

DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH: FRANJO TUĐMAN AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Jure KRIŠTO*

Based on the transcripts of conversations held in the Croatian president's office, other documents and testimony by participants in events, the author presents the essential elements of Franjo Tuđman's geopolitical thoughts with special focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Introduction

A veritable constellation of Croatian and foreign journalists, various analysts, former politicians, foreign observers and witnesses at the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague has woven a narrative, not without citing one another, about how Franjo Tuđman, the first president of the Republic of Croatia, wanted to partition Bosnia and Herzegovina in agreement with the head of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević.¹ The editor of the published transcripts of Tuđman's conversations taped in his office and Ivan Lovrenović, who wrote the foreword to these editions, highlighted sentences and portions thereof in an attempt to suggest to readers precisely this interpretation of those documents.² James J. Sadkovich, on the other hand, demonstrated that many journalists, foreign observers, commentators, peace negotiators and politicians had their own reasons to draw such conclusions. Armed with exemplary knowledge of local history and the conflicting sides, Sadkovich offered an interpretation of the circumstances and events that does not comply with such responses,

* Jure Krišto, Ph.D., Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, Croatia

¹ See James J. Sadkovich, "Franjo Tuđman and the Muslim-Croat War of 1993," *Review of Croatian History* II/2006, no. 1: 207-245.

² *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, 2 volumes, compiled by Predrag Lucić, (Split – Sarajevo, 2005).

moreover they indicate that an objective observer familiar with the relevant circumstances should not accept them.³

Tuđman, with his statements on the geopolitical significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia, may have provided the impetus for baseless interpretations among the uninitiated. Thus, in a conversation with the representatives of the Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Zagreb on 17 September 1992, he stressed:

Gentlemen, the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the essential questions of the Croatian people as a whole[,] of the Republic of Croatia as a sovereign internationally recognized state [-] and it is time for all Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to see this. This is not just a question for the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is a problem for the Croatian state and the Croatian people as a whole. Why? Because it is historically and geopolitically tied to Croatia, due to the unnatural boundaries of today's Croatia, [and] because of Bosnia and Herzegovina of any kind.⁴

However much this rhetoric may lead the chance reader to conclude that Tuđman favored the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, those better versed in Croatian history know that Tuđman only joined the ranks of many Croatian politicians and thinkers – and not just those of more recent date – which held similar convictions.⁵ An inescapable conclusion is that this geopolitical analysis of the Croatian people and Croatian state contains the essence of Tuđman's stance on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it must also be recalled that many of the misconceptions about Tuđman's relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina and his role in the war between the Croats and Bosnian Muslims, over and above ideological prepossessions and application of post-modern models to historical matters, originated due to a misunderstanding of Tuđman's geopolitical analysis.

³ Besides the work cited in note 1, see: James J. Sadkovich, "Patriots, villains, and Franjo Tuđman," *Ibid.*, pp. 247-280; *Ibid.*, "A Historical Test Case: Was Franjo Tuđman an authoritarian nationalist?" *Review of Croatian History* III/2007, no. 1: 219-249.

⁴ "Gospodo, bosansko-hercegovačko pitanje jedno [je] od bitnih pitanja hrvatskoga naroda u cjelini[,] Republike Hrvatske kao suverene međunarodno priznate države [-] i neka to shvate svi Hrvati u Bosni i Hercegovini. To nije samo pitanje Hrvata u Bosni i Hercegovini, to je problem Hrvatske države, hrvatskog naroda u cjelini. Zašto? Zato što je to i povijesno i geopolitički tako povezano sa Hrvatskom zbog neprirodnih granica sadašnje države Hrvatske, zbog Bosne i Hercegovine ovakve ili onakve." *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, 2 vols., Predrag Lucić, ed. (Split-Sarajevo, 2005), vol. 1, p. 237.

⁵ L. V. Südland [I. Pilar], *Južnoslavensko pitanje. Prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja*, Varaždin, 1990; Ivo Pilar, *Politički zemljopis hrvatskih zemalja, Geopolitička studija* (Sarajevo, 1918); Ivo Lendić, *Božji kotači. Otvoreno pismo mstru. Augustinu Juretiću*, J. Matanić, ed. (Split, 2001), Mladen Klemenčić, "Suvremena politička geografija i geopolitika," *Geografski glasnik*, Zagreb, 57, 135-145; M. Klemenčić – Nenad Pokos, "Ivo Pilar i politička geografija," in: *Godišnjak Pilar. Prinosi za proučavanje života i djela dra Ive Pilara*, Srećko Lipovčan and Zlatko Matijević, eds., Zagreb, 1/2001, 39-49; Petar Vučić, "Proslov," in: Ivo Pilar, *Politički zemljopis hrvatskih zemalja. Geopolitička studija*, /reprint/ (Zagreb, 1995), v-xviii.

This work avoids the fabrications of post-modern models and imposition of interpretations based on stereotypical assumptions, instead being limited to the classical historiographic approach of analyzing available documents. The work is based on the published transcripts of recorded conversations Tuđman held in his office with various international, Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian politicians and church dignitaries⁶ and other published documents,⁷ supplemented with the published memoirs of participants in the relevant events and the scholarly literature.⁸

Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Problem

Why is Bosnia and Herzegovina problem for the Croatian state and the Croatian people? In Tuđman's unpolished analysis three types of reasons are discernible: historical, geopolitical and political. Tuđman the historian knew that throughout history Bosnia and Herzegovina was either a part of the Croatian state or within its orbit. He also knew, and tirelessly reminded others of this, that modern Bosnia and Herzegovina was a colonial construct which emerged and was maintained from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, and thereby torn from the Croatian orbit. Viewed geopolitically, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia are so mutually interdependent that neither can function well nor survive without the other. Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it is compelled to secure its interest through Croatia's territory, which was also demonstrated in the wars that followed Yugoslavia's collapse. Croatia, on the other hand, with Bosnia and Herzegovina penetrating deep into its territorial "bowels," can scarcely secure its borders, and it encounters equal difficulty in maintaining its vital functions.⁹ Finally, for Croatia the constitutional and legal structure of its neighbor and the domestic policies implemented therein are essential. This final observation indicates that Tuđman did not conceive of Bosnia and Herzegovina as necessarily incorporated into Croatia – thus its partition was not a necessity, but the organization of this neighboring state and its domestic policies are of vital interest to Croatia.

The context of Tuđman's first formulation of the geopolitical significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the negotiations between the presidents of the Presidencies of the Socialist Republics during 1991, before Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, even before these declarations were announced. At the seventh session of the Supreme State Council of the Republic of Croatia

⁶ *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, 2 vols., Predrag Lucić, ed. (Split-Sarajevo, 2005).

⁷ Miroslav Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini* (Zagreb, 2005).

⁸ Franjo Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina 1990.-1996.* (Mostar, 2002); Martin Špegelj, *Sjećanja vojnika*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb, 2001); Janko Bobetko, *Sve moje bitke* (Zagreb, 2003).

⁹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 11.

on June 8, 1991, President Tuđman reported on the results of the last of these meetings.¹⁰ At this session, Tuđman explained that at the last meeting with the presidents, the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina was *finally* opened as the key to resolving the Yugoslav crisis. Why did Tuđman believe that resolving the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina was crucial to resolving the Yugoslav problem? Actually, Tuđman was not the only one thinking along these lines, for all of the participants in these unproductive gatherings were aware that the disputes in Yugoslavia would conclude or break over the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tuđman may have been more aware than others that perceiving Bosnia and Herzegovina as a problem that needs to be solved would open the way for solving the problem of Yugoslavia. At that meeting held in mid-June 1991, it was decided that Alija Izetbegović, the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Franjo Tuđman, the president of Croatia, and Slobodan Milošević, the president of Serbia, would meet to commence talks on resolving the matter of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All three agreed to meet and to solve the dilemma called Bosnia and Herzegovina. To be sure, entire books can be written on why it was left to Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to solve the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but suffice it to say for now that all participants were aware that the question of Yugoslavia would be easily solved, either as a unified country or separated into its republics, if concord on matters of interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina were achieved. It could also be argued that all representatives of their republics were aware that the final solution would be reached when they came to an agreement on the mode for partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina, but this consideration would move this discussion into an entirely different direction. Here it is sufficient to note that Tuđman was aware that this problem was “up in the air” and that the time had come to begin solving it. Particularly important is Tuđman’s observation that the future fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina had now acquired the status of legality.¹¹ In his later experiences as state president and commander-in-chief of Croatia’s armed forces, Tuđman was confronted with the breaking of commitments, the violation of agreements and blatant deceit, but he never backed down from the “mandate” given to him by the political representatives of the Yugoslav republics, together with Izetbegović and Milošević, to solve the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He firmly believed that prior to Yugoslavia’s collapse the solution to it “lies ... in a demarcation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and if we achieve this, then we can seek the potential establishment of an Alliance of sovereign republics and states.”¹² In these formulations of the Bosnian problem, it is not entirely clear whether Tuđman had in mind a demarcation *within* Bosnia and Herzegovina or a demarcation that would abolish Bosnia and Herzegovina as

¹⁰ *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, vol. 1, pp. 9-74.

¹¹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 10.

¹² Rješenje za Jugoslaviju “nalazi se u razgraničenju Bosne i Hercegovine i ako to postignemo, znači onda možemo tražiti eventualno osnovu za Savez suverenih republika i država.” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 25.

a component of the new alliance of “sovereign republics and states,” but there is no doubt that this was proposed still within the context of Yugoslavia, i.e. with a view to the creation of some type of *confederation* or alliance of states of Yugoslavia. After all, the astonishing patience he demonstrated in agreements with Izetbegović, despite the deceptions and broken promises, showed that Tuđman was more concerned with the quality of the organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina and politics therein than seizing parts thereof.

It appears to me that this is the key to understanding the everyday, military and strategic policies which various sides in the territory of the former Yugoslavia conducted.

If we accept the theory that Tuđman, like all of the leaders of the Yugoslav republics, believed that ultimately Bosnia and Herzegovina would have to be partitioned (with firm borders or with soft borders inside Bosnia and Herzegovina), it is important to point out who actually initiated its division. It was entirely clear to Tuđman, as it was to everyone else, that this solution to the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina was encouraged by the Serbs, by their intention of separating their territory from it. It was also clear to him that “Izetbegović ... [was] helpless in the face of *this Serbian movement to dismantle Bosnia and Herzegovina*.”¹³ In confronting this reality, only two options remained. The first was for the Croats and Muslims (who would later be identified as the Bosniaks) agree to the organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to militarily defeat the Serbs jointly. The second was for each to reach an agreement with the Serbs to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina into three parts. The Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with Tuđman as their representative as well, could only be, and eventually were, divided over the question of whether it was possible to reach an agreement with the Muslims/Bosniaks on an arrangement of the country that would satisfy the Croats or whether such an agreement was impossible, necessitating a mutual demarcation. The majority of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not believe that an agreement was possible with the Muslims/Bosniaks.

At this point one may already conclude that the accusations that Tuđman partitioned Bosnia and Herzegovina are puzzling at the very least, for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a task taken up by all relevant factors involved, from the presidents of the Presidencies of the former Yugoslav republics, including the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the representatives of international institutions, including the European Community (EC) and the United Nations (UN). Furthermore, the international community assumed the comprehensive task of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Another important conclusion is that at the beginning of Yugoslavia's collapse, the *need* for Bosnia and Herzegovina's partition was never doubted; the

¹³ “Izetbegović je bespomoćan u odnosu na *taj srpski pokret razgrađivanja Bosne i Hercegovine*,” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 11, emphasis mine.

question was simply *how* to do so to the satisfaction of all three ethnic and religious communities.¹⁴ The question of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina was never reduced to a two-way partition, but rather exclusively a three-way partition, i.e. a division between the Muslims/Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. This is precisely how Tuđman responded to his critics, particularly to those who reproached him for his alleged deal with Milošević on dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina: “There was never any deal on partition [of Bosnia and Herzegovina] between Serbia and Croatia.” But he also added that he always publicly advocated the idea that there were only two possible solutions for Bosnia and Herzegovina – one was confederalization, the other division.¹⁵

A separate question is how and why the policy of the international community changed and, pursuant to this policy, the concept of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s partition changed, or how and when the concept that Bosnia and Herzegovina had to be preserved as a integral, unified country emerged. This shall be the subject of the discussion below.

The political situation in Croatia and the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina

To understand Tuđman’s policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina, the political circumstances of that time must be taken into account.

In December 1990, ethnic Serbs in Croatia proclaimed the autonomy of their “Serbian Krajina” districts and their secession from Croatia. Just after New Year’s Day, on January 9, 1991, the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia issued an order on disarmament of the Croatian police, to which the Croatian Parliament responded by passing a resolution on defense of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia,¹⁶ while at the end of March 1991, the first of Croatia’s armed defenders was killed in hostilities between the forces of the Croatian Interior Ministry and the militia of the Serbian autonomous district of Krajina. At the end of June 1991, Croatia proclaimed its sovereignty and independence.¹⁷ During the remainder of 1991, various armed forces, the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) and Serbian paramilitary formations attacked

¹⁴ See: Mladen Ančić, *Tko je pogriješio u Bosni* (Osijek-Zagreb-Split, 1999).

¹⁵ “Nikakvog dogovora o podjeli [Bosne i Hercegovine] između Srbije i Hrvatske nije bilo.” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 338.

¹⁶ Milan Vuković, *Dr. Franjo Tuđman u sudskim dosjeima /11. siječnja 1972. – 10. lipnja 1990.*, 2nd expanded edition (Koprivnica, 2007), p. 128.

¹⁷ See the text of the Croatian Parliament’s decision to sever state and legal ties with the SFRJ of June 8, 1991, in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 66-67.

the Republic of Croatia, which culminated in the annihilation and occupation of Vukovar, accompanied by a massacre of troops and civilians, and massacres of civilians elsewhere, the demolition of hospitals, schools and cultural heritage sites and the destruction of Dubrovnik. A not insignificant point is that the United States approved of this aggression against Croatia, a stance with which at least some members of the European Union complied.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, by mid-September 1991, the Serbs began to create Serbian autonomous districts (better known under their Serbian acronym SAO) in the areas they deemed their own. By the end of the month, over 100,000 JNA troops and members of Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary units had poured into Bosnia and Herzegovina and deployed in the Serbian SAOs in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. At the end of September, the first Croatian casualties were claimed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the village of Ravno in southeast Herzegovina.¹⁸ Alija Izetbegović, president of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and the president of the Bosnian collective presidency, not only failed to react to events in this Croatian village in his own state, he also declared that the Serbian aggression against Croatia, which was being waged from his country as well, was “not our war,” but rather a war between the Serbs and Croats. Furthermore, the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina sent signals (accepting use of the Yugoslav currency, the dinar; the agreement between Muhamed Filipović and Radovan Karadžić on August 2, 1991)¹⁹ indicating a willingness to remain in a rump Yugoslavia, which actually meant an expanded Serbia.²⁰ Many Croatian youths from Bosnia and Herzegovina enlisted in the armed defense of Croatia.

Aware of the impossibility of preserving Muslim unity in a unified Yugoslavia, Izetbegović lost interest in a negotiated re-organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina as initially conceived, instead launching talks for a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina. The model remained a unitary state like Yugoslavia, and interest remained concentrated on the Muslim population. Izetbegović's attitude toward the assault on a Croatian village in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a clear indication that the Bosniak leadership could not conceive of a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina that was not unitary, just as it had no concern for any ethnic community that was not Bosniak/Muslim. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina became clear. Since the Serbs had already earlier decided that they were only interested in the Serbian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and

¹⁸ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁹ Text of agreement in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 64-65.

²⁰ See Izetbegović's 6 points of the future of the SFRJ of June, 27, 1991 in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 55-56. Alija Izetbegović later explained that his efforts to preserve Yugoslavia was meant to keep all Muslims together, A. Izetbegović, *Sjećanja. Autobiografski zapisi* (Sarajevo, 2001), p. 461; cf. M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 20-21. Izetbegović's motives thus corresponded to those of Milošević, except that as opposed to Izetbegović, Milošević had in mind the Serbs.

the territory they would seize and retain there, while the Muslim leadership was concerned only with the Muslim population, the sole option left to the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to defend the Croats and, at a minimum, that territory in which the Croats formed a compact population. Bosnia and Herzegovina truly became a disunited country, only the future boundaries between the three ethnic communities had to be decided by war, since the representatives of the Muslims and Serbs could not accept any of the proposed solutions that would have avoided war.

Under these circumstances, the preservation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a (unitary) state was only in the interest of the Bosniaks, while the Serbs and Croats could either conceive of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a loose confederation of three ethnic states or call for the annexation of the Serb and Croat ethnic communities to Serbia and Croatia respectively, which would also imply the formation of a Muslim state in a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the proposal of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on October 15, 1991, the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed the Declaration of Sovereignty.²¹ The Serbian deputies opposed the declaration and departed from the session, and initiated the establishment of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, later the Republic of Srpska. This turn in the political situation was entirely inauspicious for the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and led to the need for decision-making on at least that part of the country in which the Croatian population accounted for a majority. And indeed, in Mostar on November 18, 1991, the representatives of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina established the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna “as a political, cultural, economic and territorial whole” with Mate Boban as its president.²²

But the establishment of Croatian political autonomy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a unified expression of representatives of the local Croatian people. In fact, the leadership of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina was split. Party chairman Stjepan Kljuić from Sarajevo preferred a solution to the conundrum in Bosnia and Herzegovina along the Bosniak line, while the, provisionally designated, Herzegovinian current – supported by the leadership from central Bosnia and the Bosnian Posavina – accepted the Herceg-Bosna Community as an expression of the political will of the Croatian people. Therefore, at a session held on December 23, 1991, the Community revoked Kljuić’s authority to represent the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina

²¹ *Platforma o položaju Bosne i Hercegovine i budućem ustrojstvu jugoslavenske zajednice*, (Sarajevo); 15 October 1991; text also in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 72-74.

²² “kao političku, kulturnu, gospodarstvenu i područnu cjelinu”, Text of decision in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 99-100; cf. F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, p. 78.

in any negotiations. This split was conveyed to the elite of the entire Croatian national body.²³

This is precisely why Tuđman summoned the representatives of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina to a meeting in Zagreb on December 27, 1991.²⁴ At this meeting a solution to the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina was discussed directly. Taking the floor at the beginning of the Zagreb meeting, Boban formulated the objective of an “alternative policy for the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” as he called it, which would entail the territory which the Croats inhabit to be proclaimed “an independent Croatian territory and merged with the Croatian state[,] but at a time and at a moment when the Croatian leadership ... decides that this time and this moment are ripe.”²⁵

There can be no doubt that with this move, the leadership of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina had forsaken the struggle for Bosnia and Herzegovina, confederal or otherwise. It was also a renouncement of the age-old maxim that (all of) Bosnia and Herzegovina was a geopolitical interest of Croatia. But there is some question as to the extent to which the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina were responsible for this change, and whether these new geopolitical views were a consequence of the overriding political situation. Tuđman agreed with these new geopolitical insights, but not without some vital reservations which significantly blunted Boban’s formulation. Therefore, Tuđman’s explanation of the current political and military situation used as the basis to explain the geopolitical situation is very important. In the explanation of his geopolitical analysis, Tuđman took into consideration the collapse of Yugoslavia, the presence of the Yugoslav Army in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the interests of the great powers, particularly the United States, the refusal to accept an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina by Serbia and the Serbs, the geographic distribution of the population and the numerical status of each ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia’s interests, and similar factors. Hence one may conclude that Tuđman’s (new) attitude toward Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged from an analysis of the current political situation, the balance of forces on the ground and the presumed desires of the international community, especially the United States. In this regard, he reminded Stjepan Kljuić that Croatia had advocated the maintenance of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that this was at a time

²³ See, for example, Ivo Banac, *Cijena Bosne* (Zagreb: Europa danas, 1994); Ivan Lovrenović, *Ex tenebris. Sarajevski dnevnik* (Zagreb, 1994); Luka Markešić, *Slučaj Bosna. Dijagnoza, nalazi, terapija* (Livno, 1995). See also this author’s examination of these book in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 31/1999, no. 3: 641-645.

²⁴ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 75-128.

²⁵ Da se prostor koji obitavaju Hrvati proglasi “nezavisnim hrvatskim prostorom i priključi državi Hrvatskoj[,] ali u onom vremenu i u onom trenutku kada to [h]rvatsko vrhovništvo ... odluči da je taj trenutak i to vrijeme nastupilo.” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 80.

when the Serbs in Croatia demanded separation from Croatia. But even then, more precisely in 1989, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) declared that the Croats have their own demands *if* the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina is placed in jeopardy. By the end of 1991, Tuđman was beginning to conclude that Bosnian-Herzegovinian independence had no great prospects, taking into account the Serbian opposition to this with the additional support of the Serbian-Montenegrin army. But even if independence were secured, Tuđman wondered about the prospects of the Croats there. Since the creation of the Yugoslav state, the share of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina declined from 24% to 17%. If Bosnian-Herzegovinian independence were declared, Croats would largely depart for Croatia and their continued existence in that state would be placed in even greater jeopardy, and this would in turn further threaten Croatia. Tuđman therefore concluded that it was in the interest of the Croatian people at that time for there to be a “demarcation” *inside* Bosnia and Herzegovina. Major international circles were open to such a possibility, for they saw it as a way to avoid war. The Croats did not need to openly advocate the break-up of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it would have been unreasonable of them “to reject this offer of demarcation when it is in the interest of the Croatian people ... here in the Republic and ... in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Tuđman did not neglect to specify that such possibilities did come up in the talks with Izetbegović and Milošević. He added that “an almost optimum solution” for the Croats, precisely on geopolitical grounds, would be for Croatia to obtain, besides the Communities of Herceg-Bosna and Posavina, the Cazin and Bihać regions. A small state would be formed around Sarajevo which would serve as a buffer between Croatia and Serbia. Also important is Tuđman’s observation that such a policy would avoid war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁶

Also notable is that besides Kljuić, Miro Lasić, a Herzegovinian, also disagreed with such geopolitical assessments, stressing that an optimum solution is to “retain Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, not altering its borders,” for such a future would be favorable to Croatia. He opposed negotiations with the Serbs to the detriment of the Muslims and the idea that the Croats could obtain over 20 of the 110 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the suggestion that the Cazin region could be attached to Croatia. He was convinced that the separation of Herzegovina would be devastating for the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the Croatian future, for approximately 600,000 Croats would remain outside of Croatia, while those 150,000 that would join it were already a part of it in spirit. In contrast to Tuđman’s view, Lasić concluded that only an “indivisible Bosnia” could serve as a buffer zone between Croatia and Serbia.²⁷

²⁶ Bilo bi nerazumno “ne prihvatiti tu ponudu razgraničenja kada je to u interesu hrvatskog naroda ... ovdje u ovoj Republici i ... u Bosni i Hercegovini.” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 84-88.

²⁷ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 92-98.

There were other speakers who expressed the same opinion. Ivan Markešić backed his disagreement with the proposals made by Tuđman and the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna with the alleged stance of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically Sarajevo Archbishop Vinko Puljić and the Franciscan provincial of the Bosna Srebrena: “The unified message, and I stand by this, is that an integral, sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina is the best solution for the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”²⁸

Tuđman did not assent to such arguments and did not change his mind. In a rather long monologue he recapitulated his geopolitical views. Viewed historically, (civic) Bosnia and Herzegovina was “not the solution for the Croatian people.”²⁹ Tuđman once more recalled that Bosnia and Herzegovina was a colonial construct, which had not existed between the two World Wars, rather the communists once more concocted it to purportedly lessen the antagonisms between the Croats and Serbs. Currently, Tuđman continued, there is no integral Bosnia and Herzegovina, because the Serbs do not accept it, while the Bosnian-Herzegovinian representatives (the Bosniak/Muslim portion) do not believe in it, for they are making arrangements to remain in Yugoslavia. Experience shows, Tuđman reminded, that there is no political solution with Serbia nor elimination of the possibility of war without the establishment of borders.³⁰ The necessity of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina imposed itself, which, Tuđman once more stressed, had been negotiated and concluded with Izetbegović and Milošević “privately, between the two of us, the three of us.”³¹ Tuđman responded to those from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian delegation who insisted on preserving the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina by recalling that “not one people in the world can ever achieve its maximum demands.”³² This is why he admonished Kljuić for failing to fully observe the agreement about initiating talks with Izetbegović and Karadžić on Croatian demands in Bosnia and Herzegovina, rather he acceded to Izetbegović’s policies and Muslim interests. He did not accept the argument that only 30% of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be attached to Croatia, for the significance of the territory that would be attached to Croatia, to its security and other conditions of life, had to be taken into consideration.

There can thus be no doubt that by the end of 1991 discussions had been held on the possibility of annexing the Croatian sections of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia. This is not, in fact, surprising, for Tuđman had discussed this with Izetbegović and Milošević, and this resulted from a logical sequence of conclusions that a demarcation *within* Bosnia and Herzegovina had to be

²⁸ “Jedinstvena je poruka i ja na tome stojim, da cjelovita, suverena Bosna i Hercegovina je najbolje rješenje za hrvatski narod u Bosni i Hercegovini.”, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 109.

²⁹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 114.

³⁰ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 116.

³¹ “u četiri oka, i u šest oka”, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 116.

³² *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 117.

arranged. On January 9, 1991, the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina issued the Declaration of the Republic of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³³ When it became apparent that a demarcation had to be established among the ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the obvious question that arose was the potential annexation of the Serbian portion to Serbia and the Croatian portion to Croatia.

The attempt to solve the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina by war

After January 15, 1992, Croatia was recognized as a sovereign state by many countries, including the European Community. In order to recognize the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international community, represented by the Badinter Commission, demanded that a referendum be held and that accord be established on the tenets of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional order.³⁴ The referendum was held at the end of February 1992,³⁵ which the Serbs boycotted, while Tuđman encouraged the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to turn out for the referendum and to support it. In the referendum, two thirds of those who turned out voted in favor of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence, which means that the Croats largely voted for independence, and that it was their votes which proved the deciding factor.³⁶

Serb forces were unconcerned with the referendum, rather they attacked Sarajevo, and this made it clear that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian problem would be settled by war and that it would be a war of all against all. Izetbegović firmly believed that the JNA was a guarantor of safety and Bosnia and Herzegovina's preservation, particularly when he demonstrated political loyalty and a lack of concern for what was being done to Croatia from the territory of his state. He even assented to the creation of a federation with Serbia and Montenegro at the prompting of the JNA.³⁷ A lack of unity also arose in the Serbian ranks. The Serbian representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nikola Koljević, came to Zagreb on January 8, 1992 and proposed a tripartite entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina which would be a confederation of the three peoples with clearly defined territories.³⁸ But Slobodan Milošević rejected this idea, obviously interested in much more expansive plans.³⁹ It is important to note that as the war

³³ Text of Declaration in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 119-121.

³⁴ M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 22.

³⁵ Text of Bosnian Parliament decision on holding the referendum in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 132.

³⁶ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 78-79.

³⁷ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, p. 82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

option went into motion, the idea of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina was even more present. This was clearly confirmed by the international community with a proposal for demarcation. At the end of February 1992, the EC plan on the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina was put forth by Portuguese Ambassador Jorge Cutileiro.⁴⁰ After securing consent on the division of the country into three components in Lisbon on March 31, 1992, Izetbegović withdrew his signature after returning, and the other two parties soon followed suit.⁴¹ These talks were closed after several further fruitless rounds. Izetbegović's consent for a confederation with Serbia and Montenegro was not well received by his political associates and party colleagues, for then nothing would remain of Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, nor did they approve of his signature on Cutileiro's proposal to divide the country.⁴² This is not surprising, given that the Main Headquarters of the Patriotic League for the Defense of the Sovereignty of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Glavni štab Patriotske lige BiH za odbranu suvereniteta Republike Bosne i Hercegovine*) issued its Directive on February 25, 1992, whereby it called out those forces working on the disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and among these were the "extremist forces of the HDZ."⁴³ At the beginning of 1992, the Muslims were undeniably concerned solely with an integral Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EC member states accorded recognition to Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 6, 1992, while the United States did so a day later.⁴⁴ On the same day as the U.S., the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also recognized by the Republic of Croatia.⁴⁵ On April 7, 1992, the Bosnian Serbs also proclaimed the independence of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁶ On April 8, 1992, the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna established armed forces called the Croatian Defense Council (better known under its Croatian acronym, HVO-*Hrvatsko vijeće obrane*). At the beginning of May 1992, the representative of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mate Boban, and the representative of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Radovan Karadžić, met in Graz, Austria, and expounded the contested details concerning mutual demarcation, underscored the need to continue negotiations within the fra-

⁴⁰ For the texts of various forms of the Cutileiro plan, see: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 136-162.

⁴¹ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 86-87.

⁴² Izetbegović later claimed that he never intended to accept what he had signed in Lisbon, but rather that this agreement served to secure sovereignty; see the interview with Radio Free Europe, cited in M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 23.

⁴³ Text of agreement in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 138-140.

⁴⁴ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, p. 91. Text of the joint declaration by the EC foreign ministers on Bosnia-Herzegovina's recognition in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 163.

⁴⁵ Text of decision in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 167-168.

⁴⁶ Text of decision in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 169-170.

mework of the European Union conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina and declared that any reasons for mutual warfare had ceased.⁴⁷

It would appear that this agreement disturbed Izetbegović and aroused fears that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina could reach an arrangement with the Serbs, which would certainly be detrimental to the Muslims/Bosniaks. Izetbegović turned to Tuđman and intensified talks with him. In response to Izetbegović's letter of July 5, 1992, Tuđman very clearly explained to Izetbegović Croatia's interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was similar to the standpoints Tuđman had earlier communicated to the representatives of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia was interested in the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it had contributed to their defense, and to the defense of the Muslims who were being attacked by the same Serbian enemy. All humanitarian aid to the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina went through Croatia, and Croatia was caring for hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuđman continued, had to organize the defense against the Serbian aggressor. The Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna and the HVO were components of this self-organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbian aggression against "territories with Croat majority populations" was ongoing, so it was absurd to speak of a deal between the Croats and Serbs to the detriment of the Muslims. "Certain unitary and unitarist tendencies among some in the Muslim leadership" were contributing to a sense of peril among the Croats, which is why there were those among the latter who wanted to merge parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia, which the leadership of the Republic of Croatia rejected.⁴⁸

Pursuant to this letter and several similar moves, Izetbegović and Tuđman concluded a friendship and cooperation agreement between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia in Zagreb on July 21, 1992.⁴⁹ The agreement was concluded for the purpose of joint defense against aggression mounted by the Serbs and the JNA, but it also entailed comprehensive economic, financial, cultural and other relations. The HVO entered the structure of the unified armed forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁵⁰ and, with Croatia's assistance, became engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina's defense in Posavina and Herzegovina.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Text of agreement in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁸ Text of letter in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 195-196.

⁴⁹ Text of the agreement in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 212-214.

⁵⁰ See text of the Directive on the armed forces of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 215-216; F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 100-102.

⁵¹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 239.

It would have been logical to expect that the political cards had been dealt and that they could have then commenced to defeat their common adversary militarily. But precisely the opposite occurred. Izetbegović obviously never intended to implement the Zagreb agreement; rather he used it to buy time to prepare his military for an attack on the Croatian territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵² This is probably why Izetbegović rejected Tuđman's proposal to sign a military pact.⁵³ Had Croatia had such an agreement, the defense of Posavina would have been ensured. Izetbegović obviously did not trust Tuđman, just as Tuđman had little sympathy for or faith in Izetbegović.⁵⁴ The latter increasingly leveled accusations at Tuđman for his purported efforts to create a "greater Croatia" at the expense of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵⁵

Instead of observing agreements and demonstrating good faith, the Muslim side, some representatives of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the press began to ramp up accusations on Tuđman's intent to partition and destroy Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Croats (in Herzegovina) of creating Croatian enclaves in Bosnia and Herzegovina as mere instruments for Tuđman's policies. Unfortunately, even the international community soon accepted this theory and the accompanying accusations, and Tuđman found it increasingly difficult to defend Croatia's political and military interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community also upheld the Muslims in the achievement of their strategic aims. Tuđman was more than simply aware of this, for he told his associates that this was in fact an essential component of international policy in the Balkans.⁵⁶ According to Tuđman's interpretation, the international community wanted to preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina and did not believe that the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina – who were portrayed as pro-Western and who gladly emphasized their friendship with secular Turkey – would create a fundamentalist state. To this extent, Croatia was seen as culpable for the tension and hostilities emerging in Bosnia and

⁵² F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 102-104. At the meeting with representatives of Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina in Zagreb on Sept. 17, 1992. Tuđman let it be known that he was familiar with the plan and declaration of the Muslim leadership that after war with the Serbs, the Catholic Croats would be next, and the objective was to create a civic, meaning unitary, state, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 239-240.

⁵³ Tuđman revealed this to representatives of the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina at meeting in Zagreb on September 17, 1992, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 241.

⁵⁴ In his afterward to the published transcripts, Ivan Lovrenović wrote: "It can definitely be said that these two (Tuđman and Izetbegović) did not at any moment give in to ordinary human weakness and to exchange even a single sincere word," Ivan Lovrenović, "Memento jednoga političkog somnambulizma," *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 537-541 (540).

⁵⁵ See: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁶ See Tuđman's meeting with representatives of the central Bosnian municipalities and the president of the Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna, Mate Boban in Zagreb on March 8, 1993, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 284-285.

Herzegovina and the deterioration of the Croatian-Muslim alliance,⁵⁷ and so attempts were made to lay a portion of the blame for the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina at Croatia's doorstep.

The London Conference, chaired by Lord Carrington, was held from August 26 to 28, 1992. In early September 1992, the Geneva Conference commenced, presided over by Cyrus Vance and David Owen. The conclusions to these conferences indicate that their purposes were multiple: there was a desire to abet the Serbs in their military campaign, while the idea of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unified, sovereign state was upheld and reinforced among the Muslims, even as the Croats were presented as aggressors who wanted to divide the country and take a portion for Croatia. This also impeded Croats of Croatia from directly aiding Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby directly assisting the Muslims in taking over the territories that were previously under the HVO's control.⁵⁸

In any case, during the spring of 1993, Muslim forces increased their pressure on Croat territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina which had until then been under the control of the HVO.⁵⁹ Prior to escalation of this conflict, Izetbegović and his associates held a meeting with Tuđman in Zagreb on March 27, 1993, at which they reported that they had received assurances of world powers that Bosnia and Herzegovina would remain an independent state and that its constituent peoples had to agree to its structure.⁶⁰ At this meeting, Izetbegović aired that almost notorious idea of unifying Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶¹ The international community did not care for these initiatives made by Izetbegović, and just how sincere he was when he undertook them remains a big question. For instead of unification, in July 1993 international mediators David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg proposed the organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Union of Republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶² In this vein, on August 28 the Croatian Community of Herceg Bosna proclaimed the establishment of the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna.⁶³

Today one may debate the extent to which the establishment of the Croatian Community of Herceg Bosna, and later the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna, contributed to the deconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and whether or not the blame leveled at the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina for its partition was justified. It is certain that the international community exer-

⁵⁷ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 286.

⁵⁸ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 108-109.

⁵⁹ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 142-147.

⁶⁰ Text of joint declaration by Tuđman and Izetbegović in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 339.

⁶¹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 307.

⁶² Text of plan of July 30, 1993 in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 414-415.

⁶³ Text of decision in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 421 - 424; cf.: F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, p. 130.

ted ever greater pressure on Croatia as an aggressor against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶⁴ But there can be no doubt that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not establish the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna on a whim, rather they were responding to the international community's initiatives and moves, i.e. the proposal made by Owen and Stoltenberg for the organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a union of republics. It is also certain that Izetbegović did not look kindly on the establishment of an organized Croatian community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He arbitrarily removed Croatian members Miro Lasić and Franjo Boras from the Wartime Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶⁵ and instead of them co-opted two Sarajevo Croats, Stjepan Kljuić and Ivo Komšić, whose cooperativeness he did not have to question.⁶⁶

At the end of 1993, the primary preoccupation of Croatian politics was holding the line which was becoming increasingly precarious under Muslim onslaughts. The territory of the Croatian enclave around Vareš was, by all accounts, lost. Tuđman was prepared to secure or retake, insofar as it had moved, the Jajce-Travnik-Vitez-Busovača line and once more assume control of Gornji Vakuf to reinforce the push to Novi Travnik. Kupres was then still in Serb hands, but Tuđman had received assurances from the Serbian side that they would cede Kupres in exchange for other territory. Tuđman planned all of this under the assumption that the Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina was maintained. If it failed to hold, he had received a pledge from Fikret Abdić that the Bihać-Cazin region would go to Croatia, together with those zones that could be placed under military control.⁶⁷ Usora and Žepče were deemed lost.⁶⁸ The military status of the territories once held by the HVO was becoming increasingly tenuous and uncertain.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ However, at a meeting with Defense Minister Gojko Šušak and Corps General Janko Bobetko on Nov. 23, 1993, Tuđman was dismayed, and very angered, over the fact that someone had written an order on behalf of the Defense Ministry – Šušak had not signed it – on appointment of the Command Staff for the HVO, thus making it apparent that the Republic of Croatia administered and commanded military operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 473-484 (476; part of text to which Tuđman refers is on p. 477).

⁶⁵ Text of dismissal in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 483.

⁶⁶ Text of appointment in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 484; cf.: F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, pp. 133-136.

⁶⁷ See transcript notes of the meeting which Tuđman held on Nov. 6, 1993 with the Defense Ministry, *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 434.

⁶⁸ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 434.

⁶⁹ Davor Marijan, "Vještački nalaz: o ratnim vezama Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine (1991.-1995.)," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 36/2004, no. 1: 241-242, asserts: "The number of Croatian Army troops engaged did not surpass that of a JNA light brigade (1,400-1,800 men) with support from the equivalent of an artillery battery and an armored company. They were never concentrated in a single tactical direction or site, rather they were divided into a smaller groups for the purpose of 'patching' overextended defensive lines... Such forces are not deployed to wage an aggression on another state or secession therefrom. Their role was primarily psychological and truly constituted only symbolic support..."

Tuđman's criticism of the politics of the Sarajevo Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the American solution

Besides the precarious defensive lines, in late 1993 the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was no less precarious. The Sarajevo political representatives of the Croats formed the Herceg-Bosna Croatian Steering Committee and sought a meeting with President Tuđman. At this meeting, held in Zagreb on December 15, 1993, it became apparent that the representatives of the Sarajevo Croats agreed with the international community and the Muslim leadership on the aggressive policies of Tuđman and Croatia. Tvrtko Nevjestić⁷⁰ communicated political views to Tuđman which were not only supposed to be an alternative, but also a critique of his own policies. The essence of the alternative policy endorsed by these few Sarajevo Croats was to adhere to Izetbegović's political views and accept his criticisms of Tuđman's policies. Nevjestić claimed that Sarajevo was also a Croatian city, just as Bosnia and Herzegovina was also a Croatian country, and that the Sarajevo Croats were a respectable force within it and that they should be maintained there (implying that Tuđman's policies implied the departure of the Croats from Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina). He also insisted on the inviolability of Bosnia and Herzegovina's external borders and called on Tuđman to explicitly acknowledge this (implying that Tuđman's policies consisted of a refusal to recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina's integrity and its partition). The Sarajevo group also sought Tuđman's pledge to end hostilities with the Muslims (implying that Croatian forces initiated the hostilities against the Bosniak army) and the punishment of war criminals, Croats first, which would be followed suit by others.⁷¹

Tuđman responded by reminding his guests that there were some "irrationalities" in their views. Imploring them to view matters from the historical perspective, he recalled that the Catholic Croats had struggled against the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims (not Turks) for three centuries, and that not one Croatian politician (Radić, Maček, Pavelić, and he did not exclude himself) "managed to establish working relations with the Muslims."⁷² He did not deny Bosnia and Herzegovina's geopolitical importance to Croatia, "which is why I advocated the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina,"⁷³ to be sure, only as some kind of confederation or something similar. This was not, however, what the great powers (Europe, the United States) wanted, and they allowed the Serbs

⁷⁰ Led by Tvrtko Nevjestić, the group included Fr. Petar Anđelović, the provincial of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena, Franjo Topić, the president of the Napredak Croatian Cultural Society, and Ivo Komšić, the chairman of the Croatian Peasant Party and a member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁷¹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, pp. 508-510.

⁷² "nismo uspjeli uspostaviti radne odnose s Muslimanima.", *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 510.

⁷³ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 511.

to butcher Bosnia and Herzegovina to prevent the creation of an Islamic state in Europe. Tuđman reminded his interlocutors that he had “done everything,” mobilized all political factors from Turkey to Germany to conclude friendly, even confederal, relations with the Muslims, but that nothing succeeded. Instead of an agreement, the Muslims extended a hand, and continued to do so, to the Serbs, not seeking support from secular Turkey but rather from fundamentalist Islamic countries.

These proposals made by clerical and lay representatives from Sarajevo came at a very onerous moment, when there was a danger of Muslim forces seizing even those components of territory in which the Croats were a compact population, thereby militarily imposing a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such a Bosnia and Herzegovina would almost entirely lack Croats, except for that small enclave in Sarajevo. It should not be overlooked that in this military assault the Bosniak forces perpetrated many horrible crimes, which greatly increased the dramatic situation of the Croats. Therefore, Tuđman warned the representatives of the Sarajevo Croats that their political views and proposals were “irrational,” and he could rightfully ask himself how much these Sarajevo representatives even cared about the fate of Croats outside of Sarajevo.

Two opposing political positions existed among the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the very beginning of the crisis in Yugoslavia. One may be called the Sarajevo option, for it represented a small group of Croats from Sarajevo, joined by the Sarajevo (Vrhbosna) archbishop and the Franciscan provincial, both seated in Sarajevo. The other may be called the Herzegovinian option, for it was unwaveringly backed by Herzegovina as a compact Croatian unit, but also supported by representatives of the Croats from central Bosnia and the Bosnian Posavina (in the north along the Croatian border on the Sava River) and the friars of the Herzegovinian Franciscan province. Even though the Sarajevo option gave the impression of being motivated by higher objectives and having a strategic vision for Bosnia and Herzegovina, a closer analysis suggests the conclusion that its advocates were motivated by more base considerations.

This does not mean that all representatives of the Sarajevo option held identical political convictions. The Franciscan representatives readily agreed with their lay counterparts that the politics of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina had to be subordinated, even co-formulated with that of Izetbegović, while the regular church hierarchy attempted to find some middle path. In any case, the Sarajevo orientation also adopted the rhetoric – at least at the declarative level – of Bosnian patriotism, even though, again declaratively, it did not deny its Croatian identity. This effectively meant favoring policies which protected Muslim interests and the politics of Alija Izetbegović, for Izetbegović's politics never offered them any sort of national or religious protection but rather just a unitary state.

Tuđman and the “Herzegovinians” were guided by the principle of “take what you can now, and seek a better solution later.” The explanation of this principle rested on the belief and conviction that Croatia, which would have been reinforced with the Croatian sections of Bosnia and Herzegovina, would be in a better position to care for the Croats who would not be able to join the territorial complex of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna. The Herzegovinian option also adopted its own specific rhetoric, which was replete with Croatian patriotism while entirely neglecting its Bosnian counterpart.

The two Croatian political options in Bosnia and Herzegovina collided head-on, and in neither variant were the consequences for the Croats beneficial. It was logical to expect that a third party would regulate their mutual relations and relations between the Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This third party was the United States, under the leadership of President Bill Clinton.

The Americans took an interest in resolving the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 1994. They did not spend much time on speculation and analysis, rather they moved toward a solution that best suited their political principles and interests. The principle that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina had to be together with the Muslims/Bosniaks, thereby avoiding the danger of creating a Muslim state in the heart of Europe, was, it would appear, decisive. The fact that this solution complied more with the political views of the Sarajevo group of Croats than Tuđman’s was only coincidental.

Tuđman was aware of what had occurred. At a meeting with representatives of Herceg-Bosna held in Zagreb on February 13, 1994, he announced that the United States, after peripheral participation through its representatives at various conferences (Cyrus Vance, Reginald Bartholomew, Charles Redman), had become more directly involved in resolving the crisis and was demonstrating an affinity toward the Muslims and a critical attitude toward the role of the Croats in that country – all with the objective of negotiating cooperation between the Croats and Muslims.⁷⁴ The sole remaining hope was that the Americans would not pressure the Croats so much as to block the organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a union of three republics, within which cantons could be formed.⁷⁵ Tuđman set into motion all available resources, which were not, truth be told, very great, to convince the Americans that, given the most recent negative experiences with the Muslims (in clashes with them the Croats suffered double the casualties than with the Serbs), a long-term and strategically more sound solution would be for the Muslims and Croats to be separate.⁷⁶ In case the world became more prepared to allow the Serbs to join Serbia, attempts were to be made to convince the world (the U.S.) that it would

⁷⁴ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, p. 24.

⁷⁵ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 43, 52.

⁷⁶ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 43-44.

be better for Herceg-Bosna to go with Croatia, while Croatia would form the closest possible alliance with the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁷

At first sight, nothing in Tuđman's political views had changed. Aware of the balance of military force in the field, he hoped, and correspondingly geared his diplomatic efforts, to get the international community (at the time this almost exclusively meant the U.S.) to accept his political standpoints and his suggested solution: Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state composed of three national units (cantons), and if the Serbs are allowed to unite with Serbia, the Croats (Herceg-Bosna) should be allowed to unite with Croatia. But already at that meeting, Tuđman had begun to move the focus from Herceg-Bosna to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the development of cooperation between Croatia and (the Muslim-Croat) portion of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There could no longer be any consideration of creating a buffer state *inside* Bosnia and Herzegovina, rather *Bosnia and Herzegovina* itself had to be the buffer state.⁷⁸ Tuđman for the first time "got it through the heads" of his interlocutors that the situation would proceed with the United States and Germany demanding that Herceg-Bosna remain unified with the Bosniaks/Muslims.⁷⁹

Adjusting the geopolitical vision to the political reality

Everything did indeed proceed in precisely in that manner at the talks held in Washington DC at the end of February 1994.⁸⁰ The documents adopted during these talks resulted from a "carrot and stick" strategy. The main pillars of Tuđman's policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina were torn down, while he was given pledges which could immediately be seen as unrealistic. For example, a confederation between Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed by Tuđman and Izetbegović, constituted nothing more than hollow promises and a means to defuse tensions. Tuđman, however, did not back down from a rational explanation of this course of events – and his contribution thereto. He simply altered his rhetoric, which no longer had anything in

⁷⁷ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, p. 52.

⁷⁸ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, p. 25. Tuđman's statements, and this must be borne in mind, came after a meeting with the leaders of Herceg-Bosna in Livno, at which it was concluded that the Croats would support Bosnia-Herzegovina as a union of three republics, *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, p. 25.

⁷⁹ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, p. 53.

⁸⁰ The peace talks in Washington between the Bosniak Muslims (Haris Silajdžić) and Croats (Mate Granić, Republic of Croatia, Krešimir Zubak and Mile Akmadžić, Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna) commenced on February 27 and concluded on March 2, 1994. The agreement was signed on March 18, 1994. For the text of the framework agreement and the preliminary and final agreement of March 1, 1994, see: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 528-542. At the same time, Tuđman and Izetbegović signed a preliminary agreement on a confederation between the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Text of this agreement in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, p. 551.

common with his earlier rhetoric. Tuđman turned to the idea that the Croats would influence the Westernization of the Bosniak Muslims, which would be their contribution to Western interests.⁸¹ Sometimes Tuđman's rhetoric drifted into unfounded euphoria, as when he claimed that Croatia was given "half of Bosnia to administer."⁸² Under this new concatenation of relations, once Croatia established confederal relations with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croats would have the opportunity to become the leading component of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by "Croatianizing" and "Europeanizing" the Bosniak Muslims (if the Serbs were also included, this would be impossible). The chances were all the greater since this was an interest of the West, and even most Islamic countries. Tuđman did not conceal his delight over this overall success of Croatian (i.e. his) policies. It was truly a miracle, he said, that Croatia, which almost nobody even wanted, had become not only an independent state, but also a state esteemed by great powers such as the United States, through the Holy See to China and some European countries.

Even so, Tuđman's insistence on the need to preserve the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna until the confederation came to life demonstrated that he was not entirely convinced of these newly-acquired gains for Croatia and the Croats.⁸³ Krešimir Zubak attempted to convince him of the fact that the Muslim leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted to use the Federation⁸⁴ solely as a transitional phase for reinforcing Bosnia and Herzegovina as "their" state.⁸⁵ Not long afterward, Mostar-Duvno Bishop Ratko Perić severely disrupted this vision:⁸⁶ "I am most troubled by the fact that we Croats are told that we have to load on our backs (*ukrkiti*),⁸⁷ excuse me for the expression, shoulder them [,] to have the Muslims mount us again, so we have to carry them into Europe[.] [...] Is this that common life [?...] We were with them [in] common life for 70 years in Yugoslavia, so we know that this was slavery for us Croats, while for others it was largely overlordship, i.e. control over us, control of us."⁸⁸ The bishop did not hesitate to continue: "I don't think that the Washington Agreement is fair and forthright. Why? Because it includes seizure and ag-

⁸¹ See the transcript of the meeting with representatives of Herceg-Bosna in Zagreb on June 11, 1994, *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 143-146. See also Tuđman's Address to the Nation of March 3, 1994 in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 543-547.

⁸² *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 192-193 (193).

⁸³ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 144-145.

⁸⁴ Text of the decision on proclamation of the Constitution and the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in: M. Tuđman, *Istina o Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 555-570.

⁸⁵ At the meeting held in Zagreb on Sept. 2, 1994, *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 200-202.

⁸⁶ This was at the meeting with political and clerical representatives of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina held in Zagreb on Sept. 12, 1994 during the papal visit to Croatia, *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 233-342. Statement by Bishop Perić, pp. 260-262.

⁸⁷ The word was incorrectly written as "*ukrtiti*" in the text.

⁸⁸ *Stenogrami*, vol. 2, pp. 261-262.

gression and excludes the possibility of healthy co-existence[,] and because it excludes Serbs who are also in those parts [...] at which the federation should be, they cannot live there any more. It will practically implement ethnic cleansing from one to another construct, this means a Serbian republic inside the federation.”⁸⁹

The bishop's words did not dissuade Tuđman. But to complete the demolition of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna and the policies which built it, Mate Boban had to be dismissed.⁹⁰ And that was done.

In lieu of a conclusion: the Croatian view of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Some suitable conclusions will be possible after we recall that Tuđman's views of the geopolitical importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia and the Croats passed through developmental stages. It is therefore crucial to view events in Bosnia and Herzegovina in compliance with the historiographic demand for chronological consideration instead of the post-modern stricture of events into preconceived analytical models. Tuđman's historiographic hypothesis that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a colonial construct that was maintained only due to the interests of international factors or ideological prejudices was certainly important, but I do not ultimately believe that it was a decisive component of his policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina. What did significantly dictate his policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina was the conviction of all relevant factors in the former Yugoslavia that the “division” of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be the key to solving the problem of Yugoslavia and the future of its constituent peoples. This conviction could only have been reinforced by the fact that Tuđman, together with Milošević and Izetbegović, received a mandate to find a solution to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Tuđman's earliest solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina gravitated toward a demarcation between its constituent peoples and a confederal state structure. He could not articulate this idea too vociferously because he had to deal with the rebellion of the Serbian ethnic community in Croatia, which could have potentially sought a confederal solution for Croatia itself.

The instant it became clear that the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not want any kind of Bosnia and Herzegovina (opposition to the declaration of sovereignty, October 1991), rather they wanted either peaceful or violent secession from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (creation of the Serbian

⁸⁹ “Ja ne smatram da je washingtonski sporazum pravedan i pošten. Zašto? Zato što uključuje otimačinu i agresiju i isključuje mogućnost jedna zdrava suživota[,] i što isključuje Srbe koji su također na onim dijelovima [...] na kojima bi trebala biti federacija, ne mogu više tamo živjeti. Praktično će se provesti etničko čišćenje s jedne u drugu tvorevinu, to znači iz srpske republike u federaciju.”, *Stenogrami*, vol. pp. 2, 262.

⁹⁰ *Stenogrami*, vol. pp. 2, 25.

Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and particularly once they launched military operations to achieve that objective (blockade of Sarajevo – April, 1992), Tuđman lost any hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina could survive as a unified state – for the Serbs did not want such a state – and he began to aid the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to become militarily organized to prevent the Serbian takeover of territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina which they considered theirs (establishment of the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna – November 1991, establishment of the HVO – April 8, 1992).

At meeting held in Zagreb in December 1991, Tuđman agreed with Boban that the Croats proclaim the independence of the areas in which they lived. At this time, Tuđman had the support of the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for Croatian forces were also defending Muslim territories, in any case protecting the Muslim population from killings and expulsion. Tuđman, like the international community, wanted to avoid war, and he was convinced that an *internal* demarcation in Bosnia and Herzegovina would function to maintain peace.

After the international recognition of Croatia (January 15, 1992) and the referendum on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence, which Tuđman endorsed (February 1992), the international community proposed a plan to partition Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Cutileiro plan – early 1992). Izetbegović initially acceded to the partition plan, but then withdrew his signature; he decided to attack the Croatian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the first clashes occurred at the end of April 1992, and that gradually intensified). Nonetheless, Tuđman concluded a friendship alliance with Izetbegović, on which basis the HVO was incorporated into the structure of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (July 1992).

At the beginning of 1993 (January), the Vance-Owen plan to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina into ten provinces was proposed, and a meeting was organized for the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan in Međugorje (May 18, 1993). The Muslims demanded that the mandate to the head of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Izetbegović, be extended to a third year, while the Croatian representatives attempted to dismiss Izetbegović.

The proposed Owen-Stoltenberg plan called for the organization Bosnia and Herzegovina as a *confederation* of three republics (end of March 1993). The Muslims insisted on a unified and integral Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in April 1993 they stepped up their attacks on the HVO.

After the proposal to organize Bosnia and Herzegovina as a *Union* of Republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina was made on August 20, 1993, the Croatian Community of Herceg Bosna opted to declare the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna on August 28, 1993.

The Muslim portion of the Wartime Presidency headed by Izetbegović decided to expel Miro Lasić and Franjo Boras from its ranks, while Ivo Komšić and Stjepan Kljuić were co-opted to join (October 20, 1993). This coincided with the harshest attacks by the Muslim army on Croatian territories.

Frustrated by the ineffectiveness of Europe and the UN, U.S. President Bill Clinton decided to put a stop to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (negotiations began in Washington, DC at the end of February 1994). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Confederation of this Federation and the Republic of Croatia were established in Washington (March 18, 1994).

At the beginning of July 1995, Izetbegović sought military assistance from Croatia to lift the blockade of Bihać. Pursuant to the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement of 1992, Tuđman and Izetbegović signed the Declaration on Activation of the Washington Agreement in Split, which also incorporated common defense against Serbian aggression.

At the beginning of November 1995, negotiations in Dayton commenced, which would produce a political solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its essence was to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina into two sections.

A minimum of three phenomena are apparent in the chronology of the most important events tied to Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995. First, the idea of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina was present from the beginning to end, and the final outcome of a political solution for this country was its division into two – the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The confederal relationship between the Federation and the Republic of Croatia, which was the subject of a formal agreement, never came to fruition, and there is some question as to whether there was any serious intention to do so. Second, Tuđman as the political representative of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well never initiated a single solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina; rather he made (reasoned) moves in response to the political moves of either the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina or the international community. Third, Tuđman readily rendered assistance to the Muslims/Bosniaks whenever they were in a hopeless situation and whenever they sought assistance. The aid given to millions of civilian refugees in Croatia is a story unto itself.

All of this shows that the accusation that Tuđman partitioned Bosnia and Herzegovina utterly lacks merit.

However, a discourse on Tuđman's political views and concrete political moves is both legitimate and welcome. For, as opposed to earlier Croatian intellectuals who contemplated the geopolitical significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia, Tuđman was in a position to achieve his geopolitical vision. Therefore, here I will highlight some thoughts on Tuđman's policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina in the critical 1991-1995 period.

Tuđman's geopolitical vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina was predicated first and foremost by his specific point of view as a historian and, on the other hand, by his experience of living in Yugoslavia. From history, he knew that Bosnia and Herzegovina as a political entity was created under the hooves of horses and at sword point, and that its life was extended by application of force and in line with the interests of the world powers. The experience of life in both Yugoslavias armed him with the conviction that any Bosnia and Herzegovina that would be a state could not maintain itself nor survive. Therefore he accepted the conclusion of the presidents of the former Yugoslav republics, that together with Milošević and Izetbegović he finds a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina, a solution which all assumed would have to consist of partition. For political reasons, particularly the problems with the Serbs, Tuđman also attempted to achieve a degree of concord with Muslim representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so at times he played at detaching the Croatian territories from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at times at friendship with the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina – moreover, at very close friendship with them. This political tactic of vacillation quite apparently resulted in blowback. To be sure, Croatia and the Croats in general were in a difficult situation in 1991 and later, and formulating a clear political vision and consistently implementing it in the tactical sense was no simple task. It should be additionally recalled that Tuđman had no political partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina with whom he could create long-term and more consistent policies. The Muslim/Bosniak leadership was obsessed with the creation of a Muslim state that would not only be limited to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and opted for an alliance with the Croats only at moments of great need and desperation. It is quite intriguing that Tuđman always readily came to the aid of the Muslims. If there was one way in which Tuđman truly failed to understand Bosnia and Herzegovina, then this was precisely in his failure to understand the pan-Muslim and fundamentalist aspirations of Alija Izetbegović and his party.⁹¹ The clerical and secular representatives of the Croats in Sarajevo feared being abandoned and losing their functionality if a Croatian political entity was formed along the models of the Serbian entity, and they preferred the Muslim/Bosniak vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina without clearly formulating their own demands. They repeated, with Izetbegović, that they wanted a sovereign and unified Bosnia and Herzegovina, and convinced themselves more than anyone else that Bosnia and Herzegovina was their homeland and that they wished to live in it. They never communicated to Izetbegović what kind of life they expected for Croats in a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina, what rights they demanded for them, nor what guarantees they expected, not even when the Muslims arbitrarily dismissed Croatian representatives and seized all authority under their noses and watched as Croats were exiled from their homes and age-old lands. Finally, even the Croatian leadership in Herzegovina was not up to the task

⁹¹ F. Boras, *Kako je umirala Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, p. 141.

when required to implement their policies, and they often committed unnecessary blunders.

Tuđman did not, therefore, have partners who were qualified to conduct well-conceived policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even so, there were some internal inconsistencies in Tuđman's own policies concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, it is illogical that he did not accept Izetbegović's offer to have Herzegovina attached to Croatia, which was allegedly made,⁹² when he posited as an explicit policy objective the appropriation by Croatia of that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would be defensible and when he assured the Croats outside of these ideally conceived Croatian borders that what is realistic is not always ideal and that Croatia would be more capable of helping those Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina who would remain outside of Croatian territories. This inconsistency had even deeper roots. For it would appear that Tuđman never entirely decided that the Croatian portions of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be attached to Croatia nor that this would be realistic, even though his rhetoric undoubtedly left the impression that this was his political objective.⁹³

There can be no doubt that here as well Tuđman kept more than one eye on the wishes of the international community. This is an exceptionally important factor when assessing Tuđman's policies. Tuđman often let it be known that political aims cannot always be achieved, or sometimes achieved only partially, for the interests of others had to be taken into account and – and this was the reality – it was necessary to bow before the power of stronger party. This “stronger” player in the Croatian case was not the superior military power of its adversaries, but rather exclusively the “international community.” To Tuđman, complying with the demands of Europe and, in particular, the U.S. meant implementing realistic policies.

At one of the meetings, Tuđman claimed that the international community would not assent to the organization of an Islamic state in the heart of Europe, while during that same conversation he claimed that the international community did in fact want to create a Muslim state, since it was convinced that such a state would not be fundamentalist. It was probably true that certain European countries and the United States offered cooperation to Croatia.⁹⁴

⁹² “But in this conversation, Izetbegović said something very interesting, he said if the Serbs left or if it would be more acceptable for us to be independent, he said how this would be. That then the Croatian republic would join Croatia. This is normal, he said, and perhaps that would be more acceptable to us because we would have internationally recognized borders,” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 317.

⁹³ At the meeting with representatives of the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina held on Sept. 17, 1992, Tuđman was firmly opposed to either a federal or confederal structure for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and he favored reinforcing the position of the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina “in the national and territorial sense,” *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 242.

⁹⁴ *Stenogrami*, vol. 1, p. 286.

But the belief that this was because they wanted to help Croatia prevent the creation of an Islamic state in Europe was questionable. Later it would become apparent that certain European countries and the United States used the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to preserve the pretense that what remained of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a Muslim state.

Tuđman's indecisive policies in and toward Bosnia and Herzegovina generated an important result on the international scene. These policies did not always take into account that political decisions have an international dimension and create obligations before the international community. For example, it was not always taken into account that support for the referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its sovereignty would be difficult to square with advocacy for the creation of a Croatian political entity therein. The Serbs were driven by a much more consistent logic. Since they wanted to take their parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they remained committed to their decision not to acknowledge its sovereignty.

But with all of the shortcomings of Tuđman's policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croatian policies in it, there can be no doubt that today the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are struggling tenaciously to organize the country so that the Croats also have their own political entity, either in the form of a federal unit or in the form of cantons with Croatian majority populations, which actually means that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are struggling to return the country to that position which Tuđman had advocated but did not manage to achieve. Perhaps this stands as a caveat that Tuđman's political legacy should henceforth be more objectively evaluated, and certainly much less critically than the judgment already made long ago by certain journalists, chance passersby, political consultants and misinformed diplomats. Perhaps these opinion-makers will admit that the reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains unchanged. And that reality is like a triangle which may remain so only if all three corners are preserved. Currently the Serbian and Bosniak corners are in place, but not the Croatian one, which means that the triangle cannot, in fact, remain a triangle. And nothing has changed in the solution between the partners since before the violent separation of the Serbian component and the subsequent clashes between the two remaining components: the Muslim and Croat. As before, the Croats, as the least powerful people, may side with either the Bosniaks or the Serbs to secure their equality with the other two peoples. Some among the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe that the Croats must not under any circumstances ally themselves with the Serbs to secure equal status. Among them the most vocal are the Sarajevo clerical and secular exponents, such as the friars Ivan Šarčević, Luka Markešić and Petar Jeleč, and Ivan and Dubravko Lovrenović. This is, however, an irrational and illogical postulate and mostly furthers the interests of the Bosniaks in using specific actions to influence the Croats to choose the only remaining possible option. But these relations have not changed since the period of war.

Even during the war years, this circle of Sarajevo intellectuals agreed *a priori* with the Bosniak vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosniak solution to its triangular reality, and did not approve of the idea that the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina have the right to their "piece of land." This closes the circle of the absurd Croatian policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but Tuđman is not to blame for this absurdity, rather the responsibility lies with (some) Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Abbauen des Mythos: Franjo Tuđman und Bosnien und Herzegowina

Zusammenfassung

Schon vor dem Zerfall Jugoslawiens wussten die Vertreter aller Ex-Republiken, dass Bosnien und Herzegowina zugleich Problem und Schlüssel für die Lösung des Problems Jugoslawiens war. Die Lösung dieses Problems wurde zuerst Alija Izetbegović, Franjo Tuđman und dem Präsidenten Serbiens Slobodan Milošević übergeben. Wie alle anderen Präsidenten der Ex-Republiken waren auch die genannten drei Politiker sich darüber im Klaren, dass die Lösung eine gewisse „Teilung“ Bosniens und der Herzegowina voraussetzte.

In seinen frühesten Formulierungen sprach Tuđman über die Abgrenzung *innerhalb* Bosniens und der Herzegowina, die die Grundlage für den Bund „souveräner Republiken und Staaten“ darstellen würde. Auf ähnliche Weise machten sich Gedanken darüber auch die Vertreter internationaler Institutionen, einschließlich der Europäischen Gemeinschaft und der Vereinten Nationen. Als es aber klar geworden war, dass die Serben überhaupt keine Bosnien und Herzegowina wünschten, konnte man an zwei mögliche Lösungen denken: die Erhaltung Bosniens und der Herzegowina als des von drei ethnischen Staaten zusammengesetzten Staates oder die Annektierung der serbischen ethnischen Gemeinschaft durch Serbien und der kroatischen ethnischen Gemeinschaft durch Kroatien sowie die Formierung eines muslimischen Staates auf einem Teil Bosniens und der Herzegowina. Es muss betont werden, dass Tuđman für alle Lösungen offen war. Deswegen ist nicht zu bewundern, dass er zusammen mit Kroaten aus Bosnien und der Herzegowina alle Angebote der internationalen Faktoren über die innere Abgrenzung Bosniens und der Herzegowina akzeptierte.

Bosniakische Leitung wählte aber den dritten Weg aus, den Weg der Verneinung der serbischen und kroatischen Interessen in Bosnien und Herzegowina sowie die Erhaltung des Landes als eines bosniakisch-muslimischen Staates. Mit der Zeit akzeptierte die internationale Gemeinschaft, besonders die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, etwas modifizierte bosniakische Lösung. Tuđman bemühte sich darum, seine politische Lösung des genannten Problems der neuen Realität anzupassen und versuchte mit militärischer Macht diejenigen Teile Bosniens und der Herzegowina zu behalten, die mit Kroaten bewohnt waren. Als er aber eingesehen hatte, dass das nicht akzeptiert wird, rechtfertigte er die angebotene amerikanische Lösung als eine neue Chance für Kroatien und Kroaten, um Bosniaken-Muslime nach Westen „zu führen“.