



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

The Politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** The Historical Roots of Bosnian Politics
- **Chapter 2** The Yugoslav Legacy and the Rise of Nationalism
- **Chapter 3** The Bosnian War and the Dayton Peace Agreement
- **Chapter 4** The Constitutional Framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Chapter 5** State Structure: Entities and the Brčko District
- **Chapter 6** The Presidency: Collective Leadership and Representation
- **Chapter 7** The Parliamentary Assembly and Legislative Process
- **Chapter 8** The Role of the Council of Ministers
- **Chapter 9** The Judiciary and Constitutional Court
- **Chapter 10** Governance in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Chapter 11** The Structure of Republika Srpska
- **Chapter 12** The Cantonal System and Local Governance
- **Chapter 13** Brčko District: A Unique Political Entity
- **Chapter 14** The Office of the High Representative: International Oversight
- **Chapter 15** The Bonn Powers: Scope and Controversies
- **Chapter 16** Political Parties: Ethnicity and Electoral Dynamics
- **Chapter 17** The Electoral System and Voting Patterns
- **Chapter 18** Coalition Governments and Political Gridlock
- **Chapter 19** Ethnic Divisions and Nationalist Politics
- **Chapter 20** The Politics of Reform and EU Integration
- **Chapter 21** The Role of Civil Society and Media
- **Chapter 22** Corruption, Clientelism, and Rule of Law Challenges
- **Chapter 23** International Actors and the Path to Stability
- **Chapter 24** The Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Political System
- **Chapter 25** Lessons for Post-Conflict State-Building

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina stands as a unique case study in post-conflict state-building, governance, and democracy. Its modern political system was forged in the aftermath of devastating war—a complex compromise between the international community’s vision of peace and the enduring realities of ethnic divisions on the ground. In seeking to carefully balance the interests and identities of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, the architects of the Dayton Peace Agreement created an institutional framework that has shaped the country’s politics for decades.

This book aims to offer a comprehensive guide to the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through an examination of its constitutional foundations, power-sharing arrangements, and multitude of government layers, we explore how the ambition to secure peace and stability has resulted in an often unwieldy and inefficient system. The country is formally a parliamentary republic, but its day-to-day functioning is heavily influenced by the ethnopolitical cleavages of its past and present.

The creation of two highly autonomous entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska—along with the distinctive Brčko District, has amplified both the strengths and weaknesses of decentralized governance. Here, state institutions are carefully calibrated to ensure ethnic representation and balance, yet also hampered by frequent political gridlock. The presence of the international Office of the High Representative, wielding the powerful Bonn Powers, further complicates questions of sovereignty and local accountability.

A recurring theme in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s politics is the persistent tension between national integration and ethnic autonomy. This is reflected in the dominance of ethnically-based parties, persistent patterns of ethnic voting, and challenges in forming stable coalitions. Efforts to modernize governance and align with European Union norms are frequently hindered by entrenched interests, nationalist rhetoric, and the legacy of wartime trauma.

Yet, Bosnia and Herzegovina is also a testament to the resilience of democratic aspirations in a fragmented society. Despite a host of obstacles—including corruption, clientelism, and a complex web of institutions—the country maintains functioning democratic processes and a vibrant, if divided, civil society. As Bosnia and Herzegovina continues its pursuit of reform and Euro-Atlantic integration, its experience offers valuable lessons for understanding the possibilities and limitations of post-conflict political engineering in deeply divided societies.

In the chapters that follow, this book will guide readers through the structures, actors,

processes, and persistent challenges that define the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By dissecting the key institutions, exploring the dynamics of power sharing, and analyzing the perennial issues facing the country, we aim to provide not only a guide, but also a foundation for critical reflection on the future of democracy and governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: The Deep Roots of a Complex Identity

The story of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and by extension its politics, is a tapestry woven over millennia, a complex blend of cultures, migrations, and empires. To understand the present, we must delve into the deep past, acknowledging that the ground upon which modern Bosnia is built has been, for thousands of years, a crossroads, a frontier, and a contested space. It's a history that doesn't offer simple answers but instead reveals layers of identity that continue to shape the political landscape today.

Before the arrival of the South Slavs, the area that is now Bosnia and Herzegovina was primarily inhabited by Illyrian tribes. These ancient peoples, known for their warrior culture and distinct customs, left their mark on the landscape and, according to some modern interpretations, potentially on the genetic makeup of the region's current inhabitants. While the idea of a direct, unbroken line from Illyrians to modern Bosnians is debated among historians, there's no doubt these early inhabitants were the first thread in a very long historical narrative.

The Romans arrived in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, gradually incorporating the region into their vast empire. Bosnia became part of the Roman province of Dalmatia, with a northern strip along the Sava River included in Pannonia. The Romans brought infrastructure, including roads and fortifications, and established towns, some of which remain to this day. They also introduced Christianity, which began to take root in the region by the 1st century CE. Roman rule, however, was not without challenges, facing resistance from local tribes.

The 4th and 5th centuries saw the Roman Empire in decline, and the region experienced invasions by various groups, including Goths and Huns. This period of flux set the stage for the next major demographic shift. Beginning in the 6th century, Slavic tribes began to migrate into the Balkans, a process that continued into the 7th century. These migrations, often in conjunction with the Avars, significantly altered the ethnic and linguistic landscape of the region.

The precise details of the Slavic settlement in Bosnia are debated, but it's generally understood that various South Slavic groups settled in the area. The interaction between the arriving Slavs and the existing populations, including the Illyrians and Romanized inhabitants, contributed to the unique cultural blend that would develop in Bosnia. This wasn't a simple replacement of one group by another but rather a complex process of assimilation, adaptation, and the formation of new identities.

In the early Middle Ages, the territory of Bosnia was often contested between neighboring powers, including the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary.

Despite this external pressure, a distinct Bosnian entity began to emerge. The first mention of a Bosnian region appears in a 10th-century Byzantine text. By the 12th century, a Bosnian Banate, a medieval state ruled by a Ban, was established.

The Banate of Bosnia, while at times nominally subject to Hungarian or Byzantine suzerainty, often exercised a significant degree of independence. This period saw the rise of notable Bosnian rulers, such as Ban Kulin in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Kulin's era is often remembered as a time of peace and prosperity, marked by a trade agreement with the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik).

A particularly intriguing aspect of medieval Bosnia was the presence of the Bosnian Church. This autonomous Christian church existed independently of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox hierarchies and was often viewed with suspicion and labeled as heretical by both. The exact doctrines and practices of the Bosnian Church are still debated by scholars, with historical links to the dualist Bogomil movement being largely questioned by modern historians. Regardless of its theological specifics, the existence of a distinct Bosnian Church highlights the unique religious landscape of the region in the Middle Ages and its divergence from the dominant Christian traditions of its neighbors.

The 14th century marked a high point for the medieval Bosnian state. Under rulers like Stjepan II Kotromanić and especially Tvrtko I, Bosnia expanded its territory and briefly became one of the most powerful states in the Balkans. Tvrtko I was crowned king in 1377, elevating the Bosnian state to a kingdom. This era saw economic development, particularly through mining, and the growth of urban centers.

However, the Kingdom of Bosnia also faced internal challenges, including the power of the local nobility, as well as external threats. The most significant of these threats came from the rising Ottoman Empire. Ottoman raids into the Balkans began in the late 14th century, and Bosnia found itself increasingly in their path. Despite periods of resistance and alliances with other Balkan states, the Kingdom of Bosnia gradually succumbed to Ottoman power. The final conquest is generally dated to 1463, although resistance in some areas continued for a few more decades.

The arrival of the Ottomans marked a profound turning point in Bosnian history. Ottoman rule brought with it significant changes to the administrative system, land ownership, and perhaps most significantly, the introduction of Islam on a large scale. While conversions to Islam were not immediate or universal, over centuries, a significant portion of the population adopted the new faith, creating the multi-religious landscape that characterizes Bosnia and Herzegovina today. This period of Ottoman rule, lasting over 400 years, left an indelible mark on Bosnian culture, architecture, and social structures.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century brought new shifts in power

and influence to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nationalist movements in neighboring Serbia and Croatia began to assert claims over territories inhabited by their ethnic kin, including parts of Bosnia. This rising tide of nationalism, coupled with the weakening of Ottoman control, created a volatile situation.

In 1878, following the Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin decided that while Bosnia and Herzegovina would nominally remain under Ottoman sovereignty, it would be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary. This move, intended to stabilize the region, instead introduced a new layer of complexity and fueled further nationalist aspirations.

Austro-Hungarian rule, which lasted until the end of World War I, brought modernization and infrastructure development but also a new set of political dynamics. The Austro-Hungarians attempted to balance the interests of the different ethnic and religious groups, but nationalist movements continued to gain traction. The formal annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908 sparked a major international crisis and further heightened tensions in the Balkans.

It was in this environment of competing nationalisms and imperial rivalries that the spark that ignited World War I was struck in Sarajevo in 1914, with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The end of the war and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to yet another transformation of the political landscape. Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This union, while ostensibly a state of South Slavs, was dominated by Serbian centralism and did little to resolve the underlying ethnic and political tensions within Bosnia.

The interwar period in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was marked by political instability and ethnic strife, issues that were far from resolved when World War II erupted. Yugoslavia was invaded and partitioned by the Axis powers in 1941, with Bosnia and Herzegovina largely incorporated into the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a fascist puppet state. The war years were horrific, characterized by widespread violence, persecution, and genocide targeting Serbs, Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Bosniaks and Croats.

The brutal experience of World War II and the complex web of collaboration and resistance further deepened the divisions within Bosnia. The multi-ethnic Partisan movement, led by Josip Broz Tito, eventually emerged victorious, and after the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the six constituent republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Within socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina was presented as a model of ethnic coexistence, a republic where no single group held a dominant majority. The communist regime suppressed overt nationalism and attempted to foster a sense of

Yugoslav identity. While this period brought industrialization and social changes, the underlying ethnic identities and historical narratives remained, often simmering beneath the surface. The political structures of socialist Yugoslavia, while appearing unified, were also built on a delicate balance of power among the republics and their respective ethnic populations.

This brief journey through the historical roots of Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals a land shaped by successive waves of peoples, empires, and ideologies. The layers of Illyrian, Roman, Slavic, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian influence, combined with the unique development of the Bosnian Church and the traumatic experiences of the 20th century, created a complex societal fabric. It is this deep historical legacy, with its overlapping identities and unresolved tensions, that provides the essential backdrop for understanding the political system that emerged from the ashes of the late 20th century conflict. The political structures of modern Bosnia and Herzegovina are not simply a product of recent events but are profoundly influenced by this long and intricate past.

SAMPLE COPY

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY