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Youth and History
in Contemporary Bosnia

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In November and December 1999, I visited about 40 schools all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim was to collect a sample in which the three groups were equally represented, as their separation is the present reality. Moreover, the inclusion of each group provided an additional analysis level within the Bosnian country sample. Thus, the sample can be characterised as an “intelligent convenience sample” using the terminology of the Youth and History research project of the mid-1990s (Magne Angvik and Bodo von Borries, eds., Youth and History: A Comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes...Bosnians would grant the right to vote for immigrants more easily than Europeans. In all positive items their mean values were higher and in the item stating that civil rights should be granted to the victims of oppression, Bosnians give the highest support of all the countries. 

Notions of nations. The portion of my study presented here focuses upon pupils’ ideas regarding ‘nations’ and ‘national states,’ and the table below reflects the types of questions that were asked [see table 1]. The first three items are definitions of nations while the other three deal with the role of a nation in the past and in the future. Such questions are more complicated in the Bosnian case since the pupils are likely not to think that a nation equals a state based on the reality of their home country. While some of the items conflict with one another, none clearly contradicts one another.

What, then, does the term ‘nation” represent for Bosnian pupils (according to their answers)? First, we can look at the initial three items, i.e., the definitions of ‘nation.’ Young Bosnians support the Herderian notion of nations as natural entities unified by common origin, language, culture and history. The support expressed by the Bosnians was, however, fairly low by European standards. Amongst Europeans, only Belgian, Slovene, and Welsh youth exhibit lower values than the Bosnians (See Angvik and von Borries for comparative figures across Europe).

The Croats showed slightly higher support for this notion, though the difference is not substantial.
Albanian Women continued

and problematic for two reasons. The first has to do with traditional Albanian public customs or culture, which still very actively interfere in couples’ private lives. People — usually close family, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors — consider with suspicion and sometimes slander the real purpose of these marriages.

These unions, in their eyes, are not real marriages, as women are expected to be less educated than men. “The educated woman leads her husband by the nose” or “the family led by a woman is cursed” or “man should be superior to the woman in everything, education included” or “women who are paid better than men are cantankerous” are some of the mentalities widespread among Albanians, especially those living in the north and those from rural villages. This psycho-cultural factor causes a lot of pressure, mistrust, and potential stains in couples’ relationships.

Albanian men who are in this kind of relationship find it hard to overcome the inferiority barrier. Their reaction is either jealousy or forcing their successful spouse to submit to their rule. This kind of attitude brings a great deal of strain and mistrust in the couple’s relationship and causes divorce. Divorce is still considered evil magic that devalues the social prestige and professionalism of Albanian women. A physics professor just about to retire, who was divorced in 1989, said:

Exactly when I was on the top of my career...my husband was becoming an alcoholic and a nuisance at home and in the neighborhood. He constantly beat me and abused our two boys. I did not find any way out, but divorce. Although most of my friends supported me through the process...friends who at the beginning were supportive began to abandon me.... I am considered nothing else but a shadow of my husband.

Economic advancement, social stability and abiding law will have a direct impact on the Albanian family and will bring about stability and respect for women. Albanian women will be key players in creating fundamentally new and better relationships with men in marriage, family and society. As women will leave homes to join the workforce, their economic and social status will significantly improve. Women will stop marrying men for economic reasons. However, there will never be economic, social and political progress without a genuine cultural and social transformation that instills dignity in women.

Albania at a Glance

Republic of Albania (Republika e Shqiperise)
Capital: Tirana
Terrain: mostly mountains and hills; small plains along coast
Flag: red with a black two-headed eagle in the center
Currency: lek
Total area: 28,748 sq. km (slightly smaller than Maryland)
Population: 3,510,484 (July 2001 estimate)

Government:
Executive branch: The president is elected by parliament for a five-year term. Rexhep Kemal Meidani is the current president (elected 1997). The Prime Minister is appointed by the president. The current Prime minister is Pandeli Majko (appointed 2002).

Legislative branch: The Kuvendi i Republikës së Shqipërisë (Assembly of the Republic of Albania) has 140 members, elected for a four year term, 100 members in single-seat constituencies and 40 members elected through proportional representation. Last election: 24 June 2001.

Judicial branch: Supreme Court (chairman is elected by the People’s Assembly for a four-year term)

GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - $3,000 (2000 estimate)
Constitution: new constitution adopted by popular referendum November 1998

Gender ratio:
• at birth: 1.08 male(s)/female
• under 15 years: 1.07 male(s)/female
• 15-64 years: 0.93 male(s)/female
• 65 years and over: 0.78 male(s)/female
• total population: 0.96 male(s)/female (2001 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.32 children born/woman (2001 estimate)
Life expectancy at birth:
• total population: 71.83 years
• male: 69.01 years
• female: 74.87 years (2001 est.)

Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001
Table 1: “What are your views on nations and the national state?”

Percentages of Bosnian national groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>BOSNIAKS</th>
<th>CROATS</th>
<th>SERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nations are born, grow and perish in history, just like everything else</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nations are natural entities unified by common origin, language, history &amp; culture</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nations represent a will to create a common future, despite cultural differences in the past</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The claims of national groups for a state of their own was one main cause of wars in recent centuries</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National groups have the right to go to war to make their own state</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National states should give an essential part of their sovereignty to a supernatural organisation</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Not Agree</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, Bosnian pupils support all the three definitions of nations in remarkably similar fashion, suggesting that in contemporary Bosnia pupils are more likely to see ‘nation’ as something changing over time.

Thus, we have seen that young Bosnians, regardless of their ethnic group, consider all the different definitions positively without being too excited about any of them. When moving from the definitions of nations to the roles and functions of nations, (the three latter items in Table #1), we find two interesting results, particularly when looked at in an international comparison. In the European overall sample the idea of national groups having the right to go to war to make a state, and the idea that national states should yield their sovereignty to supranational powers, were both rejected (See Angvik and von Borries).

Among Bosniaks, however, both items were supported. As can be seen in Table #1, the values of Bosnians were among the highest in the question of rights to go to war, and the highest when talking about yielding sovereignty to supernatural organisations. Cautious interpretation would suggest that young Bosnians see national groups having the right to go to a war for their state and therefore would be ready to give the sovereignty of national states to multinational powers.

Looking within the ethnic groupings, we can note some minor differences on the frequencies: while approximately 35% of Bosniaks sees national groups as having the right to go to a war to make a state, the figure among Croats and Serbs is approximately 42%. All groups were equally supportive of the idea of national states yielding their sovereignty, though the Bosniaks and Croats were more undecided on it. In terms of the relationship of ‘supranational’ power versus the national state (the EU being first and foremost in consideration here), Bosniaks supported the idea the least. In fact their mean was fourth lowest amongst Europeans, following Belgium, Italy, and France.

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Countries, Religions, Identities: The question for young Bosnians of ‘what is a nation’ versus ‘what is a state’ is naturally of great interest and importance. Unfortunately, the data collected does not allow for a definitive answer. We can, nevertheless, discuss the representation of nation in the light of some other crucial questions. First we have the question of importance where among other things the pupils were asked about the personal importance of ‘my country,’ ‘my ethnic group,’ as well as the category of religious faith.

What about the notion of ‘my country’? Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multinational state, consisting of three equal divisions, based upon three nations. The pupils’ understanding of the term ‘my country’ can of course be questioned: do they think of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the entity in which they live (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbs), as their ‘country?’ For example, do Croat pupils associate ‘my country’ with Herceg-Bosna? Finally, the category of religious faith is interesting in the context of the representation of nation, since it is perhaps the clearest distinction amongst the three main groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In cross-country comparisons, notions of country, ethnic group, and religion are all considered important by young Bosnians. ‘My country’ is for them fourth most important when compared to all Europeans. There are no differences between the three Bosnian groups on this score. The picture is similar in relation to the importance of ethnic groups, with very few European groups giving it higher importance than the Bosnians. Among the Bosnians themselves, Serbs and Croats emphasise the importance of ethnic group slightly more than Bosniaks. The importance of religious faith is also comparatively very high for Bosnians, and amongst the three groups the Croats consider the importance of religious faith the highest.

The Rights of ‘Others’: The discussion about ‘others’ in the Youth and History research was based upon questions about immigrants and their rights. In the Bosnian context, notions of ‘immigrants’ and of ‘others’ is problematic. The multinational character of Bosnia and Herzegovina has rendered others who are part one’s own society much more central than is generally the case with immigrants. The immigrant question was formed as follows: “People in many countries discuss whether immigrants (people from abroad) should be given full citizenship including right to vote. Which immigrants should – in your opinion – have the voting rights in parliamentary elections in your country?” The items ranged from ‘none’ to ‘all,’ including reasoning based on cultural assimilation, law-abiding, victim-nature of immigrants, and loyalty of immigrants to one’s country.

In general, Bosnians would grant the right to vote for immigrants more easily than Europeans. In all positive items their mean values were higher and in the item stating that civil rights should be granted to the victims of oppression, Bosnians give the highest support of all the countries. Similar positive thinking towards immigrants was also clear when young Bosnians were asked about their voting preferences: they rejected the strongest the idea of voting for the reduction of immigration having the lowest value in the entire sample. Thus, young Bosnians consistently support the rights of immigrants. Whether that could be interpreted as openness towards others, or simply a result of the recent past when many Bosnians have in fact found themselves or their family members to be immigrants (and therefore would wish good treatment for immigrants), can of course only be speculated. Definitely young Bosnians do not think of their peers belonging to other national groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina as immigrants – in fact had this been a national (rather than a cross-country) survey there should have been a similar question concerning ‘displaced’ and ‘returnees’ instead of immigrants.

Nation and Europe: Finally, as part of the representation of nation, a series of questions were asked regarding the relationship among notions of ‘Europe’, European integration, and the general idea of the nation. As with the initial questions concerning ‘the nation’ [see above], the pupils were also asked about definitions for Europe, which was assumed to be a historically-laden concept. The principal question was: “What do Europe, and European integration, mean to you?” Other statements in the survey included the following items: “Europe is a geographical expression, no more,” “Europe is a birthplace of democracy, enlightenment and progress,” “Europe is a group of white, rich countries guilty of economic and ecological exploitation of the rest of the world,” “European integration is the only way to peace between nations that previously attempted to destroy each other,” “European integration is a dan-
Contemporary Bosnia continued

ger to sovereign nations, to their identity and culture,” and lastly, “European integration will solve the economic and social crises of the countries in Europe.”

In the overall sample, most Europeans (not surprisingly) agreed with the statement that Europe is the birthplace of democracy, enlightenment and progress. The Bosnians, in turn, supported most the idea that European integration is the only way to peace between nations wanting to destroy each other, as well as the notion that European integration will solve crises. Within the Bosnian sample the Serbs agreed less with the idea of European integration solving crises than did the Croats and Bosniaks, while both Croats and Serbs emphasise slightly less the idea of Europe as the only way to peace than Bosniaks.

What interpretations can we derive from this? Firstly, young Bosnians seem to agree with the idea that nations have attempted destroy each other and therefore European integration is needed as a peacemaker. Secondly, we can note a sort of anti-nation approach; the integration of Europe is seen as a way to problem-solving in particular and to peace in general. This points to a quite positive idea of Europe and a rather negative idea of nations and nation states. All the ideas are strongest among Bosniaks but Serbs and Croats follow the same pattern only with less enthusiasm.

The positive thinking about European integration is further supported by the pupils’ reactions to the statements regarding the importance of European cooperation and to voting for the European integration including common currency.

**Conclusions:** The main questions about the definitions and role of the nation indicate that the definitions are relatively meaningless or confusing to young Bosnians. It is further suggested that the differentiation between Herderian and Renanian concepts of nations exists mainly in the theories of intellectuals, but does not refer to a clear distinction in the minds of the young public. While Bosnian youth seems to be in line with European youth on many of the issues raised, some Bosnian particularities arose. The young Bosnians showed the absolute highest support for the traditional Herderian concept of nations being natural entities unified by common language and culture, but their support for the concept was very modest compared to the European average. In turn, young Bosnians expressed comparatively high support for the concept that nations get born, grow and die just like anything else in history. The differences between the national groups within Bosnia were modest, yet the Croats were the clearest in their support for the Herderian concept of nations.

**The Bosnians...**supported most the idea that European integration is the only way to peace between nations wanting to destroy each other, as well as the notion that European integration will solve crises.

Thus, we can say that part of representation of nations in the minds of young Bosnians is the idea of natural entities united by common language and culture. However, the idea that nations are temporal constructions of history is also part of their thinking, which might stem from their historical experience. During the communist period the Yugoslav-nation was actively constructed parallel to ethnic nationalities. However, since that time Yugoslav nation yielded to the ethnic nations, which also have gone through constant changes. For example, among the Bosnian Croats the general Croathood has been forced to turn towards Bosnian or Herzegovinian Croathood as the government in Zagreb has made it clear that Bosnian Croats are not part of Croatia. Similarly, Bosnian Serbs have started to emphasize their Bosnian Serb nationality as their ties with Belgrade have loosened.

Finally, the Bosniaks have been building their national identity to quite some extent due to the pressure from Serb and Croat nation-building projects. From the overall European sample it is interesting to note that both former Yugoslav republics Croatia and Slovenia also had relatively high values for the idea that nations get born, grow and die in history. This further suggests that the Yugoslav past has influenced the thinking of the youth about the definitions for nation.
Kyrgyzstan’s Dilemmas
Rafis Abazov, Columbia University

After the unexpected dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the Kyrgyzstani government subordinated its foreign policy to achieving economic and political survival in a very complex Central Asian environment. In addition, after 11 September 2001 Bishkek’s foreign policy makers have had to find a balance between long-standing security arrangements with Russia and the newly established regime of anti-terrorist cooperation with the USA, which brought a US military presence to the outskirts of Kyrgyzstan’s capital. In November 2001, US personnel began hastily building the Republic’s first-ever American military base, just a few miles away from a Russian-sponsored CIS anti-terrorist center. Moreover, the visitors were talking about extended cooperation with the independent Kyrgyz defence forces, outraging Russia’s generals and political hawks.

Struggling with a fading economy: When Kyrgyzstan declared its independence in 1991, many experts, including those from the IMF and World Bank, thought that Kyrgyzstan, like other former “second world countries” (i.e. those between the developed countries and the Third World), might rapidly undergo a transition similar to that of Western-European countries after the Second World War under the Marshal Plan. That plan had included massive financial and technical assistance, which enabled the war-torn countries of Western Europe to modernize their economies in less than a decade. Kyrgyzstan was among the favorites to benefit from a modern equivalent. In 1990 it was ranked in 31st place in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), ahead of many Asian countries; it also had per capita GDP of $1160, or around

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