslim violence. Those who wanted to continue participation in the government, led by Ibrahim Maglajlić, left the JMO to found the Yugoslav Muslim People’s Organization (Jugoslavenska muslimanska narodna organizacija—JMNO). In the parliamentary elections of March 1923, the
JMO won 112,228 votes and eighteen seats, while the JMNO won only 10,266 votes and no seats. The JMNO disappeared soon after. In the ensuing years, the JMO participated in the governments led by the democrat Ljubomir Davidović in 1924, by the radical Velimir Vukičević in 1927, and by Anton Korošec, chairman of the SLS, in 1928. In other periods, the JMO aligned itself with the opposition, joining the Federalist Bloc formed with the HRSS and the SLN in 1923, as well as the Democratic Union formed with the Democratic Party in 1926. Despite these changing alliances, the JMO continued to win a large majority of Muslim votes in the parliamentary elections of 1925 and 1927.

Given its shifting alliances, some historians have presented the JMO as a purely opportunistic party, concerned only about the material interests of the traditional land-holding elites. This criticism, also seen during the Austro-Hungarian period, takes into account neither the renewal of the Muslim political elites after 1918 nor the role the JMO played in interwar Yugoslav political life. The JMO was too weak to have a decisive impact on how the Yugoslav state was organized, so it negotiated allegiance to the central power for more limited political concessions. As during the brief parliamentary phase of the Austro-Hungarian period, the political representatives of the Muslim community also attempted to use their position—midway between the Serb political forces and the Croat ones—to increase their political bargaining power and achieve some of their strategic objectives. Hence long-standing strategic orientations may lie underneath the JMO’s changing alliances. Analyzing the political life of this era, Dejan Djokic writes, “decisions by party leaders in interwar Yugoslavia were often motivated by tactics and pragmatism, not by national feelings.”

Motivations and limitations of Muslim Yugoslavism

It is therefore necessary to look beyond tactical alliances and to analyze the JMO’s main strategic orientations as well as Bosnian Muslims’ modes of self-identification.
during the interwar period. The first noteworthy observation is that the continuities between the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods did not involve only the Muslim political elites’ allegiance to the center. Another important continuity lay with the issue of the national identification of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although many of the JMO’s leaders considered themselves to be Croats, the JMO refused to choose between the Serb or Croat national identity. In 1920, the JMO’s newspaper wrote, with regard to Serb and Croat nationalisms:

We Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina do not feel either of these nationalisms in our hearts, we do not want to spread our faith, nor our customs, nor our name, and we would gladly remain foreign to this confrontation between nationalisms, because this fight can bring no good to anyone, but destiny has placed us in between two opposing sides.  

The JMO’s relative indifference to the national issue prompted intellectuals in favor of a Serb (or Croat) national identity to accuse it of leading an “a-national” policy. The JMO also came into conflict with the Muslim cultural society Gajret, which was pro-Serb. In 1923, the JMO’s leaders even supported the creation of a rival society, Narodna uzdanica (“The People’s Hope”), led by pro-Croat intellectuals. However, the role of these two cultural societies in the changing national identification of Bosnian Muslims remained limited and ambiguous. Admittedly, they encouraged Bosnian Muslims to identify as either Serbs or Croats, but their rivalry limited the scope of their appeals and deepened the divide between the intelligentsia and the rest of the Muslim population. At the same time, these societies nourished certain historical myths specific to Bosnian Muslims, regarding for example the conversion of Bosnian “Bogomils” to Islam or Bosnia-Herzegovina’s autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. In so doing, they were creating markers of cultural identity that would be claimed by Muslim proto-nationalism when it appeared in the late 1930s. Nevertheless, during the interwar period, the Bosnian Muslim community did not undergo massive nationalization similar to the Serb and Croat communities, and the vast majority of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina continued to be nationally undetermined.

The Yugoslavism of the JMO must be viewed in this context. In its 1919 program, the party stated:

We adhere to the principle of full equality of rights between the three tribal names [Serb, Croat, and Slovene], and observe that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina have never strayed far from their homeland, their people and their language. They have held onto all the signs of pure nationalism, but they are simply not aware of their tribal name. This is why, with regard to our nationalization, we are of the opinion that this is a field of action for the cultural societies, and in no way a day-to-day political affair… This is why we are opposed to all forms of narrow-mindedness and passion, and more particularly, any forced imposition of any tribal name. We shall bring [people] together, and in no case shall we divide [them]. We consider Yugoslavism to be the most appropriate path towards rapprochement and unification.
Concretely, by supporting Yugoslavism, the JMO was able to show its allegiance to the Yugoslav state, while distancing itself from the rivalries between Serbs and Croats regarding national identity. In 1921, JMO leader Sakib Korkut wrote:

We do not ask that the Croat reject his Croatism, and it does not bother us that the Serb is proud of his Serbism; we ask only that they come together and unite in Yugoslavism as a broader, more common name. In other words: may they show proof of national unity and avoid any tribal chauvinism that can lead to separatism . . . Our Yugoslavism has yet another characteristic, we do not acknowledge the theories whereby it can only be acquired through Serb or Croat nationalism. These may be a natural bridge to Yugoslavism, but they are sometimes a large obstacle in its path.\(^\text{13}\)

The JMO’s Yugoslavism was not just a refuge in the face of the attempts at Serb and Croat nationalization. It also enabled Bosnian Muslims to present themselves as an autochthonous Slavic population, or even as the “purest Serbo-Croat element”\(^\text{14}\) of the Yugoslav space, in response to the Serb nationalists who called them “Turks” and threatened to expel them to Anatolia. Lastly, it enabled them to assert themselves as fully fledged members of a pluriconfessional Yugoslav community, and thus overcome their minority status. This active commitment to the Yugoslav idea was visible even in the name of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, and in the proposal of some JMO deputies, put forward as early as 1921, to name the new state “Kingdom of Yugoslavia.”

The Muslim political elites’ decision to support Yugoslavism during the interwar period was the main break, in terms of strategy and identity, with the Austro-Hungarian period. Of course, this is attributable to the new political context, in which the Yugoslav state had replaced the former Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, while hesitating between an imperial model and a nation-state model for itself. At the same time, the JMO’s leaders took on the two major demands put forward by the Muslim elites of the Austro-Hungarian period: autonomy for Islamic religious institutions, and autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Among the demands laid out by the JMO, autonomy for Islamic religious institutions was one of the most vocal. The JMO based this demand on Article 10 of the annex on minority protection to the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which the Yugoslav state had signed. In 1921, the JMO succeeded in preserving the autonomy granted in 1909, thus securing the Bosnian Muslim community’s status as a non-sovereign and protected minority, and thus preserving Islam’s central role in its political and social cohesion. This centrality explains why, during its electoral campaigns, the JMO appealed to the religious sentiments of its potential voters: the organization’s representatives stated that the candidates of the other parties wanted to convert the Muslims to Christianity, proclaimed that “faith is in danger” and that voting for the JMO was an “Islamic duty,” threatening to bar those who did not vote for them from mosques and Muslim cemeteries. By appealing to such religious sentiments, the JMO won seats for its representatives on the waqf commissions. However, it failed to extend its influence to all the Muslims of the kingdom, and thus to increase its relative weight in Yugoslav politics. Admittedly, in the first years after the war, the JMO presented itself as the spokesman for the Muslims of South Serbia. But
the hostility of the kingdom’s central power and the creation of the Đemijet party caused this attempt to fail. The only case in which the JMO ran candidates outside Bosnia-Herzegovina came in 1927, as part of an alliance with the Democratic Party, and only involved the Sandžak region, which had a population of Slavophone Muslims. The JMO thus did not become a party for all Muslims in the kingdom, and it quickly retreated to represent only the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, the only pan-Islamic demand it made in its 1920 program was to establish a link between the Islamic religious institutions and the Ottoman Caliphate “so that we might have ties that are just as free as those between Catholics and the Holy See.” 15

In parallel, the incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into a broader South Slavic entity made it more necessary than ever before to preserve it as a distinct territorial entity, to prevent the Muslim community from being marginalized on a demographic scale. Thus, it is no surprise that the JMO was in favor of the unity of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but asked for autonomy for the provinces that would make up the new Yugoslav state. In 1920, Mehmed Spaho specified that the JMO advocated autonomy for the historical provinces but opposed “tribal autonomies,” i.e. a partition of the Yugoslav state into three separate Serb, Croat, and Slovene entities. Indeed, such a partition would have divided Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Serb and the Croat entities, leading to the political dispersion of the Bosnian Muslims. The demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina therefore constituted another important element of continuity between the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods. As during the Austro-Hungarian period, this demand in the 1920s expressed both a strong provincial identity and a search for a direct link with the central power, rather than the emergence of Muslim nationalism. Yet, as shown by Mehmed Spaho’s words, this demand now expressed itself against the background of the growing nationalization of the Yugoslav space, a trend that was endangering the status of the Muslim community. Beginning in 1929, the crisis affecting the Yugoslav state made these threats increasingly tangible, exhausting the traditional strategies of the Muslim political elites and yielding fragile attempts at a proto-nationalist reformulation of the idea of autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

From the banning of the JMO to the movement for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina

In January 1929, the banning of the JMO was not the only consequence of the dictatorship of King Alexander. To marginalize the leaders of this party, the regime relied on the Muslim cultural society Gajret, which had hastened to support the new policy of “integral Yugoslavism.” Its president, Avdo Hasanbegović, was appointed to the government. More importantly, the Yugoslav authorities challenged the two pillars on which the Muslim political elites’ traditional strategies rested, namely, the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a distinct territorial entity, and the autonomy of the Islamic religious institutions. In October 1929, the law on the new administrative division of the kingdom divided the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina among four different banovinas, with Muslims representing only a minority in each of them (see Map III). In
January 1930, another law created an Islamic Religious Community (Islamska vjerska zajednica) for the entire kingdom. This community was led by the Reis-ul-ulema, whose headquarters moved from Sarajevo to Belgrade, but Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Serbia both kept their own ulema-medžlis and their own waqf commission. The 1930 law ended the autonomous status established in 1909, allowing the Ministry of Justice to exert strong control over the governing bodies of the Islamic Religious Community, by appointing its own representatives and by exerting pressure on the Shari’a judges sitting on these bodies. Reis-ul-ulema Džemaludin Čaušević opposed this law and was forced to retire in June 1930. He was replaced by Ibrahim Maglajlić, the former mufti of Tuzla and previous leader of the short-lived Yugoslav Muslim People’s Organization (JMNO). The management of waqfs was entrusted to prominent activists from Gajret. In just a few months, the very basis of the strategies that the Muslim political elites had established during the Austro-Hungarian period was swept away.

Initially, the JMO’s leaders reacted by joining the opposition and calling for a boycott of the November 1931 parliamentary elections. In January 1933, they issued a resolution stating that they were the sole legitimate representatives of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and demanding that parliamentary democracy be re-established and the state be reorganized “on the basis of historical political entities with equal rights and with the broadest competences, giving up to the [Yugoslav] community only what is necessary in order to ensure the general and common interests.” This same document demanded “for Bosnia-Herzegovina as the oldest historical political entity of the state, which has always represented a distinct entity on a cultural and social level, that it should be one of these entities with equal rights.” However, when the dictatorship softened, the JMO’s leaders hurriedly rallied to the new regime: in June 1935, barely a month after running for parliamentary elections on the lists of the opposition, they gave their support to the new Prime Minister, Milan Stojadinović, and consented to the absorption of the JMO into the Yugoslav Radical Community (JRZ). In exchange for this support given to the JRZ, two leaders of the former JMO were appointed ministers, and the Islamic religious institutions regained partial autonomy. In February 1936, a new law regarding the Islamic Religious Community transferred the seat of the Reis-ul-ulema back to Sarajevo and gave the Muslims the right to elect all the community’s governing bodies. Yet by prohibiting the ‘ulama’ employed by the Islamic Religious Community to be candidates for the waqf commissions, this law aimed also at supporting the JMO leaders in their attempt to take control of the Islamic religious institutions. This reform was followed by Ibrahim Maglajlić’s forced retirement in March 1936, and by the appointment of Fehim Śpahović (Mehmed Śpahović’s brother) as Reis-ul-ulema two years later. Yet the former JMO’s grip on the Islamic religious institutions must not be misinterpreted. The JMO’s absorption into the JRZ deprived Bosnian Muslims of their own political organization for the first time since 1906, and reflected the shrinking leeway of the Muslim political elites, in a context of exacerbated conflicts between the Serbs and Croats regarding the organization of the Yugoslav state. And, while the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions had been partially restored, Bosnia-Herzegovina was still divided among four banovinas.

As the strategies inherited from the Austro-Hungarian era became ineffectual, the Muslim community faced a legitimacy crisis that various political actors attempted to
instrumentalize to their own benefit. Thus, in December 1935, pro-Croat politicians and intellectuals came together in a meeting summoned by Adem-aga Mešić, where they denounced the JMO’s support of the JRZ and reaffirmed Bosnia-Herzegovina’s need for autonomy. This meeting gave birth to the Muslim Organization (Muslimanska organizacija—MO), presided over by Hakija Hadžić and affiliated with the Croat Peasant Party (HSS). During the November 1938 elections, the MO HSS challenged the hegemony of the former JMO, winning 28,524 votes compared to 114,741 votes for the Muslim candidates of the JRZ. At the same time, the KPJ came out in favor of autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Between 1937 and 1939, several open letters by students with ties to the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije—SKOJ) denounced the hegemonic policies of the Serb and Croat bourgeoisie, accused Mehmed Spaho of opportunism and nepotism, and called for an autonomous Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, the KPJ’s influence within the Muslim community did not extend further than the student milieu and the small circle of intellectuals gathered around the journal Putokaz (“Signpost”). But the Muslim Organization and the KPJ’s satellite organizations were important venues for training alternative political elites: during the Second World War, a large number of Muslim leaders of the Ustasha regime came from the MO HSS, and the intellectuals of Putokaz and the students of the SKOJ would figure among the first Muslim cadres of the Partisan movement.

By dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Banovina of Croatia and the territories still under Serb administration, the Cvetković–Maček Agreement of August 26, 1939 sealed the failure of the Muslim political elites’ traditional strategies. In this agreement, the Muslim community was denied existence as a political entity and a demographic reality, since the boundaries of the Banovina of Croatia were determined based on the comparison of the local populations of Orthodox and Catholics, without taking account of the presence of Muslims. But the Cvetković–Maček Agreement caused the Muslim elites to mobilize on a scale that had not been seen since the movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions during the Austro-Hungarian period. On November 6, 1939, Džafer Kulenović, a minister in Dragiša Cvetković’s government and the Muslim politician with the highest prestige since Mehmed Spaho’s death in June 1939, called for the creation of a Banovina of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over the following weeks, deputies, municipal councilors, representatives of Muslim cultural societies, and Islamic religious institutions gathered in the main Bosnian towns and adopted resolutions in favor of autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even the cultural society Gajret, which had been sidelined by the creation of the JRZ, asked that “as part of the ongoing reorganization of the state, a distinct and self-administered entity should be created that would encompass Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak.” By the same token, the KPJ’s regional organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina expressed the view that the Cvetković–Maček Agreement harmed the interests of the Serb, Croat, and especially Muslim working people, with the latter having been abandoned by the leaders of the JMO. It stated that the only fair solution would be “people’s autonomy” for Bosnia-Herzegovina. On December 30, 1939 in Sarajevo, around a hundred delegates from all over Bosnia-Herzegovina, representing the former JMO, the MO HSS, the cultural societies Gajret and Narodna uzdanica, and various other associations came together to form the Movement for the Autonomy
of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Pokret za autonomiju Bosne i Hercegovine). This movement was presided by Džafer Kulenović; it asked for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina within its historical borders, stating that "this demand is in the interests of the state and the entire population of Bosnia-Herzegovina," and expressing a wish that "our brothers and fellow citizens of the Orthodox and Catholic faiths shall join us in this action."²⁰

There was nothing new per se about such a demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. What was new, however, is that it was expressed in opposition to the central authorities and on equal footing with the Serb and Croat demands. The aim was to create a fourth Bosnian entity, alongside the Serb, Croat, and Slovene ones to come. This fourth entity would derive its legitimacy from the Muslim community’s existence. As such, this demand for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina was not identical to that of the Austro-Hungarian period because it did not coincide with a "search for empire." Furthermore, in the late 1930s, for some intellectuals and politicians, this mobilization went hand in hand with the first hesitant outline of a specific national identity for Bosnian Muslims. Thus, Salih Ljubunčić, an intellectual with ties to the cultural society Narodna uzdanica, considered the Serb, Croat, and Slovene national identities to be increasingly linked to Orthodoxy and Catholicism. As a result:

The Muslims have shaped themselves into something particular, a sort of particular political grouping, and even a "fourth nation", all of which the Muslims did not want as citizens of this state and as compatriots of the Serbs and Croats.²¹

Expressed in negative terms and almost with regret, this affirmation of a specific national identity for Bosnian Muslims came from a few isolated individuals. It would be appropriate to describe this as a form of Muslim proto-nationalism. The Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina itself was merely a heteroclite coalition of notables. Yet its appearance shows how the exhaustion of the Yugoslav idea, along with the spread of Serb and Croat nationalist ideologies and the failure of the Muslim political elites’ traditional strategies, pushed the Muslim community to leave behind its status as a non-sovereign religious minority in order to affirm its own political subjectivity. However, with a new world war breaking out in Europe, the conditions for such an endeavor were bleak.

**Intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama’ faced with Muslim “backwardness”**

After seeing how the Muslim political elites positioned themselves within the first Yugoslav state, we must now look more closely at the changes within the Muslim intelligentsia and the ‘ilmīyya. To do so, we must first review some of the essential characteristics of Bosnian society during the interwar period, as well as the place held by Muslims in that society. Bosnian society during the period was fundamentally a rural one, with around 80 percent of the population living off agriculture. However, the 1919 land reform emancipated the peasantry and profoundly transformed the economic and social realities of the rural world. In parallel, the towns continued to grow, with
Sarajevo’s population rising from 58,000 in 1919 to 90,000 in 1941. The social and cultural modernization of towns also continued, and this fostered secularization of social life, as symbolized notably by the development of modern and mixed leisure activities. Lastly, an important factor for social and cultural transformation lay in the development of public education. While the illiteracy rate in Bosnia-Herzegovina still stood at 72.9 percent in 1931, the province had 1,018 elementary schools and sixty-three secondary schools (including sixteen high schools) in 1936 or, in other words, two and a half times more schools than at the end of the Austro-Hungarian period.

While Bosnian society continued on the path of social and cultural modernization, the Muslim community remained largely outside this process. Thus, in a 1939 survey, the Muslim cultural society Gajret counted 2,663 Muslim high school students in Yugoslavia, of a total of around 110,000. This underrepresentation of the Muslim community in the school system partly explains its social and economic marginalization. On the one hand, the traditional landowning elites were ruined by the land reform. On the other, Muslims had a marginal role among the new industrial and administrative elites. According to the aforementioned Gajret survey, there were only thirty-six Muslim-owned industrial companies in all of Yugoslavia, out of a total of 3,054 industrial companies, and 108 Muslims among the 6,163 high-level civil servants in the kingdom.

This social and economic marginalization of the Muslim community was not just an obstacle to its political participation, it also affected Islamic religious institutions, which suffered a clear decline in the interwar period. In 1928, the Reis-ul-ulama Džemaludin Čaušević expressed alarm that the number of mektebs had declined from 1,200 to 700 in ten years, with the number of reformed mektebs dropping from 260 to 120, and the number of madrasas from forty-three to eighteen (four of which were reformed). In the 1930s, however, several major reforms of the Islamic religious institutions were implemented: the management of waqfs, which had been tarnished by cases of incompetence and corruption, was put under the control of the state in 1930, the school for Shari’a judges was transformed into the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari’a Law (Viša islamska šerijatsko-teološka škola) in 1935, and a rationalization of Islamic religious education brought the number of madrasas to twelve in 1938.

It is therefore not surprising that intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama’ were upset about the “backwardness” (zaostalost) of the Muslim community. Thus, the Reis-ul-ulama Džemaludin Čaušević, the main figure of Islamic reformism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, wrote:

The Catholics, the Orthodox and the Jews take responsibility—quite effectively—for educating their youth, caring for their poor, and we Muslims act as if we were asleep on the Arabic peninsula, as if we were not in this corner of Europe, we are paralyzed.

In the same vein, the intellectual Edhem Bulbulović noted that “the Jews as a national minority have done better than the Muslims as part of the [Yugoslav] nation as a whole,” with the Jewish community in this case no longer being a foil, but instead a model for social and cultural integration. Calling on the Muslims to espouse “progress” (napredak) and “the spirit of the times” (duh vremena), intellectuals and reformist
‘ulama’ emphasized both education and work as the means for ensuring the Muslim community’s future. In the first issue of the magazine Novi behar (“New Blossoming”), which brought together pro-Croat intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama’, Čaušević stated, for example, that “we must connect the treasure of Islam with the material treasure of Western education, represented by science and technology, and thus to achieve a happy life in both worlds.” This desire to integrate the Muslim community in the European social and cultural modernity coincided with a critique of its traditional elites, and chiefly the ‘ilmiyya. Abdullah Ajni Bušatlić, a Shari’a judge with ties to Čaušević, affirmed:

The hodžas are chiefly responsible for our backwardness because, over our long history, they were not up to the hard task of educating our people in contemporary ways. Nobody taught them how to encourage [the people’s] moral and material progress.

Yet Bušatlić also distanced himself from the intellectuals, whom he criticized for moving away from Islam and the Muslim community:

What is blatantly obvious is that they completely neglect the religious rituals and show no outward sign of their attachment to their religion. Something makes them poor patriots, and it is a fact that many of them marry women of another religion and thus do considerable harm to their Islamic community.

Through their behavior, the intellectuals thus attested to the fact that the Muslim community did not escape the nascent secularization affecting Bosnian society at the time.

The desire of the intellectuals and, to a lesser extent, of the reformist ‘ulama’ to “turn the Muslim element in Yugoslavia into modern Europeans” explains their interest in the Kemalist Revolution in Turkey. The intellectuals made numerous enthusiastic declarations, and in 1928, Čaušević himself hailed Mustafa Kemal’s reforms, sparking accusations that he wanted to create a “fifth Kemalist madīlab.” But the harshest confrontation between intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama’, on the one side, and the majority of ‘ulama’ and Muslim political leaders, on the other, involved Islamic dress codes and the status of women. As early as 1918, the journalist Dževad-beg Sulejmanpašić created a scandal by calling for women to stop wearing the veil. His brochure, entitled A Contribution to Resolving our Muslim Women’s Question, was even burnt in public in Sarajevo. Yet Sulejmanpašić reoffended seven years later by calling for hats to replace the fez. The most serious controversy broke out in January 1928, after Čaušević stated that wearing the veil was not a religious obligation for women. Intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama’ had divergent views of the meaning of this statement, with intellectuals believing that it referred to the entire traditional attire of Muslim women, whereas the reformist ‘ulama’ considered it to apply only to the veil covering the face. However, they all defended the Reis-ul-ulema from the violent attacks of his adversaries, with Čaušević even being accused of blasphemy and apostasy. The cultural society Gajret showed its support for the Reis-ul-ulema, whereas Sulejmanpašić and other intellectuals launched the association Reforma, with the mission of promoting Islamic reformist ideas. This association remained marginal, however, and soon disappeared. The controversy
sparked by Čaušević’s statement continued until July 1928, when the electoral curia in charge of selecting the Reis-ul-ulema officially declared that Muslim women must cover their faces and their hands, unless their schooling or economic activity prevented it, and that Muslim men were not allowed to wear hats. The electoral curia thus assured the defeat of Čaušević and his supporters. The Congress of Muslim Intellectuals organized by Gajret in September 1928 took note of this imbalance of powers and came out in favor of compulsory schooling for Muslim girls and participation in economic and social life for Muslim women, but it carefully avoided mentioning the veil.  

One of the underlying stakes of the debate on Muslim dress codes was the national identification of Bosnian Muslims. For the intellectuals in particular, replacing the fez with the hat and doing away with the veil were changes also aimed at eliminating the social and cultural barriers between Muslim and non-Muslim Yugoslavs. In 1925, Sulejmanpašić stated that:

The fez is one of the social barriers between us and our national brothers of other confessions. Wearing a fez like a uniform prescribed in the strictest fashion amounts to creating an obstacle to the strengthening of national feelings [of Muslims].

Three years later, the association Reforma (over which Sulejmanpašić presided) set a goal to nationalize Bosnian Muslims, “so that, as an autochthonous element, they see Yugoslavia as their true and only homeland.” Divided between the cultural societies Gajret (pro-Serb) and Narodna uzdanica (pro-Croat), the Muslim intellectuals were still unanimously in favor of the nationalization of Muslims, viewing nationalism as a sign of modernity. This stance was opposed to pan-Islamism, which was presented as an indication of backwardness. For example, Mustafa Mulalić, an essayist and deputy elected on the lists of the Yugoslav People’s Party (JNS), stated in 1932 that:

The intelligentsia wants Yugoslav Muslims to be active and enthusiastic national elements, fanatically convinced [of their national identity], who will live and work for their ethnic group, [and] for their national state. Our intelligentsia does not want to enter pan-Islamist utopias, because our own home is what matters the most to us, and because no advanced Islamic people has left the framework of its nationalism, because nationalism is the foundation of the organization and elevation of one's own home[land]. The intelligentsia does not wish to neglect the qualities of its race, the beauty of its homeland, it does not live under the illusion of a promised land, another unknown homeland, [or] any Asian desert.

Thus, Muslim intellectuals applauded when Mustafa Kemal abolished the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924, and called for it to be replaced by a new caliphate of a purely religious dimension: “What the Pope and the Vatican are to the Catholic faith,” wrote Edhem Bulbulović, “the Caliph and the Caliphate should be to the Islamic faith.”

Unsurprisingly, the stances adopted by reformist ‘ulama’ were less clear-cut. In a 1933 article, Čaušević distinguished between three types of community ties: religious ones, which united Bosnian Muslims with other Muslims in the world; homeland and language ties, which united the South Slavs; and lastly the ties that were “indisputably
stronger between Muslims living with us in our homeland, and speaking the same language as we do." Y et for Čaušević, acknowledging stronger community ties between Slavophone Muslims did not mean that they had a distinct national identity, and he spoke on different occasions about “the Islamic part of our people” or “our co-nationals of one [Christian] orientation or the other.” It was even the inadequate correspondence between national identity and religious belonging, and more concretely, the existence of Muslim Serbs and Muslim Croats, that caused Čaušević to call for strict religious neutrality for the state:

Religion, and particularly Islam, is for all nations, and in our era, an exclusive religious characteristic cannot be given to any single nation. In our state there are Croats and Serbs who remain closely bound to their Islamic faith, and this must be taken into serious account . . . The best is for everything that is religious to go in the mosques, churches and religious textbooks of each confession, and in our schools which are for all citizens, for the nation and science to be exempt of anything that belongs in places of worship and religious textbooks.

Čaušević thus aspired to a clearer dissociation between religion and nationality, and therefore, to a separation between religion and politics. Concurrently, in his disputes with his adversaries, Čausević increasingly challenged the authority of tradition and the ‘ilmiyya, preferring a form of Islam based on ijtihad, reason and individual autonomy. As such, he was a forerunner of new forms of religiosity influenced by modern conceptions of the individual. In 1928, responding to those who accused him of breaking with the Hanafi madhab, Čaušević wrote:

My answers [concerning the veil for women] are in agreement with what God prescribes in the Qur’an, and although I also know what the experts in Shari’a law and exegesis have said, I prefer to adhere to the Qur’an’s prescriptions, because it is here forever and for all time. This is what the Qur’an calls on me to do, it tells me to reflect, to learn and to study.

Weakened by the 1928 controversy and removed from his position as Reis-ul-ulema two years later, Čaušević dedicated the end of his life to a translation of the Qur’an, which he published in 1937, shortly before his death. However, while this effort to make the Qur’an accessible to every believer was the logical end to Čaušević’s intellectual career, it also highlights his growing isolation within the Bosnian ‘ilmiyya, and beyond his individual situation, reflects the exhaustion of the Islamic reformist movement that had appeared in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the late nineteenth century.

Islamic revivalism and politicization of the ‘ilmiyya

In the 1920s, the main opponents of the intellectuals and reformist ‘ulama were other ‘ulama trained before the First World War in the religious schools of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Ottoman Empire. The latter expressed opinions shared by a
majority of the ‘ilmīyya and, through the waqf commissions, benefited from discreet support from the JMO. Indeed, the JMO’s leaders regarded the intellectuals’ nationalizing zeal and Čaušević’s controversial statements—as threats to their hegemony over the Muslim community. The form of Islam that most ‘ulama’ and Muslim political leaders defended was therefore profoundly conservative, imbued with Ottoman traditions, and supposed to strengthen the internal cohesion and external boundaries of the Muslim community. For the ‘ulama’ and conservative politicians, the most crucial aim was not for Muslims to catch up with the West or the other religious communities in Yugoslavia, but to safeguard themselves from any form of political and cultural assimilation. For some representatives of the traditional elites, this could lead to a rejection of the very principle of nationalism, regarded as assimilationist and anti-Islamic. Thus, landowner Osman Nuri-beg Firdus wrote in 1925:

Being nationally defined means not being Muslim, because Islam is not the religion of the Serbs or the Croats, it is not even human, all of nature is imbued with it, it knows no boundaries . . . It is not possible to be Muslim and to have a national feeling at the same time.\textsuperscript{44}

More specifically, during the 1928 controversy, Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, the mufti of Tuzla, reiterated the importance of signs of religious belonging for the cohesion of the Muslim community:

We Muslims . . . do not want to disappear as Muslims, we do not want to merge with others with all the consequences that would result. We want to exist as Muslims, first and foremost. After we have settled that, we will gladly dedicate ourselves to nationalism, politics and political parties. For us, nothing is as important as faith. It is the most important thing. It holds us together as a group, and thanks to it, we are taken account of.\textsuperscript{45}

Three years later, in 1931, his brother Ahmed Lufti Čokić insisted on the importance of wearing visible signs of belonging to Islam:

We must be able to recognize and know one another easily, and this is why we must wear a visible sign [of our religious belonging] . . . If we all wore the same clothing as the others, it would mean that we no longer wished to be recognized amongst ourselves, apart from the most restricted circles.\textsuperscript{46}

Permeated with communitarianism, the form of Islam defended by the opponents of Islamic reformism was loyalist and apolitical: the conservative ‘ulama’ never failed to demonstrate their allegiance to the Yugoslav state, describing themselves as “pureblood Yugoslavs”\textsuperscript{47} and acknowledging the JMO’s leaders as the legitimate political representatives of the Muslim community. However, the same ‘ulama’ were profoundly upset by the disappearance of the Ottoman Caliphate and the anti-religious measures implemented by Kemalist Turkey. Thus, they warned their reformist adversaries that
“nobody shall or can impose on us [the suppression of the veil] through force or through declarations copied from those of the tyrant Kemal Pasha.”

Concretely, the hostility to Kemalist Turkey and nostalgia for the Ottoman Caliphate materialized through the participation in the pan-Islamic Congresses organized during the interwar period. In 1931, a Yugoslav delegation led by Mehmed Spaho in person took part in the Islamic Congress organized in Jerusalem by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husayni. Four years later, another delegation took part in the European Muslim Congress organized in Geneva by Shakib Arslan, a Lebanese Arab nationalist. This pan-Islamism in the conservative milieus was chiefly religious in nature, and Ibrahim Hakki Čokić stated that the idea of “a unification of all Muslims from Japan and certain American [Caribbean] islands to our own Krajina, not to mention Africa as far as Madagascar, is the greatest nonsense and the biggest error.” However, for some authors, a more political form of pan-Islamism was already taking shape. Thus, Murat Šuvalić defined this as a desire “to group together all the compact Muslim peoples of Southeast Asia and North Africa, around the metropole of Mecca, and to form a federal empire able to live autonomously and, one day, become the most powerful empire in the world.” He then expressed his regret that, due to their minority status, the Balkan Muslims would be excluded from this imaginary empire.

Beginning in the 1930s, the exhaustion of Islamic reformism coincided with the emergence of a new generation of ‘ulama’ who matured after the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The most brilliant of them had completed their studies at al-Azhar University in Cairo. The main figure was undoubtedly Mehmed Handžić, who, after five years in Cairo, became the director of the boarding school of the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo in 1932, then head librarian of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library in 1937 and professor at the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari’a Law in 1939. Yet this new generation of ‘ulama’ took the lead in a new religious current that we would describe as revivalist. This current shared in the Islamic reformists’ strong hostility towards the religious traditions developed over centuries, notably the tarikats (Sufi orders), Sufi pilgrimages to places such as Ajvatovica in central Bosnia, and any practice that deemed magical. But contrary to the reformists, the revivalist ‘ulama’ believed that a return to original Islam was hardly compatible with freely interpreting the Qur’an or readily accepting European modernity. To the contrary, in the face of modernity, revivalists sought to reassert the immutability and specificity of Islam. In other words, to quote Handžić:

Renewal within Islam cannot occur through additions or changes, because Islam is perfect and complete. The path towards renewal goes through a return to the purity of the religion in its original form, eliminating everything that has been added to it or that has been misunderstood.

This revivalist current took on an organized form in 1936 with the creation of the ‘ulama’ association el-Hidaje (“The Right Path”), which published a magazine with the same name. Initially conceived to defend the material interests of the ‘ilmiyya, el-Hidaje quickly came under the influence of the revivalist ‘ulama’, and Handžić became the association’s president in 1939. Under his leadership, el-Hidaje went from being merely
an organization representing the ‘ilmīyya to becoming the avant-garde of a religious and moral revival movement meant to encompass the entire Muslim community. 

The revivalist current gathered strength in a specific cultural and political context. Culturally, the effects of secularization were beginning to appear within the Muslim community, as seen in the slow increase in the number of mixed marriages. Yet revivalists’ religious activism was largely motivated by their rejection of secularization. In Handžić’s words:

Whereas, as a consequence of the First World War, morality has declined, vice has begun to spread among both sexes, atheistic ideas have spread, Islam is insulted and publicly attacked in newspapers, magazines, books and even school books, whereas pseudo-Muslims take advantage [of this situation] to tear down the foundations of true Islam with their articles and their books, the ‘ilmīyya’s mission is clear today and a vast field of action is opening up, in which [the ‘ilmīyya] must fight two enemies . . . namely, the overt non-Muslims and the hypocrites.  

Thus, in opposition to those who disputed the ‘ulama’ s authority, the revivalists sought to reaffirm the ‘ilmīyya’s predominant position as the religious elite of the Muslim community. They were particularly concerned about strengthening its authority among young people, who were threatened by materialist and communist ideas. Already in 1936, the association el-Hidaje considered creating youth sections. Almost imperceptibly, the revivalists thus tended to give the ‘ilmīyya a political role. This was due in part to the fact that several key figures in el-Hidaje, including Mehmed Handžić, Alija Ćaganović, and Kasim Dobrača, had studied at al-Azhar. There, they had been in contact with the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) or with the youth organization Young Muslims (al-Shubban al-Muslimun). They returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina with a much more political view of Islam than most Bosnian ‘ulama’. In the 1930s, this resulted in an underlying hostility between the key figures of el-Hidaje and the leaders of the former JMO on the topic of the new Constitution for the Islamic Religious Community adopted in 1936. By prohibiting the ‘ulama’ from sitting on waqf commissions, this Constitution enabled the political elites with ties to the former JMO to take control of the Islamic religious institutions. The leaders of el-Hidaje denounced the ‘ilmīyya thus being placed under close supervision, and in their magazine, they complained:

A religious official must often, while carrying out his sublime mission, look both to the left and the right, listen to what this or that potentate of a political party will say, because if he does something that does not fit with the wishes of those people, he runs the risk of being subject to various kinds of annoyances.

This confrontation between the revivalist ‘ulama’ and Muslim political elites signaled a major break with the previous decades of allegiance to the state and collaboration among Muslim elites. However, the redefining of the ties between religion and politics did not stop there: the revivalist ‘ulama’ also began to enter the political sphere on their own terms. According to el-Hidaje:
[P]reaching rectitude in religious and educational activity, and even in political activity, does not mean doing politics, just as preaching morals and rectitude in trade and various crafts does not mean doing trade or craftwork.  

The best example of this politicization of the ‘ilmiyya was, once again, Mehmed Handžić. In November 1938, he was a candidate in Sarajevo on the Muslim Organization’s electoral lists, alongside the party’s president Hakija Hadžić. A year later, he entered the leadership of the Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a representative of the association el-Hidaje. Last but not least, Handžić was one of the artisans of the Muslim proto-nationalism that began to take shape in the late 1930s, putting a strong emphasis on its Islamic dimension. To understand this, we must consider the political context of the 1930s, which saw a crisis of the Yugoslav idea and rising interethnic tensions. For the Muslims, these tensions were illustrated by several incidents with the Jewish community about the Palestinian question, and by a fatwa issued in 1939 by the Reis-ul-ulema Fehim Spaho, prohibiting mixed marriages of all kinds, including between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman, which is in principle allowed in Islam. Some of Handžić’s stances also reflect this climate: he too condemned mixed marriages, advised Muslims not to attend non-Muslim weddings or funerals, and reiterated the importance for Muslims to wear visible signs of their religion.

Apart from this strict communitarianism, Handžić stood out from the other ‘ulama’ by resorting to the markers of cultural identity produced during the Austro-Hungarian period. Following in the footsteps of Safvet-beg Bašagić, he made important contributions to the study of Bosnian Muslim literature, and in a brochure entitled The Islamization of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Origin of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims, he adopted the Bogomil thesis on the Islamization of Bosnian Muslims. In a 1940 conference, Handžić also insisted on the compatibility between Islam and nationalism: in his view, Islam “has not erased nationality and has not declared itself to be against a moderate, useful nationalism. It has been unable and unwilling to erase nationality as a reality, as the whole set of signs and features that characterize a nation.” Much to the contrary, Handžić regarded Islam as a foundational element for Bosnian Muslims’ own cultural identity. In an obvious allusion to the Cvetković–Maček Agreement of August 1939 and the ensuing Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina, he observed:

Islam has strengthened the innate patriotism of the Bosniaks and they have become the most strongly patriotic element and practically the only one to feel that Bosnia-Herzegovina is their homeland. Apart from Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims, few people feel that Bosnia-Herzegovina is their homeland, and this is why, when the interests of our homeland are at stake, few people contribute to the efforts, apart from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims.

In this text, Handžić was also sketching out the basic contours of a Muslim nationalism. Yet as was the case with the secular intellectuals, Handžić’s proto-nationalism was full of hesitations, at a time when war was about to force each person to make fateful choices.
A Winding Search for Security (1941–5)

The Yugoslav space in war: extreme violence and shifting alliances

From September 1939 until April 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia escaped the war that was ravaging Europe. However, Germany and Italy exerted growing pressure on Yugoslavia, and on March 25, 1941, Prince Paul, the regent, agreed to join the Tripartite Pact signed by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Two days later, a military coup hostile to this pact ended the regency and brought young King Peter to power. Germany's reaction was immediate and overwhelming: On April 6, 1941, German troops crossed the Yugoslav borders, and eleven days later, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia surrendered unconditionally. The first Yugoslav state was then dismantled, with Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania annexing large portions of it, while leaving a Serbian rump state under German protectorate. The Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska—NDH), covering Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, was proclaimed on April 10, 1941 (see Map IV). This dismantling of the Yugoslav state, by satisfying the irredentist demands of neighboring states and allowing the creation of a Croat nation-state, might suggest a belated triumph of the nation-state principle in the Yugoslav space. Yet such a triumph was largely an illusion. On the one hand, all the states involved were satellites of Germany or Italy, two countries that intended to dominate the “new European order.” These imperial aspirations were blatantly obvious with the NDH, whose territory was divided into two German and Italian occupation zones, and whose leaders were under direct tutelage of the occupying powers. On the other hand, in a Yugoslav space characterized by its diverse populations, any attempt to create homogenized nation-states could only lead to extreme violence and harsh resistance—as also illustrated by the NDH.

At the same time as the NDH was created, the Ustasha movement (formed in 1929) came to power. Returning from exile, the Ustasha leaders took control of the young Croatian state, and Ante Pavelić was appointed poglavnik (head of state). As a sign of allegiance to Nazi Germany, the new Ustasha power adopted racial laws based on the Nuremberg Laws and began the extermination of its Jewish and Roma populations. However, its treatment of the Muslim and Orthodox populations owed less to the demands of the Axis Powers than to its extremist interpretation of the Croat nationalist ideology formulated by Ante Starčević and Josip Frank in the nineteenth century. The Ustashas considered the estimated 900,000 Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina to be Muslim Croats, and reserved an eminent place for them in their nationalist rhetoric.
For example, in April 1942, the newspaper *Sarajevski novi list* ("The New Sarajevo Journal") wrote:

The Muslim Croats also owe Dr Ante Starčević, the Father of the Homeland, infinite thanks, for Dr Starčević is the man who, in Europe, took the defense of the purest Croat blood, that of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . He emphasized that the Muslims are the purest Croats, for they have always been Croats, and during the Ottoman regime, they were able, as Muslims, to preserve their Croat consciousness more easily. Starčević viewed Muslims as the flower of Croat identity.¹

While the new Ustasha state considered a rapid and widespread nationalization of Bosnian Muslims within a bi-confessional Croat nation, the case was different for

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¹ For a detailed discussion of Starčević’s views on the Muslims, see chapter 3 of the book "Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina."
Orthodox Serbs, who represented around 1,900,000 people, i.e. one-third of the population of the NDH. For the Ustashas, the Serbs were a foreign body within the Croat nation-state, to be eliminated through their conversion to Catholicism, their expulsion to Serbia, or their extermination, pure and simple. In summer 1941, Ustasha military formations committed several massacres in regions with a Serb majority, whereas widespread conversion campaigns were organized with the complicity of some Catholic priests. But the primary symbol of Ustasha violence remains the Jasenovac concentration camp, which opened in 1941 and where, according to Vladimir Žerjavić’s calculations, 45,000 to 50,000 Serbs, 13,000 Jews, 10,000 Roma, and 12,000 Croat or Muslim opposition members all perished. The Ustasha plans for a homogenous Croat nation-state thus led to extreme violence toward the non-Croat populations of the NDH.

The German and Italian occupying authorities disapproved of the Ustasha regime’s anti-Serb violence, since it contributed to the rapid deterioration of the military situation. Indeed, as early as 1941, the Serbs of the NDH responded to the Ustasha massacres by taking up arms and seeking refuge in zones not under the control of Croat authorities. This insurrection was largely spontaneous, but would soon be led by two resistance movements with diverging national and ideological objectives. The Chetnik movement (from četa, armed band), also called the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini), was headed by Colonel Draža Mihailović and supervised by former Yugoslav Army officers. Politically, this movement aspired to restore the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under Serb domination, and to create a large Serb entity with the expulsion of non-Serb populations. Draža Mihailović himself, in his instructions to two Chetnik commanders, spoke of the “creation of a Great Yugoslavia, and within it, an ethnically pure Great Serbia,” and therefore planned for “purification of the state territory of all national minorities and foreign elements,” including the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak. On the ground, the Chetniks committed several massacres of Muslims during the early years of the war, notably in eastern Bosnia and the Sandžak. In this case as well, the war fueled the radicalization of nationalist ideologies, and the Chetnik plans for a Great Serb nation-state resulted in extreme violence toward non-Serb populations.

The Partisan movement arose alongside the Chetnik movement. Also called the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije), the Partisan movement was led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) and headed by its Secretary General, Josip Broz—known as Tito. In keeping with the ideas defended by the KPJ since the 1930s, and in opposition to the acute nationalism of the Ustashas and the Chetniks, the Partisans extolled fraternity among all the peoples of the Yugoslav space. They intended to create a new Yugoslav state that would acknowledge the national specificity of each people. Thus, the Partisan movement viewed the plurinational character of the Yugoslav space positively, and intended to leverage this element in the struggle for people’s liberation. Admittedly, early in the war, ordinary Partisan units were generally regional and mononational, but the proletarian brigades—mobile and highly ideological elite units—including combatants of various nationalities.

In the early months of the war, the front lines generally followed the divisions between communities. The regular army and Ustasha formations of the NDH, made up of Catholic Croats, and Muslims, faced off against Chetnik and Partisan groups that
were mainly Serb. At that period, Chetniks and Partisans fought side by side, and the two groups were sometimes hard to distinguish from each other. However, by late 1941, their divergent ideological and strategic orientations caused violent clashes in Serbia and eastern Bosnia. The Chetnik movement did not hesitate to appeal to the “anti-Turk” sentiments of the Serb population in order to destabilize the Partisans. Over the course of 1942, considerable political and military restructuring took place within the NDH. On the one hand, faced with the growing insurrection and pressure from the German and Italian authorities, the Ustasha regime pulled back on its anti-Serb policy. Generals Slavko and Eugen Kvaternik, deemed to be responsible for the 1941 massacres, were stripped of their duties, and a Croatian Orthodox Church was founded so that the Orthodox could integrate the Croat nation more easily. On the other hand, in an effort to protect Serb populations, the Chetnik movement made local agreements with Italian occupation forces, thus strengthening its presence in the southern portion of the NDH. Then, increasing its collaboration, it made similar agreements with the German forces and the Ustasha authorities. Weakened by the constant assaults by its adversaries and by the defection of many of its combatants, the Partisan movement was able to rebuild its forces in western Bosnia and to assert itself gradually as the main Yugoslav resistance movement. Its rising influence was symbolized by the first session of the Anti-Fascist Council for People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobodenja Jugoslavije—AVNOJ), held on November 26 and 27, 1942 in Bihać. At that point, the main fault lines had ceased to be ethnic: the Partisan movement gradually expanded to recruit Muslims and Croats, whereas the foreign occupation forces, Ustasha formations, and Chetnik groups cooperated ever more closely in their fight against the Partisans. The national projects defended by the Ustashas and the Chetniks were lost in the twists and turns of a particularly brutal, complex civil war, leaving room for circumstantial alliances that varied over time and space.

When Italy surrendered on September 8, 1943, the Chetnik movement lost its main political and military support. Conversely, the Partisan movement continued to gain strength. On November 29, 1943, during the second session of the AVNOJ in Jajce, the Partisans proclaimed a new Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (Demokratska federativna Jugoslavija—DFJ). The Chetnik movement, meanwhile, made a belated effort to broaden its base beyond just the Serb community, and encouraged the formation of Muslim units, albeit fairly unsuccessfully. These projects were in vain, and they arrived after several years of anti-Muslim violence, as the Chetnik movement was in decline. In August 1944, King Peter II, in exile in London, removed Mihailović from his position as Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, thus isolating him even further.

Over the last two years of the war, the Partisan movement’s supremacy became irreversible, and it seemed to be the only movement capable of ensuring the safety and peaceful coexistence of the Yugoslav peoples. The main concern of its communist leaders was, at that time, to obtain international recognition for the new Yugoslav state, and to crush their adversaries definitively. In November 1944, Tito made an agreement with Ivan Šubašić, head of the royal government-in-exile, to create a provisional government presided by Tito himself. In March 1945, King Peter II accepted the appointment of a Regency Council until the structure of the new Yugoslav state could
be determined. In parallel, the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the Red Army steadily pushed back the German forces and their local allies toward the northwest of the Yugoslav space. Belgrade was liberated on October 20, 1944, Sarajevo on April 6, 1945 and Zagreb on May 9, 1945. In the following weeks, British troops repelled members of collaborationist units who attempted to find refuge in Austria. Several tens of thousands of these troops were then killed by the Partisans in a series of massacres and forced marches known as the “Bleiburg massacre.” Thus, the war ended in the Yugoslav space just as it had begun, with a wave of extreme violence, whose fault lines were no more ethnic but ideological.

In barely four years, the Second World War had left more than a million dead in the Yugoslav space, i.e. 6 percent of the total Yugoslav population, including 300,000 to 400,000 dead in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone, i.e. 10–13 percent of the total Bosnian population. The particular intensity of the massacres and fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina explains why, within Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Muslim community was, after the Jewish and Roma communities, the most affected by the war. But in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, Serb casualties were much higher than Muslim ones, reflecting the gravity of the Ustasha crimes and the Serbs’ early involvement in the Partisan movement. In four years, the war in the Yugoslav space was marked both by an onslaught of extreme violence and by a series of shifting alliances, during which ethnic divisions gradually diminished in favor of ideological ones. In the throes of war, the plans for homogeneous nation-states defended by the Ustashas and the Chetniks collapsed under the weight of their own contradictions and violence. A new plurinational Yugoslav state emerged from their ruins, modeled after the Soviet Union and led by a victorious communist party. We must now look at how the Muslim political and religious elites positioned themselves during this war that jeopardized the very existence of their community.

The NDH, the Muslim elites, and the resolutions of autumn 1941

In the weeks that followed the proclamation of the NDH, the Muslim political and religious elites of Bosnia-Herzegovina gave their allegiance to the new Ustasha state. However, we must distinguish between those who rallied the NDH following a long period of pro-Croat activism, and those for whom the NDH merely represented a new central power succeeding the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The former group included the politicians belonging to the Muslim Organization (Muslimanska organizacija—MO) since 1935, some of whom were given important positions in the new regime: thus, Adem-aga Mešić became doglavnik (deputy head of state), alongside Ante Pavelić, and Hakija Hadžić was appointed as Pavelić’s representative in Sarajevo. The same enthusiasm for the young Ustasha state could be found among the pro-Croat intellectuals associated with the magazine Novi behar or with the cultural society Narodna uzdanica. The leaders of the former JMO were apparently more reluctant to support the new regime, and Džafer Kulenović did not accept the position of vice prime minister until November 1941. Lastly, the ‘ulama’ replicated their strategy of trading their support for the central power in exchange for
minimal security and religious autonomy. Thus, speaking in the great mosque of Sarajevo on May 11, 1941, the Reis-ul-ulema Fehim Spaho declared:

[W]hereas numerous other countries have been the theatre of terrible scenes of warfare, we have reached, with a limited number of victims and after a very brief period, a situation where we can say: We have our state. The Independent State of Croatia has been born and has begun to live. We Muslims have greeted it with all our hearts, bearing in mind that we are entering it as citizens with equal rights and strongly believing that no injustice will be committed against any Muslim.  

Three months later, in the name of the association el-Hidaje, Mehmed Handžić and Kasim Dobrača were part of a Muslim delegation that met with Ante Pavelić to pledge allegiance, all the while insisting on their wish for a revision to the Constitution of the Islamic Religious Community. On a local level, other Muslims rallied the NDH in a similar way, and although few Muslims were present in the upper echelons of the state apparatus, they often held local responsibilities in regions with Muslim populations, thus participating in the Ustasha violence against Serbs and Jews. Moreover, the Muslim elites’ support for the NDH went beyond its borders, as several petitions from Muslim notables in the Sandžak called for their region to be attached to the Ustasha state.

To understand the reasons why the Muslim political and religious elites rallied the NDH on such a wide scale, we must remember that they had been marginalized during the interwar period, then sidelined completely with the Cvetković–Maček Agreement in August 1939. Compared with the partition of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the subsequent political negation of the Muslim community, the integration of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the NDH and the Muslims’ promotion to the rank of “flower of the Croat nation” may have seemed like an attractive alternative. Although in some ways the Muslim elites’ support of the NDH was an extension of the political strategies developed since the Austro-Hungarian period, it also highlighted how these strategies had become obsolete in a radically new context. The NDH was neither an empire nor a plurinational state, but a racist and dictatorial nation-state determined to use violence to achieve its political ideal. As a result, the political rationales driving the NDH were, at best, foreign to the Muslim elites, and at worst, completely incompatible with their conception of the world. Admittedly, the NDH’s policy of nationalizing the Bosnian Muslims met with no open opposition; intellectuals, politicians, and ‘ulama’ agreed, more or less enthusiastically, to consider themselves Croats of Islamic faith. But this nationalization was all the more superficial as the Ustasha state soon lost its authority over large stretches of its territory. In reality, Bosnian Muslims continued to consider themselves chiefly in religious terms, and even pro-Croat intellectuals expressed a strong sentiment of belonging to a distinct and threatened Muslim community. Thus, in the newspaper Osvit (“Dawn”), published by young intellectuals close to Hakija Hadžić and the association el-Hidaje, the son of Džemaludin Čaušević, Halid, wrote:

[W]e too, as an inseparable part of our heroic [Croat] nation, have the right to live and exist in this corner of Europe. We are not an a-national element and we
consider it the highest offence when our nationality is demonstrated in a so-called scientific way. If nationalism lies in the awareness of solidarity and a spiritual and moral unity (by spiritual unity, we do not mean religious unity, as nationality and religion are totally different concepts), in pure and preserved national language and customs, in fanatical love for the homeland, then we Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are nationalists in the full sense of the word . . . Now we must both defend our skins and take giant steps forward if we do not want time to get ahead of us. And we cannot permit it, because without us, our state lacks Herceg-Bosna and without us, there is no Islam in Europe.

The Muslim elites, however, were not unanimous in their support to the NDH. On the one hand, these elites were fairly disoriented and afflicted by certain long-term conflicts. The question of revising the Constitution of the Islamic Religious Community, in particular, continued to pit the former JMO’s leaders against the revivalist ‘ulama’ of el-Hidaje. The former sought to maintain their control of the religious institutions, while the latter were determined to restore the ‘ilmīyya’s prerogatives. Careful not to turn the Muslim political elites against them, the Ustasha authorities continued to waffle on this matter, but this caused growing hostility from the revivalist ulama. On the other hand, the rhetoric of the Muslims as the “flower of the Croat nation” did not stop the Ustasha state from actually favoring Catholic Croats. Throughout the war, the Muslim community’s representatives complained about the privileged status enjoyed by the Catholic Church and the Muslims’ underrepresentation in the state apparatus. However, the first major confrontation between the Ustashas and a portion of the Muslim elites came in 1941 due to the extreme violence of the NDH. Rapidly, the nationalist and racist violence of the Ustashes came into contradiction with the communitarian rationale favored by the Muslim elites. Thus, the Islamic Religious Community defended Muslim Roma, was shocked that Jewish families were still persecuted after converting to Islam, and was indignant when the Ustasha authorities prevented some Serb villages from converting to Islam rather than Catholicism. At the same time, the Ustasha anti-Serb violence triggered a wave of Chetnik reprisals against the Muslim community, thus indirectly threatening its physical security. As a result, Ustasha violence weakened the Bosnian Muslim elites’ ties of allegiance to the NDH. This was the background to the resolutions adopted by Muslim notables in various Bosnian towns between August and December 1941.

The first such resolution was adopted on August 14, 1941 by the association el-Hidaje, which continued its politicization process that had begun in the 1930s. In a dictatorship in which the Muslim political elites were either integrated into the Ustasha state apparatus, or likely to come under pressure from the Ustashas, this religious association claimed to speak for the Muslim community. In its resolution, it first mentioned the Muslim victims of Chetnik massacres, before also condemning “all Muslim individuals who may have purposely caused any disorder or committed any violence of any sort,” and called on the Croat authorities to “restore, as quickly as possible, law and order in all the regions by preventing any spontaneous actions in order to avoid innocent people suffering.” The association el-Hidaje thus implicitly condemned anti-Serb violence and called for the rule of law to be re-established. Yet it
also reaffirmed its allegiance to the Ustasha state, noting its commitment to religious freedom, insisting on the equal rights shared by Catholic Croats and Muslims as the basis for “fraternal cooperation by all members of the Croat nation in building our young state,” and even asked for the Sandžak to be attached to the NDH.\(^9\)

In the following months, as violence spread throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, Muslim notables adopted other resolutions in Prijedor (September 23), Sarajevo (October 12), Mostar (October 21), Bijeljina (December 2), and Tuzla (December 11). These resolutions all emphasized the dramatic situation faced by Bosnian Muslims, with the Sarajevo resolution even asserting that “in their history, the Muslims of these regions have not known a more difficult time.”\(^10\) In more or less vigorous terms, they condemned the massacres against the Serb population, calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice and the rule of law to be restored. Sometimes, the values of Islam were mentioned to denounce Ustasha violence. For example, the Mostar resolution stated:

\[A\]ny true Muslim, ennobled by the high precepts of Islam, condemns such crimes, from whichever side they are committed, for he knows that the Islamic religion considers the murder and torture of innocents to be the gravest of sins, alongside the theft of others’ goods and forced conversion. Only a handful of individuals purporting to be Muslims has violated the high precepts of Islam, and punishment from God and from men shall inevitably reach them.\(^{11}\)

The contradiction between the NDH’s nationalist, racist rationales and the Muslim notables’ religious perspective is clearly apparent here. However, the signatories were still hesitant concerning Muslim participation in Ustasha crimes, and while certain resolutions admitted that some Muslims had taken part in massacres, others accused Ustasha militiamen of wearing the fez in order to trigger a cycle of Serb retaliation against Muslims or to push the Serbs into the arms of the Catholic Church.

The 1941 Muslim resolutions were a courageous act condemning the Ustasha state’s violence against Serbs, at the same time expressing a feeling of insecurity and powerlessness as war broke out, and a desperate appeal to restore a protective state. This is why these resolutions never led to a complete break with the Ustasha state or the occupying powers. Thus, the fate of the Jews was largely ignored in order to avoid any conflict with the German authorities. Likewise, the massacres and abuses were often attributed to local authorities or rogue militiamen, with the central power then being asked to restore order and security. Lastly, the resolutions sometimes mentioned the tolerance that the Muslims showed in the Ottoman period, but they did not call for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina or include any proto-nationalist message. The signatories of the 1941 resolutions were thus carrying out a strong moral action in a perilous context, but they did not actually break with the strategies of allegiance to the center that had traditionally characterized the Muslim elites. Moreover, they deployed methods that had no doubt proven effective during the Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian periods, but held no sway with a dictatorship during a total war. This explains why, as the war progressed, the signatories did not always avoid the moral compromises and strategic impasses into which some of the Muslim political and religious elites strayed.
Demand for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina and appeal to the Third Reich

The 1941 Muslim resolutions showed that, in a context of war and dictatorship, a portion of the Muslim elites mobilized through informal networks of notables and associations such as el-Hidaje. The Islamic Religious Community as such could not play this political proxy role, because after the death of Fehim Spaho in February 1942, it was led by a naib-ul-reis (i.e. a vice-reis) with no great authority and by a weakened, divided ulema-medžlis. Whereas a portion of the Muslim political and religious elites remained loyal to the Ustasha state until its collapse, the Muslim political and religious leaders that wanted to distance themselves from the NDH were slow to organize. It was not until August 26, 1942, following additional Chetnik massacres in eastern Bosnia, that 300 Muslim notables met in Sarajevo in the offices of the Muslim charity Merhamet (“Mercy”), under the auspices of the naib-ul-reis Salih Bašić. The debates were led by Muhammed Pandža, a member of the ulema-medžlis, vice president of Merhamet and signatory of the 1941 Muslim resolution of Sarajevo. The assembly set the goals of organizing aid for Muslim refugees from eastern Bosnia, finding weapons to defend the Muslim population, and alerting the Muslim world to the fate of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It therefore appointed a People’s Salvation Committee (Odbor narodnog spasa) comprising forty-eight members and chaired by Mehmed Handžić, the president of the association el-Hidaje. This committee included other ‘ulama’ such as Muhammed Pandža and Kasim Dobrača, a member of the board of el-Hidaje, as well as former JMO leaders, such as Uzeir-agha Hadžihasanović, a former close collaborator of Mehmed Spaho, and Mustafa Softić, Hadžihasanović’s son-in-law and the mayor of Sarajevo.

The creation of the People’s Salvation Committee coincided with a renewed demand for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, certain committee members, notably Mehmed Handžić, had belonged to the short-lived Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1939. However, British historian Marko Hoare goes too far when he places this Muslim autonomist movement on the same level as the Partisan movement, describing them as “two autochthonous movements that resisted Bosnia’s incorporation in the NDH and that sought its restauration as an autonomous entity in some form.” On the one hand, the Muslim autonomists did not break completely with the NDH authorities. On the other, they merely formed an informal coalition of notables, whereas the Partisans constituted a genuine armed resistance movement. At least until 1943, most Bosnian Muslims involved in the war were in the various armed formations of the NDH, ranging from the regular Croatian army to various Ustasha units, such as the infamous Črna legija (“Black Legion”). In late 1941, several militias made up solely of Muslim combatants appeared. These were generally local units, although some of them had several thousand members, such as the Home Guard Volunteer Regiment (Domobranska dobrovoljačka pukovnija—DOMDO) founded by Muhammed Hadžiefendić in the Tuzla region.

Although these Muslim militias enjoyed broad autonomy on the ground, they still had ties with, and were largely armed by, the Ustasha authorities and occupying troops. Thus, these militias were a sign of the Muslim population’s quest for security, which the
NDH was unable to provide, but they did not convey political claims. Their ties with the People’s Salvation Committee were either inexistent or limited to a few informal contacts. Lacking their own military force, the Muslim notables in the People’s Salvation Committee had very limited leeway for action. Furthermore, to achieve their goals, they were not counting on Muslim political mobilization, but rather on protection from what they regarded as the new imperial power in Europe: the Third Reich.

Indeed, while a movement for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina was discreetly being revived with the People’s Salvation Committee, a demand for imperial protection was being addressed to the Axis Powers. In October 1942, a delegation of the ‘ulama’ and Muslim notables from Mostar visited Rome to seek Italian support for forming Muslim militias and to meet with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husayni, who was attempting to mobilize the Muslim world in favor of the Axis Powers. Meanwhile, Muhamed Pandža was asking the commander of the German forces in Croatia to provide weapons for Muslim militias. However, the Italian authorities gave priority to their alliances with the Chetnik movement, and the German military authorities suggested that Pandža should contact the Ustasha authorities. In November, a memorandum was written and addressed to Adolf Hitler, signed by a “People’s Committee” (narodni odbor). This document expressed both a demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina and an appeal to the Third Reich as an imperial power. Indeed, the authors insisted on their allegiance to Nazi Germany. For example, they wrote that no other people in Europe had shown such great loyalty to the “new European order,” while they denounced the Ustasha state for allowing many Jews to convert to Catholicism, and proposed that Bosnian Muslims could be “the bridge and the tie between the West and the East, with its 300 million Muslims.” Claiming that only a few intellectuals had gone astray and declared themselves to be Serbs or Croats, the memorandum declared that Bosnia-Herzegovina had more historical reasons to be autonomous than Serbia or Croatia. Thus, it proposed transforming the region into a “Province of Bosnia” (župa Bosna) under the protection of the Third Reich. In this autonomous province, the Ustasha movement would have been banned and replaced by a Bosnian National Socialist Party, and a “Bosnian guard” (bosanska straža) would have been formed from Hadžiefendić’s militiamen and all the Muslim soldiers and officers of the NDH, apart from those fighting on the Eastern Front. Lastly, this memorandum proposed that Bosnia-Herzegovina should be divided into a territory B, corresponding to the Province of Bosnia, and territories A, C, and D, attached to Croatia, Italy, and Montenegro, respectively (see Map V). So that the Bosniaks would be the absolute majority in the Province of Bosnia, a suggestion was made to carry out population transfers. According to the memorandum’s authors, the Province of Bosnia would have a population of 750,000 Bosniaks, 600,000 Serbs, and 300,000 Croats before any population transfer, versus 925,000 Bosniaks, 500,000 Serbs, and 225,000 Croats after the proposed transfers.

The November 1942 memorandum—which German sources attribute to Uzeir-agha Hadžihasanović, Mustafa Softić, and Suljaga Salihagić—did not necessarily reflect the views of all members of the People’s Salvation Committee. It nevertheless showed how, in a context of bloody confrontation between Serb and Croat nationalisms, the political and religious leaders of the Muslim community were forced to reason in nation-state
terms. This memorandum was *de facto* a “first draft” of a Muslim nation-state project, and it reveals the inevitable contradictions of such a project. On the one hand, the proposed creation of a Province of Bosnia showed the difficult balancing act between preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina and creating a national state for Bosnian Muslims; this difficulty would reappear fifty years later, with the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. Taking account of the balance of power at the time, both in the Yugoslav space and in Europe, the memorandum’s authors renounced the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
and reluctantly rallied the idea of more or less homogeneous national entities, formed through exchanges of territory and populations. On the other hand, to escape the NDH's domination, the authors combined their demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina with a search for imperial protection, offering their political and ideological allegiance to the Third Reich. Thus, in this memorandum, a barely sketched national project was immediately reincorporated into an imperial framework. From this point of view, the demand for autonomy in the November 1942 memorandum was perhaps more similar to the Muslim political claims during the Austro-Hungarian period than to the Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina of the late 1930s. Here again, the memorandum authors had to take into account some priorities and balances of power. However, these largely pragmatic calculations were also fueled by a misplaced nostalgia for the Austro-Hungarian Empire that the Third Reich instrumentalized by presenting itself as its legitimate heir. Motivated by a desire to protect the Muslim community from Chetnik violence, these calculations led their authors to collaborate with the German occupiers and eventually condemned them to political irrelevance.

For several months, the German authorities hesitated as to the appropriate attitude toward the autonomist milieus and the credit to give to the November 1942 memorandum. However, the signs of allegiance from Muslim autonomists attracted the interest of certain SS leaders, including Heinrich Himmler. In February 1943, the decision was made to create a Waffen SS division with Muslim troops. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, living in Berlin since November 1942, was involved in this project. In April 1943, al-Husayni went to Sarajevo to promote the idea among the leaders of the Bosnian Muslim community. For the SS leaders, the creation of this Muslim division would have freed up German troops for the Eastern Front, while also serving as an instrument of propaganda for the Muslim world. Al-Husayni also saw the advantage that he could harness for his own pan-Islamic ambitions, and he positioned himself as the middleman between the SS leaders and Bosnian Muslim notables. Therefore, he took responsibility for presenting the SS leaders with some Bosnian demands, notably not to recruit members of Hadžiefendić's militia for the SS division and to keep the division in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, he negotiated an agreement about the place of Islam in the Waffen SS. This agreement stipulated that "there are no plans to find a synthesis between Islam and National Socialism, or to impose National Socialism on Muslims." According to this agreement, "National Socialism is conveyed to Muslims as a German national ideology, and Islam as an Arab national ideology, with emphasis on their common enemies," namely Judaism, Anglo-Americanism, Communism, Free Masonry, and Catholicism. The agreement concluded by expressing a wish that, "with the establishment of a Muslim SS division, for the first time a tie can be formed between Islam and National Socialism on a frank and sincere basis, as this division will be bound to the North by race and blood, but to the Orient by philosophy and spirit."  

Recruitment for the Muslim SS division, officially called the 13th SS Division but better known as the Handžar division ("Dagger division"), quickly created tension between the Waffen SS and the Ustasha authorities, who demanded that recruitment should take place under their control and should be opened to Catholic Croats. As there
were not enough volunteers, the Waffen SS forcibly incorporated Hadžiefendić’s militia into it and forced the NDH to transfer thousands of Muslim soldiers from certain regular or Ustasha units. The political and religious leaders linked to the autonomist milieus apparently viewed the creation of the 13th SS Division sympathetically, without being outspoken in their support. This is either because they feared the reactions of the Ustasha authorities, or because the German defeats of El Alamein and Stalingrad had undermined their confidence in the Third Reich. Only Muhammed Pandža played an active role in recruiting volunteers, especially the imams in charge of the troops’ religious and ideological supervision. Among these imams was Husein Dozo, an ‘alim trained at al-Azhar University, close to the el-Hidaje association and a signatory of the 1941 Muslim resolution of Sarajevo. In 1944, after being given responsibility for training the young imams of the 13th SS Division, Dozo wrote in the division’s newspaper:

Communism, capitalism and Judaism are side by side [fighting] against the European continent. After the terrible suffering endured in our Croat fatherland, and more particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we have learnt what it means when the enemies of Europe govern. This must not come to pass, and this is why the best sons of Bosnia are serving in the SS.  

Although some imams appeared to adhere to the idea of a convergence between Islam and National Socialism, most of the division’s troops were probably unaware of this ideological dimension to the Muslim SS division project. Indeed, after it was formed, the 13th SS Division did not live up to expectations. The Germans quickly realized that this division was unreliable on an ideological level and not very effective militarily. Sent to France for training, the division was hurriedly recalled to Germany after a battalion mutinied in September 1943. Back in Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1944, it took part in several operations against Partisans in the Tuzla region and carried out several large massacres, collaborating with the local Muslim militias and Chetnik groups. It attempted to impose an SS political and military order despite the protests of the Ustasha authorities. However, the Partisan movement quickly regained the upper hand, and the 13th SS Division proved increasingly less combative and saw its troop numbers shrink due to desertions until it was transferred to Hungary in late 1944. At that time, it had already ceased to be a major military force. Within the autonomist milieus, the disillusionment was also considerable. The Third Reich took advantage of the Muslim community’s quest for security to create a Muslim SS division, but continued to favor its alliance with the NDH; thus, it took no action on the demands for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina. From this standpoint, Marko Hoare’s description of the 13th SS Division as “the flagship Muslim autonomist force” is misleading. In reality, this division absorbed Hadžiefendić’s militia and thousands of other Muslim soldiers, before being sent away from Bosnia-Herzegovina for several months. As a consequence, the Muslim community was even weaker as it faced the Chetnik movement. Lastly, after the division returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina, it followed the priorities of the German military command, joining with the Chetniks to fight the Partisans.

This disillusionment with regard to the 13th SS Division partially explains why the autonomist milieus were so disoriented and despondent toward the end of the war. In
October 1943, Muhamed Pandža, the most enthusiastic proponent of the 13th SS Division, broke with this project and attempted to set up a Muslim Liberation Movement (Muslimanski oslobodilački pokret), defending plans for “an autonomous Bosnia in which everyone will have the same rights regardless of religion—Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics.” Yet this movement only brought together a few hundred combatants and it quickly disbanded. Pandža was captured by the Partisans, then by the Germans, and was imprisoned for the rest of the war. In the meantime, two of the main figures of the autonomist milieus died: Uzeir-aga Hadžihasanović in September 1943 and Mehmed Handžić in July 1944. The Muslim autonomists were reduced to gathering information about Chetnik massacres, adopting additional resolutions calling for peaceful coexistence with the Serb and Croat communities, while avoiding taking a political stance. They also wrote additional memorandums—this time, addressed to the Allies. However, there is no certainty that these memorandums ever reached their intended recipients, and they would only be discovered several decades later in the private archives or political files of some Muslim figures.

The Young Muslims and the escape into the pan-Islamist utopia

During the Second World War, the association el-Hidaje played a central role in the Muslim community’s attempts to organize politically, as shown by the first Muslim resolution adopted by el-Hidaje in August 1941 or by Mehmed Handžić’s appointment as president of the People’s Salvation Committee the following year. At the same time, the association provided the institutional framework for the development of a youth movement of pan-Islamist inspiration, the Young Muslims (Mladi Muslimani). This movement was founded in March 1941, just a few weeks before the war began, by high school and university students eager to rediscover their Islamic faith. Its name was borrowed from Egypt’s Young Muslims (al-Shubban al-muslimun), a youth organization with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Over the following months, the Young Muslims grew closer to el-Hidaje and organized their activities under its patronage, as a way to get around the prohibition of all youth organizations other than the Ustasha Youth. Lastly, in May 1943, the Young Muslims officially became the youth organization of el-Hidaje, led by Kasim Dobrača, a young ’alim trained in Cairo at al-Azhar University. In November 1943, he was replaced by Mustafa Busuladžić, another young ’alim who had studied in Rome.

In the meantime, the Young Muslim movement, which had initially been limited to a few high schools in Sarajevo and the University of Zagreb, set up a network of activists in around fifteen Bosnian towns. But what exactly were the social structure, the political ideology and the activities of this youth movement, especially in a specific context of war?

Most members of the Young Muslims came from families of urban notables, and thus were personally affected by the marginalization and disorientation of the traditional Muslim elites. Attending high schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the University of Zagreb, they were also directly confronted with the secularization of social mores and the rise of new ideologies like communism and fascism. It is
unsurprising that these young believers were suffering from a deep identity and moral crisis. For example, in an article titled, “The Problem of our Youth,” medical student Esad Karadozović wrote that Muslim young people were in a desperate situation, distinguishing between three groups:

[O]ne group that has cast itself into the whirlwind of politics and contemporary ideologies, then a group of young snobs, socialites, gigolos, Don Juans and idlers, and lastly, an ignored and disrespected group of young people who are neither politicians nor show-offs, but who live withdrawn into themselves and their own world, far from the daily agitation of life, waiting, hoping and looking for their place without knowing what it is.  

Karadozović attributed the responsibility for this situation to the Muslim intellectuals, who had denied their religious traditions and betrayed their community by marrying non-Muslim women or by emancipating their Muslim wives. Then he extended this criticism to an entire generation of fathers who had given up on any ideal and merely eked out a living without standing up for themselves:

They all lower their heads like gentle lambs and no one dares to raise his head and look heroically towards the heavens, to accept the struggle for life and to create ideals to fight for, and to become a man, a Gentleman, a Muslim.

Thus, Karadozović rejected the traditional Muslim elites’ loyalism and introversion, instead promoting a new proud and combative Muslim personality. For the Young Muslims, the identity and moral crisis affecting the Muslim community could be overcome if it returned to Islam, reaffirmed its Muslim identity and encouraged the re-Islamization of individual selves and society at large. And in fact, during the war, the bulk of the Young Muslims’ activities consisted of publishing religious articles in the magazine el-Hidaje, organizing readings of the Qur’an and lectures on different religious topics, and celebrating mevluds (ceremonies in honor of the Prophet).

The Islam that the Young Muslims wanted to promote was not very well defined, and their sources of inspiration varied widely, from the reformist Osman Nuri Hadžić to the revivalist Shakib Arslan, and even included Western writers, such as Oswald Spengler and Alexis Carrel. However, their overt aim of returning to the Islam of the Qur’an and the Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) and responding to secularization with a re-Islamization of social mores meant that they were close to the revivalism of the association el-Hidaje. Although in principle the Young Muslims rejected not only the secularism of the intellectuals, but also the mysticism of the Sufi sheikhs and the conservatism of the ‘ulama’, they were actually drawn to the activism of young revivalist ‘ulama’ such as Handžić, Dobrača, or Busuladžić. In an article that reads like a political program, Tarik Muftić, another medical student, wrote: “There is truthfully an enormous difference between what we mean today by ‘Islam’ and true Islam.” Then, he denounced the “Islam of compromise” (kompromisni islam) created first by the incorporation of Persian mysticism and Turkish folk religion into religious practice, and since 1878, by the reduction of Islam to a mere religious confession. Muftić, therefore, stated: “reawakening,
renewal and reform are truly necessary—not reform of Islam, but reform and reawakening of the Muslims themselves.”20 He rejected the reformist authors who considered Europe and European thinking to be a model, supporting instead a return to an original Islam in which “everything is planned for and specified.”21 For Muftić, Islam was not simply a religion, whether traditional or reformed; instead, it was a total, unsurpassable social project—a political project carried by:

pan-Islamism—a movement whose goal is to reawaken the Islamic colossus from its secular slumber, and to create a great Islamic state of more than 400 million inhabitants belonging to the most diverse races and peoples—but all brothers.22

In Muftić’s view, there could be no doubt: “the greatest revolution in the history of humanity is the Islamic revolution”, with Islam being “the most perfect universal ideology.”23 In writing so, Muftić pushed the movement to politicize Islam, which the association el-Hidaje had begun in the 1930s, to its final conclusions.

However, the Young Muslims’ interest in political pan-Islamism was the factor that most set them apart from the ‘ulama’ of el-Hidaje, who remained focused on the fate of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This political pan-Islamism resulted from a politicization of Islam following contact with fascist and communist ideologies. Faced with the racialized nationalism of the Ustashas and the new Yugoslav fraternity of the Partisans, the Young Muslims backed the solidarity of the Umma (the community of believers). Yet contrary to what the Young Muslims’ supporters have asserted, this does not mean that the movement was both anti-fascist and anti-communist—in a word, anti-totalitarian. In his writings from the Second World War, Mustafa Busuladžić—one of the ‘ulama’ who influenced the Young Muslims—clearly took a stance in favor of the Axis Powers. For example, in August 1943, he deemed that:

living in this corner of Europe, i.e. at the frontier between East and West, and having the dynamism of the West and the spiritual values of the East, we are predestined to connect Europe, and especially Italy and Germany, with the Islamic world, to the benefit of our country and the Muslim religious community.24

This analysis is relatively close to the one developed at the same period by Amin al-Husayni and the portion of the Muslim elites that split with the NDH to turn toward the Third Reich, even though Busuladžić appears to have remained loyal to the Ustasha state. As for political pan-Islamism, it offered the Young Muslims a political utopia, an imaginary empire in contrast with the isolation and turmoil afflicting the Bosnian Muslims, at a time when their very existence was threatened by the extreme violence of the Chetniks and the Ustashas. By seeking refuge in this pan-Islamist utopia, the Young Muslims avoided taking a stance on the actual situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and thus attempted to escape from the hesitations and contradictions of their community.

Given its status as the youth organization of el-Hidaje and the young age of most of its members, the Young Muslim movement was not forced to take a stance on the war that was raging. In fact, the Mladi Muslimani supplement printed in the el-Hidaje magazine never spoke of the war. At the very most, the Young Muslim movement took
part in aiding Muslim refugees from eastern Bosnia, alongside the charity organization Merhamet. However, some Young Muslims became more politically involved on an individual basis, participating in the diffusion of the 1941 Muslim resolutions or attending the reception hosted by Amin al-Husayni in April 1943. Those responding to the mufti’s invitation included a Young Muslim named Alija Izetbegović, who would become the first president of the independent Bosnia-Herzegovina forty-eight years later. At least three Young Muslims became imams in the 13th SS Division. During this period, in Osvit, Mustafa Busuladžić wrote:

The gravity of the era in which we find ourselves does not allow for any hesitation or indecisiveness, but imposes unity and solidarity . . . In these days of jihad, we must all be combatants, defending our faith and our lives using all the means that our enemy uses. By fighting for our very existence, we must have in mind the words of a thinker who says that a man among wolves must not be a lamb.

However, at the end of the war, the Young Muslims of fighting age were dispersed across various military formations. Indeed, they were enrolled in the regular Croatian Army, Muslim militias, the 13th SS Division, Pandža’s Muslim Liberation Movement, and in the Partisan movement, which mobilized increasing numbers of young Bosnian men as it gained ground. From this standpoint, the fate of the Young Muslims reflected that of Muslim Bosnians in general: the Young Muslim movement reacted to, but did not overcome, the Muslim community’s powerlessness. And, while the Young Muslims were dreaming of an Islamic state of 400 million inhabitants, a more modest imperial entity was taking shape in the Yugoslav space, gradually appearing to be the sole salvation for the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Partisans as new protectors of the Muslim community

Of all the protagonists of the Second World War in the Yugoslav space, the Partisans were the only ones to tirelessly defend the idea of a new Yugoslav state and thus to advocate renewed coexistence between the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Beginning in June 1941, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s (KPJ) provincial committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina appealed to the three main Bosnian communities to halt their fighting and massacres. However, in the first two years of the war, the Partisan movement struggled to translate these principles into reality. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the movement’s cadres were communist activists from all communities, most of its combatants were Serbs. This resulted in overlaps with the Chetnik movement and some Partisans participating in violence against non-Serb populations. Non-Serb communist activists had difficulties being accepted by their men and, as a result, some Muslim communist activists even had to adopt Serb surnames. The Partisans also chose to form exclusively Muslim units in some places, but these were small in scale and short-lived.

Nevertheless, beginning in this period, the KPJ made sure that the Muslim community was represented in the governing bodies of the Partisan movement. One of
the few Muslim politicians to have joined the Partisans at that stage, former JMO senator Nurija Pozderac, was elected vice president of the first session of the Anti-Fascist Council for People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), which was held in Bihać on November 26 and 27, 1942.

In his speech to the council, Pozderac declared: “All Muslims must know that the victory of our enemies, of the enemies of the struggle for people's liberation, would signify the complete extermination of Muslims, and this is why the struggle for people's liberation is the only path [possible] for all Muslims.” Even at this early stage, the Partisan movement thus endeavored to present itself as a guarantor of the physical security of the Muslim community. In its final declaration, the AVNOJ repeated this argument, addressing Muslims thusly:

Muslims! You have felt at your own expense the full intensity of the Ustasha crimes committed against Serbs in Bosnia, in Herzegovina and in the Sandžak, when the blood-thirsty Chetnik gangs began to cut the throats of your children and your wives and to burn down your homes and your villages. The leadership of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization deceived you during those days of extreme troubles and misfortune, caused by the Ustashes massacring the Serb population . . . Muslims must no longer be a booty to be fought over by Great Serb pillagers and by [unreadable: Great Croat?] twisted monsters, all to reign over one group or another. All of you—Serbs, Croats and Muslims—need sincere and fraternal cooperation, so that Bosnia-Herzegovina as the entity of our fraternal community can move forward for everyone's satisfaction with no differences of religion or party.

In addition to ensuring their physical security, the Partisan movement thus offered Muslims recognition for Bosnia-Herzegovina as a distinct territorial entity within the future Yugoslav state. In so doing, the movement adopted the demand for autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina that had previously been advocated by the traditional Muslim elites.

By the end of 1942, the Partisan movement had stopped its Serb combatants from committing acts of violence against non-Serb populations. At the same time, several new agreements between the occupation forces, the Ustasha authorities and the Chetnik movement left the Muslims defenseless from attacks by the Chetniks. A logical consequence was that many Muslims began to join the Partisans, initially in western Bosnia, then in the rest of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the following years, the Partisan movement incorporated many Muslim combatants from the regular Croatian Army, Muslim militias, and even the 13th SS Division. On some occasions, entire formations rallied the Partisans in one go, such as when the Tuzla garrison joined in October 1943 or Huska Miljković’s Muslim militia from the region of Cazinska Krajina (near Bihać) in February 1944. The Partisan movement’s growing presence in the Muslim community resulted in the formation of Muslim majority units, such as the 8th Brigade of Krajina, formed in western Bosnia in December 1942. Some “Muslim brigades” (muslimanske brigade) were also founded, such as the 16th Muslim Brigade, formed in eastern Bosnia in September 1943, or the 1st and 2nd Muslim Brigades, formed in early 1944 in western Bosnia. By duplicating the communitarian structure of Bosnian society in their military organization, the Partisans were endeavoring to reassure the Muslim
populations and to facilitate the incorporation of Muslim combatants. The Partisan movement used a similar approach with the Croat community, with the 18th Croat Brigade being created in October 1943 in Tuzla. As community ties were taken into account, so too were religious practices. Each brigade had an officer for religious matters (vjerski referent), and Islamic dietary restrictions were respected in the Muslim brigades. Lastly, the Partisans were able to rely on some religious leaders to help mobilize the Muslim community. Muhamed Kurt, the mufti of Tuzla, rallied the movement when the Partisans captured Tuzla in October 1943, and several ‘ulama’ took part in the sessions of the AVNOJ. In March 1944, thirty-four imams from western Bosnia denounced the ‘ulama’ that had helped recruit Muslims for the Ustaschas and the SS, declaring that in so doing, they had “left Islam.” These imams reassured the population that the Partisan movement respected the Islamic faith, and proclaimed, “our faith, sublime Islam, orders that we shall fight against the assassins of liberty and the enemies of the faith [namely] the Germans, the Chetniks and the Ustaschas.” They then assimilated the struggle for people’s liberation with jihad, stating, “those who lose their lives in this holy war will be šehits [martyrs of the faith].”

As the Partisan movement gained strength within the Muslim community, a growing number of Muslim notables rallied it. This was clearly apparent in the composition of the Provincial Anti-Fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine—ZAVNOBiH), which met for the first time on November 25 and 26, 1943 in Mrkonjić Grad. Of 172 delegates, forty-one were Muslims: alongside communist militants from before the war, such as Avdo Humo, Hasan Brkić, and Pašaga Mandžić, other delegates included a former JMO deputy, a former sub-prefect, three former officers of the Croatian Army and the DOMDO, a professor from the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari'a Law, two professors of Islamic religion, a writer, and many others from more ordinary occupations. The KPJ’s preoccupation with re-establishing the communitarian structure of Bosnian society was visible not just in the composition of the ZAVNOBiH. It was also the reason behind the party’s constant emphasis on equality between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats. Hence, in its final resolution, the first session of the ZAVNOBiH declared that all the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina “want their country—which is neither Serb, nor Croat, nor Muslim, but Serb and Muslim and Croat—to be a free and fraternal Bosnia-Herzegovina where full equal rights and equality are guaranteed for all Serbs, Muslims and Croats.” In opposition to the Ustasha and Chetnik nationalist projects, the Partisan movement reaffirmed the multiethnic character of Bosnian society. Moreover, the Muslim delegates to the ZAVNOBiH addressed a special appeal to their “Muslim brothers,” reminding them that:

Muslims will save themselves from extermination and will ensure a better future for their children if they invest their strength in the common struggle with the Serb and Croat peoples against the foreigners and their mercenaries. Muslims must follow the path of the Muslim Partisans who are fighting in the people’s liberation movement, the only true protector of the Muslim community.

Here again, the Partisans were presented as the Muslim community’s new protectors.
This special treatment for the Muslim community would be found again in the second session of the ZAVNOBiH, from June 30 to July 2, 1944 in Sanski Most. In his introductory speech, communist leader Đuro Pucar stated that Muslims were not rallying the Partisan movement due to a deep-seated political conviction, but because of “a specific arrangement based on the conviction that the people’s liberation movement is the only one that can save the Muslim community from the difficult situation that they have faced up until now.” To explain why it had taken so long for Muslims to join the movement, Pucar emphasized that “the Muslims have, due to their socio-historical situation and their political education at the time of [the first] Yugoslavia, developed certain peculiarities that strengthened, in an unbelievable manner, their sentiment of being a separate group.” He therefore advocated relying on the notables that had joined the Partisan movement in order to create a representative body specifically for the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, aimed at facilitating their integration into the people’s liberation struggle. In September 1944, the Muslim delegates to the ZAVNOBiH issued a new appeal, urging Muslims to join “the people’s liberation movement that has saved us, Muslims, from annihilation,” and emphasizing, “only in this way can we ensure our interests and our future, only in this way can we ensure that we will have a worthy place in the new state.” Eight months later, the Main Muslim Committee (Glavni odbor Muslimana) was created, grouping together the Muslim cadres of the Partisan movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This communitarian body, attached to the People’s Liberation Front (Narodno-oslobodilački front—NOF) had no equivalent within the Serb or Croat communities.

By re-establishing the communitarian structure of Bosnian society, the Partisan movement also recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina’s status as a constituent of the future Yugoslavia. However, for a long time, the KPJ was evasive as to the exact status that it intended to give the province. The communist leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina were in favor of equal status to the other constituents of the future federal state, but some members of the KPJ leadership—such as Moša Pijade and Milovan Đilas—were in favor of transforming Bosnia-Herzegovina into an autonomous province of Serbia. This debate remained open until Tito made the final decision just before the second session of the AVNOJ, held in Jajce from November 21 to 29, 1943. During this session, the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia was proclaimed, with Bosnia-Herzegovina becoming one of its six constituent republics, alongside Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia (see Map VI). The Partisan movement thus sheltered Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Serb and Croat nationalist claims and turned it into a distinct territorial entity within the new Yugoslav state. At around the same period, the KPJ leaders were apparently tempted to recognize the territorial autonomy of the Sandžak, but they ultimately decided to divide it between Serbia and Montenegro.

To justify their decision to elevate Bosnia-Herzegovina to the rank of constituent republic of the Yugoslav state, the communist leaders stated that this was the only way to ensure equality between the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina and thus to bolster the stability of Yugoslavia. In an article dated April 1945, Rodoljub Čolaković wrote that the war had shown that “Bosnia-Herzegovina is neither Serb, nor Croat, but both Serb and Croat, as well as Muslim.” Čolaković then explained that, for this reason, “Bosnia-Herzegovina could not be divided because this would have meant
dividing a close-knit entity, a whole that has long had its own life,” and that it was therefore decided to make Bosnia-Herzegovina a constituent of the new Yugoslavia. Also according to Čolaković:

This solution for the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina will strengthen the new Yugoslavia because the continued fraternal relations between Serbs and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina will, first and foremost, be reflected in the relations between Serbs and Croats in [all of] Yugoslavia, [and therefore] in the relations between the two most important nations in Yugoslavia.37

While justifying Bosnia-Herzegovina’s elevation to the rank of constituent republic, Čolaković’s article also highlights a basic ambiguity in the Partisan movement, namely,
the political status of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, in the same article, Čolaković wrote:

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as everyone knows, there live two nations: the Serbs and the Croats, and the Muslims who are undoubtedly of the Slavic race. They will be given the possibility to determine what nation they belong to, peacefully and gradually.  

Čolaković thus appeared to share the dominant conception since the late nineteenth century, whereby Bosnian Muslims could only be identified nationally as Serbs or Croats. But things were more complex. In a brochure entitled *Our Muslims and the Struggle for People’s Liberation*, the same Čolaković was close to recognizing Bosnian Muslims as a separate national identity. In the new Yugoslavia, he wrote, “nobody will force them to be what they are not, Serbs or Croats, nobody will touch their faith or their customs, nobody will consider them responsible for the Ustasha misdoings.”

More generally, the proclamations of the Partisan movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina were addressed systematically to Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, often using a capital M (*Muslimani* rather than *muslimani*) to refer to Muslims, but they never spoke of a “Muslim nation” (*muslimanski narod*) the way they spoke of Serb and Croat nations. This refusal to regard the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a separate nation was very clear in the case of some communist authors. For example, Veselin Masleša wrote in 1942 that Muslims “have none of the necessary objective qualities that make a nation, and—a logical consequence of objective qualities—they do not have a subjective awareness of themselves as a nation.” Masleša therefore considered “all attempts to create a ‘Bosnian’ or even ‘Muslim’ nation [to be] destined to fail, because nations are not created by administrative fiat.”

At the end of the war, the KPJ thus recognized the existence of a distinct Muslim community, but did not grant it the status of a nation. As a result, the new Yugoslavia would have six constituent republics, but only five constituent nations: the Slovene, Croat, Serb, Montenegrin, and Macedonian nations. The KPJ had managed to become the protector of the Bosnian Muslims, but it remained puzzled about their political status.
Emergence of the Muslim Nation (1945–90)

After the war, a return to Muslim “national indetermination”

After the war, the victorious Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) began to build a new Yugoslavia, using the Soviet Union as its model. While the other communist regimes of central and eastern Europe tolerated a multiparty system for a certain period of time, Tito’s KPJ became almost immediately a single party. On November 11, 1945, the People’s Front led by the KPJ won 90.5 percent of votes in the election for the Constituent Assembly. On November 29, this assembly abolished the monarchy and proclaimed the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (Federativna narodna republika Jugoslavija—FNRJ). In the following years, the communist authorities smothered all political opposition, attacked religious institutions and developed various mass organizations, such as the Women’s Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena—AFŽ) and the Unified League of Antifascist Youth (Ujedinjeni savez antifašističke omladine—USAO).

In this context, the main threat for the new Yugoslav authorities quickly proved to be their worsening relationship with the Soviet Union, due to Yugoslavia’s aggressive foreign policy. Going against Stalin’s advice, Yugoslavia claimed the city of Trieste as Yugoslav territory, supported the communist guerrilla in Greece, and considered creating a Balkan federation with Bulgaria and Albania. As a result, on June 28, 1948, the KPJ was excluded from Cominform and, in the months to follow, an aggressive anti-Yugoslav campaign was waged in the Soviet bloc countries. This threatened the KPJ’s unity: the supporters of Moscow represented around 20 percent of the party membership, and 30,000 of these “Cominformists” were sent to labor camps. However, in an initial period, the split between Tito and Stalin merely strengthened the Stalinist zeal of the Yugoslav leaders, who thus sought to counter accusations of “revisionism” levied against them. From the end of the Second World War until the mid-1950s, communist Yugoslavia was at the same time the most dutiful and the most turbulent pupil of the Stalinist Soviet Union. This painstaking imitation of the Soviet model could be seen in the economy, as the new Yugoslav authorities decreed a radical agrarian reform in 1945, nationalized industry in 1946, and adopted the country’s first five-year plan in 1947. Lastly, they began collectivization of farmland in 1949, but faced with the risks of rural unrest, they gave up this process four years later. Therefore, apart from Poland, Yugoslavia was the only country of central and eastern Europe whose agricultural sector remained in the hands of smallholders.
The area in which the Soviet influence was the most visible and lasting was undoubtedly the policy of nationalities. Proclaimed on January 31, 1946, the Constitution of the new Yugoslavia recognized six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia), along with an autonomous province (Vojvodina) and an autonomous region (Kosovo), both within the Republic of Serbia (see Map VI). In so doing, the Yugoslav communists looked for inspiration in the Soviet Union’s division into federal republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous regions, and transformed Yugoslavia into something of a Soviet-style plurinational mini-empire. The KPJ was divided into republican communist parties, although this division remained largely formal until the 1960s. In parallel, the Yugoslav communists adopted the definition of “nation” given by Slovene communist leader Edvard Kardelj—and inspired by Stalin—whereby a nation is:

A specific social community based on the social division of labour of the capitalist period, on a compact territory and within the framework of a shared language and, more generally, tight ethnic and cultural ties.¹

On this basis, they distinguished five constituent nations of the Yugoslav federation: the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—already recognized as specific groups in the first Yugoslavia—plus the Macedonians and the Montenegrins, who had been regarded as Serbs in the interwar period. Lastly, the Yugoslav communists recognized the existence of several national minorities, including the large Albanian minority settled mainly in Kosovo and western Macedonia.

The break with the Soviet Union did not affect this general architecture of the Yugoslav federation, but initially, it prompted the KPJ to insist on the idea that building a socialist society, by eliminating the national bourgeoisies, would allow for rapprochement between the South Slavic nations. This “socialist Yugoslavism” (socijalističko jugoslovenstvo) was also formulated by Kardelj:

It is not an artificial merging of languages and cultures, nor is it the creation of a new Yugoslav nation of the classic sort, but rather a development and strengthening of the workers’ socialist community of all the nations of Yugoslavia, the affirmation of their shared interests on the basis of socialist relations [of production].²

After the failure of the first Yugoslavia and its integral Yugoslavism, the KPJ endeavored to lay the foundations for a new socialist community of the Yugoslav nations. Accordingly, Serb and Croat linguists signed an agreement in Novi Sad in December 1954, officially recognizing the existence of a single Serbo-Croatian language—or Croato-Serbian—with two alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) and two pronunciations (ekavica and iječavica).³

Once again, Bosnia-Herzegovina found itself at the heart of the Yugoslav state’s contradictions. In November 1945, the People’s Front won in this republic a record score of 95.2 percent of votes, but the KPJ noted a trend for some voters to prefer candidates from their own communities.⁴ Initially called “Federal Bosnia-Herzegovina” (federalna Bosna i Hercegovina), Bosnia-Herzegovina was promoted to the status of
Emergence of the Muslim Nation (1945–90)

constituent republic of Yugoslavia on February 8, 1946, and adopted its own Constitution on December 31, 1946. This Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not specifically enumerate its constituent nations, stating only: “in the People’s Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, its nationalities are in all respects equal in rights” (Article 11). In fact, only the Serbs and Croats were recognized as constituent nations. Bosnia-Herzegovina was thus in a peculiar position, as it was the only republic without an eponymous nation, whereas its two constituent nations had their political and cultural “centers of gravity” outside its borders. The relative recognition that the Muslim community had enjoyed during the war was quickly jeopardized, and the Main Muslim Committee (Glavni odbor Muslimana) created in May 1945 was disbanded eighteen months later. Likewise, the Muslim cultural society Preporod (“Rebirth”) was founded in September 1945 with the merger of the societies Gajret and Narodna uzdanica, but it was dissolved four years later, at the same time as the Serb society Prosvjeta and the Croat society Napredak. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina were relegated to “national indetermination”, as shown in the first post-war population censuses.

During the 1948 census, Bosnian Muslims could declare themselves to be “undetermined–Muslim,” “Serb–Muslim,” or “Croat–Muslim.” In this census, 788,403 chose the first category, compared with 71,991 declared to be Serb–Muslim and 25,295 Croat–Muslim. At the time, Bosnian Muslims represented 30.7 per cent of the total Bosnian population, versus 44.3 per cent for Serbs, and 23.0 per cent for Croats (see Table 2). Five years later, at the height of socialist Yugoslavism, Bosnian Muslims—which the communist authorities intended to nationalize rapidly—could declare themselves to be “undetermined–Yugoslav,” “Serb,” or “Croat.” To justify this choice, communist leader Moša Pijade wrote:

The term “Muslim” designates belonging to the Muslim religion, and has no connection with the question of nationality… No one has ever doubted the fact that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak are of Yugoslav origin, and belong ethnically to the Yugoslav community. This is why those who have determined themselves to be Serbs or Croats will register as “Serb” or “Croat”, and those who have not precisely determined [their nationality] will register as “undetermined–Yugoslav”… This will put an end to the non-scientific and backward practice of mixing religious identity and the determination of nationality.

In the 1953 census in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 891,798 declared themselves to be “undetermined–Yugoslav,” i.e. 31.3 percent of the total population, compared to 44.3 percent Serb and 23.0 percent Croat (see Table 2). Thus, in the first decade after the war, the national indetermination that had characterized Bosnian Muslims since the nineteenth century returned to the forefront.

In December 1945, during the Constituent Assembly’s debates, Muslim deputy Husaga Ćišić protested the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina was deprived of its own eponymous nation, calling for recognition of the “Bosnians” (Bosanci) as the sixth constituent nation of the Yugoslav federation, albeit without clearly stating whether this new nation would encompass only Muslims or all the inhabitants of Bosnia-
Herzegovina. But Ćišić remained alone in his endeavor, and communist leader Milovan Đilas retorted: “The Parliament cannot examine the question of whether the Muslims are a national group or not... This is a theoretical question on which people can debate in this fashion or that, but in no way can it be resolved by decree.” Moreover, the members of the Constituent Assembly paid less attention to Ćišić’s protests than to a letter from the ulema-medžlis asking that the new Constitution maintain the autonomous management of waqfs and the validity of Shari‘a law for family affairs.

Against a backdrop of radical political upheaval, the Islamic Religious Community (Islamska vjerska zajednica) thus attempted to preserve the religious institutions that had, since 1909, formed the backbone of the Muslim community as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority. Yet as part of their overall anti-religious policy, the communist authorities began systematically to dismantle these institutions: Shari‘a courts and the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari‘a Law were shut down in 1946, religious classes were removed from public schools in 1948, the mektebs (Qur’anic schools) were closed in 1952, and the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo was the only madrasa to remain open throughout the communist period. Lastly, the waqfs were nationalized over a period from 1945 to 1958.

Not content to weaken the Islamic religious institutions, the communist authorities attempted to take control of them. As early as 1945, some religious dignitaries were tried for collaboration, including Mustafa Busuladžić, sentenced to death and later executed, and Muhamed Pandža, sentenced to ten years of prison. In the following years, several other trials took place, including that of Kasim Dobrača and twelve other defendants in September 1947. This trial finally broke the resistance of the Islamic Religious Community, and in August 1947, its leadership agreed to adopt a new internal Constitution and to elect Ibrahim Fejić (a cleric who had rallied the Partisan movement) as Reis-ul-ulema. This brought an end to the autonomy Islamic religious institutions had enjoyed since the Austro-Hungarian period. Three years later, an Association of ‘Ulama’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Udruženje ilmije Bosne i Hercegovine) was founded; it declared

### Table 2: Population of Bosnia-Herzegovina by nationality (1948–91).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Serbs</th>
<th>Muslims*</th>
<th>Croats</th>
<th>Yugoslavs</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1,136,116</td>
<td>788,403</td>
<td>614,123</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>26,635</td>
<td>2,565,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,261,405</td>
<td>891,798</td>
<td>654,227</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>40,029</td>
<td>2,847,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,406,057</td>
<td>842,248</td>
<td>711,665</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>42,095</td>
<td>3,277,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,393,148</td>
<td>1,482,430</td>
<td>772,491</td>
<td>43,796</td>
<td>54,246</td>
<td>3,746,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1,320,644</td>
<td>1,629,924</td>
<td>758,136</td>
<td>89,024</td>
<td>89,024</td>
<td>4,124,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,369,258</td>
<td>1,905,829</td>
<td>755,895</td>
<td>93,747</td>
<td>93,747</td>
<td>4,364,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


its allegiance to the new communist power and joined the People's Front led by the KPJ. At the same time, the Ajvatovica, a major Sufi pilgrimage in central Bosnia, was banned in 1947, as were the tarikats (Sufi orders) in 1952. Lastly, the end of the status that the Muslim community had enjoyed as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority was symbolized by the abolition of the veil for women—a subject that had given rise to such heated controversy in the interwar period. Beginning in 1947, the Women's Anti-Fascist Front (AFŽ) launched a campaign to abandon the veil. This campaign received the support of the KPJ’s other mass organizations, the Muslim cultural society Preporod, and even the leadership of the Islamic Religious Community. After three years of intense propaganda, the communist authorities decided to use force, and on September 28, 1950, the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted to prohibit the veil. In the following months, similar laws were passed in Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia. In the span of a few years, the institutional and symbolic devices that had ensured the Muslim community’s cohesion were swept away by the new regime, strengthening the feeling of identity crisis that prevailed in the first decade after the war.

In this difficult context, the Young Muslim movement (Mladi Muslimani) was revived. Having lost the protection of the disbanded association el-Hidaje, and forced into a semi-clandestine status, the Young Muslims nevertheless managed to set up a network with several hundred members. In addition to their usual activities of re-Islamization, they carried out more directly political actions such as infiltrating the cultural society Preporod in Sarajevo and preparing for an uprising in the Mostar region. Marked by the violence of the Second World War and faced with harsh anti-religious policies, the Young Muslims considered Bosnian Muslims to be threatened with physical and spiritual annihilation. Convinced that the political, intellectual, and religious elites had failed to protect the Muslims, they declared that they were taking charge of their community to lead it in combat. Thus, a proclamation by the Mostar group stated:

While a [communist] foe destroys everything Islamic, while it offends, attacks Muslims and attempts to suppress their leaders . . . others are making plans to exterminate us physically, just as they annihilated the Muslims in Hungary, in Lika, in Sicily and in Spain . . . In these difficult times, our organization is taking charge of the Muslims . . . for these are days of fighting for existence, days of jihad, and our organization is resolutely committed to this path.  

Therefore, the Young Muslims of the post-war period had an even stronger political bent than during the Second World War. Fiercely anti-communist, they were also opposed to any rapprochement with other South Slavs:

Enough with the choices and options [looking] towards Zagreb or Belgrade, this must be clear for everyone and especially for our intelligentsia. It has led us to everything but the defense of Islam and the Muslims. We have seen with our own eyes that the names “Croat” or “Serb” are just masks hiding a cross and a sword, with a single idea: to demolish Islam, to avenge [the Battle of] Kosovo, to rape, pillage and defeat the crescent and the star.
As a consequence, the pan-Islamist utopia remained at the heart of a political project calling for the re-Islamization of Muslim societies, the seizure of power in each of them, and their unification in a vast pan-Islamic state. This grandiose vision mingled with the more modest goal of achieving independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina, eventually giving birth to the idea of a state that would bring together all the Muslims of the Balkans. This idea of a Balkan Muslim state explains why the Young Muslims were so interested in Pakistan, formed in 1947 from the partition of the Indian subcontinent along confessional lines. One of their clandestine newsletters was even entitled Pakistan. But the Young Muslims had little leisure to build their pan-Islamist utopia: from 1946 until 1949, they were the target of fierce repression, culminating in the trial of fourteen Young Muslims in August 1949, with four of the defendants sentenced to death. The Young Muslim movement was then completely dismantled, with most of its members either in jail or refugees abroad.

The confederalization of Yugoslavia and recognition of the Muslim nation

In the decades following the establishment of communist power, Yugoslav society—and within it, Bosnian society—underwent profound transformations. From 1945 onwards, the communist period corresponded with an era of accelerated modernization on all levels. First and foremost, societies that had mainly been agrarian became primarily industrial and urban. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the proportion of farmers in the active population dropped from 80.6 percent in 1948 to 23.8 percent in 1981. Over the same period, the proportion of industrial workers rose from 9.7 percent to 34.7 percent. Although “peasants-workers” remained numerous in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the rural exodus resulted in rapid growth in cities: between 1948 and 1981, Sarajevo’s population grew from 115,000 to 380,000, and other major cities such as Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar, and Zenica experienced similar growth. New districts, with socialist architecture, sprouted up on the outskirts of cities, contributing to the emergence of a new urban culture. At the same time, the development of public education quickly reduced illiteracy—in Bosnia-Herzegovina, illiteracy dropped from 44.9 percent in 1948 to 14.5 percent in 1981—and brought about a higher level of education. Between 1953 and 1981, the proportion of the Bosnian population with a high school diploma rose from 4.1 percent to 21.7 percent, and those with a university education rose from 0.3 percent to 4.3 percent. A university was opened in Sarajevo in 1949, followed by others in Banja Luka (1975), Tuzla (1976), and Mostar (1977); in the early 1980s, there were more than 50,000 university students in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

These economic and social changes, which lead to higher living standards, greater leisure time, and more gender equality, fueled a veritable cultural revolution that also reshaped the way people fitted into their communities. In cities in particular, each community’s markers of cultural identity tended to disappear, and communitarian ties faded as a shared Yugoslav lifestyle gained strength. One important indicator of these transformations were mixed marriages. While such marriages were rare before the Second World War, they comprised 7.4 percent of all weddings in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
in 1950 and 12.0 percent in 1981. However, Bosnia-Herzegovina still had one of the lowest rates of mixed marriage anywhere in Yugoslavia, and the Muslim community was clearly less exogamous than the Serb and Croat communities. More generally, modernization in the communist period came with certain imbalances between urban and rural areas, with the latter remaining partly on the sidelines of the transformations underway. Likewise, the gap widened between the most developed federal units (Slovenia, Croatia, Vojvodina, and Serbia) and the least developed ones (Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina): the gross social product (i.e. output) per capita of Bosnia-Herzegovina was 83 percent of that of Yugoslavia as a whole in 1953, compared with just 67 percent in 1981. To understand why, we must look at how the Yugoslav federation evolved politically.

Beginning in the mid-1950s, Yugoslavia stopped copying the Soviet Union and gradually started to create its own model of self-managed socialism. On an economic level, self-management was introduced into the workplace and planning was combined with elements of a market economy. This economic decentralization further widened the development gap between the federal units, despite the creation in 1965 of a Federal Fund for the Development of Underdeveloped Republics and Provinces. This development gap quickly became one of the main subjects of discord between the elites of each republic. On a political level, the new Constitution adopted on April 7, 1963 created the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Socijalistička federativna republika Jugoslavija—SFRJ). Within this new entity, the federal units enjoyed greater powers, whereas Kosovo became an autonomous province.

In 1952, the KPJ was renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez komunista Jugoslavije—SKJ), and the People’s Front was renamed the Socialist Alliance of Working People (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda—SSRN). As from 1964, the growing autonomy of the republican and provincial leagues of communists was symbolized by the fact that their congresses were held before the federal congress. Against this backdrop, socialist Yugoslavism was abandoned in favor of “organic Yugoslavism” (organsko jugoslovenstvo), based on the idea that the constituent nations of the Yugoslav federation were complementary to one another and destined to last in the long term. In 1964, the Eighth Congress of the SKJ declared:

The erroneous opinions stating that our nations have become obsolete over the course of our socialist development and that it is necessary to create a unified Yugoslav nation [are] the expression of bureaucratic centralism and unitarism. Such opinions usually reflect an ignorance of the political, social, economic and other functions of the republics and autonomous provinces.11

Internationally, communist Yugoslavia joined with India, Egypt, and Indonesia to found the Non-Aligned Movement, hosting its first summit in Belgrade in 1961. Lastly, Yugoslavia started a program to liberalize its cultural and religious policies, and in 1965, Yugoslav citizens won the right to travel abroad. Over the following decades, nearly one million of them went to work in Western Europe.

These transformations of communist Yugoslavia in the 1960s also corresponded to a confrontation between the political elites that had risen to power during the war, who
were mainly Serb and were attached to a centralized political system, and the new technocratic elites, who aspired to decentralization and liberalization of the communist system. In July 1966, Aleksandar Ranković, the head of the political police, was removed from power. This decision, approved by Tito himself, marked a temporary victory for the liberals who dominated the Leagues of Communists of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Reforms then gathered pace, along with cultural and political liberalization, and a system of multiple candidates was even tested during the 1967 and 1969 elections. In 1969, each federal entity was given its own Territorial Defense (Teritorijana odbrana—TO), intended to assist the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska narodna armija—JNA) in the event of external aggression. Yet there was also an upsurge in national tensions and demands in the Yugoslav space in the late 1960s. In November 1968, Kosovo Albanians held demonstrations demanding that the autonomous province be made into a republic. These protests were severely put down. Moreover, between 1967 and 1971, the liberals of the League of Communists of Croatia grew closer to the nationalist elements of the cultural association Matica hrvatska to demand virtual independence for Croatia. Here again, Tito intervened personally, putting a decisive end to this “Croat Spring” in December 1971, while also sidelining the liberal leaders of the League of Communists of Serbia. However, this move to take back control of the situation did not lead to recentralization of the Yugoslav political system; on the contrary, it coincided with even more power being devolved to the republics and autonomous provinces.

This “confederalization” of communist Yugoslavia, symbolized by the new Constitution of February 21, 1974, made it a highly decentralized plurinational state, whose central government retained control only over foreign policy and defense, and whose head of state, Marshal Tito, was the final arbiter in conflicts between federal units obsessed with their own prerogatives. Given these arrangements, conflicts of an economic or political nature inevitably took on a national dimension, in relations between republics and within the republican or provincial apparatus whenever several national communities coexisted inside the same federal unit. The widespread application of the “national key” (nacionalni ključ) in distributing positions of responsibility fueled powerful clientelistic networks within each community, while also helping rekindle feelings of national belonging and rivalry—inside a socialist system that was originally supposed to erase such feelings. This use of national quotas also transformed each population census into a period of intense mobilization and competition between national groups. This is the context underlying the gradual recognition given to the Muslim nation between 1961 and 1974.

In the communist period, the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina—especially Muslim women—won access to education and salaried employment on a massive scale, and were thus among the primary beneficiaries of Yugoslavia’s modernization. The Muslim community’s social progress was also reflected in the national composition of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Savez komunista Bosne i Herzegovine—SKBiH). In the 1950s, this league was clearly dominated by Serbs. At the same period, a majority of Muslim communist leaders declared themselves to be of Serb nationality. Thus, in the 1956 Who’s Who of Yugoslavia, David Dyker has counted 61.5 percent of Muslim leaders describing themselves as Serbs, versus 16.6 percent as Croats,
8.6 percent as “undetermined,” and 12.6 percent indicating no nationality. As from the 1960s, however, the SKBiH gradually became more representative of the three main communities of Bosnian society, as new Muslim and Croat elites emerged thanks to the communist modernization (see Table 3).

This transformation corresponded to the evolution of the SKJ as a whole. Until the mid-1960s, the SKBiH was dominated by Serb politicians who had risen to prominence during the war, such as Đuro Pucar and Rodoljub Ćolaković, who defended centralist stances close to those of Aleksandar Ranković. However, Ranković’s downfall coincided with Pucar’s and Ćolaković’s fall from grace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while a new generation of communist leaders came to power, such as Hamdija Pozderac, a Muslim and the son of JMO senator Nurija Pozderac, the Croat Branko Mikulić, and the Serb Milenko Renovica. These new Bosnian communist leaders were passionate defenders of the prerogatives of their republic, while remaining scrupulously faithful to Titoist orthodoxy. The communist modernization and confederalization of Yugoslavia thus allowed for new political and intellectual elites to emerge, paving the way for the crystallization of a Bosnian Muslim national identity. Meanwhile, the abandonment of socialist Yugoslavism enabled this new mode of national identification to become widespread, as shown notably by the change in population census results. In 1961, the category “Muslim—ethnic belonging” (Muslimani—etnička pripadnost) was added to the census. This category was defined in these terms:

Muslim, in terms of nationality, refers to an ethnic and not confessional belonging. The only people who should give this response are those of Yugoslav origin who consider themselves Muslims in terms of ethnicity. As a result, neither the members of non-Yugoslav nationalities, such as the Albanians or the Turks, nor Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians and others that consider themselves to be members of the Islamic religious community [should give this response]. These individuals should respond according to their nationality, i.e. Albanian, Turk, Serb, Croat, Montenegrin, Macedonian, etc., regardless of their religion. As the response “Muslim” designates an ethnicity and not a religion, individuals with no religion can also give this response if they consider themselves to belong to this ethnic group.

Table 3 National composition of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1946–84).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Serbs</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Croats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This definition is in complete contradiction to the stances that Moša Pijade had defended eight years earlier. In the 1961 census, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 842,248 people declared themselves to be of Muslim ethnicity, but 275,883 others declared themselves to be Yugoslav, which suggests that a large number of Bosnian Muslims continued to opt for the latter category (see Table 2). From a legal perspective, the recognition of a Muslim nation remained hesitant as well, as the new Bosnian Constitution of April 10, 1963 merely affirmed the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the “Serbs, Muslims and Croats,” without clearly mentioning their status as constituent nations.\footnote{14}

It was not until Aleksandar Ranković and the old guard of the Party in Bosnia-Herzegovina left the scene that the Muslim nation became fully and entirely recognized as such. Most often, the event officially recognizing this new nation is considered to have taken place on May 17, 1968, when the Central Committee of the SKBiH stated:

> Experience has shown the harmfulness of the various forms of pressure and injunction left over from an earlier period, aimed at forcing the Muslims to determine themselves nationally as Serbs or Croats, for it was apparent in the past, and current socialist practice confirms, that the Muslims constitute a separate nation.\footnote{15}

This official recognition did not fail to trigger hostile reactions in the neighboring republics. During the 1971 census, for example, a controversy erupted between the SKBiH and the League of Communists of Macedonia regarding the Slavophone Muslims of Macedonia and their right to declare their nationality as Muslim. At the same time, the “Muslim” national name was promoted intensely in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the media and organizations in charge of the census also striving to delegitimize the terms “Yugoslav” and “Bosnian.” The former was presented as a supranational category, and the latter as a regional identity with the same value as “Dalmatian” or “Slavonian.”

The Commission for Interethnic Relations of the SSRN, presided over by the Muslim Atif Purivatra, played a central role in this mobilization campaign in favor of the “Muslim” national name. Ultimately, in 1971, 1,482,430 people in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared themselves to be Muslims (i.e. 39.6 percent of the total population), compared to 1,393,148 declaring themselves to be Serbs (37.2 percent), 772,491 Croats (20.6 percent), and 43,796 Yugoslavs (1.2 percent) (see Table 2). Thus, the 1971 census was a major turning point in the political history of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During this census, the Bosnian Muslim population mobilized on a massive scale in favor of a new mode of national identification. As a result, for the first time in history, Bosnian Muslims stood out as a nation, separate from the Serb and Croat nations. Moreover, for the first time since 1878, they formed the largest population segment in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the detriment of the Serbs, whose share of the total Bosnian population had declined from 44.3 percent in 1948 to 37.2 percent in 1971. This reversal in the demographic balance of powers between Serbs and Muslims was even more obvious in the 1981 and 1991 censuses (see Table 2). This partly reflected the changes in the national identification of some Muslims, but was also attributable to their higher birth rate, the result of a later demographic transition, and to a higher rate
of emigration of Serbs and Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina to the neighboring republics of Serbia and Croatia. Lastly, between 1961 and 1991, Slavophone Muslims outside Bosnia-Herzegovina also began to adopt the Muslim national identification, with the number of people recorded as Muslims rising from 83,811 to 173,871 in Serbia proper (i.e. outside the autonomous provinces), from 30,665 to 89,932 in Montenegro, from 8,026 to 57,408 in Kosovo, and from 3,002 to 47,790 in Macedonia.  

A scant twenty-five years after the communist authorities had done away with the Bosnian Muslim community's status as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority, this community was elevated to the rank of constituent nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Yugoslav federation. Following the 1971 census, the Muslim nation represented the most populous nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the third largest constituent nation of Yugoslavia, with 1,729,932 members across all of Yugoslavia, i.e. 8.4 percent of the total population. Three years later, the Muslims' constituent nation status was explicitly stated in the Yugoslav Constitution of February 21, 1974 and the Bosnian Constitution of February 25, 1974. The latter document defined Bosnia-Herzegovina as the state “of the workers and citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, of its nations—Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, and of the members of the other nations and nationalities who live there.” This radical reversal in fortune was partly due to the fact that the dismantling of the religious institutions that had previously structured the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina had created a void, which the new Muslim national identity then filled. However, it resulted mainly from a twofold political process strengthening the prerogatives of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and giving birth to new Muslim political and intellectual elites. Now, we will look at how these new elites defined the Muslim national identity, and the paradoxes that they had to confront.

New Muslim elites and the process of “national affirmation”

The recognition of the Muslim nation in the 1960s and 1970s took place with Tito's approval, and was supported by a large majority of the SKBiH's leaders (Muslims, Serbs, and Croats combined), who regarded this as a means to strengthen the political subjectivity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslim protagonists, thus, did not drive this process alone. However, the task of constructing a national identity that would buttress the new political status of the Bosnian Muslims fell to the Muslim political and intellectual elites. This cultural undertaking, officially described as a process of “national affirmation” (nacionalna afirmacija), relied on several scientific institutions, such as the Provincial Museum, the Faculties of Philology and Political Science at the University of Sarajevo, the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina (created in 1964), and the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement, inaugurated a year later. The results of this work were published in the Sarajevan journals Pregled (“Panorama”), Odjek (“Echo”), and Život (“Life”), or in the collections of publishing house Svjetlost (“Light”).

The Muslim “national affirmation” began with a rejection of the past attempts at assimilating Bosnian Muslims into the Serb and Croat nations. For example, Atif
Purivatra, a historian and president of the Commission for Interethnic Relations of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Bosnia-Herzegovina, stated:

[Muslims] are not, in the national sense, Serbs, Croats, or “undetermined” but . . . constitute a particular ethnicity in the Serbo-Croatian linguistic area, equivalent to the Serb, Montenegrin and Croat nations.  

To demonstrate this, Muslim politicians and intellectuals endeavored to provide the Muslim nation with the origin myth and historical continuity that would allow it to fully occupy its place in the community of Yugoslav nations. Rediscovering the markers of cultural identity produced during the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods, they emphasized the South Slavic origins of Bosnian Muslims and insisted on the “bogomilism” of the medieval period as a central explanation for their conversion to Islam. This emphasis on religion as a founding element of national identity is hardly consistent with the definition of a nation as given by Edvard Kardelj, but Marxist dogma reappeared in the handling of later periods of Muslim history. Thus, the specialist in Ottoman history Avdo Sučeska insisted with others on the autonomy that Bosnia had enjoyed during the Ottoman period, but he added that, “unlike the non-Muslim population, which found itself mainly in a situation of serfdom and in a subordinate political position, Muslim society was complete and self-sufficient, in other words, it comprised all estates and all social groups.” The influence of Marxist ideology was even clearer in the explanations given for why a Muslim national identity had taken shape so belatedly; this was attributed to the reactionary nature of the Muslim landholding elites, and the hegemonic claims of the Serb and Croat bourgeoisies. Lastly, to legitimize the emergence of a Muslim nation in a socialist society, the proponents of this nation noted that the KPJ had—after some hesitation—recognized the specific ethnicity of Bosnian Muslims in the late 1930s already, and that the struggle for national liberation in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been waged in the name of the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats.

Hence, the 1960s and 1970s were an important period of rediscovery and reinterpretation of the markers of cultural identity created during the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods. However, the proponents of Muslim national identity came up against several major obstacles. The first involved the definition of the ties between Islam and the Muslim national identity. Indeed, they had to show that Islam lay behind the specific identity of Bosnian Muslims, while not depicting them as a mere religious group. To this end, Muslim politicians and intellectuals noted that the Serb and Croat national identities had also crystallized around religious symbols and explained that Islam had given birth to numerous markers of cultural identity that had lost their religious meaning in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, according to Atif Purivatra,

“Muslim” as a concept triggers an association with a member of the Islamic religion, which is one of the world’s largest religions. However, in the Yugoslav space and particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, history has given this concept many new meanings, which in our era extend and even modify the initial meaning.
To mark this dissociation between the Muslim identity in the confessional and the national sense of the word, the proponents of the Muslim national identity emphasized that the name “Muslim” should be written with a lower-case “m” when referring to the religion, and with a capital “M” when referring to the nationality. In this view, the national category “Muslim” (with a capital “M”) also encompassed non-believers, and the recognition of the Muslim nation would even help secularize Bosnian Muslims. In December 1969, the Central Committee of the SKBiH observed that recognizing the Muslim nation “reduces Muslimness [muslimanstvo] to an ethnic category and frees it of the religious burden that is still present in the concept ‘Muslim’ in the minds of many Muslims.” Furthermore, to justify this recognition, intellectuals Kasim Suljević and Salim Ćerić compared the situation of Muslims with that of Jews, another religious community that had been elevated to the rank of nation. However, despite the difference in capitalization between members of the Umma and members of the Muslim nation, the Muslims were still the only Yugoslav constituent nation to have a national name with a religious origin. This peculiarity created a large number of ambiguities and paradoxes, as we will see later on with regard to the Islamic Religious Community.

Endeavoring to detach the national name “Muslim” from its religious roots, Muslim politicians and intellectuals also had to justify the fact that this term was preferable to “Bosniak” (Bošnjak) or “Bosnian” (Bosanac). To do so, the proponents of Muslim national identity emphasized the failure of Bosnism (bošnjaštvo) in the nineteenth century. The rejection of “Bosniak” or “Bosnian” as a national name coincided with renewed emphasis that Bosnia-Herzegovina had three constituent nations: Muslims, Serbs, and Croats. In this context, adopting the term “Bosniak” or “Bosnian” would amount either to identifying the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina with only the Muslim community, or denying the national identities of the Serbs and Croats of this Republic. Thus, Salim Ćerić denounced the hegemonic intentions lurking behind the name “Bosnian”:

By suggesting the idea of a Bosnian nationality, a relative minority, the Muslims, seeks to impose itself as the soundest fundamental historical factor of the state subjectivity [državnost] of the SRBiH [Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina] . . . The idea of a Bosnian nationality (of Muslims) creates confusion in interethnic relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . [This idea] gives rise to doubts, for the Serbs and Croats, as to the Muslim perception of the long-term national commitments of the Serbs and the Croats of this Republic. Thus, Salim Ćerić denounced the hegemonic intentions lurking behind the name “Bosnian”:

Thus, recognition of the Muslim nation did not end the complexity of the national question in Bosnia-Herzegovina; it remained the only Yugoslav republic to comprise several constituent nations, with none of them eponymous. Moreover, the Muslims were the only constituent nation not to have their own federal unit. Hence the definition of the ties between the Muslim national identity and the political subjectivity of Bosnia-Herzegovina was also complex, giving rise to recurring tensions between the SKBiH’s leaders and Muslim intellectuals. Some intellectuals sought to give the Muslim nation its own cultural attributes, such as its own language or literature, and thus called for the creation of national institutions responsible for promoting these attributes. On a linguistic level, the unity of the Serbo-Croatian language was challenged in the 1960s
by the recognition of two dialects: eastern (Serb) and western (Croat), and by the 1967 publication, as part of the “Croat Spring,” of a Declaration on the Status and Name of the Croatian Standard Language. The SKBiH’s leaders took the risk of a splitting of the Serbo-Croatian language very seriously, viewing it as a threat to the very existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In their view:

A polarization between dialects would definitely lead to the disintegration of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture, and teaching—in the case of a substantial enforcement of the distinction between dialects—would have to be separated . . . We would therefore have the kind of “national” schools that would closely resemble the confessional teaching of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, such a policy would lead to the disintegration and the negation of the sovereignty of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.  

The SKBiH leaders were therefore opposed to the Muslim intellectuals such as literature professor Alija Isaković, who highlighted the specific features of the language of Bosnia-Herzegovina—beginning with its numerous Turkisms—and called for recognition of a Bosnian dialect of Serbo-Croatian. The SKBiH merely promoted equality between the two Serbo-Croatian dialects and the greatest tolerance for their use in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, it referred to a “standard pronunciation” (standardnojezički izraz) specific to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to be defined more precisely by the Institute for Language and Literature inaugurated in Sarajevo in 1972.  

The language issue showed how the affirmation of a specific national identity for the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not necessarily strengthen this republic as a distinct federal unit. Similar tensions and dilemmas arose with regard to the recognition of a specific form of Bosnian literature or Muslim literature—not to be confused with each other. In the 1960s and 1970s, writers, literature professors, or historians such as Alija Isaković, Muhsin Rizvić, Midhat Begić, and Hazim Šabanović contributed to a rediscovery of Muslim writers from the Ottoman period, the Austro-Hungarian period, and the interwar years. Yet at the same time, philosopher Muhamed Filipović was accused of “Muslim nationalism” for mentioning a “Bosnian spirit” (bosanski duh) common to all writers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for having criticized the fact that some of these writers were incorporated into Serb or Croat literature. As for plans to write a history of the literature of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, they fell through due to tensions that broke out between contributors of different nationalities. Similar difficulties arose in the field of history. While the historiography of the Muslim nation was developing rapidly, the historiography of Bosnia-Herzegovina was stifled by national dissensions. Plans were made in 1968 to write a history of the nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this project never got off the ground.  

Struggling to define the contours of a specific language, literature, and history, the promoters of the Muslim national identity were also deprived of national institutions to accomplish their project. Whereas the Serbs could rely on the Serb Academy of Sciences and Arts or the cultural association Matica srpska, and the Croats had the cultural association Matica hrvatska, the Provincial Museum or the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina were not institutions intended for the
Muslim community alone. Unsurprisingly, some intellectuals called for the creation of Muslim national institutions. For example, Salim Ćerić wrote in 1971 that “the Muslim nation is the only nation in the SFRJ not to have this kind of institution, even while it is in its formational period,” and called for the creation of a Matica muslimanska in charge of promoting the Muslim cultural heritage, writing the history of the Muslim nation and revising the content of schoolbooks. Yet Ćerić, too, was denounced as a “Muslim nationalist,” and the leaders of the SKBiH once again raised fears of Bosnia-Herzegovina breaking apart. For instance, Branko Mikulić stated that “the idea of national institutions . . . cannot be achieved without civil war.”

The fear of a violent breakup of Bosnia-Herzegovina that was sometimes perceptible in the words of Muslim politicians and intellectuals explains their ambiguous attitude towards the Yugoslav idea. On the one hand, they rejected Yugoslavism as they had Bosnism, viewing it as a negation of the specific national identity of each constituent nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. To promote the Muslim national identity, they had to end the national identification of Muslims as “undetermined Yugoslavs,” which had been typical of the first two decades after the war. On the other hand, only the Yugoslav federal framework protected Bosnia-Herzegovina from the claims of Serb and Croat nationalists, and allowed the Muslim elites to manage the paradoxes and ambiguities of the Muslim national identity. These elites thus showed a strong attachment to the Yugoslav state and to the idea of a socialist community of the Yugoslav nations. According to Atif Purivatra:

We cannot speak of Yugoslavism in the sense of a sentiment of belonging to a Yugoslav nation, because no such nation exists. However, the sentiment of Yugoslavism is a specific sentiment of belonging to a larger social community that has developed due to the existence of the socialist community of the Yugoslav nations, due to socioeconomic ties and socialist policies that are bringing our nations together and uniting them, ever more soundly and profoundly, and reducing the social functions of the nation.

Even as they were developing the new Muslim national identity, Muslim politicians and intellectuals thus reaffirmed their allegiance to the plurinational state of communist Yugoslavia. Admittedly, certain intellectuals—such as Muhamed Filipović, Alija Isaković, and Salim Ćerić—were accused of “Muslim nationalism,” but in the 1970s, this accusation was unfounded. These intellectuals never challenged the legitimacy of Yugoslavia and did not aspire to create an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina or a nation-state specifically for Bosnian Muslims. The Muslim nation was, we might say, a nation without nationalism. The SKBiH’s leaders were not mistaken on this account, and the Muslim intellectuals generally fell out of favor for only a short period of time.

Nevertheless, the tensions between the SKBiH’s leaders and certain Muslim intellectuals showed that the promotion of the Muslim national identity brought with it several conflicts among the new Muslim elites. While most intellectuals supported the “national affirmation” process, a few were more reserved. The writer Meša Selimović continued to state that he was a Serb, and the writers Skender Kulenović and Mak Dizdar still declared themselves to be Croats. The historian Enver Redžić, for his part,
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

criticized the adoption of a national name with a religious origin in a context of socialist secularization, stating: “even if the role of Islam in the process of forming the Bosnian Muslim ethnic community is undeniable, this community itself is not ethnically Muslim, but Bosnian.”

At the same time, the promotion of the Muslim national identity favored closer ties between the newer post-1945 elites and some representatives of the interwar intellectual elite. The best example of the role played by certain Muslim intellectuals trained before the Second World War is Muhamed Hadžijahić. As a young Croat nationalist, he had worked for the NDH’s propaganda services during the war. In the 1960s, he was the secretary of the Commission for the History of the Peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, within the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was also the main contributor to a 1970 report for the Central Committee of the SKBiH, about the attitude of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina toward the issue of national determination (communist intellectuals Atif Purivatra and Mustafa Imamović also contributed to this report).

Lastly, he was one of the proponents of enriching the new Muslim national identity with markers of cultural identity produced in earlier periods. Other links between the intellectual elites of the interwar and communist periods could be found in the Oriental Institute, which opened its doors in 1950. The historian Hazim Šabanović, for example, was a former student at the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari’a Law. Lastly, the literature professor Muhsin Rizvić, who played a crucial role in the promotion of Bosnian Muslim literature, was a former member of the Young Muslim movement.

To complete this overview of the pluralism within the Muslim intellectual elites, we must also look at the situation of Muslim political emigration. In the first decade after the war, Bosnian Muslim refugees in the West or the Middle East were indistinguishable from Croat political émigrés, whether Ustashas or democrats. However, from the mid-1950s, some of these Muslim refugees denounced attempts to force them to convert to Catholicism, then stopped identifying as Croats. At the initiative of Adil Zulfi karpašić, a former Partisan and communist minister who had emigrated to Switzerland, the Liberal-Democratic Alliance of Bosniaks-Muslims (Liberalno-demokratski savez Bošnjaka-Muslimana) was founded in 1963. This alliance gathered Muslims who had studied abroad during the war, alongside former imams of the 13th SS Division and former Young Muslims.

For us Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bosnism [bošnjaštvo] is more than just a regional sentiment, more than a geographic concept, more than a cultural and historical particularity, even though it encompasses all these things. Bosnism is, for us, our true and our only national identification.

Yet the definition of Bosnism was unclear in the Muslim political emigration as well. Sometimes the term referred to all the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina and sometimes just to the Bosnian Muslims. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Muslim elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the representatives of Muslim political emigration opted for different national names—a divergence whose consequences would become apparent in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, they all agreed that only the Yugoslav federal framework
could protect Bosnia-Herzegovina from Serb and Croat nationalist claims. Thus, Adil Zulfikarpašić joined the Democratic Alternative (Demokratska alternativa), an organization created in 1963 by Yugoslav political émigrés with a democratic orientation. While this organization recognized the right to self-determination of each South Slavic nation, it still stated that “a common state of the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina is necessary to preserve the political, ethnographic [sic] and geographic integrity of each nation of Yugoslavia,” and thus called for the creation of a new democratic Yugoslavia.  

In the end, a study of the national affirmation process reveals that the recognition of the Muslim nation in the 1960s and 1970s was not simply granted by Tito or by the communist leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Instead, it was also brought about by the efforts of many Muslim intellectuals, and was not devoid of dilemmas and conflicts. Likewise, the Muslim national identity promoted by Muslim politicians and intellectuals was not a pure creation of the communist period, but also made use of the markers of cultural identity produced during the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods. The choice of “Muslim” as the national name was driven by a desire to maintain a balance between the three constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while also rooted in the common usage of this religious name since the beginning of the twentieth century. From this standpoint, using the national name “Muslim” to refer to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina was a lingering trace of their former status as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority. Lastly, the new Muslim political and intellectual elites’ attachment to communist Yugoslavia was in part an extension of the traditional Muslim elites’ allegiance to the prevailing central power. For communist leaders and intellectuals as well, the existence of the plurinational Yugoslav state was a sine qua non condition for the physical and political existence of the Muslim community. Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, the new Muslim elites of the communist modernization were successful where the Muslim intelligentsia of the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods had failed. They were able to make the specific cultural identity of Bosnian Muslims fit into a political environment dominated by national categories, finally nationalizing the Bosnian Muslim population—as proven by vast numbers of people who declared “Muslim” to be their national identity during the 1971 census.

The Islamic Community, a proxy national institution

During the communist period, the activity of Islamic religious institutions was affected by changes in the Yugoslav state’s antireligious policy, transformations in Bosnian society, and the recognition of the Muslim nation. In the late 1950s, the decline of the Islamic Religious Community appeared irreversible. Following the nationalization of the waqfs, and despite an annual state subsidy, the Islamic religious institutions were in dire financial straits. Religious personnel were increasingly few in number and had a low level of education. The Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo, the only madrasa still open, graduated only a dozen students a year, and most of these graduates did not opt for a religious career. Lastly, the only Islamic religious publications were Glasnik (“The Messenger”), which dealt mainly with the religious institutions’ internal affairs,
and Takvim ("Almanac"), which informed the faithful of the times for the five daily prayers and the dates of the main religious holidays. After the communist authorities had evicted it from the public sphere, the Islamic Religious Community withdrew into its mosques, where it continued to perform the main religious rituals. However, changes started to occur in the 1950s: religious lessons were reauthorized in places of worship in 1953, Sulejman Kemura was elected as Reis-ul-ulema in 1957, a new internal constitution simplified the functioning of religious institutions in 1959, and from the late 1950s, the khutbas (Friday sermons) were given in Serbo-Croatian, not in Arabic.

The narrower scope of activities for the Islamic Religious Community coincided with a rapid decline in religious practice. However, this secularization of the Muslim community did not affect all social classes equally. In research carried out in the early 1960s in Herzegovina, sociologist Esad Ćimić showed that religious practice was higher in the countryside than in towns, and especially low for people involved in the communist modernization. Yet Ćimić’s main finding was that a decline in religious practice did not mean that religion was simply disappearing; for example, he observed high participation in the main religious holidays:

During the religious holidays, more than ninety private houses in the region [Herzegovina] are “transformed” into places of worship, to allow as many people as possible to perform the main religious rites. In 1963, there were ninety-three religious events, namely three major gatherings that brought together 13,000 believers, and ninety mevluds [ceremonies in honor of the Prophet] involving around 70,000 believers (i.e. on average 700 to 800 believers each).

Among the reasons behind this persistent religiosity, Ćimić cited the identification between nationality and religion, especially for the Muslims, who “have a consciousness in which nationality and religion are often intermingled and complementary (and more clearly so than for others).” Anthropologist William Lockwood and historian Robert Donia, who had done fieldwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1960s and 1970s, also noted: “For most Bosnian Muslims, the significance of religious adherence as a symbol of ethnicity outweighs the importance of religious belief and dogma.”

The Muslims thus closely associated their national and religious identity, even while the communist authorities hoped that recognizing the Muslim nation would facilitate their secularization.

This question of the relationship between national identity and religious identity was also on the minds of members of the Islamic Religious Community. Initially, the ‘ulama’ were reluctant to use the term “Muslim” in a national sense. In the Takvim for 1965, Kasim Dobrača noted that the term “Muslim” is a religious concept, and he therefore deplored that “an ethnic meaning should be given to the concept ‘Muslim,’ and that this term be used to designate an individual who, for example, belongs to the Muslim group only because of his origins, but who denies in theory and in practice his belonging to Islam.” Faced with this hesitancy on the part of some ‘ulama’, the national name “Muslim” found a tireless defender in Husein Dozo. A 1939 graduate of al-Azhar University, sentenced to five years in prison in 1945 for his role in the 13th SS Division, then reincorporated into the Islamic religious institutions in the late 1950s,
Dozo became President of the Association of 'Ulama' of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1964. As such, he had great influence within the Islamic religious institutions. In his view, the Bosnian Muslims gaining the status of constituent nation of the Yugoslav federation was a major historical turning point, because it removed the “Turkish burden” that weighed on them:

For the first time in their history, the Muslims are standing upright on their land. They have finally freed themselves from accusations of being foreigners or the remnants of the foreign occupant, which certain [Serb] nationalist forces wanted to apply to them, and which has weighed on them heavily.  

For Dozo, the recognition of the Muslim nation freed the Muslims of a deep-rooted sentiment of insecurity and inferiority, and made them fully fledged members of the community of Yugoslav nations. Then, turning to the connection between national identity and religious identity, between Musliman with a capital “M” or a lower-case “m,” he noted:

Beginning now, the concept of Muslim no longer designates merely a member of the Islamic religion, but also a member of the Muslim nation, whether this member is a believer or not . . . It would appear that Islam loses out here. It seems indisputable that, in this case, the word “Muslim” is formally alienated and removed as far as possible from Islam. And yet, this is not the case. I would say that it is more a return than an alienation. The lower-case “m” does not lose out, it wins. The capital “M” strengthens and consolidates it even more. 

To understand fully Dozo’s stances on the issue of Muslim national identity, we must view them within his broader vision of the relationship between Islam and the socialist society. Dozo was in fact a typical representative of Islamic reformism, influenced by the thought of Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Mahmud Shaltut. It was he who, in the 1960s, successfully imposed Islamic reformism as the dominant current of thought in the Islamic Religious Community. Dozo tirelessly advocated a renewal in Islamic thought that can be summarized in two basic demands: “to purify Islam of the various mistakes and erroneous conceptions that have been introduced over a long period, and to revive *ijtihad* and the elaboration of new Islamic conceptions.” Moreover, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he spent a considerable amount of time answering readers’ questions in the columns of the religious press, and through his answers (fatwas), he contributed to a subtle transformation in how Islam was conceived and practiced in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dozo also wanted to break with the narrow or mystic conceptions of religious life, and encouraged believers to become more involved in socialist society:

It is of the greatest importance [to know] how the Muslim as a member of the Islamic Community, and thus as a believer, positions and integrates himself into the new socialist reality . . . Each member of the Islamic Community is also a citizen of the socialist community. As a Muslim, he does not have the right to be
closed [withdrawn], he must be completely open to society and completely integrated and involved in the processes of this society.\footnote{42}

In opposition to the ‘ulama’ and other religious Muslims who focused only on performing religious rituals, Đozo advocated active involvement in the new social and political reality. In his view:

Muslims are deeply aware that socialist society offers them the best guaranties for their existence, development and wellbeing. This society has enabled them to find themselves, to find their place and to free themselves of certain burdens of the past.\footnote{43}

These words probably concealed a certain degree of hypocrisy. However, Đozo’s allegiance to communist Yugoslavia was similar to that of the new political and intellectual elites linked with communist modernization, and fit with the tradition of allegiance to the central power that went back to the Austro-Hungarian period.

In Đozo’s view, the Islamic Religious Community had to accept the socialist reality in order to be able to revive religious life and re-enter the public sphere. The recognition of the Muslim nation enabled the Muslims “to go from a narrow form of our [religious] existence and our evolution to a broader form of our national and social existence.”\footnote{44}

In re-entering the public sphere, the Islamic Religious Community would also facilitate a redefinition of the relationship between the ‘ilmiyya and the new Muslim intelligentsia. Aware that “at present, the new progressive forces, the forces of the capital ‘M’ hold the advantage,” Đozo called for a convergence between the ‘ilmiyya and the intelligentsia:

There are real possibilities for that. The forces of the [religious] infrastructure are increasingly adapting to the contemporary world, while the forces of the [national] superstructure are taking more and more account of their historical foundation. The objective is thus the same. Perhaps the ways and means of achieving this objective are different, but that should not be troublesome.\footnote{45}

In this prospective relationship, the ‘ilmiyya would have the possibility of relying on its own institutions, whereas the Muslim intelligentsia had none. Đozo thus encouraged Muslim intellectuals to use the Islamic Religious Community as the proxy, or substitute, for a national institution. Hence his confidence in the fact that adopting “Muslim” as the national name would ultimately benefit the Islamic religious institutions and Islam as a whole. According to Đozo, “the lower-case ‘m’ forms the infrastructure for the capital ‘M’, without which it would be nothing more than an empty word, a formula with no content.”\footnote{46} Despite the devastating effects of the communist modernization and secularization, Đozo thus looked optimistically towards the future of Islam in Yugoslavia. Then, going beyond the Yugoslav framework, he extended his hopes to all of Europe:

The Muslims in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia represent the largest autochthonous Islamic community in Europe. In a way, we could say that this
Beginning in the 1960s, the Islamic Religious Community therefore experienced a clear revival in its activity and visibility. In some respects, this renewal of Islamic religious institutions was reminiscent of that of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches at the same period, and can be attributed to factors such as the liberalization of the communist regime, a rekindling of national tensions and demands, or simply the higher standard of living of religious followers. The building of many places of worship in Bosnia-Herzegovina was also made possible by the financial contributions of the diaspora, and in some places, became a veritable competition between religious communities. The number of mosques and prayer rooms rose from 817 in 1955 to 1,661 twenty years later. At the same time, the Islamic religious community experienced considerable growth in its schools. The number of children attending religious classes climbed from 11,500 in 1957 to 115,000 in 1977, while the number of students graduating from the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa rose from eleven to forty-three over the same period, and a Faculty of Islamic Theology opened in Sarajevo in 1977 to train the future cadres of the Islamic Community. In Kosovo, the Alauddin Madrasa opened in 1962, and had 196 students in 1975. The Islamic religious press also grew substantially, under Husein Đozo's decisive leadership.

In 1968, along with printing the hours of prayer, the Takvım began publishing texts about the Islamic faith and the political and cultural history of Bosnian Muslims. Its circulation at the time stood at around 50,000. Besides, the Association of 'Ulama' of Bosnia-Herzegovina launched a bimonthly magazine in 1970. Called Preporod (“Rebirth”), its circulation quickly grew to 30,000. To serve on the staff of Preporod, Đozo brought in young clerics recently graduated from the madrasa and—as we shall see later on—former members of the Young Muslim movement. Lastly, the 1970s also saw a revival of the tarikats, which had been banned in 1952, with a Tarikat Centre (tarikatski centar) opening in 1977 to coordinate their activities with those of the Islamic Community.

This renewed activity for the Islamic religious institutions coincided with new visibility, as the Islamic Religious Community gradually took on the status of a proxy national institution. In 1969, a new internal Constitution changed the community’s official name from Islamic Religious Community to the Islamic Community (Islamska zajednica), thus illustrating its desire to broaden the scope of its action beyond merely performing religious rituals. This function as a proxy national institution became particularly apparent during the 1971 census. Preporod relayed the stance of the League of Communists on the national name “Muslim,” and the Association of ‘Ulama’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina even organized seminars to mobilize the imams in favor of this name. A certain convergence of interests thus arose between the leaders of the Islamic Community and the intellectuals involved in promoting the Muslim national identity, notably Atif Purivatra. This rapprochement between the Islamic Community and a portion of the Muslim intelligentsia continued throughout the 1970s, and intellectuals such as historians Muhamed Hadžijahić, Hazim Šabanović, and Enes Pelidija wrote for
the religious press during this period. However, the best example of circulation between the academic sphere and the Islamic Community was Hamdija Ćemerlić. Professor of Law at the Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari’a Law before the war and a member of the ZAVNOBiH in 1943, Ćemerlić was elected rector of the University of Sarajevo in the 1960s and became a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After his retirement, he was elected president of the Islamic Community’s vrhovni sabor (supreme assembly) in 1976. A year later, he became the first dean of the Faculty of Islamic Theology. Ćemerlić was therefore one of the main intermediaries between the communist authorities, the Muslim lay intelligentsia, and the Islamic religious institutions.

The national role of the Islamic religious institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina was, in many respects, similar to the role of the Serb Orthodox Church or the Catholic Church during the same period. However, the Islamic Community’s situation was unique in two regards. Firstly, it was not competing against secular national institutions equivalent to the Serb Academy of Sciences and Arts (for the Serbs) or the association Matica hrvatska (for the Croats), and was thus in a favorable position to take on the role of proxy national institution. Secondly, the renewal of Islamic religious institutions came with a revival of exchanges with the Muslim world. The number of Yugoslav pilgrims to Mecca climbed from sixty-five in 1955 to 1,048 in 1975, and 1,620 in 1990. In 1962, for the first time since the war, the Islamic Community sent five students to al-Azhar University. Twenty-eight years later, it counted 218 graduates of the Gazi Husrev-beg and Alauddin Madrasas in universities in the Muslim world, including 109 in Egypt, forty-four in Saudi Arabia, twenty in Jordan, and fifteen in Turkey. Over the same period, exchanges of delegations with the Muslim world grew in number, and the financial support of certain Muslim states enabled the Faculty of Islamic Theology to open in 1977, along with the construction of the monumental Zagreb Mosque in 1987. As part of Yugoslavia’s policy of non-alignment, the leaders of the Islamic Community were even involved in welcoming the official delegations of certain Muslim states, thus playing a role in Yugoslav foreign policy that had no equivalent for the Orthodox or Catholic Churches. Yet the relationship between the Islamic Community and the Yugoslav authorities was not devoid of tensions. For example, Husein Đozo was reprimanded on several occasions in the official press, which described his views on the Arab-Israeli conflict as anti-Semitic. Beginning in this period, the communist authorities became concerned that “some Muslim clerics tend to overestimate the importance of the religious factor in the Muslim national identity, asserting that national and religious identity are one and the same.” However, until the end of the 1970s, the Islamic Community enjoyed relatively wide leeway, which Đozo used to rehabilitate some of the men who had been excluded from Islamic religious life in the 1940s.

The resurgence of the pan-Islamist current in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Harshly repressed during the post-war period, the members of the pan-Islamist movement Young Muslims (Mladi Muslimani) ceased all organized activity until the 1960s. Admittedly, its members who had been exiled abroad contributed to newspapers
such as Der gerade Weg ("The Straight Path," published in Vienna) and Bosanski pogledi ("Bosnian Viewpoints," published in Zurich), and took part in organizing the first Islamic religious associations in Austria and Germany, but those who remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina had to make do with informal, discreet contacts with one another. Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, the changes within the Islamic Community opened up a space of liberty that some Young Muslims quickly took advantage of. Their involvement in Islamic religious institutions took on two main forms.

Firstly, with Dozo's support, they published articles in Takvim and Preporod under pseudonyms. These articles usually dealt with purely religious themes, but could also address social issues such as moral "corruption" or the "backwardness" of Muslim countries. Sometimes, their articles took on an overtly political dimension. In the mid-1960s, the former Young Muslims could thus once again present their conception of Islam to a wide audience. At the same time, they took part in discussion forums organized by Dozo. Beginning in 1966, a weekly forum was held in the Emperor's Mosque (careva džamija) in Sarajevo, aimed primarily at young people, and involving various outside speakers. After a hiatus between 1972 and 1978, this forum resumed in the tanners' prayer room (tabački mesdžid), in the Baščaršija district. One of its leaders, young imam Hasan Čengić, spoke about his worries about moral corruption—symbolized by unisex clothing, discotheques and the "sexual revolution"—and called on young believers to show their Islamic faith through their personal ethics and their clothing. In addition, he asked them to recreate spaces for Islamic socialization within the socialist society:

Join or form an Islamic džemat with boys and girls of your age, and instead of meeting with your friends in cafés and discotheques, meet them in mektebs, mosques, houses, mahalas [traditional neighborhoods], schools and during open-air excursions.49

For the former Young Muslims, this discussion forum was an opportunity to come into contact with the students of the madrasa and with young non-religious intellectuals who were interested in Islam and to make them aware of the topics dear to the Young Muslims themselves, such as the need to re-Islamize the Muslims or the primacy of pan-Islamic solidarity.

During the 1960s, a pan-Islamist current thus took shape again within the Islamic Community. This current counted a few hundred members, from two different generations with very distinct characteristics. The older Young Muslims were often from families of urban notables, and had been trained in the high schools of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the universities of Zagreb or Belgrade. The new generation of pan-Islamist sympathizers had more rural, modest origins. Deprived of its former prestige, the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa drew students for whom a career as a cleric represented either a family tradition, a means of social advancement, or both, as in the case of the sons of rural imams. By acquiring religious knowledge that their fathers lacked, while attending in parallel the faculties of philology or political science of Sarajevo, these students were educated both as an 'alim and as a secular intellectual. They therefore went through an identity and moral crisis similar to that which the Young Muslims had
experienced in the late 1930s. Lastly, to complete this portrait of the Bosnian pan-Islamist current, we must mention the ties that it built with certain Arab students who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. These students notably helped disseminate the writings of Islamist authors such as Hassan al-Banna, Muhammad Iqbal, Abul A'la Maududi, and Sayyid Qutb. Some of them, such as the Sudanese Fatih al-Hassanein, would play a crucial role in the 1990s in fostering ties between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Muslim world.

Among the texts written by members of the pan-Islamist current at that time, the most political, by far, was the *Islamic Declaration* written by Alija Izetbegović. He was a Young Muslim who had been sentenced to three years in prison in 1946, later graduating from the law school of Sarajevo and working as a jurist in various public companies. The *Islamic Declaration*, completed in 1970 and parts of which were published in *Takvim* in 1972, resembles an informal manifesto for the Bosnian pan-Islamist current. Its preamble notes the “backwardness” of Muslim countries, as reflected in their poverty, low level of education, and subservience to Western powers. Rejecting equally the conservative ‘ulama’ and the Sufi sheikhs who “pull Islam back to the past,” and the modernist intellectuals who “prepare a future [for Islam] which is not its own,” Izetbegović then reserves his harshest criticism for the secular regimes of the Muslim world, from Kemalist Turkey to the Indonesian philosophy of *pancasila*, along with the Ba’athist regimes of the Arab world. In his view, their authoritarian secularization policies led to failure, as shown by the case of Turkey: “As an Islamic country, Turkey dominated the world;” whereas “Turkey as a plagiarism of Europe is a third-rate country.”

Alija Izetbegović called for the establishment of a new “Islamic order” throughout the whole Muslim world. But he struggled to define the contours of this new order. Thus, he proclaimed that “there is no peace or coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic social and political institutions,” but just after, called for studying the experiences of the United States, the USSR, and Japan without preconceived judgments, ultimately describing Islam as a “median thought” in a world divided into two blocs. When attempting to define more clearly the Islamic order that he was advocating, Izetbegović merely gave general considerations about the equality and fraternity of believers, the republican principle, the necessary restrictions to private property and freedom of the press, as well as the importance of education, moral, and family values. Unable to give precise political content to his Islamic project, Izetbegović emphasized its moral dimensions, eventually defining the Islamic order in these tautological terms:

To the question, “What is a Muslim society?” our answer is a community made up of Muslims, and we consider that this answer says it all, or nearly so. The meaning of this definition is that there is no institutional, social or legal system that can exist separately from the people who are its actors, of which we could say, “This is an Islamic system.” No system is Islamic or non-Islamic *per se*. It is only so based on the people who make it.

Evasive as to the nature of the Islamic order, Izetbegović was hardly more precise in describing the paths that would lead to the establishment of this new order. In his view, “the Islamic renaissance cannot begin without a religious revolution, but it cannot
continue and be complete without a political revolution.” Establishing the Islamic order would thus involve, first and foremost, the re-Islamization of Muslim societies, from the bottom up. To this end, Izetbegović called for a new, re-Islamicized intelligentsia that would be able to mobilize the Muslim masses.

Yet here again, the true nature of the Islamic movement remains unclear. On the one hand, Izetbegović views it as a moral movement, rather than a political one. On the other, analyzing the weakness of Pakistan’s Muslim League, he defines this Islamic movement as an ideological avant-garde, in the Leninist mould:

*Only individuals who have been tested and trained, gathered together in a sound, homogeneous organization, can win the struggle for the Islamic order and the complete reconstruction of Islamic society. This organization bears no resemblance to a political party from the arsenal of Western democracy; it is a movement founded on Islamic ideology, with clear criteria of moral and ideological belonging.*

Despite its numerous imprecisions, Alija Izetbegović’s *Islamic Declaration* is not merely a “general treatise on Islam and politics,” as British historian Noel Malcolm would have it. It is a text that energetically reaffirms the political dimension of Islam in the contemporary world, and therefore belongs to the genre of Islamist literature. The frequently asserted view that the *Islamic Declaration* says nothing about the situation of Bosnian Muslims is also mistaken. Admittedly, neither Bosnia-Herzegovina nor Yugoslavia is explicitly mentioned in this document, and it is striking to note that Izetbegović describes nationalism as an “imported product” and an “anti-Islamic movement,” just when the Bosnian Muslim community was being recognized as a nation. In opposition to nationalism, which he views as a Western invention, Izetbegović supports “pan-Islamism [which] has always burst from the very breast of the Muslim people,” and calls for “a great Islamic federation stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, from tropical Africa to Central Asia.”

The fact that this idea of a pan-Islamist utopia lived on in Bosnia-Herzegovina may seem surprising; after all, in the rest of the Muslim world, these ideas had been swept away by the failure of the interwar Pan-Islamic Congresses and the post-1945 rise of anti-colonialist movements. However, this anachronism is easier to understand if we consider Izetbegović’s pan-Islamism to be a response to the specific situation of Bosnian Muslims.

First of all, Izetbegović’s insistence on the religious ties binding Muslims together automatically devalued the linguistic ties binding together the community of Yugoslav nations, which the secular promoters of the Muslim nation held so dear. At the same time, his reference to the Umma enabled him to go beyond the minority status of Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia and in Europe, and to imagine them as part of a future pan-Islamic empire. This empire would be the Muslim counterpart of the United States, the USSR and the European Economic Community—three blocs that Izetbegović regarded as imperial formations. In Izetbegović’s view, the European Economic Community represented a step beyond the nation-state in Europe, and was therefore “the most positive event in European history in the twentieth century.” This is the context surrounding Izetbegović’s conception of the issue of Muslim and non-Muslim minorities. In his view, “non-Muslim minorities in an Islamic state should
enjoy religious freedom and full protection [by the state], on the condition that they are loyal.” Conversely, and “on the condition that religious freedom and a normal life and development are guaranteed for them, Muslim minorities in non-Muslim communities should be loyal and should fulfil all their duties towards this community, apart from those that harm Islam or Muslims.” This approach to managing religious minorities is reminiscent not only of the millets of the Ottoman Empire, but also (and especially) the Bosnian Muslim community’s status as a non-sovereign, protected religious minority during the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods.

It is unclear whether Izetbegović and his comrades considered Bosnian Muslims to be a minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and if so, whether they would remain in the minority for long. Indeed, in 1970, the Muslims were close to becoming the largest nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and it was not unrealistic to think that they would form a majority of the Bosnian population in the medium term. Moreover, the example of an Islamic state chosen by Izetbegović was Pakistan, a state created from the partition of a pluriconfessional country in which Muslims were only a minority. Lastly, it is worth noting that Izetbegović condemned the creation of Israel, but was fascinated by the capacity of Zionism to transform the Jewish community into a nation with its own language and state, and to defeat Muslim states that had larger military forces but were not united. Thus, Izetbegović’s pan-Islamism looked less like a radical form of anti-nationalism and more like a religiously-inspired proto-nationalism shaped by the specific political history of Bosnian Muslims. His denunciation of nationalism was aimed chiefly at the secular nationalisms of the Muslim world, which he accused of “leading to a kind of denationalization [of the Muslim peoples] very similar to that of their colonialist predecessors.” The Islamic Declaration was therefore not just a religious text; it was a political manifesto inspired by pan-Islamism, advocating a religious form of proto-nationalism that was distinct from the “national affirmation” encouraged by the communist regime. Despite its evasiveness and internal contradictions, the Islamic Declaration was rooted in the social and political reality of Bosnian Muslims, addressing several powerful messages to the community.

From the Yugoslav crisis to the Islamic Community crisis

In the late 1970s, the economic and political situation of communist Yugoslavia rapidly deteriorated. Economically, the world crisis led to slower growth, runaway inflation and the appearance of mass unemployment. Politically, the rivalries between republican elites grew more intense, and the communist regime’s legitimacy evaporated. In this context, the election of a Polish pope in 1978 and the Islamic Revolution in Iran a year later prompted the Yugoslav authorities to tighten their surveillance of religious institutions. Therefore, it is unsurprising that an August 1979 article by Husein Đozo praising the Iranian revolution as “a victory of the divine word” was followed by a harsh campaign in the press against the Islamic Community and against Đozo personally, forcing him to give up all his official functions. However, this sidelining of Đozo (who would die three years later) did not end the controversies involving the Islamic Community and Islam in general.
Tito died on May 4, 1980, depriving Yugoslavia of its supreme leader. This event exacerbated the crisis of the Yugoslav federation even more. Ten months later, demonstrations in Kosovo, demanding that this province be transformed into a republic, were violently put down. The Albanian demonstrators were described by the Yugoslav media as “counter-revolutionaries,” “irredentists,” and “Islamic fundamentalists”—a new phrase borrowed from the Western press. More generally, the conflicts between the Yugoslav republics became increasingly heated in the 1980s. The Serb press multiplied its attacks against the Muslim leaders and intellectuals of Bosnia-Herzegovina, accusing them of encouraging “Muslim nationalism,” “pan-Islamism,” and “Islamic fundamentalism.” Initially, the Muslim political and intellectual elites denied that any such phenomena existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Then, as the attacks continued, the leaders of the SKBiH decided to turn against the Bosnian pan-Islamist current. A wave of arrests was carried out in the religious milieus in March 1983 and, four months later, Alija Izetbegović and twelve other individuals were brought to trial, including four former Young Muslims (Salih Behmen, Omer Behmen, Ismet Kasumagić, and Rušid Prguda) and three leaders of the tabački mesdžid discussion forum (Hasan Čengić, Džemaludin Latić, and Mustafa Spahić). They were accused of encouraging the creation of an “ethnically pure” Bosnia-Herzegovina, of circulating the Islamic Declaration, and—for five of them—of secretly travelling to Teheran. On August 20, 1983, they were handed down prison sentences from six months to fifteen years. Thus, the members of a marginal pan-Islamist current served as scapegoats in a settling of scores that went well beyond them.

In the 1980s, the issue of Kosovo precipitated the Yugoslav crisis. There, police repression caused the relations between the Albanian and Serb communities to deteriorate, and Serbs in the province organized their own demonstrations, as they considered that they were being forced into exile by the Albanian majority. They won the support of the Serb Orthodox Church and nationalist intellectuals with ties to the Serb Academy of Sciences and Arts, which produced a “memorandum” on the state of the Yugoslav federation. Published in the press in 1986 without the authorization of its authors, this document described the attacks against the Serb population of Kosovo as a “genocide,” presented the Serb nation as the main victim of the confederalization of Yugoslavia, and thus called for the Yugoslav federation to be recentralized. This awakening of Serb nationalism was accelerated in 1987, when Slobodan Milošević became head of the League of Communists of Serbia. A pure product of the communist apparatus, Milošević adopted the main themes developed in the memorandum, grew closer to the Serb Orthodox Church and the nationalist intellectuals, and encouraged the Serb media to resort to anti-Muslim rhetoric. A skillful orator with a populist bent, he took part in various mass gatherings, including the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in June 1989. In parallel, his partisans led “anti-bureaucratic revolutions,” causing the political leaders in place in Montenegro and Vojvodina to resign, and the Parliament of Serbia passed constitutional amendments that repealed the autonomy of the province of Kosovo. This set off a new wave of Albanian demonstrations, which the army and police repressed. On July 2, 1990, the Parliament of Kosovo—which had been dissolved by Milošević—met secretly to proclaim a “Republic of Kosovo,” thus ushering in a long series of proclamations of autonomy and independence throughout the entire Yugoslav space.
The rise of Serb nationalism in the second half of the 1980s destabilized the Yugoslav federation as a whole. On the one hand, Milošević's partisans brought the conflicts among republics out of the halls of the party, and into the streets and media. On the other hand, by taking control of the Republic of Montenegro and the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, then demanding the recentralization of the Yugoslav federation, they shattered its fragile edifice. In particular, they came into opposition with the Slovene communist authorities, who wanted increased decentralization and democratization of the Yugoslav federation, and were also effective in using populist rhetoric and allying with the Catholic Church and dissident groups. The other republican leagues of communists were more restrained. Yet, the collapse of the communist regimes of central and eastern Europe in 1989 signaled the end of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia: in January 1990, its 14th Congress was marked by a confrontation between the Serb and Slovene delegations with regard to the introduction of a multiparty system, and by the departure of the Slovene and Croat delegates. Barely three months later, the republics of Slovenia and Croatia organized their first free elections. In Croatia, these elections were won by the Croat Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica—HDZ), a party that combined dissidents, nationalist émigrés, and former members of the communist apparatus. The HDZ enjoyed support from the Catholic Church. Its deputies held a majority in the Croatian Parliament, and elected Franjo Tuđman as the President of Croatia. Tuđman was a former general and communist historian who had been sidelined in the 1960s because of his "Croat nationalism." In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Yugoslav federation's crisis was watched with great apprehension. As early as 1984, Branko Mikulić expressed opposition to any multipartyism due to the risk of civil war. In the press, he stated:

If we authorize a multiparty system in this country, all that people would gain would be several new national and religious parties with no specific political or economic program, apart from mutual hatred and cries from their leaders for partition and secession. We would have another Lebanon in this country, and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia will not allow this. 63

Nevertheless, the SKBiH was unable to escape the crisis of the communist system, as shown by a series of financial scandals. The largest of these was the Agrokomerc scandal, named after a food processing company that employed around 13,000 people in Cazinska Krajina (in the Bihać region), including a large majority of Muslim workers. In 1987, this scandal caused Hamdija Pozderac to step down from his post as representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Collegial Presidency of Yugoslavia, and coincided with large-scale demonstrations supporting Fikret Abdić, the director of Agrokomerc, who had been imprisoned for embezzlement. At the same time, the SKBiH's loyalty to Titoist orthodoxy made it powerless: at its 10th (and last) Congress in November 1989, it still proclaimed its opposition to multiparty politics.

The SKBiH’s resistance to change did not prevent Bosnia-Herzegovina from being affected by the rise of nationalist sentiments, as shown by the increased number of religious gatherings: beginning in 1981, the village of Medugorje in Western Herzegovina became the site for a major Catholic pilgrimage, and in the mid-1980s,
the Serb Orthodox Church started to organize commemorations for several massacres of the Second World War. In July 1989, Nijaz Duraković, the new president of the Central Committee of the SKBiH, denounced the “national and religious euphoria” that had seized hold of Bosnian society. With regard to the Islamic Community, he noted:

Also in the ranks of the Muslim clergy, a strong politicization is occurring around the central thesis that now, more than ever, all the Muslims of Yugoslavia must close ranks and return to the bosom of Islam, because they are once again threatened by Christian repression, and more particularly by Serb and Montenegrin vengeance. In this context, some Muslim nationalists are openly showing solidarity with Albanian nationalists, supporting all their irredentist and counter-revolutionary demands, from the slogan “Kosovo Republic” to the assertion that what is happening in Kosovo is a genocide against the Albanian people. Likewise, the slogan stating that the existence of Muslims is directly connected to the preservation of Islam is increasingly carrying weight.

However, the revival of Islam that could be seen in Bosnia-Herzegovina was more complex than Duraković implied. During her fieldwork in Sarajevo in the late 1980s, British anthropologist Cornelia Sorabji frequented young “revivalist” circles that were developing on the fringes of the Islamic Community. She showed that these youths felt solidarity with the Albanians of Kosovo and rejected the idea of coexistence between Islam and socialism, but they were less concerned with political ideology than moral values. Seeking to apply these values in their family and interpersonal relationships, they turned towards the Muslim world in search of models to follow:

The revivalists not only link the values they defend to a better era [that of the Prophet], but also to a better place. In search of values perceived as Islamic, the revivalists of Sarajevo look constantly towards the outside Muslim world, seeking to identify their own practice with that of the Arabs and Turks. Modesty, respect and obedience within the family are not only considered to be intrinsically Islamic, but also perceived and promoted as values that tie the Bosnians to the rest of the Muslim Umma.

More generally, Sorabji observed that Islam’s influence in the Muslim population was reflected less in carrying out religious rituals than in respecting certain moral standards. In this context, the revival of Islam did not bring with it a general increase in religiosity. An opinion poll carried out in 1989 showed that 61 percent of young Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina never went to the mosque, and 25 percent went out of deference to culture and family traditions. Only 14 percent attended mosque out of religious conviction.

For the Islamic Community itself, the growing instrumentalization of religious institutions and symbols for nationalist purposes further encouraged its expanding activities and visibility, but also coincided with a serious internal crisis. Indeed, the 1980s saw the return of students who had gone to study in the Muslim world, where
they had discovered neo-Salafism, a strict, fundamentalist current that called for a return to the Islam of the “pious ancestors” \((\textit{al-salaf al-salih})\). Worried by this trend, Bosnian authorities considered Ahmed Smajlović, the Chairman of the \textit{starešinstvo} (Presidency) of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to be too close to Saudi Arabia, and forced him to step down from his position in 1985. This forced resignation was supposed to complete the process that had begun in 1979 to regain control of the Islamic Community. However, new sources of disputes and tensions quickly arose. Firstly, the mosque opened in Zagreb in 1987 became an active center for religious dissent. It was led by its main imam Mustafa Cerić, a 1978 graduate of al-Azhar University and the imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago from 1981 to 1987. Secondly, the worsening crisis in Kosovo raised a major challenge for the Islamic Community, even more so as the Catholic Church sought to play a key role in the Albanian protest movement. In February 1990, the \textit{vrhovni sabor} (supreme assembly) of the Islamic Community observed that in Kosovo, “even if the imams attempt to maintain order and appeal to the faithful to have \textit{subur} [patience], it is clear that the situation is increasingly out of their control.” At the same time, the Zagreb Mosque organized a prayer for the \textit{šehid}s (martyrs of the faith) of Kosovo. Eight months later, in October 1990, Rexhep Bojaš’s election as the head of the Islamic Community of Serbia was a sign that the Albanian nationalists had taken control of the Islamic religious institutions of Kosovo.

Against this backdrop, a wave of protest broke out in late 1988 inside the Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Led by Salih Čolaković, Seid Smajkić, and Halil Mehtić—three ‘\textit{ulama}’ with close ties to the neo-Salafists, this “imam movement” combined tangible demands with attacks aimed at the religious leaders who were the most compromised with the regime. It obtained the resignation of \textit{Reis-ul-ulema} Husein Mujić in September 1989. These upheavals within the Islamic Community were an opportunity for pan-Islamists to take over certain key positions in religious institutions. Thus, just after leaving prison, Omer Behmen was elected as the head of the local religious institutions of Sarajevo, and Džemaludin Latić became Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper \textit{Preporod}. However, pan-Islamists quickly came into conflict with the leaders of the “imam movement” on the subject of the Islamic Community’s new internal Constitution: whereas the pan-Islamists wanted to give an important role to laymen, the “imam movement” intended to strengthen the ‘\textit{ilmiyya}’s role. In the end, the Constitution adopted in April 1990 maintained the principle of electing the members of the Islamic Community’s governing bodies, while specifying that at least one-third of these members must belong to the ‘\textit{ilmiyya}’. Moreover, the Islamic Community officially reincorporated the \textit{tarikats}, thus lifting the ban on their activities that had been in place since 1952. The campaign for the election of new leaders for the Islamic Community then led to the defeat of pan-Islamists. In October 1990, Salih Čolaković was elected chairman of the \textit{mešihat} (presidency) of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with eighteen votes versus twelve for his rival Senahid Bristrić. Five months later, the Macedonian Jakub Selimoski was elected \textit{Reis-ul-ulema}, with sixty-seven votes versus seventeen for the pan-Islamist candidate, Mustafa Cerić, and twelve votes for two other candidates. Selimoski thus became the first \textit{Reis-ul-ulema} ever to not be from Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Yet the clearest sign that the pan-Islamist current was in a minority within the Islamic Community was the latter’s official stance on multiparty politics. In January 1990, Fikret Karčić, a specialist in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), published an article in *Glasnik* about the Islamic Community and the democratic transition. Karčić expressed the view that, while supporting the democratization process, the Islamic Community must clearly show its political neutrality. In his view, the introduction of multiparty politics was even an opportunity to halt the political instrumentalization of religious institutions:

> In a single-party system, if someone did not or could not act within the framework of the party in power, he would do so within the existing institutions. Sometimes, this could be the religious community. In a system with several political parties, this cannot occur.\(^{69}\)

Karčić thus wished to ban the ‘*ulama*’ from all political activities, as partisan choices should remain a private matter for individual Muslims. Especially, he was hostile to the creation of a Muslim party:

> The rule of neutrality for the Islamic Community must apply in particular with “Muslim” or, as the case may be, “Islamic” parties. The history of the political life of pre-war Yugoslavia or of some contemporary Muslim countries abounds with examples of partisan conflict shifting from political grounds to religious institutions, of struggles between “Muslim” parties [in an attempt] to influence Islamic institutions, governing bodies and foundations. Such a situation systematically has negative consequences.\(^{70}\)

In the following months, this principle of the Islamic Community’s political neutrality was reaffirmed on several occasions by its governing bodies. But what impact did this principle really have as multiparty politics was being introduced into Bosnia-Herzegovina?

**The pan-Islamist takeover of nascent Muslim nationalism**

On February 21, 1990, the Bosnian Parliament passed a law authorizing the creation of political parties, but banning any parties based on an ethnic or religious principle. At the time, 74 percent of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina approved of this restriction.\(^{71}\) However, a few months later, the constitutional court lifted this ban on ethnic parties, and three major nationalist parties appeared on the Bosnian political scene: the Party for Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije*—SDA, a Muslim party), the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka*—SDS), and the Croat Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*—HDZ). Two major “civic” parties (*gradanske stranke*) competed with these nationalist parties: the SKBiH, renamed the Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*—SDP), and the Union of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (*Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije*—SRSJ), which supported the Federal Prime Minister Ante Marković. The Serb SDS and the
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Croat HDZ were modeled after eponymous parties that had been formed in Croatia a few months earlier. The Muslim SDA was created at the initiative of the Bosnian pan-Islamist current. Indeed, its forty founding members included Alija Izetbegović and several other former Young Muslims or men who had been sentenced during the 1983 trial, plus around a dozen leaders of the Islamic Community, of which seven were connected with the Zagreb Mosque. During the SDA Constituent Assembly on May 26, 1990, Izetbegović was elected president of the party, and the members of the pan-Islamist current won considerable influence on the executive committee. In addition, the commission responsible for nominating SDA candidates to the coming general elections was headed by Omer Behmen. After being sent to jail in 1983 as scapegoats for a complex political settling of scores, the members of the pan-Islamist current returned a few years later as martyrs of a discredited communist regime. Armed with this symbolic capital, they took center stage in the reconfiguration of the Muslim political elites.

The pan-Islamist current’s central role in forming a Muslim nationalist party is partly attributable to the hesitations of non-religious Muslim intellectuals, who had remained loyal to the former League of Communists or cautiously stood on the sidelines. On a national level, the only major intellectual figure to rally the SDA was Muhamed Filipović, who created a short-lived Forum for the Protection of the Rights of Muslims before joining the SDA. Other important players in the “national affirmation” process, such as Atif Purivatra, Alija Isaković, and Mustafa Imamović, opted to join the Muslim cultural society Preporod, which was revived in October 1990. However, the support given to the SDA by Adil Zulfi karpašić—the main figure of Muslim political emigration—shows that this party’s founders were succeeding in assembling the various currents of the nascent Muslim nationalism. Moreover, the SDA benefited from the support of some local communist notables. The best example of this occurred in the region of Cazinska Krajina, where the SDA was created by Mirsad Veladžić and Irfan Ljubijankić, two members of the pan-Islamist current, but only became a mass movement after Fikret Abdić, the former director of Agrokomerc, announced that he was joining it in September 1990. In addition to an initial core of founders dominated by the pan-Islamist current, various nationalist protagonists and clientelistic networks of the communist era joined the SDA. Similar configurations could be found in many towns and cities where individuals with ties to the pan-Islamist current or the Islamic Community created local branches of the SDA, before being joined by a portion of local notables and intellectuals. This explains why the SDA’s candidates for the legislative and local elections were often former communists, even as the SDA’s governing bodies were dominated by the pan-Islamist current. Hence the case of the SDA confirms what Croat sociologist Vjeran Katuranić observed in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: “many representatives of the former [communist] elites have successfully infiltrated the ‘new’ [nationalist] elites, including certain protagonists of the former regime who, at one time or another, had been losers in the struggle for power, and who have now come back for ‘revenge.’”

Apart from this internal reshaping of the Muslim political elites, the pan-Islamist current’s ability to take control of the nationalist mobilization of the Muslim community is also attributable to its ability to instrumentalize the Islamic religious institutions and
the symbols of Islam. Admittedly, the Islamic Community was officially neutral, but some members of the pan-Islamist current held strategic positions within its governing bodies, and on a local level, the imams often came out in favor of the SDA. In the party’s campaign meetings, the green flags of the Islamic Community and the ‘ulama’ wearing their ahmedija (‘ulama’ headdress) were quite visible, as shown by the group prayer organized in August 1990 in Foća (eastern Bosnia) in homage to the šehids (martyrs of the faith) killed by the Chetniks during the Second World War. Two months earlier, the SDA’s leaders ostentatiously took part in the revival of the Ajvatovica, a Sufi pilgrimage in Central Bosnia. The pan-Islamist current’s ability to get around the Islamic Community’s official neutrality was partly due to the prestige that its members enjoyed as martyrs of the communist regime. More broadly, these men took advantage of the Islamic Community’s role as a proxy national institution and of the close ties between the Muslim national identity and Islam. In this way, they could harness a nascent Muslim nationalism. However, the pan-Islamist current’s central position was still of a political nature, not a religious one, as shown by the fact that it was in the minority in the governing bodies of the Islamic Community.

While there can be no doubt about the pan-Islamist current’s dominant position within the SDA, its actual ideological influence on the party is harder to assess. In its charter, the SDA defined itself as the party of the “Muslim historical and cultural circle” in Yugoslavia, and thus as the representative of all Yugoslav Muslims in a confessional sense, regardless of their national identity. This definition reflected the pan-Islamic ambitions of the party’s founders. Yet in reality, the Albanian, Turkish, and Roma populations of Yugoslavia formed their own political parties, and the SDA only grew to a mass movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak. In Kosovo, it assembled only the small local Bosnian Muslim population, and in Macedonia, it was divided into a pan-Islamist branch led by Kenan Mazllami (an Albanian) and a nationalist branch headed by Muslims from the Sandžak. As a whole, the SDA was thus a nationalist party rather than a pan-Islamist party. Likewise, it is hard to find the pan-Islamist influence on the SDA’s platform. The party called for democracy and a social market economy, and the religious issues that it cited went no further than defending family values, fighting alcoholism and pornography, or protecting the major religions from blasphemous literary or artistic works. This moderate stance can be attributed to the changing views of the pan-Islamists themselves. Hence in his book Islam between East and West, published in 1988, Alija Izetbegović compared his Islamic “middle way” with the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, social democracy, or even Eurocommunism. However, the SDA’s moderate platform mainly showed that the weight of the pan-Islamist current in the party’s governing bodies did not mean that its constituent ideology was widespread. In September 1990, when asked about the prospects for an “Islamic order” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Izetbegović answered that this would be desirable in principle, but impossible in practice given the secularization of Bosnian society. Then, he added: “If someone declared, before a gathering of 100,000 Muslims, that some kind of Shari’ā should be introduced in Bosnia, he would find no echo.” Thus, despite the pan-Islamist current’s central position and its instrumentalization of Islam, the SDA was not an Islamist party. At the very most, it was a religious, conservative party. This is what Halil Mehtić (an ‘alim close to neo-Salafist ideas) meant when he regretted that “we do not yet have the possibility
to vote for an Islamic party” and called for “Islamization of politics” to replace the “politization of Islam.”

So was the SDA a nationalist party, just like the others? In its platform, the party stated:

Faced with the failure to take account of the national specificity of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and [attempts at] their recuperation, and rejecting these claims as contrary not only to the historical realities, but also to the clearly expressed will of this nation, we hereby declare that Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims, those living in Bosnia-Herzegovina and those living outside its borders, represent an autochthonous Bosnian nation, and thus form one of the six historical nations of Yugoslavia, with its historical name, its land, its history, its culture, its faith, its poets and writers, in short, its past and its future. This is why the SDA will stimulate this national consciousness of the Muslims and will insist on taking account of the reality of their own national existence, with all the legal and political implications thereof.

This emphasis on the political subjectivity of the Muslim nation “with all the legal and political implications thereof” made the SDA a nationalist party, just like the Serb SDS or the Croat HDZ. It leant on the “national affirmation” of the communist era, but broke radically with the Muslim elites from before the Second World War, who regarded the Muslim community as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority, and renounced any national project for Bosnian Muslims. In short, the SDA was a nationalist party, whereas the JMO was not. However, the facts that Muslim nationalism crystallized around a minority pan-Islamist current, that it instrumentalized Islamic religious institutions and the symbols of Islam, and that its proponents struggled to define its contours are reminders that in 1990, this nationalism was still in its nascent phase.

First of all, the SDA leaders had trouble breaking with the Yugoslav idea. When the party was founded, it called for preserving Yugoslavia as a “free community of sovereign nations and republics,” and announced that it would refuse to collaborate with the parties working for the destruction of Yugoslavia. This initial Yugoslavism went hand in hand with the SDA’s desire to unite all Yugoslav Muslims (in a confessional, not national, sense), but also reflected its preoccupation with not openly confronting the Serb SDS or the Muslims themselves, who were still strongly attached to the Yugoslav state: in late 1989, 62.6 percent of Muslims were in favor of greater powers for the Yugoslav federation, against 9.5 percent in favor of stronger powers for the individual republics. During the electoral campaign, the SDA avoided choosing between the “federal” (i.e. centralist) model defended by Serbia and Montenegro, and the “confederal” (i.e. separatist) model defended by Slovenia and Croatia, even though Izetbegović expressed his personal preference for the latter. The SDA’s leaders refocused their preoccupations on Bosnia-Herzegovina alone and remained evasive on the issue of Yugoslavia’s future. In September 1990, Izetbegović stated:

For us there are three acceptable alternatives: a Bosnia with equal rights in an integral federal Yugoslavia, a Bosnia in a confederal Yugoslavia, and lastly, an
independent Bosnia. If the threats of Slovenia and Croatia leaving do come true, Bosnia will not remain part of a small Yugoslavia, it will not be a part of Great Serbia. If that occurs, we will proclaim full independence.\textsuperscript{80}

Beginning in this period, independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina was one of the options considered by the SDA’s leaders, but they had not yet decided to pursue it actively.

At the same time, the SDA’s greatest difficulties did not come from the future of Yugoslavia or of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but instead, the very definition of the national identity of the Bosnian Muslims. Within the party, Adil Zulfikarpašić took on the identity discourse that had been developed by the Muslim political emigration in the 1960s, and called for “Bosniak” to be quickly adopted as the national name. In his view, this name was not only “the sole national identification for the Muslims of Bosnia,” but also “an historic chance for them to become a state-building [državotvoran] factor, a majority nation that for a long time was exposed to attempts to keep it as a shapeless mass, to transform it gradually and to manipulate its national identity.”\textsuperscript{81} Zulfikarpašić’s initiative received support from a handful of intellectuals, including Muhamed Filipović, but came up against hostility from the members of the pan-Islamist current, who considered that only the national name “Muslim” could express the essence of the national identity of the Bosnian Muslims. Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, an intellectual with close ties to the pan-Islamist current, thus wrote:

\texttt{The historical consciousness, customs and culture as “sources of national identity” are, in the case of Muslims, linked irrevocably and in multiple ways to Islam, and any purely secular attempt to legitimize the Muslim nation is inevitably condemned to be incomplete.}\textsuperscript{82}

Hence in his view:

\texttt{There exists no other name that better expresses the specificity of the Muslim community (or of the Muslim nation) and which, at the same time, conveys and preserves the link with the spiritual environment and spiritual source from which this nation provides for its future and understands its past.}\textsuperscript{83}

This controversy over the national name of the Bosnian Muslims reveals that, even as the Yugoslav federation was falling apart, the contours of Muslim nationalism remained blurred and controversial. At the same time, it presented an opportunity for the pan-Islamist current to demonstrate its new central position. To counter the partisans of a Bosniak national identity, the pan-Islamists could rely on not only the Islamic Community’s ʻulama’, who were eager to maintain close ties between Islam and the Muslim national identity, but also the intellectuals from the League of Communists, who were attached to the careful balances that had been crafted during the communist period. More broadly, the pan-Islamist current benefited from the kindly indifference of the notables and the language habits of the Bosnian population. In early 1990, a mere 1.8 percent of Bosnian citizens were in favor of adopting the name “Bosniak” for Muslim Bosnians alone, with 17.0 percent in favor of adopting it for all inhabitants of Bosnia-
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Herzegovina, and 65.1 percent in favor of keeping the existing national names. Within the SDA, the representatives of the pan-Islamist current far outweighed the partisans of a Bosniak national identity: in September 1990, the governing bodies of the SDA voted, with 272 votes versus eleven, to exclude Adil Zulfikarpašić and his partisans, who then went on to create the Muslim Bosniak Organization (Muslimanska bošnjačka organizacija—MBO). On November 18, 1990, this new party won just 1.1 percent of the votes in the legislative elections. After having won over the support of the ‘ulama’ and former communist intellectuals, the pan-Islamist current succeeded in pushing its adversaries to the margins of Bosnian political life.

To win the general elections scheduled for November 18, 1990, the SDA had not only to silence internal opposition, but also to ensure that it had the support of most Muslim voters and to eliminate a certain number of institutional obstacles. In July 1990, the Bosnian Parliament—still controlled by the SKBiH—debated the constitutional amendments necessary for free elections to be organized in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The supporters of civic institutions that ignored the existence of the three constituent nations (Muslim, Serb, and Croat) lost out to the defenders of consociational institutions that gave a central place to these three constituent nations. The new Article 1 of the Bosnian Constitution thus stated:

The Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina is the sovereign democratic state of the citizens, of the constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina—the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats—and of the members of the other nations and nationalities that live there, all having equal rights.

Therefore, a bicameral Parliament was created, which would elect from its members a Council for the Equality of the Nations and Nationalities. A Collegial Presidency was also created, made up of two Muslim members, two Serbs, two Croats, and one representative of the other nations and nationalities. To prevent nationalists from entering the Presidency, each of its members would be elected by all Bosnian voters, with the Serb and Croat votes supposedly sufficient to block the election of any Muslim nationalist candidate, the Muslim and Croat votes blocking any Serb nationalist candidate, and so forth.

In reality, this institutional arrangement encouraged the nationalist parties to form an informal electoral coalition amongst themselves. When the SDA was founded in May 1990, Izetbegović openly attacked the Serb nationalists, denouncing “these wild ideas [in Serbia] of launching a new Crusade to defend Europe from the Islamic and Muslim threat.” However, in the following months, the SDA’s leaders formed ties with the leaders of the Serb SDS and the Croat HDZ, and Izetbegović himself came to consider that:

It would be very good to form a coalition in Bosnia-Herzegovina between the SDA, the SDS and the HDZ, and thus a Muslim-Serb-Croat coalition.

This coalition was necessary to overcome the institutional obstacles created by the constitutional amendments of July 1990, and was also attributable to their shared
anti-communism and their desire to defeat the civic parties, which were leading in all the opinion polls. To weaken their political adversaries, the nationalist parties had to simultaneously kindle fears and tensions between communities and present themselves as the only ones able to contain these tensions. The electoral campaign thus gave rise to absurd situations in which the leaders of the three nationalist parties heaped praise on their opponents and made social visits to them, even as their campaign meetings saw fights break out between supporters of the different parties. This manipulation of communitarian divisions explains why, barely six months after 74 percent of Bosnian citizens had supported the ban of ethnic parties; 71.1 percent of them voted for one of the three major nationalist parties.

Indeed, on November 18, 1990, the SDA won 30.4 percent of the votes in the legislative elections, against 25.2 percent for the SDS, 15.5 percent for the HDZ, and 28.9 percent for the civic parties. The SDA thus became the leading political party in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the Collegial Presidency, the SDA won three out of seven seats, with Alija Izetbegović and Fikret Abdić holding the two seats reserved for the Muslim nation and Ejup Ganić—also formerly of the League of Communists—the seat reserved for the other nations and nationalities. Abdić won 1,040,307 votes, versus just 874,213 for Izetbegović, but an agreement between the nationalist parties made Izetbegović the first Chairman of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency. Izetbegović then decided to combine this position with that of president of the SDA. A month later, on December 9, 1990, the Serbian elections were won by Slobodan Milošević, who was elected President of Serbia with 65.3 percent of the votes, and by his Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije—SPS), which won 46.1 percent of the votes but 77.6 percent of the seats in Parliament. In the Serbian part of the Sandžak, the SDA won 84,156 votes, i.e. around 80 percent of the Muslim votes, thus obtaining three seats in the Serbian Parliament. In Montenegro, the SDA—allied with the Albanian Democratic Party (Partia demokratike—PD)—won 30,710 votes and thirteen seats in Parliament. In the Yugoslav space as a whole, the SDA thus stood as the hegemonic leader of the nascent Muslim nationalism, continuing along the lines of the national affirmation of the 1970s, and breaking definitively with the status as a non-sovereign and protected religious minority that had been defended by the traditional Muslim elites between 1878 and 1945. From this standpoint, Izetbegović was right when, speaking of the elections of November 18, 1990, he said that “the Muslim nation has been waiting for this day for more than a hundred years.” But did Izetbegović have any idea what lay ahead?
Caught in the Mortal Embrace of Nationalism (1990–5)

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia and the choice for independence

In 1990, nationalist parties won the elections in all the Yugoslav republics, making the disintegration of Yugoslavia irreversible. On the one hand, Slovenia and Croatia quickly moved towards independence. Slovenia organized its independence referendum on December 23, 1990, followed by Croatia on May 19, 1991. Both republics proclaimed their independence on June 25, 1991. On the other hand, Serbia and Montenegro took control of the Yugoslav federal institutions, notably taking over the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). The European Community, which intended to demonstrate its ability to handle the Yugoslav crisis on its own, convened an international conference on Yugoslavia in August 1991, declared the Yugoslav federation to be in the process of dissolving in December 1991, and recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia a month later. In the meantime, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were more hesitant as to which stance they should adopt towards the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation. However, following the Slovenian and Croatian proclamations of independence, as well as the changing stance of the European Community, these two republics also began to move towards independence. Macedonia organized a referendum on September 7, 1991, and Bosnia-Herzegovina asked for international recognition as an independent state on December 20, 1991. At the behest of European authorities, it organized its own referendum on March 1, 1992 (64.3 percent voter turnout, 99.4 percent in favor of independence), and proclaimed its independence two days later. Then, Serbia and Montenegro acknowledged the disappearance of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and created a new, rump Yugoslav state on April 27, 1992: the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Savezna republika Jugoslavija—SRJ).

Apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina, which still had three constituent nations, the new states formed out of the Yugoslav federation defined themselves as nation-states embodying the sovereignty of their eponymous nation and considerably reduced the rights of their national minorities. In Slovenia, where 87.6 percent of the population declared itself to be of Slovene nationality, this triumph of the nation-state principle was relatively painless. However, this was not the case in the rest of the Yugoslav space, where state borders did not coincide with ethnic boundaries (see Map VII). The new independent states had large minority populations of Serbs (31.4 percent in
The disappearance of the plurinational state of Yugoslavia thus had the logical consequence of awakening nationalist projects that aspired to bring together all the members of one nation within a single nation-state, and challenged existing borders. These projects, often described as “Great Serbia,” “Great Croatia,” or “Great Albania,” nevertheless took more complex forms than these terms would suggest. Initially, Serb nationalists claimed to be defenders of the Yugoslav federation rather than promoters of a Great Serb nation-state, to mobilize the strong Yugoslav sentiments of the Serb populations, while also fitting into the categories of international law. More generally, the protagonists of the Yugoslav crisis could defend the territorial integrity of the state or, alternatively, call for the people’s self-determination, depending on the place and circumstances. For example, Serb nationalists defended the right to self-determination of the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina but were opposed to Albanian separatist claims that threatened the territorial integrity of Serbia. Eventually, the various nationalist players formally accepted the principle of intangibility of borders supported by the European Community. Thus, they did not openly attach new territories to the nascent nation-state, but supported instead the formation of self-proclaimed quasi-states within the borders of neighboring states. For example, Serb nationalists created “autonomous Serb regions” in Croatia in summer 1990, grouping these together into a “Serb Republic of Krajina” on December 19, 1991. They repeated the same scenario in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the creation of “autonomous Serb regions” in autumn 1991 and the proclamation of a “Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina” on January 9, 1992. In parallel, the Croat nationalists created two “autonomous Croat regions” in Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 1991. Further south, the Albanian nationalists organized a plebiscite on the independence of Kosovo on September 30, 1991, and another on the autonomy of western Macedonia on January 11, 1992. In all these cases, the nationalists aimed to show their domination over certain territories before being able to bring them together into a single nation-state.

In a Yugoslav space characterized by the diversity of its populations, this drive to create homogenous nation-states would inevitably trigger violence. This was particularly true for the Serb nationalists, who were determined to use force to take control of Serb-populated regions in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As early as spring 1991, the first armed confrontations occurred in Croatia between the Croatian police and Serb militias supported by the Yugoslav Army. After the declarations of independence on June 25, 1991, fighting between the Yugoslav Army and the Territorial Defense of Slovenia lasted only a few days and resulted in the withdrawal of the federal troops. But in Croatia, the conflict that pitted the young Croatian Army against the Yugoslav Army and Serb militias became outright war, as shown by the Yugoslav Army’s siege of the town of Vukovar from August to November 1991. The war in Croatia also saw the first cases of people being forcibly expelled on an ethnic basis—a practice described in the Yugoslav space as “ethnic cleansing” (etničko čišćenje). By the end of 1991, the war in Croatia had killed nearly 11,000 and created 300,000 refugees, and the “Serb Republic of Krajina” controlled around 30 percent of Croatian territory. On January 3, 1992, a UN-negotiated ceasefire allowed for the creation of “protected
areas” corresponding to the regions settled by Serb populations in Croatia, and a 12,000-strong United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed. At that point, the war was interrupted in Croatia, but soon expanded into Bosnia-Herzegovina. Wedged between Serbia and Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s population in 1991 was comprised of 1,905,829 Muslims (43.7 percent of the total), 1,369,258 Serbs (31.4 percent), 755,895 Croats (17.3 percent), 239,845 Yugoslavs (5.5 percent), and

93,747 from other national categories (2.1 percent). The country was thus at the center of the territorial claims awakened by the collapse of the Yugoslav federation. On March 25, 1991, Serbia’s President Slobodan Milošević and Croatia’s President Franjo Tuđman met in Karadordevo, on the Croatia–Serbia border, and during their meeting, a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina was mentioned as a possible solution to the territorial dispute between Serbia and Croatia. As with the 1939 Cvetković–Maček Agreement or during the Second World War with the Ustasha and Chetnik projects, the triumph of the nation-state principle in the Yugoslav space threatened the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a distinct territorial entity, and therefore, the political sovereignty and physical security of the Muslim nation. This was the context behind the SDA’s ambiguous, hesitant stance toward the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation.

Indeed, in the weeks following the elections of November 18, 1990, the SDA reaffirmed its attachment to Yugoslavia: in January 1991, a resolution signed by eighty-four Muslim intellectuals close to the SDA stated that “the Muslims consider the existence and development of a democratic and fair Yugoslav community to be an essential condition for their [own] existence and development.”¹ One month later, during a meeting in Bihać, Alija Izetbegović reminded his audience that “Yugoslavia is not our love, but it is our interest.”² Yet in the same period, SDA deputies presented the Bosnian Parliament with a Declaration on the Sovereignty and Indivisibility of Bosnia-Herzegovina that did not even mention the existence of the Yugoslav federation.³ This declaration sparked a confrontation with the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), which considered it denying the existence of Yugoslavia and disputing the Serb nation’s right to live in a single state.

Thus, in contrast with the idea that events forced the SDA to opt for Bosnian independence, the reality is slightly more complex. Faced with the SDS’s hostile reaction, the SDA withdrew its declaration on the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in the following months, it adopted a more cautious stance on the future of Yugoslavia. In May 1991, Izetbegović joined with Macedonia’s President Kiro Gligorov in supporting the idea of an “asymmetric federation” in which the republics of Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro would have federal ties, while Croatia and Slovenia would have looser ties with the other republics, as in a confederation. However, the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, along with the military escalation in Croatia and the European Community’s evolving stances marked the death knell for the Yugoslav federation. The SDA’s leaders were then faced with a delicate choice: either agree for Bosnia-Herzegovina to remain part of a rump Yugoslavia under Serbia’s domination, or support independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina despite the Bosnian Serb community’s opposition. The moment of truth came in August 1991, when the SDS and the Muslim Bosniak Organization (MBO), a small party that had split from the SDA in September 1990, published a project for an “historic Serbo-Muslim agreement.”⁴ In this project, the two parties suggested that the Muslim community could support a rump Yugoslav state in exchange for guarantees regarding the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In so doing, the MBO gave priority to maintaining Bosnian territorial integrity, even if it meant reducing the political sovereignty of the Muslim nation. Yet after some hesitation, the SDA’s leaders
rejected this “historic agreement.” *Muslimanski glas* (“The Muslim Voice”), the SDA’s official newspaper, denounced the idea of a “rump Yugoslavia in which the Serbs would be number one, and the Muslims number two.” This decision by the SDA to favor the Muslim nation’s political sovereignty, even to the detriment of Bosnian territorial integrity, shows once more how the party was breaking with the strategies of the pre-1945 Muslim elites, which had renounced any national project of their own in order to better preserve the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Beginning in August 1991, the SDA was leading Bosnia-Herzegovina on the path towards independence, adhering to the schedule laid out by the European Community. On October 15, 1991, just after the international conference on Yugoslavia had started, the SDA and HDZ deputies adopted a memorandum on the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, declaring that, “in light of the national composition of its population, Bosnia-Herzegovina will not accept any constitutional solution for the future Yugoslav community that would not include both Serbia and Croatia.” This memorandum also received the support of a majority of deputies from the civic parties, which thus broke with their initial support for preserving the Yugoslav federation. Indeed, with war raging in Croatia, the October 15, 1991 memorandum amounted to rejecting any plans for a new Yugoslav federation. Unsurprisingly, this memorandum sparked a new confrontation with the SDS, which called for a referendum for self-determination to be held for each of the three constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the following months, the SDA, the HDZ, and the civic parties supported the request for international recognition sent to the European Community on December 20, 1991, i.e., three days before the deadline set by the European authorities. They then organized an independence referendum on March 1, 1992, at the behest of these same European authorities. Politically isolated, the SDS responded by creating several “autonomous Serb regions” between September and November 1991, by organizing a plebiscite on November 10, 1991 about the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina remaining in the Yugoslav federation, and by proclaiming a “Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina” on January 9, 1992. In the “autonomous Serb regions,” the SDS monopolized power and increased intimidation measures against non-Serb populations. On March 1, 1992, the SDS called for a boycott of the independence referendum. Thus, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s march towards independence went hand in hand with an increasingly overt challenge to its territorial integrity and its interethnic balances.

Between December 1990 and April 1992, the future of Yugoslavia was not the sole issue facing the SDA’s leaders. As Bosnia-Herzegovina’s independence grew closer, the SDA also had to clarify its vision for the Bosnian state. In the early months of 1991, it repeatedly expressed its support for a civic definition of this state, one that did not refer to the existence of the three constituent nations. Thus, the declaration proposed to the Bosnian Parliament in February 1991 defined Bosnia-Herzegovina as “the sovereign state, united and indivisible, of all the citizens who live there,” exercising their sovereignty through their representatives or through referendum. In this declaration, the existence of the three constituent nations was not even mentioned—a fact that sparked hostility from the SDS. For certain leaders of the SDA, their new-found support for the civic principle was a good way to get rid of the consociational mechanisms embedded in the Bosnian Constitution, and thus to transform
Bosnia-Herzegovina discreetly into a state for the Muslim nation. Significantly, the slogan chosen by the SDA to encourage its supporters to declare themselves “Muslim” during the census was “Our rights depend on our numbers.” A year later, Izetbegović himself fueled these ambiguities about the use of a civic definition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, stating that he was prepared to “inscribe in the Constitution a guarantee that Bosnia will not become a Muslim state in the next fifty years.”

However, as tensions worsened in Bosnia-Herzegovina, emphasis on the civic principle also became a way to oppose any sort of partition along ethnic lines. In August 1991, asked about the partition projects that Milošević and Tuđman had spoken about in Karadordevo, Izetbegović stated:

We were offered a sort of Muslim state, and we refused it . . . We clearly replied that we wanted a civic republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina because—let us understand each other clearly—it is the only solution possible. Perhaps we would be ready to accept such a proposal [for partition]—after all, if the Croats and the Serbs have their own nation-states, why not the Muslims? But it is not realistic . . . A Muslim state in Bosnia-Herzegovina does not appear realistic to me because there is no compact Muslim space, and we would therefore only obtain a reduced Bosnia, with all the problems that this would entail.

However, in October 1991, the memorandum on the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina adopted by the Bosnian Parliament made explicit reference to the three constituent nations: this return to a consociational conception of the Bosnian state enabled the SDA to counter the SDS’s criticisms and to win the support of the Croat HDZ, which was in favor of independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina but strongly attached to the consociationalism of Bosnian institutions. Moreover, the HDZ requested that the question asked in the self-determination referendum define Bosnia-Herzegovina as “a state community of three constituent nations, sovereign in their national spaces (cantons).” The SDA’s hesitations and ambiguities about the issue of citizenship were partly attributable to the difficult context it faced. But they also reflected a deeper dilemma for the SDA’s leaders, who were simultaneously expressing their attachment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and to the political sovereignty of the Muslim nation. These two principles were sometimes at odds with each other, as we have already seen with the Muslim “national affirmation” of the communist period or the failed attempt at the “historic Serbo-Muslim agreement” in August 1991. The potential contradictions between these two principles became clearly apparent when the SDA, while defending the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, created the National Muslim Council of the Sandžak (Muslimansko nacionalno vijeće Sandžaka—MNVs) in May 1991, then organized a plebiscite on October 25, 1991 in this region nestled between Serbia and Montenegro, on “the political and territorial autonomy of the Sandžak, with the right to attach itself to one of the sovereign republics [of the Yugoslav federation].” Thus, the SDA’s leaders were no less opportunistic in their use of the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination than the other nationalist players in the Yugoslav space.

Similar ambiguities were on display in the political alliances that the SDA formed between December 1990 and April 1992. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s march towards
independence caused increasingly heated conflict between the SDA and the SDS, while bringing the SDA closer to the civic parties as the latter progressively came to term with the demise of Yugoslavia. However, the SDA's closest ties continued to be with the HDZ, even though this Croat party was also forming “autonomous Croat regions,” and its president, Stjepan Kljujić, a moderate nationalist, was replaced by Mate Boban in February 1992. Moreover, at no time did the SDA renounce the government coalition that it had formed with the SDS and HDZ since November 1990. Yet this coalition between nationalist parties implied a sharing of leadership positions according to the “national key” principle, which sharpened interethnic rivalries for control of ministries, administrations, and state-owned enterprises. At the same time, on the local level, the battles for power between nationalist parties caused city councils to break up, with parallel monoethnic councils being formed. Lastly, the SDA and the other nationalist parties shared a quiet hostility towards the civic forces that were mobilizing against the risks of war, expressing their views on Bosnian television, in the daily *Oslobodenje* (“Liberation”) and through trade-union organizations. Through its actions, the SDA also contributed to the dismantling of the state apparatus in Bosnia-Herzegovina in favor of communitarian networks, and to a worsening of interethnic tensions within Bosnian society.

In this context, one last question about the SDA’s attitude—and perhaps the most important question of all—involves its choices in the face of the risks of war, which grew sharper between December 1990 and April 1992. There is no doubt that the SDS and the Yugoslav Army bear the primary responsibility for the war that broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 6, 1992, as shown by the magnitude of their military preparations and the increased number of armed incidents that they provoked in the preceding months. However, the SDA's leaders appear to have accepted the idea of armed confrontation very early on: in February 1991, Izetbegović told the Bosnian Parliament that “for sovereign Bosnia, I would sacrifice peace; for peace, I would not sacrifice Bosnia-Herzegovina.” In the same period, the SDA was launching the initial preparations for the creation of the Patriotic League (*Patriotska liga*—PL), a paramilitary organization tightly bound to the party. Four months later, on June 10, 1991, a National Defense Council (*Savjet za narodnu odbranu*) was founded. Presided by Izetbegović, it brought together the representatives of the main political and cultural organizations of the Muslim community. Thus, the SDA created its own paramilitary forces, in parallel to the Bosnian Territorial Defense and outside any legal framework. In the months that followed, the escalating warfare in Croatia and the concentration of Yugoslav Army troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina increasingly encouraged the SDA's leaders to place their hopes on an internationalization of the Bosnian crisis without interrupting their military preparations. However, this strategy of internationalization quickly showed its limitations. In January 1992, the UN refused to preventively expand the UNPROFOR's mandate to Bosnia-Herzegovina. One month later, Jose Cutilheiro, the European negotiator in charge of talks about the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina, borrowed the HDZ's idea of creating ethnic cantons, and proposed a partition plan that scrupulously respected ethnic majorities on a municipal level (see Map VII).

By convoking a self-determination referendum and by promoting a cantonization plan, the European Community contributed to the outbreak of war by reducing
interethnic relations to a zero-sum game. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the period from the self-determination referendum until the international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina was also the period in which the country went from peacetime to war. To convince the Bosnian Muslims to vote in favor of independence, the SDA explained that this was the best means to obtain the international community’s protection and to avoid war: in this context, many Muslim voters were not expressing a desire for independence so much as a plea for security addressed to the European Community. But on the evening of March 1, 1992, the SDS set up armed barricades around Sarajevo to demand that negotiations resume on the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On February 22, and then again on March 18, the three nationalist parties gave their support to the Cutilheiro Plan, before Izetbegović rescinded his signature. On April 6, the European Community recognized the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The next day, the United States followed suit, while Serb deputies met in Pale, a small town in the heights dominating Sarajevo, and proclaimed the independence of the self-styled “Republika Srpska” (“Serb Republic”). On the ground, the number of armed incidents increased, and in Sarajevo, Serb snipers fired on tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators who had gathered in front of the Bosnian Parliament to call for the nationalist parties to leave, bearing portraits of Tito, in a pathetic appeal to a now-defunct central power. As the nation-state principle triumphed in the Yugoslav space, the territorial claims of Serbia and Croatia, as well as the growing divergences between the nationalist parties, pushed Bosnia-Herzegovina into war.

From defending a plurinational Bosnia-Herzegovina . . .

As soon as it broke out, the Bosnian war combined aspects of an outside aggression and a civil war. Outside aggression because the “Republika Srpska” enjoyed support from neighboring Serbia and the Yugoslav Army, which merged with Serb-controlled municipal territorial defense forces on May 19, 1992 to form the Army of Republika Srpska (Vojska Republike Srpske—VRS). This outside logistical support explains why a quasi-state such as the “Republika Srpska” was able to control 60 percent of Bosnian territory in just a few weeks (see Map VIII). However, the Bosnian conflict was also a civil war, as its origins lay partly with internal political disagreements within Bosnia-Herzegovina, and as most combatants were Bosnians, even though various militias from Serbia played an important role in the first weeks of the war. Serb forces, thanks to their overwhelming military superiority, besieged the town of Sarajevo. In conquered municipalities where Muslims or Croats were the majority, “crisis staffs” (krizni štabovi) implemented a particularly harsh ethnic cleansing policy. This first wave of violent expulsion of non-Serb populations resulted in several thousand civilian victims in some places, causing one and a half million refugees to flee elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina or to neighboring countries, chiefly Croatia. The resistance to the Serb military offensive was organized around the Bosnian Territorial Defense, various Muslim militias (whether or not linked to the Patriotic League), and the Croat Defense Council (Hrvatsko vijeće obrane—HVO), a paramilitary force created by the HDZ on April 8, 1992 and joined in Herzegovina by many Muslims seeking arms. On July 5, the
Territorial Defense and the Muslim militias merged to form the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine—ARBiH), but the HVO refused to join this new army.

The war’s first months were crucial not only for setting the frontlines, but also for crystallizing certain political choices, as well as the balance of powers, on each side. As the two SDS members of the Collegial Presidency had stepped down on April 7, they
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina

were supposed to be replaced by the Serb candidates from the civic parties that had received the most votes in the November 1990 elections. However, the SDA did not make this replacement until the anti-war demonstrations had died out in Sarajevo and Sefer Halilović, the military chief of the Patriotic League, had been appointed to head the newly-formed ARBiH. Only on May 31 did Izetbegović yield to the demands of the civic parties, stepped down from the SDA’s presidency, and integrated the Serb representatives of the civic parties in the Collegial Presidency. A month later, this presidency adopted a Platform for Action of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Wartime, written by the Muslim Fikret Abdić, the Serb Nenad Kecmanović, and the Croat Stjepan Kljujić. This platform affirmed that Bosnia-Herzegovina was “the sovereign and independent state of its citizens, of its constituent and equal nations, the Muslims, Serbs and Croats, and of the members of the other nations that live there,” and specified that “the three constituent Muslim, Serb and Croat nations have their own national interests, but they also have interests that derive from a centuries-long tradition of coexistence.” This platform called for the creation of a Chamber of Nations within the Parliament, where the decisions involving the vital interests of the constituent nations would be made consensually. However, it warned that “Bosnia-Herzegovina will not accept negotiations based on the creation of ethnically pure territories or the regionalization of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to exclusively ethnic criteria.”

The June 26, 1992 platform thus opposed the creation of ethnically homogenous territories, proposing instead a consociational, non-territorial organization for relations between the constituent nations. It was adopted unanimously by the Collegial Presidency, but at the same time, ethnic homogenization and territorialization was also at work in territories controlled by the ARBiH and the HVO. Indeed, beginning in the early months of the war, the HDZ monopolized power in Croat-majority towns, and the level of intimidation and violence aimed at non-Croat populations increased. In the town of Vareš in central Bosnia, the HDZ overthrew the city council held by the civic parties and imposed its own crisis staff. On July 3, a “Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna” gathered all the territories under HVO control, a clear sign that the HDZ was opting for the creation of a Croat quasi-state. In this context, a rapprochement quickly began to take shape between Serb and Croat nationalists. As early as May 6, HDZ president Mate Boban met secretly in Graz with Radovan Karadžić, the president of the “Republika Srpska,” to define the border between the future Serb and Croat entities. Despite these political and military changes, the SDA did not break its alliance with the HDZ: the Bosnian government was headed by a prime minister from the HDZ (Jure Pelivan then Mile Akmačić), and the civic parties held only a few portfolios of secondary importance. In November 1992, the SDA also agreed for Stjepan Kljujić to be replaced (unconstitutionally) by Miro Lazić (HDZ) in the Collegial Presidency. More generally, the SDA tolerated the HDZ’s hegemony in Croat regions, and even condemned the creation in Mostar of a Council of Muslims of Herzegovina that was hostile to the HDZ and led by the town’s mufti Seid Smajkić. The stance taken by the SDA’s leaders is partly attributable to important strategic considerations: the HDZ’s participation in Bosnian institutions was crucial to their international legitimacy, the HDZ’s political hegemony in Herzegovina was the trade-off for the free flow of weapons towards territories under the ARBiH’s control, and the latter could hardly
afford to open a second front against the HVO. However, the SDA’s alliance with the HDZ was also due to the fact that, as a Muslim nationalist party, it considered the HDZ to be the sole legitimate representative of the Croat community, and thus an indispensable counterpart. By contrast, it viewed the civic parties as minor players with no real legitimacy. Thus, in November 1992, the SDA’s governing bodies rejected their proposal for a “Bosnian patriotic front,” choosing instead “the coalition of the SDA and the HDZ, as the main and mutually recognized vehicles for the political will of the Muslim and Croat nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.” This communitarian rationale pushed the SDA, in turn, to monopolize power in the ARBiH-controlled territories, to form its own crisis staffs in many municipalities, and to attack the few bastions of the civic parties, such as the social-democratic city council of Tuzla, led by its mayor Selim Bešlagić, or the Zenica steel plant. The SDA’s attitude partly explains why Nenad Kecmanović, a Serb member of the Collegial Presidency, secretly left Sarajevo in August 1992 to seek refuge in Belgrade.

From the early months of the war, fighting broke out sporadically between the ARBiH and HVO as they pillaged the barracks of the Yugoslav Army and delimited their respective areas of influence. At the same time, in Herzegovina, the Muslim fighters of the HVO gradually left this corps to join the ARBiH, which was still in its nascent stages in the region. However, to understand why wide-scale conflict between Muslims and Croats erupted in spring 1993, we must take into consideration the ways in which the Bosnian conflict was internationalized between April 1992 and May 1993. Emboldened by the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Member States of the European Union, the United States and many Muslim countries, Bosnian authorities began in April 1992 to request military intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and a lifting of the arms embargo that the UN had imposed on all states of the former Yugoslav federation in 1991. However, the military option was rejected by the states involved in the resolution of the Bosnian war in favor of a number of diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives. In May 1992, the UN Security Council voted for economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; these sanctions would be made harsher over the course of the conflict, despite Russia’s reluctance. In June, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) deployed in Croatia was given an extended mandate that covered Bosnia-Herzegovina: UNPROFOR was to reopen the Sarajevo airport and to ensure the unhindered circulation of humanitarian convoys. Lastly, in October 1992, a no-fly zone was created over Bosnia-Herzegovina, to be enforced by NATO aviation. At this stage of the conflict, however, the international action with the greatest impact was the peace talks mediated by UN Special Representative, Cyrus Vance, and European Union representative, David Owen.

After the Cutilheiro Plan fell through, a new international conference on the former Yugoslavia was summoned in July 1992, with the aim of negotiating a peace plan with the various protagonists of the Bosnian war. On January 2, 1993, Vance and Owen made public a peace plan whereby Bosnia-Herzegovina would be turned into a decentralized state, with a Collegial Presidency and a central government, but divided into ten ethnic provinces, three of which would be Muslim, three Serb, and three Croat, with one “neutral” province covering the Sarajevo region (see Map IX). These provinces would wield most political powers, but would have no international political
subjectivity, and would be subject to complex consociational rules to avoid discrimination against local national minorities. However, far from settling the war, this plan actually caused it to spread to regions populated by Croats and Muslims. The HDZ, with the Croat provinces covering the bulk of Herzegovina and central Bosnia, eagerly accepted the Vance–Owen Plan and required that the ARBiH withdraw from

Map IX  The Vance–Owen Plan (January 1993).
areas allocated to the Croat provinces. Beginning in March, fighting between Croats and Muslims spread throughout central Bosnia, then into Herzegovina. On May 9, 1993, the Battle of Mostar began. In the following months, the HVO carried out a systematic ethnic cleansing in the regions it controlled, while the ARBiH did so on an occasional basis. By endorsing the rationales of ethnic territories that were at the heart of the Bosnian war, this peace plan actually only encouraged violence.

For the SDA's leaders and all the inhabitants of ARBiH-controlled territories, the fighting between Croats and Muslims was a diplomatic, military, and humanitarian catastrophe. Diplomatically, this fighting strengthened the view of a “war of all against all,” hindering the internationalization of the conflict. Therefore, whereas the Vance–Owen Plan called for military intervention against whichever party caused the plan to fail, the “Republika Srpska” rejected it with impunity in May 1993. The Bosnian authorities denounced Croatia’s military aid to the HVO, describing it as a second aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, but did not call for international sanctions against Croatia, in an effort to avoid consummating the rift between Croats and Muslims. Militarily, the ARBiH-controlled territories found themselves completely surrounded by the VRS and the HVO (see Map X), and the main flows of weapons through Herzegovina were interrupted. Lastly, from a humanitarian perspective, this fighting caused hundreds of thousands of additional refugees to flee, while making the delivery of international aid extremely difficult. This situation grew even worse in March 1993, when the VRS launched a vast offensive in eastern Bosnia, significantly reducing the size of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica and threatening to capture the town. General Philippe Morillon, the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, intervened at the last minute to prevent a major catastrophe; six UN-protected “safe areas” were created in May: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihać, Srebrenica, Goražde, and Žepa (see Map X). This creation of “safe areas” changed the mandate of UNPROFOR and NATO air forces considerably, but it did not provide effective protection for these towns, a fact that became cruelly evident when Srebrenica fell in July 1995. In addition, the “safe areas” came in place of the direct military intervention that the inhabitants and leaders of ARBiH-controlled regions were hoping for.

The situation caused by fighting between Croats and Muslims inevitably affected the objectives and strategies of the SDA’s leaders. The most surprising, given the circumstances, was their reluctance to end their coalition with the HDZ: Prime Minister Mile Akmačić remained formally in office until October 1993, and the two Croat members of the Collegial Presidency that belonged to the HDZ, after resigning in June 1993, were not replaced until four months later. However, the way in which the SDA defined its war objectives underwent considerable transformations in the same period. In December 1992 in Sarajevo, a Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals declared:

The destiny of the Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) is tied to the existence of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Any challenge to the territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina caused by expansionist aspirations towards its territory represents a threat to the physical and spiritual existence of the Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks).18
In the difficult wartime conditions, the Muslim intellectuals with close ties to the party affirmed that there was a tight connection between the Muslim nation’s political sovereignty and the defense of the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over the following months, however, this twofold objective would be challenged. To understand why, we must again turn to the international context of the Bosnian conflict.

... to the temptation of a small Muslim nation-state

On June 16 1993, Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tudman took advantage of the failure of the Vance–Owen Plan, followed by Cyrus Vance’s resignation and replacement by Thorvald Stoltenberg, to present a joint proposal for Bosnia-Herzegovina to be partitioned into three ethnic republics. Eight days later, the SDS and the HDZ signed an agreement on the “confederalization” of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Croat representatives stepped down from the Bosnian Collegial Presidency. In the following weeks, the VRS captured Mount Igman, cutting off the ARBiH’s sole supply route for Sarajevo. Only pressure from the UN was able to force Serb forces to withdraw, with “demilitarization” of Mount Igman and a discreet return of the ARBiH. In parallel, on August 20, international mediators Owen and Stoltenberg published a new peace plan inspired by the Milošević–Tudman proposal and calling for Bosnia-Herzegovina to become a union of three ethnic republics, with the following territorial breakdown: Republika Srpska 51 percent, Bosnian Republic 30 percent, Croat Republic 16 percent, and Sarajevo and Mostar (under international administration) 3 percent (see Map XI).

Under this plan, shared institutions were reduced to a minimum, with each ethnic republic having its own Constitution, albeit without international political subjectivity. The triumph of the nation-state principle thus seemed complete, and Bosnia-Herzegovina was apparently destined to disappear and be replaced by three ethnically homogenous quasi-states. At that moment, the Bosnian Muslims were not only completely encircled on a military level, but also totally isolated diplomatically. Making this desperate situation even worse, the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan triggered serious tensions within the Collegial Presidency between representatives of the civic parties (who were hostile to the plan but unwilling to continue a war that was ravaging Bosnian society), Izetbegović and Ejup Ganić (in favor of renegotiating this plan) and Fikret Abdić (who wanted to accept the plan immediately and unconditionally). Over the summer, Abdić stepped down from the Collegial Presidency to return to his stronghold in Cazinska Krajina and came into conflict with local leaders of the SDA. In September, he proclaimed an “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia,” whose militias quickly confronted the ARBiH’s 5th Corps. Just as the Vance–Owen Plan had fostered conflict between the Croats and Muslims, so the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan triggered conflict among Muslims themselves.

Thus, for the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, summer 1993 was the worst period of the war, when their political and physical survival was under the greatest direct threat. Abdić underscored this fact, stating that “continuing this bloody war could lead our population to its physical disappearance,” as did Izetbegović, who warned that “continuing the war threatens the very biological existence of the nation.” So why were the two men not in agreement? Apart from personal ambitions, there were real political and strategic disagreements between Izetbegović and Abdić. The latter wanted the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan to be accepted unconditionally. He considered stopping the fighting to be the absolute priority, and expected that renewed trade and human interactions between the future constituent entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina would favor their gradual disappearance. Izetbegović, for his part, was not—or was
no longer—the unconditional defender of a united Bosnia-Herzegovina that some have considered him to be. Indeed, the presentation of the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan and the deteriorating situation on the ground had prompted the SDA’s leaders to give priority to the Muslim nation’s survival, even if that meant sacrificing the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, in early August, Izetbegović said in a television interview:

Map XI  The Owen–Stoltenberg Plan (July 1993).
The centre of gravity for our struggle, for the struggle of our soldiers who have succeeded in preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina, must be the Bosniak, Muslim nation, which is the target of aggression. The aggressor’s goal, first and foremost, is not so much the annihilation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state as the extermination of the Muslim nation.21

The SDA’s leaders thus dissociated the Muslim nation’s physical survival from Bosnia-Herzegovina’s territorial integrity, accepting (at least in part) the principle of a partition along ethnic lines, and putting off its possible gradual reintegration to a period after the war was over.

Speaking to the Bosnian Parliament on August 27, Izetbegović stated: “our duty these days is to save what can be saved of Bosnia. This is our duty here and today so that perhaps, in the future, all of Bosnia can be saved.”22 In appearance, this position is not very far removed from the one that Fikret Abdić was defending. In fact, the disagreement between the two men did not relate to the principle of partitioning Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines, but rather on the actual delineation of the ethnic republics. Abdić accepted the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan unconditionally, whereas Izetbegović (still speaking to the Bosnian Parliament) demanded that the proposal be adjusted so that the Muslim majority regions of eastern and western Bosnia would be attached to the future Bosnian Republic, so that this entity would have sea access, and so that the peace plan would be guaranteed by the United States and NATO.

One month later, on September 27, 1993, a Bošnjački sabor (Bosniak Assembly) met in Sarajevo, bringing together the main political, military, religious, and intellectual representatives of the Muslim nation. Its initial purpose was to give its opinion of the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan. In his opening speech, Izetbegović criticized this plan less for establishing an ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and more for leaving “in the aggressor’s hands vast regions formerly populated by a majority of Muslims, [and] ethnically cleansed during the war.”23 During the Bošnjački sabor, the representatives of these regions were, quite logically, among the fiercest opponents to the peace plan. The representatives of the civic parties, for their part, refused any ethnic partition in the name of a plurinational Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, Nijaz Duraković, the president of the Social Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska partija—SDP, the former communist SKBiH), warned that the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan:

means additional population displacements, it does not stop ethnic displacements, because what is left in the Serb and Croat Republics would immediately [and] quickly be cleansed, and most likely this same process would extend to what we would call the Bosnian Republic, thus [it would mean] further tragedies for hundreds of thousands of people and it would be, I am convinced, the sign of the disappearance of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina as such, but also the disappearance of the Muslim nation or the Bosniak nation, no matter [which name we use for it], as such.24

Enes Duraković, president of the cultural society Preporod and chairman of the Bošnjački sabor session, had a stance that was more ambiguous, but extremely significant, when he summarized the choice facing the Bošnjački sabor as follows:
The Bosniaks have done everything to preserve Bosnia as it has existed over its thousand-year history, in other words, as a multicultural, multinational and multiconfessional community. In this period of extreme temptations, of clear genocide and of others’ refusal to live with us, the Bosniaks have done everything not to obtain their [own] national state. This is probably a unique case of a nation refusing such a “gift” and the world is stunned. It is stunned because it did not understand us before, and it does not understand us today. Today they are forcing us [to opt for a nation-state] and the decision on this topic will be made by the Bošnjački sabor and the Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.25

Enes Duraković’s words underscore the fact that many members of the Bošnjački sabor accepted the nation-state rationales at work in the Yugoslav space only because they were forced to by the military and diplomatic balance of powers. Some of the SDA’s leaders, however, viewed the possibility of founding a small Muslim nation-state more serenely. For example, Edib Bukvić, an SDA cadre with ties to the pan-Islamist current and a candidate for prime minister, declared:

The current Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its three nations, has become unrealistic. After such a genocidal war, the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats will for a long time be unable to create any sort of common state . . . In light of what has just been said and our real possibilities, it is indispensable to define the limits of a state for the Muslim nation.26

In this attempt to delineate a small Muslim nation-state, the main concern of the SDA’s leaders may not have been the lost Muslim-majority territories. Hakija Meholjić, one of the delegates of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, even accused Izetbegović of floating the idea of trading this enclave for some suburbs of Sarajevo held by Serb forces.27 But the SDA’s leaders were inflexible on the future Bosnian Republic’s access to the Adriatic Sea (at Neum) and the Sava River (at Brčko), which was needed to avoid being completely surrounded by the Serb and Croat republics. In the end, 218 members of the Bošnjački sabor (out of 349) voted in favor of the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan provided Izetbegović’s demands were met, whereas fifty-three voted for it unconditionally and seventy-eight voted for it to be purely and simply rejected.28 The Bošnjački sabor thus rejected the international community’s peace plan as it was presented and was in open opposition to the international community for the first and only time during the conflict. During the same session, the Bošnjački sabor voted to replace the national name “Muslim” with “Bosniak”: at the most critical moment of the war, the representatives of the Muslim/Bosniak nation reasserted its political sovereignty loudly and clearly, and attempted to resolve some of its identity dilemmas, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

The Bošnjački sabor’s proceedings enable us to better understand the confrontation between Fikret Abdić and the SDA’s leaders. For Abdić, the physical survival of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina required them to renounce their own political sovereignty and for the future Bosnian Republic to declare allegiance to Serbia or
Croatia—or to both at the same time. Abdić thus adopted the strategies used by the Muslim political elites before the Second World War: namely, renouncing any national project for the Muslim community. From this standpoint, the issue of the borders of the Bosnian Republic was secondary. However, Abdić’s strategy could only lead to a situation of powerlessness and subordination, as shown by the events in his “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia.” The SDA’s leaders, as well as a large number of politicians and intellectuals, believed that the political sovereignty of the Bosniak nation was an absolute prerequisite for its physical survival. Therefore, the Bosnian Republic had to be economically and militarily viable, without depending on its neighboring countries, hence the importance of the borders and, in particular, access to the Adriatic Sea and to the Sava River.

Autumn 1993 was undeniably a time when the SDA’s leaders gave in to the nation-state rationales that held sway over the Yugoslav space and considered creating a small Bosniak nation-state. Just after the Bošnjački sabor, Edhem Bičakčić (a co-defendant in the 1983 trial and vice president of the SDA) explained:

The SDA will support a state for the Bosniak nation and the citizens who live on this territory. This means that the Bosniaks will be those who will form this state community, and the other citizens will be guaranteed all human rights according to the highest European standards . . . It will be a secular state, but it will be the state of the Bosniak nation. It will constitute this state and the other nations will have the rights of [national] minorities.

Concretely, while rejecting the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan’s territorial breakdown, Izetbegović signed a bilateral agreement with Momčilo Krajišnik, representative of the “Republik Srpska,” on September 16. This agreement gave each of the ethnic republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina the right to secede after a two-year transitional period. At the same period, the newspaper Ljiljan asked:

If Alija Izetbegović cannot prevent the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, why not ask for the same principle to be applied to all of the former Yugoslavia and integrate the Muslim Sandžak region into the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Indeed, in autumn 1993, the National Muslim Council of the Sandžak published a Memorandum on the Establishment of a Special Status for the Sandžak. However, this new request for autonomy for the Sandžak only exacerbated the conflict within the local branch of the party opposing its president Sulejman Ugljanin and secretary general Rasim Ljajić.

But did the SDA’s leaders support the idea of a small Bosniak nation-state with enthusiasm or regret? Džemaludin Latić, a close associate of the Bosnian President, believed that Alija Izetbegović was “forced to accept this vulgar concept [of a nation-state].” Yet Adnan Jahić, another influential representative of the pan-Islamist current, believed that “Alija Izetbegović’s eternal dream, as a Young Muslim, was and is still the creation of a Muslim state in Bosnia-Herzegovina; now this dream is coming true, and ‘that does not really bother him.’"
Izetbegović’s feelings, Latić or Jahić? In his memoirs published in 2001, Izetbegović himself presented the Bošnjački sabor’s vote eight years earlier as a refusal of any ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is, at the very least, a simplistic presentation of the facts.36

Nevertheless, there is one major certainty about this complex period. In 1993, some of the SDA’s leaders—beginning with those connected to the pan-Islamist current—were tempted by the idea of a small Bosniak nation-state, but this was never used as a justification for ethnic cleansing. Granted, ARBiH units committed serious crimes, notably against the Serb population of Sarajevo and the Croat population of central Bosnia. But the ARBiH did not resort to ethnic cleansing systematically, and did not elevate it to the level of a legitimate instrument for creating a Bosniak nation-state.37 To understand this essential fact that set the SDA apart from the SDS, the HDZ and their related armies, several factors must be considered. There were some strategic considerations: for the ARBiH, carrying out systematic ethnic cleansing would have tarnished the international legitimacy of the Bosnian authorities, made the Bosnian conflict look like a “war of all against all,” and pushed tens of thousands of men into the arms of the Serb VRS and the Croat HVO at a time when these armies were sorely lacking in recruits. However, beyond this strategic dimension, there were deeper reasons why the leaders of the SDA and the ARBiH rejected ethnic cleansing. First of all, the Bosniak political and military leaders were not all nationalists. In the ARBiH, notably in its 2nd Corps based in Tuzla, many officers coming from the Yugoslav Army were connected to the civic SDP rather than the nationalist SDA. Even within the SDA, Izetbegović and his close collaborators were originating from the pan-Islamist current. Yet from a pan-Islamist standpoint, the Serbs and Croats were not “foreign elements” to be expelled from the national body, but “people of the Book” (ahl-al kitab) to be protected in exchange for their allegiance. At the same time, this refusal of ethnic cleansing was a way to assert the European identity and moral superiority of the Bosniak nation, as we shall see in Chapter 7. However, the most important factor was that the future Bosnian Republic could not be a catalyst for later reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina unless it ensured the safety of the Serbs and Croats living on its territory. Even more so, the protection of the local Serb and Croat populations was a condition sine qua non for the Bosniak nation to be at the heart of this reintegration. As Izetbegović said, speaking again to the Bošnjački sabor in July 1994:

Our struggle for the integration of Bosnia will largely depend on us, on what we are ourselves, on what we want and what we can do. On our will and our capacity to make the part of Bosnia that we control into a modern, democratic and free country … Bosnia cannot bear intolerance. Such as it is, plurinational and multiconfessional, it seeks someone that this mosaic does not bother. Churches and cathedrals do not bother us; we have learned to live with people who think and feel differently, and we consider that this is an advantage for us. This is why we Bosniaks, we the Muslim people of Bosnia, are predestined to be at the forefront of the reintegration of Bosnia. Not so that Bosnia will be a homogenous state—it cannot be—but so that it is and remains whole.38
Exhaustion of nationalist mobilizations and territorialized consociationalism

The political crisis that the Muslim community underwent in summer 1993 illustrates the exhaustion of nationalist mobilizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. After a year and a half of war, the three communities endured centrifugal forces that threatened their cohesion and their capacity for action. On the one hand, the various peace plans heightened tensions between nationalist leaders and the representatives of local populations threatened by the different partition plans. On the other hand, entangled frontlines fed parochial interests, encouraged smuggling activities between armies that were supposedly enemies, and resulted in a rising divide between mafia-like military units controlling the black market and underpaid, under-equipped local units. In the “Republika Srpska,” a mutiny of several military units in Banja Luka in September 1993 revealed the poor morale afflicting Serb combatants. Everywhere, the civilian population rapidly sank into poverty and became dependent on international humanitarian aid. At the same time, in Serbia and Croatia, the nationalist mobilizations of the early 1990s ran out of steam due to divisions within the political elites and a growing apathy amongst the population. Lastly, as the war carried on, the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the conflict and by ethnic cleansing threatened the credibility of international organizations and the major Western powers. The West, which had given priority to the nation-state principle in the solution of the Yugoslav crisis when it recognized Slovenia and Croatia in January 1992, gradually had to adjust this stance with regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Bosniak community had been the first of the three communities to fall into overt political crisis when Fikret Abdić seceded in September 1993; it was also the first community to exit the crisis. On October 25, 1993, the Bosnian Collegial Presidency stripped Abdić and the two HDZ representatives of their powers, naming three representatives of the civic parties in their place: Nijaz Duraković (president of the SDP), Ivo Komšić, and Stjepan Kljujić. On the same day, Haris Silajdžić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and an influential member of the SDA, became prime minister of a government whose ministers came from the SDA and the civic parties. In his governmental program, Silajdžić mentioned the priorities of strengthening the army, setting up a war economy, bringing supplies to the population, and restoring the rule of law, because “any violence, injustice or illegal actions against individuals . . . sparks a general feeling of insecurity among the citizens.” In the weeks that followed, various mafia-like military units were eliminated in Sarajevo and central Bosnia, Sefer Halilović was replaced as the ARBiH commander-in-chief by General Rasim Delić, and the military hierarchy was taken in hand. It may appear surprising that the SDA’s leaders grew closer to the civic parties at the very moment when they appeared to accept a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. Yet there are several explanations for this apparent paradox. Diplomatically isolated, having broken with their Croat partners of the HDZ, weakened by Abdić’s secession, they had no other choice.

Focused on reorganizing and remobilizing the territories under ARBiH control, the SDA’s leaders no longer viewed a coalition of nationalist parties as the only legitimate form of government, favoring instead other forms of communitarianism: a Croat
National Council (*Hrvatsko nacionalno vijeće*), presided by Ivo Komšić, was created in Sarajevo in February 1994, and one month later a Serb Civic Council (*Srpsko gradansko vijeće*), presided over by Mirko Pejanović, one of the two Serb members of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency. Lastly, the new coalition between the SDA and the civic parties did not prevent the SDA from continuing to monopolize power in the ARBiH-controlled territories; as the army was taken in hand, many officers with ties to the SDA were promoted, while the takeover of state-owned enterprises deprived the civic parties of a good portion of their material support, notably in the Tuzla region.

The exhaustion of nationalist mobilizations beginning in 1993 was similar, in some respects, to what the Ustasha and Chetnik movements had experienced during the Second World War. In both cases, plans for homogenous nation-states were shattered due to their own internal contradictions, leading to a deep crisis within their respective communities. Thus, in late 1993, after the Bosniak community gathered new strength, the Croat community’s political and military underpinnings collapsed. Overstretched between its stronghold in western Herzegovina and the Croat enclaves of central Bosnia and Posavina, the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna” struggled to maintain its political cohesion (see Map X). In central Bosnia, the HVO bought arms and munitions from the Serb forces in order to face the ARBiH, whereas in Posavina, the HVO remained an ally of the ARBiH. Everywhere, the HVO’s local units were involved in all sorts of smuggling: humanitarian aid, petrol, weapons, and refugees. In Croatia itself, the Tudman regime's support for the Croat “Herceg-Bosna” sparked criticism from the opposition parties in Parliament and from the Catholic Church, and triggered a split within the HDZ. This was the backdrop against which, in November 1993, the ARBiH captured the Croat enclave of Vareš, thus restoring territorial continuity between the towns of Zenica and Tuzla. In central Bosnia, “Herceg-Bosna” was reduced to a few exhausted, isolated enclaves. For the first time, Bosniak leaders were the victors, and they had to decide how to deal with the recaptured territories. However, the case of Vareš shows that the Bosniak leaders were unable to make sure that the local Croat population would stay put. The HVO organized the evacuation of Croat civilians through areas under Serb control, several ARBiH units pillaged the town, and the SDA appointed one of its leaders to be in charge of the city council, rather than restoring the local civic majority that had been elected in 1990. From this standpoint, the capture of Vareš cast a dark shadow over the SDA’s capacity to carry out the expected reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina into a single political entity populated with different communities.

In the following months, several major geopolitical and political changes occurred. First and foremost, the United States became more and more involved in the settlement of the Bosnian war. In February 1994, the American administration supported NATO’s ultimatum to the VRS, demanding that it withdraw its heavy artillery stationed around Sarajevo. A few weeks later, the United States gave its implicit approval for Iranian weapons shipments to the ARBiH, thus indirectly lifting the UN arms embargo. The American involvement was a crucial success for Bosnian diplomats, who had stopped believing in the intervention capacities of the European Union and the United Nations. At the end of 1993, the United States also gave their support to the proposal by the Croat National Council to transform Bosnia-Herzegovina into a consociational state.
divided into cantons. The US State Department proposed using this model to end the fighting between Croats and Bosniaks and to escape the nation-state rationales that had been at work since the war started. In so doing, it forced the SDA’s leaders to reconsider their definition of the ties between Bosniak political sovereignty and Bosnian territorial integrity, in a very different context from autumn 1993. Indeed, at the time, the SDA’s leaders could say that they had no other possibility than to accept the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina; six months later, their military and diplomatic situation had improved considerably, and a cantonization of ARBiH-controlled territories could give a tangible form to the idea of a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet if the SDA’s leaders had had difficulty accepting the idea of a small Bosniak nation-state in September 1993, five months later, they seemed to have some trouble giving up the idea.

On February 7, 1994, the Bosnian Parliament met to discuss the latest developments in the peace talks, including the proposal by the Croat National Council. Izetbegović then asked the deputies to examine all proposals without any preconceived ideas, because apart from saving the nation and state, “there are no taboo subjects.” Soon after, SDA deputy Muhamed Kupusović stated that only an agreement with the Serb and Croat nations, or a complete military victory, would enable Bosnia-Herzegovina to be reintegrated. He ruled out these two possibilities, considering them highly unlikely, and therefore proposed that a Bosnian Republic should be proclaimed as an “independent and democratic state for the Bosniak Muslim nation.” This republic would encompass all municipalities that had a Muslim majority before the war, with the possibility of land swaps if necessary. It would have access to the Adriatic Sea and to the Sava River, and it would ensure national minority status to the Serbs and Croats living on its territory. This proposal not only ran into opposition from the civic parties, but also sparked sharp tensions within the SDA parliamentary group. More generally, in early 1994, a group of Bosniak intellectuals who had been involved in the “national affirmation” of the communist period began to express their open opposition to any partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This revolt took shape around Enes Duraković, president of the Bosniak cultural society Preporod, and was joined by Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, a major intellectual figure of the SDA who had been close to the pan-Islamist current up to that point. The SDA’s leaders had to backtrack and give their support to the idea of cantonizing the territories controlled by the ARBiH and the HVO. On the Croat side, Krešimir Zubak took Mate Boban’s place as the leader of the HDZ in February 1994, and Croatia accepted the principle of a shared Bosniak-Croat entity—which it had refused just a few months earlier. In March 1994, negotiations began in Washington between the Bosniak and Croat delegations, and on March 18, 1994, a bilateral agreement created the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine). This federation would be led by a rotating Presidency, a bicameral Parliament, and a government formed on a strict basis of parity. It was formed of eight cantons, including four Bosniak cantons, two Croat ones, and two “mixed” ones, with the town of Mostar placed under European Union administration. Lastly, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina claimed 58 percent of Bosnian territory, thus leaving open the possibility of integrating Serb-controlled territories at a later date.
The creation of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was, in several respects, a major turning point in the Bosnian war. On a diplomatic level, it sanctioned the central role that the United States was now playing in resolving the conflict. On a military level, it ended fighting between Bosniaks and Croats, and thus shifted the balance of powers between the ARBiH and the VRS. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it established a territorialized form of consociationalism, in opposition to nationalist projects that had been weakened by their own contradictions. This consociationalism thus represented a new way of organizing the relations between the constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In reality, however, the Washington Agreement proved particularly difficult to implement.

The frontlines were simply frozen, while the ARBiH and the HVO continued to behave like two potential enemies, even though the HVO allowed weapons to transit to the ARBiH again—in exchange for a certain percentage! Setting up shared institutions was extremely laborious, at both the federal and cantonal levels. In this context, the SDA and the HDZ again recognized each other’s political monopoly over their respective communities. The establishment of the Federation thus coincided with a return to an informal SDA–HDZ coalition, to the detriment of the civic parties.

Hence the HDZ demanded that Croat municipalities be created around Brčko and Tešanj, or even in Tuzla and Sarajevo, but refrained from asking for the civic city council of Vareš to be restored. Conversely, the SDA claimed the right to organize the Bosniak population in the territories under Croat control, but did not extend this claim to the civic parties. Few refugees who had been victims of ethnic cleansing returned to their homes, and the departure of Serb and Croat populations gathered pace in the territories under ARBiH control. The territorialized consociationalism devised in Washington struggled to reverse the underlying nation-state rationales behind the Bosnian conflict, and did not prompt nationalist leaders to renounce their initial political ambitions permanently.

Soon after the Washington Agreement was signed, Izetbegović stated:

We have two ends: firstly, preserving Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state in its existing and internationally-recognized borders; secondly, organizing Bosnia-Herzegovina internally in such a way as to ensure the existence, identity and development of the Muslim nation. This must be a state built in such a way that the Muslim nation never again endures genocide. I have said that these are two ends. To be more precise: the second point is the end, whereas the first is the means.  

A few days later, he told the SDA’s governing bodies:

Life together is a beautiful thing, but I think and I can freely say that it is a lie . . . Our soldier in the mountains, suffering in the mud, does not do it for the sake of coexistence but to defend this toprak [territory], this land that they want to take away from him. He risks his life to defend his family, his land, his people.  

Against this backdrop, the SDA further consolidated its hegemony in the territories under ARBiH control. Thus, the creation of the canton of Tuzla-Podrinje in August 1994 enabled it to strip the Tuzla city council of most of the prerogatives that it had inherited.
from the Yugoslav self-management system. At the same time, however, the SDA’s founding core began to lose its unity. Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić saw his efforts to restore the state hampered by the renewed SDA–HDZ coalition. On the one hand, his government was completely overhauled in May 1994 to bring on board HDZ representatives, to the detriment of the civic parties. On the other hand, an SDA–HDZ mixed commission was created, led by Edhem Bičakčić (the SDA’s vice president) and Dario Kordić (the vice president of the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna”). This commission, responsible for settling conflicts between the two parties, circumvented the government when it came to making important decisions. A falling-out between Haris Silajdžić and the SDA’s governing bodies was on the horizon; it finally occurred in 1995.50

The major diplomatic and political changes in 1994 did not have an immediate military impact. Thus, the VRS led an offensive against the Muslim enclave of Goražde in April 1994, stopped at the last minute by a NATO ultimatum. Seven months later, the VRS successfully countered an offensive by the ARBiH 5th Corps in Bihać. However, it was the Serb community’s turn to go through an internal crisis, just as the Bosniak and Croat communities had. Milošević’s desire to end the war brought him into opposition with the leaders of the “Republika Srpska.” In August 1994, Serbia announced an economic embargo to the “Republika Srpska” that was never fully enforced. In parallel, political tensions rose within the “Republika Srpska,” and several deputies opposed to Karadžić’s policies formed a parliamentary group around Milorad Dodik, who had been elected in 1990 on the lists of the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (SRSJ). Last but not least, the population’s impoverishment, the army’s criminalization and collapse, and ever stronger international pressure increasingly sapped the morale of Serb combatants. The major Western powers hardened their stance towards the “Republika Srpska,” as shown by the gradual strengthening of economic sanctions and the increasingly important role played by NATO. In this context, a Contact Group—comprising the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Germany—proposed a new peace plan in July 1994. This plan called for Bosnia-Herzegovina to be divided between the Federation (51 percent of total Bosnian territory) and a still-undefined Serb entity (49 percent). These two entities would form a Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina with very limited powers, as each entity would have its own Constitution and international political subjectivity. Speaking to the Bošnjački sabor, which was meeting again on July 18, 1994 to debate this peace plan, Izetbegović called on the participants to approve it even though it gave the Serb entity several Muslim-majority towns. According to Izetbegović:

If peace arrives, and it will not be without difficulty, then the aggressor will have to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina and withdraw from 20% of occupied territories. . . . This means that the struggle for liberation of the other occupied territories will have to be pursued through political means, not military. It will be a long tactical fight that will last for years, even generations, but the chances for victory are on our side.51

The idea of reintegrating Bosnia-Herzegovina in two stages, first militarily and then politically, enabled the SDA’s leaders to evade the ever-present tension between
affirming the Bosniak political sovereignty and preserving Bosnian territorial integrity. In the end, the Bošnjački sabor approved the Contact Group’s plan by 303 votes out of 349. Ten days later, it was rejected by the Parliament of the “Republika Srpska.” In January 1995, in an attempt to rekindle the peace talks, France and Great Britain proposed establishing confederal ties between the future Serb entity and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, equivalent to the ties between the Federation and Croatia, as stipulated in the Washington Agreement. After some hesitations, the SDA eventually conceded that “special ties are possible between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia, on the condition that similar ties [are formed] between the Bosniaks of Bosnia and those of the Sandžak.”

In spring 1995, the war suddenly gained pace. In early May, in Croatia, the Croatian Army won its first major victory against the “Serb Republic of Krajina” by regaining control of Western Slavonia. Three weeks later, following a deadly VRS bombing of Tuzla, NATO air forces bombed VRS positions. In retaliation, the VRS took several hundred UN peacekeepers hostage, casting a harsh light on UNPROFOR’s vulnerability. In early July, the VRS assaulted the enclave of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, capturing it on July 11, 1995, despite the presence of several hundred UN Dutch peacekeepers. In the following days, the Serb forces systematically massacred some 8,000 Bosniak prisoners, turning ethnic cleansing into genocide. On July 25, the VRS also captured the neighboring enclave of Žepa. The capture of the two enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa strengthened the Serb leaders’ feelings of invincibility and impunity, but UNPROFOR’s helplessness to prevent the worst massacre of the war incited Western leaders to take the gloves off. In August 1995, the Croatian Army launched a general assault against the “Serb Republic of Krajina,” wiping it off the map within a few days and causing 300,000 Serb refugees to flee. Soon thereafter, deadly shelling in Sarajevo triggered a NATO air campaign to bomb the VRS’s positions. The Croatian and Bosnian armies took advantage of this campaign to break through Serb lines and recapture considerable territory in western Bosnia (see Map XII). At that time, the “Republika Srpska” was on the verge of collapse, with heightened tensions between representatives of western Bosnia and eastern Bosnia, and an open conflict between its political and military leaders. The “Republika Srpska” had to accept a general ceasefire and give Slobodan Milošević authority to start new peace talks in its name. In late October, the VRS controlled only half of Bosnian territory—i.e., what the Contact Group’s peace plan allocated to it.

While summer 1995 saw the Serb nationalist project collapse, it was also a difficult period for the SDA’s leaders. On the one hand, the fall of the enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa created strong tensions within the Bosniak community. On the other, the SDA chose to adopt several controversial constitutional reforms during this agitated period. On August 3, despite opposition from the civic parties, it brought up for parliamentary vote a constitutional amendment whereby the Chairman of the Collegial Presidency would no longer be chosen by his peers, but by the Parliament itself, thus ensuring de facto that this position would always be held by a Bosniak. At the same time, the SDA had a law passed that clarified the competences of the federal and republican governments, reducing the latter’s prerogatives. Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić protested, with support from the civic parties, and threatened to resign. In Silajdžić’s
view, the Federation was the foundation for the future reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and thus a step towards a full restoration of republican institutions. On the contrary, for the SDA’s leaders, establishing the Federation entailed a transfer of powers that had previously been devolved to the Republic, and must not under any circumstances hamper the political practices that enabled the SDA to maintain its hegemony in the ARBiH-controlled territories. For the SDA’s leaders, the Federation

was nothing more than a means for the SDA to continue to assert its political hegemony over a portion of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, without explicitly having to renounce its territorial integrity.

As the situation was changing rapidly on the ground, new peace talks opened in September 1995 under the leadership of US emissary Richard Holbrooke. These talks quickly yielded two intermediary agreements on the future institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In November, the final phase of talks was held in Dayton, Ohio, leading to the signing of several agreements on November 21. Known collectively as the Dayton Agreement, these accords transformed Bosnia-Herzegovina into a state made up of two separate entities: the Federation (51 percent of Bosnian territory) and the Republika Srpska (49 percent). The latter ceded most of the suburbs that it held in the Sarajevo region, but kept control of many towns that had had Muslim majorities before the war, including Srebrenica (see Map XIII). The status of the municipality of Brčko, considered highly strategic by both the Republika Srpska (for its territorial continuity) and the Federation (for access to the Sava River), would be decided at a later date. The shared institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a three-member Collegial Presidency, a bicameral Parliament, and a government with very limited powers. Each entity would have its own Constitution and armed forces and could establish special relations with the neighboring states of Croatia or Serbia.

In parallel, the Dayton Agreement called for elections to be organized rapidly, with refugees supposed to vote in the municipality where they had lived before the war and being granted a right to return. An Implementation Force (IFOR) made up of 60,000 men was formed and placed under NATO command, and a High Representative was appointed to oversee the implementation of these peace agreements. On November 29, 1995, only thirty-five out of 240 deputies attended the Bosnian Parliament session called to vote on this agreement. Two weeks later, on December 14, 1995, the Dayton Agreement was officially signed in Paris by Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman, and Alija Izetbegović.

The Dayton Agreement extended the territorialized consociationalism of the Washington Agreement to the Serb community, but did not split the Republika Srpska into several cantons. Hence it created a serious imbalance between the two constituent entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. More generally, this agreement gave the Serb side more concessions than any other peace plan, both in institutional and territorial terms. The Dayton Agreement thus halted the nation-state rationales underlying the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but largely ratified the territorialization of communities caused by the war and by ethnic cleansing. Admittedly, it established a territorialized consociationalism that could form a starting-point for gradually reintegrating Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it also let the nationalist parties evade their own contradictions and unfurl their nation-state ambitions within the new Bosnian institutions. Lastly, the complexity and ambiguities of the Dayton Agreement allowed these nationalist parties to dissimulate the cost of their past failures and to present themselves as the war’s victors. For example, speaking to the SDA’s governing bodies in January 1996, Alija Izetbegović stated that “we have remained faithful to the idea of Bosnia, despite the price paid and the risks encountered, we have awakened the national consciousness of the Bosniaks and we have not forgotten our brothers in the Sandžak.”

The Bosnian
The war, which had lasted three and a half years, had caused 2.3 million people to flee, including 1.1 million displaced within Bosnia-Herzegovina, 500,000 refugees in Serbia and Croatia, and 700,000 refugees elsewhere in the world. The human toll is estimated at 97,000 dead, of which 65.9 percent were Bosniaks, 25.6 percent Serbs and 8.0 percent Croats. Of the 40,000 civilian victims, Bosniaks represented 83.3 percent.  

Map XIII  Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Dayton Agreement (December 1995).
A Bosniak Nation Centered on Islam (1990–5)

Muslims/Bosniaks: Birth of a political nation

From 1990 to 1995, the affirmation of political sovereignty for the Muslim/Bosniak nation went hand in hand with considerable changes in its national identity. Already in the months leading up to the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDA sought to give the Muslim nation the national symbols it was lacking. During the 1990 electoral campaign, it promoted a national flag with two horizontal green stripes on top and bottom and a green crescent in the middle of a white background to symbolize Islam, a layout that was strongly reminiscent of the Israeli flag (a blue star of David on a white background, surrounded by two horizontal blue stripes). The Muslim national flag was visible at all the party’s electoral meetings. A year later, during its first convention in November 1991, the SDA unveiled an anthem for the Muslim nation, written by Džemaludin Latić and entitled “I Am Your Son” (“Ja sin sam tvoj”). In both cases, these new symbols were supposed to show that the Muslims had become a nation in their own right, and were chosen by the SDA, which positioned itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Muslim nation.

Alongside this symbolic production, the SDA began to set up the Muslim national institutions that some intellectuals had been demanding since the 1970s. These institutions were given the responsibility of continuing the “national affirmation” that had begun during the communist period. Preporod, the Muslim cultural society dissolved in 1949, was revived on October 5, 1990. At this occasion, its president Muhsin Rizvić stated:

For forty years until today, we have been the only nation, not only in the Yugoslav community of nations but also in Europe, not to have cultural autonomy, not to have its own cultural institutions and thus [the only nation] with a literature that is disputed, a language which in Yugoslav linguistics does not have the right to [be called by] its traditional name, much less to contribute to the shared vocabulary, a history repressed by historical guilt and a “Turkish [inferiority] complex”, [and] a culture accused of interrupting the development of intellectual life in Bosnia.¹

Preporod regarded itself as the central venue for elaborating the Muslim national identity, and focused its initial efforts on formalizing a Bosnian language, publishing an anthology of Muslim literature, and drafting new school curricula. Muhsin Rizvić, a
former Young Muslim who had a university career during the communist period, also viewed the society he presided over as a unifying factor for the Muslim intellectual elite, who were divided between a secular intelligentsia and religious ‘ilmīyya. In particular, Rizvić believed that the intelligentsia was characterized by an “inferiority complex verging on self-denial,” but the end of communism would give it the opportunity to be “decontaminated” and to “get closer to the people.” As a matter of fact, most of the intellectuals that had participated in the “national affirmation” during the communist period joined Preporod, contributing in their own way to the reconfiguration of the Muslim elite triggered by the end of the communist regime. Some intellectuals trained during the communist era—such as historians Atif Purivatra and Mustafa Imamović or literature professors Alija Isaković, Enes Duraković, and Munib Maglajlić—even played a decisive role in Preporod. However, not all Muslim intellectuals answered this rallying call. In particular, several Muslim members of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina kept their distance from Preporod, which they regarded as a communitarian and partisan institution.

The creation of Muslim national institutions linked to the SDA went beyond the cultural sphere. Following the November 1990 elections, other similar organizations were founded, such as the charity Merhamet (“Mercy”), whose national chairman was Edah Bećirbegović, a former Young Muslim. Beginning in 1991, these various organizations helped found other more political national institutions, such as the Muslim National Council of Sandžak in May 1991 or the National Defense Council created a month later. Presided over by Alija Izetbegović, the National Defense Council brought together the SDA members of parliament and the leaders of Preporod and Merhamet, as well as various Muslim intellectuals and notables; it was in charge of supervising the military preparations of the Muslim nation. In affirming the political sovereignty of the Muslim nation, the SDA thus created parallel institutions whose members were coopted by the party leaders, but that claimed to express the political will of all Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and thus threatened the legitimacy of Bosnian state institutions. This ambivalent relationship between Muslim national institutions and Bosnian state institutions became fully apparent after war broke out in April 1992. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s independence went hand in hand with the promotion of new state symbols, and on May 4, 1992, the Bosnian Collegial Presidency adopted a new Bosnian flag, showing a blue shield with six gold fleurs de lys, all on a white background; the fleur de lys symbolized the ties between the medieval kingdom of Bosnia and the house of Anjou. Some confusion arose between the symbols of the Bosnian state and Muslim national or religious symbols. For several months, the units of the Patriotic League and the nascent ARBiH hesitated between the Bosnian shield and more specifically Muslim symbols such as the crescent and star or a Qur’an flanked by two swords. The song “I am Your Son” was used as the unofficial national anthem throughout the war, with an official anthem only being adopted a few weeks before the signing of the Dayton Agreement.

Because of the war, it became simultaneously more complex and more necessary to form national Muslim institutions. Territories under ARBiH control were isolated from one another and affected by powerful centrifugal forces, as shown by the great autonomy enjoyed by the social-democratic city council of Tuzla, the rising tension
between the SDA’s national leadership and some political and religious notables in Mostar or, in 1993, the secession led by Fikret Abdić in Cazinska Krajina. To prevent localism from gaining sway, a Coordination Committee of the Muslim Institutions was created on May 17, 1992, grouping together representatives of the SDA, Preporod, Merhamet, and the Islamic Community. Seven month later, on December 22, 1992, a Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals met in Sarajevo. This convention adopted several resolutions denouncing Serb crimes, rejecting plans to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina, and reasserting the existence of the Muslim nation as an “autochthonous European nation within the borders of the former Bosnian pašalik”, “elevated by Islam” and having “its own Bosnian (Bosniak) language.” The convention called on the intelligentsia to support the war effort and elected a Council of the Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals, presided by Alija Isaković and in charge of defining the interests of the Muslim nation in the war circumstances. This process of forming representative institutions for the Muslim nation culminated on September 27, 1993 with the opening of the Bošnjački sabor (Bosniak Assembly), which brought together the main political, military, religious, and intellectual representatives of the Muslim nation, at the very time that Fikret Abdić was seceding in Cazinska Krajina. A 1995 brochure from the ARBiH even stated that the Bošnjački sabor was “the equivalent for Bosniaks of the World Jewish Congress for Jews.”

The Bošnjački sabor acted as a kind of informal parliament of the Muslim nation, and thus appeared to embody its political sovereignty. Therefore, it is no surprise that this assembly, while rejecting the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan, decided to abandon the “Muslim” national name in order to “give our nation its historical and national name, ‘Bosniak’, thus to link ourselves closely to our country Bosnia, its continuity as a state and legal entity, to our Bosnian language, and to the entire spiritual tradition of our history.” More generally, 1993 was the year that clearly revealed the will of the Muslim political, cultural, and religious elites to affirm their nation’s political sovereignty and to establish it as a “political nation” (politički narod). Thus, in his opening address to the Bošnjački sabor, Alija Isaković emphasized that since 1878, Muslims had been “marginalized as a political nation, physically and materially annihilated, their culture despised, their religion vilified as an Asian-Islamic residue,” and still during the communist era, formed “the only nation in Europe without national institutions, with a political elite made up of apatrides and cowards, with political repression against our religious and secular intelligentsia, with no right to our national name, to our language, our literature, our customs or our faith.”

To affirm the political sovereignty of the Muslim/Bosniak nation, its leaders had not only to promote the various symbols of its identity, but also to fight the centrifugal forces that threatened it. In his speech to the Bošnjački sabor, Isaković thus attacked local and regional particularisms, social and cultural divisions, immediate and selfish interests that, in his view, threatened the unity of the Muslim nation. Over the following months, criticism of the “pre-political” nature of the Muslim nation was expressed in many calls to reject “good neighborliness” (komšiluk) with Serbs and Croats, preferring “komšiluk among Bosniak-Muslims”, to look beyond one’s own backyard (avlija) to build the state (država), to cease being a “charitable nation” (merhametli narod) and become a “sovereign nation” (državotvorni narod, literally, “state-creating”). This
nationalization of Muslims/Bosniaks, i.e. their transformation into a political nation conveying ambitions of statehood, is emphasized by the fact that, at the same period, Fikret Abdić’s partisans rejected the national name “Bosniak” and continued to call themselves “Muslims.” Speaking of them, Izetbegović stated:

The Muslims have become a political and sovereign nation [državotvoran] and this is an attempt to bring us back fifty years, to divide us into several tribes again, and there will be a Krajina tribe, and a Tuzla tribe, and lastly, a Sarajevo tribe.  

Asserting the Bosniak nation as a political nation meant going beyond centrifugal forces unleashed by the war, and was indissociable from the re-establishment of the Bosnian state begun by Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić in October 1993. Over the following months, Silajdžić re-unified the monetary and fiscal system, named four ministers in charge of regional coordination, nationalized public companies, and scaled back the powers of municipalities. Yet local and regional particularisms remained strong, as shown by the regional sabors (assemblies) held to represent the displaced populations of Eastern Bosnia, Bosanska Krajina, and Posavina. In addition, the creation in March 1994 of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, divided into eight cantons, gave these regional particularisms a new institutional basis. In this context, the army remained the main means for the nationalization of Muslims/Bosniaks. It underwent substantial centralization during the conflict, and its units—initially built by local strongmen or criminal gangs—gradually became disciplined, mobile units. From defending a village or a neighborhood, the army moved on to liberating the country. Even more than the national institutions created between 1990 and 1993, the ARBiH thus became the true birthplace of the Bosniak nation, promoting the new Bosniak national identity through the newspapers and brochures aimed at soldiers. It even published a history of Bosnia-Herzegovina intended for officer training, written by historians close to Preporod.  

Although the transformation of the Bosniak nation into a political nation received virtually unanimous support, the simultaneous reconfiguration of its national identity was much more fragile and controversial. Even the “Bosniak” national name was accepted with some reluctance. Barely three years after its first partisans had been excluded from the SDA, it was adopted by the Bošnjački sabor, a fact that attests to how quickly the Muslim/Bosniak nation saw its identity evolve. Yet this shift can chiefly be attributed to a change of heart of intellectuals involved in the communist-era “national affirmation”, who were still defending the national name “Muslim” in 1990. Their move to support the name “Bosniak” three years later is attributable to their desire to strengthen the ties binding the Muslim/Bosniak nation to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to bolster its international legitimacy. Similar reasons led Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, a strong opponent to the national term “Bosniak” in 1990, to become one of its fervent defenders, while opposing plans to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina. But what about members of the pan-Islamist current, who were then tempted by the idea of a small Muslim nation-state? All evidence indicates that they came to support the national name “Bosniak” belatedly, due to the necessities of their national and international environment. In April 1993, Adnan Jahić—a leading pan-Islamist activist in Tuzla—
was still denouncing the name “Bosniak” as “an attempt to redefine the Muslim nationality solely in Bosnian territorial categories, and to minimize the historical and religious aspects that transcend [them].” Six months later, Džemaludin Latić described the abandoning of the “Muslim” national name as a “sad separation”:

Oh, Lord! The Bosniaks will become a European nation, not only in a geographical sense but also in a cultural sense, a big, ugly copy, with a European lifestyle, a European neglect of God, religious and even moral indifference . . . Yes, we must become Bosniaks, which is what we are of course, if we want to survive in our own state! But in the future? Won’t there come a time of post-nationalism, when living faith, and not the dead nation, will determine our way of life?  

To a large extent, the members of the pan-Islamist current thus accepted the national name “Bosniak” without enthusiasm. However, this did not prevent them from playing an active role in the other ways in which the national Muslim/Bosniak identity was being reconfigured, and in particular in building closer ties with Islam, as we shall see later on.

As for the identity reconfiguration related to language or national history, these were also driven by intellectuals trained during the communist period. In many aspects, the elaboration of the new Bosniak national identity was merely an extension of the Muslim “national affirmation.” Thus, the recognition of a Bosnian language, which a few Muslim intellectuals had demanded in the 1970s, was made official in the early 1990s. Beginning in February 1991, SDA members of parliament presented a draft resolution to the Bosnian Parliament, recognizing the existence of a Bosnian language distinct from the Serbian and Croatian languages. Two months later, during the census, 37.5 percent of the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared that they spoke Bosnian, 26.6 percent Serbo-Croatian, 18.8 percent Serbian, 13.5 percent Croatian, and 1.4 percent Croato-Serbian. During the same period, a spelling committee led by Alija Isaković and the linguist Senahid Halilović was in charge of formalizing the Bosnian language, but struggled to define its specific features. For example, should words of Turkish origin be promoted in the language of Muslims/Bosniaks, as advocated by Senahid Halilović, or should these words be replaced by “authentic Bosnian words,” as requested by Alija Isaković? Should the Bosnian language be identified with Muslims/Bosniaks alone, at the risk of weakening Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state, or should it be associated with all inhabitants, but at the risk of weakening the Muslim/Bosniak nation? Should the language be called Bosnian (bosanski jezik) or Bosniak (bošnjački jezik)? In the end, in September 1993, the Bosnian Collegial Presidency decreed that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, “the official language is the standard literary language with the ijekavica pronunciation of its constituent nations, which bears one of these three names: Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian.” Yet this decree was far from resolving all the contradictions related to the name of the language spoken in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a year later, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced new textbooks entitled simply “Mother Tongue.”

Most often, the task of writing new language, literature, and history textbooks was given to intellectuals tied to the Muslim “national affirmation” of the communist
period. However, the rewriting of the history of the Bosniak nation also gave rise to certain contradictions. Thus, during the war, the “Bogomil thesis” became the centerpiece of Bosniak national history. Indeed, referring to “Bogomilism” made it possible to counter the idea that conversion to Islam had been forced or opportunistic, by presenting this conversion as being religiously motivated and experienced as a liberation. Islamization was therefore no longer seen as renunciation or treason, but rather as a means to preserve an immutable religious and national identity. In this vein, Hajrudin Numić, a member of the Council of the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals, stated his belief that, “due to the noted proximity between certain elements of the new Islamic religion and the old Bogomil religion, Islam was for Bosnian Muslims simply a way to perpetuate their religious existence in a new period and under new circumstances.” Under this interpretation, Bosnian “Bogomilism” was some sort of Islam before its time. This emphasis on Islamization as a voluntary and linear process was primarily aimed at proving the Bosniak nation’s age-old existence.

The Bogomil thesis was also useful to counter the “Turkish complex,” namely the feelings of inferiority and guilt that Serb nationalists allegedly inflicted on the Bosniaks because of their conversion to Islam and their role during the Ottoman period. In opposition to the idea of an “Ottoman yoke,” the five centuries of Ottoman presence were regarded as a long period of peace and tolerance, in contrast with the religious conflicts in the rest of Europe. The “Turkish complex” was thus supposed to give way to a feeling of pride rooted in the grandeur of the Islamic and Ottoman civilization. Nevertheless, this narrative did not prevent the same Bosniak historians from casting light on the various revolts of Bosnian Muslims against Ottoman power, such as the uprising led by Husein-kapetan Gradaščević, which began in 1831. These uprisings were presented as signs of an early national feeling. Between 1990 and 1995, the Muslim/Bosniak national identity thus underwent numerous transformations, building on the “national affirmation” of the communist period and partially repeating its hesitations and contradictions. However, the major identity shift of this period was still the redefinition of the ties between Islam and Muslim/Bosniak national identity, in which pan-Islamist activists played a central role.

The re-Islamization of Bosniak national identity and the nationalization of Islam

Already during the 1990 electoral campaign, the SDA had highlighted the symbols of Islam to spark the Muslim population’s nationalist enthusiasm. In the following years, the intellectuals and ‘ulama’ with ties to the party continuously emphasized Islam as the centerpiece of Muslim national identity. Sociologist Šaćir Filandra thus stated:

Islam is what initially caused differentiation within the shared ethnic Slavic heritage, and the emergence of a specific Muslim national and cultural profile. More than any other historical, ethnic or political factor, Islam is what defined the Muslim essence [biće]”. Moreover, secularization under way since the nineteenth century did not change this because “although Islam, like Christianity, has been
reduced in our regions to a simple theology due to a particular process of secularization, the ties between Muslim culture and Islam have not been broken.”

Džemaludin Latić, an eminent pan-Islamist activist, also insisted on the central position of Islam, but refused to reduce it to a simple cultural substrate. On the contrary, he viewed Islamic transcendence as the ground for the superiority of Muslim nationalism. In his view:

Bosnian Muslims are a specific European nation, due to their relationship with the constituent elements of the nation. Indeed, while the European nations worship their language, their land and their destiny, Bosnian Muslims worship only the supreme divine being. Turned towards transcendence, towards monotheism (tevhid), they break free of the traps of contemporary idolatry (širk).

This emphasis on Islam as the central element of national identity became even stronger after the “Bosniak” national name was adopted, with members of the pan-Islamist current using the term “Bosniak-Muslim” (Bošnjak-Musliman) to counter those who wished to extend the name “Bosniak” to all the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1994, Hilmo Neimarlija, professor of sociology at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, stated:

The Bosniaks are Muslims. Through their traditions, their culture, the faith of their forefathers, the faith of the vast majority of Bosniaks, as shown in their convictions and practices. The Bosniaks are Muslims in the same way that the Croats are Catholic . . . We will no longer allow anyone, not even ourselves, to raise this dilemma [between national identity and religious identity], because our national being, our national identity has been defined by Islam, not as a religion but as one of the three great universal cultures.

The issue of the ties between Islam and Muslim/Bosniak national identity is where the intellectuals and ‘ulama’ close to the SDA broke with the “national affirmation” of the communist period. Whereas the intellectuals of the 1970s sought to minimize Islam in Muslim national identity, twenty years later, those close to the SDA attempted to place Islam at the heart of the Bosniak national identity. In fact, this re-Islamization of Muslim/Bosniak national identity was not mainly due to the actions of national institutions such as the Preporod cultural society or the Council of the Congress of Intellectuals, but the Islamic Community and, in a context of war, the ARBiH. Yet in both cases, the attempts at re-Islamization of the Muslim/Bosniak national identity stirred up many controversies, and actually led to a nationalization of Islam. This complex dialectic was clearly visible in the army, which beginning in 1993 became the main driver for the re-Islamization of the Bosniak national identity.

In 1993, assistants for morale, information, and religion (pomoćnik za moral, informisanje i vjerska pitanja) were appointed in each army unit. Imams were detached from the Islamic Community to fill these positions. These imams were responsible for making sure that the main precepts of Islam were respected and religious life developed...
within the ARBiH. At the same time, alongside the regular army units, new “Muslim” units appeared, emphasizing Islamic practice and the religious aspect of their combat. The largest of these was the 7th Muslim brigade, founded in November 1992 from the merger of several smaller units, and commanded initially by Mahmut Karalić, a hadith professor at the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo (the hadith are the acts and words of the Prophet). Based in Zenica in central Bosnia, the 7th Muslim brigade quickly became one of the ARBiH’s main elite units. Other similar units were created during the war, such as the 4th Muslim brigade based in Herzegovina and commanded by Nezim Halilović, the main imam of Konjic, or the 9th Muslim brigade based in Tuzla. After the “Bosniak” national name was adopted, these units kept the name “Muslim,” emphasizing their religious and ideological nature. From this standpoint, the Muslim brigades of the 1990s should not be assimilated with the Muslim brigades of the Second World War, but instead with the highly ideological proletarian brigades created by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, or Iran’s Guardians of the Revolution. In fact, the latter assisted in arming and supervising the 7th Muslim brigade.

For the military, political, and religious leaders involved in the re-Islamization of Bosniak national identity, Islam was supposed to make combatants fight harder and to help overcome parochialism. Thus, the Reis-ul-ulama Mustafa Cerić told combatants in the 4th brigade of Hrasnica (a suburb of Sarajevo), “when Islam has become the tie binding us together, when it has become strong, then we can make it the foundation for our national identity, our language, [and] our army.” During a seminar on the “role of religion in strengthening patriotic unity,” Fikret Muslimović, the ARBiH Morale Department Chief, emphasized the positive impact of religious practice on combatants’ morale. He suggested to ARBiH officers that they “reassemble their people” and create a favorable setting for fulfilling religious obligations, with emphasis on funeral services:

It is desirable that commanding officers, notably those in key positions, should adapt their behaviour to the religious tradition of their people, during patriotic events and official events supporting our fight for freedom, or when honours are made to the şehids [martyrs] (for example, at funerals). In these circumstances, where respect is expressed with emotion to the victims of the genocide against our people, officers should show that they are aware that the genocide against our people is in fact being carried out with the aim of eliminating our religious traditions.

This reinterpretation of the war in Islamic terms by the army coincided with fallen soldiers being described as şehids (martyrs of the faith). During the war, the Islamic Community, the SDA, and the ARBiH established a cult of şehids that involved widespread use of this term in funerals and obituaries, an increase in şehid tombs in mosque cemeteries and public gardens, and material support and special recognition for the families of şehids. In February 1995, the Islamic Community issued a decree that the second day of the feast ending Ramadan would be the day of şehids, dedicated to visiting the graves and families of martyrs. This cult of şehids became widespread during the war and saw little resistance from the population. But also in this case, the
re-Islamization of Bosniak national identity came hand in hand with a nationalization of Islam: gradually, this cult of šehids became a national and secular phenomenon, as shown by the appearance of nišans (tombstones) in the shape of lilies (the symbol of Bosnia-Herzegovina), or the inauguration of monuments to the “unknown šehid” in public gardens, although the religious identity and motives of such soldiers were, by definition, unknown.

While the cult of šehids became widespread, the war was only described as jihad (holy war) by the Muslim units of the ARBiH. But even within these limited circles, the concept of jihad gave rise to substantial debate. Those in favor of jihad were unable to agree on its practical implications. For example, Mehmedalija Hadžić, an advisor to the Reis-ul-ulema for Shari’a, believed that “the moral code of the Muslim soldier” prevented him from mistreating prisoners or pillaging civilians. 21 However, in their Instructions for the Muslim Soldier (1993), the muftis of Zenica and Bihać stated, “It is up to the commanding officer to decide whether it is better for the common good to free, exchange or liquidate an enemy prisoner.” 22 Mirsad Mahmutović, in charge of morale and religious matters at the ARBiH’s officer training schools, referred to the Prophet to conclude that “the commanding officer of the unit that took part in combat decides what the loot is, and how it is distributed. When it is done in this way, there is no problem, there is no pillage.” 23 Lacking a substantial definition, jihad was reduced to a symbol, a folklore, and did not avoid the paradoxical nationalization process caused by the policy of re-Islamization of the Bosniak national identity. One piece of evidence is that in January 1994, before an audience of ARBiH officers, Enes Karić, a professor of tefsir (Qur’an commentary) at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of Sarajevo, defined jihad as “all the activities that contribute to a worthy expression of Islamic faith, to the preservation of goods, honour, life, [and] descent.” He therefore deduced that “If Muslims need a state to protect all these values, then the creation of this state represents—from a religious viewpoint—jihad par excellence.” In this conception, jihad is reduced to a patriotic war. 24

The re-Islamization of Bosniak national identity, driven by members of the pan-Islamist current and relayed by many ‘ulama’, secular intellectuals, and officers, thus led to a nationalization of Islam. This paradoxical evolution had many implications for Islamic religious institutions and for religious life in general. With regard to the former, note that in the early 1990s, the Islamic Community was still largely outside the reach of the pan-Islamist activists: Salih Čolaković, the chairman of the mesihat of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was hostile to this movement, while Yugoslav Reis-ul-ulema Jakub Selimoski was in favor of political neutrality for religious institutions. In 1991, the relationship between Čolaković and members of the pan-Islamist current grew even more hostile, after the former took control of the newspaper Preporod from the latter. The pan-Islamist activists then decided to revive the ‘ulama’ association el-Hidaje and to make it their instrument for taking over the Islamic religious institutions. At the same time, Selimoski and Čolaković stated that the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia would remain united even if the Yugoslav federation disappeared, and in September 1991, they organized a Conference of Eastern European Muslims in Sarajevo. Čolaković believed that the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, the largest in Europe, should be the “guiding force” for European Muslims, and proposed that all European Islamic
organizations establish their headquarters in Sarajevo. The Islamic Community’s leaders were promoting plans for pan-European Islamic religious institutions, which did not mix with the political pan-Islamism of the founders of the SDA.

The beginning of the war in April 1992 temporarily ended these ambitious European projects. By preventing the Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina from functioning normally, the war gave pan-Islamist activists an opportunity to seize control of those institutions. On April 28, 1993, a refounding assembly (Obnoviteljski sabor) removed Selimoski and Čolaković from office, issued a decree dissolving the Islamic Community in Yugoslavia and “refounding” an Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then designated Mustafa Cerić, the main imam of the Zagreb Mosque, as the new Reis-ul-ulema. Under the cooptation methods already used to form the Muslim/Bosniak national institutions, the refounding assembly of the Islamic Community was made up of ‘ulama’ (connected or not to the association el-Hidaje), as well as representatives of the Coordination Committee of the Muslim Institutions, the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals, Preporod, Merhamet, and other lesser-known associations. Although this refounding assembly lacked legitimacy in the eyes of many ‘ulama’, it nevertheless allowed the pan-Islamist current to take control of the Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while dissolving the largest Muslim community in Europe.

The emphasis on Islam as the central component of Muslim/Bosniak national identity thus went hand in hand with the nationalization of Islamic religious institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And, making this paradox complete, this nationalization was implemented by the supporters of pan-Islamist ideas. In this case as well, pan-Islamism proved to be merely a form of proto-nationalism. Although it was supposed to bring together “all the Muslims living in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and all Bosnian Muslims living abroad temporarily or permanently,” the new Islamic Community had difficulty gaining influence beyond the Bosnian borders, as the Serbian and Montenegrin authorities refused to recognize the new mufti of Novi Pazar, and the mufti of Zagreb took advantage of the circumstances to increase his autonomy. The “refounding” of the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina thus not only resulted in the Umma being divided along national lines but also jeopardized the spiritual unity of the Bosniak nation.

Apart from religious institutions, all of religious life was affected by the nationalization of Islam during the war. Thus, this period saw an increase in the number of songs with martial or religious themes, presented as ilahiye and kaside (Sufi chants) but sung in concert halls or during political rallies. Likewise, ARBiH units sent delegations to the Sufi pilgrimage of Ajvatovica in central Bosnia, soon transforming this event into a patriotic and military rally. Soldiers in the 7th Muslim brigade practiced dhikr (a Sufi ceremony) led by officers promoted to the rank of sheikhs in the Naqshbandi order. This often superficial combination of patriotic and martial messages with Sufi practices occurred despite the traditional hostility of pan-Islamists towards Sufism, which reappeared when the newspaper Ljiljan called for Ajvatovica to be cleaned up of “all the religious kitsch, rural folklore and širk [idolatry]” present at the event. Lastly, the nationalization of Islam threatened to transform some political conflicts into religious ones, as in Cazinska Krajina, where Mufti Hasan Makić warned the partisans of Fikret Abdić that “the path that Abdić wants you to follow goes against the Islamic faith.”
decreeed that, as *murtats* (apostates), they would not be entitled to religious burial. The imams supporting Fikret Abdić, for their part, refused to recognize the new leaders of the Islamic Community and called on “all sincere, faithful Muslims . . . to do without the services of the warring imams . . . who have, by force, torn religion out of the places of worship to place it at the service of politics and a partisan ideology.”

Thus, the nationalization of Islam ultimately threatened its sacred nature, and was accompanied by substantial tension and numerous controversies of a religious nature. At the same time, it exacerbated the political divisions within the Bosniak community, as shown by the controversy that broke out in 1995 in the Bosnian Collegial Presidency. In February 1995, Izetbegović attended a parade of the 7th Muslim brigade in Zenica, giving the brigade high praise before the TV cameras. Immediately, the members of the Collegial Presidency linked to the civic parties denounced this as a sign of “ideologization of faith,” asserting that “the army that defends Bosnia-Herzegovina, and will defend it in the future, must be secular and plurinational, far removed from partisan influences and rivalry.” The ARBiH, they noted, “was formed in response to aggression, and was created by all patriots. They were not motivated by their political or partisan convictions, nor by their religious convictions, but by their responsibility to the state and the fatherland, and by a clear choice in favor of freedom and in defense of their own existence.”

The next day, Izetbegović and Ejup Ganić retorted that the Zenica parade was simply an “expression of piety,” and that the religiosity of the Muslim units of the ARBiH was merely a “spontaneous reaction” to Serb forces’ destruction of mosques. They also asserted that these Muslim units “have defended, sometimes at the cost of enormous losses and sacrifice, many towns and villages, and have saved the population from genocide, without ever committing genocide.” And they concluded: “Count the graves! This country’s destiny will be decided by those who fight, act and die for it!” This controversy, unparalleled during the war, proves that the re-Islamation of Bosniak national identity was not a spontaneous or consensual process. It also shows that, to understand the transformations that Islam underwent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we must look not only at its ties with the new Bosniak national identity, but also at its place in the new one-party state established by the SDA.

**The SDA state: Less than an “Islamic republic”?**

As the Muslim/Bosniak national identity changed during the war, the continuities with the communist “national affirmation” were just as important as the discontinuities. The same holds true for the transformations of the political system of Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1990 and 1995. Despite the introduction of a multiparty system in 1990, each nationalist party tended to act as the hegemonic party for the nation that it claimed to represent, and to establish a new one-party state in the territories that it controlled. The SDA was no exception, and following the November 1990 elections, it began to take over the Bosnian legal institutions, on the one hand, while setting up parallel power networks on the other. Regarding the former, Alija Izetbegović gradually took over the powers attributed to the Bosnian Collegial Presidency, as illustrated by visits he made to various Muslim countries without preliminary concertation with the other members of the Presidency. Likewise, the
SDA took over several strategic ministries, beginning with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Haris Silajdžić, a former student of the Gazi Husrev-Beg Madrasa and former assistant of the Reis-ul-ulama for international affairs. The SDA also managed several Muslim-majority towns. However, the major public companies generally held onto their autonomy thanks to their self-managed status and the nationalist parties' inability to agree on how to divide them up. At the same time, members of the pan-Islamist current took part in the development of Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), a “humanitarian” organization headquartered in Vienna and managed by Fatih al-Hassanein, a Sudanese member of the Muslim Brotherhood with ties to Izetbegović since the 1970s. TWRA was responsible for promoting the cause of Balkan Muslims throughout the Muslim world. Lastly, the pan-Islamist activists maintained control of the underground military networks of the Muslim community by placing the political leadership of the Patriotic League in the hands of Hasan Čengić, a co-accused with Izetbegović in 1983, and Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, an intellectual close to the pan-Islamist current.

After the war broke out in April 1992, the SDA's domination of Bosnian legal institutions became even stronger. Izetbegović reluctantly agreed to step down as the SDA’s president, but with his advisors, he took control of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency and sidelined its other members linked to the HDZ or the civic parties. The SDA–HDZ coalition government led, first, by Jure Pelivan then by Mile Akmačić existed only on paper, as most power was held at the municipal level. Against this backdrop, the forming of the Silajdžić government in October 1993 signaled a certain restoration of the state, while also representing a crucial step in the SDA's monopolization of power. The most important ministries were given to individuals with ties of some sort to the new hegemonic party. Firstly, several ministers were tied to the pan-Islamist current. This was the case for Irfan Ljubijankić, a doctor from a family of 'ulama', who became the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, and for Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, Minister for the Defense Industry, who would break with the SDA a few months later. The Silajdžić government also included ministers who had begun their careers under the communist regime but had sworn allegiance to the SDA, such as Bakir Alispahić, the new Minister of the Interior, and Hamdija Hadžihasanović, the new Minister of Defense. The Ministry of Education and Culture—another key position given the ongoing reconfiguration of the Muslim/Bosniak national identity—was initially awarded to Enes Duraković, a literature professor with ties to the “national affirmation” of the communist period, then to Enes Karić, a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of Sarajevo. Lastly, the four ministers in charge of regional coordination were all from the SDA. In the following months, public companies were nationalized, with their administrators either being replaced by or becoming members of the SDA. For example, Edhem Bičakčić, an engineer from a prestigious Sarajevan family who had been co-accused at the 1983 trial, was appointed as the head of the power company Elektroprivreda. Also, Edib Bukvić, an economist and the son of a former Young Muslim, became the head of the industrial group Energoinvest. Lastly, the SDA's domination of positions of power sometimes took unexpected forms: the tunnel connecting besieged Sarajevo to Igman—a crucially strategic and profitable infrastructure—was managed by Nedžad Branković, a nephew of former Young Muslim Hasib Branković.
In wartime, control of the army remained the most important stake for the new one-party SDA state, and the SDA’s informal networks focused their activity on the army. Beginning in May 1992, Sefer Halilović, the military chief of the Patriotic League, was appointed Commander of the General Staff of the ARBiH. A year later, Halilović was regarded as making too many waves, and was replaced by Rasim Delić. Meanwhile, command of the army corps was given to officers who had joined the SDA, and the ARBiH’s Muslim units openly showed their support for the party. The SDA’s gradual takeover of the army was partly because, through the TWRA, the pan-Islamist activists controlled most of the funds gathered in Muslim countries. The TWRA, then co-directed by Fatih al-Hassanein and Hasan Čengić, was also responsible for the procurement and transport of substantial quantities of weapons, thus acting as an intermediary between the ARBiH and the outside world. Once these weapons arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they were stored in the ARBiH’s main logistics center in Visoko, managed by Halid Čengić, Hasan’s father, then redistributed within the army according to criteria of political and ideological allegiance. One sign of the SDA’s control of the army came in April 1994, when the ARBiH General Staff declared:

Support from ARBiH officers shall not go to any groups that think that “all nationalist parties are guilty for the war”, nor to individuals who deny the historical importance of the Patriotic League in the forming of the ARBiH or the special merits of the SDA as a political factor that answered its historical duty as completely and concretely as possible by creating the Patriotic League, the military organization that gave rise to the ARBiH. 34

By presenting the ARBiH’s origins in this way, the decisive role of the Territorial Defense and its officers (who were often tied to the SDP) was ignored. In the same period, the establishment of the one-party SDA state was made official when Izetbegović became the president of the party again, with Minister of the Interior, Bakir Alispahić, and ARBiH Morale Department Chief, Fikret Muslimović, both joining the party leadership. Nine months later, Hazim Sadić, commander of the 2nd Corps of the ARBiH and the last army corps commander with ties to the civic parties, was replaced by Sead Delić.

There was some resistance to the establishment of a one-party state. In January 1995, the SDP protested that “the plurinational, multiparty Presidency is oft en a mere decor or veil enabling the policy of a single party to be implemented.” 35 A month later, as we have seen, the members of the Presidency connected to the civic parties denounced the army’s Islamization. The ARBiH General Staff then publicly reiterated its support for Izetbegović, thus meddling in the internal affairs of the Presidency that it was supposed to be subordinate to. Shortly thereafter, in August 1995, the SDA presented a constitutional amendment whereby the Parliament would choose the Chairman of the Collegial Presidency, which would automatically reserve this position for a Bosniak. The civic parties protested that such a “change in the constitutional powers of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina requires the general consent of the citizens and constituent nations” of Bosnia-Herzegovina. 36 Izetbegović then responded that, if something were to happen to him, “a Bosniak should come [to
take my place), someone from the SDA should come," because otherwise, the army would refuse to obey. Therefore, the ARBiH had been politicized by bypassing the authority of the Collegial Presidency, before this politicized army justified the SDA’s takeover of the Collegial Presidency itself. On a more local level, pockets of resistance to the SDA state appeared, as shown by the cases of the social-democratic city council of Tuzla or the Zenica steel plant. However, these strongholds of resistance were subject to significant pressure, and, in 1994, the directors of several large companies in Tuzla and the director of the Zenica steel plant announced that they were joining the SDA.

Thus, during the war, a new one-party state took shape in the territories under ARBiH control. However, this one-party SDA state cannot be simply identified with the former communist one-party state. Admittedly, the SDA tended to behave, and especially to present itself, as the single party of the Muslim/Bosniak nation. However, whereas the civic parties were gradually removed from positions of power, they continued to play their opposition role within the Collegial Presidency, the Parliament, and even the Bošnjački sabor, while non-nationalist intellectuals joined together in the Circle 99 in Sarajevo and the Forum of Citizens in Tuzla. Likewise, public television came under the SDA’s control, but independent media outlets still existed in territories under ARBiH control, including the daily Oslobodenje and the weekly Dani in Sarajevo, or the newspapers Front slobode ("Freedom Front") and Tuzla-list ("Tuzla News") in Tuzla. Therefore, the SDA state was in no way a totalitarian regime or even a classic authoritarian one. In the territories under ARBiH control, the SDA’s hegemony came through indirect channels, for example, with dissident intellectuals or overly curious journalists being beaten up by anonymous attackers or forcibly conscripted into the army. Media outlets were punished in discreet ways, such as cuts to electricity or to paper supply. Overall, the SDA state relied less on overt repression, instead using corporatism and clientelism to control the population, thereby perpetuating other practices of the late communist regime.

During the war, the absence of political repression in the strict sense was offset by widespread material uncertainty, making the population very dependent on political authorities. On the one hand, the authorities were fully responsible for the distribution of humanitarian aid, allocation of housing, and issuing of passports, commercial licenses, and the “working obligations” (radne obaveze) that made it possible to avoid conscription. On the other, the inevitable participation in the black market and payment of bribes meant that everyone was at risk of sanctions from the same authorities. In this context, few would risk the dangers of becoming involved in politics. Moreover, the new hegemonic party began to supervise the population through corporatist organizations, thus following the communist model. Yet here again, the wartime context caused substantial changes. While the League of Communists had relied on public companies and trade unions to distribute jobs, new apartments, and social benefits, the SDA relied chiefly on municipalities, refugee associations, and humanitarian organizations to distribute “abandoned” housing and humanitarian aid. In August 1994, the SDA created a foundation for families of šehids and disabled veterans. Founded at the same period, the United Soldiers’ Organization (Jedinstvena organizacija boraca—JOB) was largely controlled by the SDP, but the SDA managed to undermine it by starting separate organizations for disabled veterans and families of
šehids, promising them special support and recognition. The SDA thus successfully oversaw the new social groups produced by the war and by ethnic cleansing, and controlled the material and symbolic resources distributed to them. The SDA was able to incorporate a large portion of the security and managerial elites of the communist period because it reused the corporatist and clientelistic practices of the League of Communists in a new framework.

As we have seen, the founding core of the SDA was made up of members of the pan-Islamist current that the communist regime had repressed in the 1980s. More broadly, at the national and local levels, the first generation of SDA cadres often came from former prominent families that had been marginalized after the Second World War due to political repression and economic reforms. During the war years, this first generation was substantially renewed, especially at the local level, with the emergence of military, political, or economic players who had contributed to the war effort, along with the sidelining of prominent local members who were more accustomed to the political manoeuvres of peacetime. This renewal often meant that representatives of the urban elite were sidelined in favor of outsiders newly established in the large cities or living in small provincial towns. Examples include the resignation of the mayor of Sarajevo, Muhamed Kreševljaković, the son of a famous historian from the interwar period, or that of the mayor of Bihać, Nedžad Ibrahimpašić, whose father was prominent in the interwar period and who was considered to be close to Fikret Abdić, or the sidelining in Mostar of Ismet Hadžiosmanović, an SDA leader from a family of Young Muslims and a partisan of an alliance with the Croat HVO. In the city of Tuzla, the local SDA leader, Mehmed Begović, a former Young Muslim, was kicked out of the party after refusing to overthrow the social-democratic municipal majority. Also in Tuzla, the founding of Tuzla-Podrinje Canton in 1994 brought to power politicians from the small surrounding towns, and the new canton governor was Izet Hadžić, mayor of the small town of Kalesija, which had ties to the “Black Wolves” (Crni vukovi) military unit and the Naqshbandi Sufi order.

By the same token, the establishment of the SDA state involved the cooptation of a portion of the former communist elite within the new hegemonic party and related institutions, in exchange for minimal political and ideological allegiance. Admittedly, few of the former regime's high-level officials joined the SDA, either because they remained loyal to the SDP or because they were too compromised to hope for a political reconversion. The main exception to this rule was Ismet Grbo, the former vice president of the Socialist Alliance of Working People in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who became the director of the SDA’s center for analysis, documentation and public relations. Yet just as the cultural society Preporod welcomed intellectuals with ties to the “national affirmation” of the communist period, so did the SDA attract military officers, policemen, company directors, and other civil servants linked to the former regime. This trend took place on a massive scale beginning in 1993. The establishment of the SDA state thus prompted a substantial renewal within the political elite; new mid-level cadres emerged who had begun their careers under communism but moved up the ranks rapidly in a time of political upheaval and war.

The most surprising aspect of this complex combination of continuity and discontinuity was the ability of a pan-Islamist network with just a few hundred
members to keep control of the SDA and thus to remain at the heart of the reconfiguration of the Bosniak political elite. The most striking example of political ascension for a member of the pan-Islamist current—apart from Alija Izetbegović himself—is that of Edhem Bičakčić, who at the war’s end was the director of Elektroprivreda, vice president of the SDA in charge of the party’s internal affairs and co-president of the joint SDA–HDZ commission. The persistent centrality of the pan-Islamist activists cannot be understood simply by focusing on Izetbegović’s institutional legitimacy and personal charisma, on the ideological, generational, and family ties uniting members of these circles, or on their experience in underground action (particularly useful in wartime). Certain specific features of the SDA state must also be considered. Firstly, some pan-Islamist activists were at the heart of two parallel power networks: the Patriotic League before the war, and the Third World Relief Agency during the war. This bypassing of legal institutions in favor of informal networks was also visible in the establishment of parallel national institutions: the Coordination Committee of the Muslim Institutions, the Bošnjački sabor, or the Islamic Community refounding assembly. Within these institutions, pan-Islamist activists co-opted relatives, long-term comrades, and circumstantial allies. In this context, the founding of Mladi Muslimani ’39 (“Young Muslims ’39”)38, an association bringing together former members of the movement and their real or supposed relatives, made the affiliation with the Young Muslim movement an even more explicit criterion for upward mobility in the state and party apparatus. However, nepotism in the pan-Islamist current also caused tensions within the SDA itself. In particular, at the end of the war, Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić’s desire to bring fundraising efforts back under the state control led to conflicts with the informal networks controlled by the pan-Islamists. The informal practices of the pan-Islamist activists thus gave them short-term strength, but threatened the longer-term cohesion of the party and state.

The other specific feature of the SDA state that allows us to understand the persistent central importance of the pan-Islamist current is the fact that, in this new one-party state, Islam was placed at the heart of the Muslim/Bosniak national identity. Hence Islam could also be used as a new criterion of political and ideological allegiance, instead of communist ideology. This is what Izetbegović was expressing in subtle terms when, in March 1994, he called on the local SDA in Sarajevo to welcome former communist cadres by placing their “honesty” above their “competence.”39 With this statement, Izetbegović was seeking less to remove fraudulent practices from the party than to subordinate such practices to prior political allegiance. The proof is that such practices were often denounced during conflicts of a political nature. In particular, anti-corruption operations at the local level were first and foremost opportunities for settling of scores and redistribution of power. Examining the “honesty” of particular individuals thus became an essential means to control and renew the political elite. The pan-Islamist activists remained at the center of this system thanks to their skillful use of the secret police files, on the one hand, and the absolving powers of religion, on the other. Under these circumstances, it is unsurprising that upward mobility in the party and state apparatus was often attributable to family ties with a former Young Muslim, schooling at the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa or, if these were lacking, a belated but ostentatious religious enthusiasm.
A Bosniak Nation Centered on Islam (1990–5)

The ideological function fulfilled by Islam in the SDA state prompts us to return to a question that was passionately debated during the 1990s: What was the potential for an “Islamic republic” in Bosnia-Herzegovina? In 1990, the Serbian press used Alija Izetbegović’s Islamic Declaration to evoke this threat. After the war broke out in 1992, these outcries against the Islamic peril became even more hysterical, including in the Croat press. Muslim political and religious leaders unanimously responded by stating their attachment to a secular state in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, in 1990, the Islamic Community said that it was in favor of:

A state that is neutral on questions of religion and personal conviction, where full freedom of conscience exists on an individual and collective level, where religious communities are separate from state structures and are autonomous in their area of activity, and where the legal status of citizens does not depend, either de jure or de facto, on their religious convictions. 40

Five years later, addressing the governing bodies of the Islamic Community, Izetbegović stated:

Islam is not the state religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it cannot be, and moreover, it does not need to be. Only weak people or weak messages seek a protected, privileged position . . . Rather than privileges, Islam needs three things: freedom, possibilities for action, and dignity in its calling. The first two must be guaranteed by the state and the last one must come from you. 41

However, Izetbegović’s stance must be viewed in light of the more ambiguous stances of other members of the pan-Islamist current. For example, in 1991, Džemaludin Latić stated that when Muslims represented more than 50 percent of the Bosnian population, they would say “what they want and what they don’t want,” including an “Islamic republic,” which “does not represent a monstrous or oppressive form of power.” 42 Two years later, he noted with regret that it would be impossible to have an “Islamic republic” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, “not because this Islamic state would deprive Muslims or non-Muslims of their freedom, but because the harsh European environment of this state would destroy it with atomic bombs if necessary.” 43

While Latić dared to say out loud what others were thinking, the most elaborate thinking about the question of an Islamic state in Bosnia-Herzegovina came from Adnan Jahić, a leading pan-Islamist activist in Tuzla. In Jahić’s view, “The state does not need to be formally Islamic to encourage a subtle Islamization of society. Bosnia is a good example: the president and the party in power, through their stance on the central question of the relationship between religion and the nation, provide a sound framework, acceptable for everyone, for striking a future balance between what is desirable and what is possible, between an Islamic optimum and national reality.” For Jahić, the harmonious relationship that the SDA had established between national and religious identity “paves the way for a happier Islamic society, without which there is no way and there can be no way to create a real and consequential Islamic state.” 44 In another text that would become famous, entitled A Robust Muslim State, Jahić began by reminding his readers:
Islam is not a “religion”, but a political and religious ideology, a comprehensive Weltanschauung. Islamic principles never remain at the surface of individual consciences and private religious sentiments. The original Islam seeks to encompass the society in which it exists, and thus to encompass the political and state structures themselves.  

Hence he called for a “Muslim state” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where “the Muslim ideology would be established as a comprehensive political and legal system, from the state and national symbols to the educational, social and economic institutions, and even to the family, [the basic] cell of the entire state.” Moreover, he specified:

[In this state] full equality of rights would be guaranteed by law to all citizens, whereas the level of social success of each individual shall depend not only on his own economic activity, but also on the degree to which he consciously accepts and applies the principles and spirit of Muslim ideology.

In some respects, Jahić’s writings are reminiscent of Izetbegović’s Islamic Declaration: in both cases, it is assumed that re-Islamization of society would occur before that of the state, and “no political system is Islamic or non-Islamic per se, but only according to the people who make it.” However, Jahić confuses matters to a certain degree. On the one hand, he plays on the ambiguity between a “Muslim state,” i.e. one made up of Muslims in the national sense of the term, and an “Islamic state,” i.e. one founded on Islam. This confusion was frequent among Muslim political and religious leaders, and among their Serb and Croat critics. On the other hand, Jahić merely describes an authoritarian political system where Islam acts as the ideological criterion for selecting new elites. From this standpoint, he clearly expresses the implicit rationale of the SDA state, but within the continuity of dying Yugoslav communism rather than the Islamic Declaration.

In any case, Adnan Jahić’s ideas not only sparked outraged reactions from the civic parties and non-nationalist intellectuals, but also fueled lively debates within the SDA and the Islamic Community. Rather than considering Islam as a discriminating political ideology, some intellectuals and ‘ulama’ defined Islam as individual faith and shared culture. Fikret Karčić, a professor of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences and a tireless defender of the political neutrality of religious institutions, was also an ardent promoter of a secular definition of the state. In 1990, responding to Serb propaganda, he stated that “the secular state … is the best organization model for the relationship between political and religious authorities for multiconfessional societies,” and declared himself personally to be “reserved towards any ideological state.” In a programmatic text entitled The Meaning and Expression of Islam in the Secular State, Karčić justified the principle of secularism from an Islamic point of view. On a practical level, he asserted that with the separation of religion and the state, “religious communities lose many privileges … but, at the same time, become free to manage their own affairs without state interference” and “obtain the possibility to dedicate themselves entirely to their primary mission: meeting the religious needs of their members.” On a doctrinal level, he explains, “in a secular state, each religion is treated as a private affair of citizens, is excluded from politics, and exerts no influence on the law. Such is the status that Islam has
and should have, in keeping with the principle of equality between religions . . . Islam can only be a religion, and its legitimate domain of expression is the private life of citizens.” Therefore, for Karčić, “certain components of the message of Islam take on a different meaning,” and “the value judgements expressed in the prescriptions regarding the mu‘amelats [social practices] survive only insofar as they are conveyed in the customs and personal morals of individuals.”

This defense of the secular state and individualized faith, elaborated in the early 1990s, lost part of its pertinence during the war. However, the use of Islam as a discriminating political ideology caused a new Islamic justification for the secular state to emerge. This justification was the work of Enes Karić, a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences and Minister of Education and Culture, who supported Haris Silajdžić in his increasing conflicts with the SDA. In 1992 already, Karić told the Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals that the Muslim nation accepts the separation of religion and the state, hence Islam exists in Bosnia-Herzegovina “as a faith and as a culture, as a religious and cultural system of faithful Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is expressed and shown within a civic, civil state.” Three years later, in the same vein, Karić denounced the political instrumentalization of Islam:

Bosnia is a European country and it is very important that Bosnian Muslims have accepted, for a long time already, the principle of practising, expressing and manifesting Islam within a civil society and a civic state. This principle, in the European context and in the current period, is useful for Bosnian Muslims because it provides them with an expression of Islam without an ideological diktat and without a political or ideological decree of what “true Islam” is.

For Enes Karić, Islam is the shared cultural heritage of all Bosniaks and thus cannot be used for ideological or partisan purposes:

Islam is, in Bosnia, the shared treasure of all Bosniaks, this valuable treasure from which they have for centuries drawn their numerous religious, cultural, artistic, literary, urban and architectural inspirations. In such a conception of Islam, which the Bosniaks have long adopted, Islam cannot become the property or exclusive reserve of anyone, nor can it be subject to pragmatic adaptations to the political imperatives of the day. For the Bosniaks must protect themselves from themselves, and from the various forms of religious, traditional, political or cultural ostracism.

In opposition to Islam as a discriminating political ideology, as promoted by Adnan Jahić, we thus find Islam viewed as an individual faith (Fikret Karčić) or as a shared culture (Enes Karić). These three diverging definitions of Islam show how its use as a substitute ideology by the SDA state was far from unanimous in the eyes of Bosniak intellectuals and ‘ulama’. They also give us a better understanding of the close ties between Islam, national identity and the political system in wartime Bosnia-Herzegovina, even though they do not cover all facets of this complex issue. However, to understand better how Islam was transformed in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war, we must now focus on the changes in religious life itself.
Between authoritarian re-Islamization and religious disenchantment

Islam’s central place in the SDA state prompts us to return to the changes in Islamic religious institutions in the first half of the 1990s, and to the relations that these institutions had with the SDA and various other political and religious players. Even before the November 1990 elections, the Islamic Community had expressed certain demands to Bosnian political authorities, notably regarding the celebration of the main religious holidays, media access for religious institutions, introducing religious education into schools, revising land use plans to allow for the building of new mosques, and denationalization of *waqfs*. There was a debate between the governing bodies of the Islamic Community, in favor of mandatory religious education, and the partisans of general “religious culture” education, of which Enes Karić was the spokesperson. In 1991, after nationalist parties came to power, the main religious holidays were recognized as public holidays again, with religious ceremonies broadcast on public television, and an experimental religious education curriculum was introduced in some schools, on a strictly confessional basis. Beginning in April 1992, the war caused a brutal change in the functioning of Islamic religious institutions: over the course of the conflict, 107 Islamic Community employees were killed and 729 mosques (out of 1,376) were destroyed. At the same time, the Islamic Community underwent a substantial institutional renewal, symbolized by the appointment of ten regional muftis and the opening of seven madrasas (in Tuzla, Mostar, Travnik, Cazin, Visoko, Novi Pazar, and Zagreb) and an Islamic Pedagogical Faculty (in Zenica). In territories under ARBiH control, religious education was introduced in schools in 1994 on a confessional basis, even though Enes Karić was Minister of Education and Culture at the time. Theoretically optional, this teaching soon became virtually mandatory because many local religious and political leaders refused to give families humanitarian aid unless their children attended the religious classes.

This institutional renewal of the Islamic Community nevertheless had its limits. On the one hand, the Islamic Community suffered from a lack of manpower, worsened by the death of around one hundred imams and dozens of others joining the army, the diplomatic corps, or the secret services. The new madrasas and the Islamic Pedagogical Faculty were created to offset this shortfall, and notably to train the staff needed to organize religious education in schools. On the other hand, the Islamic Community underwent serious financial difficulties. In 1990, not content with merely demanding the restitution of the *waqfs* that had been nationalized during the communist period, the Islamic Community considered developing various lucrative activities such as organizing the pilgrimage to Mecca or producing halal food. But it also had to defend its exclusive right to collect the *zakat* (obligatory alms), against unwelcome initiatives from the *Merhamet* charity and the ‘ulama’ association *el-Hidaje* (with ties to the SDA). During the war, some *waqfs* were recovered at the local level, but these were mainly symbolic moves. For example, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences was awarded the former building of the Higher Islamic School of Shari’a Law and Theology. The main *waqfs* nationalized after 1945 comprised land and property assets that were very difficult to recover due to construction during the communist period. Lastly, the rapid
impoverishment of the population caused the zakat resources to dry up and made the financial situation of the Islamic Community even worse. One of the main sources of funding was aid from the Muslim world, but these funds did nothing to strengthen the financial autonomy of the Islamic Community, exposing it instead to various outside influences, as we will see in Chapter 7.

More generally, the case of the waqfs shows how the renewal of Islamic religious institutions was in no way synonymous with a return to the pre–1945 situation. This is even more obvious with regard to Shari’a courts: while some ‘ulama’ spoke about Shari’a family law becoming an option for couples who requested it, nobody seriously considered restoring the Shari’a courts that had been abolished in 1946. Beginning in 1990, the Islamic Community celebrated Shari’a weddings in mosques, but these were mere symbolic acts with no legal value and were relatively few in number. Thus, in 1995, the Islamic Community counted 213 such weddings in the Sarajevo metropolitan area. From 1992, Shari’a marriage was sometimes used by either member of a couple separated by war to remarry without obtaining a divorce, or by some foreign mujahidin (jihadi soldiers) seeking to wed young minor girls. However, faced with these abuses, the Islamic Community issued a reminder in 1994 that all Shari’a marriages had to be preceded by a civil marriage.

Thus, the first half of the 1990s was not a pure and simple period of restoration for the Islamic Community. The Islamic institutions of the time were undergoing rapid, complex transformations in their relations with the SDA and other political and religious players. Between 1990 and 1993, as we have seen, the Islamic Community was largely controlled by adversaries of the pan-Islamist current that was the founding force of the SDA. With communism ending and the SDA rising to power, a debate developed about which side—the religious institutions or the political party—would have authority over the other or, expressed in different terms, what would be the main national institution of Bosnian Muslims. The confrontation between Čolaković and members of the pan-Islamist current also reflects a conflict between two conceptions of how the Islamic Community should operate internally. The first conception focused on the authority of the ‘ilmiyya, while the other was in favor of greater participation by the faithful. In April 1993, the Islamic Community refounding assembly (Obnoviteljski sabor) resulted only in the nationalization of Islamic religious institutions. Convened at the initiative of ‘ulama’ with ties to the SDA, this assembly also forced Čolaković to step down, with Mustafa Cerić being appointed Reis-ul-ulema for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thereafter, the ties between the SDA and Islamic religious institutions grew closer: the Islamic Community refounding assembly was controlled by the party and related associations, and the new Reis-ul-ulema was a charter member of the SDA with close ties to the pan-Islamist current. The establishment of the SDA state in 1993 thus coincided with the SDA’s takeover of Islamic religious institutions, and with a substantial renewal of Islamic Community cadres. This was particularly obvious in the case of the regional muftis appointed in 1993, as a large number of these had been persecuted during the communist period (Husein Smajić in Sarajevo, Halil Mehtić in Zenica, and Hamed Efendić in Goražde) or had participated in the war effort, such as the mufti of Tuzla Husein Kavazović, a founding member of the Zmaj od Bosne unit in Gradačac. That Halil Mehtić, who had ties to Čolaković and the neo-Salafist movement,
became mufti of Zenica and remained the president of the Association of ‘Ulama’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina nevertheless shows that the SDA’s control of Islamic religious institutions was far from absolute.

During the war, the Islamic Community took part in the establishment of various Muslim/Bosniak national institutions, and sent its representatives to the Coordination Committee of the Muslim Institutions and to the Bošnjački sabor. The participation of Islamic religious institutions in exercising Muslim/Bosniak national sovereignty was thus officially acknowledged. However, at the same time, the Islamic Community lost the status as a national proxy institution that it had gained during the communist period, and was rivaled by the SDA, the cultural society Preporod and other associations. Moreover, its monopoly over Islamic religious life was also challenged by the arrival of foreign Islamic NGOs and mujahidin, as we will see in Chapter 7. Destabilized by this pluralization of religious life, the Islamic Community issued a decree in August 1995, stating that “no institution, association, magazine or newspaper, or any other means of information whose initiator is not the Islamic Community can include in its name or programme the terms ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim’ without authorization from the Islamic Community.” This decree illustrated the Community’s desire to preserve its monopoly on Islamic religious life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it quickly proved to be unenforceable. Therefore, the institutional renewal that the Islamic Community underwent in the first half of the 1990s should not overshadow another equally important change, namely, the loss of the privileged institutional position that it had enjoyed, paradoxically, during the communist period. This context must be kept in mind when examining the difficulties that it faced in its attempts to re-Islamicize the Muslim/Bosniak population and to control its religious practices.

Between 1990 and 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina undeniably experienced an upturn in religious activity. For Muslims, this increase became clear in 1990 in many forms, including the revival of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage in central Bosnia and other Sufi pilgrimages, the organization of major religious events to inaugurate new mosques, the wide-scale celebration of the main religious holidays, increased attendance at Friday prayers, women wearing the headscarf and men growing beards, or the use of the religious greeting “Selam alejkum!” However, these various phenomena reflect more the increased visibility of Islam in the public space than an actual increase in religious piety: daily prayers or fasting during Ramadan were still the reserve of a pious minority, payment of the zakat declined due to the impoverishment of the population, and the introduction of religious education in schools caused an unexpected decline in attendance of classes held in mosques. After the war broke out in April 1992, Islam became even more visible. The religious greeting “Selam alejkum!” became widespread in the army, and the Islamic Community even sent a resolution to Bosnian authorities, calling for “the introduction of the greeting selam in all segments of our social life, with equal legal standing to other greetings used in our nation.” The main religious holidays were celebrated in a more official fashion. For example, the second day of the feast of the end of Ramadan became the day of šehids. Lastly, religious and political authorities sought to re-Islamicize public space and social life. As a result, mosques or šehid gravesites were built in certain public spaces that had no previous religious connotations (e.g. on important squares, public gardens, etc.), prayer rooms were
opened in gymnasiums and shopping centers, and the call to prayer was broadcast on state television, especially during Ramadan.

Thus, the wartime context did not foster a spontaneous increase in Islamic fervor within the Muslim population so much as it encouraged authoritarian forms of re-Islamization. This was blatant when, for example, receiving humanitarian aid was conditional on the children attending religious classes or women wearing the headscarf. Nevertheless, it was not until 1994 that these authoritarian attempts at re-Islamization turned into actual press campaigns orchestrated by the political or religious authorities. In June 1994, a heated debate broke out between the weekly *Ljiljan* (close to the SDA) and the daily *Oslobodenje* (close to the SDP) on the subject of mixed marriages. Journalists at *Ljiljan* asserted that such marriages, a product of the communist regime, led to unstable couples, frustrated children, and ruined the Bosniak nation. At this occasion, Mustafa Spahić—one of the accused of the 1983 trial—went so far as to write:

> Even if these rapes [of Muslim women by Serbs] are burdensome, intolerable and unforgiveable for all of us, from the point of view of Islam, they are lighter and less painful than mixed marriages and the resulting children and ties of friendship.  

In August 1994, the Islamic Community entered this debate, recalling the stance adopted by the *Reis-ul-ulema* Fehim Spaho in 1939, whereby all mixed marriages are prohibited under Shari'a. This campaign against mixed marriages occurred shortly before another Islamic Community campaign aimed at curbing the consumption of alcohol and pork in territories under ARBiH control. During the second half of 1994, a veritable “fatwa fever” overtook religious authorities, who issued numerous “communiqués” on dietary matters. The Islamic governing bodies of Tuzla, for example, took advantage of the plum harvest—plums are used to make *rakija* (fruit brandy)—to publish a communiqué about alcohol. After decrying that alcohol was present everywhere in the private and public spheres, the religious authorities regretted that “no social body publicly advises against, places limits on, or, why not . . . prohibits its consumption, production and sale” and called for “our public areas to be cleansed of this evil and for each individual, in this very case the Muslim believer who must not be ignored in our city, to be able to use public areas (cafés, squares, etc.) in keeping with his moral and religious convictions.” Soon thereafter, in October 1994, the *Reis-ul-ulema* joined this campaign. In an official communiqué, Mustafa Cerić called for the sale and consumption of alcohol to be banned outside places especially set aside for that purpose, denounced the UNPROFOR for bringing pork into Sarajevo, “forcing Muslim Bosniaks to transgress their way of life and diet,” and called on Muslims to “reject the trash from Europe: alcohol, drugs, prostitution.”

These campaigns against mixed marriages or alcohol and pork consumption were part of the authoritarian policies aimed at re-Islamicizing the Muslim population. However, they also show the limits of such policies. On the one hand, their actual results were quite mitigated. Mixed marriages still represented 10–15 percent of all new marriages in Sarajevo during the war (versus 32 percent before the war), and although pork gradually disappeared from the market stalls of towns under ARBiH control, alcohol continued to be sold in grocery stores, cafés, and restaurants. On the other hand,
each of these re-Islamization campaigns sparked considerable reaction. The religious authorities then had to explain that their “communiqués” were not actually fatwas that had a legal value, but simply recommendations for the faithful. Ismet Spahić, deputy to the Reis-ul-ulema, thus explained that Mustafa Cerić had never called for pork to be prohibited, but simply for halal butcher shops to open for the faithful, and his October 1994 communiqué had been “misunderstood and instrumentalized.” More generally, religious authorities had to go back to a more restricted definition and use of fatwas. In December 1994, for example, Mustafa Cerić hoped that “fatwas will be issued less often, but will have a practical impact for Muslim Bosniaks.” Fatwas then became less and less frequent, gradually limited to simply providing details on how to adapt the main Muslim rituals to the unique wartime circumstances.

Although the “fatwa fever” quickly went away, new controversies continued to break out on religious questions. On May 25, 1995, a Serb shell fell right in the middle of a crowded café terrace in Tuzla, killing seventy-one young people celebrating the Youth Festival. The Tuzla city council decided, with support from many families, to bury all the victims together. While the local religious authorities accepted this idea, the Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić demanded separate burials per religion, causing an outcry from the civic forces. In the end, the choice was left up to the families, and forty-eight of the seventy-one victims were buried in the Slana Banja Park, next to the monument to the Partisans of the Second World War. Six months later, the Christmas and New Year’s holidays became a source of conflict. On January 1, 1996, just after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, Bosnian television showed Sarajevans celebrating the New Year with much joy and a considerable amount of alcoholic drinks. The next day, Alija Izetbegović published an open letter to the television management, denouncing “the shameless, insensitive individuals who dared, with the wounds and graves still fresh, to get drunk and make faces in front of the TV cameras,” as well as those who had broadcast these images without commentary. Then he added:

> I would ask you not to impose upon us with these “Father Christmases” [“djeda mrazovi”] and other symbols that are foreign to our people. They can be kept at home by whoever really wants to. But television is a public institution, and our people is no longer an idiot being led by the nose. Of course, we will not resort to censorship or bans, but we will make sure that the people refuses, with contempt, the dubious values that others try to impose upon it in the name of culture and freedom, which is in reality false culture and false freedom.

Over the next few days, the controversy grew. Accused of attacking the traditions of the Catholic community, the SDA backed down by explaining that Father Christmas was a communist creation, with no ties to St. Nicholas.

Hence the “top-down” attempts to re-Islamicize the Bosniak population appear to have been exhausted quickly, with no tangible results on a religious level. However, in reality, the re-Islamization campaigns led by the SDA and the Islamic Community facilitated the political reconfigurations underway in territories under ARBiH control. By attacking mixed marriages, multiconfessional burials or the celebration of Christmas, they helped widen the divide between communities and pushed local minorities to move
away. In the war context, this contribution to ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina was admittedly modest and these re-Islamization campaigns targeted Bosniaks first and foremost. On the one hand, they encouraged the secularized elite to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina, thus favoring the transformation of the intellectual and political elites of the Bosniak community. On the other hand, the re-Islamization campaigns were opportunities for SDA leaders to test the political and ideological allegiance—or “honesty,” as Izetbegović would say—of the new elites co-opted into the party. These campaigns therefore played an essential political role in the new one-party state.

Apart from their role in renewing the elites, the authoritarian re-Islamization campaigns also helped redefine the relationship between the public and private spheres. Hence they contributed to another essential aspect of the political changes started by the SDA. Opposition to the re-Islamization campaigns led by the Islamic Community and the SDA sometimes resulted in more or less overt political protest. The controversy over mixed marriages, for example, was a key moment in the wartime political changes because it was the first open confrontation between civic forces and the SDA since the war began. By defending mixed marriages, the daily *Oslobođenje* implicitly stood for the idea of a multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina as opposed to territorial partition along ethnic lines, at a time when certain SDA leaders were considering such partition. The debates sparked by these re-Islamization campaigns can therefore be regarded as a sign of a certain degree of political pluralism in the territories under ARBiH control. However, this remark must be taken in relative terms. Firstly, in most cases the controversies over religious matters were substitutes for genuine political debate in a wartime context when it was difficult to openly dispute the SDA’s political orientations. Moreover, most of the practices imposed by authoritarian re-Islamization did not spark open, articulate debates, but rather verbal jousting of an implicit, diffuse nature. For example, the issue of which greetings were appropriate led to daily verbal jousting within the population.

As a result, opposition to the re-Islamization campaigns of the Islamic Community and the SDA mainly consisted of a defense of the private sphere. Therefore, the religious controversies during the war most often ended in implicit compromise, with the political power deciding not to interfere in the private sphere, and citizens in turn relinquishing control of the public sphere to the authorities. Far from encouraging the political mobilization of the population, these controversies ultimately kept it passive, thus also fulfilling an essential function in the new one-party state. The relationship between the private and public spheres, as shaped by these re-Islamization campaigns, was similar to that of the late communist period, when the League of Communists renounced control of the private sphere in exchange for minimal political allegiance. However, there was one essential difference: far from protecting the private sphere from political interference, Islam in the 1990s became a privileged means for controlling the public sphere. Mustafa Cerić’s oft-repeated slogan that “faith is a public affair, disbelief is a private one” was simply an eloquent way of expressing this reversal.

From Islam as a discriminating political ideology to authoritarian re-Islamization campaigns used as tools to redefine the relationship between the public and private spheres, religion held a central place in the political system set up in territories under ARBiH control. Nevertheless, can we say that the Muslim/Bosniak population was
“re-Islamized”? Islam’s new central place was obvious in the transformations of the Muslim/Bosniak national identity, but it was actually much less noticeable in citizens’ daily behavior even though many people returned to religion on an individual basis. From this standpoint, there was no real re-Islamization in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The best indication of this reality is that, as Islam’s role in the public space grew, religious practice became increasingly assimilated to political careerism and religious hypocrisy. Thus, in everyday language, a former communist cadre who joined the SDA and became a practicing Muslim would be called a “Muslim ’92” (“Musliman ’92”) or a “watermelon” (“lubenica”), i.e. green on the outside but red on the inside. The Reis-ul-ulama himself had to take a stance against this underlying hostility to “new Muslims,” when in 1994 he told the faithful of the city of Gračanica:

Do not divide yourselves into “new” and “old” Muslims. You have always been Muslims and it must remain that way. For a period of time, things were awry, but you have now returned to the right path and are all lined up in a single row to preserve our religious, national, cultural and political existence.  

However, the idea of a fake and ostentatious return to Islam could be found even in the SDA press, with the newspaper Zmaj od Bosne (“The Dragon of Bosnia”) writing during the war:

Intellectuals behave in a certain way. Their servile mentality, a legacy of the old system, adapts crudely to another era. The servile intelligentsia has replaced Marx’s Capital not with the Qur’an, but with the surat Al-Fatihah [the first chapter of the Qur’an] … and this results in jostling in the front rows of the faithful.

The Islamic Community and the SDA’s authoritarian attempts to re-Islamicize social life thus ultimately led to a certain disenchantment with religion. This reversal caused reconfigurations that were quite unexpected. Thus, accusations of religious hypocrisy leveled against former communist cadres were most often refuted by SDA and Islamic Community leaders, but willingly echoed by the civic opposition. As Islam took on a central place in the Bosniak national identity and the SDA state, it also became a target for gradual reappropriation by a multitude of social and political players. In January 1995, in an interview with the local newspaper Ratna tribina (“War Tribune”), Selim Bešlagić, the social-democratic mayor of Tuzla, presented himself without hesitation as a defender of the Qur’an to support his point of view:

Today, many people refer to the Qur’an. But they should not use this Holy Book for political purposes [because] it is written and does not require interpreters … I am reading it again at the moment, and I realize that, in its surats and its verses, there is room for everyone. We must [therefore] consider that Bosnia needs a united front.

This kind of reappropriation of Islam could be found in the independent press. Also in Tuzla, a city with a particularly vibrant and diverse press, references to Islam were frequent in the verbal jousting between Zmaj od Bosne, Front slobode, and Tuzla-list.
In the latter newspaper, for example, Šefket Vejzović contrasted a definition of Islam “according to the Qur’an,” i.e. as “religion and divine word,” with the definition given by Islamist writers, namely Islam as “revolutionary ideology and programme.” Vejzović then noted that “these are two different meanings of Islam, or even two Islams,” and asks Allah to “destine the Earth to all those who have a spirit and a soul, who think, do and preach good, and [to] wreak divine punishment in this world or the beyond on all the munafiks [hypocrites] and those who are human only in body, face and appearance.” By reappropriating Islam in this way, representatives of the civic forces helped weaken the monopoly held by the leaders of the Islamic Community and the SDA on the symbolic resources of Islam. These leaders were thus faced with an impossible predicament. Either they accepted this pluralist reappropriation of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina and renounced using Islam for their own political and ideological purposes, or they attempted to maintain their monopoly on Islam and risked exacerbating the identity dilemmas and divisions afflicting the Bosniak community. In either case, the entire political system established by the SDA during the war was under threat of collapsing.
On the European Fringes of the Umma (1992–5)

The attitude of the Bosnian Muslim political elite during the violent reshaping of the Yugoslav space cannot be understood without taking their ties with the outside world into consideration. Faced with an extremely unfavorable balance of powers, the SDA’s leaders attempted to overcome this handicap by seeking protection from outside powers and by pushing for an internationalization of the Yugoslav crisis. This essential place held by foreign policy in the SDA’s strategies was already obvious in 1990, when key positions in the Bosnian government were being distributed among nationalist parties. At that time, the SDA took control of the main foreign policy levers: Alija Izetbegović became Chairman of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency, while Haris Silajdžić (then the Reis-ul-ulema’s assistant for international matters) became Bosnian Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the following months, without consulting the other members of the Collegial Presidency, Izetbegović made a series of official visits to Libya (February 1991), Iran (April 1991), Turkey (July 1991), Sudan (November 1991), and Saudi Arabia (March 1992). As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate more quickly, the SDA’s leaders turned to Muslim countries for political, financial and, most likely, military support. During this diplomatic offensive aimed at the Muslim world, the SDA’s leaders endeavored to capitalize on the legacy of Yugoslavia’s non-alignment policy. Thus, Silajdžić asked for Yugoslav embassies in Muslim countries to be led by Bosnian Muslim diplomats, and in August 1991, he attended the Twentieth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, alongside Budimir Lončar, the then Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the same time, the SDA’s leaders could rely on the Islamic Community, which sent a memorandum to international Islamic organizations in August 1991, requesting their help in the resolution of the Yugoslav crisis, denouncing “the ideologues and nationalist politicians [who] call for the Crusades to continue against the Muslims,” and stressing that in the event of an armed conflict, “defending the faith, lives, honour and goods [of the Bosnian Muslims] will become a religious obligation, and the Muslim Umma altogether will be responsible for our destiny.”

This appeal to the Umma’s solidarity must not obscure the fact that after war broke out in Croatia in June 1991, the SDA’s leaders mainly addressed their appeal for protection to the major Western powers, expecting diplomatic action and, if necessary,
military intervention to resolve the Yugoslav crisis. From this standpoint, Haris Silajdžić’s speech about the “new world order” announced by US President George H.W. Bush is significant: during the military intervention against Iraq in January 1991, Silajdžić stated that the international coalition’s aim was to “control rebellious Islam through submissive Islam,” 2 and he viewed this “new world order” as an “unfair order that will lead sooner or later to a new conflict.” 3 Yet six months later, he praised the universal triumph of the Western values of democracy, free market, and human rights. He emphasized that in this new context, “accepting interdependence as a universal value is the first condition for progress of individuals, the nation and the state,” and that “absolute sovereignty in the classic sense is being reduced by acceptance of direct powers for international institutions.” 4 Therefore, while reaffirming that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a sovereign state within the Yugoslav federation, the Muslim political elites were considering abandoning a portion of that sovereignty to supranational bodies that were not yet clearly defined. Concretely, after definitively opting for independence in August 1991, they brought their stance into line with that of the European Community, which intended to make the Yugoslav crisis a test case for its common foreign policy.

By declaring that Yugoslavia was in a process of dissolution, encouraging its constituent republics to request international recognition, and making the intangibility of their borders the main axiom for resolving the Yugoslav crisis, the European institutions largely fulfilled the expectations of the SDA’s leaders. Thus, the latter approved of the main directions of European policy, asked for international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina in December 1991, and agreed to organize a referendum on its independence in March 1992. As the Yugoslav federation was falling apart, the Muslim elite’s political allegiance shifted to the European Community, which appeared as the emerging supranational power in Europe and therefore a possible substitute for the community of Yugoslav nations. However, this allegiance was far from unconditional. Already at this early period, the SDA’s leaders showed an interest in obtaining protection from the United States. In July 1991, Izetbegović made an official visit to the United States, and three months later, he stated: “we had some illusions about Europe’s moral and political strength, but [the European Community] is not a superpower of the same rank as America.” 5 Furthermore, certain high-ranking SDA officials had spent several years in the United States and made no mystery of their sympathies for American multiculturalism. These officials notably included: Ejub Ganić (a member of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency), Haris Silajdžić (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Mustafa Cerić (the head imam of the Zagreb Mosque and future Reis-ul-ulema), and Muhamed Šaćirbegović (the Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the United Nations, and the son of the Young Muslim Nedžib Šaćirbegović, who had sought refuge in the United States after 1945). However, the United States’ refusal to become involved in resolving the Yugoslav crisis in 1991 forced the SDA’s leaders to remain focused on the European Community and the United Nations. Yet in the weeks leading up to the war, the European Community supported Jose Cutilheiro’s plan to cantonize Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the United Nations refused to expand the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Croatia to include Bosnia-Herzegovina. In both cases, the Muslim elite’s internationalization
strategies appeared to have reached their limits—a fact that became painfully clear when war broke out in April 1992.

On May 22, 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina was admitted to the United Nations as an independent state. At the same time, Serb forces were laying siege to Sarajevo, while carrying out an ethnic cleansing campaign that caused hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Croats to flee. The Bosnian authorities denounced the aggression by neighboring Serbia and requested military intervention under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. It also asked for Bosnia-Herzegovina to be exempted from the UN arms embargo enforced against all the states of the former Yugoslav federation. However, the Bosnian war became internationalized in ways that were very different from these demands. Admittedly, in May, the UN Security Council—with Russia’s consent—implemented economic sanctions against the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia created by Serbia and Montenegro. On the ground, UNPROFOR’s mandate was expanded to include Bosnia-Herzegovina: its mission was to guarantee that the Sarajevo airport could operate, to enable humanitarian aid to arrive by land, and to protect the six “safe areas” that were created in May 1993. In so doing, UNPROFOR helped the civilian populations survive and blunted the Serb military superiority, thus giving the ARBiH the respite it needed to organize itself.

However, UNPROFOR’s humanitarian agenda made direct military intervention more unlikely, and thus ran counter to the Muslim elite’s internationalization strategies. Thus, the SDA’s leaders denounced the inaction of the major Western powers, which they accused of being accomplices of Serb aggression, just like Russia. At the same time, the peace plans put forward by UN and EU mediators formally supported the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while proposing its de facto partition into ten ethnic provinces (under the Vance–Owen Plan in January 1993), then into three ethnic republics (under the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan of August 1993). The SDA’s leaders accused the international mediators of ratifying the outcome of ethnic cleansing. The demand for protection addressed to the major Western powers thus appeared to have gone unheard: France, Great Britain, and Russia were opposed to military intervention, and the United States denounced the peace plans as being unfair, but remained on the sidelines. In January 1993, Bill Clinton’s inauguration as president signaled a more interventionist approach, but this failed to materialize due to the outbreak of fighting between Croats and Muslims and a hardening of Russia’s stance. As a sign of these harsh times, the Bosnian authorities accepted the Vance–Owen Plan in March 1993 in the hopes that the Serbs would reject it, triggering Western military intervention, but they rejected the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan in September 1993, opposing the international community for the first and only time in the name of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s sovereignty.

As a result, it is hardly surprising that in the first years of the war, appealing to the solidarity of the Muslim world was a key element of Bosnian foreign policy. Whereas representatives of the civic parties were appointed as ambassadors to the main Western countries (including Bosnian Ambassador to the United States Sven Alkalaj, a Jew, and the Ambassador to France Nikola Kovač, a Serb), ambassadors to Muslim countries had backgrounds in the Islamic Community or the pan-Islamist current. First of all, Omer Behmen, a former Young Muslim and a co-defendant at the 1983 trial, was appointed as Ambassador to Iran. In September 1992 in Zagreb, an international
conference chaired by Mustafa Cerić (then the main imam of the Zagreb Mosque), was attended by important figures of the international Islamist movement such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Mohammad al-Ghazali, expressed its “full support for the struggle for freedom (jihad) in Bosnia-Herzegovina” and called “for all the Muslim world to support this struggle.” Three months later, in Jeddah, the Organization of the Islamic Conference held a summit dedicated to the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In his introductory speech, Izetbegović stated:

If the tragedy of my people has a good side, a modicum of meaning and goodness—and every sufferance does—then it lies in the fact that this suffering has awakened the Muslim world’s consciousness. We have been waiting for this day for a long time!

In reality, however, the apparent unity of the Muslim countries covered numerous dissensions and rivalries. Some Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, Iraq, and Libya, remained attached to non-aligned Yugoslavia and viewed with suspicion a Bosnian Muslim nation formed on a confessional basis. Other countries, such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, expressed their solidarity with Bosnian Muslims, but this often remained mere words. Iran, for example, offered to send thousands of Iranian “blue helmets,” while obviously aware that the UN Security Council would reject this proposal. Turkey—which is not an oil-producing country—called for an oil embargo against Serbia’s allies. Lastly, the Bosnian conflict became a domestic policy issue in some Muslim countries, as Islamist movements such as Turkey’s Prosperity Party (Refah partisi) and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood accused their governments of inaction and launched their own solidarity campaigns. However, in 1992, the first deliveries of weapons from Iran and Sudan arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina via Croatia, and the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), directed by Fatih al-Hassanein and Hasan Čengić in Vienna, organized fundraising in the Muslim world. The funds raised played a crucial role, as we have seen, in the SDA’s gradual takeover of the ARBiH and the formation of a new one-party state in the territories under ARBiH control. However, the main effect of Muslim solidarity was indirect: just as the mobilization of Islamist movements forced the governments of Muslim countries to act, so these governments exerted considerable pressure on the major Western powers and international organizations. From this standpoint, the demand for protection addressed to the major Western powers and the appeal for the Umma’s solidarity were complementary actions, not opposing ones. Izetbegović was aware of this when he reminded the United Nations General Assembly in October 1993:

One billion [Muslim] individuals are waiting for you to decide to act. Are you ready to let Bosnia and its people be totally annihilated? This billion individuals—and many others—would never forgive you.

While aid from the Muslim world was important, the real turning point in the internationalization of the Bosnian conflict came in late 1993, when the United States decided to intervene directly to shift the military balance of power and to reorient the
peace talks. Taking advantage of the fact that the Bosniak community was gathering new strength at the same time as the Croat community fell into crisis, US diplomats began separate talks with these two parties in January 1994, thus short-circuiting the peace talks backed by the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia. Two months later, the Washington Agreement ended the Croat-Bosniak fighting and created the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which caused a radical change in the political and military situation. Concurrently, with the Clinton Administration’s discreet approval, Croatia reauthorized arms deliveries to the ARBiH. The country most involved in breaking the arms embargo was Iran, which also sent several hundred military instructors, supervised certain Muslim units of the ARBiH, and even headed the Foundation for the families of šehids (martyrs of the faith) and war invalids. Other Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia helped arm the ARBiH as well, and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), a private company with ties to the Pentagon, was in charge of officer training for the Croatian and Bosnian Armies. This simultaneous involvement of the United States and some Muslim-majority countries helped shift the balance of powers between the ARBiH and VRS, and the Bosniak elite’s internationalization strategies finally began to pay off. The newspaper Ljiljan even started to dream of a lasting convergence between American protection and Muslim solidarity:

If the Muslim world had not provided not only moral support but also material aid, we could not have remained standing. This pan-Islamism will be useful if we succeed in reconciling it with American democracy and interests, which is possible, realistic, and this is our big chance. For America is committed to the principle of ethnic pluralism that made possible the development of its society, and even though it has no particular interests in Bosnia, it has [interests] in the Muslim world. Bosnia has the possibility to reconcile the interests and strategies of the American and Islamic democracies.9

During the same period, Bosnia-Herzegovina announced that it was joining the Organization of the Islamic Conference with observer status. But although benefiting from the simultaneous support of the United States and Iran was a feat (a feat already achieved a few years earlier by the Nicaraguan contras), it was not enough to control the international dynamics of the Bosnian conflict. In 1994 and 1995, UNPROFOR’s failure in its mission, along with the increasingly direct intervention of NATO air forces against the VRS, appeared to serve the strategies of the SDA leadership. However, in autumn 1995, the shift in the military balance of powers and Russian pressure on Slobodan Milošević enabled American diplomacy to impose a peace agreement in a few weeks, which, by legalizing the existence of the Republika Srpska and awarding it certain Bosniak-majority territories, was very far from the war goals of the Bosniak leadership. Their “search for empire”—a search aimed simultaneously at Europe, the United States and the Muslim world—had undoubtedly saved the Bosniak nation from utter military defeat, and perhaps from physical annihilation. But it had not liberated that nation from its own political contradictions.
When worldviews consolidate the Bosniak national identity

By looking at the actual ways in which the Bosnian war was internationalized, we can see how the interpretations of this conflict as a “shock of civilizations” are inaccurate. Not only did the policies of the United States and Iran discreetly converge beginning in 1993, but the major Western powers were also divided. Russia’s stance was hesitant, and several Muslim countries remained close to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which they viewed as the legitimate heir of non-aligned Yugoslavia. Moreover, in the Yugoslav space, solidarity between Muslim populations was virtually inexistent. Admittedly, a few hundred Albanians from Kosovo joined the ARBiH’s ranks, but the Kosovar Albanian political leaders refused to open a second front against Serbia and supported the principle of self-determination of peoples over the principle of territorial integrity of states, whereas the Bosniak leaders did exactly the opposite. Nevertheless, the Bosniak leaders continuously interpreted the international dimensions of the Bosnian war in cultural and civilizational terms. Regularly, Izetbegović spoke of the Bosniaks as a nation situated on the “Great Frontier” (“Velika granica”) between East and West.

In October 1994, Irfan Ljubijankić, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, presented his vision of the “new world order” to the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals. He distinguished three major cultural areas: the “Judeo-Christian civilization,” grouping together Western Europe and North America; the “Communist-Orthodox ideological and civilizational complex,” dominated by Russia; and Islam, “an authentic system of values founded on a book, on divine Revelation—the Qur’an,” but which is weakened by “the inability of Muslim societies to translate this idea into reality.” In this context, Ljubijankić intended to base his foreign policy on both the Western world and the Muslim world, “by gaining greater political and material influence in Muslim countries, and by imposing our society as a model of peaceful coexistence with the Western system of values, without neglecting our own religious and cultural identities.”

Hence we must distinguish between the SDA leadership’s pragmatic, multidimensional foreign policy (aimed at shifting the military balance of powers in favor of the Muslim/Bosniak community) and their culturalist representation of the world (which helped drive the ongoing transformations of the Muslim/Bosniak national identity). It is telling, from this point of view, that the civic parties and the intellectuals with ties to them supported the SDA leaders in their internationalization strategies, but rejected their worldview. While the SDA’s press outlets compared the fate of Bosnian Muslims to that of Muslims expelled from Spain during the Reconquista, newspapers with ties to the civic parties preferred to identify with the anti-fascists of the Spanish Civil War. More generally, the civic press accused Europe of betraying its own values, whereas the SDA’s press considered that Europe was revealing its true face. In August 1992, at the opening of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Izetbegović himself stated:

The evil that has reached us did not come from Asia, it has European origins. The aggressor has brought together two poisons: Fascism (racism and extreme nationalism) and Bolshevism (a complete disrespect for rights and law). Both are European products.
Moreover, the SDA's leaders had widely changing views of the relationship between Europe and Islam, between the West and the East, over the course of the conflict. In May 1990, enthusiastic about the fall of communism, Izetbegović declared: “we are aware of these wild ideas [in Serbia] of launching a new Crusade to defend Europe from the Islamic and Muslim threat. I have been to Europe, and the only thing that I noticed on this topic is that Europe itself is wondering how to protect itself from these backwards Crusaders of the late twentieth century.” The same idea appeared a year later in the pages of *Muslimanski glas*, as the SDA's expectations towards the European Community were at their peak. Indeed, for Mersada Zubović, “Europe, as it is forming a unified space . . . is freeing itself from the shadow of the Crusades which has for so long hung over the West and the Muslim world, and was rooted in the Western mentality.” Yet in March 1992, the plan presented by Jose Cutilheiro to cantonize Bosnia-Herzegovina awoke old demons, and Džemaludin Latić exclaimed:

The citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina are increasingly less afraid of the Chetniks. The danger comes . . . from Europe. At any moment, [Europe] could create a new Palestine here, because in this “f . . . Europe”, certain groups are at work, convinced that "Islamic fundamentalism" is proliferating, and [they] cannot get used to the fact that on a “Christian continent”, a Muslim population could have a state.

The idea of a persistent European hostility toward Islam was dominant throughout the war, and was expressed by Haris Silajdžić, who believed that “the international community has opted for a path leading to a shock of civilizations,” by Mustafa Cerić, for whom the West “values a gram of oil more than a liter of Muslim blood,” and even by some intellectuals with ties to the “national affirmation” of the communist period. In 1994, for instance, Mustafa Imamović wrote: "the indiff erence of a good portion of the world, which passively watched and even supported the nationalist outburst and genocide against the Bosnian Muslims shows that Europe is still aff ected by the barbarism of the Crusades and national egoisms.”

Why did the SDA’s leaders give priority to this culturalist representation of the world, while they were at the heart of an internationalization process that paid little attention to cultural divides? They did so because this representation of the world helped mobilize outside support while at the same time helped consolidate the new Bosniak national identity. By emphasizing the special civilizational features of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosniak leaders endeavored to offset its geopolitical insignificance, to bring it out of the sidelines and into the spotlight. In July 1991, Silajdžić called for “highlighting our main asset, namely, our experience of multiple civilizations,” while believing that, due to the Yugoslav crisis, “Bosnia-Herzegovina does not have the possibility to benefit fully from its intermediary position within Yugoslavia as well as its position as an historical, geographical and cultural link between the East and the West.” Three years later, his successor Irfan Ljubijankić stated, along the same lines, that “we are still far from being able to use Islam's strength to improve our standing, but we will have enormous competitive advantages in the future, because we may have the best conditions in the world to . . . situate Islam in today’s era and world, in a way that does not frighten the Western world.” After the conflict broke out, the culturalist
representation of the world favored by the Bosniak leaders also enabled them to accentuate the divide with Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats and to strengthen a new Bosniak national identity focused on Islam. But here again, the message of the SDA’s leaders varied significantly over time. In January 1994, speaking to the local SDA committee in Sarajevo, Izetbegović stated:

We represent here a European Islam, a moderate Islam as far as the image of Islam is concerned. On this point, we can do a lot for the East and for the West—us in particular. Perhaps our mission is precisely to show Islam in a new, fairer light.²⁰

A few months later, speaking to the combatants of the 7th Muslim Brigade, he explained:

We carry the amanet [legacy] of faith, the amanet of Islam, and we have a duty to preserve it in these countries. For here is the most Western part of Islam. There is also Islam in France, Germany and England, but there is no autochthonous Muslim population, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The task has fallen to us to make sure that the Muslims can remain and survive here.²¹

Lastly, the day after the Dayton Agreement was signed, Džemaludin Latić expressed satisfaction in Ljiljan that the Bosniaks had become the first European Muslims to defend themselves successfully, unlike the Muslims of Andalusia, Sicily, or Hungary, and proclaimed Sarajevo to be “the capital of the Bosniaks and of all European Muslims.”²² Thus, for the leaders of the SDA and the Islamic Community, the relationship between Europe and Islam was viewed differently depending on the circumstances, and Bosnia-Herzegovina stood alternately as a bridge or as a wall between these two sides. But in this worldview, the Bosniak nation constantly occupied center stage.

Alongside these culturalist interpretations of the Bosnian war, another view of the conflict developed, based on a certain number of universal legal and moral categories. Even as they described the international dimensions of the Bosnian war as a shock of civilizations, the SDA’s leaders refused any classification of this conflict in terms of “civil war” or “religious war,” describing it instead as an outside aggression in order to request the enforcement of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Yet the legal category most often emphatically used by the SDA’s leaders, the Islamic Community and the civic parties was “genocide.” Use of the term “genocide” by some Muslim intellectuals to describe mass violence suffered by Bosnian Muslims over the centuries actually goes back to the 1980s, and was partly inspired by the rhetoric developed by Serb nationalists over the same period, with reference to the Second World War. Beginning in 1990, the notion of genocide was emphasized by the SDA, the Islamic Community, and likeminded intellectuals: this notion was also supposed to help strengthen the Muslim national identity. Evidence includes the fact that they often extended the concept to describe the 1919 land reform as “economic genocide” and the communist period’s anti-religious policy as “cultural genocide.” Above all, the intellectuals close to the SDA continuously presented genocide against Muslims as a
recurring phenomenon, and insisted on its religious dimension. In November 1991, during a conference entitled *Genocide against Muslims* organized by the cultural society Preporod, historian Mustafa Imamović presented various massacres and forced migrations of Slavophone Muslims in the Yugoslav space between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries as genocides; this list was later included in a report published by the Islamic Community. At the same conference, Mehmedalija Hadžić and Džemaludin Latić asserted that “behind every genocide against Muslims lies a religious hatred of them,” and thus attributed a religious dimension to the violence committed against Bosnian Muslims.

Beginning in 1992, the widespread use of the term “genocide” was mainly attributable to the extreme and well-planned nature of violence committed by Serb forces and to the shock that these acts caused within the Muslim population and among its elites, stretching across partisan boundaries. Use of the term also reflected a strong urge for justice: during the war’s early months, the Bosnian authorities were already calling for creation of an international tribunal to try war criminals. These appeals were answered in February 1993 with the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Soon thereafter, in March 1993, Bosnia-Herzegovina filed a complaint with the International Court of Justice, accusing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of genocide. Resorting to international justice was an integral part of the Bosniak elites’ internationalization strategies, but the emphasis on genocide against the Bosniak nation also fueled the transformations of its national identity. Hence some peculiar features of the message of Bosniak leaders and intellectuals. On the one hand, they insisted on the fact that the Bosniak nation had endured “ten genocides,” a number that could vary or feed into the idea of an interrupted genocide since the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the genocide underway was, in their view, attributable to the Serbs’ hatred of Islam, with the Muslims being the victims “only because we are Muslims” (“*samo zato što smo muslimani*”). During another conference about genocide organized in August 1992 in besieged Sarajevo, Mustafa Imamović declared:

> The Muslims have paid with their blood as victims of genocide, over nearly regular cycles of two or three decades. It is typical that, in recent history, they have mainly suffered in their place of residence, and most often as victims of their closest neighbors. This means that the torturer and the victim knew each other in most cases and perhaps socialized.

Imamović’s insistence on the guilt of ordinary Serbs aimed at further deepening the divide between the Bosniak and Serb communities, without openly contradicting the official stance in favor of a multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. Three years later, an ARBiH brochure proclaimed that the genocidal violence against the Bosniaks represented “a continuity which, in various combinations depending on the political and military circumstances, goes back 120 years,” i.e. back to the beginning of the Austro-Hungarian occupation. With this view of the Bosniaks’ history, their past coexistence with the Serbs and Croats could be presented as an illusion, and their mobilization could be encouraged. As Izetbegović told the combatants of the 7th Muslim Brigade:
They say that, over the past two hundred years, some seven, eight or even twelve genocides have been launched against us . . . Those of us who are older remember three genocides. I say that this will be the last one. Why the last? Because for the first time, we have decided to defend ourselves. For the first time, we have said that we do not want to die. 27

Inevitably, the emphasis on the notion of genocide led the Bosniak leaders and intellectuals to draw a parallel with the Holocaust. In September 1992, on the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Spanish Jews in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Izetbegović stated that “today the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina are enduring a genocide just like the one committed against the Jews during the Second World War.” 28 The Bosniak leaders and intellectuals drew such parallels with the Holocaust on a recurring basis. Sometimes, they went further and presented the genocide perpetrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina as unique in history. Hence Izetbegović spoke of a “genocide of a dimension never before seen,” 29 and philosopher Muhamed Filipović noted:

When the Germans committed genocide against the Jews, it was carried out by a specialized service of the army and the police, whereas for the Serbs, it is being committed by the entire local population. 30

Once again, the reference to the Holocaust reflected at the same time the shock caused by the Serb violence, the deliberate strategies to internationalize the conflict, and attempts to strengthen the Bosniak national identity. Throughout the war, the Bosniak leaders and intellectuals endeavored to win the support of the main Jewish organizations, often deluding themselves about the cohesion of the Jewish community and its influence on world politics. Moreover, some of them identified the Bosniaks’ historical fate with that of the Jews. Thus, Mustafa Cerić proclaimed that “we are, from an historical cultural standpoint, the Jews of the Balkans,” 31 and Enes Karić expressed his view that:

The Bosniaks share, to a large extent, the fate of the European Jews, not only with the camps, the pogroms and massive emigration that is several times larger than the number of people remaining in the country [ 32 ] but also with the existence of a “Muslim Israel” (in other words, a reservation for Bosniaks) in the small country of Bosnia. 33

Conversely, some other Muslim leaders and intellectuals were frightened by the risk of becoming the “Palestinians of Europe,” confined to vulnerable and dispersed enclaves; hence they dreamed of building a “Muslim Israel” at the heart of the Balkans. This “Muslim Israel” would be superior to its neighbors in military terms and would benefit from American protection. In the newspaper Ljiljan, Mustafa Imamović noted that the Jews—just like the Bosniaks—had been victims of genocide, and that “if the Jews managed to create Israel thanks to their attachment to their religion, then the Muslims can be victorious if they embrace their own religion.” 34 It means that the parallel with the
Jewish situation was used not only to support the SDA’s internationalization strategies, but also to justify some Bosniaks in their aspirations for their own nation-state.

Lastly, denouncing aggression and genocide and referring to the Holocaust were ways to turn the Bosnian war into a moral issue, with the world no longer divided into civilizational areas, but into two sides: Good and Evil. This emphasis on the war’s moral dimensions contributed likewise to the SDA’s internationalization strategies and the strengthening of the Bosniak national identity. Indeed, the SDA’s leaders, the Islamic Community, and likeminded intellectuals were trying to free the Bosniaks from their “Turkish complex,” the complex of inferiority from which they allegedly suffered due to their religion. Thus, it was important to show that the Bosniaks were morally superior to their adversaries because they were committing no war crime; moreover, they abstained from committing crime precisely because they were Muslims. This preoccupation was especially noticeable with Izetbegović, who stated:

> For [Westerners], we were half-savages, originating in the Orient, Asians. And why not? But in fact it turned out that those whom [the Europeans] expected to behave in a civilized manner, people with European roots, have killed the weak, destroyed mosques and bridges. We did not do that.  

Continuing this observation, Izetbegović also explained:

> When we respect and we say that we will respect the churches and the beliefs of others, we are acting not only according to the best traditions of a European democracy, to which the world has arrived at by trial and error throughout history but we are directly and literally respecting the injunction of our Holy Book [the Qur’an].

Thus reaffirming Islam's moral superiority, Izetbegović called on the Bosniaks to build on this new self-esteem by refusing to commit any criminal acts:

> We have tried and succeeded in being and remaining human. But—I insist on this—we have not tried for them [for the benefit of our enemies]. We have tried to remain human for our own sake, not for them. We owe them nothing.

This new feeling of moral superiority was visible in the resolutions of the Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals, which asserted that the Muslim nation was “the only nation that has entered Europe in a civilized manner,” and even more passionately, in a fiery speech that Mustafa Cerić made to the officers of the Gračanica region:

> Do not be ashamed of Islam, do not be ashamed to belong to such a great civilization. Yes, we are in Europe, and Europe has things to learn from us . . . For after what has happened to us and after the complicity of a lying, hypocritical Europe and a lying, hypocritical world, we Bosniaks will not let anyone give us lessons in morals or ethics. From them, we can learn how to kill, to destroy towns, destroy bridges, rape women, burn archives, we can learn that from them,
but in terms of morals and ethics, we have nothing to learn from Europe. As a result, it’s up to them to learn from us what is moral and ethical, and you Bosniaks should be proud of who you are . . . We Bosniaks are going to save Europe from its own Evil. 39

Bosniak leaders promoted a worldview that brought the Bosniak nation out of its marginal geopolitical position to place it at the heart of a global confrontation between Good and Evil, hoisting it up as the redeemer for all Europe. Thus, this worldview significantly strengthened the Bosniak national identity and bolstered the central place held by Islam within that identity. Until the day when the promoters of this national identity were faced with various Islamic actors from other countries, who had come to Bosnia-Herzegovina to show their solidarity in the name of the Umma.

Globalized Islam and the rediscovery of a European Muslim identity

During the war, the SDA and its parallel networks channeled material support from Muslim-majority countries and, as we have seen, this greatly facilitated the establishment of a new one-party state in the territories under ARBiH control. From this standpoint, Muslims around the globe may have contributed less to shifting the balance of power between the belligerent parties, and more to changing the Bosniak community’s internal political and religious configurations. This is even truer for the various transnational Islamic actors who arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war, namely Islamic NGOs and foreign mujahidin. As early as 1992, numerous Islamic NGOs set up operations in refugee camps in Croatia and in some parts of central Bosnia. The largest such organizations were the Saudi Arabia-based International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), Islamic Relief (based in the United Kingdom), and the foundations Muwafaq, al-Haramain, and Benevolence International. These organizations viewed charity (igatha) and missionary work (da’wa) as interconnected. While distributing humanitarian aid and opening medical dispensaries, they also distributed religious literature and organized religious classes. Often, they were accused of resorting to coercion, by giving humanitarian aid only to women wearing a headscarf or to parents who sent their children to religious classes. Albeit small in scale compared to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the major Western NGOs, these Islamic NGOs nevertheless helped spread neo-Salafist ideas and religious practices. They also had an impact on some local political and religious configurations, as shown by their close ties with Halil Mehtić, the mufti of Zenica, who was also close to neo-Salafist ideas.

As for the mujahidin, the first appeal to foreign fighters was launched at the international conference organized in Zagreb in September 1992 and chaired by Mustafa Cerić. Support for this appeal was far from unanimous: for example, the ARBiH General Staff retorted that there was “no need for any sort of jihad.” 40 Even Izetbegović’s support seemed half-hearted, and in one of his rare statements on this topic, he explained:
We do not need men because we have them. We need weapons because we don't have any. However, we do not have the right to refuse, and we will not refuse the friends who arrive to fight with us. Everyone has the right to fight for justice, including volunteers from Muslim countries.  

In fact, the Bosnian authorities tolerated the arrival of the mujahidin because some donors made it a prerequisite for their financial support and because the glorification of the mujahidin's feats helped mobilize Muslim public opinions worldwide. However, on the ground, the relations between the mujahidin and the local population were far from easy. Between 1992 and 1995, several thousand mujahidin from Afghanistan, the Gulf countries, North Africa, and Western Europe arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the length of time they would stay varied from weeks to years. They played only a marginal role in the war, despite a few military feats against the Serb and Croat forces. However, in the regions where they were stationed, the mujahidin attacked cafés selling alcohol and harassed couples holding hands. They also had violent disagreements with the combatants of the 7th Muslim Brigade due to the latter's Sufi practices. In central Bosnia, they were guilty of serious war crimes and became a major threat to public order. As a result, in August 1993, they were grouped together into the el-Mudžahid unit and attached to the 3rd Corps of the ARBiH. This reorganization halted the mujahidin's exactions, but also transformed the el-Mudžahid unit into a major breeding ground for neo-Salafi ideas. The foreign mujahidin incorporated several hundred young Bosniaks attracted by the jihadist ideology, and organized religious classes in which these young Bosniaks were subjected to intensive religious resocialization.

The forays into local religious life by Islamic humanitarians and mujahidin soon sparked indignation among the leaders of the Islamic Community and the SDA. In their view, the most serious matter was the spread of religious practices that did not comply with the Hanafi madhab, the legal school that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina were traditionally affiliated with. Indeed, because of the foreign neo-Salafists, the correct ways to pray, to wear a beard or a headscarf became subject to heated debate, or even physical confrontation between believers. In 1993, the Islamic Community published a fatwa on “the obligation to respect the Hanafi madhab in carrying out religious rituals in mosques, prayer rooms, tekkes [Sufi lodges] and Islamic gatherings of any kind.” More generally, the Islamic humanitarians and mujahidin disputed the Bosnian Muslims’ own religious traditions, often influenced by Sufism, and the Islamic Community itself, which they accused of tolerating these heterodox practices. The most blatant example of such protest was a brochure written by Imad al-Misri, an Egyptian and one of the religious leaders of the el-Mudžahid unit. The Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage, a Kuwaiti NGO, disseminated this brochure, which was entitled Some Conceptions that We Must Correct. In it, al-Misri writes:

I arrived in Bosnia and I found strange conceptions of Islam, things that [local] Muslims think are part of religion, whereas they are most certainly not. I was stunned that some of the 'ulama' who know that certain things are not Islamic tolerate them rather than doing the necessary work to correct them.
Then, al-Misri denounces various local traditions, such as the presence of cemeteries inside mosques, visits to saints’ tombs, the Sufi ceremonies, and *mevluds* honoring the Prophet, the use of amulets and other magical practices. In parallel, he calls on Bosnian Muslims to distance themselves from Christians, Jews, communists, and “all those who say that they are Muslims but do not pray and do not live according to the faith but are Muslim only in name and origin.” Lastly, al-Misri violently attacks communism, democracy, and nationalism as ideologies that turn people away from true Islam. In particular, he denies that nationalism has any value, as the sole criterion for judging the value of a state lies in how well it conforms to Islam: “In every country, we must look at who is ruling. If Shari’a reigns, then it is an Islamic country, and if Shari’a does not reign, then it is a country of infidels [kafirska zemlja].” Implicitly calling for an Islamic state to be established in Bosnia-Herzegovina, al-Misri ends by urging Bosnian imams to order Good and eradicate Evil, to fight the “Turkish innovations” that have taken root in the population, and to take a direct part in jihad. 45

This criticism of local religious practices by foreign neo-Salafists did not fail to spark passionate reactions from Bosniak intellectuals and ‘ulama’. The first to react was Enes Karić, professor of *tefsir* (*Qur’an* commentary) at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of Sarajevo. In an article published in 1993, he denounced the “pseudo-missionaries” who consider Bosnia-Herzegovina to be an “empty space” and “think that we, Bosniaks, have no ties with Islam and that we must learn how to pray, to wear a beard, to trim and curl our moustaches, etc.” Karić viewed this as an “epidemic of anathemas to know who is a better or lesser Muslim,” and he cautions about the conflicts that such behavior could create. Then, he joked about those who would debate the size of their beards while the Chetniks are beheading them; recalling sterile debates about the introduction of the fez in the nineteenth century, he concluded by exclaiming: “we must not trade our Bosnian *dimije* [harem pants] and *šamije* [coloured headscarves] for dark chadors!” 46 Thus, Karić referred again to his definition of Islam as the Bosniaks’ common culture to more effectively oppose the globalized, strict Islam of the neo-Salafists. In 1995, Džemaludin Latić decried the neo-Salafists’ treatment of women, defended the Hanafi *madīhab* from “Wahhabi radicalism” and reasserted the importance of the local traditions and adaptations of Islam, before crying out: “communism is more appealing than al-Misri!” 47

So, whereas abstract references to solidarity with the Umma favored re-Islamization of the Bosniak national identity, the actual attitude of transnational Islamic actors jeopardized the Islamic Community’s monopoly on interpreting Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina, denied that local religious traditions had any value, and thus threatened the ties that had been carefully woven between Islam and the Bosniak national identity. In addition to these divergences on religious matters, political disagreements became apparent in 1994. When the Washington Agreement was signed in March 1994, the mujahidin who had come to Bosnia-Herzegovina to fight for an Islamic state viewed this as an act of treason by the Bosnian authorities. They viewed the signing of the Dayton Agreement in December 1995 in the same light. So it is unsurprising that Izetbegović became involved in these debates. In April 1995, speaking to the governing bodies of the Islamic Community, he stated:
Here we need Islam and faith, not new madhâbs. But as always, there are some demagogues who want to emphasize form over substance, matters of gymnastics and mechanics ahead of morals and true teachings. In the midst of a battle for life and death, while our “to be or not to be” is being played out, they are forcing “scholarly” debates on us about the length of beards or the position of hands and legs during prayers . . . People are thirsty for real faith, for its religious and moral messages, and not for hollow and sterile debates. Such things dishearten young people and cause considerable damage. So take care of these phenomena and prevent such nonsense from being spread in the name of faith.

The confrontation with the globalized Islam of the neo-Salafists thus forced the leaders of the SDA and the Islamic Community to rediscover the complexity of the Umma, and to clarify their position in it. Then, despite the criticism levied at Europe, these leaders started reaffirming the European identity of Bosnian Muslims, and the anchoring of Islam (as they practiced it) within the European geopolitical and civilizational framework. Thus, in a 1994 interview with the weekly paper Dani (“The Days”), Izetbegović stated:

Through our faith we are Oriental, through our education we are European. Through our hearts, we belong to one world, and through our minds, to another . . . Each of us, if he is sincere, must acknowledge that he often asks himself the question [of] who he is, to which world does he belong. As far as I am concerned, I answered myself that I was a European Muslim, and I am just as comfortable with this definition as in a good pair of shoes.

However, this reaffirmation of a European Muslim identity was not devoid of ambiguity. Faced with secular intellectuals who presented the local form of Islam as a model for a tolerant and European Islam, the Islamic Community denounced the idea of a distinct “Bosnian Islam,” stating that this would lead to “the violation of certain Islamic standards and rules, such as [the prohibition of] alcohol, prostitution, pornography, etc., under the pretense that this is the only way that the Muslims can enter Europe.”

Izetbegović returned to this theme at the end of the war, when he responded to those who defended the celebration of the New Year:

We are indeed a European country, but that does not mean that we must open our doors to all the European vices: alcohol, pornography, drugs and debauchery of every variety. We will take as a model Europe’s punctuality, hard work and sense of organization, but we will not follow Europe and America in all their traditions, without criteria or measure.

For the SDA’s leaders and the Islamic Community, the emphasis on the European nature of Islam practiced in Bosnia-Herzegovina thus did not mean that European culture would be accepted without reservation, and especially not the secularization of European societies—including the Bosnian one.
In any case, by signing the Dayton Agreement, the Bosniak leaders placed themselves under the protection of the United States and NATO troops, and consented to the departure of all other foreign combatants. Despite all the tensions that had arisen between the mujahidin and the Bosnian authorities, the Islamic Community and the ARBiH organized ceremonies to thank them and bid them farewell. During one such ceremony, General Rasim Delić, the commander-in-chief of the ARBiH, told the mujahidin leaders:

“This was just the first round, and we do not know when the next round (or rounds) will come. That is why your help and that of the Muslim world remains indispensable for this nation, which is located at the border between Islam and Christendom, and it will be indispensable so long as Islam has not been victorious in the world.”

Thus, Delić returned to the idea of a never-ending confrontation between the West and Islam, with the Bosniak nation standing on the outpost. So from the first day of the war until the last day, the Bosniak leaders constantly oscillated between universal values and shock of civilizations, between Western protection and Muslim solidarity. And they mobilized these different worldviews in order to bring the Bosniak nation out of the geopolitical sidelines and give it a place in the world.
Bosnia-Herzegovina after the war: A partial and fragile reintegration

For the Bosniaks, the 1992–5 war was the most tragic period in their history. But it was also a time of considerable political and religious upheaval. This period of rapid transformation continued after the war, in a highly complex general context. To grasp this context, one can begin by focusing on the institutional framework set up by the Dayton Agreement. The Constitution attached to this agreement specified that Bosnia-Herzegovina had three constituent nations—Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. On this point, it represented a continuation of the pre-war constitutional arrangements. The new Constitution also formally divided Bosnia-Herzegovina into the two entities that had arisen during the war: the Republika Srpska and the Federation. The latter was divided into ten cantons, five of which were Bosniak majority, three Croat majority, and two considered “mixed” (see Map XIII). At every level, complex consociational mechanisms ensured a balance between the constituent nations. Thus, the Collegial Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina had three members: one Bosniak and one Croat elected in the Federation, and one Serb elected in the Republika Srpska. The Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina was bicameral, with various quotas and veto rights intended to make sure that each constituent nation benefited from the same representation and protection. Lastly, the government comprised a prime minister and six other ministers (in charge of foreign affairs, foreign trade, finances, civil affairs, human rights, and communications); each minister was assisted by two vice-ministers of different nationalities. Equally complex consociational mechanisms could be found in the Federation, whereas at the end of the war, the Republika Srpska clearly was mononational in nature. The territorialized consociationalism established by the Dayton Agreement was thus particularly complex.

To ensure that the peace process would move forward smoothly, the Dayton Agreement called for a substantial international presence, with military and civilian components. On a military level, a 60,000-strong Stabilization Force (SFOR) was placed under NATO command. On a civilian level, a High Representative was appointed by the Peace Implementation Council. The High Representative would act both as a mediator between local political elites and a coordinator for the many
international organizations involved in the peace process, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for democratization aspects, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for helping refugees return home, or the European Union and the World Bank for rebuilding the country. In reality, however, the first two years after the war saw little in the way of actual progress. Whereas the SFOR interpreted its mandate in minimalist terms, the High Representative Carl Bildt was extremely cautious with regard to local nationalist leaders even though the Serb representatives were boycotting the state-level institutions. In September 1996, the first elections after the war resulted in landslides for the SDA, the SDS, and the HDZ—despite the fact that just eight months earlier, the SDA had undergone a serious crisis when Haris Silajdžić resigned as prime minister and launched the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu—SBiH), as we shall see later on.

It was not until summer 1997 that the new High Representative Carlos Westendorp adopted a more assertive stance, supporting the election of Milorad Dodik, the president of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata—SNSD), as Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska. This first success over the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) prompted the Peace Implementation Council, at a meeting in Bonn, Germany, to broaden the High Representative’s powers, authorizing him to promulgate laws in the event of institutional deadlock, and to dismiss elected officials or civil servants deemed hostile to the peace agreement. Over the period 1998–2006, the successive High Representatives Carlos Westendorp, Wolfgang Petritsch, and Paddy Ashdown made extensive use of these “Bonn powers.” Thus, Westendorp’s term in office was marked by the introduction of a single currency on the entire Bosnian territory, and Petritsch did not hesitate to remove the Croat representative from the Collegial Presidency in March 2001. At the same time, other international organizations broadened their scope of action. Thus, the SFOR took an increasingly active part in tracking down war criminals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Likewise, the OSCE no longer merely oversaw elections, but also supported political parties and NGOs who were opposed to the three major nationalist parties. Hence Bosnia-Herzegovina became a de facto international protectorate.

This period of strong international tutelage was also the time when Bosnia-Herzegovina underwent the most important institutional and political changes. The period 1998–2006 first saw the disappearance of the parallel institutions created during the war: the representatives of the Republika Srpska began to attend the meetings of the state-level institutions, and the HDZ’s leaders resigned themselves to dismantling the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna.” Also on an institutional level, in 1999, the municipality of Brčko, whose status had been left undecided by the Dayton Agreement, became a district separate from the two constituent entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina and placed under the tutelage of an international supervisor (see Map XIII). Concomitantly, following a request by Alija Izetbegović, the Bosniak member of the Collegial Presidency, the Constitutional Court ruled in 2000 that the three constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina had to have the same rights over all of Bosnian territory, and ordered the entities to amend their constitutions accordingly.
After much hesitation, Wolfgang Petritsch imposed in April 2002 constitutional amendments extending the consociational mechanisms of the Federation to the Serbs living there, and creating in Republika Srpska a Council on National Minorities with an equal number of Serb, Bosniak and Croat representatives.

Yet the most important changes were the gradual expansion of powers given to the state-level institutions to the detriment of the two constituent entities, with the creation of three new ministries (of defense, security, and justice) and the establishment of central administrations, such as the Civil Service Agency, the Customs Agency, the Criminal Police, and the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Contrary to all expectations, and even though no such merger was stipulated in the peace agreement, the former belligerent armies were disbanded in favor of a common army. In 1997, the ARBiH and the HVO merged to form the Federation Army (Vojska Federacije), and eight years later, this army combined with the VRS to create the Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Oružane snage Bosne i Hercegovine—OSBiH), with a smaller number of troops. Altogether, these various reforms constituted a substantial transformation in the institutional frameworks established by the Dayton Agreement and suggested that an institutional reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina was possible. At the same time, in both entities, coalitions formed with strong international support ended the hegemony of the three major nationalist parties, ushering in a period of growing pluralism in Bosnian political life. As a result of these major political changes, Bosnia-Herzegovina was admitted to the Council of Europe in 2002—the first step towards more advanced Euro-Atlantic integration.

The political evolutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1998 and 2006 were also facilitated by the upheavals affecting both Serbia and Croatia during this period. In Croatia, the HDZ’s monopoly of power ended with Franjo Tuđman’s death in December 1999 and the Social Democratic Party’s (SPD) electoral victory one month later. The Croatian political elites set their priorities on taking part in the Euro-Atlantic integration process. Thus, Croatia signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union in 2001, and attained candidate country status in 2004. This priority given to the Euro-Atlantic integration process explains why Croatia ceased to finance the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna” in 2001. By comparison, the political changes in Serbia were more tumultuous. Beginning in 1998, armed conflict broke out in Kosovo and quickly reached an international dimension, with the major Western powers seeking to avoid the same hesitations and failures as during the Bosnian war. Therefore, from March until June 1999, NATO waged an intense bombing campaign against Serbia, leading to the withdrawal of Serbian security forces from Kosovo. The province then came under the tutelage of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and new local institutions took shape, dominated by the main Albanian parties. NATO’s military intervention and the loss of the province of Kosovo eventually destabilized Milošević’s regime, which had been exhausted by a decade of wars and economic sanctions: in October 2000, wide-scale demonstrations drove Slobodan Milošević from power after he refused to recognize his defeat in the presidential elections. However, Milošević’s fall did not end the crisis of the rump Yugoslav federation encompassing Serbia and Montenegro, nor did it curb the authoritarian and nationalist trends in Serbia itself. The country then began a troubled
democratization process, as shown by the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in March 2003. That same year, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia turned into a loose Serbia–Montenegro union, before Montenegro proclaimed its independence in June 2006—the final coup de grâce for the Yugoslav idea.

The magnitude of the political changes that took place in the Yugoslav space in the late 1990s and early 2000s should not overshadow the warped effects of the de facto protectorate over Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, the constitutional amendments passed in 2002 made little change to the actual balance of powers between constituent nations within the institutions of each entity, because the national quotas established did not match any demographic reality, and the parties representing the majority nation in each entity easily ensured the victory of the minority candidates of their choosing. Likewise, the 2002 elections saw the SDA and the HDZ return to power in the Federation, as allies of the SDS within the state-level institutions: some observers considered that this was a return to the pre-war coalition of the three major nationalist parties. Last, but not least, the interventions of the High Representative and international organizations in Bosnian political life sparked repeated showdowns with local political elites. More generally, the de facto protectorate required international organizations and great powers to become more involved in Bosnian affairs than they would actually have liked, at the risk of stripping the Bosnian institutions of their legitimacy. In the 2000s, a new turning point arose in the international action in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the one hand, the European Union's increased commitment was supposed to offset US disengagement; the High Representative also became the EU Special Representative beginning in 2002, and a smaller European Force (EUFOR) replaced the SFOR in 2004. On the other hand, the prospect of Bosnia-Herzegovina joining the European Union was used to encourage new compromises among local political elites. The de facto protectorate was then gradually dismantled: the main international organizations disengaged from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the High Representatives appointed after 2006 gradually ceased using their coercive powers. The Europeanization of the peace process and the dismantling of the de facto protectorate were presented as signs of progress, but in reality, they coincided with a gradual blocking of the institutional and political processes that had begun in the late 1990s.

In 2006, the leaders of the Republika Srpska rejected a police reform that would have strengthened state-level institutions. Soon thereafter, a new set of constitutional amendments presented by the SDA and aimed at changing the areas of competence and the mode of designation of these institutions was blocked in the Bosnian Parliament by SBiH deputies and some SDA deputies, who believed that this institutional reform did not go far enough. In response, the Republika Srpska announced that it was refusing any further transfer of competences from the entities to the central state. The 2006 electoral campaign unfolded in a climate of mistrust and aggressiveness that had not been seen since the end of the war. It mainly pitted SBiH president, Haris Silajdžić, against his SNSD counterpart, Milorad Dodik. Hence when these two parties won the election, it only created further political deadlock. While Silajdžić said that he wanted to abolish the entities, Dodik threatened to organize a referendum on the independence of the Republika Srpska. As for the HDZ, it renewed its call for a third (Croat) entity. Several attempts to renegotiate the constitutional
amendments were made, but they failed to yield a viable compromise. In this context, the 2010 elections ushered in another victory for the SNSD in the Republika Srpska, and for the SDP and the HDZ in the Federation. However, the SDP’s return to power did not end the institutional and political crisis; at the central level, it took fourteen months to form a government coalition including the SDP, the SDA, the SNSD, the SDS, and the HDZ. Four months later, the alliance between the SDP and the SDA fell apart. This institutional and political stalemate gradually grew into a major obstacle to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s participation in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The prospect of joining the European Union, far from fostering new compromises among the Bosnian political elites, was actually cast in doubt due to their ongoing conflicts. Whereas Croatia joined NATO in April 2009, then the European Union in July 2013, and while Serbia was granted candidate country status in March 2012, Bosnia-Herzegovina got no further than a Stabilization and Association Agreement, signed in June 2008.

Thus, although the period 1998–2006 appeared to herald a gradual institutional reintegration for Bosnia-Herzegovina, the years thereafter were characterized by growing institutional and political gridlock. In 2013, nearly two decades after the war ended, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s political situation remained particularly complex and uncertain. Neither a true international protectorate, nor a full-fledged EU Member State, it was still under an awkward European tutelage. Neither completely divided nor completely reintegrated, it was hampered by consociational mechanisms whose integrative potential had been exhausted. Neither dominated exclusively by the nationalist parties, nor driven by powerful civic movements, it remained trapped in the aftermath of the war and ethnic cleansing. To understand this, we must step back from the institutional framework and focus instead on some deeper political and social realities of post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Bosnian society, a prisoner of the war’s aftermath

To ensure Bosnia-Herzegovina’s reintegration, Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement insisted on the right of return for all displaced people. In fact, this issue of return has probably been the greatest source of tensions in the post-war period. Whereas the main Bosniak political parties fought for this right to be applicable, the authorities of the Republika Srpska, the municipalities under Croat control, and even some municipalities under Bosniak control resorted to discriminatory practices to prevent so-called “minority returns.” The question of return was thus one of the means whereby different nationalist protagonists continued to pursue their war goals in a time of peace. On the ground, “minority returns” were also influenced by local considerations that sometimes contradicted the nationalist rationales. In Sarajevo and Tuzla, for instance, the local SDA branches encouraged Bosniak refugees to settle down to bolster their electoral base, thus contradicting the national strategy of their own party. For the refugees and their associations, the desire to return to their homes and hometowns was often stronger than their desire to “reconquer” a territory. The question of return also sparked a strong commitment from the international organizations present in
Bosnia-Herzegovina: the High Representative forced through new laws canceling the property seizures carried out during the war, and the UNHCR played a key role in distributing aid for rebuilding damaged and destroyed houses.

Concretely, the “minority returns” were few in number just after the war, before rising substantially between 2000 and 2003. This peak is attributable to the improved safety conditions, the enforcement of the new laws on confiscated property, and the relative abundance of reconstruction aid. However, the difficulties in finding work, enrolling children in schools, or accessing municipal services remained major roadblocks. The end of the property restitution process, cuts to reconstruction aid, and the fact that many refugees had settled in a new municipality or abroad are all reasons why the number of “minority returns” plummeted after 2004. Here again, the prospects for a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina began to fade by mid-decade. In 2011, the UNHCR estimated the total number of “minority returns” in Bosnia-Herzegovina at around 470,000, 275,000 of which in the Federation, 173,000 in the Republika Srpska, and 22,000 in the Brčko district. These “minority returns” represented a mere 20 percent of the number of people displaced during the war, and mainly involved Bosniaks and Croats who had been displaced within the Federation. Thus, these returns were far from sufficient for a true reintegration of Bosnian society. On a human level as well, Bosnia-Herzegovina was in an ambiguous situation leading neither to a definitive partition nor to a gradual reintegration. The partially irreversible effects of the war and ethnic cleansing were also apparent in the fact that, of the 1.2 million Bosnian citizens who sought refuge in other countries during the war, around half a million settled permanently in their host countries. Moreover, several hundred thousand people emigrated after the war. These facts explain why the total population of Bosnia-Herzegovina fell sharply from 4,364,574 in 1991 to 3,531,159 in 2013, and why a diaspora estimated at 1.2 million people took shape in Europe, North America, and Oceania.

So two decades after the war ended, Bosnia-Herzegovina was still deeply marked by the human and social effects of the war. The indelible lines of demarcation between territories and populations, a legacy of the war, were also visible in the geographic distribution of votes in favor of the major Bosnian political parties. Unsurprisingly, votes for any of the three major nationalist parties were largely concentrated in one of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s constituent entities: in 2010, 92.4 percent of the SDA’s votes, as well as 97.3 percent of the HDZ’s, were cast in the Federation. Meanwhile, the SDS did not run candidates in the Federation and therefore garnered all of its votes in the Republika Srpska. The nationalist parties’ refocus on their home entities is especially striking for the SDA, which still represented a major political force in the Republika Srpska just after the war. Indeed, in 1996, in compliance with the Dayton Agreement, several hundred thousand Bosniak and Croat refugees living in the Federation or abroad voted in their home municipalities in the Republika Srpska, and the SDA won 177,398 votes in that entity. With fourteen deputies, the party was the second largest parliamentary group in the Parliament of the Republika Srpska, and contributed to Milorad Dodik’s appointment as prime minister. Yet fourteen years later, the SDA won only 16,861 votes in the Republika Srpska, garnering just two deputies in the entity’s Parliament. The SDA’s electoral collapse in the Republika Srpska reflected the fact that
many Bosniak refugees had permanently settled in the Federation. The situation was not very different for the parties founded after the war’s end; in 2010, 87.0 percent of votes for the SBiH were cast in the Federation, while 96.2 percent of the SNSD’s voters were in the Republika Srpska. Lastly, despite its aim of being a multiethnic party, the SDP also remained a prisoner of the dividing lines left over from the war. In 2010, 92.3 percent of its votes came from the Federation (76.3 percent from cantons with a Bosniak majority). The SDP’s score in the Republika Srpska remained weak: 22,329 votes in 1996 (2.1 percent of total votes), and 19,297 (3.1 percent) in 2010. So it is clear that most of the SDP’s voters were Bosniaks, alongside a few Croats, Serbs, or other nationalities in the large towns of the Federation. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s new political landscape underscored the lines of demarcation drawn by the war, rather than contributing to erase them. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ebbing of nationalist mobilizations can mainly be seen in a general disenchantment with politics and a sharp rise in the abstention rate, which came to 43.5 percent in the 2010 elections.

The post-war economic and social transformations also partly explain why these ethnic divisions have persisted. For the drafters of the Dayton Agreement, the transition to democracy and a market economy would eventually sideline the nationalist parties in power and produce new political elites able to renegotiate the institutional framework established by the peace accords. Yet this bright scenario never came to pass. Admittedly, the three major nationalist parties got rid of their most compromised leaders, underwent serious internal crises, and lost the hegemonic position that they had held during the war. Nevertheless, they remained major players on the Bosnian political scene, and most of their cadres successfully manoeuvred the post-war transition, either by continuing to represent their party in the new post-war institutions, by joining a rival party, or by taking advantage of the country’s reconstruction and the privatization of state-owned enterprises. In an economic context marked by the enrichment of a small number of “nouveaux riches” (bogataši), high unemployment, and mass poverty, these same parties continued to redistribute a wide variety of public-sector contracts, jobs, and social aid through their clientelistic networks. In addition, bringing rival parties to power had little effect on these practices. The cadres of the SBiH and the SNSD quickly earned themselves a sound reputation as “career politicians” (foteljaši), and the SDP fought fiercely for the distribution of ministerial portfolios, while respecting the national quotas established by its predecessors. As the material and national stakes remained intrinsically interconnected, the end of the three nationalist parties’ hegemony did not lead to new political and institutional compromises. Instead, it gave rise to endless arguments and lasting institutional deadlock. From this standpoint, it is worth noting that Haris Silajdžić and Milorad Dodik—the two politicians regarded in the late 1990s as an alternative to the nationalist parties and thus supported by the international community—came to be seen as the representatives of unyielding nationalism just a few years later. Far from facilitating Bosnia-Herzegovina’s institutional and political reintegration, the transition to democracy and a market economy has hardened the dividing lines running through post-war Bosnian society.

In addition to these dividing lines between communities, the war created other social divides. Local populations and displaced people often fought over scarce
resources such as housing, jobs, and social aid, and refugees from rural areas were especially harshly rejected in the large towns of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar. At the same time, veterans and war invalids felt abandoned by the public authorities, even as the civilian victims envied them their reserved jobs and military pensions. In turn, these civilian victims fell into several categories—families of war casualties, former concentration camp inmates, rape victims, etc.—with sometimes diverging interests. These different social groups had been forged by their own unique experience of violence, by the material and symbolic status that they enjoyed (or demanded) and by more or less dense networks of associations that supported them. Thus, refugee associations played an important role in the return process—or in its obstruction, in the case of the Serb refugee association Opstanak (“Survival”). Veterans’ associations were particularly powerful and fiercely defended the material benefits and moral prestige enjoyed by their members. Associations of civilian victims developed close collaboration with certain international organizations, chief among which the ICTY. As each of these associations often represented a single nation, they largely replicated the interethnic divides, while also expressing the social diversity proper to their community. Created during or just after the war, they helped perpetuate new social identities forged in wartime in a context in which the economic crisis had blurred class identities and uncertainties of all kinds kept people from looking toward the future. Overall, these socio-economic mobilizations replicated the dividing lines left over from the war, rather than enabling them to be overcome. Only the NGOs supported by the international community emphasized their interethnic character, yet these organizations struggled to become more mainstream. Lastly, the social effects of the war varied from one generation to the next; two decades after the war’s end, a large majority of Bosnian high school and university students had grown up in a mononational environment, and had studied school curricula that were steeped in nationalist ideology, despite the efforts of the OSCE and the Council of Europe to dampen these aspects. Here again, the territorial and ethnic divisions left over from the war tended to become permanent. Hence it is unsurprising that the ICTY has had only a limited impact on interethnic relations. Admittedly, this tribunal succeeded in becoming the major judicial body for post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, as illustrated inter alia by Slobodan Milošević’s extradition in June 2001, followed by those of Radovan Karadžić in July 2008 and Ratko Mladić three years later. By classifying the Srebrenica massacre as a genocide in August 2001, the ICTY met the expectations of the Bosniak victims’ associations and political elites. Yet the tribunal’s legitimacy was hotly disputed within the Serb and Croat communities, and its influence over the shaping of war memories was uncertain. Indeed, commemorations of the war’s main events continued to give rise to harsh controversies between different communities and within each community. With only a few exceptions, war monuments, such as cemeteries and memorials, also acted as landmarks for the territorial division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In their own way, such monuments also cast light on the magnitude of the human and social changes unleashed by the war and ethnic cleansing, and on the inherent difficulties of any attempt to overcome them. Within this general context, we will now turn our sights to the political and religious changes within the Bosniak community itself.
The SDA, from political hegemony to a pragmatic shift

Just after the war, the SDA held most of the power in the territories under ARBiH control, and presented itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Bosniak nation. However, at that stage, the SDA one-party state established during the war was already beginning to falter. In January 1996, the underlying conflict between Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić and the SDA's governing bodies erupted in plain view: Silajdžić resigned and created the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH). Eight months later, the SDA won a large victory in the first post-war elections, taking 54.2 percent of the votes in the Federation, versus 25.3 percent for the Croat HDZ, 7.9 percent for the SDP and its allies, and 7.0 percent for the SBiH. Several people with ties to the pan-Islamist current then took seats in the Parliaments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Federation, including Džemaludin Latić, a co-defendant at the 1983 trial and a close associate of Izetbegović; Adnan Jahić, a leading figure in the pan-Islamist current in Tuzla; Halil Brzina, joint commander of the 7th Muslim Brigade; and Nezim Halilović, commander of the 4th Muslim Brigade. Soon thereafter, the pan-Islamist current stepped even further out of the shadows, as Edhem Bičakčić, a co-defendant at the 1983 trial, became the Federation's prime minister, and Hasan Čengić, another co-defendant from 1983 and the powerful director of the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), was appointed Federal vice-minister of defence. The Bosnian pan-Islamist current had reached the height of its power.

During this period, Alija Izetbegović, the Bosniak nation's true founding father, formulated a Bosniak national strategy that—with a few slight adjustments—would remain unchanged until his death in 2003. Lending credence to the scenarios imagined by the American drafters of the Dayton Agreement, Izetbegović believed that this agreement could lead to a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina, provided that all their terms were respected. He placed particular emphasis on the right of return, because the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines could only be undone if the people displaced during the war actually returned to their homes. Izetbegović aimed to act within the framework of the institutions established by the peace accords, and repeated the idea put forward during the war that the Bosniaks must be exemplary in terms of democracy and economic development so that the Serbs and Croats would gradually come to accept Bosnia-Herzegovina as their state. However, he also continued to believe that “a strong and self-aware Bosniak nation is the backbone for Bosnia-Herzegovina and, if not the only, at least the primary mainstay for the survival of Bosnia-Herzegovina.” Izetbegović counted on the international community, and first of all the United States' support, to ensure that the peace agreement would be properly enforced. Lastly, he wagered that transformations would occur within the regional environment:

Bosnia will grow stronger in the future, and these [Serb and Croat] appetites will weaken in parallel. In Croatia, things will move towards democracy, and Serbia will long remember the military and political defeat that it suffered during this last war. Croatia will no longer want, and Serbia will no longer be able, to lead an expansionist policy.
Between 1996 and 2003, Izetbegović waged several political battles for a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The most emblematic of these was for the constitutional amendments that extended the rights of the three constituent nations to the entire Bosnian territory. At the time, Izetbegović’s strategy still enjoyed virtually unanimous support from the Bosniak political and intellectual elites. However, as time went on, relatively few refugees returned to the Republika Srpska, and Izetbegović’s optimistic forecasts about the Dayton Agreement’s positive effect on reintegration did not come true, giving way to increasingly visible dilemmas and strategic disagreements from the mid-2000s.

To understand this, we must remember that in the late 1990s, the SDA lost its hegemonic position within the Bosniak community. On the one hand, its parallel networks disintegrated in favor of the new legal institutions established by the Dayton Agreement, as illustrated by the fact that the TWRA interrupted its activities in the late 1990s. On the other hand, the SDA’s dominant position within the Bosniak electorate shrunk rapidly; after winning 54.2 percent of votes cast in the Federation in 1996, the SDA’s tally fell to 26.8 percent in 2000, forcing it to turn the reins of power over to the SDP and the SBiH. The SDA returned to power two years later. At the same time, the pan-Islamist current was also on the back foot. As early as 1996, the United States demanded that Vice Minister of Defense Hasan Čengić turn in his resignation, since he was deemed too close to the Iranian military and security apparatus. After some hesitation, Izetbegović asked Čengić to step down to preserve the necessary support of the United States. In the following years, the High Representative sanctioned other members of the pan-Islamist current. In December 1999, Wolfgang Petritsch dismissed from their functions Mirsad Veladžić, the governor of the canton of Una-Sana, and Dževad Mlačo, the mayor of Bugojno in central Bosnia. Even Edhem Bičakčić, the Federation’s prime minister between 1996 and 2000, was removed from his position as director of the company Elektroprivreda, and excluded de facto from Bosnian politics. Investigations for terrorism or corruption were also launched against military or police officers with ties to the SDA.

Within the SDA, the rise of cadres from the former League of Communists and an increased number of conflicts of interest or personal disputes weakened the pan-Islamist current. It became even more marginalized when Alija Izetbegović retired from politics in 2001, and passed away two years later. During the SDA’s Third Congress in October 2001, in a context marked by the 9/11 attacks, Izetbegović installed Sulejman Tihić as the new party chief. Tihić, an SDA cadre, was a distant relative of Izetbegović but had no religious background. At the same congress, Izetbegović reiterated that the international community’s tutelage over Bosnia-Herzegovina was indispensable and could last another five or ten years until the new Bosnian state was strong enough to stand on its own. In the longer term, he promoted Bosnia-Herzegovina’s inclusion in the European Union as the new strategic imperative, because “only as part of Europe can [the Bosniak nation] be sure that it will never again be the victim of genocide.” In a context of US disengagement, Izetbegović called on the Bosniaks to ensure their security by shifting their allegiance to the European Union—the new supranational power that was then in the process of expanding into central and eastern Europe.
As Alija Izetbegović’s successor, Sulejman Tihić sought to minimize the SDA’s image as a religious party. At the end of the party’s Third Congress, he created a scandal by stating that “you can join the SDA while holding a beer in your hand.” In the following months, he took control of the SDA’s governing bodies, and in 2002, he was elected as a member of the Collegial Presidency. However, he had to contend with Bakir Izetbegović, Alija’s son, who was more popular with the party’s base. In 2005, at the SDA’s Fourth Congress, Tihić managed to force through a pragmatic shift, symbolized by an opening of the SDA’s governing bodies to Serb and Croat cadres and the party’s membership in the European People’s Party, a coalition of parties with Christian democratic roots. In 2006, Tihić was again a candidate for the Bosnian Collegial Presidency. He lost to Haris Silajdžić, and thereafter, he avoided running for state positions. In 2010, Bakir Izetbegović was elected as the Bosniak member of the Collegial Presidency, thus stepping into the role previously held by his father. In the meantime, the pan-Islamist current had become just one of many currents within the SDA. Some of its members, such as Hasan Čengić, continued to work within the party, whereas others withdrew from politics or attempted to promote an Islamist party. During the 2010 elections, the Party of Democratic Activity (Stranka demokratske aktivnosti—A-SDA), led by Džemaludin Latić, won 1.9 percent of votes in the Federation, thus confirming that the pan-Islamist current had indeed returned to the same political marginality that it had held before 1990.

The SDA’s pragmatic shift sparked changes in its relations with the other parties in the Bosniak community. In the early post-war years, the SDA was viewed as a nationalist and religious party, compared with the SDP, which embodied a civic and secular alternative. By the mid-2000s, however, the divisions left over from the communist era and the war became less rigid, just as strategic disagreements were shifting. On the one hand, the SDA held to its strategy of a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina in keeping with the Dayton Agreement, as illustrated by the new constitutional amendments that it proposed in 2006. On the other hand, the SBiH and SDP were increasingly vocal in rejecting the territorialized consociationalism that the peace accords had established. In 2006, the SBiH torpedoed the constitutional amendments proposed by the SDA by joining with a few dissident SDA deputies, and Silajdžić campaigned to abolish the constituent entities. During the same period, former SDP president Nijaz Duraković rejected the constitutional amendments proposed by the SDA by stating that “we must say clearly, without trying to know whether or not everyone on the domestic political scene will be pleased, that the Dayton Agreement has exhausted its historical potential, and must be changed radically, as well as the Constitution [annexed to the Agreement].” The more radical stance adopted by both the SBiH and the SDP could be attributed to a general disillusionment as to the peace accords’ capacity to foster reintegration of the country, and also to the SNSD’s concurrent radicalization in the Republika Srpska. Alongside the SDA’s pragmatic shift, this radicalization helped reshape the Bosnian political landscape. Whereas the SDA took on a reputation as a moderate party that respected the legal institutions, the SBiH and SDP came to be seen as protest parties that challenged the legitimacy of the Dayton Agreement. At the same time, the SDP attempted to water down its reputation as a secular party, and the government coalition that it formed
with the SDA in 2010 revealed that the former ideological differences between the two parties were largely a thing of the past. However, the constraints of Bosnian consociationalism and the international tutelage over Bosnia-Herzegovina also meant that the Bosniak nation’s own strategic dilemmas were, for the most part, played out beyond the existing political parties.

Between secular national institutions and Islamic religious institutions

The changes within the SDA had effects on the other institutions that were supposed to represent the Bosniak community as a whole. In the early post-war years, the SDA exerted a strong influence on secular national institutions such as the cultural society Preporod and the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals, as well as on Islamic religious institutions. The muddled distinction between political and religious functions was illustrated by the case of Hilmo Neimarlijja, who was simultaneously the president of the Islamic Community’s sabor (assembly) and of the SDA’s cadre commission, while also holding a seat in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Later on, the cultural society Preporod and the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals broke free of the SDA’s domination, but as nationalist parties lost momentum, both these institutions suffered a clear decline in their activities and lost most of the legitimacy that they had enjoyed during the war.

Nevertheless, the most significant reconfiguration involved the relationship between the SDA and the Islamic Community. Indeed, the growing political pluralism and the changes affecting the SDA prompted the Islamic Community to distance itself from this party, as shown by the fact that the religious institutions sent no delegates to the SDA’s Fourth Congress in 2005. In contrast, the Islamic Community became a refuge for some representatives of the pan-Islamist current who had been evicted from politics; hence Edhem Bičakčić was elected president of the sabor and Nazim Halilović became president of the waqf administration. In 2006, the Islamic Community initially supported the constitutional amendments proposed by the SDA, before realigning with the SBiH’s positions. The same year, despite the proclaimed neutrality of religious institutions, the Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić discreetly supported Haris Silajdžić over Sulejman Tihić as both men ran for a position on the Collegial Presidency. Freed from the SDA’s tutelage, the Islamic Community’s leaders recovered their autonomy and could negotiate their support with other Bosniak political parties. Above all, the Islamic Community took advantage of the weakness of the SDA and secular national institutions to resume its role as a national proxy institution, which it had partly lost during the war. This national function for religious institutions often became entangled with their ordinary activities. For example, the burial of war victims naturally involved religious ceremonies, and the return of refugees was symbolized everywhere by the rebuilding of mosques. However, the Islamic Community’s role in shaping war memories sometimes took a more controversial turn, such as when it organized support for Bosniak officers being tried by the ICTY.

First and foremost, after Alija Izetbegović’s death in 2003, the Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić used his prestigious function to position himself as the informal spokesman for
the Bosniak nation, increasingly making his political stances known during press
interviews or during his trips abroad. In Vienna in April 2007, he stated:

> It is clear for everyone now that all the ethnic and national groups of the former Yugoslavia—Slovenes, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins and soon Albanians—have achieved an exclusive right to a homeland and a nation-state. It is obvious that only the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which the Muslims are a majority, must have three presidents, a tribal and not a civic Constitution, and a police force divided along ethnic lines. Only the Bosnian Muslims are forced to reconcile with those who committed genocide against them. Only the Bosnian Muslims must be watched, because they are not trusted, whereas they must trust everyone, even those who committed genocide against them.  

This stance against the Dayton Agreement and in favor of a Bosniak nation-state sparked heated protests from the independent press, but undoubtedly also represented the frustrations many Bosniak politicians and voters felt. Two years later, speaking to the Congress of the Association of ‘ulama’, Mustafa Cerić affirmed that the Islamic Community’s role was chiefly religious, but that it also existed as a ‘substitute to what our ancestors tried to build, a nation-state for the Bosnians.’ Lastly, at the end of his second (and final) term in office in 2012, Cerić—speaking to the sabor—presented a lengthy justification for the national function of religious institutions: indeed, he reminded his audience that “each mosque and each imam is a spiritual sentinel who watches conscientiously and responsibly to make sure that no one harms the nation,” and once more hammered home the point that “the Bosniaks are an autochthonous nation that has a natural right to everything that the other nations of the Balkans and Europe have, including a nation-state.” Mustafa Cerić thus took advantage of his status as Reis-ul-ulema to put forward radical national demands that could not be expressed by the political elites subject to the constraints of Bosnian consociationalism—demands that were in strict opposition to SDA’s preferred strategy of gradually reintegrating Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Cerić illustrated the tendency of some Islamic Community leaders to position themselves as political representatives of the Bosniak nation. Thus, he inevitably came up against hostility from many politicians and intellectuals. Šaćir Filandra, the president of the cultural society Preporod from 2001 to 2010, was one of the most virulent opponents to Mustafa Cerić’s nation-state plans. In his eyes, “the Bosniaks are a nation that accepts that their homeland cannot and must not be built on the exclusionary nation-state principle,” because historically, they “have always given priority to building and preserving the common state, to the detriment of their own special share in this state. They have always preferred what was Bosnian over what was Bosniak.” Moreover, Filandra was opposed to religious institutions taking on any national function, at a time when the Bosniaks were at a crossroads between “the transformation into a nation in the full and modern sense of the term and the persistence as an incomplete identity of a religious community [sic].” Thus, like Mustafa Cerić, Filandra refused to reduce the Bosniaks to a simple non-sovereign religious community, but unlike Cerić, he remained attached to the principle of a plurinational
Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Perhaps more surprisingly, some criticism of the proxy national function assumed by the Reis-ul-ulema came from the Islamic Community itself. In 2005, the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Enes Karić, who was running to be the next Reis-ul-ulema, criticized his rival Mustafa Cerić in these terms:

For four or five years Dr Cerić has imagined himself to be our religious and secular leader . . . Dr Cerić thinks that we can join the European Union as a religious group. With the ahmedija ['ulama' headdress] on its head, and not like an organized European state. Although [this view] may have some impact on the population, I am convinced that Dr Cerić is committing a terrible conceptual error and that with such an approach, he increases the danger of us being perceived and reduced to a confessional factor, in Europe and the world. We must join Europe and the world as a state, as a secular, normal state.  

After losing by a vote of 180 to 119, Enes Karić withdrew from the debate on the Islamic Community's national role. However, in 2012, during the campaign to elect the next Reis-ul-ulema, the specialist in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) Fikret Karčić denounced Mustafa Cerić's strategic choices. Karčić rejected the idea that the Bosniaks would be the only Balkan nation without a nation-state, and noted that the formation of a Bosniak nation-state on a portion of Bosnian territory would amount to simply creating a “Bantustan.” In Karčić’s opinion, a plurinational Bosnian state, despite all the difficulties in building it, remained the only option that would coincide with the Bosniak nation's historical interests and choices. He even viewed such a state as the foundational institution for the Bosniak nation, thus limiting the Islamic Community to its religious functions only. Hence, he rejected the Reis-ul-ulema’s role as informal spokesman for the Bosniak nation, because such a role “would impose on a modern nation, living in a modern state, the equivalent of the [Ottoman] concept of non-Muslim millets,” and “would place the Muslims in the situation of Islamic dhimmis [protected persons].” These stances, which he expressed in the journal of the Association of ‘Ulama’, showed that the notion of the Islamic Community acting as a proxy national institution no longer had unanimous support within the Islamic religious institutions themselves.

As time went on and the territorialized consociationalism established by the Dayton Agreement began to falter, the Bosniak political, intellectual, and religious elites were divided as to which political strategies would be the most appropriate for the Bosniak nation. The dilemmas and disagreements that arose were reminiscent of those during the war. Notably, some people felt that affirming the Bosniak nation’s sovereignty was the priority, whereas others preferred to preserve the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. These disputes also echoed back to the long history of the Bosniak nation, with the various protagonists accusing their opponents of wanting to bring the Bosniaks back to their earlier status as a non-sovereign protected minority or an Ottoman millet. Unsurprisingly, in these circumstances, the only strategic option that the Bosniak elites approved unanimously was the appeal for protection from the current hegemonic power. Admittedly, this “search for empire” was limited in its effectiveness: the implementation of the peace accords did not match the political aims.
of the Bosniak elites, the United States and major international organizations disengaged over the 2000s, and although the rulings of the ICTY and the International Court of Justice classified the Srebrenica massacre as genocide, they did not strip the Republika Srpska of its legitimacy or enable an indictment of Serbia. However, the Bosniak politicians, intellectuals and ‘ulama’ remained unanimous in their calls for Bosnia-Herzegovina to participate in the Euro-Atlantic integration process. This unanimity may seem surprising given the virulent criticism levelled at the European Union and NATO during the war. It is attributable to the fact that the Bosniak elites not only expected these regional institutions to keep the peace, but they also believed that by joining the European Union and NATO, Bosnia-Herzegovina would achieve its own reintegration, and thus free the Bosniak nation from the imbalance of powers and dilemmas entrapping it. Hence in 1999, as NATO was bombing Serbia, Enes Karić wrote:

The Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, each in its way, preserved, through their universalist spirit, the religious pluralism of Bosnia and the Balkans and the Bosnian and Balkan multilateralism. This is why NATO’s task in the Balkans, in an admittedly different context and time, is very similar to that of these two previous universalist and supranational empires—the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. Under both these empires, the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks survived, all the faiths and local cultures survived, and the disaster known as “ethnic cleansing” was completely unheard of.

At that time, the prestige of the United States was at its peak. Thereafter, the US’s disengagement after the 9/11 attacks pushed the Bosniak elites to shift their hopes to the European Union. It became the new “empire” that the Bosniak community appealed to as it was struggling to form a nation.

**Bosniaks/Bosnians: A national identity with uncertain boundaries**

Culturally, the return to peacetime allowed the secular national institutions to complete the various projects that they had begun in the early 1990s with the aim of strengthening the Bosniak national identity. In 1996, the cultural society Preporod published a spelling handbook for the Bosnian language, written by Senahid Halilović, followed a year later by Mustafa Imamović’s History of the Bosniaks, which was hailed as the first overall history of the Bosniak nation. During the same period, the society Preporod also launched plans for a Bosniak literary anthology, edited by Enes Duraković. However, as we have seen, the activity of these secular national institutions gradually declined, and in the 2000s, the production of cultural markers linked to the new Bosniak national identity was more likely to result from uncoordinated private initiatives. Moreover, these various elements did not do away with the hesitations and tensions surrounding the Bosniak national identity. Thus, linguist Midhat Ridanović believed that his fellow linguists were borrowing too much grammar and vocabulary from the Croats, and outside observers agreed that the efforts at formalizing a Bosnian language had little
impact on the language used in the media and in everyday life. Likewise, in the field of historiography, there were numerous disputes. In his *History of the Bosniaks*, Mustafa Imamović presented the Bosniaks as having a Slavic origin, and thus reaffirmed what had been the dominant view since the late nineteenth century. However, historians Enver Imamović and Ibrahim Pašić continued to defend the thesis that the Bosniaks had Illyrian origins, and thus had a longer history in the Balkans than the Serbs and Croats, who had arrived in the region in the sixth and seventh centuries.

The historical debate that unleashed the greatest passions was, as it had always been the case since the late nineteenth century, the Islamization of Bosnia-Herzegovina. One frequent way of asserting that the Bosniaks had a longer history than the Serbs or Croats was to modify the Bogomil thesis by combining "Bogomilism" with other, older religious heresies. Hence Bećir Džaja asserted that the "Manichaean doctrine arrived in our regions, and particularly in Bosnia, in the third century, then, after having been chased out of Europe in the sixth century, returned to Bosnia through the neo-Manichaean sects of the Bogomils and the Patarins."  

In this view of history, the origins of Bosnian "Bogomilism"—and thus of the Bosnian Muslims—predated the arrival of Slavs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (sixth to seventh centuries AD) and their Christianization (eighth to ninth centuries AD). Mustafa Imamović, having read the English-language historical works rejecting the Bogomil thesis, was more reserved on this topic, but struggled to explain the Islamization of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, in his view, emphasizing the material advantages of converting to Islam would have amounted to denying the national subjectivity of the Bosniaks. Hesitant as to the real causes of Islamization, he ultimately presented it as a phenomenon that evaded any scientific explanation:

Lastly, the process of adopting Islam by the Bosniaks requires no explanation. It is simply an historical reality that explains itself. Its explanations can be mythical or legendary . . . but they do not require any interpretation, and still less any justification. Even if it is a myth, it must be known that every legend or tradition speaks for itself and justifies itself.  

And so the author of the *History of the Bosniaks* admitted that he was powerless to reconcile a scientific approach and national mythology in his interpretation of the Islamization of the Bosnian Muslims. Lastly, outside academic circles, some more recent episodes of Bosnian history gave rise to underlying tensions within the Bosniak community. For instance, the Islamic Community praised the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire, while the social-democratic city council of Tuzla ignored the Ottoman period in its celebration of the town's "2,000 years of history." Moreover, the milieu close to the Islamic Community presented the Young Muslims as the sole movement against totalitarianism during the Second World War, while the SDP and associations of former Partisans perpetuated the memory of Tito and the struggle for national liberation.

However, the Bosniak intellectuals and politicians were unanimous on two points. Firstly, the history of the Bosniak nation since the early nineteenth century was basically a linear process of national awakening: Husein-kapetan Gradaščević’s uprising in 1831, the movement for autonomy for Islamic religious institutions in the
1890s, the JMO’s creation in 1920 and the recognition of the Muslim nation in 1968 were all presented as steps in an unstoppable march towards political sovereignty. Secondly, the post-Ottoman history of the Bosniak nation was presented as an uninterrupted series of genocides. Hence Mustafa Imamović wrote: “since the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, and until today, the Bosniaks have been faced as Muslims with almost constant genocide.” This insistence on the genocide theme was the raison d’être for certain institutions, such as the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, directed by historian Smail Čekić. It could rely on rulings from the ICTY and the International Court of Justice that declared the Srebrenica massacre to be genocide. Identifying with the fate of the Jewish nation—a phenomenon already present during the war—continued after 1995. Thus, Enes Karić stated his belief that

The European Muslims of the Balkans are living their Holocaust; evermore so, they are approaching its apex. Whatever the Muslims may be on an ideological level, neo-communists, neo-democrats, social democrats, traditionalists, liberals, citizens, etc., an inevitable ethnic cleansing is waiting for them, the European destiny of the Jews is waiting for them.23

In this context, Šaćir Filandra was quite alone when he declared that “despite all the suffering, the pains and humiliations that we have gone through during the past genocidal and criminal onslaughts, we cannot use genocide as the foundation for our future identity.” At the same time, other aspects of the recently ended war were the topic for recurring controversies, with certain journalists regularly bringing up the crimes committed by the ARBiH or the circumstances of the fall of the enclave of Srebrenica, each time sparking indignant protests from the SDA, the Islamic Community, and veterans’ associations.

These debates about the ancient or recent past were signs of a new pluralism in Bosnian political and cultural life. However, they also fueled deeper questions about Bosniak national identity, as shown by hesitations felt regarding the use of national names “Bosniak” (Bošnjak) and “Bosnian” (Bosanac). Two years after the war ended, a group of professors from the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, led by Omer Ibrahimagić and Esad Zgodić, called out in favor of “constituting Bosnia as a nation-state,” in which the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina would identify with “the Bosnian nation [bosanska nacija].” This idea of a Bosnian national identity that would encompass the three existing national communities was not just a radical challenge to the consociational institutions established by the Dayton Agreement, but also an indirect attack on the promoters of a Bosniak national identity existing besides the Serb and Croat ones. Indeed, the Bosniaks were a priori the ones most likely to adhere to this project of a Bosnian nation. This idea resonated strongly enough that Alija Izetbegović felt the need to react publicly. In 1997, speaking to the SDA’s Second Congress, he told the partisans of a Bosnian nation:

We at the SDA consider that “the Rubicon has been crossed” and that there is no turning back to a colorless, a-national Bosnia. After becoming aware of itself and its
name, and after the immense suffering that it has gone through, the Bosniak nation shall never renounce Bosnism [bošnjaštvo] as its national identity and Islam as its spiritual component. This feeling cannot fade away, and there is no known example of a nation that, after becoming self-aware, has consented to oblivion. A multiethnic Bosnia is possible, [but] an a-national Bosnia no longer is.  

Yet four years later, during the SDA’s Third Congress, Ijezbe-gović supported this idea of a Bosnian nation:

If a survey of Bosnian citizens were carried out today, one could reasonably assume that nearly two-thirds of them, alongside their ethnic identity, would mention the Bosnian identity—provided of course that this possibility was given to them. An immense majority of the Bosniaks and a certain number of the Serbs and Croats would do so, not to mention the “other” category and men and women who are the children of mixed marriages. We propose that such a possibility should be given to them, so that administrative forms do not prevent the expression of this feeling which is a Bosnian reality. For even according to theory, people can have multiple identities. The Bosnian identity is just the identity shared by the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nothing more, and nothing less.

This reversal in Ijezbe-gović’s stance was part of the SDA’s pragmatic shift of the same period, and part of the search for new paths towards a gradual reintegration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, by carefully articulating the Bosniak identity and the Bosnian identity, it avoided fueling the identity dilemmas facing the Bosniak community—until they returned to the fore during the population census.

Indeed, organizing a new population census was one of the most highly sensitive issues in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. In particular, the Bosniak leaders feared that the census results would perpetuate the consequences of the war and ethnic cleansing. Thus, a new census was postponed for many years. Unsurprisingly, the announcement in October 2012 that a new census would be held was followed by heated controversies over the national identification modes that would be proposed to Bosnian citizens, and notably to Bosnian Muslims. On one side, a group of NGOs were asking for all the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina to declare themselves to be of Bosnian nationality, before opting for an ethnic (not national) identity as Bosniak, Serb, Croat, or other. On the other side, the Islamic Community, the cultural society Preporod, the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals, and various other associations were mobilizing in favor of the national name “Bosniak.” In an official communiqué, the Islamic Community rejected both the terms “Bosnian” and “Muslim,” even adding that “nowhere in the world is there a people whose national name is ‘Muslim.’ This could only happen to us Bosniaks because we have lived under oppression for the past one hundred years and more.” Of course, the Islamic Community made no mention of its own role in promoting the national name “Muslim” during the 1971 census. Then, it asserted that “all those who encourage the Bosniaks to declare themselves nationally as ‘Muslim,’ ‘Bosnian’ or ‘Herzegovinian’ during the upcoming population census are directly or indirectly contributing to the ethnic cleansing of the Bosniaks,” even warning that “he who is
unaware of that is suffering from an amnesia that, unfortunately, has often cost the Bosniaks greatly and caused great suffering for the Bosniaks, going as far as genocide.”

This emphasis on genocide, a recurring theme for the Islamic Community’s leaders, was here aimed at mobilizing the Bosniaks during a population census that was deemed historic, because it could show the Bosniak nation to be the majority in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And so the results of the census showed that Bosnia-Herzegovina had 3,531,159 inhabitants in 2013, of which 1,769,592 were Bosniaks (50.1 percent), 1,086,733 Serbs (30.8 percent), 544,780 Croats (15.4 percent), and 96,539 “other” (2.7 percent). For the first time in its history, the Bosniak nation broke through the symbolic 50 percent threshold of the Bosnian population. The Bosniak national institutions’ efforts in favor of the national name “Bosniak” had definitely paid off, but neither the plurinational nature of Bosnian society nor the territorialized consociationalism established by the Dayton Agreement were seriously questioned.

The Islamic Community and pluralization of religious life

In the early post-war years, the dismantling of the SDA one-party state and the return to normal political and social life brought an end to the authoritarian re-Islamization policies that had appeared during the war. However, the Islamic Community partly recovered its role as a proxy national institution and continued its institutional development that had begun during the war. Within its governing bodies, it created a waqf administration and an office for the diaspora in 1996, an office for organizing the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) in 1998, an agency for certifying halal products in 2006, and a collection office for the zakat in 2011. It had its greatest successes in the field of education, opening two new Islamic pedagogical faculties in Bihać in 1997 and in Novi Pazar in 2001. In 2012, the six madrasas operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina enrolled 2,171 students, a 45 percent increase compared to 1997, and the number of children attending religious classes in mosques came to 91,498, a 40 percent rise from 1997. Lastly, also in 2012, the number of children attending religious classes in schools totaled 234,384, i.e. around 93 percent of young Bosniaks schooled in Bosnia-Herzegovina (96 percent in primary school and 82 percent in secondary school).

This expansion of religious teaching went hand in hand with its gradual integration into the general school system, as shown by the growing importance of non-religious subjects in the curricula of madrasas. Now, the madrasas were no longer dedicated solely to training future imams, but were confessional schools with a broader curriculum. At the same time, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences was incorporated into the University of Sarajevo, and the Islamic pedagogical faculties of Zenica and Bihać were attached to their respective local universities. Between 1993 and 2012, 6,123 students graduated from madrasas, and 1,739 from the Islamic Community’s faculties. Gradually, the Islamic Community was no longer faced with a shortage of qualified personnel, but with a surfeit of young graduates. Confronted with this unexpected challenge, it tightened the criteria required for becoming an imam: candidates had to have done their schooling in one of the eight madrasas administered by the Islamic Community, and beginning in 2004, also had to have studied in one of its faculties.
or in a university in the Muslim world, with the approval of religious authorities. These selection criteria were aimed not just at the Islamic Community maintaining its control over the training of imams, but also meeting the requirements of the increasingly educated Muslim believers.

The post-war period also saw the launch of many real estate development projects. In Sarajevo, spacious new facilities were built for the Gazi Husrev-beg Library, along with a large new residence for the Reis-ül-ulema. Throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, the madrasas opened during the war were given new premises, 524 destroyed mosques were rebuilt, and 376 new mosques were opened in areas that did not have one before the war. Lastly, on a financial level, aid from the Muslim world tapered off in the 2000s, under the twofold impact of a decrease in interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina and stricter financial controls enforced after the 9/11 attacks. At the same time, the Islamic Community’s own revenues grew rapidly, thanks to a better financial organization, but remained modest overall. The amount of the zakat collected in Bosnia-Herzegovina rose from KM381,147 in 1996 to KM2,722,162 in 2012. Against this backdrop, the main problem faced by the Islamic Community was the slow process of regaining control of the waqf. This unresolved issue partly explained why the relations between the Islamic Community and the SDA cooled in the early 2000s.

However, this development of Islamic religious institutions did not mean a return to their pre-1945 legal status or a renewed monopoly on religious life. Admittedly, the Islamic Community successfully kept control of the zakat collection, the organization of the Hajj, the building of mosques and the organization of religious education, despite the opening of a few Qur’anic schools by neo-Salafist associations. Yet it was unable to convince the Bosnian authorities to make the creation of Islamic organizations subject to its approval. Various humanitarian, cultural, youth, and women’s NGOs were founded without any control by religious institutions. Likewise, several dozen self-proclaimed preachers (daijas), who had often studied in the Muslim world without the approval of religious authorities, went from town to town spreading the good word. Lastly, a large portion of the Islamic literature published in Bosnia-Herzegovina came from publishing houses with no ties to the Islamic Community, and websites of a neo-Salafist, Islamist, or neo-Sufi inspiration were much more dynamic than those of the religious institutions. Therefore, the Islamic Community had to adapt to a religious pluralism that was entirely new to it.

Furthermore, the new pluralism in religious life had effects even within the religious institutions. In the years since the war ended, these institutions were shaken by several serious conflicts. In 1997, Mustafa Cerić removed Halil Mehtić, the mufti of Zenica, and Salih Čolaković, the director of the Mostar Madrasa, from their positions. These two ‘ulama’ had been close to neo-Salafism since the 1980s and were linked to a small ultra-nationalist party, the Bosnian Patriotic Party (Bosanska patriotska stranka—BPS). Yet these authoritarian measures taken by the Reis-ul-ulema did not prevent a new generation of neo-Salafists from gaining influence within the Islamic Community—as we shall see later on. In 2003, the publication of the files of ‘ulama’ who had collaborated with the Yugoslav secret services sparked new tensions, as some members of the pan-Islamist current (including Džemaludin Latić and Mustafa Spahić, who had both been imprisoned in the 1980s) accused Mustafa Cerić of protecting the
incriminated ‘ulama’. This explains why the members of the pan-Islamist current supported Enes Karić’s candidacy to become the Reis-ul-ulema in 2005, over Mustafa Cerić whom they had brought to power twelve years earlier. Lastly, in 2003, Hilmo Neimarlija stepped down from the presidency of the sabor of the Islamic Community due to his disagreements with the Reis-ul-ulema, and became increasingly critical of the politicization of the religious institutions—a phenomenon that he had largely helped bring about. The case of Hilmo Neimarlija shows how the political disillusionment so characteristic of the post-war period did not spare the Islamic Community, prompting some of its leaders to call for a clearer separation of political and religious activities.

But to what extent did this development of Islamic religious institutions reflect a revival in religiosity? Several quantitative surveys carried out after the war suggest that the Bosniak population had become more religious, but religiosity remained limited to a pious minority. In a 2007 study by sociologist Dino Abazović, 82.6 percent of Bosniaks surveyed stated that they were religious, and 63.2 percent said that they pay zakat regularly, but only 38.7 percent fast throughout Ramadan, 31.7 percent pray at least once a day, 14.5 percent read the Qur'an at least once a week, and 1.5 percent have performed the Hajj. Furthermore, practicing a religion did not mean unconditionally obeying religious institutions: on ethical questions related to sexuality, only 43.8 percent of the individuals surveyed by Dino Abazović believed that women must wear Islamic dress, 40.0 percent were opposed to premarital sex, and 31.8 percent were opposed to abortion. This suggests that a significant number of believers did not follow the precepts of the religious authorities. And in fact, only 22.2 percent of the people surveyed stated that they consider the Islamic Community to be very trustworthy, versus 40.5 percent who view it as somewhat trustworthy, 21.5 percent as not very trustworthy, and 8.4 percent as not trustworthy at all. Ahmet Alibašić, a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Sarajevo, has analyzed these religious trends using categories coined by religion sociologist Grace Davie:

This is the problem of belonging without believing. We like to think that this is a problem for Western Christianity. Yet there are reasons to fear that Islam, as we teach it, is not immune to the corrosive effects of modernity and post-modernity on the human soul and intelligence.

Religious beliefs and practices thus became more diversified at an accelerated pace after the war ended, and the pluralization and individualization of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina raised a growing challenge for the Islamic Community, as shown by the change in Sufi practices. Indeed, the post-war period saw not only a reintegration of the tarikats (Sufi orders) within the Islamic Community, but also the emergence of new charismatic figures with varying ties to Sufism. Thus, Halil Brzina, former assistant commander of the 7th Muslim Brigade and former SDA deputy, became the sheikh of the Naqshbandi tekke (Sufi lodge) located in the Mejtaš district of Sarajevo, and based his religious authority on his political and military background. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, a former éminence grise of the SDA, showed his affinity with the perennial philosophy of Martin Lings and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Lastly, Sulejman Bugari, an imam originally
from Kosovo who officiated at the White Mosque (bijela džamija) of Sarajevo, did not belong to a tarikat but attracted many followers around a mystic and individual conception of faith, resistant to any form of politicization. Each in his own way, Brzina, Mahmutčehajić, and Bugari reflected the loosening of ties between Islam and politics in the post-war period. Over this period, Sufi pilgrimages became increasingly popular, and alongside the major pilgrimages to Ajvatovica in central Bosnia and Buna in Herzegovina, other smaller pilgrimages were revived or invented altogether. Yet these pilgrimages partly lost their religious dimension first in favor of a national or patriotic one, before turning in the 2000s into occasions for families to come together, combining devotional acts, cultural entertainment, and shopping opportunities. Emblematic of this paradoxical secularization is the fact that the Ajvatovica pilgrimage was moved from the seventh Monday after Đurđevdan (St. George’s Day) to the fourth Sunday in June, and women were authorized to participate, following a specific request by Alija Izetbegović in 1997. Moreover, these transformations of Sufi pilgrimages sparked indignation from some believers and religious leaders. For instance, Hilmo Neimarlija condemned “parades and religious ceremonies held in the public space, organized by religious, political and private organizations, which have the character of sterile, secular events and popular entertainment.”

This paradoxical secularization of Islam also became obvious during Ramadan, when employers invited both fasters and non-fasters to collective iftars (evening meals to break the fast), or when restaurants organized feasts where alcohol flowed freely to celebrate ramazanski bajram, the feast at the end of the month of Ramadan. Lastly, the number of Shari’a marriages grew rapidly, rising from 1,692 in 2000 to 3,201 in 2010 (according to incomplete statistics of the Islamic Community), but these weddings remained a purely symbolic act. These complex transformations of religious life explain the trends on the Islamic book market, whose growth was driven by books about relationship matters, how to bring up one’s children, as well as health and ethics. Despite the persistent ties between religious identity and national identity, the politicization of Islam that had characterized the war period gave way to a deep disillusionment about politics. This encouraged people to refocus inward on their private lives and to seek out personal salvation.

The neo-Salafist movement, between jihad and routinization

This new pluralism of religious life and political disillusionment sets the context for the changes in the neo-Salafist movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the immediate post-war years, the few hundred foreign mujahidin who had remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Islamic NGOs to which they were connected managed to attract a small fringe of Bosniak youth. At the time, foreign and local jihadists formed closed communities in abandoned Serb and Croat villages, such as Gućja Gora near Travnik or Bočinja near Maglaj. They also created their own religious organizations, the two most important of which were the Active Islamic Youth (Aktivna islamska omladina—AIO), with close ties to dissident Saudi ‘ulama’ Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali, and Jamiyyat al-Furqan (“Society of the Criterion”), connected with the official Saudi authorities. At that time, this jihadist neo-Salafist current defended
radical positions, refused to recognize the state established by the Dayton Agreement, accused the SDA and the Islamic Community of betraying the cause of Bosnian Muslims, and supported the various jihads underway in the world, chiefly in Chechnya and Palestine. In 1999, several AIO members were convicted of organizing terrorist attacks against the Croat community in central Bosnia. Lastly, on a religious level, the Bosnian jihadists denied the Hanafi madhab’s very legitimacy, thus starting an open conflict with the religious institutions.

However, beginning in the 2000s, the jihadist movement saw its influence decline and its own internal diversity grow. The 9/11 attacks and subsequent pressure from the United States initially prompted the extradition of some former mujahidin, such as Imad al-Misri, who was expelled to Egypt in October 2001. Many other mujahidin then left Bosnia-Herzegovina for host countries where they would be less exposed. The 2000s also saw the disappearance of most foreign Islamic NGOs, while funding from the Muslim world dried up. In 2002, the Saudi High Commission for Relief of Bosnia-Herzegovina cut off its support for Jamiiyat al-Furqan, and the organization folded a short while later. Also in 2002, the AIO disbanded of its own accord, but it continued to publish its magazine Saff (“The Row”) and created several youth cultural centers. In the post-9/11 context and new jihadist activities in Afghanistan and Iraq, a split within the jihadist movement grew wider. On the one side, most Bosnian jihadists adopted a legalistic stance, recognizing the Hanafi madhab’s validity and the Islamic Community’s authority, and reasoning more and more in nationalist terms. On the other side, a minority gravitating around the websites Ensarije shari‘a (“The Partisans of Shari‘a”) and Kelimet ul-haqq (“Words of Truth”) rallied around Osama bin Laden’s global jihad and gathered in a few isolated Bosniak villages, the best-known of which was Gornja Maoča, near Brčko. This marginal and violent fringe movement remained deeply hostile to the Islamic Community and readily proclaimed takfir, declaring its political and religious adversaries to be unbelievers. In fact, takfir was an issue that caused a break in the jihadist movement. In April 2006, sixteen preachers with ties to the jihadist movement publicly denounced the use of takfir, because:

> our [Bosniak] nation needs experienced and reputed doctors to heal it as painlessly as possible and to bring it back to the precepts of faith, and hold it to the path of the Prophet, where the amputation of certain parts of the body will be the last solution applied by doctors during its convalescence, and not the first one that comes to mind.35

Divided between a majority whose political and religious conceptions gradually became closer to the mainstream, and a minority dwelling on the fringes, the jihadist movement’s impact on Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina came less from its own direct influence than from the reactions that it sparked in others. Thus, as extremist and sectarian as it might be, the jihadist movement fueled the processes of pluralization and individualization of Islam rather than countering them. The factor that makes it truly unique in the Bosnian religious landscape is its close ties to the transnational networks from which it derives most of its ideological references and funding, hence its vulnerability to repressive measures taken after 9/11. However, the declining influence of the jihadist movement
in the 2000s also corresponds to a broader reshaping of outside religious influences in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Islamic NGOs from the Arab world left the country, Turkish players took on a considerable presence. Among these actors, the most important were the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), which built strong ties with the Islamic Community, and the fethullahci neo-Sufi movement, which managed four primary schools, four colleges, and one private university that opened in Sarajevo in 2008; all these establishments taught in English. As the Diyanet helped strengthen the legitimacy of the Hanafi madhab and Islamic religious institutions, the fethullahcis were part of the neo-Sufi revival of the 2000s. There were also other smaller-scale protagonists, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Kalkınma İşleri Başkanlığı—TIKA), the neo-Sufi community Erenköy (which ran a private university that opened in 2004), and the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı—IHH), with close ties to Turkey’s Felicity Party (Saadet partisi). These numerous religious actors fueled the pluralization of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as its globalization, and helped reduce the place held by the jihadist movement in an increasingly diverse religious offer.

Lastly, the changes within the jihadist movement cannot be understood unless we take account of its relations with the Islamic Community. In the immediate post-war years, the Islamic Community adopted a hard-line stance against the AIO and Jamiiyyat al-Furqan, which it viewed as illegitimate rivals; it called for a ban, pure and simple, of these organizations. But as time went on, the Islamic Community’s leaders were forced to accept the neo-Salafist current as a lasting component of religious life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to seek a modus vivendi with it. This shift was made easier after 9/11, as foreign mujahidin and local jihadists sought protection from religious institutions, and the latter defended them from the police operations and press campaigns targeting them. Despite the recurring conflicts on various doctrinal or political issues, members of the jihadist movement and leaders of the Islamic Community learned to coexist, in a context in which the bulk of the jihadist movement accepted the legal order and the Hanafi madhab, and in which the Islamic Community renounced its monopoly on religious life. This shift in the stance of the religious institutions was justified by Ahmet Alibašić, who called for a constructive dialogue with the neo-Salafists. Indeed, Alibašić did not regard the neo-Salafists as a serious threat to the Islamic Community or to Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In his view:

The greatest threat for our mosques and our džemats comes from the sterilized, formalized, non-normative Islam, reduced to the culture and customs of our dear grandfathers and grandmothers, [reduced] to leisure activities and concerts, an Islam that does not respond to the confusion and interior questioning of people young and old in Bosnia-Herzegovina.  

According to Alibašić, the risk was not that the mosques might be controlled by neo-Salafists, but that they would be empty, and the appearance of neo-Salafism could even be a catalyst for a revival in Islamic thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This forecast was confirmed by the debates within the Islamic Community on the nature of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Europe, as we shall see later.
Before focusing on these debates, we must stress that this change in the relationship between religious institutions and the jihadist neo-Salafists is also attributable to the rise of a neo-Salafist current that was pietistic in nature within the Islamic Community itself. Indeed, although Halil Mehtić and Salih Čolaković were relieved of their functions in 1997, this did not prevent other neo-Salafists from holding important positions within the Islamic Community. The main representative of this current was Nezim Halilović, former commander of the 4th Muslim Brigade, who became head of the waqf administration in 1996, and four years later head imam of the King Fahd Ibn Abdul-Aziz Mosque, built in Sarajevo with Saudi funds. Over the following years, the pietistic neo-Salafist current was strengthened by the return of young ‘ulama’ who had studied in various Arab countries, first of all Saudi Arabia, and who had the skills needed to hold leadership positions. These neo-Salafist ‘ulama’ were involved in the magazine *Novi horizonti* (“New Horizons”), held key positions in the Islamic pedagogical faculties of Zenica and Bihać, and sat on the Islamic Community’s governing bodies. The best-known—such as Safvet Halilović, Šukrija Ramić, Muharem Štulanović, and Fuad Sedić—published articles in *Preporod* and other Islamic Community periodicals, as well as publishing many works with private publishing houses and participating in various websites. While this pietistic group was very different sociologically from the jihadist current, and much more discreet, it nevertheless played an important role in the changes affecting Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It counterbalanced the views of the reformist ‘ulama’ who had been trained in the 1970s and 1980s, a fact that explains how certain key topics were debated within the Islamic Community.

What place for Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

In March 2006, faced with the jihadists’ attacks, the Islamic Community’s governing bodies issued an official resolution denouncing “the outrageous interpretation of Islam by certain individuals and groups,” and while describing these groups as being tiny minorities, expressed concern about the impact that the political and religious changes in the Muslim world could have in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They therefore called on the imams to protect “the special features of the Islamic Community’s centuries-old tradition in Bosnia-Herzegovina” and to defend “the official interpretation of Islam based on the Qur’an, the Sunna [tradition] and our Bosnian-Herzegovinian experience.” In particular, they reiterated that the only valid Islamic legal school in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the Hanafi madhab. In opposition to the globalized Islam of the jihadists, the Islamic Community thus reaffirmed the validity of its local practice of Islam, while rejecting the idea of a *sui generis* “Bosnian Islam.” In doing so, it intended to define a minimal consensus among believers. However, forced to specify the main characteristics of this local practice of Islam, it inevitably sparked new debates. After the resolution was adopted in March 2006, most of the work defining the “Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks” came to Fikret Karčić, a *fiqh* specialist, professor at the Law Faculty of Sarajevo, and central figure of Islamic reformism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a text entitled *What is the “Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks”?* Karčić distinguished six key components, namely:
1. The Sunni path of Islam, including the Maturidite doctrine in the field of 'aqa'id (religious doctrine) and the Hanafi madhab in the field of fiqh as well as the dervish orders (tarikat) attached thereto . . . 2. Belonging to the Ottoman-Islamic cultural area . . . 3. The existence of “Islamicized” elements of [religious] practice of the pre-Ottoman Bosnian population . . . 4. The tradition of Islamic reformism (islah) in the interpretation of Islam . . . 5. The institutionalization of Islam within the Islamic Community . . . 6. The practice of witnessing for Islam within a secular state . . .

This definition given by Fikret Karčić was based on a dynamic conception of tradition, as it incorporated certain elements from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More specific than the March 2006 resolution, it was also less consensual. Building on his work from the early 1990s, Karčić came out in favour of a secular state that would give the same rights to all its citizens while respecting the autonomy of religious communities. In such a state, Islamic norms have no legal value. Indeed, according to Karčić,

All the Shari'a norms that are addressed to the state, such as constitutional, administrative, criminal and international law and others, cannot be applied in a secular state . . . What is commanded or forbidden to Muslims by these norms remains valid, but the punishments for violating these norms do not apply. In other words, the religious aspect of the norm (dijaneten) remains valid, but the legal aspect (kadaen) does not apply . . . The former [term] designates the spiritual and moral aspect of life, and the later the organization of human relations through secular institutions and sanctions. Therefore, when it is said that the religious aspect remains valid, and that the legal aspect does not apply, this means that such a [Shari'a] norm goes from being a legal rule for behavior to being a religious and ethical rule.

So Fikret Karčić persisted in his beliefs from the 1990s whereby in a secular state such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Shari'a is reduced to a set of moral norms that each believer can apply (or not) on an individual basis. Moreover, Karčić warned against the temptation to return to the pre-1946 situation, when Shari'a courts ruled on family matters. In his view, such a measure would weaken the Bosnian state further, reducing the Bosniaks to the status of a religious minority with a certain degree of legal autonomy. Yet in Karčić’s view, “this model is historically outdated and the Muslims of Europe today need a new legal paradigm, and this [new paradigm] is full citizenship.”

This view of the relationship between a secular state and Islamic norms was noticeably different from the view defended by Mustafa Cerić and, more discreetly, by the new generation of neo-Salafist 'ulama'. Indeed, the Reis-ul-ulema was much more reserved about the secular state than Fikret Karčić. In an article published in 1997, he criticized those who viewed Western secularism as a solution to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s woes, and specified the conditions for a secular state to be acceptable from an Islamic perspective:

On a metaphysical level, secularism implies atheism as its worldview, and on a political level, it tends to exercise its monopoly on all spheres of public life, including the religious one. These goals of secularism are unacceptable because
they carry the risk of amoral behavior of individuals, which can lead to an amoral society in which freedom can mean choosing the worst because [this freedom] is based on a utilitarian ethical premise. This is why metaphysical secularism is equivalent to the atheism that we have experienced [during the communist period] and whose consequences we have survived. Political secularism, however, is acceptable if the separation of faith and the state does not mean that the state authorities use their force to impose secularist values and if there is no dispute that religion and the religious institutions have the right to carry out and develop their spiritual activities autonomously in the private sphere and in the public sphere.42

Thus, Mustafa Cerić intended to reaffirm the validity of Shari’a norms and the necessity of translating them into legal terms. On several occasions, he mentioned the possibility of restoring the use of Shari’a for family matters. For example, in 1998, he stated:

The state has an obligation to ensure that Muslims have the freedom to live according to the conscience of their religion, in other words, according to Shari’a. It is the inalienable right of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina to live under Shari’a and according to Shari’a. The state does not have to give this right to the Muslims, and it cannot take it away from them. Shari’a is the culture of Muslims. The [Shari’a] courts are the organization of this culture.43

The differences between Fikret Karčić’s stance and that of Mustafa Cerić are clear, but what was their practical importance for the Islamic Community and ordinary believers? At first glance, the debate was purely theoretical: the few public calls for restoring Shari’a courts immediately sparked an outcry in the independent press, and plans for private-law Shari’a marriage contracts or extrajudicial mediation never came to fruition. The diversity of religious life was reflected in a strong increase in the number of fatwas in the religious press and on websites, with their numerous authors using very diverse sources and giving largely divergent opinions depending on their own doctrinal orientations. To respond to this uncontrolled production of Islamic norms, the Islamic Community created in 2005 a fatwa council, with one of its members—the fetva-i emin (“fatwa delegate”—in charge of answering questions from practicing Muslims in a column of the newspaper Preporod. The creation of this council did not end the de facto religious pluralism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and it is hard to measure the actual impact of fatwas issued by the fetva-i emin on practicing Muslims. However, the fatwa council quickly became a venue for confrontation between reformist ‘ulama’ and neo-Salafists. From this standpoint, it is worth noting that the first question sent to it came from the muftis of Mostar, Travnik, and Tuzla, and enquired as to the possibility of practicing polygamy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, given the large number of war widows. This approach immediately sparked considerable reaction in the public opinion, and the fatwa council cautiously announced that it would not take a stance on this issue, reminding readers simply that Islamic sources are favorable to polygamy to a limited extent, but that it is prohibited by law in Bosnia-Herzegovina.44 Here again, the debates that shook religious institutions had little apparent practical impact on the lives of Bosnian Muslims. However, behind this short debate on polygamy, conflicting views
again came into play regarding the relationship between the Bosnian state, the Bosniak national community, and Islamic religious institutions. Fikret Karčić clearly understood this; he sharply criticized the muftis, emphasizing that “the problems of widows and orphans must be resolved by greater attention from the state and society, not by legalization of polygamous marriages.” In his view, giving the Islamic Community the power to resolve this issue would amount to giving it “powers that belong to the state, the concept of equal law for all citizens would give way to legal particularism, and the nation of Bosniaks would be reduced to the status of a Muslim millet with community institutions and a [religious] minority status.” Then, leaning on his own definition of Shari’a as a set of moral values, Karčić noted:

In this latter definition, Shari’a is relevant for Muslims in a secular state. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina have already been living in such a configuration for fifty years now, and their religious thinking has developed in this context. We believe that the theoretical elaboration of this experience must continue by exploring it and presenting it [to the outside world], not by revising it. 45

Fikret Karčić’s reply here shows that although the debates between reformist ‘ulama’ and neo-Salafists did not directly affect the religious practice of ordinary Muslims, in the medium term, they had more of an impact on the transformations of the Islamic religious institutions and of Islam itself in Bosnia-Herzegovina than did the outrageous statements by the jihadist current. Moreover, in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina participating in the Euro-Atlantic integration process, these debates influenced the way that the religious elites defined the European identity of Bosnian Muslims, and how they conceived their own contribution to the debates about Islam’s place in Europe.

The Islamic Community and the future of Islam in Europe

To understand the various stances that took shape around this topic, we must first remember that the Islamic Community’s leaders, just like the Bosniak politicians and intellectuals, viewed the Euro-Atlantic integration process as the best possible protection for Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bosniak nation. This “search for empire” is what Mustafa Cerić expressed in a 2003 statement:

I hope that in the future, my son will not have to wait for mujahidin to come to Bosnia to save him from the assassins of Srebrenica, because I believe that our Sultan, who now lives in Brussels and not Istanbul, will do everything possible so that there is never another genocide and ethnic cleansing in Europe.46

More broadly, the Islamic Community’s leaders insisted on the fact that the Bosniaks were an autochthonous population, and that they legitimately belonged to the family of European nations. Lastly, some ‘ulama’ viewed Europe as a place for possibly surpassing the ethnic and doctrinal cleavages that divided the Umma. Hence, Enes Karić also appealed for a “Euro-Islam [that] would be interpreted in universal terms, would free
the European Muslims from their self-imposed ghettoization and from the ghettoization of Islam in Western Europe, and could even act beyond Europe’s borders. However, according to the Bosnian ‘ulama’, a major obstacle to the emergence of such a renewed Islam in Europe was the weakness of the Islamic religious institutions in Western Europe. They were therefore eager to offer the Islamic Community as an example. In particular, Fikret Karčić believed that the “institutionalization of Islam currently under way in many EU countries occurred here during the Austro-Hungarian era.”

The prospect of holding a driving role in the institutionalization of Islam in Europe was greeted favorably by the Islamic Community, which declared itself ready to share its centuries-old institutional experience, and the Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić even promoted plans for an “Islamic Sorbonne” in Sarajevo, where the Islamic religious elites of all Europe would come for training. However, these ambitious projects never came to life, given a lack of qualified staff, financial means, and interest from the other Muslim communities in Europe. In this context, the Islamic Community’s initiatives primarily remained nothing more than ideas. As early as 1999, Mustafa Cerić proposed a new definition for Europe as a “house of truce” (dar al-'ahd):

[Europe] is not the home of Islam [dar al-islam] because Muslims do not make up the majority of the European population, and thus, enforcement of Shari’a law is not possible. But nor is it the house of war [dar al-harb], because certain aspects of Shari’a law can be enforced there. Thus, Europe is the house of truce because one can live there in compliance with Islam within the social contract.

The Reis-ul-ulema reiterated this proposal in 2003 during a conference in Graz, while noting the absence of a true concept of dar al-'ahd applicable in the European context. He then cited six issues that could be the focus of a contract between European states and Muslim communities: halal food, clothing, burials and cemeteries, participation in Friday prayers, celebration of religious holidays, and Islamic institutions. Concretely, Mustafa Cerić’s personal commitment to an institutionalization of Islam on a European scale was reflected in his 1997 participation in the European Council for Fatwas and Research, presided over by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Qatari theologian and the éminence grise of the Muslim Brotherhood. Especially, visiting London in August 2005, Mustafa Cerić unveiled a Declaration of European Muslims. This declaration began by condemning the attacks in New York, Madrid, and London, then affirming that European Muslims adhere to the values of citizenship, human rights, and interreligious dialogue. It then defined Europe as “the House of Peace and Security based on the principle of the Social Contract.” In this definition of Europe, in which the citizen gives allegiance to the state and the believer gives allegiance to God, Muslims expect their political allegiance to be rewarded by protection from Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing and genocide, more liberal immigration policies, an institutionalization of Islam, the opening of Islamic schools, implementation of Shari’a law in matters of family affairs, and the presence of “legitimate representatives” of Muslims in European state parliaments. The declaration continued by calling on European Muslims to present Islam “as a universal Weltanschauung and not as a tribal, ethnic or national culture” and to develop a “European culture of Islam.” So in his declaration, Cerić borrowed a
certain number of ideas developed within the Islamic Community, and envisaged it “being accepted in Brussels as the document through which the united positions of Muslims on their lives and their status would be presented to Europe, and that Europe would accept it as such.”

Although such an ambition betrayed a certain naivety regarding how European institutions work and how Muslim communities in Europe relate to each other, the Islamic Community supported the Reis-ul-ulema’s initiative, and officially adopted the Declaration of European Muslims in November 2005. The ‘ulama’ opposed to Mustafa Cerić remained relatively discreet at that time, even though Fikret Karčić’s critical comments about reducing the Bosniak nation to the status of a “Muslim millet” were partly motivated by the publication of this document. Yet the only direct criticism came from Esad Duraković, a professor of Arabic at Sarajevo University, who believed that the Declaration of European Muslims advanced claims that were fundamentally opposed to the interests of Muslims in Europe, as it aimed to isolate them within their host societies and lead to their ghettoization. Indeed, even as he called for the formation of a Bosniak nation-state, Cerić offered European Muslims a model based on the historical experience of the Bosnian Muslim community as a non-sovereign religious minority. And so, the hesitations and contradictions running through this community returned to the fore, just as they always had since the end of the Ottoman period, endlessly alternating between South Slavic projects and Islamic bonds, dreams of a nation, and search for an empire.
Conclusion

Many histories of the Balkans and several theories of nationalism are based on the idea of a linear transition from empires to nation-states. However, the history of the Muslims/Bosniaks forces us to rethink such teleological views. On the one hand, the case of the Muslims/Bosniaks highlights the enduring imperial dimensions of the history of the contemporary Balkans. In particular, this case prompts us to extend the analyses in terms of loyalty and allegiance to the Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian Empires, applying it also to the two Yugoslav states. These analytical categories complement rather than replace the categories of national identity, national identification, and the like. On the other hand, the national indetermination of Muslims/Bosniaks until the 1960s—or even later—shows how national identities in the Balkans were formed belatedly and haphazardly. Particularly visible for the Muslims/Bosniaks, this uncertain genesis of national identities can be found in other Muslim and Christian populations of the Balkans. The lengthy national indetermination of the Muslims/Bosniaks thus prompts us to expand the analyses in terms of “national indifference” to the Ottoman and post-Ottoman space. But at the same time, we need to distinguish better what reflects the premodern primacy of religious and provincial identities, what relates to the strategic avoidance of national categories, and what simply reveals that nationality is not an issue in most daily interactions.

The case of the Muslims/Bosniaks also provides a particularly clear illustration of the modern and constructed nature of national identities, even though this case contradicts some deterministic interpretations or hasty generalizations. The fact that the traditional Muslim elites rejected any national project of their own and that the nascent Muslim intelligentsia hesitated between a Croat, Serb, or Yugoslav national identification shows that the construction of Balkan national identities depended on specific and local historical trajectories, as well as various demographic, political, and geopolitical balances of power. Beginning with the “national affirmation” of the 1960s, the new Muslim political and intellectual elites struggled with the latent contradiction between affirmation of Muslim political sovereignty and preservation of Bosnian territorial integrity. This reality took a dramatic turn in the 1990s, when the very existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Muslim/Bosniak nation was under threat. The Muslim/Bosniak case also forces us to search for a more complex version of Rogers Brubaker’s triad nationalizing state/national minority/kin state in order to analyze Central and Eastern European nationalisms. Indeed, the historical trajectories and balances of power at work in Bosnia-Herzegovina make this explanatory model
partially inoperative: the Muslims/Bosniaks have no nationalizing state or kin state to refer to, and Bosnia-Herzegovina is characterized by the fact that none of its communities has national minority status and none would agree to be reduced to such status. At stake in the 1990s was not the relationship between a nationalizing state and national minorities, but rather the very existence of a plurinational state. Similar situations can undoubtedly be found in other Balkan states where nation-state rationales have been unable to erase post-imperial political and social realities, as in Macedonia, Cyprus, and post-Soviet Moldavia. Lastly, the Muslim/Bosniak elites’ continuous search for a new empire not only reveals the persistence of certain imperial dynamics after the demise of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, but also shows that the processes of building national identities in Central and Eastern Europe must be viewed in the context of their international environment, as illustrated by the role of the EU in resolving national disputes between certain Central and Eastern European countries, in managing the Yugoslav crisis of the 1990s, and last but not least, in placing post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina under tutelage.

Another frequently highlighted feature of Muslim/Bosniak national identity is its close ties with Islam. Yet until the mid-twentieth century, Muslim religious identity was a substitute for national identity, rather than its foundation, as the Muslim elites renounced any nation-state project in favor of non-sovereign religious minority status, and no massive nationalization of the Muslim population took place. Beginning in the 1960s, the new Muslim political and intellectual elites attempted to dissociate the new Muslim national identity from the religious identity of the same name, even though the absence of secular national institutions allowed the Islamic Community to position itself as a proxy national institution. In the 1990s, the ties between Muslim/Bosniak national identity and Muslim religious identity grew closer than ever before, but this process resulted in a paradoxical nationalization of Islam and its main symbols. Thus, the Muslim/Bosniak case is unique, notably due to a belated and incomplete nationalization, but the ties between religious and national identity for Muslims/Bosniaks show many similarities to those of Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats, as described by Vjekoslav Perica and Klaus Buchenau. After 1990, the closer ties between Islam and the Muslim/Bosniak national identity resembled similar changes in other European countries such as Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Cyprus, or further afield, Poland and Northern Ireland. In every case, as shown by Patrick Michel and Antonela Capelle-Pogacean, this was not a one-sided “return of religion,” but rather a complex reshaping of the relationship between political and religious elites in search of renewed legitimacy. The result of these transformations seldom called into question the profound effects of secularization.

The question of the ties between Islam and Muslim/Bosniak national identity inevitably raises the question of secularization of the Muslim/Bosniak community and, more generally, of Bosnian society as a whole. The appearance of a small Muslim intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century was the precursor of secularization in the Muslim community, which then became apparent during the interwar period with the development of mixed leisure activities, despite the indignant reactions from the revivalist ‘ulama’ and the Young Muslims. During the communist period, Bosnian society underwent an accelerated secularization, with religion being expelled from the
public sphere, religious institutions being dismantled to a large extent, and religious practice declining rapidly. This authoritarian secularization process was similar to that of other communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. However, beginning in the 1960s, the Islamic Community successfully rekindled its activity within socialist society itself, in a way not dissimilar to the Catholic Church in Poland. After 1990, the Islamic Community benefited from a sharp rebound in its activity and visibility, but religious practice remained the preserve of a pious minority, and the few attempts at authoritarian re-Islamization led by the Islamic Community and the SDA came up against strong resistance. As in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe studied by Patrick Michel, there was no real "return of religion" in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Much to the contrary, the end of the Islamic Community’s monopoly on religious life, the diversification of practices, and individualization of faith show that the religious changes in post-communist Bosnia-Herzegovina largely converge with those in the rest of Europe, as analyzed in the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger and Grace Davie. More in-depth research needs to be done to determine whether Europe—including Bosnia-Herzegovina—is really a religious exception worldwide, or if certain paradoxical forms of secularization can also be noted in Turkey, Iran, or other Muslim countries.

In this context, one of the most notable features of the Muslim/Bosnian case is that, in the 1990s, nascent Muslim nationalism was taken over by a previously marginal pan-Islamist current. Generally speaking, pan-Islamism is associated with the policy of Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid, certain religious mobilizations such as the Khilafat Movement in the Indian sub-continent in the 1920s, and the pan-Islamic Congresses of the interwar period. As an organized movement, it faded in the 1940s with the rise of nationalist and anti-colonialist movements. The persistence of a pan-Islamist current in Bosnia-Herzegovina after 1945 may thus look surprising, especially as it gained power in 1990 and remained in power for nearly a decade. However, we can solve this riddle if we adopt the view that pan-Islamism is a form of proto-nationalism. Having come to power in particularly dramatic circumstances, the Bosnian pan-Islamist current not only struggled to resolve the national contradictions facing the Muslim community, but also largely reproduced the political practices of the former communist regime, simply replacing communist ideology with Islam turned into a discriminating political ideology. These excesses fueled a strong disillusion regarding politics and religion, and the case of the Bosnian pan-Islamist current thus supports the analyses of Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel on the "failure of political Islam" and the "decline of Islamism." Instead of a one-party SDA state with tight control over the Islamic Community, the SDA has now adopted a pragmatic approach, religious institutions have won back a large degree of autonomy, and the political and religious life is becoming increasingly pluralistic. These phenomena prove that Bosnian society is taking part in political and social changes affecting all of Central and Eastern Europe— or even all of Europe. On a doctrinal level, the reflections of Fikret Karčić and Enes Karić on the relationship between a secular state and Islam as a minority religion have contributed to the intellectual elaboration of a "post-Islamist" Islam. These reflections are pertinent not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also for all Muslims in Europe.

In sum, the specific features of the Bosniak case are mainly attributable to changing and haphazard balances of power and to deliberate strategic choices, not to a supposed
unchanging nature of Islam. This would be even more apparent with a more in-depth comparison between Serb, Croat, and Bosniak nationalisms, showing all their similarities and their forms of ideological and institutional mimicry. Apart from the specificities and tragedies of its post-Ottoman history, the Bosniak nation fits into the underlying trends of European history, and has paid a heavy price during each of Europe’s major crises. Against this backdrop, the Bosniaks’ aspirations to join the European Union—regarded as a new empire ensuring peace and prosperity—appear more than legitimate, even though it is too early to say whether this “empire” will offer sound protection against future upheavals on the European continent.
Notes

Introduction

2 Speech by the High Representative Paddy Ashdown, accessible at http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/presssp/default.asp?content_id=28799
3 On the use of the terms “Muslim,” “Bosniak,” and “Bosnian,” refer to the Note on Terminology at the beginning of this book.
10 See notably Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Religion as a Chain of Memory, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001; and Antonela Capelle-Pogacean, Patrick Michel, and Enzo Pace (eds.), Religion(s) et identité(s) en Europe, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2008.


**1 The Origins of National Indetermination (1878–1914)**

1 The Štokavian dialects are spoken in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Slavonia, and Dalmatia, while the Kajkavian dialects are spoken in northern Croatia (in Zagreb and Zagorje), and the Čakavian dialects along a portion of the coast and on some of the Dalmatian islands.


10 From the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, there was a “Bosnian church” (bosanska crkva) in Bosnia that was independent from the Catholic and Orthodox religious hierarchies. In the nineteenth century, certain historians such as Franjo Rački linked this “Bosnian church” to the Bogomil heresy that appeared in Bulgaria in the tenth century, attributing the Islamization of Bosnia-Herzegovina to a wide-scale conversion


14 Memorandum submitted to Minister Kállay in Sarajevo on December 19, 1900, reprinted in *Spisi islamskog naroda Bosne i Hercegovine u stvari vjersko-prosvjetnog uređenja i samouprave*, Novi Sad: Društvo Rad, 1903, pp. 87–138, here pp. 91–2, 100, and 123–4.


21 “Consociationalism“ means the incorporation of communitarian criteria into political institutions, mainly by instituting quotas, qualiﬁ ed majorities, or veto rights.

22 Regarding the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDP stated that they “should become aware of their nationality. They should become either Serbs or Croats, or both since it is a single nation” (“Muslimska demokracija,” *Glas slobode*, vol. II, no. 16, April 15, 1910, quoted in Dževad Juzbašić, *Jezičko pitanje u austrougarskoj politici i Bosni i Hercegovini pred prvi svjetski rat*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1973, p. 45).


25 Ibid., p. 32.

26 Ibid., pp. 36–7.

27 Ibid., p. 52.


Derviš-beg Miralem, Javni račun o mome političkom radu..., op. cit., p. 11.


2 The Disillusions of Yugoslavism (1914–41)

During the interwar period, “South Serbia” corresponded to the regions of Macedonia, Kosovo, and the Sandžak (the former sanjak of Novi Pazar), which Serbia annexed following the Balkan Wars of 1912–13.

The name Džemijet is the abbreviation for İslam Muhaçazai Hukuk Cemiyeti, which is Turkish for “Association for the Defense of Muslims’ Rights.”


The Sandžak region corresponds to the former sanjak of Novi Pazar, which was attached to the Bosnian vilayet until 1878, then partitioned between Serbia and Montenegro in 1912.


Dejan Djokic, Elusive Compromise. ..., op. cit., p. 183.


JMO program, p. 418.

Notes

17 JMO resolution dated January 1933, reprinted in Ljubo Boban, Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije, op. cit., p. 49.


20 Open letter by the executive committee of the Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina, dated December 30, 1939, quoted in Nikola Babić, “Bosna i Hercegovina u koncepcijama. . .,” op. cit., p. 35.


26 Edhem Bulbulović, Nacionalizam i muslimani, Sarajevo: Reformistička biblioteka, 1933, p. 29.


29 Ibid., p. 11.


31 Ali Riza Karabeg, Rasprava o hidžabu (krivenju muslimanki), Mostar: Hrvatska tiskara, 1928, p. 17. Sunni Islam is divided into four major madžhab (legal schools) that date back to the eighth and ninth centuries: the Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi ‘i madžhab. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are affiliated with the Hanafi madžhab—named after its founder Abu Hanifa (699–767)—which was the official madžhab of the Ottoman Empire.

32 Dževad-beg Sulejmanpašić, Jedan prilog riješenju našeg muslim. ženskog pitanja, Sarajevo: Daniel & A. Kajon, 1918.

33 Schooling became compulsory for Muslim girls in 1929.


37 Edhem Bulbulović, Sveisalmski kongres i pitanje hilafeta, Sarajevo: Islamska dionička štamparija, 1926, pp. 15–17.


39 Speech made on September 6, 1928 before the Congress of Muslim Intellectuals, reprinted in ibid., p. 267.


43 Kur'an časni: prevod i tumač, Sarajevo: Džemaludin Čaušević, 1937.


3 A Winding Search for Security (1941–5)


2 Vladimir Žerjavčić, Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga, Zagreb: Globus, 1992, p. 72.


5 The pro-Serb cultural society Gajret was dissolved by the Ustasha regime.


7 “Herceg-Bosna” is a term sometimes used to refer to Bosnia-Herzegovina.


18 Mladi Musliman, medical student [Esad Karadozović], “Problem naše omladine,” el-Hidaje, vol. VI, nos 1–2, September 11, 1942, pp. 17–22, here p. 20. I would like to thank Armina Omerika for providing the name of the author of this article.
19 Ibid., p. 19.
I would like to thank Armina Omerika for providing the name of the author of this article.
21 Ibid., pp. 95–6.
22 Ibid., p. 92.
23 Ibid., p. 93.
26 These three young men were Hasan Bajraktarević, Kasim Mašić, and Salih Šabanović.
29 Proclamation of the first session of the AV NOJ, November 27, 1943, reprinted in ibid., p. 233.
32 Proclamation of the Muslim delegates to the ZAVNOBiH, December 1943, reprinted in ibid., pp. 85–90, here pp. 88–9.
33 Speech by Đuro Pucar, July 1, 1944, reprinted in ibid., pp. 177–89, here p. 187.
34 Proclamation of the Muslim delegates to the ZAVNOBiH, September 1944, reprinted in ibid., pp. 411–5, here p. 412.
36 A Provincial Anti-Fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of the Sandžak (Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Sandžaka) was formed on November 20, 1943, but this council was dissolved on March 29, 1945 after approving the partition of the Sandžak between Serbia and Montenegro.
38 Ibid.
4 Emergence of the Muslim Nation (1945–90)

3 In the ekavica dialect of Serbo-Croatian, the Proto-Slavic letter *ijat* is pronounced *e* (e.g., the word for *world* is pronounced *svet* and *river*, *reka*), whereas in the ijekavica dialect, this letter is pronounced *ije* (hence *svijet* and *rijeka*). Ekavica is mainly spoken in Serbia, whereas ijekavica is predominant in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro.
7 In 1953, of the 891,798 people in Bosnia-Herzegovina recorded as “undetermined–Yugoslav,” 860,486 declared themselves to be of the Muslim faith and 29,097 without religion.
10 Ibid., p. 127.
16 Between 1961 and 1991, the number of Muslims in Croatia rose from 3,113 to 23,740; in Slovenia, from 465 to 13,425; in the Vojvodina, from 1,630 to 4,930. In all three cases, this very rapid increase resulted from both changes in national identification and migratory moves toward these three most highly developed federal units of Yugoslavia.
17 Ustav socijalističke republike Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo: Službeni list SR BiH, 1974, p. 61.
19 Indeed, Edvard Kardelj writes: “The historical community and religion can influence, negatively or positively, the development of a nation, but they cannot define the very concept of nation.” Edvard Kardelj, Razvoj slovenačkog nacionalnog pitanja, op. cit., p. 96.
24 Salim Ćerić, O jugoslovenstvu i bosanstvu, Sarajevo: Oslobodenje, undated, pp. 97–8.
34 Following the full nationalization of the waqfs in 1958, the new Constitution of the Islamic Religious Community merged the former leading bodies of the Islamic religious community into a vrhovni sabor (supreme assembly) and a vrhovno starešinstvo (supreme presidency). A sabor (assembly) and a starešinstvo (presidency)
were created in each republic. The sabor and the starješinstvo of Bosnia-Herzegovina also covered Croatia and Slovenia. See "Ustav Islamske vjerske zajednice u FNRJ," in Muhamed Salkić, Ustavi Islamske zajednice, Sarajevo: el-Kalem, 2001, pp. 231–46.


36 Ibid., p. 256.


44 Husein Đozo, "Islam i Musliman," op. cit., p. 201.


46 Ibid., p. 205.


50 Alija Izetbegović, Islamska deklaracija, Sarajevo: Bosna, 1990, p. 5.

51 Ibid., p. 4.

52 Ibid., p. 22.

53 Ibid., p. 20.

54 Ibid., p. 38.

55 Ibid., p. 45.


57 Alija Izetbegović, Islamska deklaracija, op. cit., pp. 46 and 49.

58 Ibid., p. 50.

59 Ibid., pp. 37–8.

60 Ibid., p. 49.


62 The five members of this delegation, which had gone in January 1983 to a Congress for the Unification of Shi’a and Sunni Muslims, were Omer Behmen, Hasan Čengić, Ismet Kasumagić, Edhem Bićakčić, and Husein Živalj. Teufi k Velagić, a former Young Muslim living in Vienna, helped them organize their trip.


Notes


66 According to the same survey, 70 percent of young Serbs and 35 percent of young Croats stated that they never went to church, while 27 percent of young Serbs and 32 percent of young Croats went to church because of family or cultural tradition, and 3 percent of young Serbs and 33 percent of young Croats went to church out of religious conviction. See Dragomir Pantić, “Prostorne, vremenske i socijalne koordinate religioznosti mladih u Jugoslaviji,” in Srečko Mihailović (ed.), *Deca krize. Omladina Jugoslavije krajem osamdesetih*, Belgrade: IDN, 1990, pp. 203–8, here p. 222.


68 The Islamic Community’s new Constitution also Arabized the names of its governing bodies. On the federal level, the *vrhovno starešinstvo* (supreme presidency) became the *rijaset*, and on the republican level, the *starešinstvo* (presidency) became the *mešihat*. See “Ustav Islamske vjerske zajednice u SFRJ,” in Muhamed Salkić, *Ustavi Islamske zajednice*, op. cit., pp. 289–312.


70 Ibid., p. 11.


73 The small groups of Slavophone Muslims living in southern Kosovo did not rally the SDA on a wide scale: the Muslims living east of Prizren created the Democratic Reform Party of Muslims (*Demokratska reformska stranka Muslimana*—DRSM), and the Gorani living south of Prizren voted mainly for Slobodan Milošević’s Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*—SPS).


78 Ibid., p. 62.

79 In the same survey, 76.0 percent of Serbs and 8.2 percent of Croats were in favor of strengthening the powers of the Yugoslav federation, versus 3.6 percent of Serbs and 29.3 percent of Croats in favor of strengthening the Republics’ powers. See Ibrahim Bakić, “Gradani BiH o medunacionalnim odnosima,” *Sveske instituta za proučavanje međunarodnih odnosa*, vol. VIII, nos 28–29, 1990, pp. 255–330, here p. 299.


83 Ibid., p. 98.


85 For the definition of the term “consociational,” see footnote 21 in chapter 1.


Speech during a campaign meeting organized by the SDA in Banja Luka on November 6, 1990, quoted in “Oslušnuti narod,” *Oslobodenje*, vol. XLVII, no. 15226, November 7, 1990.


5 Caught in the Mortal Embrace of Nationalism (1990–5)


7 Draft declaration on the state sovereignty and indivisibility of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, *op. cit.*


9 Interview with the daily *Borba*, vol. LXIX, no. 229, August 16, 1991.


15 On August 24, 1993, the “Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna” became the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna.”

Notes

17 Nenad Kecmanović was replaced by Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović.


23 Opening speech to the first *Bošnjački sabor* given on September 27, 1993, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

24 Video recording of the *Bošnjački sabor* session of September 27, 1993; author’s personal archives.


26 Video recording of the *Bošnjački sabor* session of September 27, 1993; author’s personal archives.


28 The next day, the Bosnian Parliament voted for conditional approval of the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan, by fifty-eight votes out of sixty-nine deputies present (out of a total of 240 deputies elected in 1990).

29 Soon after its creation, the “Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia” (*Autonomna provincija zapadne Bosne—APZB*) signed “peace treaties” with the “Republika Srpska” and the “Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna.” These “treaties” replicated most of the terms of the Owen–Stoltenberg Plan. At the time, the APZB benefited from the support of Serbia and Croatia. The end of fighting between Muslims and Croats, and the creation of the Federation in March 1994 put an end to Croatian military aid, and six months later, an offensive by the ARBiH 5th Corps chased Fikret Abdić from his stronghold in Velika Kladuša. The VRS helped Abdić take back this town in November 1994, but the APZB was then reduced to a small mercenary branch of the “Republika Srpska.” The APZB disappeared definitively in August 1995, and Abdić fled to Croatia with several thousand of his followers.


33 Between 1992 and 1995, the SDA in the Sandžak was the target of severe repression in both Serbia and Montenegro. While Ugljanin fled to Turkey, Harun Hadžić (president of the Montenegrin SDA) was given a lengthy prison sentence. In the Serbian Sandžak, Rasim Ljajić came out in favor of participating in the legislative elections.
alongside Serbian opposition parties, and distanced himself from the demand for autonomy for the Sandžak. In 1994, the dispute between Ljajić and Ugljanin led to the appearance of two parties, both named SDA, which the SDA’s leaders in Sarajevo were unable to reconcile.


37 On September 28, 1993, the deputies of the Bosnian Parliament reviewed a draft proclamation for the “Bosnian Republic” with two possible definitions of this state: “A sovereign and independent state of the citizens who live there, all equal in rights,” or “A sovereign and independent state of the citizens, all equal in rights, of the Bosniak Muslim nation and the members of the other nations who live there.” Neither definition referred to the creation of a homogenous Bosniak nation-state. Draft constitutional law on the constitution of a Republic of Bosnia, dated September 28, 1993, author’s personal archives.


39 Ivo Komšić was the former vice president of the SDP and the president of the Croat Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*—HSS), created in 1993.

40 Stjepan Kljujić was the former president of the HDZ, removed from the Bosnian Collegial Presidency in November 1992, and the president of the Republican Party (*Republikanska stranka*) created in 1993.

41 The governmental programme was presented in October 1993 to the Bosnian Collegial Presidency, and reprinted in *Oslobodenje*—European edition, vol. I, no. 34, November 5, 1993.

42 Transcript of the session of the Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina on February 7, 1994 in Sarajevo, p. 1/3; author’s personal archives.

43 Ibid., pp. 4/2 to 4/4.

44 At the head of the Federation, there was a president and a vice president. These functions would alternate every six months between a Bosniak and a Croat.

45 The Parliament was made up of a House of Representatives elected through universal suffrage, and a House of Peoples designated by the parliaments of the cantons.

46 The Federation’s government was composed of an equal number of Bosniak and Croat ministers, with each minister of one nationality being seconded by a vice minister of the other nationality.

47 The four Bosniak-majority cantons were those of Una-Sana, Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj, and Goražde; the two Croat-majority cantons were those of Posavina and Western Herzegovina; the two “mixed” cantons were those of Central Bosnia and Herzegovina-Neretva.

48 Interview with the daily *Ljiljan*, vol. III, no. 61, March 16, 1994, p. 7.


51 Opening speech to the second *Bošnjački sabor* given on July 18, 1994, op. cit., p. 109.
A Bosniak Nation Centered on Islam (1990–5)

1 Speech given on October 5, 1990 to the constitutive assembly of the Muslim cultural society Preporod, printed in Glasnik rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ, vol. LIII, no. 5, September 1990, pp. 96–102, here p. 97.
3 Thus including the sancak of Novi Pazar.
Notes


23 Interview with the weekly Ljiljan, vol. IV, no. 143, October 11, 1995, p. 10.


26 Following the break-up of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, the Islamic religious institutions of Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro adopted their own constitutions and chose their own Reis-ul-ulema (Suljeman Rexhepi in Macedonia, Idriz Demirović in Montenegro) or Grand Mufti (Rexhep Boja in Kosovo). In October 1993, Muamer Zukorlić was named mufti of Novi Pazar and a mešihat was formed in the Sandžak, connected to the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina.


33 Killed in May 1995 when his helicopter was shot down by the VRS, Irfan Ljubijankić was replaced by Muhamed Śaćirbegović, whose father Nedžib Śaćirbegović was a Young Muslim who took refuge in the United States after the Second World War.


36 Communiqué from the five members of the Bosnian Collegial Presidency connected to the civic parties, reprinted in Oslobodenje, vol. LII, no. 16937, August 5, 1995.

38 By asserting that the Young Muslim movement was created in 1939, instead of the more accurate date of 1941, the creation of this movement was dissociated from the founding of the Independent State of Croatia.


46 Ibid.

47 Alija Izetbegović, Islamska deklaracija, op. cit., p. 20.


52 Ibid.


Notes 237


64 See, for example, Mustafa Cerić’s speech to members of the ARBiH Morale Department in December 1995, quoted in “Vjera javna—nevjerovanje privatna stvar,” Preporod, vol. XXVII, no. 1, January 1996, p. 22.

65 Mustafa Cerić, Bošnjaci će spasiti Evropu, Gračanica: Monos, 1994, p. 22.


7 On the European Fringes of the Umma (1992–5)


Notes

16 Interview with the newspaper Večernje novosti, reprinted in Preporod, vol. XXIV, no. 15, August 1993, pp. 8–10, here p. 9.
17 Mustafa Imamović, Bit nacije, Sarajevo: V KBI, 1994, p. 3.
21 Speech given on October 20, 1994 to the combatants of the 7th Muslim Brigade, reprinted in the brigade newsletter el-Liva, no. 16, November 1994, p. 4.
23 Mustafa Imamović, Pregled istorije genocida nad Muslimanima u jugoslovenskim zemljama, supplement to Glasnik rijašeta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ, vol. LIV, no. 6, November–December 1991.
27 Speech given on October 20, 1994 to the combatants of the 7th Muslim Brigade, op. cit., p. 4.
29 Speech given on December 5, 1994 in Budapest at the OSCE summit, reprinted in Alija Izetbegović, Odabrani govori, pisma, izjave, intervjui, op. cit., pp. 179–82, p. 181.
32 Here, Enes Karić repeats the thesis that, following the waves of emigration in the post-Ottoman period, several million people of Bosniak origin reside in Turkey.
35 Speech given in Sarajevo on December 9, 1993 to the heads of the ARBiH Morale Department, reprinted in Alija Izetbegović, Odabrani govori, pisma, izjave, intervjui, op. cit., pp. 9–19, here p. 13.
36 Speech given in Sarajevo on January 12, 1994 to a special session of the local SDA committee, op. cit., p. 40.
37 Speech to the SDA Convention, held on March 25, 1994, op. cit., p. 73.
38 Proclamation about the war, issued by Bosnian Muslim intellectuals, reprinted in Husnija Kamberović (ed.), Ratni kongres bosanskomuslimanskih intelektualaca . . ., op. cit., p. 190.
Notes

42 On the madīhab in Sunni Islam, see Chapter 2, footnote 31.
44 Imad Al-Misri, Shvatanja koja trebamo ispraviti, Organizacija preporoda islamske tradicije Kuvajt, no publication place or date given, p. 1.
49 Interview on December 11, 1994 with weekly paper Dani, reprinted in Alija Izetbegović, Odabranı govori, pisma, izjave, intervjuj, op. cit., pp. 207–13, here p. 211.

8 Dreams of a Nation, Search for an Empire (1995–2013)

1 The Peace Implementation Council comprised forty-three countries and fifteen international organizations. Its Steering Board includes the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Russia, the European Union, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
2 The term “minority return” applies to people who return to a municipality in which their national community is not (or is no longer) in the majority.
3 In keeping with the consociational mechanisms at work in the Federation, the Ministry of Defense was awarded to the Croat Vladimir Šoljić (HDZ).
5 Speech given on August 24, 1996 during a campaign meeting in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, reprinted in ibid., pp. 185–93, here p. 191.
7 Interview with the weekly Magazin Express on October 18, 2001, quoted in International Crisis Group, Bosnia’s Nationalist Governments: Paddy Ashdown and the Paradoxes of State Building, Sarajevo and Brussels: ICG, July 22, 2003, p. 16.
Notes


15 Interview with the weekly magazine Preporod, vol. XXXVI, no. 18/812, September 15, 2005, pp. 29–31, here p. 29.


18 Senahid Halilović, Prawopis bosanskog jezika, Sarajevo: BZK Preporod, 1996.

19 Mustafa Imamović, Historija Bošnjaka, op. cit.

20 Bećir Džaka, Manihejstvo, bogumilstvo i islam, Sarajevo: VKBI, 1997, p. 27.

21 Mustafa Imamović, Historija Bošnjaka, op. cit., p. 169.


29 One KM (convertible mark) is worth around EUR0.50.


31 Ibid., pp. 143 and 151.

32 Ibid., p. 138.

34 Interview with the magazine *Novi muallim*, vol. XIII, no. 50, Summer 2012, pp. 66–80, here p. 68.

35 Proclamation of Bosnian preachers on the *tekfir* problem, April 2006, author’s personal archives.


37 In 2000, the Islamic Community recorded 292 Bosniak students in the Muslim world, 107 of which in Saudi Arabia, sixty in Syria, forty in Egypt, thirty-four in Jordan, twenty-eight in Iran, and eleven in Turkey.


41 Ibid., pp. 434–5.


53 Fikret Karčić, “Bošnjački iskorak u prošlost,” op. cit.

Conclusion


3 Antonela Capelle-Pogacean, Patrick Michel, and Enzo Pace (eds.), Religion(s) et identité(s) en Europe, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2008.


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Index

1st Muslim Brigade (NOVJ), 68
2nd Corps (ARBiH), 130, 152
2nd Muslim Brigade (NOVJ), 68
3rd Corps (ARBiH), 181
4th Brigade of Hrasnica (ARBiH), 148
4th Muslim Brigade (ARBiH), 148, 193, 209
5th Corps (ARBiH), 125, 135, 232 n.29
7th Muslim Brigade (ARBiH), 148, 150, 151, 175, 177, 181, 193, 205
8th Brigade of Krajina (NOVJ), 68
9th Muslim Brigade (ARBiH), 148
13th SS Division, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 88, 90
16th Muslim Brigade (NOVJ), 68
18th Croat Brigade (NOVJ), 69

Abazović, Dino, 5, 205
Abdić, Fikret, 104, 109, 120, 131, 143, 144, 150, 151, 155, 232 nn.19 and 29
Abduh, Muhammad, 21, 22, 91
Abdülhamid (Sultan), 19, 218
Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 83, 86, 88, 94
Active Islamic Youth (IAO), 206–8
Afghanistan, 181, 207
Agašović, Alija, 49
Agrokomerc (company), 100, 104
Ajvatovica (Sufi pilgrimage), 77, 105, 150, 162, 206
Akan-Ellis, Burcu, 2
Akif, Mehmed, 21
Akmačić, Mile, 120, 123, 152
al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din, 21
al-Awda, Salman, 206
al-Azhar (university), 48, 63, 64, 90, 94, 102
al-Banna, Hassan, 96
al-Ghazali, Mohammed, 172
al-Haramain (Islamic NGO), 180
al-Hassanein, Fatih, 96, 152, 153, 172
al-Hawali, Safar, 206

al-Husayni, Amin, 48, 60, 62, 66, 67
al-Misri, Imad, 181, 182, 207
al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 172, 213
Alexander I (King of Yugoslavia), 31, 32, 39
Alibašić, Ahmet, 5, 205, 208
Alispahić, Bakir, 152, 153
Alkalaj, Sven, 171
Allaudin Madrasa (Priština), 93, 94
Allemagne, 60, 62, 63
Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), 186, 189, 191
Andalusia, 176
Anderson, Benedict, 3
Antifascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), 54, 68, 70
Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (OSBiH), 187
Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ARBiH), 119–21, 123, 125, 130, 132–4, 142–4, 147–51, 153, 154, 172, 173, 187, 201
Army of the Republika Srpska (VRS), 118, 123, 130, 134–6, 187
Arslan, Shakib, 48, 65
Ashdown, Paddy, 1, 186
Association of ‘Ulama’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1950), 76, 91, 93, 162, 197, 198
Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APZB), 125, 129, 232 n.29
Azapagić, Teufik, 12
Bajraktarević, Hasan, 226 n.26
Bašagić, Safvet-beg, 17, 20, 21, 25, 50
Bašić, Salih, 59
Becirbegović, Edah, 142
Begić, Midhat, 86
Begović, Mehmed, 155
Behar (periodical), 20, 22
Behmen, Omer, 99, 102, 104, 171, 229 n.62
Behmen, Salih, 99
Benevolence International (Islamic NGO), 180
Benevolencia, La (Jewish cultural society), 23
Bešlagić, Selim, 121, 166
Bičakčić, Edhem, 129, 135, 152, 156, 193, 194, 196, 229 n.62
Bildt, Carl, 186
bin Laden, Osama, 207
Biser (periodical), 20, 22, 28
Black Legion (military unit), 59
Black Wolves (military unit), 155
Bleiburg massacre, 55
Boban, Mate, 120
Boja, Rexhep, 102, 235 n.26
Bosanski pogledi (periodical), 95
Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS), 204
Bošnjacki sabor (Bosniak assembly), 127, 128, 130, 135, 136, 143, 144, 154, 156, 162
Bošnjak (periodical), 15–17, 20
Branković, Hasib, 152
Branković, Nedžad, 152
Brčko district, 186, 190
Bristrić, Senahid, 102
Brkić, Hasan, 69
Broz, Josip alias Tito, 53, 54, 70, 73, 79, 80, 83, 89, 99, 118, 200
Brubaker, Rogers, 3, 4, 215
Brzina, Halil, 193, 205, 206
Buchenau, Klaus, 216
Bugari, Sulejman, 205, 206
Bukvić, Edib, 128, 152
Bulbulović, Edhem, 43, 45
Buna (Sufi pilgrimage), 206
Burbank, Jane, 4
Bušatić, Abdullah Ajni, 44
Bush, George H. W., 170
Busuladžić, Mustafa, 64–7, 76
Caliphate, 39, 45, 47
Canada, 239 n.1
Capelle-Pogacean, Antonela, 3, 216
Carrel, Alexis, 65
Čaušević, Đzemailudin, 1, 22, 23, 33, 34, 40, 43–6, 56
Čaušević, Halid, 56
Čekić, Smail, 201
Čemerlić, Hamdija, 94
Čengić, Halid, 153
Čerić, Mustafa, 1, 102, 148, 150, 161, 163–6, 170, 172, 175, 178–80, 196–8, 204, 205, 210–14
Čerić, Salim, 85, 87
Chechnya, 207
Chetniks, 53–5, 57, 59, 62–4, 66–9, 105, 114, 132, 175, 182
Čimić, Esad, 90
Circle 99 (association), 154
Čišić, Husaga, 75, 76
Clayer, Nathalie, 2
Clinton, Bill, 171, 173
Čokić, Ahmed Lufti, 47
Čokić, Ibrahimim Hakki, 47, 48
Čolaković, Rodoljub, 70–2, 81
Čolaković, Salih, 102, 149, 150, 161, 162, 204, 209
Cominform, 73
Communist Party of Yugoslavia (K PJ), 31, 33, 41, 53, 67, 69, 70, 73, 74, 77, 79, 84, 148
Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals (in 1991–1993, Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals), 123, 143, 146, 147, 150, 159, 174, 179, 196, 202
Congress of Muslim Intellectuals (1928), 45
Contact Group Peace Plan, 135
Cooper, Frederick, 4
Coordination Committee of the Muslim Institutions, 143, 150, 156, 162
Council of Europe, 187, 192
Council of Muslims of Herzegovina, 120
Croat Catholic Association (HKU), 23, 24
Croat Defense Council (HVO), 118–23, 130, 132–4, 155, 187
Croat Democratic Union (HDZ), 100, 103, 106, 108, 109, 115–17, 120–2, 125, 130, 131, 133–5, 152, 156, 186–90, 193
Croat National Council (HNV), 132, 133
Croat Peasant Party (HSS) (before 1925, Croat Peasant Republican Party-HRSS), 31–3, 36, 41
Croat Peasant Party (HSS, 1993) 233 n.39
Croat People's Union (HNZ), 23, 24
Croat Revolutionary Movement (HRP), see Ustashas
Cutilheiro, Jose, 117, 170, 175
Cutilheiro Plan, 117, 118, 121, 170, 175
Cvetković, Dragiša, 32, 41
Cvetković-Maček Agreement, 32, 33, 41, 50, 56, 114
daijas (self-proclaimed preachers), 204, 207
Dani (periodical), 154, 183
Davidović, Ljubomir, 36
Davie, Grace, 3, 205, 217
daʿwa (missionary work), 180
Dayton Agreement, 138, 139, 164, 176, 182, 184–7, 189, 190, 193–5, 197, 198, 201, 203, 207
Delić, Rasim, 131, 153, 184
Delić, Sead, 152
Demirović, Idriz, 235 n.26
Democratic Alternative, 88
Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFJ), 54, 70
Democratic Party (Kingdom of Yugoslavia), 31, 36, 39
Democratic Party (Montenegro), 109
Democratic Reform Party of Muslims (Kosovo), 230 n.73
Democratic Union, 36
Der gerade Weg (periodical), 95
dhikr (Sufi ceremony), 150
Đikić, Osman, 27
Dilas, Milovan, 70, 76
Dindić, Zoran, 188
Dizdar, Mak, 87
Djokić, Dejan, 32, 36
Dobrača, Kasim, 49, 56, 59, 64, 65, 76, 90
Dodik, Milorad, 135, 186, 188, 190, 191
Donia, Robert, 19, 24, 25, 90
Dozo, Husein, 63, 90, 91–5, 98
Duraković, Enes, 127, 128, 133, 142, 152, 199
Duraković, Esad, 214
Duraković, Nijaz, 101, 127, 131, 195
Dyker, David, 80
Džabić, Ali Fehmi, 18, 20
Džaja, Bećir, 200
Džemijet (political party), 31, 39
Efendić, Hamed, 162
Egypt, 22, 48, 64, 79, 94, 207, 241 n.37
El Alamein, 63
el-Hidaje (periodical), 65, 66
el-Hidaje (‘ulama’ association, 1936), 48–50, 56, 57, 59, 63–5, 77
el-Hidaje (‘ulama’ association, 1991), 149, 150, 160
Elektroprivreda (company), 152, 156, 194
Emperor’s Mosque (Sarajevo), 95
Energoinvest (company), 152
Ensarije ćerijata (website), 207
Erenköy (neo-Sufi community), 208
European Council for Fatwas and Research, 213
European Force (EUFOR), 188
European Muslim Congress (1935), 48
European People’s Party, 195
Faculty of Islamic Sciences (before 1993, Faculty of Islamic Theology), 93, 94, 147, 149, 152, 158–60, 182, 198, 203, 205
Faculty of Philology (Sarajevo), 83, 95
Faculty of Political Science (Sarajevo), 83, 95, 201
fatwa (religious decree), 12, 50, 91, 163, 164, 181, 211, 213
Federation Army (VF), 187
Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 144, 173, 185, 187, 189–91, 193, 194, 233 n.42
Fejić, Ibrahim, 76
Felicity Party (Turkey), 208
fethullahcıs (neo-Sufi movement), 208
Filenstra, Šačir, 146, 197, 201
Filipović, Muhamed, 86, 87, 104, 107, 178
fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), 103, 158, 198, 209, 210
Firdus, Ali-beg, 20
Firdus, Osman Nuri-beg, 47
Forum for the Protection of Rights of Muslims, 104
Forum of Citizens (Tuzla), 154, 155
Foundation for the Families of Šehids, 173
France, 135, 136, 171, 176, 239 n.1
Frank, Josip, 33, 51
Franz-Ferdinand (Archduke), 28
Franz-Josef (Emperor), 1, 2
Front slobode (periodical), 154, 167
Gaj, Ljudevit, 7, 9
Gajret (Muslim cultural society), 20, 22–4, 27, 37, 39–41, 43–5, 75
Gajret (periodical), 20
Ganić, Ejup, 109, 151, 170
Gasprinski, Ismail, 21
Gazi Husrev-beg Library, 48, 204, 205
Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa, 48, 76, 89, 93–5, 148, 152, 156
Gellner, Ernest, 3
Germany, 51, 54, 55, 66, 135, 176, 239 n.1
Glasnik (periodical), 89, 103
Gligorov, Kiro, 114
Gradaščević, Husein-kapetan, 10, 146, 200
Grbo, Ismet, 155
Great Britain, 135, 136, 171, 176, 239 n.1
Guardians of the Revolution (Iran), 148

hadith (acts and words of the Prophet), 148
Hadžić, Hakija, 41, 50, 55, 56
Hadžić, Harun, 232 n.33
Hadžić, Izet, 155
Hadžić, Mehmedalija, 149, 177
Hadžić, Osman Nuri, 20, 21, 23, 65
Hadžiefendić, Muhamed, 59, 60, 62, 63
Hadžihanović, Hamdija, 152
Hadžihanović, Uzeir-agha, 59, 60, 64
Hadžijahić, Muhamed, 88, 93
Hadžiosmanović, Ismet, 155
Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), 94, 160, 203–5
halal (licit), 160, 164, 203, 213
Halilović, Nezim, 148, 193, 196, 209
Halilović, Safvet, 209
Halilović, Sefer, 120, 131, 153
Halilović, Senahid, 145, 199
Handžić, Mehmed, 48–50, 56, 59, 64, 65
Hasanbegović, Avdo, 39
Hasanbegović, Zlatko, 5
Hečimović, Esad, 5
Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, 3, 217
High Representative, 138, 190, 194
Higher Islamic School for Theology and Shari’a Law, 43, 69, 76, 88, 161
Himmler, Heinrich, 62
Hitler, Adolf, 60
Hoare, Marko, 59, 63
Hörmann, Kosta, 17
Holbrooke, Richard, 138
Home Guard Volunteer Regiment (DOMDO), 59, 69
Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH, Islamic NGO), 208
Humo, Avdo, 69
Ibrahimagić, Omer, 201
Ibrahimpašić, Nedžad, 155
iftar (evening meal), 206
igatha (charity), 180
ijtihad (effort at independent reasoning), 21, 46, 91
ilahiyya (Sufi chants), 150
‘ilmiiyya (body of ‘ulama’), see ‘ulama’
“imam movement”, 102
Imamović, Enver, 200
Imamović, Mustafa, 88, 104, 142, 175, 177, 178, 199–201
Implementation Force (IFOR), 138
India, 79
Indonesia, 79, 96, 97, 172
Institute for the History of the Workers’ Movement, 83
Institute for Language and Literature, 86
Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, 201
International Court of Justice, 199, 201
International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 177, 186, 192, 196, 199, 201
International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) (Islamic NGO), 180
Iqbal, Muhammad, 96
Iran, 98, 99, 132, 169, 171–4, 194, 217, 241 n.37
Iraq, 170, 172, 207
Isaković, Alija, 86, 87, 104, 142, 143, 145
Islamic Congress (Jerusalem, 1931), 48
Islamic Cultural Center (Chicago), 102
Islamic Pedagogical Faculty (Bihać), 203, 209
Islamic Pedagogical Faculty (Novi Pazar), 203
Islamic Pedagogical Faculty (Zenica), 160, 203, 209
Islamic reformism, 5, 21–3, 42–6, 91, 209–12
Islamic Relief (Islamic NGO), 180
Islamic revivalism, 5, 46, 47–9, 216
Islamism, 4, 5
Israel, 98, 178
Italy, 51, 54, 60, 66, 239 n.1
Izetbegović, Bakir, 195
Jahić, Adnan, 129, 130, 144, 157–9, 193
Jamīiyat al-Furqan (neo-Salafist movement), 206–8
Japan, 51, 96, 239 n.1
jihad (holy war), 34, 67, 69, 72, 149, 172, 180–2, 207–9
Jordan, 94, 241 n.37
Kállay, Benjamin von, 15, 19, 22, 23
Kamberović, Husnija, 5
Kapetanović, Mehmēd-beg, 15, 16, 19, 20
Karadorđevo (meeting Milošević-Tudman), 114, 116
Karadžović, Esad, 65
Karadžić, Radovan, 120, 135, 192
Karadžić, Vuk, 9
Karalić, Mahmut, 148
Karčić, Fikret, 5, 103, 158, 159, 198, 209–14, 217
Kardelj, Edvard, 74, 84
Karić, Enes, 149, 152, 159, 160, 178, 182, 198, 199, 201, 205, 213, 217
kasīde (Sufi chants), 150
Kasumagić, Ismet, 99, 229 n.62
Katuranić, Vjeran, 104
Kavazović, Husein, 162
Kazim, Musa, 21
Kecmanović, Nenad, 120, 121
Kelimet ul-haqq (website), 207
Kemal, Mustafa, 44, 45, 48
Kemal, Namik, 21
Kemura, Sulejman, 90
Kepel, Gilles, 3, 5, 217
Khilafat Movement (India), 217
khūtas (Friday sermons), 11, 90, 213
King Fahd Ibn Abdul-Aziz Mosque (Sarajevo), 209
Klijunić, Stjepan, 120, 131, 233 n.40
Komišić, Ivo, 131, 132, 233 nn.36 and 39
Kordić, Dario, 135
Korkut, Sakib, 38
Korošec, Anton, 36
Kovač, Nikola, 171
Krajišnik, Momčilo, 129
Kreševljaković, Muhamed, 155
Kulenović, Đafer, 41, 42, 55
Kulenović, Skender, 87
Kupusović, Muhamed, 133
Kurt, Muhamed, 69
Kurtović, Šukrija, 24, 25
Kvaternik, Eugen, 54
Kvaternik, Slavko, 54
Latas, Ömer-paşa, 10
Latić, Džemaludin, 99, 102, 129, 130, 141, 145, 147, 157, 175–7, 182, 193, 195, 204
Lazić, Miro, 120
League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOI), 41
League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (SKBiH), 80–3, 85–8, 99, 100, 101, 108, 154, 165
League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), 79–81, 100
Leveau, Rémy, 5
Liberal-Democratic Alliance of Bosniaks-Muslims, 88
Index

Libya, 169, 172
Lings, Martin, 205
Ljajić, Rasim, 129, 232 n.33
Ljiljan (periodical), 150, 163, 173, 178
Ljubijankić, Irlan, 104, 152, 174, 175, 235 n.33
Ljubunčić, Salih, 42
Lockwood, William, 90
Lončar, Budimir, 169
Lučić, Iva, 5
Maček, Vladko, 32
madīhab (legal school), 44, 46, 181–3, 207–10, 223 n.31
madrasa (religious school), 3, 10, 43, 76, 160, 203, 204
Maglajlić, Ibrahim, 35, 40
Maglajlić, Munib, 142
Mahmutćehajić, Rusmir, 107, 133, 144, 152, 205, 206
Mahmutović, Mirsad, 149
Main Muslim Committee (1945), 70, 75
Makić, Hasan, 150
Malaysia, 172, 173
Malcolm, Noel, 97
Mandžić, Pašaga, 69
Marković, Ante, 103
Marx, Karl, 166
Mašić, Kasim, 226 n.26
Masleša, Veselin, 72
Matica hrvatska (Croat cultural association), 80, 86, 94
Matica muslimanska (Muslim cultural association), 87
Matica srpska (Serb cultural association), 86
Maududi, Abul Ala, 96
Mazlami, Kenan, 105
Međugorje (Catholic pilgrimage), 100
Meholjić, Hakija, 128
Mehtić, Halil, 102, 105, 162, 180, 204, 209
mekteb (elementary school), 10, 18, 22, 43, 76, 93, 95
menšura (accreditation), 18, 19, 20
Merhamet (Muslim charity), 59, 67, 142, 143, 150, 160
Mešić, Adem-ag, 26, 41, 55
Mesić, Stipe
mešihat (presidency, Islamic Community), 102, 149, 230 n.68
mevlud (ceremony in honor of the Prophet), 65, 90, 182
Michel, Patrick, 3, 216, 217
Mihailović, Draža, 53, 54
Mikulić, Branko, 81, 87, 100
Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), 173
Miljković, Huska, 68
Milošević, Slobodan, 99, 100, 109, 114, 116, 125, 135, 136, 138, 173, 187, 192
Miralem, Derviš-beg, 26, 27
Mlačo, Dževad, 194
Mladi Muslimani ‘39 (association), 156, 236 n.38
Mladić, Ratko, 192
Morale Department (ARBiH), 148, 153
Morillon, Philippe, 123
Morocco, 97
Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1939), 41, 42, 50, 59, 62
mufti (regional religious authority), 149, 150, 160–2, 211, 212
Muftić, Tarik, 65, 66
mujahidin (jihadi soldiers), 161, 162, 180, 181, 182, 184, 207, 208
Mujić, Husein, 102
Mulabdić, Edhem, 20
Mulalić, Mustafa, 45
munafik (hypocrite), 167
murtat (apostate), 151
Musavat (periodical), 21
Muslim Bosniak Organization (MBO), 108, 114
Muslim Brotherhood, 49, 64, 152, 172, 213
Muslim Independent Party (MSS), 27
Muslim League (Pakistan), 97
Muslim Liberation Movement (MOS), 64, 67
Muslim Organization (MO HSS), 41, 50, 55
Muslim People’s Organization (MNO), 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27
Muslim Progressive Party (MNS), 26, 27
Muslimanski glas (periodical), 115, 175
Muslimović, Fikret, 148, 153
Muwafaq (Islamic NGO), 180
Napredak (Croat cultural society), 23, 75
Naqshbandi Sufi order, 150, 155, 205
Index

Narodna uzdanica (Muslim cultural society), 37, 41, 42, 45, 55, 75
Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 205
National Defense Council, 117, 142
National Muslim Council of the Sandžak (MNVS), 116, 129, 142
Neimarlija, Hilmo, 147, 205, 206
neo-Salafism, 5, 102, 105, 162, 180–3, 204, 206, 208–11
neo-Sufism, 204, 208
Neuburger, Mary, 2
Nicaragua, 173
Non-Aligned Movement, 79, 94, 169, 172
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 121, 123, 127, 132, 135, 136, 184, 185, 187, 189, 199
Novi behar (periodical), 44, 55
Novi horizonti (periodical), 209
Novi Pazar Agreement, 10, 17, 18
Novi Sad Agreement, 74
Numić, Hajrudin, 146
Obnoviteljski sabor (Refounding assembly of the Islamic Community), 150, 156, 161
Odjek (periodical), 83
Omanović, Fata, 18
Omerika, Armina, 5
Opstanak (refugee association), 192
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 186, 192
Organization of the 'Ilmiyya in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1912), 22
Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), 169, 172, 173, 239 n.1
Oriental Institute, 88
Oslobodenje (periodical), 117, 154, 163, 165
Osvir (periodical), 56, 67
Owen, David, 121, 125
Owen-Stoltenberg Peace Plan, 125–9, 143, 171, 232 nn.28 and 29
Pakistan, 78, 97, 98
Pakistan (periodical), 78
Palestine, 175, 178, 207
Pandža, Muhamed, 59, 60, 63, 64, 67, 76
pan-Islamism, 3–5, 19, 22, 39, 45, 48, 64–7, 78, 94, 96–9, 102–7, 130, 144, 147, 149, 150, 152, 153, 155–8, 161, 171, 173, 193–6, 204, 205, 218
Partisans, 53, 54, 55, 59, 63, 64, 66–72, 164, 200
Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH), 186, 188, 191, 193, 195, 196
Party of Democratic Activity (A-SDA), 195
Party of the Rights (Stranka prava), 9
Pašić, Ibrahim, 200
Pašić, Nikola, 35
Patriotic League (PL), 117, 120, 142, 152, 153, 156
Pavelić, Ante, 33, 51
Peace Implementation Council, 185, 186, 239 n.1
Pejanović, Mirko, 132
Pelidija, Enes, 93
Pelivan, Jure, 120, 152
People’s Front (NF), 70, 73, 74, 77, 79
People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOVJ), 53, 55
People’s Party, 9
People’s Salvation Committee, 59, 60, 64
Perica, Vojeslav, 3, 216
Peter II (King of Yugoslavia), 51, 54
Petritsch, Wolfgang, 186, 187, 194
Pijade, Moša, 70, 75, 82
Pollack, Detlef, 3
post-Islamism, 4, 217
Pozderac, Hamdija, 81, 100
Pozderac, Nurija, 68, 81
Pregled (periodical), 83
Preporod (Muslim cultural society), 75, 77, 104, 127, 133, 141–4, 147, 150, 155, 162, 177, 196, 197, 199, 202
Preporod (periodical), 93, 95, 102, 149, 209, 211
Presidency of Religious Affairs (Turkey), 208
Prguda, Rušid, 99
Princip, Gavrilo, 28
Prosperity Party (Turkey), 172
Prosveta (Serb cultural society), 23, 75
Provincial Antifascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZAVNOBiH), 69, 70, 94
Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>Provincial Museum (Sarajevo), 15, 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pucar, Duro, 70, 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purivatra, Atif, 82, 84, 87, 88, 104, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Putokaz (periodical), 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td>Qatar, 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46, 48, 65, 166, 167, 174, 179, 205, 209</td>
<td>Qur’an, 46, 48, 65, 166, 167, 174, 179, 205, 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82, 84, 87, 88, 104, 142</td>
<td>Qutb, Sayyed, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Račić, Puniša, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16, 220 n.10</td>
<td>Rački, Franjo, 16, 220 n.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31, 32, 36</td>
<td>Radical Party, 31, 32, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Radić, Stjepan, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, month of fasting), 148, 162, 163, 205, 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>Ramić, Šukrija, 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80, 82</td>
<td>Ranković, Aleksandar, 80, 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Ratna tribina (periodical), 166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Red Army, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Redžić, Enver, 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44, 45</td>
<td>Reforma (reformist association), 44, 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Rebher (periodical), 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 17, 18, 20, 23, 35, 40, 45, 102, 150, 161, 197, 198, 204</td>
<td>Reis-ul-ulema (head of the ‘ulama’), 1, 17, 18, 20, 23, 35, 40, 45, 102, 150, 161, 197, 198, 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Renovica, Milenko, 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99, 101</td>
<td>“Republic of Kosovo”, 99, 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235 n.26</td>
<td>Rexhepi, Sulejman, 235 n.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Rida, Rashid, 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>Rida, Rashid, 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>Ridanović, Midhat, 199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230 n.68</td>
<td>rijaset (high presidency, Islamic Community), 230 n.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Rivet, Charles, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86, 88, 141, 142</td>
<td>Rizvić, Muhsin, 86, 88, 141, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 217</td>
<td>Roy, Olivier, 3, 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121, 135, 171, 173, 174, 239 n.1</td>
<td>Russia, 121, 135, 171, 173, 174, 239 n.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86, 88, 93</td>
<td>Šabanović, Hazim, 86, 88, 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226 n.26</td>
<td>Šabanović, Salih, 226 n.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196, 197, 205, 228 n.34</td>
<td>sabor (assembly, Islamic Community), 196, 197, 205, 228 n.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170, 235 n.33</td>
<td>Šačirbegović, Muhamed, 170, 235 n.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170, 235 n.33</td>
<td>Šačirbegović, Nedžib, 170, 235 n.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Sadić, Hazim, 152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>Saf (periodical), 207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Salamé, Ghassan, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Salihagić, Šuljaga, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Sarajevski novi list (periodical), 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>Saudi High Commission for Relief of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Sedić, Fuad, 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108, 109, 130, 186, 188, 189</td>
<td>šehids (martyrs of the faith), 69, 102, 105, 148, 149, 154, 163, 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102, 149, 150</td>
<td>Selimoski, Jakub, 102, 149, 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Selimović, Meša, 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86, 94, 99</td>
<td>Serb Academy of Sciences and Arts, 86, 94, 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Serb Civic Council (SGV), 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Serb National Youth (SRNAO), 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23, 24</td>
<td>Serb People’s Organization (SNO), 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112, 115</td>
<td>“Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina”, 112, 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112, 136</td>
<td>“Serb Republic of Krajina”, 112, 136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12, 18–20</td>
<td>Şeyh-ül-Islam (highest Ottoman religious dignitary), 12, 18–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Shaltut, Mahmud, 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 10, 22, 35, 105, 149, 161, 163, 182, 206, 210–13</td>
<td>Shari’a (Islamic law), 5, 10, 22, 35, 105, 149, 161, 163, 182, 206, 210–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 18, 21, 40, 161</td>
<td>Shari’a courts, 3, 18, 21, 40, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131, 135, 136, 144, 152, 156, 159, 169, 170, 175, 186, 188, 191, 193, 195, 196</td>
<td>Silajdžić, Haris, 131, 135, 136, 144, 152, 156, 159, 169, 170, 175, 186, 188, 191, 193, 195, 196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31, 32, 36</td>
<td>Slovene People’s Party (SLS), 31, 32, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Smajić, Husein, 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102, 120</td>
<td>Smajkić, Seid, 102, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Smajlović, Ahmed, 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (SDP, 1909), 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (SDP, 1990, Croatia), 187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79, 82, 84, 155</td>
<td>Socialist Alliance of Working People (SSRN), 79, 82, 84, 155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), 109, 230 n.73
Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage (Islamic NGO), 181
Softić, Mustafa, 59, 60
Šolić, Vladimir, 239 n.3
Sorabji, Cornelia, 101
Soviet Union, 55, 73, 74, 79, 96, 97
Spahić, Ismet, 164
Spahić, Mustafa, 99, 163, 204
Spaho, Mehmed, 34, 35, 39, 41, 48, 59
Spain, 174
Spaho, Fehim, 40, 50, 56, 59, 163
Spaho, Mehmed, 34, 35, 39, 41, 48, 59
Takvım (periodical), 90, 93, 95, 96
Tanners’ Prayer Room (Sarajevo), 95
taqfid (uncritical imitation), 21
tarikat (Sufi order), 77, 93, 102, 205, 206
Tarkat Center, 93
tefsîr (Qur’an commentary), 149, 182
tekke (Sufi lodge), 181
Territorial Defense (TO), 80, 112, 117, 119, 153

Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), 152, 153, 156, 172, 193, 194
Tihic, Sulejman, 194–6
Tito, see Broz, Josip
Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 29, 34, 35, 38
Tripartite Pact, 51
Tudman, Franjo, 100, 114, 116, 125, 132, 138, 187
Turkey, 47, 48, 94, 96, 169, 172, 173, 208, 217, 232 n.33, 238 n.32, 241 n.37
Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), 208
Tuzla city council, 121, 132, 134, 142, 154, 164, 166, 200
Tuzla-list (periodical), 154, 167

Ugajanin, Sulejman, 129, 232 n.33
‘ulama’ (religious scholars), 10, 12, 21, 22, 40, 42–4, 46–50, 55–7, 65, 66, 69, 92, 102, 103, 105, 107, 108, 142, 146, 147, 150, 161, 181, 182, 199, 204, 205, 209, 213
ulema-medžlis (council of ‘ulama’), 17, 22, 40, 59, 76
Umma (the community of believers), 5, 66, 85, 97, 101, 150, 169, 172, 180, 183, 213
Union of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (SRSJ), 103, 135
United League of Antifascist Youth (USAO), 73
United Muslim Organization (UMO), 27, 28
United Nations, 113, 117, 121, 125, 132, 170–3, 176
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 180, 186, 190
United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), 187
United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), 113, 117, 121, 123, 136, 163, 170, 173
United Soldiers’ Organization (JOB), 154
United States of America (USA), 96, 97, 118, 121, 127, 132–5, 138, 170–4, 184, 188, 193, 194, 199, 207, 235 n.33, 239 n.1
USSR, see Soviet Union
Ustaschas, 33, 51–60, 62, 64, 66, 69, 114, 132
Index

Vance, Cyrus, 121, 125
Vance-Owen Peace Plan, 121–3, 171
Vatan (periodical), 12, 21
Vejdzić, Šefket, 167
Veladžić, Mirsad, 104, 194
Velagić, Teufik, 229 n.62
vrhovni sabor (supreme assembly, Islamic Community), 94, 102, 228 n.34
vrhovno starešinstvo (supreme presidency, Islamic Community), 228 n.34
Vukičević, Velimir, 36

Wahhabism, 182
waqfs (religious endowments), 3, 17, 20, 22, 35, 38, 40, 43, 47, 49, 76, 89, 160, 161, 196, 203, 204, 209
Washington Agreement, 133, 134, 138, 182
Westendorp, Carlos, 186
White Mosque (Sarajevo), 206
Women’s Antifascist Front (AFŽ), 73, 77
World Bank, 186
World Jewish Congress, 143
Young Bosnia (Mlada Bosna), 28
Young Muslims (Egypt), 49, 64
Young Muslims (Mladi Mulimani), 5, 64–7, 77, 78, 88, 93–5, 99, 104, 129, 152, 155, 171, 216, 229 n.62
Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (JVUO), 53, 54
Yugoslav Committee, 29, 34
Yugoslav Muslim Organization (JMO), 31, 32, 33, 35–41, 47, 49, 55, 57, 59, 68, 69, 81, 106, 201
Yugoslav Muslim People’s Organization (JMNO), 35, 36, 40
Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), 80, 111, 112, 117, 121
Yugoslav People’s Party (JNS), 31, 45
Yugoslav Radical Union (JRZ), 32, 40, 41
Zagreb mosque, 94, 102, 104, 150, 170, 171, 172
Zahra, Tara, 2
zakat (obligatory alms), 160, 161, 162, 203–5
Zenica steel plant, 121, 154
Žerjavić, Vladimir, 53
Zgodić, Esad, 201
Živaljić, Husein, 229 n.62
Život (periodical), 83
Zmaj od Bosne (military unit), 162
Zmaj od Bosne (periodical), 166, 167
Zubak, Krešimir, 133
Zubović, Mersada, 175
Zukorlić, Muamer, 235 n.26
Zulfikarpašić, Adil, 88, 89, 104, 106–8
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