In early 1992, the “three m’s” (*tri m*), which denoted a multicultural, multiethnic, and multiconfessional Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), became the rallying cry against the forces of disintegration, or more accurately, of partition. These identifying characteristics or national ideals could not avert catastrophe. Indeed, BiH’s liminal position at the crossroads of cultures, religions, and history rendered it the most vulnerable of republics in the Yugoslav wars of succession. However “three-m” Bosnia and Herzegovina was in 1992, it was less so by 1995. Yet, despite the bloodshed, forced expulsions, migrations, and the inevitable rise in nationalism, citizens of BiH have no choice, in the aftermath, but to examine what their country was before the war and the potential for a new “multi-multi” Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such an investigation must begin with the past, as a Sarajevan colleague implied when I asked her how she envisioned the future in Bosnia. She replied that Bosnians could hardly conceive a future when they still had no idea, still in 1998, what had happened, and why. This work addresses the reality behind the epithets that gained currency during and after the war, of a “three-m,” “multi-multi,” and “multi-kulti” (multicultural) Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within the framework of a particular understanding of multiculturalism, it will suggest why, despite its multiethnic and multiconfessional reality, BiH proved in many instances vulnerable to nationalistic rhetoric. This analysis proceeds from the conviction that multiculturalism must be both studied and encouraged in the international community’s efforts to support the growth of democratic institutions and practices in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.
We must first address the ambiguity resulting in the implied coordinate relationship between the three m’s of multicultural, multiethnic, and multiconfessional. Although multiculturalism has, since the 1960s, connoted the transnational interrelationships among cultures, more recently it has gained greater currency in the debate over the rights of diverse groups within a state. It is certainly this later and narrower conception of multiculturalism that applies in the use of the term in BiH today. The history of a multiconfessional and multiethnic Bosnia has been carefully recorded, and we will have recourse to significant aspects of that history below. As research in multiculturalism suggests, however, multiethnic and multiconfessional societies are not necessarily multicultural in the narrower sense. Throughout its history, Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the United States where the debate over multiculturalism began, has at times fallen far short of the ideal.

In the course of the culture wars in the West, ‘multicultural’ as a term has moved beyond its use to describe a real situation (as is the case with ‘multiethnic’ and ‘multiconfessional’) to denote an abstraction or aspired-to state: “As an ideal, multiculturalism celebrates cultural variety (for example linguistic and religious diversity), and may be contrasted with the assimilationist ideal assumed in many early studies of race, ethnicity, and immigration.” The multicultural society is opposed to one in which one culture or set of values dominates and oppresses (e.g., that of the infamous “dead European white males”). It is apparent that multiculturalists perceive an association

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1 I would like to acknowledge support for this research from the International Research and Exchanges Board, which funded my travel to the former Yugoslavia in 2001.
between multiculturalism and true democracy (a point we will return to later). For many of them, the expectation is that as multiethnic societies become more democratic politically, they must become more multicultural. Those opposed to multiculturalism counter that assigning equal value to all cultural traditions results in moral relativity and a devaluing of the very democratic (Western) principles that multiculturalists champion. In fact, many proponents of multiculturalism would take issue themselves with the notion that knowing and respecting diverse cultural practices precludes a choice as to their relative value and appropriateness. In fact, a multicultural society should privilege and adhere to (Western) democratic principles. Multiculturalism, thus defined and for the purpose of this study, connotes the ideal of a cohesive democratic society whose diverse members know, value, and respect each other’s cultures.

According to the working definition of multiculturalism employed here, even emblematic political democracies like the United States lag considerably behind in the (inevitable?) movement toward multiculturalism. Not all the newcomers to our relatively new nation came willfully; while others felt the necessity to stifle their cultural identity. The question easily arises—is this democracy? Judith Green has resolved this

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4 See, for example, the works by Leonard Harris on Alain Locke: Alain Locke and Values (Savage, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997) and The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

5 This characterization is intended as a working definition that attempts to resolve seeming conflicts. The fears of those who see multiculturalism as the road to political and moral collapse need not be realized. A multicultural society can sustain a variety of cultures and still retain the loyalty of its citizens to a shared principle or ideal (e.g., democracy).

6 Researchers in multiculturalism continue to debate and refine the concept. However, some consider it to be the inevitable next step in the humanistic movement and struggle for human rights. For example, Charles Taylor sees the interest in multiculturalism as reflective of the (growing) human need for recognition. He writes of the “politics of recognition” and surveys the philosophical inquiry into the “dialogue” (in the Bakhtinian sense) between the public and the private (“The Politics of Recognition,” in Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition, Edited and Introduced by Amy Gutmann [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994]: 25-73).
discrepancy by distinguishing between the political (if even imperfect) democracy that is the United States and “deep democracy”:

Emergent social problems with which we now struggle show that such a pride- and fear-based ideological attachment to America’s traditional, formally democratic institutions...must be replaced with more deeply democratic, critically pluralistic perspectives that motivate cross-cultural, cross-generational participation in a transformative quest for new social and institutional patterns more appropriate to current and future conditions, and more compatible with our shared democratic ideal.

It is in Green’s understanding of “deep democracy” that we can recognize the confluence of political democracy and multiculturalism. As we realize from the example of the United States, it is possible to theorize and implement a political democracy that identifies a common good for all and whose government seeks, for the most part and ever more successfully, we hope, to treat its citizens equitably. However, the theory of the public sphere does not guarantee that truly democratic principles will guide the interactions of individuals. Political democracy does not guarantee multiculturalism.

The inevitability between these types of social organization occurs, perhaps, in the other direction. Multiculturalism has arisen as a valued concept relatively recently. Certainly there existed previously places where diverse peoples identified with their community while sharing a real understanding of and respect for each other’s cultural

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7 ‘Critical pluralism’ is used here to denote the thoughtful respect for other cultures in dialogue with one’s own culturally specific views; in opposition to moral relativism.
differences. Such a city would be termed ‘cosmopolitan,’ as Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, was often described. Bosnians, for the most part, had an image of their entire country (republic) as a land of mutual understanding and respect. This “democracy” of private life was a major element of the “idea” of Bosnia. Real or not in pre-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, a kind of “local” multiculturalism would be fertile ground for political democracy. 225 years of political democracy in the United States has not yet produced a critically pluralistic, multicultural, society. Might a multicultural Sarajevo (the most likely source as a pocket of multiculturalism in BiH), have achieved political democracy and the ideal of a culturally pluralistic, yet politically egalitarian and cohesive, society had it been spared its history of political absolutisms? We will never know, but perhaps that is precisely what the power-grubbing nationalists feared most.

In the aftermath of the war, citizens of BiH, with the aid of the international community, are working to establish democratic political institutions—democracy from the top down. How quickly these institutions will flourish might depend to a certain degree on the promise of multiculturalism—or what remains of it from the pre-war period. By virtue of its position on the Balkan Peninsula, the multiethnic and multiconfessional character of Bosnia was inevitable. Yet, what is the history and, by implication, the future, of multiculturalism, with its support for political democracy, on that territory?

The Balkans

The over-simplification of the Yugoslav wars as “age-old hatreds” perpetuated the stereotype of the Balkans as a region of tribal warfare and general primitivism. Many countered this facile and reductionist characterization, but not soon enough to avert disaster. In fact, the stereotype of “Balkanization” met resistance very early on. Unfortunately, it was the very effort to form multiethnic states, such as Yugoslavia, that thwarted the broad dissemination of research on Balkan history.

The modern stereotype of age-old Balkan hatreds is a post-WWI construction. In his 1934 article, “L’Unité balkanique,” Jacques Ancel wrote: “An unfortunate and inappropriate expression was created at the end of the war, the ‘balkanization’ of Central Europe, as if the creation of new nations issuing from the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman monster empires were an imitation of Balkan civilization—a model of dissension and wars.” Ancel’s and his colleagues’ careful studies, in the *Revue internationale des Études balkanique*, of the history of the Balkan Peninsula as a geopolitical entity revealed a territory of isolated “cells” of disparate populations. Small groups separated by the rugged terrain formed small, well-functioning (if patriarchal) units of government—“the city was a country.” Ancel and his colleagues concluded that the major source of dissension in the Balkans has been the invasion of the “Great Powers,” and more important, the wane of their influence, which initiated a struggle for land and power in the region. In modern Yugoslavia, Tito did not encourage the

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9 Emblematic of this gross generalization was Robert Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts*, purported to have influenced then President Bill Clinton and to have affected US policy during the Yugoslav wars. For an analysis of some of the book’s misconceptions, see Cynthia Simmons, “Baedeker Barbarism: Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon* and Robert Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts*, Human Rights Review 1 (2000): 109-124.
dissemination of this information, for the knowledge that primarily ethnically pure enclaves in the Balkans functioned peacefully might imply that multiethnic communities (or states!) were doomed to failure. Such studies indicate that for most of their history, enclaves in the mountainous terrain of the Balkans, which defined the region, were generally neither multiethnic (in our current conception) nor multiconfessional and (therefore?) lived in peaceful coexistence with one another.

**Multiethnic/Multiconfessional** The major factor contributing to the rise of multiethnic and multiconfessional societies in the Balkans was the incursion of the neighboring empires; in particular, the Hungarian and Austro-Hungarian from the north and the Ottoman from the south. In Bosnia, the invasions of the Hungarians and Ottoman Turks preceded and succeeded, respectively, the era of the independent medieval state (1180-1463). There, with the exception of Albania, the greatest number of conversions to Islam in the Balkans occurred, and “Eastern” culture and Islam took root alongside Western-European cultural practices and the mixed Roman and Byzantine heritage of the Church of Bosnia. Although the governmental structures of the colonial powers varied considerably, the Balkan populations in both the north and south witnessed an influx of foreign representatives and, to a greater or lesser extent, the imposition of the cultural

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10 Jacques Ancel, “L’Unité balkanique,” *Revue internationale des Études balkanique* 1 (1934): 128. I wish to thank Svetlana Slapšak, of the Graduate School of Humanities in Ljubljana, Slovenia, for directing me to this journal and body of research.

11 Bosnia was to experience considerable (north-)Western influence again, of course, with the occupation and annexation of BiH by Austria-Hungary from 1878-1914.

12 The dispute over the nature of the independent Bosnian Church and its status when Bosnia fell to the Ottomans continues. In his history of Bosnia, Noel Malcolm gives greater credence to the research that reveals the heresy of the Bosnian Church as not that of the Bogomils, but of the persistence of particular Byzantine practices that had become unacceptable or heretical in the Roman church. He notes that even before the Bosnian Church lost converts to Islam, it had come under attack from the Franciscans (Noel Malcolm, *A Short History of Bosnia* (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 27-42.)
values of the ruling powers. Certainly Ottoman and Islamic practices differed considerably more from those of pre-Ottoman Bosnia than was the case in Slavic territories under Hungarian rule. It is to this exposure of Bosnians to such diversity in cultural practices that we often attribute their legendary tolerance. Since the war, however, some Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) intellectuals and theologians have stressed that it is rather Islamic faith itself that has nurtured tolerance in Bosnia.

Dr. Mustafa Spahić, a leader of the Islamic Community of BiH and cultural commentator, has written extensively on Islamic religious practice. In Neighbors (Komšije), he cites various Kur’anic appeals for neighborliness and credits them as a major influence in the development of tolerance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By definition, neighbors are defined simply by contiguity:

Neighbors are not any kind of specialized groups; they are simply territorial [groups]. In a neighborhood there are married couples, families, single people, people of various families, last names, clans, in this dynamic world of varied masses, ethnic groups, castes, classes, and nations, particularly in the world’s metropolises.13

Spahić recognizes that tolerant “neighborliness” is likely to develop naturally in diverse urban centers, but he emphasizes that the Kur’an commands that neighborliness characterize all human interactions: “Islamic faith precisely and clearly establishes neighborly laws, obligations, responsibilities irrespective of religious confession, color of

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Skin, caste, ethnicity, or nation.”

Spahić’s observations on the natural development of neighborliness among neighbors corresponds to research by sociologists on the growth of trust in urban environments. However, he holds that Islamic teaching focuses on the tolerance of human difference and has therefore enhanced the acceptance of cultural differences that arose historically on the crossroads of the Balkans.

In *Bosnia the Good: Tolerance and Tradition*, Rusmir Mahmutčehajić, a professor at the University of Sarajevo and former Vice Premier of BiH, reconsiders the factors that effected conversions to Islam in the early years of Ottoman rule in Bosnia as well as the misconceptions and misrepresentations underlying anti-Islamic sentiment in the West. Among the many reasons cited to explain the high incidence of conversion to Islam in Bosnia—the weakness of the independent Christian Church of Bosnia, the burden of taxation (which was greater for non-Muslims), the practice of the willing or forced conversion to Islam of Bosnian boys (*devširme*) who, once educated in Istanbul, were returned to Bosnia as respected leaders—Mahmutčehajić finds greater significance in the affinities between the faith of the *krstjani* (the Church of Bosnia) and Islam along with the inherent respect within Islam for the Jewish and Christian faiths (the other Abrahamic religions). Mahmutčehajić’s premise is that Bosnia embodies “unity in religious diversity.” This guiding principle underlay the state before the advent of the Ottomans, as expressed in the attempt by the Church of Bosnia to accommodate the

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14 Ibid., 11.
15 The sociologist Adam B. Seligman, for instance, identifies trust as one of the values of civilization engendered in the city. Seligman sees the growth of trust as a basic social relation as a modern phenomenon related to increased urbanization. See Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
varying traditions of Roman and Byzantine Christianity, if not pagan practices (see note 11). Bosnians willingly converted to Islam because of its respect for Christianity, and the teachings of their new faith suited well the already existing tradition of religious pluralism.

The controversy over the relationship between the Church of Bosnia and Islam aside, the tolerance in a predominantly Muslim Bosnia for other faiths did indeed contribute to the further development of Bosnia as a multi-religious state. Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain in the late 15th century found a safe haven in Bosnia. They settled in Bosnia in Sarajevo, and in other towns in the Balkans, because the Ottoman Empire did not have an official policy of discrimination. Sarajevo, in particular, came to symbolize the multi-religious nature of Bosnia, the “Jerusalem” of Europe. In numerous publications during the 1992-1995 siege of Sarajevo that decried the assault on Sarajevo, writers called forth as an emblem of the city as a multiethnic and multi-religious community the location within 300 meters of each other of a mosque, the Roman Catholic Cathedral, a Serbian Orthodox church, and a Jewish temple.

One Sarajevan writer presented perhaps the most compelling vision of a multiethnic and multi-religious Sarajevo. In his essay “Sarajevo, Portrait of an Internal City,” Dževad Karahasan offered a structural analysis of Sarajevo as a seemingly internal city—situated in a valley surrounded by mountains and unto itself. Yet, he claimed that Sarajevo, with the singular exception of Jerusalem, was actually the most open and

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external city of Europe. The neighborhoods, or mahalas, that radiate from the center, or marketplace (čaršija), like spokes from a wheel, although closed religiously and ethnically homogeneous, open out to the center, where all cultures and religions meet, trade, discourse, and intermarry. It is the center or hub of Sarajevo that best represent the city. Although structurally surrounded, the center is in spirit and essence open and external. Karahasan predicted that the internal (nationalistic) cities of Western Europe, feeling threatened by Sarajevo’s (and Jerusalem’s) cultural pluralism, would not only not defend the city, but would contribute to its demise. Published in 1993, the book proved prophetic.

**Multicultural?** Whether Bosnia’s multiethnic and multiconfessional nature derives primarily from its Muslim identity, from its position at a number of crossroads, or from the increasing desire of foreigners to conquer its landscape and to remain, BiH epitomizes the melting pot of the Balkans. In the calamitous 1990s, the majority of Bosnians clung to the idea of Bosnia. To them, as to many who knew Bosnia from afar, the betrayal of the idea and descent of many into nationalism came as a shock. As it turned out, not all Bosnians ascribed to Karahasan’s vision of Sarajevo’s hub. He described a microcosm in Sarajevo’s center where diverse cultures interacted in every way humanly possible. Most important, they intermarried. The resulting intermingling of the private spheres of existence made it impossible for families to remain ignorant of each other’s faith and most intimate customs. Ideally, such knowledge led to mutual respect and a

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strengthening of relationship. This, and their commitment to a life shared in Sarajevo, provided a foundation for multiculturalism.

Interrmarriage was the key to multiculturalism in former Yugoslavia. The highest percentage of mixed marriages occurred in Sarajevo (30%)—a common expression during the war was that the front line cut through one’s marriage bed. Intermarriage served as the bedrock of Tito’s catchphrase of “brotherhood and unity,” and in the early Communist period, it embodied the ideal of “internationalism.” Yet, if the most “brotherly” and “unified” of Yugoslav cities proved in 1992 to be insufficiently so, it was only more true of the earlier history of the city and the region.

In the current reconsideration of the past in Bosnia and Herzegovina—the effort to find out what the country was in order to determine what it might be—numerous documents and (revisionist) histories have shed light on the nature of multiethnic and multi-religious Sarajevo (and Bosnia) before the modern-Yugoslav era. For instance, Sarajevo has long taken pride in its historical role as a haven for Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. Yet, Dr. Moritz Levy, in his Sefardi u Bosni (The Sephardim in Bosnia), republished and translated from the German in its entirety in Sarajevo in 1996, describes a situation in Sarajevo under Ottoman rule of tolerance but inequality. He details the taxes levied on the Jews (as well as the Christians) along with various prohibitions. For example, in 1579, Sultan Murat published an edict that forbade Jews and other non-Muslims to dress in the same fashion as Muslims; this not long after Jews had begun

21 Svetlana Broz, Tito’s granddaughter and author of Dobri ljudi u vremenu zla (Good People in a Time of Evil [Banja Luka: Media centar “Prelom,” 2000], a collection of testimonies of interethnic deeds of heroism during the Bosnian war) came to this conclusion as well, as she expressed in her International Women’s Day lecture (8 March 2000) at the International Institute in Boston, Massachusetts.

dressing like Muslims in a conscious effort to adapt to their new homeland. Jews and Christians, instead of turbans, wore special black caps. Their footwear had to be black also—they were forbidden to wear red shoes, as Muslim men did, or high yellow boots, as Muslim women wore. Non-Muslims could not ride horseback within the city, and even outside the city, their horses could not be ornamented in any way. There were restrictions on when Jewish women could visit the public baths. Non-Muslims could not carry weapons. Most important, however, there were no laws to protect the rights of non-Muslims.\(^{23}\)

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary (in 1878 and 1908, respectively), the cultural supremacy of Bosnian Muslims began to wane. We might view the establishment of Habsburg rule in BiH as a leveling factor with regard to the civil code. In his history of Bosnia, Noel Malcolm cites the historian William Miller’s and the journalist W. E. Curtis’s assessments of Austro-Hungarian evenhanded administration.\(^{24}\) Contributing to this small step toward that ideal of multiculturalism, Habsburg agricultural policy encouraged foreign settlers (primarily Poles, Czechs, and Ruthenians), which made for an even more multiethnic BiH. According to the 1910 census in Sarajevo, the native speakers of Serbian or Croatian numbered 36,400, of German, 5,246, Spanish—4,875, Czech—1,702, Hungarian—1,392, Slovenian—789, Polish—592, Italian—465, Albanian—103, Romany—100, Romanian—59, Greek—39, Slovak—35, Ruthenian—34, Turkish—31. At the same time the city could boast the publication of 89 different newspapers, including 11 in German, 2 in Turkish, 1 each in Spanish and

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 57-64.

The Habsburg policy for economic development in BiH led to the construction of roads, railways, and model farms. However, the expected agrarian reform never materialized, and Bosnian Muslims retained much of their wealth and privilege. The Empire’s reticence to interfere, in this respect, with the status quo in BiH impeded democratization, a prerequisite for multiculturalism on a national scale.

A major redistribution of wealth in Bosnia after Ottoman rule came with the establishment in 1918 of The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Serfs were freed in 1919 and received legal title for the land they worked. Agrarian land reform resulted in the virtual impoverishment of many Bosnian Muslims: “A people who had owned 80% of the land, who had had great wealth, were transformed suddenly, by means of the laws on agrarian reform, into, one could say, beggars.” As a consequence, the descendents of formerly wealthy Bosnian Muslim landowners often sought professional training and education in the West. They joined their (ethnic) Croatian and Serbian counterparts in study abroad to form a growing class of professionals/intellectuals who were affected by the secularizing influences of the West. However, in contrast to this growing segment of the Bosnian population who shared values across ethnicities, many laws in the Kingdom and, after 1929, the first Yugoslavia, ignored and served to suppress a Bosnian Muslim identity; this while the concern for Croatian and Serbian interests among the relevant parties continued to grow. In the long run, the decline of the Muslim ruling class in BiH set the stage for economic and political equalization. Yet, it does not surprise that this relatively rapid process, from Austro-Hungarian occupation to the formation of

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25 Nijaz Duraković, Prokletstvo Muslimana, 86.
modern Yugoslavia (1878-1945), antagonized the Muslim elite and instilled in the Christian (ethnic Serb and Croat) population a sense of just retribution. In addition, the Kingdom brought together opposing factions in WWI, most in BiH and Croatia having fought against Serbia. While the forces of modernization and urbanization gradually bred greater equality and tolerance among various ethnicities, their immediate effect could be quite the contrary.

Robert Donia’s study of one institution in Sarajevo from the beginning of the Habsburg occupation to the rise of modern Yugoslavia sheds some light on the relationship among ethnicities in that time frame. He has compared the processes by which Sarajevo Council members were chosen in three periods of crisis and, therefore, relatively greater autonomy from higher-level authorities: 1878 (the Austro-Hungarian occupation), 1919-1920 (the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), and 1945 (the liberation of Sarajevo by the Partisans from German and Ustasha rule). In all cases entry into the council was determined by ethnicity, even if, with time, class membership became a more salient feature for these leaders than ethnicity:

Office-holders had to pass through the appropriate national-confessional doorway to enter the chambers of power, a principle apparently no less true of the 1945 council than of the other two. The number of council seats or executive offices was increased to assure that each group felt represented in its work. But once the participants were accommodated,

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members of various groups worked together to meet the challenges facing the city.\textsuperscript{28}

The fact that council seats were distributed among the various confessions (e.g., in the Provisional Sarajevo Council of 1919, there were 9 Muslims, 9 Catholics, 9 Serbian Orthodox, 4 Jews, and 9 socialists [although not a religious confession]), demonstrates the attempt in Sarajevo to ensure equitable political representation among ethnicities (and socialists!). However, the identification of Sarajevans primarily with religious confession forefronts difference over integration. Donia observed that from the beginning of Austro-Hungarian rule through to the founding of modern Yugoslavia, in the working of the Sarajevo Council, class eventually became more significant than confession. That fact lends support to Sarajevans’ characterization of everyday life lived in their city in the late-Tito era to before the war—in daily interactions, they were for the most part oblivious to confessional/ethnic differences.\textsuperscript{29} In any case, it was not the most salient feature of identity.

Anecdotes, memoirs, and some historical sources chronicle the movement toward greater understanding and integration in times of peace in the early twentieth century and the first Yugoslavia. Émigrés from the region who left Yugoslavia before the post-Tito era often recoiled from the rationale of “age-old hatreds.” Their recollections, often from childhood, highlighted interethnic tolerance. In a conversation shortly after the war, a

\textsuperscript{28} Robert Donia, “Sarajevo’s Pluralism in the Twentieth Century,” unpublished paper delivered at the World Congress of the International Council for Central and East European Studies (Tampere, Finland, 3 August 2000).

\textsuperscript{29} For example, Senad Pećanin implied as much in his characterization of Sarajevo as “unicultural” (see the section “Modern Sarajevo/Bosnia”), and the writer and director of the P.E.N Center in Sarajevo, Ferida Duraković, said, in an interview with me in 1998, that before the war, when hearing someone’s name for
middle-aged colleague and fellow Slavist, a naturalized American who had grown up in rural Bosnia, described the good relations in his native village between ethnic Serbs and Muslims. The children got along well in school. However, he did note that they rarely played together after school, because they lived in separate neighborhoods. Another Bosnian émigrée, compelled by the Yugoslav wars to write a memoir of her childhood in Tuzla, recalled with more introspection than she might have otherwise exercised, the tolerance, but incomplete integration, of that town before World War II. In *Bosnian Counterpoint*, Borka Tomljenović, an ethnic Serb, whose father was the town doctor and whose mother she refers to as the “first lady” of Tuzla, ponders the interethnic influences that gave Tuzla its charm. Yet, she recognizes that a “mixed” culture does not necessarily imply mutual understanding:

> Growing up in Bosnia provided ample exposure to the strange mixture of religions, nationalities and cultures where distinct communities lived peacefully side by side while preserving their customs and characteristics. As children and adolescents we were aware of and accepted those differences even though we did not fully understand them.\(^{30}\)

Tomljenović recalls in considerable detail three Muslim girls who attended her high school, although “I was not particularly friendly with any of them. They attracted me mostly because they were Moslem and were therefore cloaked with an intriguing veil of

\(^{30}\) Borka Tomljenović, *Bosnian Counterpoint* (Ann Arbor, MI: s.n.): 103-104.
mystery and secrecy that covered their private life.”

Perhaps more significant as a sign of mutual respect, Tomljenović remembers the courageous actions, during WWII, of the father of one of these girls. Fadila Kurt’s father, the muftija Muhamed Kurt, opposed the intentions of the Ustaše to destroy the Serbian quarter of the town and its Orthodox church.

The history of Bosnia is still being written, and the documentation of the historical defense of pluralism in Bosnia will bear more significance than individual memory or nostalgia. Yet, specialists are accruing evidence of courageous rebellion, as that recalled by Tomljenović, against previous violent eruptions of nationalism. While the muftija Kurt prevented the destruction, during World War II, of the Serbian quarter in Tuzla, the leadership of Sarajevo called upon the Yugoslav Minister of Education Anton Korošec to oppose the edict that would prevent Jewish children from attending high school. Korošec turned a deaf ear. In protest, Sarajevo officials opened a Jewish gymnasium, even though few of the students or teachers would survive the war. In the same vein, the heroic efforts during the recent siege of Sarajevo by the staff of the National and University Library of Sarajevo to preserve the sacred Jewish text, the Haggadah Codex, only mirrored similar valiant actions by non-Jews during the Nazi occupation.

According to the history of the Sarajevo Council, the reactions of religious and political leaders in Sarajevo and Tuzla against the Fascists’ and Ustasha’s “solutions,”

31 Ibid., 108
33 As Chief Librarian of the now destroyed National and University Library, Dr. Kemal Bakaršić was instrumental in the most recent sparing of the Haggadah. He has detailed the fate of the codex in “Never-Ending Story of C-4436 A.K.A. The Sarajevo’s Haggada Codex,” Wiener Slawistischer Almanach 52 (2001): 267-289; also available on the internet (www.openbook.ngo.ba/quarterly/no17/neverending.htm).
and the memories of older Bosnians who recall the relative harmony of their multiethnic
hometowns, Bosnia, on the eve of WWII (and the subsequent formation of modern
Yugoslavia), had developed into a more pluralistic society. Political and educational
institutions had become more integrated, which increased the “exposure” of one ethnicity
to another. The question of multiculturalism aside, Bosnia and Herzegovina was
culturally more cohesive than it had been under Ottoman rule. Much has been written
about Tito’s suppression of nationalism and how this refusal to face the horror of the civil
war only served to “incubate” interethnic hatreds.\footnote{See, e.g., Sabrina Petra Ramet, \textit{Balkan Babel} (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996): 40-42; Laura Silber
That may be true. However, more
attention should be given to the developing preconditions for multiculturalism at the start
of WWII and their influence on reconciliation in modern Yugoslavia.

\textbf{Modern Sarajevo/Bosnia} Patriotic Sarajevans cling to the ideal of multicultural Bosnia.

Senad Pečanin, former editor of the news magazine \textit{Dani} and a recent Fellow at the
Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, expressed his belief in the shared
(multicultural) values of inhabitants of Bosnia’s emblematic capital before the war by
referring to the city as “unicultural.”\footnote{Senad Pečanin, Neiman Lecture, Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 1 May 2000.}
His point was that despite cultural differences in
private life, Sarajevans identified with the city as an entity. Pečanin is not the only writer
or intellectual who has written or spoken out on the special culture of (pre-war)
Sarajevo.\footnote{On the basis of my experience among students, writers, and intellectuals in Sarajevo, most frequent and
extensive in the 1970s, I would have to agree as well. And more recently I have heard this conviction
expressed in conversation with Sarajevans who do not represent the intellectual elite.}
The question again arises whether all Sarajevans, or perhaps more significant,
whether all Bosnians (and Herzegovinians) shared these attitudes.
City vs. Country  During the recent Yugoslav wars, many, both within and without the territory, attempted to characterize virulent nationalism as a product of the village, the provincial, and the uneducated. Accordingly, at the start of the Bosnian war, Sarajevo was immediately singled out for destruction due to its role as a symbol of Bosnian cosmopolitanism and “advanced civilization.” Thus, Bosnian Serb nationalists firebombed the National and University Library not only in an attempt to destroy the records of historical Bosnian-Muslim administration in the region. They sought to annihilate the center of Bosniak higher education and high culture. The Bosnian intellectual Gojko Berić analyzed the siege as an assault by Serbian “peasants,” such as General Ratko Mladić (or in the case of the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, by a Montenegrin “peasant”), on the cultural spheres of Sarajevo that remained outside their reach (Berić asserts that Karadžić, a psychiatrist practicing in Sarajevo, was never accepted by the city’s intellectual elite).37

Others pondering the siege of Sarajevo interpreted events as a general assault on the concept of “city.” For the Serbian architect Bogdan Bogdanović, for example, Sarajevo and Jerusalem are not exceptional cities; rather, they are the very embodiment of the ideal. In response to the attacks on Bosnian and Croatian cities during the war, he wrote: “The horror felt by the West is understandable: for centuries it has linked the concepts ‘city’ and ‘civilization’, associating them even on an etymological level. It therefore has no choice but to view the destruction of cities as flagrant, wanton

37 Gojko Berić, Sarajevo na kraju svijeta (Sarajevo: Oslobo_enje Sarajevo, 1994): 164-165.
opposition to the highest values of civilization."  Bogdanović, who had written extensively on the threat of urbicide in the postmodern world, saw his worst dreams realized in his own homeland. He recognized as well the affirmation of related notions on the city. The nationalists incited their followers with epic and folk songs and even their so-called “novels” took place mainly in rural locales and recalled more the heroic song of the oral tradition. Bogdanović saw in this support for the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin’s classification of the novel as a genre of the (modern) city, open and dialogic. The urban novel represents the artistic counterpart to multiculturalism and opposes the monologic prejudices of nationalist folk genres.

Indeed, there is proof of urbicidal thinking in Yugoslavia. In nationalist rhetoric, such as the 1992 “Warning,” signed by officials of Slobodan Milošević’s Serbian Socialist Party, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, urbanization is maligned for its effect on falling birth rates and migrations of populations. Yet, urbicidal reasoning was not necessarily overtly nationalistic. For example, in The Demographic Black Hole (Demografska crna jama), published in Sarajevo no less, Ilija Bošnjović puts forth his theory of how the city engenders its own destruction—industrialization gives rise to migration to the city, but urban life leads to falling birth rates among the most educated and “progressive” citizens. The city

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implodes.\textsuperscript{41} Though Bogdanović’s experience of the Yugoslav wars was personal, he recognized in them an escalation of postmodern urbicide that threatens us all: “Defending the city is the only valid moral paradigm for the future. It is a light that even the most humanitarian of humans—as much understanding as they may have for the rift between nature and man and the plight of endangered flora and fauna—are as yet unable to see, unable to understand.”\textsuperscript{42}

We may find compelling both Berić’s psychological profile of Radovan Karadžić and Bogdanović’s warning of campaigns against the city. What is needed with respect to the successor states of Yugoslavia, however, is detailed research on the realities of urban versus rural cultures. This investigation presents a tremendous challenge in a land so devastated by war.

In one important pre-war study of a central-Bosnian village, \textit{Being Muslim the Bosnian Way} (1995), Tone Bringa makes numerous observations concerning the shared and separate lives of the village’s inhabitants, as well as the ways in which they themselves perceived their similarities and differences. She describes a society where members of the two ethnoreligious groups, Muslims and Catholics, socialize and help each other celebrate life’s important passages. Yet, intermarriage was rare—such an intent might well be opposed by the young peoples’ families, the women in the family citing the difficulty of melding the traditions of food-preparation and religious feasts. At the same time, Bringa reports on relatively rapid changes in the community. Within the preceding thirty years, the institution of the joint family household had waned to the point that newlyweds were likely to spend little time living with the husband’s family; perhaps

\textsuperscript{41} Ilijas Bošnjović, \textit{Demografska crna jama} (Sarajevo, “Veselin Masleša,” 1990).
\textsuperscript{42} Bogdan Bogdanović, \textit{Balkan Blues}, 73.
only to wait until the completion of their own home. On trips to the city, young women had ceased to wear the trousers, *dimije*, that were associated with village life. If we compare this description of village life with Karahasan’s portrait of Sarajevo, and we keep in mind the rapid urbanization of post-WWII Yugoslavia, we might recognize, rather than a sharp distinction between rural and urban life in Bosnia, a continuum from the age-old disparate “cells” of the Balkans to a more authentic and potentially multicultural existence in the hub of Sarajevo.

Bringa noted another changing custom in the Bosnian village that relates to the question of why Sarajevo was singled out for destruction. Bringa observed that in village life, those with a modern outlook considered “Muslim” customs primitive or “of the village.” Thus, although everyone in the village had previously eaten on the floor from a single pot, inhabitants of the newer neighborhoods now all ate at the table. Catholics considered the old practice a Muslim one, but everyone who now ate at the table viewed that custom as more urban or modern. If in Yugoslavia Muslims were associated with the village and the “primitive,” Sarajevo must have represented to the non-Muslim provincial mind a double affront—a cosmopolitan and seemingly exclusionary center where the majority of citizens were both “modern” and (ethnically) Muslim.

Aside from the theoretical possibility of an inherent link between rural attitudes or hatred of the city and the rejection of multiculturalism, we should consider the effect of societal change in socialist Yugoslavia. These economic changes contributed to a subtle process of disowning Bosnian Muslims as the lesser “other,” which waxed as Ottoman, and then Bosnian Muslim, power waned.43 We may wish to attribute such attitudes to the

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43 During WWII and in the aftermath that produced modern Yugoslavia, this disowning was, of course, far from subtle. On the heels of Ustaša atrocities during the war, Tito’s security chief Aleksandar Ranković
vulgar provincial, along with ethnic jokes about Bosnians/Bosniaks. However, the Yugoslav leadership, which on the one hand gave full recognition to Bosnia as an entity, on the other, by decree, chose an ethnic designation for Bosnian Muslims based on religion. Intellectuals continue to debate the outcome in the dissolution of Yugoslavia if Bosnian Muslims could have retained their historical term of identity—Bosniak (Bošnjak), which gave evidence of their connection to the territory—rather than the appellation foisted on them by the Yugoslav government in 1963—Muslim (Musliman).44

Just as some creative writers have been indicted for fostering nationalism, others, like Dževad Karahasan in “The Portrait of a City,” have led the intellectual inquiry into the reality of multiethnic integration in Sarajevo and beyond. In his essay, “The Intellectual and Creative Conscience of a Writer,” the Bosnian writer Mirko Marjanović observes that multiculturalism in the region can succeed only on the foundation of a genuine mutual understanding and experience of cultural differences among all citizens. He speaks of the writer’s need to experience cultural differences among all citizens, for the artistic community can serve as a progressive force for change: “The writer must know well all the organisms, culture, religion, ethnos, history above all, everything that is in common and what is not, to make the body and himself healthy and his intellectual and creative conscience.”45 Experience in Sarajevo and the rest of former Yugoslavia has shown, of course, that the intimate knowledge of other cultures that Marjanović recommends for writers should be the goal of everyone in multiethnic communities.


44 Ibid., 104-105.

Reminders or revelations of how reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in other republics of the former Yugoslavia, fell short of the ideal of multiculturalism should not serve a “list of grievances,” as horrific events of World War II were recalled these last two decades to incite nationalism. Information on the realities of life for the various ethnicities before and during the era of modern Yugoslavia can prove useful in assessing genuine integration. Even in Sarajevo, the symbolic center of the multiethnic and multiconfessional western Balkans, ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods speak to a long past where the periphery of the city characterized it to an equal or even greater extent than its center.

Genuine multiculturalism requires an organic relationship between ideology and cultural practices. In the United States, democracy (a type of political association that is reflective of the principles of multiculturalism) was constructed and institutionalized, but full cultural integration has yet to be achieved. In the history of Bosnia and much of the Balkans, feudal, colonial, and communist systems, by definition, prevented the equitable political representation that multiculturalism demands, regardless of the degree of cultural integration in other spheres. Over time and especially in towns and cities, the co-mingling of various ethnicities and religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina has produced quite naturally the preconditions for multiculturalism. This has been the source of the idea of Bosnia. Yet, many Bosnians have called into question their identification with that abstraction. Among all the “truths” that must be investigated, on the path toward

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46 Of course equitable multiethnic political representation was, theoretically, a goal of Communist governmental organization in Yugoslavia. These quotas bore little bearing, however, on how power was actually distributed across ethnicities. Political inequities and disenfranchisement of segments of the
reconciliation, we must include the myth or reality of “Bosnia” in pre-war BiH.\(^{47}\) Fledgling democratic institutions can help to foster multiculturalism—the only course for survival in Bosnia and Herzegovina—“from above,” but citizens of BiH and the international community must assess the historical (and remaining) foundation for critical pluralism and deep democracy in this new nation.

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\(^{47}\) Other researchers have investigated the failure of cohesive forces on the level of nation (“Yugoslavia”) and republic (“Bosnia”). In *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, Andrew Wachtel found the support for a “supranational Yugoslav culture” insufficient and waning over time (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). With respect to Bosnia, Tone Bringa cites Marilyn Strathern, who argues that “in order to create a collective identity, individuals must submerge the heterogeneous sources of their identity, rather than just add these to one another” (*Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, 32). I would agree that contiguous but separate ethnicities in parts of BiH did not contribute to a sense of “Bosnia.” However, I would disagree with Strathern’s conception/requirement of an exclusive collective identity. The goal of multiculturalism, it would seem, is to maintain multiple identities; although, of course there must be an overarching (supranational) identification with the larger nation. “Brotherhood and unity” was doomed from the start in Yugoslavia, for the multiculturalism that it invoked could not develop in the absence of political freedoms.