

## **NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

### **PART 2: THE PARADIGM APPLIED**

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#### **Introduction**

National identity is a key missiological issue in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Part 1 of this paper proposed a framework for examining national identity as it exists in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this paper I attempt to demonstrate how the first paradigm in the proposed framework can be used to exploring national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

An abstract concept like identity is best understood through contrast and comparison. In this paper I use the proposed *Paradigm for Examining the Synchronic Aspect of National Identity* to examine (ethnic) national identity in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina and to contrast it with (civic) national identity as it existed in Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina (1945-1991). Space does not permit anything more than a superficial examination but the value of this paradigm for examining this complex and abstract social phenomena is demonstrated.

#### **I. EXAMINING THE OBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA**

Examining the objective dimension of national identity involves a consideration of the categories available for national identity. Categorization can be done by the person or group

involved (i.e. the answer given to the question “Which category or group do I belong to?” or “Which category or group do we belong to”) or by those outside the category (i.e. the answer given to the question “To which category or group does he or she belong?” or “To which category or group do they belong?”).

Using the term “categorization” helps the researcher avoid the reifying connotations of identity<sup>1</sup> and does not demand that the process of categorization will necessarily result in the internal sameness, i.e. the distinctiveness and the bonded groupness that political entrepreneurs (especially nationalists) seek to achieve.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most important agents of categorization in today's world is the modern state. It has the power to name, identify, and categories and impose this system of categorization on its citizens. This is occurring in post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina and the process is clearly changing the concept of national identity in Bosnian society.<sup>3</sup> In Bosnia-Herzegovina the state has pre-determined the categories of national identity thus making them into “hard, objective” categories of identification.

Exploring the objective dimension of national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina involves examining three core concepts: a name, a kinship basis of membership in the “nation” and religious heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> “Scholarly conceptions of “nation” and “national identity” have tended to replicate key features of nationalist ideology, notably the axiomatic understanding of boundedness and homogeneity in the putative “nation.” Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 214, footnote 35. Ligner issues a similar warning: “The salience of public self-identifications should not be assumed, and their personal content is never self-evident. I prefer to view self-identification, popular terminology, and official characterizations with a degree of reserve... Social scientists, myself included, should think long and hard before offering accounts that take ideologically bounded groups as central foci of our analyses.” Daniel Ligner, “Do Japanese Brazilians Exist?” *Searching for Home Abroad*, ed. Jeffrey Lesser (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 212.

<sup>2</sup> Brubaker, 41.

<sup>3</sup> A research project exploring how this is occurring is Fran Markowitz, “Census and Sensibilities in Sarajevo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49.1 (2007).

## A. Name

Identity of any sort begins with a “name.” In contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina a person's national identity begins with their answer to the question, “Who am I? A Bosniak, a Croat or a Serb?” These categories are fixed and clear. According to the constitution, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a “state” made up of three “nations”: Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. These are defined by the Constitution as the “constituent peoples” of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>4</sup> This notion of “constituent peoples,” according to the head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, “is unique in Europe today.”<sup>5</sup>

A person's national identity is an objective, legal part of his identity and is documented on his or her legal records. This makes national identity an objective category and results in societal dynamics different from multi-ethnic contexts in the United States or Western Europe.

The national categories in Bosnia-Herzegovina represented by the names Croat and Serb stretch back hundreds of years (though the content of those categories has changed considerably over time). The names provide the unchanging categories around which these two national identities are organized.<sup>6</sup> The legitimate existence of the Bosniak “nation” has been strongly contested by both Serb and Croat nationalists.<sup>7</sup> Bringa contends, correctly I believe, that the underlying issue is one of power and control,

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<sup>4</sup> A fourth category is also included - the category of “Others.” (Annex 4 to the Dayton Agreement, Preamble to the Constitution).

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Davidson, “Report by the Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *Information Seminar on the Ratification Process of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, October 2006. <<http://www.oscebih.org/public/default.asp?d=6&article=show&id=1907>>, (March 23, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> The terms first appear in Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Administrando Imperio* written in the late 940s or early 950s (John Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 49. A survey of the usage of the name Serb can be found in Dimić's article “Who is a Serb? (Milan Dimić, “Who Is a Serb? A Survey of Internal Definitions and External Designations.” *Diaspora Serbs: A Cultural Analysis*, eds. Earle Waugh and Milan Dimić (Edmonton, AB: Research Institute of the University of Alberta, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> They insist that Bosniaks are “really” Serbs or Croats.

Naming and categorizing are always contested acts because they are essential sources of power in the construction of local, national and international loyalties.<sup>8</sup>

Serbian and Croatian nationalists view their national identity as “natural” and the Bosniak identity claim as something “invented” and therefore illegitimate. Bosnian Muslims, they argue, must really be either Serbs or Croats.<sup>9</sup> What they ignore is that their own national identity emerged in a similar way. Pavlovic reminds us that,

It is true that identity construction is a long process of historical/cultural sedimentation and that the final product is perceived as a relatively long-lasting and stable phenomenon. However, it would be a mistake to regard it as static or unchangeable. Identity is a dynamic phenomenon whose manifestations can vary over time.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, during the Socialist period, most people living in Bosnia-Herzegovina (regardless of their ethnic identity), when asked “Who are you?” would reply “Bosnian.” This is a civic category meaning a citizen of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The recent war forced people to redefine their (perceived) social identity. In today's polarized Bosnian society even if a person internally resists being placed into one of the three (ethnic) national categories the pressures of life push him or her into identification with one of these three categories.

## **B. Kinship basis of membership in the “nation”**

The second component of national identity in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina is that of a kinship basis for membership in the national community. This is what makes national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic. Donald Horowitz, in his massive study of ethnic conflict, helpfully writes,

Many of the puzzles presented by ethnicity become much less confusing once we abandon the attempt to discover the vital essence of ethnicity and instead regard ethnic

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<sup>8</sup> Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 29-31.

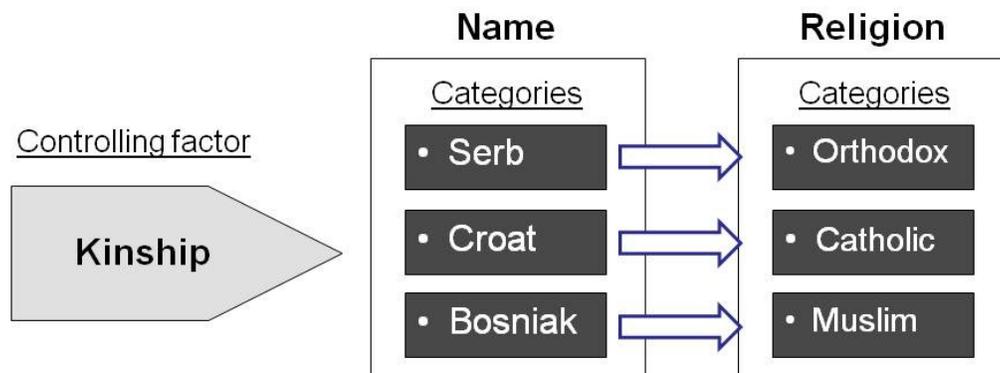
<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Srdja Pavlovic, *Who Are Montenegrins? Statehood, Identity, and Civic Society.* *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood.* (ed. Florian Bieber. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), 96.

affiliations as being located along a continuum of ways in which people organize and categorize themselves. At one end, there is voluntary membership; at the other, membership given at birth.<sup>11</sup>

In Bosnia-Herzegovina membership in an ethnic/national three categories is “given at birth.”

Kinship plays another important role in national identity in Bosnian society – it prescribes one's religious affiliation, even among the non-religious segment of society. A person “inherits” his or her religious identity from his or her parents. That in turn, determines which “nation” a person belongs to *since religion is the primary determinant of national identity*. This factor gives national identity in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina a strong primordialist flavor.



### **Kinship, National Identity and Religion Identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

In Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina, kinship membership in “nations” was present, but relatively unimportant in the urban areas, especially in Sarajevo. Many parents never even told their children what their national/ethnic background was. Instead the Socialist government taught their citizens that they were “Yugoslavs” and stressed “brotherhood and unity” (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*). They expected that (ethnic) “national identity” based on kinship would slowly disappear. This new “Yugoslav” identity was,

<sup>11</sup> Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 55.

A citizenship-based category... neither an autochthonous category of belonging nor an ethnic group but a flexible hybrid identity that indexed identification with the socialist state's ideological goals and/or provided an alternative to forcing a single choice among individuals with mixed ethnic backgrounds.<sup>12</sup>

Most educated, urban Bosnians took pride in their tolerant spirit and the multi-cultural society that “communism” had created.<sup>13</sup> A significant weakening of (ethnic) national identities occurred, evidenced by the relatively high rates of “mixed marriages” that took place between young people from different national (i.e. ethnic) groups. Sharp and Clark claim that “the Second Yugoslavia had almost two million interethnic marriages, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina their percentage was between 30 and 40 percent.”<sup>14</sup>

### C. Religious heritage

In contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina, religion not language (as in Western Europe) provides the primary marker that differentiates one “nation” from another,<sup>15</sup>

A religious identity is also a social and cultural identity and in the Bosnian context has an ethnic aspect, since a person usually “inherits” his or her religious identity from his or her parents and, above all, from the father who passes on his surname to his children and thus establishes a child's ethnic identity.<sup>16</sup>

This is true despite the fact that most people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are (and have always been) more secular than religious. This interrelationship between religion and national identity is

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<sup>12</sup> Fran Markowitz, “Census and Sensibilities in Sarajevo.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49.1 (2007), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Jane Sharp and Michael Clarke, *Making Dayton Work: The Future of the Bosnian Peace Process* (London: Centre for Defence Studies, 1996), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Religion provided a better marker of national or ethnic identity than language since the Croats and Serbs both spoke essentially the same language. Alexandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism in a Multinational State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, 21.

“fundamental to understanding the relationship... between the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”<sup>17</sup> Fra. Ivo Markovic writes,

At the level of high culture, religion provides the historical core of culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This tends to support Samuel Huntington's thesis that civilizations are defined by reference to the religious cores of their cultures.<sup>18</sup>

It is impossible to understand the role religion plays in shaping national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina without distinguishing between what anthropologists call “high religion” and “folk religion.”<sup>19</sup> At the level of everyday life, (what Lovrenović calls “the sphere of folk religion”) Bosnia-Herzegovina's history has been characterized by what Bosnians call *zajednički život* (shared life). In the sphere of “high” religion, Bosnia-Herzegovina's three cultural groups and their corresponding religions developed separately, in isolation from each other and often in conflict with each other.<sup>20</sup> This has been true throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina's history. Malcolm shares an example of this from the beginning of the nineteenth century,

The rivalry between the Catholic and Orthodox clergy in Bosnia was commented on by many visitors: Chaumette-des-Fosses, who spent seven months in the country, noted that hostility between the two religious communities was 'maintained by the clergy of the two Churches, who make horrible allegations about one another.' Without the urging of these interested parties, it is doubtful whether the Catholic and Orthodox peasants would have found much cause for antipathy between themselves; they spoke the same language, wore

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<sup>17</sup> Mitja Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.), 91. Sabrina Ramet speaks of a “fusion” that has occurred between religion and national identity and suggests five reasons this occurred. Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 147.

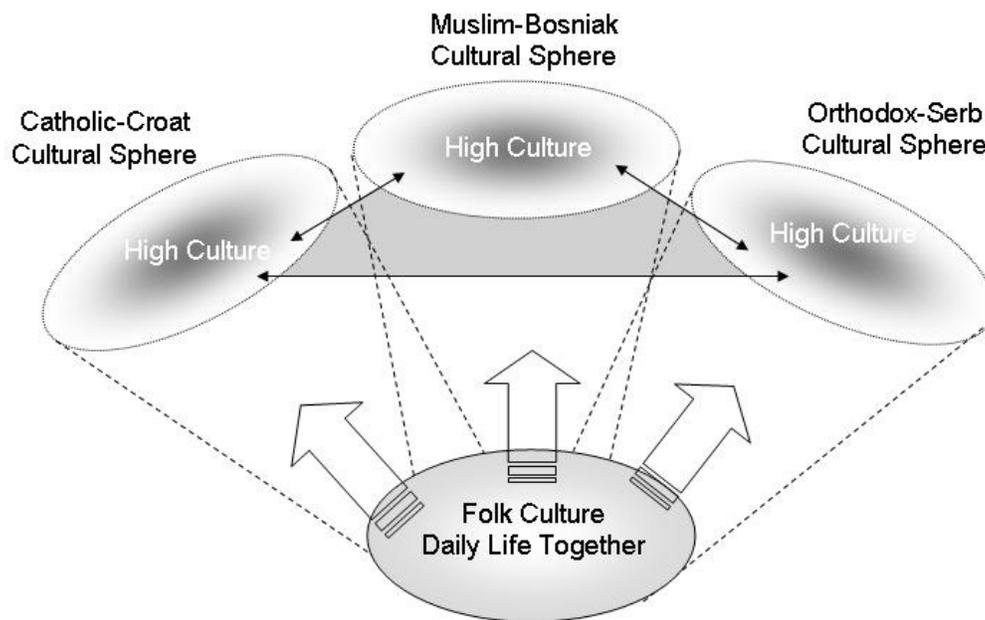
<sup>18</sup> Fra. Ivo Markovic, “In His Own Word: Ivo Markovic on Faith, Religion and Nation. Online at: [http://www.pontanima.ba/pdfs/In His Own Words Faith Religion and Nation.pdf](http://www.pontanima.ba/pdfs/In%20His%20Own%20Words%20Faith%20Religion%20and%20Nation.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Two scholars who have stressed this are Allcock (John Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 366) and Lovrenović (Ivan Lovrenović, *Bosnia: A Cultural History* (New York: New York University Press), 2001). Allcock uses the terminology of Redfield, who developed the concept to explain peasant societies - “the “Great Tradition” and the “little community.” Lovrenović uses the terminology *high* culture and *folk* culture. This concept has its roots in “the mediaeval distinction between *high* culture and *folk* culture.” He uses the term “culture” to refer to a concept related to, but not the same as my usage of the term “national identity.”

<sup>20</sup> This is an oversimplification. Actually, there were four spheres – the fourth was Jewish. This basically disappeared from Bosnian life after World War II and is not treated in this dissertation. Technically, we are talking about two religions (Islam and Christianity) and three confessions (Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy). For the sake of simplicity, I describe them as three religions.

the same clothes, went sometimes to the same churches and shared exactly the same conditions of life.<sup>21</sup>

Ivan Lovrenović treats this in some detail. As one moves from the sphere of folk religion into the sphere of high religion, he explains, the degree of the isolation between the three “nations” increases. This contrast, he argues, “helps explain many of the seeming contradictions that emerge in an examination of national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”<sup>22</sup> I’ve tried to conceptualize Lovrenović’s thinking in the following diagram:



### **High Culture and Folk Culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

The close ties between religion, national identity and family are extremely important. English sociologist John Allcock explains,

<sup>21</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Papermac, 1996), 100.

<sup>22</sup> Lovrenović, *Bosnia: A Cultural History*. Ibid.

Among the most important functions of religious identification is its role in the perseveration of the identity of the family... These associations come across very strongly when one turns to the work undertaken by anthropologists.<sup>23</sup>

Studies of family life in Yugoslavia conducted by anthropologists discovered a common “shared substratum of folk culture” that seemed common to members of each “nation.” One of the “most notable aspects” of this shared substratum was “an intense preoccupation with family and kinship.”<sup>24</sup> Andrei Simić concluded that despite outward similarities, fundamental difference existed between the conception of family in the former Yugoslavia and in the West,

The Yugoslav tends to view the family not as an entity isolated in time but rather diachronically as one stretching backward and forward ...the South Slav family...must be viewed within a framework transcending the nuclear household.<sup>25</sup>

In Socialist Yugoslavia, religion was marginalized. Those who actively practiced their religion were treated as second class citizens. Most people in Bosnia-Herzegovina if asked about God would say there must be some sort of god, but they themselves were not religious. Today the situation looks quite different *on the surface*. Religion is taught in public schools and most people, if asked, would probably say they are believers and “somewhat religious.”

Given the tight connection between religion and family and the foundational importance of family times in the cultural substratum, religious identity is probably more important to individuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina than is immediately apparent to an outside observer. Ashmore concluded, correctly I think, that,

Strong collective identities – such as the ones revealed during the war in Bosnia – are always embedded in personal experiences...although cultural differences between the groups were perhaps negligible, and although relations between Serbs, Muslims and

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<sup>23</sup> Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*, 372.

<sup>24</sup> This is the conclusion of a review of studies conducted on families in former Yugoslavia (Edita Petrović, Ružica Petrović and Andrei Simić, “Family Research and Theory in Yugoslavia,” *Marriage and Family Review* 22.3-4 (1966), 259-86).

<sup>25</sup> Andrei Simić, “Machismo and Cryptomatriarchy: Power, Affect and Authority in the Contemporary Yugoslav Family,” *Ethos* 11.1-2 (Spring-Summer 1983), 70, 68.

Croats might be cordial at the local level, there were nevertheless important social practices of affiliation that created boundaries between them.<sup>26</sup>

Except in the cosmopolitan Sarajevo middle class, Ashmore argues, this was true in Bosnia-Herzegovina even in the Socialist period,

Intermarriage was rare, the close informal networks of friends tended to be monoethnic, and the discrete groups maintained different, sometimes conflicting myths of origin. The intimate sphere, in other words, seems to have been largely monoethnic and by this token, Bosnia was a plural society in the classic sense: the public arenas were shared, but the private ones were discrete.<sup>27</sup>

Western scholars working in this period missed this<sup>28</sup> and consequently were surprised at the intensity of religious based ethnic conflict that emerged on a wide scale in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 war.

## Summary

In summary, the names of the three “nations” in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina provide objective *categories* of national identity. Membership in each “nation” is ascribed, not chosen and based on kinship relationships, making these “nations” ethnic. Kinship determines religious affiliation and religious affiliation is the primary boundary or identity marker for members of the three “nations.” The leaders of each religion have an important social and political role and jealously seek to “guard” their people from the conspiracies of outsiders.

## II. EXAMINING THE SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

Self-understanding, or what some call “situated subjectivity,” refers to the cognitive and emotional sense that people have of themselves and their specific social context. We might call

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Ashmore, Lee Jussim and David Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Probably because their professional contacts and ties were based in Sarajevo, where the salience of ethnically based identity was low.

this the “emic” sense of identity held by an individual, i.e. a “sense of who we are.” Dutch professor Joep Leerssen makes the astute observation that as constructivism in social, cultural and political thought became the dominant social discourse over the past thirty years, the term national identity shifted,

From meaning an objective essence... to something like 'collective self-awareness' – a self-awareness which is acquired, malleable, and as such a historical variable rather than an anthropological constant; an ideological *construct* rather than a categorical *donnée*. In fact it seems to have met, and merged with, what is now its near-synonym: *culture*. Identity and culture have become almost interchangeable terms.<sup>29</sup>

Three implications emerge from the definition of national identity I am working with related to the “self-understanding dimension” of national identity:

- Self-understanding is internally or subjectively perceived (a “sense”)<sup>30</sup>
- Self-understanding can be experienced both individually and collectively (“who I am” and “who we are”)<sup>31</sup>
- Self-understanding exists in relation to the “other” (the we presupposes an “other”).

The impact of modernity on traditional societies has made self-understanding important.

In traditional, pre-modern societies, personal and collective identities were closely linked.

Individuals derived their identity from the family or clan they belonged to, from their place of birth, from their ethnic origin or from their craft or occupation.<sup>32</sup> In modern societies this is no longer true. The term self-understanding, like the term categorization, lacks the reifying

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<sup>29</sup> Joep Leerssen, “The Downward Pull of Cultural Essentialism.” *Image into Identity: Constructing and Assigning Identity in a Culture of Modernity. Studia Imagologica 11*, ed. Michael Wintle, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 2006), 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> Bilgrami spells out the implications of this: “Because all of us conceive of ourselves in various ways that do not make a difference to identity politics, the idea that we have ‘multiple’ identities (or the slightly different, seemingly more organic idea that we are ‘hybrid’) is too obvious to deny. But, equally, to assert that we have ‘multiple’ identities does not put the conceptual and political difficulties of identities in the public arena to rest. Even those who take a normatively favorable stance toward identity politics, and think that there should be more identity politics, do not deny that all people possess multiple identities.” Akeel Bilgrami, “Notes toward the Definition of ‘Identity.’” *Daedalus* (Fall 2006).

<sup>31</sup> The focus here is on individual self-understanding. A given individual's subjective sense of collective identity may be quite different from that of another individual in the same category or collective group.

<sup>32</sup> David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 165.

connotations that the term “identity” carries. Self-understandings may be either variable across time and from person to person, or they may be stable. This term allows the researcher to study the “soft” dimensions of personal and collective identity.

National identity as an subjective category of “self-understanding” in Bosnia-Herzegovina centers on three core concepts: historical narratives (myth), language and core territory.

### **A. Historical Narratives (myth)**

The national identity of a “nation” forms around its collective memory (i.e. the beliefs and perceptions that have accumulated throughout the “nation's” history),

Since the “memories of societies... are selective,” national identity is significantly shaped by the values and ideology of the group that has “custodianship of the collective memory.”<sup>33</sup>

While this is true for every “nation,” “history plays a much more prominent role in the public and political life of the Balkan peoples than among the peoples of Western Europe.”<sup>34</sup> Allcock notes that,

The peoples of the South Slav region carry with them their history, not only as an objective past which conditions action in the present, but also as a subjective past. This shapes their consciousness and provides the material out of which they weave accounts of both the past and the future.<sup>35</sup>

Bosnia-Herzegovina's history led to a fusion between religion and national identity and a fusion between history and myth. At issue here is not an objective understanding of what actually occurred, but the subjective and collective understandings that people in each “nation” have of

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<sup>33</sup> Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14. In most cases, the group which controls the media and the education system has “custodianship of the collective memory.”

<sup>34</sup> Srećko Džaja, “Bosnian Historical Reality and Its Reflection in Myth.” *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (ed. Pål Kolstø. London: Hurst & Co., 2005). 106.

<sup>35</sup> Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*, 413-14.

their past. Bellamy calls them a “nation's big stories.” One of the differences between objective history and historical myth is the presence (or lack of) historical continuity,

One of the most important indicators and dimensions of mythical reasoning is timelessness: the past, present, and future arbitrarily interchange, complement, and supplement each other. The myth abolishes historical, linear time: the future becomes the new past; what is perceived as progression is, in fact, regression; and that which has been is experienced again.<sup>36</sup>

Concepts of the past and the present are so intermixed that a grievance of long ago is perceived as a present affliction.<sup>37</sup>

Although the cultural heritages of Bosnia's three “nations” stretch back over 1000 years, the underlying mentality and values of these three “nations” of Bosnia-Herzegovina are surprisingly similar. UCLA professor Andrei Simić conducted research on over 200 households from 1966 through 1978, both rural and urban, spanning the gamut from peasants to professionals, in a variety of localities in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, among Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims and concluded,

In spite of this diversity, in no case did the rural-urban dichotomy, nor regional, ethnic, or religious differences reveal any significant or widespread variations in cultural patterns ... Superficial difference in cultural styles tended to mask a deeper level of ideological and structural homogeneity underlying the ethnic and historical heterogeneity of the Yugoslav population.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina where people of each “nation” look the same, speak the same language and share a common cultural “substratum,” historical myths play the primary role in establishing “boundaries” between Balkan “nations.” Historical myth tends,

To function as a boundary-defining mechanism that distinguishes various communities from each other. The factors that lead members of two groups to view each other as different rather than as members of the same collective are often 'mythical' rather than 'factual'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Velikonja, *Religious Separation*, 239.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslav Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 40.

<sup>38</sup> Pål Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*. London: Hurst & Co., 2005), 3. This conclusion is the central focus of Balkan researcher Pål Kolstø who in turn is following the lead of John Armstrong (Armstrong's classic work is *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

Alexandar Pavković, Director of the Centre for Slavonic and East Europe Studies at Macquarie University in Sidney, extends the argument. In his analysis, not only do these myths serve to define the boundaries between the Serb, Croat and Bosniak “nations,” *they also form the core of their national identity*. He develops his argument by noting that while three different religions shaped the way of life, beliefs and attitudes of the three main communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, these differences were,

*Sufficient to differentiate individuals and their communities one from another, [but were] not sufficient to shape a fully-fledged national ideology which purports to explain what a nation is and what historical goal it has... The three religions – Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam – provided necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of three distinct national identities – Croat, Serb and Bosnian Muslim (or Bosniak).<sup>39</sup>*

The primarily “conditions” for the development of three distinct national identities were located instead, he argued, in the historical myths of each “nation.” It was the Serb and Croat historical myths, developed and publicized in the early nineteenth century by nationalist historians and intellectuals that were crucial in forming the “core around which their national liberation ideologies were constructed.”<sup>40</sup>

Since the start of the recent war, Bosniak intellectuals have worked at publicizing their own version of Bosnian history. The contours of a foundational Bosniak historical myth are now beginning to emerge.

In the Socialist period, the emphasis was on the liberation of Yugoslavia from the Germans by the Tito and his Partisan fighters. This played the role of a foundational “historical myth” for Bosnians. The “historical myths” promoted by nationalists were downplayed and in some cases banned.

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<sup>39</sup> Alexandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism in a Multinational State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 7. Italics mine.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 5.

## B. Language

John Joseph notes, “A consistent theme within studies of national identity over the last four decades has been the central importance of language in its formation.”<sup>41</sup> Outwardly, a common language provides a framework, one of the most elementary possible, for linking people together and gives them an identity marker that separates them collectively from others who speak a different language.<sup>42</sup> Language appears to be the central way that the deeper levels of culture, i.e. the level of categories and ways of viewing reality (what is sometimes labeled “worldview”) are transmitted from generation to generation. Lessie Newbiggin calls language “the most fundamental element in culture.”<sup>43</sup> A common language thus provides a collective group with a common set of assumptions about life and reality that strengthen group cohesion.

In the Socialist period, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a standardized language<sup>44</sup> used in the media and schools that was the same for everyone. The Latin and Cyrillic alphabets were used interchangeably. This contributed to the development of a shared civic identity (Bosnian).

With the re-emergence of nationalism this was no longer the case. Nationalist leaders, Croat, Serb and Bosniak, began placing great emphasis on distinguishing “their language” from the language of the other two “nations” of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Because these groups saw themselves as different nations, it followed that they must speak different languages.<sup>45</sup>

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
comments,

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<sup>41</sup> John Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 94.

<sup>42</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Handbook of Language & Ethnic Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4. This elementary function of language, however, does not support the idea that language is always the major constructive element of ethnic boundaries or is an exclusive marker of ethnicity. Harold Haarmann, “History.” *Handbook of Language & Ethnic Identity*, ed. Joshua Fishman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63).

<sup>43</sup> Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989), 185.

<sup>44</sup> It was called the Bosnian dialect of the Serbo-Croatian language.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Ivan Cvitković, *Hrvatski Identitet u Bosni i Hercegovini* [Croatian Identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006), 61 (Translation mine).

The constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina now increasingly insist on the use in education and in public life of their own language—Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Although these three languages are linguistically similar and mutually intelligible, each is separating itself from the others in certain ways—a process often hastened by the country’s education system....The language question...has far-reaching political implications...in a country in which the three, outwardly similar official languages are, it seems, almost competing one against another.<sup>46</sup>

To be consistent, the natural configuration would be – Croats speak Croatian, Serbs speak Serbian, and Bosniaks speak the Bosniak language (bošnjački). Instead, it has now become more or less standardized usage to refer to the language spoken by Bosniaks as Bosnian, after the territory, not the “nation.” This designation strengthens the position of Bosniak nationalists who contend that they are the historic inhabitants of Bosnia and the others (Croats and Serbs) are outsiders.

### C. Core Territory

Ethnic cleansing<sup>47</sup> in the recent war dramatically changed the ethnic map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Much of the violence during the war was aimed at the creation of ethnically pure areas that once had contained a mixture of peoples. The Dayton Accord that ended the war solidified the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnically defined territories.<sup>48</sup> Today each of the three “nations” has its own core territory in which they are the majority group. The percentage of individuals living in the core territories of a “nation” different than their own is now relatively small. Individuals outside their core territories feel vulnerable. In essence, they

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<sup>46</sup> Douglas Davidson, “Report by the Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *Information Seminar on the Ratification Process of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. October 2006. <<http://www.oscebih.org/public/default.asp?d=6&article=show&id=1907>> (March 23, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> This chilling term ethnic cleansing came into common usage in the western world as a result of the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (David Levinson, “Ethnic Cleansing”. *Ethnic Relations: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> For example, pre-war Republika Srpska [one of Bosnia's two political entities] had 220,000 Croat inhabitants. At the end of 2005, their number was less than 15,000. Out of 39,000 Serbs who fled Herzegovina during the war, only about 9,000 had returned by the end of 2005 (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). *Human Rights Report in the OSCE Region*. 2006. <[www.ihf-hr.org/](http://www.ihf-hr.org/)>, (March 11, 2007), 90.

are “second class citizens.” It is often hard for them to get a job and their children often have difficulties in school. In each core territory, representatives of the majority “nation” (often nationalists) control the regions' educational institutions and media.

This is a major change from the Socialist period. The *Encyclopedia Jugoslavija*, published in 1983, noted that,

The three main nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina are almost completely intermixed, so that there are no nationally homogeneous territories.”<sup>49</sup>

In urban areas the high rate of intermarriage between individuals of differing “nations” created heterogeneous, multi-ethnic urban communities. In rural areas, “checkerboard” like patterns of ethnic diversity existed,

Many larger villages also were mixed, although, in some of these, members of different ethnic groups tended to live at different ends or in different quarters. Most smaller villages were inhabited by only one group.<sup>50</sup>

This intricate “mosaic” meant people from the three “nations” went to school together, worked together and in generally lived together (*zajednički život*). In this period most people in Bosnia were proud of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious co-existence so obvious in Bosnian society. For them, that is what made Bosnia-Herzegovina unique.

Two of the three “nations” of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the Croats and the Serbs) find their “motherland” in “kin states” (i.e. Croatia and Serbia) outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This complicates the issue of national identity. For many, their primarily loyalty not in toward their country of citizenship, but toward the neighboring “kin states.” Some, but not all, have dual citizenship.

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<sup>49</sup> “Bosnia,” *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* [Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia] (Zagreb: Leksikografskog zavoda FNRJ, 1983).

<sup>50</sup> Malcolm, “Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Bosniak nationalism is increasing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The quote “Serbia for the Serbs, Croatia for the Croats and Bosnia for Bosniaks” is a popular expression of such nationalism. Over time, Bosnia as a territory may acquire the status of a “mythical territory” for the Bosniaks, like is Kosovo for the Serbs and like the expression “Croatian people on Croatian land” is for the Croats.

### **Summary**

Differing core historical myths define national identity and define boundaries that separate the three “nations” of Bosnia-Herzegovina from each other. Since the recent war, the common language of the three “nations” has split into three languages – one for each “nation.” These languages are becoming increasingly distinct. Each “nation” has its own core territory where they are the majority population. The Serbs and Croats find their “motherland” outside Bosnia-Herzegovina (i.e. in kin states) while for the Bosniaks, the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina is their sole “motherland.”

### **III. EXAMINING THE EMOTIONAL DIMENSION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA**

Solidarity, the third dimension of the paradigm, is a term that captures the collective, emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bonded group. Brubaker labels this dimension “groupness or commonality.” This felt sense of solidarity is an important variable in the study of national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This dimension emerges clearly in Milton Esman's definition of ethnic identity,

[Ethnic identity is ] the set of meanings that individuals impute to their membership in an ethnic community, including those attributes that bind them to that collectivity and that distinguish it from others in their relevant environment. A psychological construct that

can evoke powerful emotional responses, ethnic identity normally conveys strong elements of continuity.<sup>51</sup>

In examining the emotional dimension of national identity, this paradigm considers the role of symbols and the role of negative “characterizations of other” in creating an emotional sense of solidarity with one's “nation.”

### **A. Collective Symbolic Markers**

Collective symbolic markers are used publically to mark a territory as belonging to a given “nation.” As a person drives through Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is quite easy to tell, on these basis of these markers, which group is the majority “nation” in any given location.

Since religion and national identity are fused in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the symbolic expression of national identity typically involves the use of religious symbols. Religious symbols are used by nationalistic political and religious leaders to promote ethno-religious nationalism. Religion provides “nationalists with a rich source of symbols and rituals with which to inspire national identification, separateness, and internal cohesion of the ethnic group.”<sup>52</sup> Velikonja's article “In Hoc Signo Vincas: Religious Symbolism in the Balkan Wars 1991-1995”<sup>53</sup> and Sells' book *The Bridge Betrayed*<sup>54</sup> provide detailed documentation and analysis.

The power of religious symbols to sustain an emotional sense of “solidarity” is evidenced by the fact that in the recent war, religious buildings (such as mosques, churches, chapels, and

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<sup>51</sup> Milton Esman, *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Tone Bringa, “Islam and the Quest for Identity in Post-Communist Bosnia-Herzegovina.” *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States* (ed. Maya Shatzmiller. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 2001), 34, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Mitja Velikonja, “In Hoc Signo Vincas: Religious Symbolism in the Balkan Wars 1991-1995.” *Religion in Eastern Europe* 21.5 (October 2001), 8-25.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

monasteries) were typically the first buildings to be destroyed when an area was attacked and the first buildings to be restored or rebuilt after the war.<sup>55</sup>

A large number of new mosques have been built, largely with monies provided by donors in the Arab world. Some of these have been built in locations where Bosniaks are few in number. These have a very definite symbolic meaning<sup>56</sup> and for many Bosniaks convey the message – this place or this territory belongs to us. For Croats and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they create a sense of fear and resentment over the “Islamization” of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a similar way, many new Catholic and Orthodox churches have been built or substantially renovated in Croat and Serbian regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Socialist times emotional laden markers of ethnic “national identity” were discouraged or not allowed. Instead, substitutes were created and promoted that provided an emotional laden sense of belonging to Socialist “Yugoslavia.” The Yugoslav flag, with its red, five pointed star in the center, was a powerful symbol of socialist Yugoslav identity. Other socialist symbols included a Yugoslav “national hymn” and patriotic songs everyone learned, the glorification of Partisan victories during World War II and the personality cult that was carefully developed around Tito. The use of nationalistically oriented flags and symbols was not allowed, or in some cases only allowed within religious buildings. Vjekoslav Perica's explored Socialist Yugoslavia's substitute “civil religion” in his book *Balkan Idols*.<sup>57</sup>

With the breakdown of the Yugoslav government, public expressions of nationalism began occurring through public use of religious symbols,

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<sup>55</sup> According to some estimates, during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1,000 to 1,100 mosques were demolished, along with approximately 340 Orthodox and 450 Roman Catholic churches and monasteries.

<sup>56</sup> Many studies have been conducted about the relationship between mosques and Muslim identity in Western Europe. For an introductory overview of the academic literature on this subject, see Marcel Maussen, *Making Muslim Presence Meaningful: Studies in Islam and Mosques in Western Europe*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (ASSR), 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States. Religion and Global Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Public space, which prior to 1990 had been inclusive of every “Yugoslav” citizen irrespective of ethnic affiliation through the use of symbols that were shared by all three ethno-religious communities, was being redefined as the territory of one particular ethno-religious group (or nation)...

For instance, greetings that had earlier been used in private among members of the same ethno-religious community (because they were associated with the particular religious tradition of that group) would be used in publicly defined spaces (post offices, shops, banks, schools, etc.) by members of the group that was in political and military control of a certain area. In other words, those people who did not share the same limited code were made to feel like foreigners who did not belong. The expression of religious beliefs, then, did not only change from a private matter to a public one; it was also politicized.<sup>58</sup>

Flags are emotion laden symbolic markers of national identity. In contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Bosnian (civil) flag symbolizes Bosnia as a state. Each “nation” also has its own flag, with a symbol on the flag. The Croats use a flag like the Croatian flag with the red and white Croatian coat-of-arms (the so-called chessboard) in the center.<sup>59</sup> The Serbs use a flag like the Serbian flag with the symbol of a cross with a “C” in each quadrant.<sup>60</sup> The Bosniaks have a “national flag” with a *Lillium Bosniacum* (a fleur-de-lis) symbol – this was traditionally a flag used by Bosnians of all religions in the Middle ages. They also use a the green flag with the Islamic star and crescent symbol in white as a religiously based symbol of national identity.<sup>61</sup> The use of flags, both personally (for example, in a wedding procession, a flag is traditionally used), and publically during public or religious holidays sends a symbolic message.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>59</sup> This symbol was used in the Croatian Fascist state formed during WWII – a government responsible for the organized massacre of large numbers of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.

<sup>60</sup> In the Cyrillic alphabet the Serbs use, a “C” symbol is an “S” in the Latin alphabet. The four “S”s stand for “*Samo Sloga Srba Spasava*” [only unity saves the Serbs]. The Ss surround a cross, meaning that the unity which is being referred to is centered on their religion. “Anotherwords, the church rallies the Serb people together as the sole institution that – as is often emphasized – never betrayed them” (Velikonja, *Religious Separation*, 17.)

<sup>61</sup> Velikonja explores this in more detail (Velikonja, *Religious Separation*). Bosniaks also used a non religious symbol - the lily flower (fleur-de-lis) which was a symbol used in Medieval Bosnia.

## B. Individual Symbolic markers

Symbolic markers of national identity are also used by individuals to signal their own national identity, i.e. the “nation” or national category he or she “belongs” to. These markers, usually subtle and often invisible to foreigners, serve as clues to indicate a person's identity and reinforce the emotional dimension of belonging that people feel toward their “nation.” Such markers,

Appear at various levels of social structure and local culture. For the external observer, this is often a matter of what are, at first glance, minor details such as the length of a skirt in national costume or embroidered roses in a different colour on home-spun textiles, or even certain finesses in the preparation of ritual meals and their names and/or in the formulae of ritual and the odd melody or dance step... In essence, [it is] a matter of defining the symbolic boundaries between Croatian and Serbian [and Bosniak] popular culture.<sup>62</sup>

Five of the most important personal markers that signal national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina are:

### 1. A Person's Name

The most basic signal of national identity in Bosnia is a person's name. When a person has a name that comes from the Arabic language and is clearly non-western, it signals that he or she is most likely a Bosniak. Other names identify a person as a Croat or a Serb,

The combination of first and last name therefore signals to Bosnians the ethno-religious background of other Bosnians when they meet for the first time. If a person's first name does not tell the story, his last name usually will, or vice versa. Or in the rarer cases where neither indicates a person's exact background, the additional information about that person's father's personal name and possibly the neighborhood or area of Bosnia from which he or she comes will be decisive.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Dunja Rihtman-Augustin, *Ethnology, Myth and Politics: Anthropologizing Croatian Ethnology. Progress in European Ethnology*, (translated by Jasna Capo) (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004). 9.

<sup>63</sup> Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, 20.

In Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina, parents sympathetic to the Socialist system often gave their children “international” names that were ethnically neutral.

## 2. Language

The language one speaks signals national identity. Traditionally, people in the Republika Srpska spoke the same *ijekavian* form of the language as those in other parts of Bosnia. Since the war, in order to distance themselves from Croats and Bosniaks, the language in favor in the Republika Srpska was the *ekavian* form which is used in Serbia. A person speaking *ekavian* signals to others that he or she is a Serb. A similar dynamic exists among people who live in areas that are strongly Croat or Bosniak.

A whole series of “code words” function as signals of national identity. In Croatian the word commonly used for bread is *kruh*, in Serbian, *hleb* and the word traditionally used in Bosnia-Herzegovina is *hljeb*. If a person uses the word *kruh* or *hleb* in conversation, it is a clear signal that the person is a Croat or a Serb. Since the war, the Bosniaks have been encouraging the use of words of Turkish or Arabic origin and the addition of the letter “h” in certain words. When a person uses these words, it is a signal that he or she is a Bosniak. The classic example is the word a person uses for coffee. A person wanting to emphasize that he or she is a Croat would use the term *kava*, a Serb the term *kafa* and a Bosniak the term *kahva*.

## 3. Alphabet

The alphabet one uses signals national identity. The Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet and the Croats and Bosniaks the Latin alphabet. The alphabet used on road signs, on billboards, on stores, etc. signals who lives in that area.

#### 4. Greetings

Greetings people use are an important marker of identification. Most of these are related in one way or another to religion. When a person greets another person using an Islamic greeting, that person is signaling that he or she is a Bosniak. If the person greeted returns the greeting with an Islamic greeting, they are indicating that they are also Bosniak. If they don't answer, or answer back with a secular greeting, they have signaled that either they are not a Bosniak, or they don't like being identified as a “practicing Muslim.” Similar dynamics exist with certain Serbian and Croatian greetings.

Certain ritual greetings are used for Christian holidays (*blagdan*) like Christmas or Easter, and for Muslim religious holidays (*bajram*). The particular expression a person uses will indicate whether they are Serb, Croat or Bosniak.

In the Socialist period, a standardized form of Serbo-Croatia adopted to the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was in use. This helped promoted the civic, Bosnian identity of people living in the republic. The primary language related markers of identity were ethnically specific greetings and forms of address. Socialist terms like “comrade” were a part of everyday language. When a person didn't use such language, or used ethnically specific or “religious” greetings he or she signaled that their ethnic identity was important to them.

#### 5. Food

Certain foods have a symbolic role in marking a person's national identity. The most basic divide is whether or not one eats pork. Fasting (whether during Lent or other fast days or during the month of Ramadan) signals a person's national identity. Since the dates of Christian holidays differ for Catholic and Orthodox believers, the days when one fasts or celebrates signal national identity. The consumption of alcohol, especially the ritual plum glass of plum brandy

offered when people visit each other can also serve as a signal. If a person refuses it, it can be a sign that the person is a practicing Muslim. Most nominal Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina consume alcohol.

The way the ritual cup of coffee offered on a visit is served is symbolic. If a small cup without a handle is offered, with sugar cubes, that signals the person is a Bosniak. Finally, certain traditional foods such as Baklava can signal a person's identity. More or less the same dynamics occurred in Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main difference is that today, some of these practices such as the eating of port or fasting (Lent and Ramadan) the general expectation is that a person should practice them. If a person doesn't practice these traditions, their non-observance is usually done privately. In Socialist times, the generation expectation was that a good Yugoslav would not practice these things. If they did, their observance was usually done privately.

## 6. Dress and color

The most obvious form of dress as a religious symbol in Bosnian society is in the head coverings worn by some Bosniak women. But much more subtle markers exist. American anthropologist William Lockwood describes the symbolic identity markers he observed in the 1970's in Central Bosnia,

[Each ethnic group or nation] bears its objective marks of ethnicity. Most conspicuous are differences in dress, cuisine, and language. All three domains are marked by small and subtle variations in a basic style—for example, color of the sash worn with the traditional men's costume (red for Christian, green for Muslim) or style and color of headgear for both sexes (e.g., maroon fez or beret for Muslim men, black cap for Catholic/Croat men, and soft-billed cap or “overseas cap” for Orthodox/Serb men.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> William G. Lockwood, *European Moslems: Economy and Ethnicity in Western Bosnia* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 49.

The same would be true in rural areas for the type of dress worn by women. In Socialist times, many of these same symbols existed but were honored as “folklore.” The religious element of symbolic dress was discouraged. Religious head coverings, for example, for women were not allowed by the Socialist government.

Color often carries with it a symbolic meaning. The color green signifies Bosniak, the color red Serbian, and to a lesser extent, the color blue Croatian. Some Croats and Serbs (especially those influenced by nationalist ideology) are offended, for example, that the street signs in Sarajevo, which in the days of Socialist Yugoslavia were dark blue, are now green. Color as a symbolic marker was not an important factor in Socialist times.

## 7. The use of other symbols and traditions

A whole host of other markers and symbols signal a person's religious, political and national orientation. Whether or not a person “crosses himself” and how (using three fingers<sup>65</sup> or five) and what religious holidays a person observes and when<sup>66</sup> are religious markers of national identity. Which newspapers and magazines a person reads, which television channels a person chooses to watch and what kind of music a person listens to signal national identity (for example the traditional Bosniak *Sevdalinka* or the nationalistic oriented Serbian Turbo-folk<sup>67</sup>).

At birth, Bosniak boys are generally circumcised, regardless of whether they secular and non-religious, or practicing Muslims. This serves as a private “marker” of national identity. A

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<sup>65</sup> The number three has special significance to the Serbs. The way a person crosses himself, for example, indicates whether or not that person is a Serb or Croat. A Serb crosses himself with three fingers, a Croat with five. During the war, holding up one's hand and showing three fingers (the thumb and the first and second finger) was the Serbian victory sign. Serbs explain it by saying it refers to the Trinity.

<sup>66</sup> For example, does a person celebrate Christmas and if so, does he observe December 25<sup>th</sup> or January 7<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Sabina Ramet has a chapter in her book *Balkan Babel* on the role of popular music in promoting nationalism (*Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*. 4th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002). Eric Gordy's book offers the most complete analysis of the role of music, including Turbo-folk in promoting Serbian nationalism (Eric Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

person's final resting place, i.e. his or her grave, also has a symbolic dimension. When a person dies, an announcement is placed in the newspaper, and in small announcements posted in the neighborhood. These announcements signal a person's national identity by colors, symbols and “code” words in the announcement. The type of grave marker and the location of the graveyard signal also person's national identity.<sup>68</sup>

## B. Categorization of “Other”

The way people, especially nationalists, refer to those outside their “nation” also takes stylized, symbolic forms. This “categorization of the other” helps form a sense of “belonging” to one's “nation” and strengthen the boundaries between “nations.”

In the nationalistic context of Bosnia-Herzegovina this is often done through the use of negative stereotypes, such as “name calling.” This is a form of “ethnocentrism.” Smith writes,

Typical of such communities is a collective feeling of the centrality, superiority, and rightness of the community in relation to those outside, which we may term “ethnocentrism.”<sup>69</sup>

In both Serbian and Croatian *ethno-myth*, the close connection between the “nation” and God leads to the concept of a “divine destiny” and to a “demonization” of the “others.” The enemy becomes inferior, or animal-like. In religio-national discourse, the enemy is seen as cursed by God. “They” are evil and trying to destroy us. The enemy was condemned as genocidal, diabolical, etc. “We” are good, and chosen by God to “suffer and fight for just causes,”

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<sup>68</sup> Separate graveyards, or sections in a large graveyard exist for the Orthodox (Serbs), the Catholics (Croats), the Muslims (Bosniaks) and atheists (or Communists). In the largest graveyard in Sarajevo sections also exist for Jews and Protestants.

<sup>69</sup> Anthony Smith, “Ethnic Identity and Territorial Nationalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities : History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR* (ed. Alexander Motyl. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 50.

An insistence on prioritising and canonising ethnic criteria inevitably produces a backlash since it constructs others (outsiders). These others are seen as foreign, unwanted and dehumanised.<sup>70</sup>

This dehumanization and demonization of adversaries was engaged in by all three sides. Among the Serbs, for example, Islam was viewed as an “unmitigated evil” for the Serbian people and Croats were “demonized” in the Serbian press. They were portrayed as a genocidal people secretly preparing for a new genocide against the Serbs living in newly independent Croatia. Croats were not called Croats but “*Ustashe*.” The Serbs refused to use the name Bosniak, but instead called them “Turks” (Turci) and stereotyped them as “backward, primitive, dirty and treacherous.”<sup>71</sup>

The same process took place among the Croats, where the Serbs were portrayed in the media day after day as *Četnici* and as uncivilized and warlike “barbarians from the East” whose efforts to rule the cultured, peaceful people of Croatia “stood in the way” of the centuries long struggle for Croatian nationhood. After their break with the Bosniaks during the war, along with Serbs the Croat media started to refer to Bosniaks as “fundamentalists”. On a popular level many Croats and Serbs speak of Bosniaks as unbelievably “primitive.” Myths about religious conspiracies are common. Serbian nationalists continually talked about Vatican and German plots and conspiracies against the Serbian people and coordinated efforts by Islamic fundamentalists to take over Europe.

## SUMMARY

Collective identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina takes several forms. One of this is national identity. National identity in Bosnian society takes two forms: civic and ethnic and is

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<sup>70</sup> Pavlovic, “Who Are Montenegrins?” “ 105.

<sup>71</sup> This stereotype exists in sharp contrast to actual Bosnia history, where historically Muslims were the educated, urban dwellers, and Serbs the uneducated peasant villagers (the *raja*). Even today, the Bosnian Muslims tend to live in urban settings and Serbs in small towns and villages.

experienced differently in Bosnia-Herzegovina than in Western Europe or North America. Each individual has two national identities, one civic and one ethnic. The salience of these differing identities has varied considerably over the past thirty years. The Dayton agreement that ended the recent war structurally established a society has built in contradictions between civic and ethnic forms of national identity.

Three subjective dimensions were examined. Language and territory were not an important component in national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina earlier but they took on new importance during and after the recent war. The third subjective dimension, that of historical narratives (myths), is of crucial importance to Bosnian national identity and provides the undergirding for ethnic nationalism. The two fusions that have occurred, one between historical narrative and national identity and the other between religion and national identity, are what make national identity in Bosnia both unique and important to the work of evangelical missionaries.