



Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea

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Not surprisingly for Bosnia-Herzegovina, the relation between the Muslim community and the idea of Yugoslavia can be summarised by a paradox : the Bosnian Muslims have little role in the emergence of the idea of Yugoslavia, but they held on to the idea for longest. This remaining pocket of Yugoslavism amongst the Bosnian Muslims caused the Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković to send his Alliance of the Forces of Reform of Yugoslavia to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 (*Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije – SRSJ*), in an attempt to oppose the emerging nationalisms with a reinvigorated Yugoslav project. However, the nationalist parties finally won the Bosnian elections of 18 November 1990, despite opinion polls having predicted a victory for the reformists. Around 70% of Bosnian Muslims voted for the Party for Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije – SDA*). The position of the SDA vis-à-vis the idea of Yugoslavia at the time was very ambiguous: Alija Izetbegović declared soon after the elections that ‘Yugoslavia is not our love, but our interest.’¹

The paradoxes and ambiguities in the attitude of Bosnian Muslims towards the idea of Yugoslavia remain little known, and their motives are often reduced to simple political opportunism. However, despite some tactical manoeuvring, it is possible to see some genuine identity cleavages and strategic issues, slow changes and violent ruptures. In order to identify these phenomena it is necessary first to first examine the attitudes of the Bosnian Muslims and their elites towards the first and the second Yugoslavia. It is then important to analyse the attitude of the SDA leaders vis-à-vis the Yugoslav crisis to establish whether they were for or against the preservation of a united Yugoslavia and whether their actions represented continuity or discontinuity in relation to the inter-war and communist elites.

The first Yugoslavia : refuge or menace for Muslim identity ?

Before the First World War the Bosnian Muslim community did not seem attracted to the idea of Yugoslavia. Only a few individuals, often from the emerging intelligentsia or educated youth, participated in movements that can be called pro-Yugoslav, such as the ‘Young Bosnia’ organisation (*Mlada Bosna*).²

The reservations of the Bosnian Muslim community can be explained by the fact that its traditional elites very quickly pledged allegiance to the new Austro-Hungarian authorities after the Congress of Berlin (1878). They concentrated on defending the Muslim community’s identity and religious institutions by multiplying tactical alliances with the Serb and Croat political forces. The construction into a sort of ‘Muslim *millet*’, a non-sovereign religious community renouncing

¹ Speech at gathering organised at Bihać, and reported in *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo, 12 Feb, 1991.

² Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, London, 1966.

any nationalist project of its own, is illustrated by the emergence at the end of the nineteenth century of the community designation 'Muslims' and by its achievement of religious and cultural autonomy in 1909.³ At the same time the desire of the emerging small lay intelligentsia to be integrated into political and cultural modernity and its rejection of the religious cleavages inherited from the Ottoman Empire, led it in the first instance to defend the *bošnjaštvo* ('bosnism') project dear to the Governor Benjamin Kallay.⁴ Later this group divided itself into pro-Croat and pro-Serb intellectuals, who rejected the community term 'Muslims' and declared themselves 'Croats' or 'Serbs of Islamic religion'.⁵

In this context, the absence of representatives of the Bosnian Muslim community in the heart of the Yugoslav Committee, and their small number within the provisional institutions created in 1918, can perhaps be explained as much by their own attitudes as by the scant respect accorded to them by the other Yugoslavs. The threats of the post-war period (agrarian reform projects, anti-Muslim violence and the resumption of emigration to the Ottoman Empire) led the Muslim notables to reproduce the political strategies elaborated during the Austro-Hungarian period. In June 1920 the Muslim Yugoslav Organisation (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija* – JMO) exchanged its support for the centralising Constitution of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes for the maintenance of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a specific territorial entity, the perpetuation of the autonomy of Islamic institutions, and guarantees of compensation for property affected by agrarian reform. Following this, the JMO oscillated between governments led by the Radical Party or by the Democratic Serb Party and opposition coalitions led by the Croat Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka* – HSS).⁶

Allegiance to central power and a pendulum movement between Serb and Croat forces remained central to Bosnian Muslim strategies. However, situated in different institutional settings, these could only lead to unprecedented constructions of identity. As its name indicates, the JMO supported the idea of Yugoslavia and declared: 'We believe in Yugoslavism as the most appropriate path towards the bringing together and unification [of the Southern Slavs]'.⁷ The Yugoslavism of the JMO corresponded not only to its strategic choices but also to a desire to escape the conflicting assimilating pressures of the Serbs and Croats. It therefore represented a refuge rather than a genuine identity choice. In 1920, the leaders of the JMO changed the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. However, at the same time, they denounced the 'Yugoslav nationalism' of the Democratic Party and allied themselves with the Radical Party, which was more tolerant of the Muslim community's religious practices. Tactical Yugoslavism and an indeterminate nationalism contributed to characterise a Bosnian Muslim identity that could be characterised as still being based on a pre-national model.⁸

³ Nusret Šehić, *Autonomni pokret Muslimana za vrijeme austrougarske uprave u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo, 1980; Robert Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle : The Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina 1878-1914*, New York, 1981.

⁴ Tomislav Kraljačić, *Kallajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini (1882-1903)*, Sarajevo, 1987.

⁵ Alija Isaković, *O 'nacionaliziranju' Muslimana*, Zagreb, 1990.

⁶ Atif Purivatra, *Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija u političkom životu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Sarajevo, 1974.

⁷ 'Program Jugoslovenske muslimanske organizacije', (1920), reproduced in Purivatra, op. cit., pp. 596-597.

⁸ Numerous authors have noted that many JMO leaders declared themselves Serbs or Croats, and later questioned to what extent they did so and for what reasons. However, none of them seemed to pay attention to the fact that they were declaring themselves Serbs or Croats by conviction or by tactic, but that the JMO never called upon the Bosnian Muslims to do the same.

The exacerbation of Serb-Croat rivalries quickly threw this political and identity structure into a deep crisis. From the mid 1920s the divisions between the pro-Croat and the pro-Serb intelligentsia grew: as demonstrated by the existence of two rival Muslim Cultural associations: *Gajret* (The Effort) and *Narodna uzdanica* (The Popular Hope).⁹ The traditional notables' room for manoeuvre was being gradually reduced to nothing. In 1929, the transformation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia took place in parallel with the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into four different banovinas, and the suppression of the autonomy of Muslim religious institutions.¹⁰ The leaders of the JMO participated in some demonstrations of the coalition opposition, but agreed in 1935 to enter the government and to dissolve itself within a Radical Yugoslav Union (*Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica* – JRZ) in exchange for a measure of autonomy for the Islamic Religious Community (*Islamska vjerska zajednica*). Three years later they experienced an unexpected electoral defeat by the candidates of the Muslim Organisation (*Muslimanska organizacija*) allied to the Croat Peasant Party (HSS).¹¹

As a result of the traditional elites' diminishing room for manoeuvre, there was a serious crisis of political representation and identity within the Bosnian Muslim community. Organised in a way that was pre-political and pre-national meant that it was unable to find a place in a Yugoslavia increasingly divided by conflicting nationalisms. To a certain extent the settlement (*sporazum*) agreed between the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Dragiša Cvetković, and the head of the HSS, Vladko Maček, represents the outcome of this crisis. It suggests a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to a very simple principle: the territories where Serbs are more numerous than Croats would be joined to Serbia, and those in which Croats are more numerous would be attached to Croatia. In this settlement the Bosnian Muslims did not appear either as political subjects or as a demographic reality. Not having been capable or willing to constitute themselves as a nation, they saw themselves denied their existence by triumphant nationalist ideologies.

In the 1930s Yugoslavia was no longer a refuge for the Bosnian Muslims but a threat to their community. From then on, it is no surprise that most of its political representatives tended to reject the idea. Re-united in their hostility to the Cvetković-Maček agreement, the traditional elites organised themselves into the Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which constituted the first organised manifestation of a growing Muslim nationalism.¹² Some intellectuals, denying their previous pro-Croat or pro-Serb loyalties, became the promoters of a neo-*bošnjaštvo*, which applied the national epithet *Bošnjak* (Bosniak) only to the members of the

⁹ Ibrahim Kemura, *Uloga 'Gajreta' u društvenom životu Muslimana*, Sarajevo, 1986; Ismail Hadžiahmetović, *'Narodna uzdanica' u kulturnome i društvenome životu Muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine*, Tuzla, 1998.

¹⁰ In parallel, the different Islamic religious institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro were unified under one single Islamic religious community (*Islamska vjerska zajednica*) which covered the whole Kingdom of Yugoslavia and was dominated by the Bosniak ulemas. The Yugoslav authorities hoped to use these to assimilate the non-Slav Muslim populations of Kosovo and Macedonia. Alexander Popovic, *L'islam balkanique. Les musulmans du sud-est européen dans la période post-ottomane*, Berlin-Wiesbaden, 1986, pp. 318-319 ; Ismail Ahmeti, 'Institutionet e kultit islamik në Kerçovë gjatë vitëve 1939-1950' in Masar Kodra (ed.), *Shqiptarët e Maqedonisë*, Shkup, 1994, pp. 457-64

¹¹ Dana Begić, 'Akcije muslimanskih građanskih političara poslije skupštinskih izbora 1935. godine', *Godišnjak društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo, vol. XVI, 1965, pp. 173-189.

¹² Dana Begić, 'Pokret za autonomiju Bosne i Hercegovine u uslovima sporazuma Cvetković-Maček', *Prilozi instituta za historiju radničkog pokreta*, Sarajevo, vol. IV, no. 4, 1968, pp. 177-191.

Muslim community.¹³ Meanwhile, the educated Muslim youth divided themselves between various pan-Islamist groups, which dreamed of uniting all Muslim peoples in the Balkans in one super-state,¹⁴ and the League of Young Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije* – SKOJ), which imagined a new Yugoslav community based on the Soviet model.¹⁵

This political evolution of the Bosnian Muslims explains why in 1941 they did not mourn the death of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for long. Whilst some of its representatives allied themselves to the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* – NDH), others continued to demand autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, from 1941 the Autonomy Movement ran into contradictions which prove fatal for them. Opposed to the integration of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the NDH, it offered to collaborate with Hitler in exchange for the creation of an autonomous Bosnia under the tutelage of the Third Reich. However, the NDH remained the closest ally of the Axis in the western Balkans and the proposal by the Muslims lapsed. Despite the fact it was created in opposition to any partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Autonomy Movement accepted the idea of an autonomous Bosnia minus Western Herzegovina (annexed to the NDH) and Eastern Herzegovina (annexed to Montenegro).¹⁶ Finally, and most important, the movement did not succeed in ensuring the physical security of the Muslim population. The creation of the SS *Handžar* division in 1943 only increased the cycle of violence and revenge.¹⁷ From 1943 it was the Partisan Movement that took the lead in demanding the physical security and political recognition of the Bosnian Muslim community, and used its for their own Yugoslav project.

The Second Yugoslavia: the framework for Muslim national affirmation

In the first instance the Partisan movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina found its support mainly among the Serb population. However, to expand its base it took into account the multi-cultural character of Bosnian society by guaranteeing ‘full equality of rights to all Serbs, Muslims and Croats’¹⁸ within Bosnia-Herzegovina, at the same time raising Bosnia-Herzegovina to the status of republic in the new Yugoslav Federation. The Partisan movement allowed the creation of separate ‘Muslim brigades’, respected the main precepts of Islam and integrated some notables of

¹³Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Od tradicije do identiteta. Geneza nacionalnog pitanja bosanskih Muslimana*, Sarajevo, 1974.

¹⁴Sead Trhulj, *Mladi Muslimani*, Zagreb, 1990 ; Xavier Bougarel, ‘From ‘Young Muslims’ to the Party of Democratic Action: The Emergence of a Panislamist trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, *Islamic Studies*, Islamabad, vol. XXXVI, no. 2-3 (summer-autumn 1997), pp. 533-549.

¹⁵Dubravka Skarica, ‘Napredna srednoškolska omladina Bosne i Hercegovine u revolucionarno-demokratskom pokretu 1937-1941’ god., *Prilozi instituta za historiju radničkog pokreta*, Sarajevo, vol. IV, no. 4, 1968, pp. 593-617.

¹⁶Rasim Hurem, ‘Pokušaj nekih građanskih muslimanskih političara da Bosnu i Hercegovinu izdvoje iz okvira Nezavisne Države Hrvatske’, *Godišnjak društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo, vol. XVI, 1965, pp. 191-220; Rasim Hurem ‘Konceptije nekih muslimanskih građanskih političara o položaju Bosne i Hercegovine u vremenu od sredine 1943. do kraja 1944. godine’, *Prilozi instituta za historiju radničkog pokreta*, Sarajevo, vol. IV, no. 4 (1968), pp. 533-48.

¹⁷ See Enver Redžić, *Muslimansko automaštvo i 13. SS divizija*, Sarajevo, 1987.

¹⁸ Resolution of the First session of the Provincial Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZAVNOBiH), held on 25 and 26 November 1943 in Mrkonjić-Grad, quoted in Dubravko Lovrenović, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovina – činjenice iz istorije BiH*, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 76.

the JMO and Autonomy Movement into the Anti-Fascist Councils of the National Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia (created respectively on 25 and 29 November 1943)¹⁹.

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia thus during the Second World War restored Bosnia-Herzegovina as a specific territorial entity and recognised the existence of the Muslim community, though without specifying whether this was as a religious or a national community. The Communists' recognition of the Muslim community was soon called into question: they dissolved the Muslim Committee (*Muslimanski odbor*) which had been created within the National Liberation Front²⁰ and then attacked the Islamic Community itself. In 1947 the nationalisation of the *vakufs* (religious foundations), the abolition of *sharia* tribunals and the closure of *madrasas* (religious schools) signalled the end of the institutions that characterised the Bosnian Muslim community. Finally in 1949, the Muslim cultural association *Preporod* (Renaissance), created three years earlier, was dissolved. Having used the traditional structures of the Bosnian Muslim Community to its advantage, the Communist Party set about dismantling them.

In the medium term the Yugoslav authorities favoured the transformation of the Bosnian Muslim community into a modern nation. By making Bosnia-Herzegovina one of the six republics of the Yugoslav Federation, the Communist Party put a brake on Serb and Croat nationalist aspirations, and this created the necessary space for an affirmation of Muslim national identity. The 'identity void' created is demonstrated by the census of 1953, in which 93.8% of Muslims declared themselves 'undetermined Yugoslavs', only 3.8% declared themselves Serbs and 1.7 per cent Croats.²¹ The accelerated modernisation of Bosnian society and the emergence of new political elites strengthened the position of the Bosnian Muslims within the Communist Party (which in 1954 became the Communist League). Faced with the growing decentralisation and ethnicisation of the political system, the Communist League of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared on 17 May 1968: 'Past practice has shown how harmful are the different forms of pressure and legal compulsion which have attempted to make Muslims determine their nationality as Serb or Croat. This is because it has been made clear in the past, and it is confirmed in the socialist present, that Muslims form a distinct nation'.²²

The 'national affirmation' of the Bosnian Muslims, endorsed at a federal level by the constitution of 1974, represents an important stage of their political evolution and is accompanied by an upgrading of their particular identity. It is in this context that it is interesting to examine the Bosnian Muslims' attitude to the idea of Yugoslavia during the Communist period. The strong attachment that they demonstrated towards Yugoslavia at the time led to the appearance of

¹⁹Atif Purivatra, 'Stav Komunističke partije Jugoslavije prema nacionalnom pitanju Muslimana u toku narodnooslobodilačkog rata', in *Nacionalni i politički razvitak Muslimana*, Sarajevo, 1969, pp. 65-129 ; Attila Hoare, 'The People's Liberation Movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1941-45 : What Did It Mean to Fight for a Multinational State?', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. II, no. 3, autumn 1996, pp. 415-45.

²⁰The National Liberation Front (*Narodno-oslobodilački Front* – NOF) is one of the 'driving-belts of transmission' created during the war by the Yugoslav Communist Party. It became the National Front (*Narodni front*) in 1945, then the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (*Socijalistički savez radnog naroda* – SSRN) in 1953.

²¹On the other hand, 61.5% of Communists leaders mentioned in the Yugoslav *Who's Who* of 1956 declared their nationality as Serb, 16.6% as Croat and 8.6% as 'undetermined Yugoslavs'. David Dyker, 'The Ethnic Muslims of Bosnia – Some Basic Socio-Economic Datas', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. L, no. 119, April 1972, p. 238-56.

²²Resolution of the 12d Session of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Bosnia-Herzegovina, quoted in Atif Purivatra, *Nacionalni i politički razvoj Muslimana*, Sarajevo, 1969, p. 30.

two different phenomena. On the one hand, the socio-economic and cultural modernisation of Bosnian society favoured a certain break-down of communities, manifested by a rapid increase in mixed marriages. In these cases, amongst the new urban elites, the middle classes and certain sections of the working classes, it was not uncommon for the Yugoslav identity to become stronger than Muslim, Serb or Croat national identities.²³ On the other hand, Yugoslav federalism represented not only a protection against the Serb or Croat nationalism that was always susceptible to re-emerge, but also a favourable framework for the affirmation of the Muslim nation's own identity and interests. It is no surprise then to note the attachment to the construction of Tito's Yugoslavia demonstrated by the new Muslim community elite such as certain Republican leaders and local cadres of the League of Communists, the intellectuals linked to them and the ulemas of the Muslim Community.²⁴

This attachment should certainly not be seen as passive or blind. The Muslim cadres participated fully in the clientelist jousts in which the different communities and nationalities affronted each other, as shown for example by the serious politico-financial crisis of *Agrokomerc* in 1987.²⁵ The intellectuals worked for the promotion of Muslim history and culture, sometimes even claiming the recognition of a Bosnian language. They also discreetly denounced the fact that the Muslim nation had neither its own institutions nor its own republic, despite the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina contained three constituent nations: Muslims, Serbs and Croats. The ulemas took advantage of the increasingly important role the Islamic Community was playing as a substitute for a national institution.²⁶ However, none of them put into question the political and institutional framework in which they found themselves. In this period, to use the words of Alija Izetbegović, Yugoslavia embodied not only the interests but also the love of a large majority of Bosnian Muslims.

The main exception to this rule remains the Bosnian pan-Islamic movement, which reappeared in the 1970s within the Islamic Community and whose principal adherent was no other than Alija Izetbegović himself.²⁷ In 1983, he was accused of endangering the fraternity and unity of the Yugoslav peoples and of campaigning for the creation of an 'ethnically pure' Bosnia-Herzegovina. Izetbegović retorted that his *Islamic Declaration* only contained general considerations concerning the Muslim world and did not concern Yugoslavia in any way.²⁸ His argument is formally right in that it is only a repetition of the principal themes of Islamic

²³ In the 1981 census, 7.9% of the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina declared themselves of Yugoslav nationality. Duško Sekulić, 'Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in Former Yugoslavia', *American Sociological Review*, vol. CIX, no. 1, February 1994, p. 83-97.

²⁴ Steven Burg, 'The Political Integration of Yugoslavia's Muslim's: Determinants of Success and Failure', *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, Pittsburg, no. 203, 1983.

²⁵ In the first instance the '*Agrokomerc* affair' was a financial scandal putting into question the position of Fikret Abdić, director of an important agricultural and food production conglomerate of Cazinska Krajina (region of Bihać). Very quickly the scandal took on a political dimension as Abdić was accused of having installed a nepotistic and clientelist system in the region – thanks to the protection of Hamdija Pozdrac, an important Communist leader, also from the region and Bosnia-Herzegovinian representative in the Yugoslav collective presidency.

²⁶ Zachary Irwin, 'The Islamic Revival and the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina', *East European Quarterly*, vol. XVII, no. 4, January 1984, p. 437-58.

²⁷ Xavier Bougarel, 'From 'Young Muslims' to the Party of Democratic Action: The Emergence of a Panislamist Trend in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Islamic Studies*, Islamabad, vol. XXXVI, no. 2-3 (summer-autumn 1997), pp. 533-549.

²⁸ Abid Priguda, *Sarajevski proces. Sudjenje muslimanskim intelektualcima 1983 g.*, Sarajevo, 1990.

literature.²⁹ However, the fact that Izetbegović uses as an example the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which was born out of a larger multi-cultural entity, had considerable resonance in the Yugoslav context. Taking this into account, the accusation that the representatives of the pan-Islamic movement were preaching ‘the creation of a united Islamic state that would incorporate the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sandžak and the autonomous province of Kosovo’³⁰ was not unfounded. It remains to be known how this desire influenced the decisions of the political leaders when they found themselves at the head of the Bosnian Muslim community.

The leaders of the SDA faced with the disintegration of Yugoslavia

Amongst the founders of the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije* – SDA) were several representatives of the Bosnian pan-Islamic movement. The SDA saw a rapid development in just a few months, and incorporated numerous intellectuals and notables linked to the Communist League. Amongst the three representatives of the SDA elected to the Bosnia-Herzegovinian collective presidency, on 18 November 1990, only Alija Izetbegović belonged to the pan-Islamic movement, the other two (Fikret Abdić and Ejup Ganić) being from the Communist League. In the same way, out of eighty-six SDA deputies, only a dozen could be linked to the pan-Islamic tendency. However, this movement kept control over the controlling organs of the party – hence the exclusion of Adil Zulfikarpašić and the neo-*bošnjaštvo* partisans in September 1990,³¹ and the designation of Alija Izetbegović as Bosnian President three months later, despite the fact that he received many fewer votes than Fikret Abdić.³² In the years that followed, most of the political decisions within the SDA were taken by the pan-Islamic representatives, who had to take into account the balance of power within the party, the Bosnian Muslim community and Yugoslavia in general.

To understand the attitude of the SDA leaders towards the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it is necessary to distinguish between Yugoslavism as an identity project and the Yugoslav Federation as an institutional framework; or as Izetbegović put it, between Yugoslavia as a love-object and Yugoslavia as an interest. It seems clear that from 1990 the SDA leaders, in particular those linked to the pan-Islamic tendency, were hostile to Yugoslavism as an identity project. During the election campaign their most virulent attacks were directed at the Alliance of the Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (*Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije* – SRSJ), founded by Ante Marković. Some months later, during a population census, they qualified Yugoslavism as an

²⁹ Alija Izetbegović, *Islamska deklaracija*, Sarajevo, 1990.

³⁰ This accusation was made during the trial against Hasan Čengić. *Oslobođenje*, 22 July 1983.

³¹ Adil Zulfikarpašić, an old militant communist who had been a refugee in Western Europe in the late 1940s campaigned from the 1960s for the adoption of ‘Bosniak’ as the name-style for the Bosnian Muslim nation. In 1990, he joined the SDA but rapidly came into conflict with the representatives of the pan-Islamic tendency and was excluded together with his colleagues in September 1990. He then founded the Bosniak Muslim Organisation (*Muslimanska bošnjačka organizacija* – MBO), which only received 1.1% of the votes in the November 1991 elections.

³² In the election for the seven members of the collective presidency, Fikret Abdić received 1,040,307 votes against Alija Izetbegović’s 874,213. However, the leaders of the SDA decided that the latter should be head of the collective presidency and obtained consent for this from the Serb and Croat nationalist parties.

‘artificial national creation.’³³ On the other hand, their attitude towards the Yugoslav Federation as an institutional framework remains much more complex and changeable.

During the election campaign, the SDA leaders remained elusive on the subject; they stated their attachment to Yugoslavia but insisted on the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, talking already of its possible independence. More important, they refused to take definite sides in the debate that took place at the time between the federalist republics (Serbia, Montenegro) and the confederalist ones (Slovenia, Croatia). The ambiguous attitude of the SDA has two explanations. On the one hand, by not letting themselves be implicated in the conflict between Serb and Croat political forces and falling back on intermediate positions, they were largely reproducing the position of their leaders during the interwar period. On the other hand, the SDA leaders had to reckon with the strong attachment of Bosnian Muslims to the Yugoslav Federation. In an opinion poll in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of 1989, 62.2% of Muslims supported the strengthening of federal powers, and only 9.5% wanted the same for republican powers.³⁴

Was this the end of hypocrisy or the euphoria of victory? In the weeks that followed its electoral victory, the SDA pronounced itself in favour of a confederal solution.³⁵ It presented the Bosnian Parliament with a ‘Declaration on the sovereignty and indivisibility of Bosnia-Herzegovina’ which did not even mention the existence of Yugoslavia.³⁶ However, it would be simplistic to support that the SDA leaders abandoned the idea of Yugoslavia under pressure of circumstances: what is true of the Bosnian Muslims at large is not necessarily so of their political representatives. Rather the SDA withdrew its plan to declare Bosnia-Herzegovina a sovereign entity due to strong opposition from the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka* – SDS), the mounting tensions between Croatia and Serbia, and talk of dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SDA fell back onto the ‘asymmetrical confederation’ proposition presented by Alija Izetbegović and Kiro Gligorov in May 1991.

After the secession of Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991, the essential question was no longer how to reorganise the moribund Yugoslav Federation, but whether Bosnia-Herzegovina would remain in an amputated Yugoslavia, reduced to Serbia and Montenegro. In August 1991 the Serb Democratic Party (SDP) and the Bosniak Muslim Organisation (*Muslimanska bošnjačka organizacija* – MBO, born from the split within the SDA in September 1990) made public a Serb-Muslim ‘historical accord project’ (*historijski sporazum*) which by implication exchanged the maintenance of Yugoslavia in a reduced territory against guarantees of its territorial integrity.³⁷ Despite this, after a few days of hesitation and confusion, the SDA leaders rejected

³³ Džemaludin Latić, ‘Borba za bolju političku poziciju’, *Muslimanski glas*, Sarajevo, vol. 1, no. 3, 20 February 1991, p. 3.

³⁴ Ibrahim Bakić, ‘Građani BiH o međunacionalnim odnosima’, *Sveske instituta za proučavanje međunacionalnih odnosa*, Sarajevo, vol. VIII, no. 28-29, 1990, p. 299.

³⁵ Džemaludin Latić, ‘Zašto se izvršni odbor SDA odlučio za konfederaciju’, *Muslimanski glas*, vol. II, no. 5, 20 March 1991, p. 3.

³⁶ ‘Deklaracija o državnoj suverenosti i nedjeljivosti Bosne i Hercegovine’, *Muslimanski glas*, vol. II, no. 3, 20 February 1991, p. 1.

³⁷ This ‘historical accord’ stated: ‘Yugoslavia is historically completely justified as a common state of republics and states, which are completely equal in rights, and we engage ourselves to preserve and develop this community’. Concerning Bosnia-Herzegovina, it declares: ‘The basis of this life (common to its three constitutive nations) is the mutual recognition of the sovereignty of each nation and the total preservation of the territorial integrity et political subjectivity of our republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina’. Lastly, it adds: ‘whatever the situation of the Croatian Republic

the initiative, and irreversibly set themselves on the road towards independence. They continued for some months to declare themselves in favour of a 'maintained Yugoslav community' which would include Serbia and Croatia, but in the context of the Serb-Croat war this position paved the way towards a progressive exit from Yugoslavia by ensuring for the SDA the support of European diplomacy on the one hand and that of the non-nationalist parties on the other. As soon as the European Community started to consider recognition of the secessionist republics, the SDA passed a new 'Memorandum on a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina' (15 October 1991) through the Bosnian Parliament. It then demanded the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina (20 December 1991), despite the reservations of Fikret Abdić.

The controversy that still surrounds the Serb-Muslim 'historical accord' testifies to its importance. Were the negotiations between the SDS and the MBO originally supported by Izetbegović or by Abdić?³⁸ Was the final refusal of the SDA due to pressures from its 'Croat lobby' or to the advice of American diplomats?³⁹ Could the accord have protected Bosnia-Herzegovina from war or would it simply have surrendered itself to Serb hegemony? Whatever the answers, the rejection of the historical by the SDA marks the Muslim political elites' definitive break not only with the idea of Yugoslavia but also with all their other strategies elaborated in the post-Ottoman era.

Until this time, Muslim political elites, in order to facilitate tactical alliances, had always avoided any direct confrontation with the Serb or Croat political forces and occupied an intermediate space between them. However, by opting for independence the SDA leaders made a clear stand against the SDS and therefore had actively to seek the protection of the Democratic Croat Community (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* – HDZ). The Croat nationalist party found itself in the position of an intermediary: close to the SDA because it favoured Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence and close to the SDS because it also favoured its division into several territorial entities. In addition, the SDA abandoned the traditional choice of Muslim political elites, which was to renounce any political sovereignty and any national-state policy in order to be able to defend Bosnia-Herzegovina as a specific territorial entity. In contrast, the SDA chose to give priority to the affirmation of sovereignty of the Muslim nation, at the risk of territorial partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. From this point of view it is no surprise that the MBO justified the Serb-Muslim 'historical accord' on the grounds that it would lessen 'the risk of civil war and a territorial partition between Croatia and Serbia.'⁴⁰ Yet the SDA rejected it because it implied a 'restricted Yugoslavia in which Serbia would be number one, and the Muslims number two'.⁴¹

The consequences of such a political choice were quickly felt. From September 1991 the SDS started to create 'Serbian autonomous regions' (*Srpske autonomne oblasti* – SAO) and the HDZ did the same two months later. However, this does not mean that the SDA leaders at the

inside or outside Yugoslavia, the Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina constitute a nation with equal rights' and are therefore entitled to participate in this accord. 'Sporazum MBO-SDS', *Oslobođenje*, 2 August 1991.

³⁸ Milovan Djilas / Nadežda Gaće, *Bošnjak: Adil Zulfikarpašić*, Zürich, 1994, p. 203-214; Fahira Fejzić, 'Tronozac pada kad je na dvije noge', *Muslimanski glas*, vol. II, n° 15, 2 août 1991, p. 2.

³⁹ Milovan Djilas / Nadežda Gaće, op.cit.

⁴⁰ MBO, *Uz prijedlog srpsko-muslimanskog sporazuma*, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 2.

⁴¹ Fahira Fejzić, 'Takozvani istorijski srpsko-muslimanski dogovor', *Muslimanski glas*, vol. II, no. 15, 2 August 1991, p. 2.

time favoured a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the spring of 1991 Izetbegović rejected propositions of this sort from Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman. From the autumn of 1991, the SDA and the non-nationalist parties united in their defence of the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, partition was not totally absent from the ideas of the SDA leaders as shown by their lasting fascination with the Pakistani experience, or more concretely by their support for the demand for the ‘political and territorial autonomy of Sandžak, with a right to attach itself to one of the sovereign republics [of the Yugoslav Federation]’.⁴² Simply stated, the partition envisaged is that of Yugoslavia – not of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and it remains unclear to what extent they understood that due to the demographic, political and military configuration of Yugoslavia, the former was very likely to lead to the latter.

⁴² Text on the vote bulletins distributed for the referendum on the autonomy of Sandžak organised by the SDA on 25 November 1991, quoted in *Borba*, Belgrade, 25 October 1991.