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CROATIAN CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

From the Margins to the Crossroad of Europe

EDITED BY G. DOUG DAVIS

Croatian Cultural Renaissance

RUSSIAN, EURASIAN, AND EASTERN EUROPEAN POLITICS

Series Editor: Michael O. Slobodchikoff, Troy University

Mission Statement

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, little attention was paid to Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The United States and many Western governments reassigned their analysts to address different threats. Scholars began to focus much less on Russia, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, instead turning their attention to East Asia among other regions. With the descent of Ukraine into civil war, scholars and governments have lamented the fact that there are not enough scholars studying Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe. This series focuses on the Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European region. We invite contributions addressing problems related to the politics and relations in this region. This series is open to contributions from scholars representing comparative politics, international relations, history, literature, linguistics, religious studies, and other disciplines whose work involves this important region. Successful proposals will be accessible to a multidisciplinary audience, and advance our understanding of Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe.

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Croatian Cultural Renaissance

From the Margins to the Crossroad of Europe

Edited by G. Doug Davis

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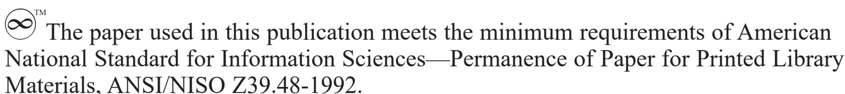

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For Rikardo, Hanna, Benedict, and Bernadette

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Chapter 12

Forging a Shared Identity: Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia

Ivan Pepić

The origin of the contemporary Croat identity in the territory now designated as Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosna i Hercegovina, BiH)[1] and Croatia can be traced back to a centuries-long stratification of the proto-national name *Hrvat* (Croat), the affirmation of religion during the Middle Ages, the development of the Croatian language and literature, and the emergence of modern nationalism in the nineteenth century. Unlike some Western nations that constructed their national identities within specific territorial boundaries, bolstered by voluntaristic civic values embraced by members of the national group (such as constitutional patriotism, equality, and in some cases, laicism), the Croat ethno-national identity evolved also as the identity of a political community that—similarly to the experience of other ethno-national groups in Central Europe—shared a common ancestry, language, and culture. Due to the turbulent history and unique circumstances deriving from imperialist policies from foreign empires, the formation of the contemporary Croat identity was significantly influenced by Christian landlords and clergy who played a pivotal role in developing a contingent Croat identity secure. They did so by identifying with and nurturing a common proto-national denominator, religion, and language.

The Croat presence in this region dates back to the seventh to eighth century when the Croats settled in present-day Croatia and BiH. The Roman Catholic identity played a key role in reinforcing the cultural identity of the local Christian Catholic rulers and the population in BiH and Croatia by serving as a unifying force, especially during centuries of foreign assaults,

rule, conflicts, and instability. During the Renaissance, Croat writers and intellectuals promoted the use of the Croatian language and cultural heritage, further strengthening Croat proto-national identity in both BiH and Croatia. This proto-national connection between Croats in BiH and Croatia was initially established through interactions between local Christian Catholic rulers. These connections further evolved through the migration of Catholic populations between BiH and Croatian regions, such as Dalmatia and Slavonia, particularly during the Ottoman occupation of BiH from 1463 to 1878. Additionally, Franciscans from BiH played a crucial role in preserving ties with Dalmatia and Slavonia. They contributed to the development and preservation of the Croatian language, literacy, and cultural traditions. During the nineteenth century as the Ottoman Empire weakened, the Croats, like other groups in the region, pushed for self-determination and recognition of their national identity. The emergence of modern Croat nationalism in the nineteenth century played a vital role in shaping a shared cultural and political identity among Croats in BiH and Croatia.

This chapter examines the key elements that built cultural connections between Croats in BiH and Croatia, and how they fit within the wider Croat identity. First, it provides a concise understanding of how the Catholic faith, local Catholic rulers, the development of the Croatian language standard, and preservation of cultural heritage were crucial to forging a shared Croat identity from the medieval period. Second, this chapter explores how historical events in the 1800s, such as the end of Ottoman rule, influenced the rise of Croat nationalism and a common Croat cultural identity among groups in BiH and Croatia. Finally, it discusses the context of the 1991 to 1995 war in Croatia and BiH, which significantly impacted the development of a unified sense of Croat cultural and political belonging. The war created a sense of urgency among Croats to fortify their unity and collective identity, which had been nurtured for centuries. Key milestones, events, influences, and time periods are discussed to demonstrate how a shared Croat identity emerged and persisted over time. Though challenges remained, these building blocks established a foundation of common heritage and purpose that transcended geographic borders.

THE ORIGINS OF THE CROAT IDENTITY IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Christianism has heavily influenced the development of Croat identity both in contemporary Croatia and BiH. This process is particularly important in providing a cultural foundation for Croat identity formation, especially from the Early Middle Ages to the development of nineteenth-century Croat

nationalism. In the medieval Croat lands that came under Ottoman rule, including certain areas of present-day Herzegovina and Bosnia, the Renaissance had a lesser impact on shaping the Croat identity compared to the medieval Croat lands under Habsburg, Hungarian and Venetian rule. Throughout the regions where Croats settled during the early Middle Ages, religious identity played a progressively influential role in nurturing and safeguarding a collective sense of belonging to a unified Croat identity, spanning from the early medieval era until the nationalist uprisings of the mid-nineteenth century. According to Grbić (1997, 18), "Catholicism and Croatianhood stand here as two parallel and inseparable phenomena, being the factors of identification" in the medieval and modern identity of Croats in BiH.

In the seventh to eighth century, the Croats, a Slavic tribe, settled in the former Roman provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia, which are now modern-day BiH and Croatia. The migration of military groups and population from "White Croatia," located "somewhere in Central Europe near Bavaria, beyond Hungary and next to the Frankish empire" was recorded in the earliest written accounts (see Emperor of the Byzantine Empire Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio*, quoted in Borri 2011, 218). From the seventh to the ninth century, the Croats more widely adopted Roman Christianity under the influence of Charlemagne's Franks and missionaries sent by the pope on the eastern Adriatic coast. The process of Catholic Christianization continued in Bosnia several decades later, from the late ninth century. The strong relationship between Croat military leaders and lords and the Roman Church in the early medieval period was crucial in granting international recognition to local lordship. Furthermore, the spread of Croat ethnonym and Catholicism from elites to the local population was facilitated.

Under Charlemagne's Franks in the ninth and tenth centuries, Croat landlords replaced tribal systems with feudalism based on Western European models. Malcolm (1994, 9) notes that "in the early 10th century Croatia enjoyed a period of power and independence under King Tomislav; again, much of northern and western Bosnia was part of his realm." The Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII mentioned in *De administrando imperio* (c. 950) that early medieval Croatia had ten dukedoms (*županije*), at least four of which were in today's BiH (Imota, Livno, Pesenta, Pliva). Catholic churches were built, sometimes linked to dioceses in Dalmatian towns and Slavonia (in Croatia). For instance, Imota's center was in Gorica,[2] whose ninth-century church reflected coastal Roman Catholic clergy's influence and medieval Croat pre-Romanesque art, such as motifs of Croat interlace (*pleter*) in church stones. Similarly, Livno's parish was mentioned in the eleventh century as part of Split diocese, while Pesenta's (today's Western Bosnia) churches, confirmed in 1185 documents, belonged to Knin diocese in today's Croatia. The Bosnian diocese, first mentioned in 1089, was a suffragan to the

Archbishopric of Dubrovnik during Bosnia's Kulin Ban rule (1170–1204), as vassal of Byzantine and Hungary.

During the early medieval period, Catholicism spread to Western Bosnia and Hum[3] from the Dalmatian coast with the help of Carolingian missionaries. They used popular Slavic traditions to convert the Croats, and the influence of the Glagolitic script and Old Slavonic as a liturgical language spread to Bosnia, Hum, and the most Western parts of Croatia (Istria) (Džaja 2012). The Catholic liturgy in early medieval Bosnia and much of Croatia was in the Glagolitic alphabet, which isolated parts of the clergy in Bosnia who were not familiar with Latin and had no connections with Rome, unlike Dalmatian priests (Malcolm 1994). The Byzantine Empire's influence, the East-West Schism of 1054, and the Old Slavic and Glagolitic liturgy were probably the main reasons for the formation of the Bosnian Church (*Bosanska crkva*), whose fellows were called *krstjani*, which was active from the twelfth century until the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia in the fifteenth century. The Bosnian Church adopted dualistic theology and was considered heretical by the Catholic Church in Rome, which engaged the Dominicans as inquisitors in the early thirteenth century, supported by the King of Hungary and Croatia, Imre, against the Bosnian Church. Rome supported the installation of a new Latin diocese in Đakovo, in Croatia's Slavonia region (Džaja 2012, 71–72). Despite the activity of the "heretical" Bosnian Church, the development of cultural identity at that time was shaped by the influence from the West, especially by the influence of Croatian coastal architecture and art, as evidenced by the remains of the governor's court in Jajce (Central Bosnia), local churches, and traditions shared through merchant exchanges. The East-West Schism of 1054 did not influence the hierarchical organization of ecclesiastical affairs in Bosnia and Hum, which remained compliant to the papacy. The construction of new churches was identical to those in the Split region, as documented by the remnants of architectural artifacts, including three churches close to Sarajevo, as was the case in the early medieval period, confirming close exchanges between Dalmatia and Slavonia with Bosnia (Ančić 2001).

THE FRANCISCAN ORDER AND CROAT IDENTITY

The preservation of the Christian Catholic religious tradition by the Franciscan order in BiH has been crucial for the development of cultural heritage of Croats in the region. The first Franciscan Bosnian Vicary was established in 1340 and has since remained one of the most influential Catholic orders in the country, including in contemporary times. The Franciscans played a central role in the systematic development and preservation of

Croat identity and heritage, especially during the Ottoman occupation of BiH (1463–1878). Their work had far-reaching political and social implications, including the promotion of Western Latin, Glagolitic Script, and Bosnian Cyrillic literacy that were used across Croat cultural areas. The cultural heritage of the Franciscans in Bosnia from the mid-1300s to the mid-1400s, prior to the Turkish occupation, was essential for the cultural and religious integration of the area from the Adriatic to the present-day eastern borders of Croatia and BiH.

In 1463, the Ottoman Empire occupied Bosnia and by the late sixteenth century, they had taken control of the entire region, including Bosnia, Herzegovina, and parts of Croatia. During the second half of the fourteenth century, the Bosnian Vicary had seven custodies with thirty-five monasteries, but only three Franciscan monasteries in Central Bosnia survived the Ottoman occupation: Fojnica, Kraljeva Sutjeska, and Kreševo. The borders of the Bosnian Vicary were dependent on the conflicts between Christian empires and Ottomans. In 1514, the Bosnian Vicary was divided into two parts: *Bosnae Argentina*, which was under the surveillance of the Ottoman Empire, and *Bosnae Croatiae*, which was under the rule of Catholic rulers. This division remained until 1688 and represents one of the confirmations of the Croat ethnonym (*Hrvat*) in the Bosnian region (Džaja 2012).

The Croat ethnonym in Bosnia is also confirmed by given names of Croat rulers and military lords of that time, who governed lands of medieval Bosnia and Hum (and sometimes Croatia's as well), including Hrvatin Stipanić, founder of the Hrvatinić noble family dynasty, who governed as vassals of largest royal families between the thirteenth and fifteenth. Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić (1350–1416), as grand duke of Bosnia governed even in Dalmatia. Other examples are Hrvatin Vučković (fourteenth century), Hrvatin Mrenović (fifteenth century), and many others (Ančić 2001). However, considering that secular Catholic and Croat landlords lost power and control over the lands within Bosnia after the Ottoman occupation, due to the policies of Ottoman administration, the Croat ethnonym could not spread as much within Bosnia as it did in Dalmatian and Slavonian towns adjacent to the Ottoman Empire.[4] Only merchants and Franciscans filled the void in the construction of the sociocultural identity in Bosnia. Catholic merchants and craftsmen were annihilated as result of Ottoman policies, which further underscores the Franciscans as almost the only relevant Catholic representatives during the period spanning the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They aimed to safeguard their cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis inhabitants of other religious affiliations, often seeking alliances beyond their borders and advocating for the socio-political framework predating the Ottoman and Islamic era. In doing so, they effectively diminished the prospects for the emergence of a distinct "political national Bosnian identity" (Džaja 1999, 215). These actions

laid the foundation for the eventual development of the contemporary Croat identity (ibid.), a process that notably gained momentum in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

CROATIAN LANGUAGE

Despite limited travels outside of Bosnia under Ottoman rule, the Franciscans and merchants managed to preserve the Croatian language and exert their influence on the local population. Evidence of the Croat influence and their utilization of the Glagolitic Script during the Middle Ages in Bosnia is substantiated by written accounts inscribed on stones. One such example is the Bužim inscription (*Bužimski natpis*) dating back to the fifteenth century. These testimonies mention the existence of "Croat lands" and refer to "Croats" who were responsible for the assassination of the local ruler, *knez* Juraj Mikulčić who constructed the fortress in Bužim, a town in Western Bosnia, as a defensive measure against Ottoman assaults (Kapetanović 2013, 164). This influence continued into the seventeenth century, when the Catholic population was greatly reduced as a result of the 1683 to 1699 Turkish War and Ottoman policies. Fr. Lovro Šitović (1682–1729), from Ljubuški in Herzegovina, taught in Franciscan schools in Dalmatia and Slavonia and wrote one of the most important Latin-Croatian grammars, which was essential for the standardization of the Croatian language spoken in both Croatia and BiH today. Šitović stood out not just for referring to his people's language as "Croatian" (*jezik harvatski*) (Zelić-Bučan 1971, 12), but also for identifying his people as "Croats" (*mi Harvati*). In 1686, Croat poet from Olovo near Sarajevo Jura Radojević Gizdelin referred to his shtokavian-ikavian language as "Croatian" (*harvacki*) and shared a profound emotional bond with his Bosnian "grandfather's land" (*didovina*) (Babić and Knežević 2007, 165). Serbian historian Teinović (2019, 7) claims that in the late sixteenth century, the Franciscans in Olovo utilized the Gospel referred to as "written in Croatian language" (*harvatshim yazichom stumacena*). Local intellectuals and friars also played a role in preserving local Croatian dialects, which were also preserved by Catholic merchants traveling between Dalmatia (especially Dubrovnik), Herzegovina, and Bosnia. In discussing the significance of the literary contributions of the Franciscans, the Nobel laureate in literature, Ivo Andrić (1990, 56–57), claims:

> If during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Franciscans generally had their works printed in Venice, during the nineteenth century the center of printing moved to Zagreb. If the literature of the first two centuries was purely religious and came about solely at the initiative of the church authorities under

> whose supervision it then developed, the Franciscan literature of the nineteenth century wholly served ideas of a national rebirth and deliverance from the Turkish yoke. And it developed without the cooperation, and often against the will, of the church.

Some Franciscans are even credited with contributing to the development of the modern Croatian linguistic standard. For example, Fr. Matija Divković (1563–1631) influenced and developed the Croatian "shtokavian" literacy language, which became widespread in Bosnia, Dubrovnik, Lika, and other Croatian regions in contact with the Bosnian Diocese (Grčević 2019, 179). Divković is considered one of the founders of literacy in BiH and his literary works will have a profound impact on Croat intellectuals during the "Illyrian Movement" (1835–1848), a national and cultural movement characterized by the gathering of intellectuals around its central figure, Ljudevit Gaj (1809–1872) and his "Croatian Newspaper" (*Novine Horvatzke*). The movement emerged primarily as a response to Hungarian nationalism within the Croatian regions. It achieved notable success in establishing linguistic standards and promoting assimilation, which laid the foundation for the modern Croatian language, rooted in the "shtokavian" literary tradition. Since it was based in Zagreb, it garnered support primarily in Croatia, but also among the Franciscans in BiH, which "in these regions marks the beginning of the modern notion of a Croatian national identity" (Greenberg 2010, 372–73). Fr. Martin Nedić (1810–1895), from Tolisa (in northern Bosnia), was inspired by the movement and recognized an opportunity to champion the cause of liberating Croat and Bosnian lands, along with their Christian populations, from foreign rulers. Additionally, he sought to engage the intellectual community in Croatia and disseminate his epic poems about the faith of Catholics enduring life under Ottoman rule. While the movement generally did not gather support among other Slavs within the Habsburg Empire, it gradually evolved into what is known as the Croatian National Revival Movement.

In the aftermath of the conflicts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and against a backdrop of policies that often discriminated against Christians, Catholic merchants in Bosnia experienced a gradual shift from urban centers to rural peripheries. This trend persisted throughout the eighteenth century and extended into the mid–nineteenth century, resulting in the absence of significant Catholic merchant families in Bosnia during this period (Džaja 1999). This profound shift in demographics and power dynamics within the region ushered in a new era, one marked by the burgeoning significance of the Franciscans as writers who breached "the disastrous isolation with which Turkish administration surrounded Bosnia" (Andrić 1990, 57). The confluence of these historical forces had far-reaching implications for both culture and education. The heightened importance of Franciscans in

the rural areas resonated not only in matters of faith but also in the realms of knowledge dissemination and popular literary production, especially in the nineteenth century.

Today, the Croatian language and its standard are an integral part of the Croat identity, both in BiH and Croatia. According to the most recent population census in BiH held in 2013, 515,418 people (14.6 percent of the total population) declared that they speak the Croatian language, which corresponds roughly to the number of Croats in BiH (544,780).

MIGRATIONS

Due to conflicts with the Ottoman Empire, lootings, and repression toward the local Christian Catholic community in BiH, such as through special taxes for non-Muslim populations or forced conversion to Islam in certain cases, tens of thousands of people fled Ottoman Bosnia. They settled in Croatian regions such as Slavonia and Dalmatia, as well as in Austria and Hungary, particularly during the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. One example of Croat Catholic migration is that of the Burgenland Croats (Gradišćanski Hrvati) who settled in lower Austria on the border with Hungary. They fled Western Bosnia, Lika, and other Croatian regions during the sixteenth century amid the Turkish Wars and Ottoman occupation, which marked a period of intense Islamization and the establishment of Oriental-style urban areas and Islamic society (Džaja 1999, 154). They continued to settle the region between Hungary and Austria until the mid-1700s, preserving the Croat language, religious, and cultural heritage. Today, Austrian authorities recognize them as one of the six autochthonous ethno-national groups. In the same period, many Croats from Central Bosnia and Hum also settled in Slavonia.

Another well-known historical example of forced migrations occurred in late seventeenth century. Despite frequent imposed financial taxes and damages that rendered the functioning of the Franciscan monastery of Rama difficult (Ančić 2001, 18), the Franciscans were able to preserve a devotional picture depicting Our Lady. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Franciscans and the local Croat population decided to flee Rama and settle in Sinj, a town in the hinterland of Dalmatia that was administrated by Venice at that time. Rama's refugees decided to take the image of Our Lady with them to preserve it. In 1715, the Turks attacked Sinj and kept it under siege. In August of the same year, Venetian soldiers and the local Christian Catholic population successfully defended Sinj and liberated the Cetina area, preventing the Ottomans from returning. The local population attributed the victory to the miraculous intercession of Our Lady and her portrait that discouraged Turkish soldiers during the siege in the face of this sacred image that instilled

a sense of fear and trepidation, weakening the resolve of the Turkish forces. The belief in the miraculous influence of Our Lady's impact on the enemy soldiers became deeply ingrained in the local folklore, forever cementing this event as a testament to the power of divine intervention against the Ottomans. Since then, this artwork depicting Our Lady has been preserved in the Franciscan monastery in Sinj and is venerated by Croat Catholics from Croatia and BiH as Our Lady of Sinj. To commemorate the victory over the Turkish Ottomans, the local population of Sinj have been organizing the equestrian competition Sinjska alka since the eighteenth century. This competition was inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists in 2010 and has been held in the town of Sinj every first Sunday in August for centuries. During the Sinjska alka's days, various speeches and programs commemorate and remember the historical events that occurred about Croats who left Rama. This is used to emphasize the common identity and cultural heritage of Croats in BiH and Croatia.

One of the most significant forced emigrations of the Catholic population from Bosnia to Slavonia and other regions in Croatia occurred in 1697 during the military campaign led by Prince Eugene's Christian coalition army in Sarajevo. At that time, approximately forty thousand native Catholics, most of whom were merchants and craftsmen from urban areas in north and central Bosnia, including Sarajevo, retreated with Prince Eugene's army from Bosnian regions, fearing effective Ottoman retaliation. Subsequently, the Catholic population dwindled to the point where church records from the early eighteenth century could no longer document any parishes in those regions (Džaja 1999, 149–51). Catholic clerical life also faced hardship and destruction, with "only four Franciscan monasteries remaining in Bosnia, housing twenty-six monks and lay brothers" (Andrić 1990, 41). The demographic situation of the Catholic population in Bosnia saw a relatively positive shift during the eighteenth century, which was marked by a period of relative tranquility (almost) without conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and its northern neighbors.

Migration from territories in BiH to Croatia has been abundant throughout history, particularly since the sixteenth century and during the twentieth century. During the time when both countries were part of communist Yugoslavia and in the 1991 to 1995 conflict, many Croat refugees fled regions under Serb and Muslims[5] control in Bosnia and found refuge in Croatia. Even after the war ended, thousands of refugees remained in Croatia. Furthermore, thousands of Croat students from BiH have completed their academic courses and training at universities of Zagreb, Split, or Osijek in Croatia and have found jobs, choosing to settle there permanently. According to a recent survey conducted by the German foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), which received responses from Croatian citizens, 41 percent of respondents have

ties to BiH, either through their own origins or their relatives. Conversely, only 26 percent of Croat respondents claimed to have no ties to BiH (Skoko 2012). This indicates that the relationship between Croats in the two countries is deeply intertwined, and its roots can be also found in the history and migrations of the Catholic population from Bosnian lands.

MODERN CROAT NATIONALISM AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Following the Berlin Congress in 1878, BiH came under the control of Austria-Hungary.[6] The society at that time was largely divided along religious lines. Nationalism was on the rise in Europe and was also taking hold in Austria-Hungary, particularly among Slavic nations who had not yet achieved independence. In BiH, the dominant idea among intellectuals was that of nationhood, which was often influenced by neighboring countries. This led to the adoption of religious and national names that coincided with one another. Separate, structured blocs began to form as various institutions and organizations became divided along political, commercial, religious, and cultural lines.

But it was during the late nineteenth century, various political and intellectual modern nationalist movements emerged in BiH among both Croats and Serbs. On the other hand, Austrian and Hungarian rulers sought to create a distinct "Bosnian nation" that would transcend the national, ethnic, and religious divisions that had characterized the region for centuries. Originally, Croatian was the language of instruction in public schools. However, in 1880, the Austro-Hungarian rulers prohibited the use of the Croatian language in public administration and schools. They mandated the use of the "Bosnian" or the "country's language" (*Landessprache*) and provided funding for the creation of the Bosnian language grammar book for high schools (*Gramatika bosanskog jezika za srednje škole*). This grammar book remained in use until 1907 when a decree by the Austro-Hungarian rulers finally discontinued the use of the Bosnian language (Babić 2008). In their ambitious pursuit of forging a harmonious Bosnian society, seemingly oblivious to the deep-seated national and religious divisions that had endured for centuries, the Austro-Hungarian authorities, during their early years of rule, enacted a series of prohibitions. These restrictions included bans on the use of Croat national names for sports and cultural clubs, as well as the public display of Croat symbols and emblems throughout BiH. In Mostar (Herzegovina), the authorities went even further, clamping down on the establishment of the "Croat Singing Society 'Tomislav'" (*Hrvatsko pjevačko društvo 'Tomislav'*) and issuing orders for the burning of "'undesirable works' penned by Croat

authors" (Šarac 2015, 104). Thus, efforts to promote Croat culture and foster national discourse were forcefully stifled. These events culminated in a notable incident in 1893 when a group of young men found themselves incarcerated for displaying the Croat flag in Mostar, while singers were frequently subjected to arrest and harassment (Šarac 2015, 104–5).

These Austro-Hungarian efforts were often met with resistance from many, particularly the Croat intelligentsia, who saw them as a threat to their own identity and aspirations for autonomy. Even certain friars from the Croat intellectual circle were actively engaged in promoting a strong Croat identity during the period of Austrian and Hungarian rule.[7] This caused them to be estranged from Franciscan monasteries that aimed to maintain positive relations with Vienna. As an example, Fr. Josip Dobroslav Božić (1860–1900), originally from Potočani near Odžak (in northern Bosnia), was compelled to leave the country. He emigrated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the United States, where he established the initial and still one of the most significant Croat organizations, the first Croat Roman Catholic parish and a school for Croat children. He later settled in Steelton, Pennsylvania, all the while continuing his debates and endeavors to promote Croat identity from his new base in the United States (Matolić 2022, 7–8).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Croat community in Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a significant cultural transformation as part of their evolving identity formation. This transformation involved an expansion of traditional cultural elements to encompass various facets of their identity. This transformation was a crucial factor in Croat identity, as evidenced by the content of publications and periodicals from the era, such as the journal *Napredak* published by the Croat Cultural Association in Sarajevo. The topics covered in *Napredak* were wide-ranging, spanning the history of the Church, individual Catholic parishes, churches, and monasteries, as well as Franciscan provinces and clerical figures. The publication also explored Croat history and language, both within and outside BiH, as well as the country's cultural institutions. The history of literature was also featured, while articles on the development of economic branches, health, and ethnographic material were presented to engage the peasant audience (Grbić 1997). Articles on the development of economic branches, health, ethnographic material, and specific Croat regions, towns, and eminent people were also published, enabling readers to become acquainted with both BiH and Croatian regions. Discussions about the history of the Croat nation were a distinct topic, emphasizing their belonging to the wider Croat nation.

According to Grbić (1997), prior to 1897, most cultural and educational initiatives geared toward national identity in BiH were focused on music associations. Out of the seven Croat national associations in BiH, five were exclusively dedicated to music. Despite restrictions, the expression

of national identity began to take on a more assertive character, making it increasingly difficult for the Austrian-Hungarian government to maintain strict control over such sentiments, including limiting the establishment of national associations. Although Austria-Hungary preferred to control the process and build a unique "Bosnian nation" within BiH borders, this project failed under the Austria-Hungary governor's Kalláy autocratic regime (Okey 2007). The period after 1897 marked a diligent effort to establish Croat reading clubs, libraries, youth groups, and other similar associations. Grbić (1997) notes that 147 Croat cultural and educational associations were established in BiH between 1897 and 1907, thanks to the diligent efforts of intellectuals and modern nationalists involved. The primary objective of these associations was to promote education and foster the development of an intellectual class, as well as to support the small business community. This was evidenced by the provision of scholarships and financial assistance to students, as well as encouragement for active engagement with literature, arts, education, social life, and the preservation of national sentiments and awareness. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, distinct national organizations appeared in BiH, confirming that the "nationalization" of religious identities was an irreversible phenomenon at that time. The formation of Croat schools and libraries, the Croat Cultural Society *Napredak*, and Croat Posavina Bank; Muslim societies such as Merhamet and Gajret, the Muslim National Organization, and Muslim Bank; and the Serb National Organization, the Serb central library in Sarajevo, the cultural organization Prosvjeta, and Serb political parties all contributed to this phenomenon (Malcolm 1994, 151; Kasapović 2005, 88–91). The Catholic and Orthodox communities increasingly emphasized their identification as Croats and Serbs, respectively, while Muslim identity also gained prominence as a separate segment.

During this time, three distinct elements played a significant role in shaping the identity of Croats in BiH. First, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire faced dissolution and loss of power, leading, second, to an increase in brutality toward the Christian population, particularly the peasants who rejected tax increases intended to repay Ottoman debts (Lučić 2018, 30). Finally, this resulted in the Herzegovina Uprising of 1875 to 1878, in which the Catholic population, friars, and Orthodox fought against armies loyal to the Ottomans. Uprisings manifested in the Bosnian Posavina region as well, where the indigenous Christian inhabitants staged forceful demonstrations against Ottoman control on at least in three occasions (in 1836, 1858, and 1875–1878) (Božić 2022). During the battles, the Catholic population displayed Croat symbols and invoked references to Croatia.

The Herzegovina Uprising brought to the attention of the Catholic population in BiH the aid that came from Dalmatia and other Croatian regions, notably in the form of medical assistance and the acceptance of thousands of

refugees (Lučić 2018, 44–45). Ironically, the Croat political elite in Zagreb, which had a form of self-rule under Austrian and Hungarian dominance, decided to follow Viennese policy and remained silent regarding the fate of BiH and the Croat Catholic population. Austrians were fearful of Russian influence in the Balkans and did not want to see the Ottoman Empire fall. Ban[8] Ivan Mažuranić (1814–1890), the ruler of Croatia when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was questioned by a Croat parliamentarian about why the Croat question in BiH was not discussed at the 1878 Berlin Congress, to which Ban Mažuranić replied that the issue "exceeded the scope of our parliament according to the existing constitution," and that he only knew about it from what he read in the newspaper. Discussions in the Croatian Parliament about Croats in BiH were generally underrepresented (Mihaljević 2008, 129). Despite Zagreb's lack of interest, the Croat Catholic population in BiH continued to regard Croatia and its population as allies, particularly because of their humanitarian assistance and support in local Dalmatian media during the Herzegovina Uprising, which strengthened the sense of belonging to a common Croat nation among Croat Catholics in BiH. In 1905, several years after the uprising, intra-Croat tensions resurfaced when Croat intellectuals in BiH protested against the creation of the Serb-Croat coalition in Croatia, which was supported by Hungary against the domination of Vienna. The Croats in BiH considered it as "treason," as the Serb intellectuals had ignored the existence of Croats in BiH and called for them to "reject the protection from Vienna and Vatican." However, political parties in Croatia were not particularly interested in supporting the Croats in BiH to preserve the Serb-Croat coalition (Lučić 2018). Despite these political conflicts, Croat intelligentsia in BiH developed their own institutions with the support of Franciscan friars and two political parties, the Croat National Community (Hrvatska narodna zajednica) and the Croat Catholic Association (Hrvatska katolička udruga). As a result, the Croats of BiH entered World War I with a well-developed political and national identity.

CROAT NEXUS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

World War I commenced as a response to the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and his spouse in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, by the Serb and Yugoslav nationalist terrorist Gavrilo Princip. Princip, in conjunction with his covert faction "Young Bosnia" (*Mlada Bosna*), perceived Austrian dominion in BiH as a threat to Serbian interests and vehemently opposed it, with support from the Serbian secret service. Their aspiration entailed the establishment of a prospective South-Slavic state under Serb

leadership, encompassing BiH "with Belgrade presented as the 'Piedmont' of the Balkans" (Jackson 2006, 51). The consequences of World War I in BiH were devastating, with 19 percent of the population perishing (360,000). Approximately one-third of the victims were children under the age of ten (100,986), a result of the reliance of 87 percent of the population on uncultivated fields (Lučić 2018, 60). The consequences for children, mainly from Herzegovina, were particularly dire, prompting Fr. Didak Buntić to organize one of the largest humanitarian rescue operations in the history of the region. In 1917, Buntić rescued around fifteen thousand starving children affected by severe famine as a result of World War I and a fatal dry and unfruitful year. Buntić accomplished a heroic feat by convincing families in the Slavonia and Srijem regions of Croatia to host thousands of children from the Herzegovina region, thus saving them from starving and death. Many of these children remained with their new families and never returned to their biological families. Buntić's humanitarian efforts are often regarded as a symbol of mutual understanding and cooperation between the Croats of BiH and Croats in Croatia, strengthening the relationship and sense of belonging to a common national identity.

One consequence of World War I was the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918, which initially included Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and later BiH. However, the concept of Yugoslavia[9] was discredited from the very start due to at least three distinct elements. First, Yugoslavism was seen by Serb elites even before World War I as a means of advancing the idea of a unitary state, Greater Serbia, toward the Western territories. This was achieved through the "serbianisation" of distinct languages, pro-Serb gendarmeries, and the imposition of taxes in wealthier regions, particularly former Austro-Hungarian regions in Croatia and Slovenia, to maintain central power in Belgrade under the Karađorđević dynasty. The words of the pro-dynasty prime minister of Yugoslavia, Nikola Pašić, who stated in 1918 that "Serbia does not want to drown in Yugoslavia, but to have Yugoslavia drown in her" (Judah 2000, 103), highlight this. In order to achieve this goal "the entire state apparatus was in the hands of the same Serbian ruling class that had run the small pre-1918 Serbian kingdom" (Cohen 1999, 8). Between 1918 and 1928, within the twenty-four governments, Serbs held the post of prime minister 97 percent of the time, defense minister 100 percent, interior minister 92 percent, and so on, while on the eve of World War II, 161 of 165 generals in the Royal Yugoslav army were Montenegrins and Serbs (Cohen 1999, 8–9). Political dissidents were subjected to terror, with twenty-five thousand people imprisoned in Macedonia between 1918 and 1928, and 1,400 killed and 1,342 houses burned by the pro-dynasty gendarmerie and members of the army (Lučić 2018, 84). Furthermore, ruling elites exacerbated the polarization of national ideologies that existed before and during Yugoslavia. As

Banac (1988, 406) argues, "these ideologies assumed their all but definite contours well before the unification and could not be significantly altered by any combination of cajolery or coercion." In other words, all the national identities present in Yugoslavia, and especially Serb, Croat, and Slovene, were fixed before the foundation of Yugoslavia. Thus, Yugoslavia became a source of disagreements, disputes, and sporadic armed conflicts between Croats and Serbs over the future of the state, which persisted until Yugoslavia collapsed at the end of the twentieth century.

In BiH, Yugoslav leaders discouraged political pluralism and sometimes even national and religious affiliations, in an attempt to create a Yugoslav national identity (Djokic 2003). This was emphasized after the introduction of the 1921 Vidovdan constitution and especially during the "king's dictatorship" (1929–1934), when King Alexander I introduced dictatorship and an octroyed constitution (1931). Some national organizations were abolished, and media and cultural activities were monitored, while centralization of power and repression against the opposition were also put into practice (Djokic 2003). However, during elections for the Parliament, which had limited powers, voters in BiH cast their votes based on their national affiliations. Serb and Croat voters not only voted according to their respective national affiliations but also for their respective political parties in Serbia and Croatia (Pepić and Raos 2015, 115). Similarly, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija, JMO) held significant influence as the primary political group representing Muslims from present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It enjoyed widespread support from the majority of Muslims, as evidenced by their substantial votes (Hasanbegović 2012, 9).

The Croat population in BiH unanimously supported the Croat bloc coalition of parties against Serb centralism in Yugoslavia. In a speech in 1923, the leader of the coalition, Stjepan Radić, called on BiH Muslims and Croats to support Croatia's opposition to centralism and protect them from gendarmes' violence. While Croats in BiH followed Croatia's politics, Serb leaders in BiH supported the king and the project of Greater Serbia. Serbs opposed decentralization and called for complete power to be given to Belgrade. In contrast, Croats strongly opposed the terminology used during meetings that defined all peoples as "Serbs of three religions." During the drafting of the 1921 Vidovdan Constitution, the Serb elite from BiH insisted on the formation of the "Kingdom of Greater Serbia," which Croats did not accept. They instead supported the Croat bloc, which advocated for the (con)federalization of Yugoslavia against pro-Serb unitarist policies (Lučić 2018, 81). Finally, in 1939, the Croats succeeded in convincing Belgrade elites and signed the territorial reform of Yugoslavia, creating a Croat-majority territorial unit within Yugoslavia called the "Banovina of Croatia" (Dubravica 2011) that included

27 percent of the territory of BiH, where Croats held the absolute majority. However, Serb and Muslim elites reacted negatively, resulting in instability but reaffirming the Croat sense of a unique identity both in BiH and Croatia (Dubravica 2011).

After World War II, BiH came under the dominion of communist Yugoslavia. The declaration proclaimed at the second State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of BiH (ZAVNOBiH) in 1944, which formed the basis for the constitution of socialist BiH, guaranteed equality between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, which is their common and indivisible homeland. In the aftermath of the war, the Yugoslav Communist Party attempted to impose a consciousness of "Yugoslavism," sometimes by prohibiting or persecuting religious and national organizations, a task implemented by the secret police. However, the affirmation of a "Yugoslav" or collective "Bosnian" identity has remained elusive, contrary to the aspirations of the Yugoslav socialist class. Mixed marriages were used as "proof" of the necessity to construct a "Yugoslav" or "Bosnian" identity, but Kasapović (2005, 111) argues that the low percentage of mixed marriages undermines those arguments. There was little fertile ground for those identities based on the argument of mixed marriages:

> From 1951 to 1980, the number of mixed marriages in Yugoslavia increased from 9 to 13 percent, and in BiH from 7 to 12 percent. The number of mixed marriages was lower only in the most nationally homogeneous Yugoslav republic, Slovenia. Only Albanians had fewer mixed marriages than Muslims. These data were certainly influenced by the strong attachment of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslim Bosniaks to their religious and national communities.

Not only did large sections of society reject the Yugoslav Communist Party's ideas of a common identity, but much of the intellectual elite did as well. Many of them emigrated or were imprisoned. Croats were dissatisfied with their position in communist BiH, with a notable under-representation in the League of Communists of BiH between 1968 and 1981. Despite representing 20 percent of the population, Croats comprised only 11 percent of the league, while Muslims comprised 28 percent (40 percent) and Serbs 53 percent (under 40 percent) (Anđelić, 2009: 28). In 1971, a Croat journal complained about this under-representation, citing examples of how Croats "hardly featured in important media posts such as the directorships of Sarajevo Radio and Television; all presiding judges were Serbs, and none of the directors of the various republican agencies was a Croat" (Malcolm 1994, 203–4). Croats felt under-represented until the end of communism.

CONTEMPORARY CROAT IDENTITY

Following the fall of communism in Europe, democratic elections were held, including in former Yugoslavia. Additionally, a series of independence referenda were held in the former Yugoslav socialist republics. On March 1, 1992, citizens in BiH participated in a referendum for independence. Around 2.1 million Muslims and Croats supported independence, while Serbs did not vote. The final vote was 0.3 percent opposed and 99.7 percent in favor in response to the question, "are you for a sovereign and independent BiH, a state of equal citizens, peoples of BiH—Muslims, Serbs, Croats and members of other people living there?"

The reasons for the Muslim and Croat support for, and Serb opposition to independence of BiH can be traced back to the period when Yugoslavia disintegrated and served as a means to advance the agenda of establishing a "Greater Serbia." This was a result of political history and, more importantly, the contrasting visions they held regarding the political future of BiH (Lučić 2013). In October 1991, Serb leaders formed the Assembly of the Serb People of BiH, a parliament that terminated all relations with BiH's institutions and accepted only the rulings of Yugoslav institutions in Belgrade (Burg and Shoup 1999). Soon after, duplicating the scenario from Croatia in 1991 and with the support of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija, JNA), the Serb Republic of BiH (Republika Srpska) created its own army, which acted against the non-Serb population with the aim of creating a predisposition for "Greater Serbia." The non-Serb population was forced to react militarily, and in 1995, the armies of Muslims (Armija BiH) and Croats of BiH (Croatian Council of Defence, HVO), with the support of Croatia, defeated the Bosnian Serb army.

In the 1990s, amid the war in BiH and Croatia, a profound sense of bond, unity, and a shared identity between among Croats in BiH and Croatia was forged. Croats were numerically inferior to both Muslims and Serbs in BiH, and they faced military aggression and control from Serbs in Croatia. During the 1991 to 1995 war in BiH, thousands of Croats in BiH faced persecution and violence from Bosniak and Serb forces, resulting in displacement from their homes and communities and ethnic cleansing campaigns aimed at driving them from the country. Tens of thousands of Croats, but also Bosniaks, became refugees and fled to Croatia, where they built new homes and lives. As a result, the war reconfirmed the bonds of solidarity and shared identity among Croats, a distinct group with their own language, culture, and traditions separate from Bosniaks and Serbs. The war in BiH also profoundly shaped the identity and sense of national purpose in Croatia. Croatia was one of the main supporters of the Croats in BiH during the war, providing

military and financial assistance, and many Croats in Croatia saw the conflict as a continuation of their own struggle for independence from Yugoslavia. In contrast to the Croatian government, during the 1990s, some intellectual and political opposition elites recognized the potential for advocating the unification of Croatia with what they considered to be historically Croat territories in BiH. They also argued that the Muslim population in those areas should be regarded as Croats of the Islamic faith. This perspective found acceptance and endorsement among certain political Muslim circles in Sarajevo, who began to cooperate and promote these ideas (Veselinović 2014, 66–67). Their motivation stemmed from the assertions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism.[10] However, the reality on the ground was different due to the conflict between Croats and Muslims in 1993/1994, which was also influenced by deep-rooted historical factors. While the war was a traumatic and difficult period for many Croats, it also gave rise to a renewed sense of pride and purpose that continues to shape their identity and aspirations today. Overall, the war in BiH strengthened the links and identity of Croats in both countries, highlighting the importance of shared cultural and historical heritage and reinforcing the idea that Croats are a distinct group.

Despite the power-sharing arrangement between the three national groups in BiH (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) resulting from the Dayton Peace Agreement signed by the belligerent sides, the legacy of attempts to create a "Bosnian nation" in the late nineteenth century and the resistance of the Croat population to this idea continue to shape BiH's political landscape today. Western powers, who have monitored peace in BiH after the war through the high representative for BiH,[11] have long attempted to construct a Bosnian identity from the top-down. High representatives for BiH have promoted or even imposed the idea of an overarching and common Bosnian identity or nation, sometimes through changes to entities' constitutions and laws. Despite these attempts to create a new, shared Bosnian identity or to weaken the BiH Croats' attachment to a broader Croat ethno-national identity, this has seemingly not been feasible.

The formation of the Croat identity was a gradual process that unfolded over more than ten centuries. Multiple factors contributed to its development, including Catholic religious affiliation, a shared Croat standard language, common values, nationalist movements in the late nineteenth century, and the 1991 to 1995 war for independence. While significant changes occurred after the 1991 to 1995 war, subsequent peace agreements, and efforts by Western powers to promote a common Bosnian identity, altering this long-established Croat identity may prove difficult or even impossible going forward. Croat "soft power" also known through sports and tourism has also served as powerful catalysts for connecting Croats in Croatia and BiH. The Croatian national team, known as the "Fiery Ones" (*Vatreni*), has been immensely

successful in recent years, reaching the final of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, and semi-finals in 1998 and 2022. Their impressive performance ignited a wave of national solidarity, transcending borders. Croats from both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina rallied behind their team, organizing watch parties, public screenings, and fan zones which became intra-Croat melting pots where identity is shared and celebrated. Many Croat football players of Croat nationality hail from BiH and represented the national football team in World and European Championships, including international stars Zvonimir Boban, Davor Šuker, Ivan Rakitić, Vedran Ćorluka, and Mario Mandžukić, contributing to its success and further strengthening the bonds between Croats across borders.

CONCLUSION

The cultural, linguistic, and ethno-national connection between Croats in BiH and Croatia as single nation is rooted in history, with the Catholic element serving as a unifying force during centuries of foreign rule and political instability. The Renaissance period and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire further strengthened Croat national identity, leading to the emergence of modern Croat nationalism in the nineteenth century. This movement was central to shaping a shared cultural and political identity among Croats in BiH and Croatia. During the 1991 to 1995 war in Croatia and BiH, the collective disposition of being part of a broader Croat cultural and political identity was once more reinforced. The war created a need for the Croat population to unite and cooperate on the basis of a common identity, especially in the process of military defence and refugees from BiH to Croatia. The unique cultural connection between Croats in BiH and Croatia has evolved over time, and this chapter provides insights into its history and development. Croats constitute a single nation with a shared identity, culture, language, and various other elements that bind them together. The Croats residing in BiH are not viewed as a diaspora by Croatia. Instead, they are regarded as an integral part of the broader Croat nation. While the regional landscape may be divided into two distinct communities, it is crucial to emphasize that this demarcation does not reflect any demarcation of Croat national identity which remains resilient and transcends political boundaries and state demarcations. The example of forging the Croat nation confirms that identities have the capacity to surpass the obstacles presented by aspirations of great empires, integrationist processes, and political boundaries, enduring throughout time.

NOTES

1. The term "Bosnia and Herzegovina" made its initial appearance, including the conjunction "and," during the Berlin Congress of 1878. During the Middle Ages, the two regions had consistently been seen as distinct territorial and administrative entities, linked to Christian rulers who often held control over territories in regions within present-day Croatia. Bosnia was one of the many lands governed by local rulers as it was Usora, Soli, Hum, and so on. Following the Ottoman conquest in 1463, these territories underwent a gradual detachment form the northern regions governed by Christian rulers, transitioning into Ottoman rule. Bosnia gained the status of an Ottoman first-level province (*eyalet*) from 1580, whereas Herzegovina functioned as a lower-level district (*sanjak*) created in 1470 as part of the Rumeli Eyalet. Herzegovina Sanjak came under the jurisdiction of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580. In mid-nineteenth century, Herzegovina was elevated to the status of an *eyalet* (Šarac 2015; Bešlija 2019). We assume that this is one of the main reasons that contributed to the formation of the modern-day name "Bosnia and Herzegovina" with the link "and" rooted in the Berlin Congress of 1878.

2. Gorica is a village situated on the border between Croatia and Herzegovina, in the municipality of Grude in Western Herzegovina.

3. Hum (or Zachlumia) was a medieval principality that encompassed the present-day regions of Herzegovina and southern Dalmatia. In 925, Pope John X mentioned Hum in his letter ("Michaeli excellentissimo duci Chulmorum"), and it was also referenced in the *De administrando imperio* around (c. 950). During the early fifteenth century, Hum came under the governance of the Kosača military noble family. It was in 1448 that Stjepan Vukčić Kosača took on the title of *herceg* (duke, possibly derived from the German title *Herzog*) and this event ultimately led to the region being named Herzegovina. Lučić (2005) argues that while Hum was under the rule of Christian (predominantly Catholic) Bosnian kings and rulers in the High and late Middle Ages, and later became a part of the Ottoman Bosnian Eyalet from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, it managed to preserve its distinctiveness and traditions. This uniqueness was acknowledged by foreign rulers such as the Austrians and Hungarians (1878–1918) as well as the Yugoslav communists (1945–1990).

4. Andrić (1990, 33) and Šarac (2015, 99) recall the example of an ordinance promulgated by Ottoman leaders in 1851 that confirms limitations on the development of cultural life and connections with neighboring regions under the Ottomans: "[a]nyone found guilty of obtaining newspapers from foreign Christian countries is to be immediately put in heavy chains, and all of his property should be confiscated."

5. Often throughout history the Slavic Muslim population referred to themselves as Muslims (*Muslimani*), signifying a shared identity with adherents of the Islamic faith. However, starting in 1993, the term Bosniak (*Bošnjak*) officially became the name for Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This term, Bosniaks, has gained widespread acceptance among Slavic Muslims as the official identifier, supplanting the previous term mostly used in communist Yugoslavia, Muslims (see Dimitrovova 2001, 97–98).

6. In 1867, after numerous calls for constitutional changes and increased national liberties, the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy was established, providing Hungary

with substantial autonomy within the empire. Prior to its dissolution after World War I in 1918, this marked the final phase of reform of the Habsburg Monarchy.

7. Certain members of the Franciscan clergy identified themselves as "Bosnians" or "Bosniaks" within the South Slavic group, particularly during the Illyrian movement and its aftermath (Džaja 1999). This was primarily in the context of the Illyrian movement, emphasizing the medieval Bosnian kingdom and the unification of Christian Slavic lands as a key goal for liberation from Ottoman rule (notably, Fr. Antun Knežević, Fr. Ivan Frano Jukić, and Fr. Martin Nedić). Some of them acknowledged both identities, both Croat and Bosniak, as seen with Fr. Grga Martić. However, the Croatian national movement ultimately gained prominence among Catholics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

8. The term *ban* refers to a historical title of a high-ranking official who held significant judicial, political, and administrative power and authority. The *ban* was a medieval Croat nobleman appointed by royal authorities (often from Austria and Hungary) to govern various regions or territories. The title of ban continued to be used in Croatia until the early twentieth century.

9. For more details on the role of foreign powers in the formation of Yugoslavia, notably the United Kingdom, which regarded Yugoslavia as a "salad" difficult to mix but "can never be unmixed again," see Drapac (2010, 129).

10. The opposition Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska stranka prava, HSP) established the Croatian Defence Forces (Hrvatske obrambene snage, HOS) during the early stages of the war in 1991 and 1992. They engaged in combat against Serb forces in BiH and Croatia. Some of their political and military leaders advocated for the unification of BiH and Croatia, drawing inspiration from nineteenth-century nationalism and the Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945). In BiH, HOS consisted of both Croats and Bosniaks and operated under the command of the BiH military forces. However, this group was disbanded several months after the conflict commenced.

11. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) is an international organization established through the Dayton Agreement, which reports to the United Nations Security Council. Starting from 1997, the OHR has been granted executive authority to modify laws, constitutions of various entities, and temporarily remove public officials, bypassing the need for approval from the parliaments of BiH.

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