

В ПОИСКАХ БОЛЬШИНСТВА: ДЕМОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ МУСУЛЬМАНСКОЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В БОСНИИ И ГЕРЦЕГОВИНЕ

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В статье рассматривается связь между демографией и развитием мусульманской политической идентичности в Боснии и Герцеговине. Главный исследовательский вопрос: в какой степени демографические компоненты населения Боснии и Герцеговины (как естественные, так и пространственные) сформировали уникальную политическую идентичность мусульман/боснийцев по отношению к православным/сербам и католикам/хорватам? Была предпринята попытка изучить показатель численности населения как объекта политической конкуренции, в том числе объяснить, как модели демографического поведения варьируются в зависимости от религиозных групп и оказывают дальнейшее влияние на политическую идентичность. Иными словами, речь идет о том, как результаты переписей населения формировали политику идентичности мусульман в Боснии и Герцеговине. Особое внимание уделено кейсу первого президента независимой Боснии — Алии Изетбеговича — как воплощения политической идентичности мусульман.

Утверждая, что демография является важным компонентом развития политической идентичности, мы предполагаем, что данная работа может вызвать интерес у ученых из других научных областей, поскольку она добавляет междисциплинарную перспективу понимания отношений между демографией, религией и политикой. Наконец, данная статья разрабатывает дополнительную исследовательскую программу, сосредоточенную на влиянии демографии на политику, помимо тех, которые изучаются в рамках политических исследований.

Ключевые слова: политическая идентичность, ислам, демография, перепись населения, Алия Изетбегович.

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IN SEARCH OF THE MAJORITY: THE DEMOGRAPHIC EVOLUTION OF MUSLIM POLITICAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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The study discusses the relationships between demography and the development of Muslim political identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). The main question that this paper aims to answer is: To what extent have the demographic components of Bosnia and Herzegovina's population (both natural and spatial movement) framed the unique political identity of the Muslim/Bosniak population in relation to Orthodox/Serbs and Catholics/Croats.

The paper seeks to examine the concept of population numbers as an object of political competition, including how patterns of demographic behavior vary between religious groups and further impact political identity. Thus, the article perceives the population census as an object of political struggle. Hence, by using the final results of the censuses, the study clarifies the significance of population numbers in the construction of the identity politics of Muslims in B&H. Furthermore, the paper argues for the significance of population statistics in constructing of the political identity of religious groups in a multi-ethnic society, emphasizing that demography holds important clues to the pattern of political behavior, and that specific forms of demographic variations are correlated with distinguished political agendas. Additionally, the study traces the political life and rise of the first president of independent Bosnia—Alija Izetbegović—as an embodiment of Muslims' political identity.

Arguing that demography is an important component of the development of political identity, the paper expects to stimulate interest from other scientific fields as it adds to our understanding of relationships between demography, religion, and politics. Finally, the study intends to open a supplementary research agenda focusing on the effects of demography on politics, beyond those explored within the limits of political studies.

Keywords: *political identity, Islam, demography, census, Alija Izetbegović.*

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With the Ottoman conquests in the fifteenth century, Bosnia and Herzegovina came under the rule of a state which had an Islamic mission: *dawa*.¹ Because Islam does not recognize the nation in the European sense, it treated all the inhabitants of the conquered areas according to their religious affiliation, as Muslims, Orthodox, and Roman

1. The term *dawa* means to urge people to follow the Islamic way of life

Catholics. When national freedom movements emerged in the nineteenth century, the main obstacle to Balkan Christians was local Muslim Slavs, who had converted to Islam during the four centuries of Turkish rule. In essence, the conflict in B&H, where the concentration of Muslims was the highest, was a religious war between people of the same origin (Jevtić, 2008). Arguably, the necessary precondition for conflict between Bosniaks/Muslim and Serbs was the population density of the former. There are also Muslims in the Republic of Serbia in Sandžak/Raška region, but they had never started any rebellion or conflict against the official state (excepting during Nazi occupation) because of their lack of population strength. The same was true for every minority population of the Balkans, regardless of religion. Specifically, because the fracture of community identity in B&H had occurred along the lines of religious affiliation, historical events impeded any modern national idea among Muslims (Jevtić, 2008). Thus, Muslims developed their unique political identity through confrontation with Slavic Christians. Moreover, they identified themselves with the Ottoman state, which has also impeded bringing out their nationalism (Babuna, 2004).

After the collapse of Former Socialist Yugoslavia, every ethnic/confessional group had organized its political parties. Unavoidably, the division has transplanted to the party system of B&H, subsequently leading to the new political reality in which the absolute majority of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks—i.e., Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Muslims—voted for their largely ethnic-religious positioned parties (Antić, 2019). Knowing that surviving in a democracy implies being counted, and feeling as if what one thinks counts, and, ultimately, that decision-making is based on the opinion of the majority (Asad, 2003), the size of religious groups is a relevant factor in everyday politics. For the Muslim community, as for the other two ethnoreligious groups, the establishment of democracy in the 1990s signaled the start of a race for achieving a majority on the following censuses and elections, equally. As a result, the census became a tool in the hands of politicians. Today, especially since the September 11 attacks in 2001, Muslim demography has become an object of serious analysis, both public and scholarly, by interpreting their birth rates as political problems. Inevitably, discourses about national populations under threat of being overtaken by Muslims, from Camus's *The Great Replacement* to Ye'or's *Eurabia*, have emerged all over Europe in recent decades and provided fertile ground for the replacement theorist. Meanwhile, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, issues of ethnic demography have never lost their importance.

The present essay is organized as follows. After the introduction, it discusses the context behind the relationship between political identity and demography, within which four central notions crucial for the study are going to be further explained. In the third section, the demography-political identity juncture in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be separated into chronological phases, starting from the 1879 census to the latest one in 2013. Finally, the paper is closed with short conclusions.

DEMOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL IDENTITY

According to Goldstone, one of the major problems in the modern world is different demographic patterns between religious groups within the state (Goldstone, Kaufmann, and Toft, 2012). In this respect, the issue of political identity and demography remains central in public debate in every multiethnic country. The question is mainly related to the higher natural growth of the Muslim population, which raises the problem of the representation of this confessional group over time, if the practice of “one man, one vote” is applied.

A political system that mirrors multi-confessional reality can be found in Lebanon: so-called confessionalism, a form of consociation democracy, understood as “a system of government that proportionally allocates political power among a country’s communities, whether religious or ethnic, according to their percentage of the population” (United Nation Institute of Peace, 2006). In a similar vein, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where religion is the dividing line of popular political identity (Ekmečić, 2017), there were attempts to resolve this heterogeneity through a similar political model imposed during the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1910, and by USA and others in 1995.

Religious affiliation shapes political views by two mechanisms: 1) religious organizations promote religious ideas correlated with political opinions and 2) religious groups encourage individuals to link their religious beliefs and political standpoint (Schmidt & Miles, 2017). Therefore, the most numerous religious group in a representative democracy potentially possesses the capability to control the political scene as well. Hence, studying the Muslim community in B&H, a country based on different denominations, especially after the collapse of the one-party regime and the establishment of a multi-party democracy, is of great importance for investigating the crossroads of politics and religion.

First, to address four central concepts in this study:

- Demography
- Political Demography
- Census
- Political identity

Demography. According to the UN Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, “Demography is the scientific study of human populations, primarily concerning their size, structure and development” (Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, 2017). It considers changes in population, natural movement (births and deaths), marriages and divorces, and all forms of population migration. The subjects of demography are also the structures of the population according to different characteristics, such as age and gender, economic activity, educational level, nationality, religion, marital status, and so on. It explores and analyses the laws and predictability in population changes under the influence of births, deaths, and mobility. Eventually, demographic development is a synonym of a complex process of population development that includes both natural and migratory population movements and changes in all population structures, but also interaction with economic, social, biological, psychological and other factors that directly or indirectly condition or steer the development of the population in a particular way.

Political Demography. In a general sense, political demography can be defined as the study of population composition and structure that are a cause or a consequence of political activities (Goldstone, Kaufmann, & Toft, 2012; Weiner & Teitelbaum, 2001). It is concerned with the political importance of population changes (ageing, migration, fertility, etc.) and considers the political determinants of population change. The subject ranges from modernization theory (Huntington, 2006), geopolitics (Huntington, 2011), ageing effects on electoral results and party affiliation (Teixeira, 2008; Goerres, 2009), and many more fields. Arguably, since demographic changes are one of the most predictable future trends, political demography needs to be brought into the mainstream of political studies. Nevertheless, the significance and possibility of contributing to a better understanding of politics are

not yet affirmed by both demographers and those educated in political science (Weiner& Teitelbaum, 2001), leaving uncharted territory between the established fields of demography and political scholarship open for new research.

Census. A census is a statistical survey conducted once every ten years to collect data on the various geographical, demographic, socioeconomic, and ethnic characteristics of a population. The census units are persons, households, and dwellings, all to the lowest territorial level, and it provides high-quality and internationally-comparable statistics, which are extremely important for planning social and economic development. In arguing that censuses today serve as a means of legitimizing state power (Loveman, 2014), the present study recognizes that the census is strongly affected by political structures. Foucault lucidly remarked how “population comes to be a subject, as well as an object of government” (Foucault, 2009).

Political Identity. Identity shapes numerous viewpoints in one’s life. Gentry has conceptualized identity as the narrative about who we are, and political identity as an internal story of one’s political views (Gentry, 2018). Additionally, Fukuyama argues that identity politics is a search for recognition from the outer world, and even perceives Islamism as a quest for recognition (Fukuyama, 2018). Political identity is almost always incorporated with a group affiliation and illustrates how membership in a particular group might signify specific political views and perspectives. Thus, Islam has the power to determine the entire political life of a group. It is “*din wa dawla*,” that is, it encompasses all aspects of human activity, both religious and political (Popović, 1990). Knowing that identity politics describes a political approach wherein people of a particular religion (also race, class or other group) form exclusive political movements, we approach demography as a framework for understanding the political identity of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CHRONOLOGY OF MUSLIM POLITICAL IDENTITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The population estimate over a century and a half, from the 1879 census to 2013, serves as a springboard for establishing a concept, on empirical evidence, about the correlation between demography and the emergence of political identity. Pointing out the main trends in the demographic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this research aims to approximate the fundamental characteristics of interreligious demographic differentiation in this area, which led to the construction of Bosniak/Muslim identity in its interaction with the identities of both Serbs/Orthodox and Croats/Catholics.

Population trends have been characterized by fluctuations in the transition of demographic elements and their interaction with other components of social and physical systems (Spasovska, 1995). Hence, by arranging demographic development into distinctive phases defined through specific political-historical events, we will be able to study the evolution of Muslim identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Starting from the general laws of the population development, Spasovska identifies three stages of demographic evolution of this area: the period between World War I and II; the period from World War II to the 1960s; and the period from the 1960s to the 1990s (Spasovska, 1995). I intend to extend her analysis on both sides of time frame by adding the period from 1879 to World War I, and the period from the last census conducted in SFRY in 1991 to the only one in independent B&H in 2013.

Now I turn to a more detailed explanation, chronologically, of how the political identity of Muslims in B&H has developed.

From 1879 to WWI. During the rule of Ottomans, the political identity of Bosnia was split along the confessional lines due to the religious character of their rule, but it was further encouraged by the Austro-Hungarian occupation from 1878 to 1918, and especially by the election law from 1910. Therefore, starting this analysis from the first Austro-Hungarian census conducted in 1879 seems like a reasonable option.

In B&H, Austria-Hungary conducted four censuses: 1879, 1885, 1895 and 1910. According to the 1879 census, across an area of 51,246 km², Bosnia and Herzegovina had 1,158,440 inhabitants. The censuses conducted in 1885 and 1895 recorded insignificant changes in the ethnic structure of the total population. Eventually, the population grew to 1,898,044 inhabitants until 1910. Regarding ethnical structure (Table 1) the percentage of Orthodox remained unchanged for thirty-one years (from 42.88% to 43.49%), while the percentage of Muslims decreased by 6.48% (from 38.73% in 1879 to 32.25 in 1910). The decline in the participation of Muslims in the total population of B&H was caused by emigration, instigated by their hesitation to live in a state under laws not based on the Qur'an and Sharia, and a country that put them in second place, behind Catholics, and together with Orthodox Christians (Rebac, 1925).

As one might expect, out-migration harmed the political identity of Muslims in B&H, making their elites lethargic and uninterested in political actions. Nevertheless, a seemingly insignificant event from 1899 changed the situation dramatically. In that year, Catholic nuns kidnapped a young Muslim woman named Fata Omanović, converted her to the Catholic faith, and arranged her marriage to a Catholic man. Outraged by this action, Muslims demanded a reaction from the authorities, who replied that the real reason for this event was the inadequate religious education of young Muslims (Rebac, 1925). This response enraged the Muslim population, and from it grew a broader movement for the autonomy of religious and religious-educational endowments and institutions. Finally, after ten years of negotiations, in 1909 *The Statute for the autonomous administration of Islamic religious and waqf-ma'arif affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina* was approved. Rebac noted in 1925 how this statute organized the Muslim community in B&H on a religious basis for the first time in their history; even during the rule of Turks they never had anything similar to this religious autonomy (Rebac, 1925). As soon as they were allowed to direct issues of a dogmatic and material nature, the need to emigrate ceased. In the end, the series of events from 1899 onwards greatly influenced the state of mind and self-perception of Muslims. They now managed to derive self-esteem from the religious group to which they belonged, which offered them security and gave them a fresh passion for political engagement.

In 1910, party-religious segmentation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was further cemented by the electoral engineering of the Austro-Hungarian administration. The Statute for Bosnia and Herzegovina enacted the electoral order through which deputies to the Bosnian convocation were to be elected from the dominant religious groups according to their share of the total population (Simovic & Andric, 2019). Eventually, this model of national-religious political segmentation has left long-lasting consequences for the party system.

Furthermore, after realizing that the new rulers did not intend to carry out far-reaching land reforms and disband the serf system installed by the Turks, Muslims' attitude towards the annexation of Bosnia changed. 91.49% of landowners were Muslims, while peasants (serfs)

73.92% Orthodox and 21.49% Catholic (Banjac, 1984), thus, making Muslims very interested in maintaining the status quo as it had been under Ottoman rule. Consequently, although no longer under the direct reign of the sultan, Muslims intended, at least in B&H, to preserve their superiority and domination over the Christian part of the population and to freeze the social relations established during Ottoman rule.

The Statute for Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1910 had a formative effect on the dominant political identities, especially on the identity of Muslims in B&H. New election law marked religious group numbers as a yardstick of political power. Moreover, events originating in this period shaped the future political structure. Even today, one can identify their attraction for the main political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From the beginning of WWI to the end of WWII. During World War I, Muslims across Bosnia enthusiastically responded to the call for mobilization into the Austro-Hungarian army. Furthermore, “the legendary Second Bosnian Regiment received more decorations for bravery than any European regiment,” and “measured per capita, Bosnian Muslims lost more people in the war than any other ethnic group in the Austro-Hungarian Empire” (Schindler, 2009, p.26). In those war years, somewhere on the battlefield in Italy, an Austro-Hungarian soldier, Mustafa Izetbegović, was wounded (and would remain a military invalid). Later, he had a son, Alija Izetbegović, the future first president of independent Bosnia and Herzegovina (Fig. 1).

Analysis of the population dynamics for the period 1914 to 1945 was based on censuses conducted in 1921 and 1931. During the inter-census period, the population increased from 1,890,000 to 2,324,000 (Spasovska, 1995). The growth of confessions was rapid and even. The Orthodox population rose from 829,000 to 1,028,000, the Muslim from 588,000 to 718,000, and the Catholic from 444,000 to 548,000. Such a high birth rate supported out-migration from Bosnia that could not disrupt the numerical relations between confessional groups (Spasovska, 1995).

The question of nationality was not asked on the first census of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on 31 January 1921, only the question of mother tongue and religion, while ten years later (31 March 1931), together with the question of mother tongue and religion, the question of nationality was asked for the first time (Mrđen, 2002). As a result of the proclaimed policy aimed at creating a Yugoslav nationality, which should have overarched other nationalities, in 1929 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and



Figure 1. Photograph of Alija Izetbegović. Source: *Politika*, 14 August 2017, retrieved 28 August 2020, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak>

Slovenes was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and in addition to Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins, Muslims were also classified as Yugoslavs by nationality (Mrđen, 2002).

Changes in both social and economic development in this period were very slow and did not significantly contribute to the transformation of demographic development. Moreover, it produced an extremely young population structure, with the share of the population aged under nineteen years old at around 50% (Spasovska, 1995), which, according to the so-called youth bulge theory (Huntington, 1991; Political Demography, 2012) is an unfavorable age structure for the establishment of a stable political system.

Within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, B&H was a central issue, an area in which Serbian and Croat nationalism clashed. For demographic reasons, both sides needed to designate Bosnian Muslims as members of their national corps, with the aim to gain majority (Schindler, 2009). Therefore, both Belgrade and Zagreb “had become centres, but also antipodes of the national, cultural and economic orientation of the new Muslim intelligentsia” (Kulenović, 1940, p. 201). As result, Dr Mehmed Spaho, a young man and one of the first Muslim intellectuals, who had received his doctorate in Vienna, came to the forefront of the new Muslim political organizations in B&H: the new Yugoslav Muslim Organizations (Ćorović, 1939). The organization accepted the Yugoslav idea, which was the most adequate for Muslims and simultaneously allowed them not to declare themselves as Serbs or Croats.

In the newly-formed Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Muslims were particularly affected by the fact that resolving the agrarian issue was on the agenda from the very beginning. As a result, Muslims began to solidify their ranks, in a sense of religious attachment (Ćorović, 1939). Thus, Spaho put himself at the forefront of the movement to defend Muslim interests, while never putting Muslims in conflict with the interests of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, led by the Serbian king (Ćorović, 1939).

During World War II, Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina took part in partisan units in the fight against the Germans in very small numbers until 1943, while a large number, at least initially, openly supported the Independent State of Croatia, a puppet fascist state whose borders encompassed B&H (Schindler, 2009). According to Attila Hoare, the anti-fascist brigades or partisans in B&H were perceived as an exclusively Serbian army by ordinary Muslims (Hoare, 2013). Moreover, at the initiative of Himmler and the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini, an SS division composed of 20,000 Bosnian Muslims associated to the 13th Volunteer Mountain Division of the SS (Handzar Division) was established, better known for its pan-Islamic ideology and crimes against civilians (Redžić, 1987; Schindler, 2009).

After the end of both world wars, the Muslims of B&H ended up on the losing side and both times ended up in a state union (Yugoslavia) with the Serbs, against whom they fought during both wars. Not surprisingly, after the wars, Muslims embraced the Yugoslav identity to renounce their “brothers in arms,” the Croats, and to ethnically distance themselves from Serbs who perceived them as Serbs of the Islamic faith. Ultimately, Islam was a shelter for most of them. They spoke the Serbo-Croatian language but maintained a separate identity, and this is why the Bosnian Muslims sustained their distinctiveness by religion (Iseni, 2010).

From the end of WWII to 1960s. The fratricidal war during 1941 to 1945 in Yugoslavia took about a million lives, and the communists considered religion to be the primary motive for interethnic hatred, but religion as such was never persecuted (Schindler, 2009). The state

established the Islamic community and allowed it some freedom in exchange for influencing the choice of imams and constant insight into events in the community (Popović, 1990). The official administration efficiently put the Muslim religious life under the control of the state (Iseni, 2010).

Table 1

Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina by religious affiliation according to the results of the census from 1879 to 1931

Year	Total population	Orthodox population		Muslim population		Catholic population		The rest of the population	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1879	1158164	496485	42.88	448613	38.75	209391	18.08	3675	0.31
1885	1336091	571250	42.76	492710	38.88	265788	19.88	6343	0.47
1895	1568092	673246	42.94	548632	34.99	334142	21.31	12072	0.76
1910	1898044	825918	43.49	612137	32.25	434061	22.87	26428	1.39
1921	1820440	820290	43.87	588244	31.07	444308	23.48	28595	1.58
1931	2323555	1028139	44.25	718079	30.90	547949	23.58	29388	1.27

Adopted from Spasovska (1995)

Source: Dj. Pejanović, Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine, str. 47-48

Rezultati popisa žiteljstva u Bosni i Hercegovini od 27.IX 1910. godine, Statistički odsjek Zemaljske vlade, Sarajevo 1912.

Prethodni rezultati popisa stanovništva u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 31. januara 1921. godine. Izdanje Direkcije državne statistike u Beogradu, Sarajevo 1924.

Stanovništvo po veroispovesti i maternjem jeziku po popisu stanovništva 31.III 1931. godine, Demografska statistika, serija II, sv. 6
Državni statistički ured, Beograd 1945.

In 1946, Alija Izetbegović, a young editor of the *Muhajir* magazine, was arrested as a member of the Young Muslims organization (Fig. 2) and sentenced to three years in prison (Schindler, 2009). This verdict marked the beginning of Alija Izetbegović's political life. Subsequent trials of Young Muslims exposed the extent of their cooperation with the Nazis during World War II (Schindler, 2009). By declaring Young Muslims a terrorist organization, the Islamic community sent them underground until the end of the 1980s and the revival of religion in political life in Bosnia.



Figure 2. Alija Izetbegović at the 1946 trial.

Source: 24hourPrijeor, 17 August 2017, retrieved 21 August 2020, <http://prijeor24h.net/2017/08/17/pogledajte-aliju-izetbegovica-iz-vremena-podrske-handzar-diviziji-foto/>

The disproportionate shares of confessional groups in the victim numbers, the genocide committed against Serbs in Jasenovac, as well as differences in the extent and directions of post-war migration, created a new religious-demographic reality on the territory of B&H (Spasovska, 1995). If one compares the number of pre-war confessional groups based on the last census before the outbreak of World War II in 1938 and the first post-war census conducted in the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1948, the largest increase was in the Muslim population of 172,000 over the course of a decade (Spasovska, 1995).

In the census conducted on 15 March 1948, Muslims could choose to self-declare as Serb-Muslim, Croat-Muslim, and Muslim-undecided (Mrđen, 2002). Seven years later, in the 1953 census, a group of "Yugoslav-undecided" was envisaged **introduced** for Muslims of Yugoslav descent, and in the 1961 census, they could declare themselves as Muslims by ethnicity.

In those days the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was afraid of a possible rise of inter-ethnic tension between Serbs and Croats, especially in B&H, where Muslims had to choose to self-declare as part of the Serbian or Croat national body. To relax the situation, they decided to give Bosnian Muslims status of the first ethnicity (1961) and then nation (1971) within the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

1961 to 1991 (from Bandung to Civil War). The next census represented a turning point in the formation of the political identity of B&H Muslims. For the first time, in the census of 31 March 1961, they could self-declare as Muslim, in terms of ethnicity (Mrđen, 2002). It was a precedent, since nowhere in the world, then or today, was religious affiliation the principal determinant of ethnicity. The instructions for conducting the census provided a somewhat more detailed explanation: "A Muslim as a data on ethnicity means ethnicity, not religion. This answer is entered only by persons of Yugoslav origin who are considered Muslims in terms of ethnicity. Therefore, the Muslim answer should not register members of non-Yugoslav nationalities, such as Albanians, Turks, as well as Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians and others who are considered members of the Islamic religious community" (Mrđen, 2002, p.4). Acknowledging that the response Muslim implies ethnic rather than religious affiliation, the answer may additionally register persons without faith, if they consider that they belong to that ethnic group (Mrđen, 2002).

The results of the 1961 census were defined by strong population dynamics, based on compensating for insufficient war reproduction. This subsequently caused ethnic-demographic polarization in population dynamics, as a result of different dynamics in the degree of acceptance of birth control among individual religious groups, the religious distribution of war victims, the volume of migrations, and especially in ways of self-declaring ethnicity (Spasovska, 1995). Namely, from 1948 to 1961, the number of Muslims increased compared to two other confessional groups, from 788,000 to 842,000, as a direct result of the change in self-reporting the ethnicity of Muslims. According to Mrđen, in 1992, the French magazine *L'Express* claimed that Tito had created the Muslim "ethnicity" to achieve the ethnic balance of certain regions, and to weaken the Serbs, because the number of Muslims who would otherwise declare themselves Serbs would have led to their becoming the majority population group in Yugoslavia (Mrđen, 2002). Along the same lines, Aleksandar Popović explained the creation of Muslim ethnicity mainly by the international politics of the time (Popović, 1990). The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. The movement was established in 1961 in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia through an initiative of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesian President Sukarno, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel

Nasser, and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito. To maintain better contact with the African and Asian countries in this movement, many of which had a significant Muslim population, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia perceived Yugoslav Muslims as intermediaries in achieving its foreign policy goals (Popović, 1990). Popović emphasized that Yugoslav Muslim enjoyed an extremely privileged position compared to Christian communities and had a special relationship with the communist leadership of the former state. Finally, he noted that in this game between communist leadership and Muslim intellectuals, “each of these two partners plays their own secret game” (Popović, 1990), and that understanding the recognition of Muslims as a nation was one way to satisfy the aspirations of Muslim intellectuals and to reduce the political influence of Islamists that began to emerge in the cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1970s, especially after the publication of Izetbegović’s *Islamic Declaration*.

When the Muslim nation was officially recognized in the 1971 census (with a capital M, in the plural), their number increased significantly (Spasovska, 1995; Mrđen, 2002). Beside Montenegrins, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenians, and Serbs, now Muslims gained the right to exercise their aspirations in terms of territorial sovereignty, that is, for independence and secession (Mrđen, 2002).

For the first time, Muslims were more numerous than Serbs in Bosnia, which in turn ignited their longing for an independent Muslim republic. During the 1970s, there was a struggle within the Communist Party over Muslim identity, and events in the Islamic world did not go hand in hand with propagated Yugoslav secularism. The Islamic revolution in Iran was greeted with enthusiasm by Muslims in B&H, who agreed with Ruhollah Khomeini’s statement that Islam is politics or nothing (Schindler, 2009). Although the Muslim Brotherhood was still the most popular movement among Young Muslims in B&H, government authorities in Tehran showed an interest in Izetbegović’s unpublished book *Islamic Declaration*, after learning about it. This later led to his arrest in 1983 and subsequent imprisonment for terrorism and cooperation with the enemy (Schindler, 2009). In the eyes of many, unlike during the trial immediately after World War II, Alija Izetbegović became a political dissident and a fighter against the secret police (Schindler, 2009).

During this period, the transition of population reproduction continued, and the model of expanded reproduction was replaced by the simple reproduction model (Spasovska, 1995). Furthermore, the process of ethnic homogenization continued, that is, Serbs migrated to the Republic of Serbia and Croats to the Republic of Croatia (Spasovska, 1995).

The total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina increased between 1961 and 1991 from 3,278,000 to 4,365,000. The three largest ethno-religious groups recorded different dynamics over thirty years: Muslims/Bosniaks reached 1,906,000 from 842,000; Orthodox/Serbs declined from 1,406,000 to 1,369,000; and Catholics/Croats increased from 712,000 to 756,000 (Spasovska, 1995).

The new political reality in which Muslims began to declare themselves as a separate nation had a particular impact (Spasovska, 1995). For the first time, they were recognized as a nation and, more importantly, became the most numerous population group with a growth trend towards becoming the majority in the perceived future, according to demographic projections and adopted migration patterns. Demography encouraged the voices from the Muslim political elite that were calling for the creation of an independent Muslim country.

From 1991 to 2013. The last census in Socialist Yugoslavia was conducted in 1991. At that time, 4,377,033 people lived on the territory of B&H. Muslims accounted for 43.38 % of

the total population (1,898,963), Serbs 31.18% (1,365,093), and Croats 17.36 % (759,906), and 5.53% of citizens (242,032) declared themselves Yugoslavs (Statistical Book of Yugoslavia, 1991). Interestingly, before the 1991 census, there was a dispute among Muslim political elites about how Muslims should register themselves: as a Muslim or as a Bosniak. To avoid any dilemma, both the SDA and the Islamic Community published instructions on how Muslims should declare themselves. According to these instructions, it was strictly suggested that a Muslim should choose Muslim as their national affiliation, Islam as their religion, and Bosnian for the language (Tanasković, 2003).

In the first multi-party elections held in 1990, parties with a strong ethnic agenda won a landslide victory. In 1990, an Islamist movement created the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), which became the preeminent party of the Bosnian Muslims.² Subsequently, it was placed at the heart of the Bosnian political elite and in 1993 and took the control of Islamic religious organizations (Iseni, 2010). Muslims voted en masse for the SDA whose undisputed leader was Alija Izetbegović, until his death in 2003, and who in 1992 became the first president of the tripartite Presidency of the newly-independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³ His *Islamic Declaration*, issued in 1990 in Sarajevo, served as a guide to the political and legal system that a new, independent Bosnia and Herzegovina should have. It claimed that there was no peace or coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic social and political institutions (Izetbegović, 1990). He proclaimed that the ultimate goal of his declaration was the creation of a single Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia, and his fascination with the Ottomans was evident by the fact that he wrote his name as Izetbeg and indicated the return of non-Muslims to *zimmi* status (Schindler, 2011).⁴ During the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–95), Alija Izetbegović embraced many foreign fighters for the Islamic cause, the so-called *mujahideen*, who committed the most severe atrocities during the war and irreversibly disrupted inter-ethnic relations (Fig. 3).⁵

The results of the first post-communist elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina show that the parties that based their programs along national-religious lines won. In the light of



Figure 3. Alija Izetbegović meeting in Zenica in September 1995 with mujahideen leaders and international terrorists Abu el-Ma'ali and Anwar Shaaban. Source: Jutarnji List, 16 September 2017, retrieved 12 August 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/politika/nevjerojatno-bakir-kao-i-alija-izetbegovic-tvrdi-da-su-mudžahedine-doveli-brvati-6555240>

2. According to Schindler, Alija Izetbegović admitted that he intended to name it the “Muslim Party” but according to the election law, the use of national and religious names was prohibited (Schindler, 2009).

3. A directly elected tripartite Presidency, which is in charge of foreign, diplomatic, and military affairs, and the budget of state-level institutions. The three presidency members are from the three constituent nations: one Bosniak, one Serb, one Croat (Andželić, 2018).

4. Beg is a Turkish title meaning lord or chief, and later prince, equivalent to the Arabic-Persian amir. The Turkish term *zimmī* derives from the Arabic *dimmiyy*, and denotes a non-Muslim subject of the Turkish Empire.

5. For more about mujahedin in B&H see Hećimović, E. (2009). *Garibi. Mudžahedini u BiH 1992–1999*. Belgrade: Dan Graf.

the newly-formed independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, political identity formation had a significant place in everyday politics. After almost half a decade of one-party rule and bloody civil war, Bosnia entered a process of democratic transition. Unfortunately, “the transition not only opened space for the modernization and liberalization of society, but also introduced old habits, and one of the most important was the ethnoreligious party segmentation” (Antić, 2019, p.8).

The first and the only census of the population in independent Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in 2013, but final results were published only after three years. By religion, the citizens of B&H declared themselves in the following way: 50.7% Islamic, 30.75% Orthodox, and 15.19% Catholic. The National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska did not want to accept the census results published by the B&H Agency for Statistics.⁶ The question of whether 196,000 people who did not live in Bosnia and Herzegovina deserved the status of permanent residents was a topic that had sharpened the rhetoric between Muslims and Serbs, and this was the reason why the latter did not recognize the final results of the census, because of they believed that this profoundly changed the structure of the population. They demanded that people who study and work outside B&H not be included in the permanent population (residents), which is the usual practice globally (the concept of the permanent population was introduced since 1991 in SFRY). Furthermore, bearing in mind the importance of this unresolved problem, it seems quite certain that the 2021 census will not be done, or be done with a delay of two years in comparison to the countries of the European Union and the region.

After the end of the civil war in Bosnia, it became the home of the world’s most complicated system of government. Any understanding of the political system needs to begin with the Dayton peace agreement. The agreement achieved its immediate purpose of putting an end to the carnage, but it froze ethnic divisions in place. Subsequently, from political socialization of an individual, their electoral behavior, political traditions, to the activity of the electoral campaign of interested political parties and candidates, in Bosnia, the agreement has subordinated everything to religious/ethnic identity.

The aspiration of Muslims towards unitarization and redefining the relations within the country between the three constituent peoples meant that the results of the latest census were perceived by Serbs as a constant effort to turn their (Muslim) numerical advantage into political dominance. Furthermore, Bosniaks even tried to elect a Croat member to the tripartite presidency by utilizing their numbers and Bosnian election law (Andjelić, 2018).

Finally, today’s leader of the Bosnian Muslims is Bakir Izetbegović, son of the late Alija Izetbegović. Beside his surname, he has to bear heavy historical baggage as heir to all the good but also the bad that his father, as the ideological creator of the Muslim political identity, left him. In 2017, on the ninety-second anniversary of the birth of Alija Izetbegović, B&H Presidency member Bakir Izetbegović said that he is in politics to try to finish what his father started (RTS, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

In his much-debated book *Whiteshift*, Kaufmann argues that Western politics is being remade through demographic changes (Kaufmann, 2018); similarly, in Bosnia, demographic power was and still is an indicator of political dominance. The first president of independent B&H, the late Alija Izetbegović, claimed that a true Islamic order could only be established in Muslim-majority states (Izetbegović, 1990). Hence, the political struggle

6. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a federation of two entities: Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republic of Srpska (Serbian part).

of Muslims in Bosnia today implies a desire for demographic dominance over non-Muslims. Furthermore, according to political studies theory, economic wellbeing was previously seen as key to winning political support, while in this age of identity politics, public affirmation of religious identity has more significance.

By examining the last hundred years and more of Bosnian demography and history, in order to recognize the determinates of Muslim political identity comprehensively, this study suggests the extent to which the power of numbers has governed the political aims and ambitions of Muslim groups. Although it observes the formation of political identity primarily in demographic terms, through numbers and population shares, it does not neglect the social context. Namely, that Ottoman rule provided the Muslims of Bosnia with both political and economic power, so they perceived the Turkish withdrawal as a danger both to their economic and political domination. Furthermore, the election models based on religion—both the first election law in 1910 and the current one from 1995—were imposed from abroad, but Muslim political elites openly accepted them, fully aware of their own demographic dominance over Catholics and Orthodox. The atavism of the current political model of Bosnia and Herzegovina is reasonable in the context of the inter-ethnic demographic power balance.

In the 1961 census, Muslim appeared for the first time as an ethnicity, and in 1971 the category was introduced in the statistics as one of the nations of Yugoslavia. After reaching a majority in 1971, Muslim elites, both secular and religious, advocated for an independent Islamic republic within socialist Yugoslavia, thus it would be reasonable to wonder what we can expect from the current political leaders of Muslims in B&H now, when, for the first time in history, they make up more than 50% of the current population?

If we look successively at the censuses, one can notice how the category and number of persons declared to be Muslims changed from census to census. Furthermore, it can be seen that in the sixty-five years between 1948 and 2013, the number of Muslims almost doubled, and what is more important they managed to achieve an absolute majority (50.1%) for the first time in history (Table 2).

According to the Alija's Islamic declaration, could we now expect the emergence of an Islamic order? In the coming years, we will be able to witness how the demographic dominance of the Muslim community exerts its political power in a multi-ethnic society for the first time in Europe.

Table 2

Ethnic structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1948 to 2013 (as a percentage of total population)

Nationalities	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2013
Undecided Muslims	30.7						
Undecided Yugoslav Muslims in an ethnic sense		31.3					
Muslims			25.7	39.6	39.5	43.4	50.1

Serbs	44.3	44.4	42.9	37.2	32	31.2	30.8
Croats	23.9	23	21.7	20.6	18.4	17.4	15.4
Yugoslavs			8.4	1.2	7.9	5.5	
Other	1	1.3	1.3	1.5	2.2	2.6	3.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Adopted from Mrdjen (2002)

Source: 1981 Census of Population, Households ,and Dwellings. National composition of the population by municipalities. Statistical Bulletin 1295. Belgrade, SOS, 1982.

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