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## Additional information

The book is the first systematic book-length study of the institutional system which has governed Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1995 and various international efforts at reforming the country's system of government. Considering the degree of international involvement, this study addresses broader challenges of governance in post-conflict divided societies under international tutelage. The book forms part of a series on governance in divided societies around the world, edited by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

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# 1

## Introduction

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a deeply divided society. After a three and a half year war (1992–1995), which left over 200,000 Bosnians dead or missing, the country is territorially, politically, and socially segregated. While a distinct Bosnian identity existed before the war and continues to some degree in the contemporary political and social life of Bosnia, the mobilization of nationalism prior to the war led to an unprecedented degree of polarization and the near disintegration of the country. Having been part of Yugoslavia and without a modern history of independence before 1992, Bosnia remains closely linked through history as well as political, economic and social reality to neighboring Croatia and Serbia.

Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats constitute the main groups in Bosnia. In addition to these three groups, a number of smaller communities (Roma, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Jews) exist. At the last census in 1991, 92.4 percent belonged to either of the three groups, with an additional four percent having declared themselves as Yugoslavs, most of whom are from mixed marriages among the three groups or belong to either of the three communities, but rather identified with Yugoslavia than with their respective nation (see Table 1.1). Smaller communities, none of which have constituted more than one percent of the population in the past decades, have thus played only an insignificant role. The two most relevant groups are Jews, who have well integrated into the urban life of Sarajevo, whereas the other group, Roma, has been mostly living on the margins of Bosnian society.

Historically, Muslims and Serbs have been the dominant communities in Bosnia, both in terms of the share of the population and in regard to political, social and economic influence. While Croats historically constituted a smaller share of the population – a fifth or less – Bosnia has

**Table 1.1** Census Results in Bosnia, 1971–1991

	Muslims		Serbs		Croats		Total
	in percent	in number	in percent	in number	in percent	in number	
1971	39.6	1,482,430	37.2	1,393,148	20.6	772,491	3,746,111
1981	39.5	1,629,924	32.0	1,320,644	18.4	758,136	4,102,783
1991	43.7	1,905,829	31.4	1,369,258	17.3	755,892	4,364,574

been for over hundred years considered a region defined by the presence of these three groups. Thus, the contemporary term “constituent people” designating Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs, has an established historical precedent and defines Bosnia as a tri-national state.

Despite the depth of divisions between communities in post-war Bosnia, the nature of the cleavages is considerably less than in other divided societies. Some have even argued that the smallness of the differences has been a cause of conflict, referring to the Freudian “narcissism of minor differences” (Ignatieff 1997: 34–71). While attributing the conflict of the 1990s to the similarities between the three nations of Bosnia might not be a fully satisfactory explanation, the differences are indeed small: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats of Bosnia speak the same language<sup>1</sup> and have largely similar traditions and cultural habits. The main “objective” distinguishing criterion between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks is religion, with Serbs adhering to the Serbian Orthodox Church, Croats following the Catholic Church and Bosniaks being Muslims. While religion has been historically important as an identifier with the three groups and religious communities played an often-detrimental role during the conflict, the majority of the population before the war was either atheist or possessed only little attachment to their respective religious community. Even among more religious members of the three groups, religion has not been a self-standing political identity, but rather informing national identity.

In addition to antagonistic interpretations of the war and its causes among the different national communities (Naučoistraživački institut 2002), the state and its powers has been the major source of contention. A majority of Serbs and a strong minority of Croats prefer secession from Bosnia, whereas an overwhelming majority of Bosniaks supports the continued existence of Bosnia (UNDP 2003: 27). These different preferences also translate into different political positions vis-à-vis the joint state institutions and the degree of autonomy of the two entities, the predominantly Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and

Herzegovina, which covers 51 percent of the country and the Serb Republic, constitutes the remaining 49 percent.

In pre-war Bosnia the settlement patterns of the three groups were mixed in large parts of the country, even though there were some areas where individual ethnic groups were predominant. One of the main results of the war, in addition to the death of approximately 200,000 citizens and the displacement of roughly half the population, has been the territorialization of ethnicity. Most of the Serb population today lives in the Serb Republic in Northwestern and Eastern Bosnia. Bosniaks mostly live in seven of the ten cantons of the Federation, primarily in central and in Northwestern Bosnia. Croats live mostly in Herzegovina (the south of the country) and along the Sava River in the north.

The territorial concentration of the three nations was a result of two secessionist movements, which sought to dissolve Bosnia and join neighboring states. While the Serb secession triggered the conflict in 1992, the Croat project of secession soon followed and contributed to the conflict particularly during the period 1993–1994, symbolically culminating in the destruction of the famous Ottoman bridge in Mostar. This self-determination dispute, which is at the core of the Bosnian conflict and its post-war inertia, has not been resolved, but pacified. Post-war Bosnia has been a semi-protectorate with a substantial civilian and security presence. Governance structures recognized the territorialization of ethnicity by devolving much of the power to homogenous regions, be they municipalities, cantons or entities. At the same time, tenuous power-sharing arrangements were established to promote minimalist joint institutions. This weak common state has, however, grown in strength in the mean time. It is within this framework of multiple layers of governance, some ethnically exclusive, others inclusive, that this book seeks to evaluate the development of post-war governance in Bosnia.

The Bosnian state and society has been much in flux since the end of the war. This means that a study of post-war Bosnia has to emphasize the dynamics of change rather than offer a snap-shot that can only reveal a partial picture of interethnic relations. For this purpose, this study is organized in five main chapters. The first chapter will trace the historical legacies since the late Ottoman period in the 19th century, when the development of a modern national identity set in. The focus of this chapter is on the nature of governance in Bosnia as regards interethnic relations. Particular emphasis will be placed on the Communist period, as well as the two years before the 1992–1995

war. The second chapter examines the main sources of division and inequality in post-war Bosnia, including ethnicity and socio-economic status. The third chapter focuses on post-war governance in Bosnia, exploring the development of political parties, the institutional structures of Bosnia at the state level and in its two entities. Here governments, legislatures and administrations will be studied to identify mechanisms of inclusion and discrimination. The fourth chapter addresses the dynamics of post-war elections in Bosnia. Here both the dominance of national parties, a key source of division and inequality, and the experiments with inclusive and moderating electoral rules merit particular attention. The final chapter traces three key initiatives to overcome the post-war division of the country and the inequalities resulting from the wartime "ethnic cleansing." The first, a most ambitious project, has been the return of refugees to their pre-war place of residence. The second concerns the reforms of the two entities, which in 2002 eliminated legal discrimination against the non-dominant nations of the entities. Finally, the case study of Brčko, a multinational district in Northern Bosnia under direct international administration, provides an example to examine the success and limitations of policies that seek to recreate diversity and eliminate discrimination.

What emerges from the study is that Bosnia is a unique case of multinational governance. The substantial involvement of the international community, making Bosnia a semi-protectorate, and the extensive and firm rules determining group representation and governance have made Bosnia a highly complex country. With some seven different types and levels of governance in Bosnia, 13 constitutions, well over one hundred ministries (and ministers) and six hundred deputies,<sup>2</sup> veto rights at most levels of government, Bosnia's complexity is hard to grasp. Despite these challenges Bosnia has moved significantly towards integration since the end of the war and many inequalities have been eliminated. At the same time, the country remains deeply divided and most change continues to be driven by international actors. There is little indication that Bosnia has become self-sustainable and no longer needs international intervention. At the same time, the international civilian and military presence has fostered a climate of dependency and reinforced the reliance on external actors. Significantly, the elaborate mechanisms of power-sharing have increased group inclusion at the price of governability and cross-national identity. Nationalism and the self-determination disputes, which have been at the core of the war, and difficulties of post-war governance remain potent.



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