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Torsti, Pilvi

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A Youth and History Survey among the Three Bosnian Ethnic Groups and their Relations to Europe

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Introduction

A research project *Youth and History: a comparative European survey on historical consciousness and political attitudes among adolescents* was carried out in 27 countries in 1995–96. About 30,000 adolescents answered the same questions concerning their ideas about history, politics and history teaching, among other things.

Bosnia-Herzegovina did not participate in this research due to the fact that there was a war in the area. The manipulative use of history has, however, been characteristic for that society during the last ten years, and it was therefore considered worthwhile to include Bosnia and Herzegovina in the *Youth and History* research later on.

Consequently, in autumn 1999, I set out to collect the *Youth and History* data in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Youth and History* provided a suitable comparative method to empirically investigate how young people form their political opinions and what kind of reasoning and argumentation they find most convincing in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s post-war situation.

Four central themes arose from the explorative analysis of the data: war and peace, democracy, attitudes towards Europe, and general optimism. In the following I will concentrate on the topic of Bosnian adolescents’ attitudes towards Europe and the differences in attitudes between the three ethnic and religious groups, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims (I will further use the term Bosniaks), in their opinions about Europe’s past and future.

Sample and data collection

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” to use *Youth and History* research terminology. Different sets of strata were also used, such as ethnic criteria, socio-historical and geographical criteria. In other words, the schools were chosen using background information about wartime events in the area and about the current social standing of the area. Thus, the sample would include the many socio-historical facets of Bosnia and Herzegovina as adequately and satisfyingly as possible. For these reasons the sample can also be characterised as a stratified sample.

The final sample consists of 37 schools. In each school one 8th grade class was chosen randomly to participate in the *Youth and History* research. The 14-year-old pupils filled out the same questionnaire that had been used in the *Youth and History* survey in 1995–96. Three different versions of the questionnaire were used in order to respect the minor linguistic differences between the language variants used by Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks.

The 18-paged questionnaires were processed in Sarajevo and processing of the approximate 950 questionnaires was completed by March 2000. The data was subsequently filtered and proof read in co-operation with the Central Analysis Centre of Youth and History Research at the University of Hamburg.

After filtering, the final sample consisted of 907 cases. In this sample the pupils identified their nationality as follows: 360 stated they were Bosniaks, 218 Croats, 311 Serbs and 7 others, 11 did not answer the nationality question.
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Main Results

As Europe itself was part of the central framework for the entire Youth and History research, many items in the questionnaire dealt with different aspects of Europe. In the Bosnian sample, the pupils of three groups showed clear differences concerning their relation to Europe; their attitude towards integration, future expectations and historical interests varied. I have chosen the most distinct and express items concerning Europe to be discussed here.

Before looking at the graphs, it is important to realise that the overall results of the Youth and History survey show that the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats only rarely differed significantly. Therefore the differences between the three groups in their attitudes towards Europe as presented here, were significant and unusually strong, also in terms of the entire research.

Some methodological remarks

The percentages displayed in the graphs and discussed here might sometimes appear relatively low. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that the average age of the pupils was as young as 14, and that the Youth and History survey usually offered a five-step scale, so a considerable number of pupils always chose the safe middle path.

The European values displayed in the graphs are calculated from the Youth and History data published on the CD-ROM. The reader should remember that the European data was collected in 1995–1996, whereas the Bosnian data was gathered in 1999, therefore the answers are not fully comparable.

Interest in European History

The pupils were asked about their interest in the history of different geographical areas. [GRAPH 1. History of Europe] All the Bosnian groups showed most interest in their immediate locality (Bosniaks 64%, Croats 73%, Serbs 66%). But as we can see in GRAPH 1, their interest in European history is also substantial: two thirds of the Bosniaks (66%) and Croats (66%) and more than half of the Serbs (54%) report to have much or very much interest in the history of our continent.

Attitudes towards European integration

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Attitudes towards European integration

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In GRAPH 2 we can see a constant pattern: the Bosniaks and Croats are both very positive in their thinking about the future of Europe while Serbs are more reserved. It is noteworthy that Bosniaks (52%) and Croats (47%) consider European integration more important for themselves than the European pupils in general (39%). The Serbs differ in their attitude towards integration: only one third of the Serbian pupils (32%) considers European integration of importance for them. The Serbian pupils also show less support for the idea of having a common currency as part of the European integration: 37% of the Serbian pupils supports such monetary union, while among Bosniaks (48%) and Croats (54%) this union is supported by about half of the pupils.

The question of whether European integration would be able to solve economic and social crises in Europe reveals that the positive attitude towards integration has much to do with the notion of the European Union for Bosnians: Bosnian youth believes that European integration means security and avoidance of crises. Bosniaks value this effect of European integration particularly highly (58%) but Serbian and Croatian pupils both agree with 48% on this notion of European integration. This is definitely higher than the European pupils in general (37%).

Finally, in GRAPH 3, we can see that more Serbs (28%) support voting for reducing the power of the European community and hereby giving more power to the national states than Bosniaks (14%) or Croats (19%). [GRAPH 1. History of Europe] It is noteworthy, however, that all these percentages are relatively low, even among the Serbs less than one third of the pupils supports the idea of reducing the power of European Union.

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A YOUTH AND HISTORY SURVEY IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Union, which also greatly influences the Bosnian situation. [GRAPH 2. Integration of Europe]

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survey point in the same direction: pupils with Bosniak and Croat origin find European integration more important and support it more strongly than the Serb pupils. I would like to discuss the reasons for this attitude later in this article.

**Future of Europe**

The items related to the future of Europe provide us with similar divisions between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats than the items related to European integration. I have chosen to group the items into those which have positive connotations and those which point to a more negative future of Europe. [GRAPH 4. Positive future of Europe]

The first item in GRAPH 4 shows us interesting figures: the peaceful future of Europe is strongly supported by the Bosniaks (53%) and moderately supported by Croats (43%) and even by Serbs (37%). However, European pupils in general are pessimistic: only one fourth (24%) believes in the peaceful future of the continent.

For all the other positive connotations, *peace, wealth, prosperity and democracy* in the future of Europe illustrated in GRAPH 4, the Bosniaks show the greatest support. Bosniaks believe in peace (53%), wealth and prosperity (69%) and democracy (52%), while the Serb pupils in particular are less supportive of these ideas with 37% for peace, 58% for wealth and prosperity and 33% for democracy.

The pattern is similar but in the opposite direction when looking at the negative connotations concerning the future of Europe in GRAPH 5. Serb pupils consistently support the negatively-laden ideas concerning the future of our continent, while the Bosniaks, just as consistently, reject such negative connotations. [GRAPH 5. Negative future of Europe] Serbs regard the European future as more likely to be overpopulated (56%) and characterised by exploitation of some states (54%) than democratic (33%), prosperous (58%) and peaceful (37%).

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* "It is likely or very likely that life will be peaceful in Europe in 40 years." * "It is likely or very likely that life will be prosperous and wealthy in Europe in 40 years.* * "It is likely or very likely that life will be democratic in Europe in 40 years time.*

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* "It is likely or very likely that it will be overpopulated in Europe in 40 years.* * "It is likely or very likely that some states will exploit others in Europe in 40 years.*
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A. NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Analysis of the main results

In relation to Europe, pupils representing the three Bosnian ethnic and religious groups show clear differences. It seems that contemporary history shapes the opinions of Bosnian adolescents the most. In the following I would like to briefly analyse the results from the perspectives of all three groups.

First we can look at the relations to Europe through the eyes of Bosnian Serb pupils. As demonstrated earlier, they show consistently less interest in European history, find the integration of Europe less important and see the future of Europe more pessimistically than the other two groups. In the past ten years Serbs have lived in a very isolated world. They were the aggressors in the war, which from the beginning made them guilty as a nation in the eyes of the outside world. Many of the Serb refugees from Bosnia went either to Serbia proper or to the Bosnian areas that had already been “ethnically cleansed” by the Serb army. Thus, not very many of them ended up in European countries, even though most of the Bosnian Serbs could also be seen as victims of the war. This is, in my opinion, the first reason for the lack of interest in Europe.

The Dayton peace agreement created the legal Serb entity, the Republic of Serbs within Bosnia and Herzegovina. In theory, both entities, the Republic of Serbs and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Muslim-Croat federation, were supposed to receive the same international support for reconstruction. However, because of the politics of the Serb entity itself, support for Serb areas has been less. There is a visible difference between the Serb areas and the rest of Bosnia in 2000, which can be noticed, for example, in construction activities and in the condition of the roads. There have simply been fewer funds and, therefore, also less reconstruction work in the Serb republic than within the Muslim-Croat federation.

The more negative, or at least more doubtful, attitude towards the international community and its politics has also meant that fewer international, mainly European people have been working in the Serb parts of Bosnia in comparison to the Muslim-Croat federation. Perhaps these two factors, lack of funds and fewer contacts with Europeans working in the country, also enforce the sceptical or even negative opinion about Europe and Europeans.

The picture is different for the Bosniaks and Croats. They had closer ties to other European countries during the war as more journalists worked in their areas, more representatives from European countries visited their areas and, most likely, more humanitarian aid reached their areas. Most of the Bosniak and Croat pupils have relatives who have been, or still are, refugees in different European countries. European support has seemed vital during peace.

In terms of Croats, the historical cultural ties to Europe are also traditionally stronger. The heritage of the Roman Empire, the Adriatic City cultures, such as Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Venice and the Roman Catholic faith relate Croats and their culture to the old European traditions, whereas other Bosnians have a more divided history between the eastern and western traditions.

Finally, the particular interest and positive attitudes towards European integration and European future among the Bosniak pupils seems to relate to their position during and after the Bosnian war. Bosniaks, who clearly were the most severe victims of the war and lack a “Motherland”, now believe and possibly hope that European integration will solve the problems and guarantee social and financial security also in their area. Bosniaks feel that their future depends on Europe and therefore they want to see the European future in a positive way.

Thus, all in all, Bosnian historical thought in terms of Europe is clear. The recent past is the most significant constitutive element in their thinking, while the more distant past of Yugoslavia under Tito and in the kingdom of southern Slavs before the World War II does not seem to influence today’s adolescents’ attitudes towards Europe. The historical perspective of Bosnian adolescents is not long enough to reach the Titostist times, when connections with the western world had a particular political role, and which would have been associated
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in a similar way among all the national groups. Therefore, it seems likely that recent history and contemporary experiences have had the strongest influence in shaping and creating the differences between the opinions of the pupils from the three groups. Europe has played a central role in the recent history of their society which is reflected in the differences in attitudes between the Bosniak, Serb and Croat pupils.

Conclusions

The Youth and History research in Bosnia-Herzegovina revealed that Serb, Croat and Bosniak pupils have a differing image of Europe. The differences in thinking patterns were consistent.

When looking at the current situation and practises in history education within Bosnia-Herzegovina, the result is not surprising as three competing histories are also taught at school. The Bosnian Croat schools use history books printed in Croatia proper and thus learn the Croatian version of history. The Bosnian Serbs use mainly books from Belgrade but have produced their own book for the last year of comprehensive school (8th grade) to emphasise their own history in recent times. The Bosniaks printed their own books during the war. A closer look at the schoolbooks would certainly verify that "Europe" has three slightly different notions in the three different books used within one small country of about 4.5 million people.

However tempting the idea may be that the school books could be made responsible for the three different attitudes towards Europe, it is more likely that the greatest factor shaping ideas on Europe is the pupils' own experience from contemporary history and the current situation, the war and the post-war period. Yet, the influence and importance of schooling cannot be overlooked especially in cementing the public views of the society.

The role of Europe in history education in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the future can only be predicted. For the school year 2000–2001, all history school textbooks had to be revised to conform with international community regulations. The revised books are no longer allowed to include "offensive material" about other ethnic groups in the country. In May 2000, the Ministers of Education, representing all the three ethnic groups signed an agreement on long-term objectives in the school curricula. The agreement should lead towards a more unified schooling system in the course of 2–3 years.

In these reforms and revisions, the central theme is always how to unite the divided country. Therefore, the role of Europe in history education cannot be at the centre of discussion. However, the European approach to learning and teaching history, and the European history educators are of great interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina: teachers are eager to learn modern teaching practises and to compare their teaching standards with those in Europe.

There is an idea to produce a common history book for everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The book would contain common elements as well as national elements, which would differ for the respective national groups. In addition, all groups would study the national histories of the other groups. In such a book European history could play a unifying role. European history should then be included in the common history section of the book. That does not need to result in an identical notion of Europe all over Bosnia, but at least the basic education would provide students with similar tools to form their opinions about the continent.

In ten years time we will know whether three versions of Europe still exist within Bosnia and Herzegovina or whether there are fewer.
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In ten years time we will know whether three versions of Europe still exist within Bosnia and Herzegovina or whether there are fewer.
A. NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Notes
1 The Dayton peace agreement was reached in November 1995.
2 Torsti 2000.
4 More about stratified sample see Angvik & von Borries 1997, A27.
5 Angvik & von Borries 1997B.
6 The educational system is not defined in the Dayton agreement. Therefore the two entities have the power over it and there is no common Ministry of Education. For all the agreements it is necessary to get the approval from the Minister of Education of the Republic of Serbs and from the Minister (Bosniak) and Deputy Minister (Croat) of education of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bibliography

Small World, Big Country
A Reappraisal of Europe in Romanian History Teaching

Carol Capita

Abstract

The paper intends to explore the newest trends in the Romanian educational reform, focusing especially on history teaching. There seems to be a “European” approach when in official documents, which is, to some extent, reflected in textbooks currently used and in daily school practice. Very recent developments at the policy making level indicate that decision makers are focusing on improving the presence of European elements in the National Curriculum by introducing new programs of study.

The Curriculum

History teaching has always been a special subject. From the classical historia magistra vitae to the new pragmatic and de-constructivist approaches, history teaching has always received attention due to its holistic character. This is also one of the reasons why it is frequently at the core of of educational reforms, and – as is apparent in Eastern Europe – at the core of public debate. There are several perspectives, which can highlight the features of history teaching, and the teaching of European history in Romania.