


The State Symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Twentieth Century¹

Emir O. Filipović
University of Sarajevo ✉ 

<https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/eiko.97723>

Recibido: 3 de septiembre de 2024 • Aceptado: 3 de noviembre de 2024 • Publicado: 1 de enero de 2025

Abstract: This paper explores the relatively frequent changes of symbols that had been used to represent the land, province, territory and state of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the twentieth century. Throughout this time the small multi-ethnic Balkan country had mostly been a part or unit of larger state structures, such as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1878-1918), Royal (1918-1941) and Socialist Yugoslavia (1943-1992). In 1992 it managed to gain its independence which was then followed by a three-year-long brutal military aggression and armed conflict that ended in 1995. Seeing as each regime change also required an adjustment of symbols which would have reflected the newly established political realities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this case study can serve as an appropriate illustration of the significant role symbols can play in modern state-building processes and construction of collective identities. In analysing these changes, the author examined a number of legal texts and contemporary discussions, revealing that the political elites responsible for designing Bosnia and Herzegovina's symbols often oscillated between traditional heraldic inspirations from the Middle Ages and the unconventional modern desire for neutral solutions.

Keywords: Heraldry, Coat of Arms, Vexillology, Flag, Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Los símbolos de Estado de Bosnia y Herzegovina durante el siglo XX

Resumen: Este artículo analiza los cambios relativamente frecuentes de los símbolos utilizados para representar la tierra, la provincia, el territorio y el Estado de Bosnia-Herzegovina durante el siglo XX. Durante todo este tiempo, el pequeño país multiétnico de los Balcanes había formado parte o constituido una unidad de estructuras estatales mayores, como la Monarquía Austrohúngara (1878-1918), la Real (1918-1941) y la Yugoslavia Socialista (1943-1992). En 1992 consiguió la independencia, a la que siguió una brutal agresión militar y un conflicto armado que duró tres años y terminó con la caída de la Unión Soviética. tres años de brutal agresión militar y conflicto armado que terminó en 1995. Dado que cada cambio de régimen requería de símbolos que reflejaran las nuevas realidades políticas de Bosnia y Herzegovina. Herzegovina, este estudio de caso puede servir como ilustración adecuada del importante papel que pueden desempeñar los símbolos en los procesos modernos de construcción del Estado y de las identidades colectivas. Para analizar estos cambios, el autor examinó una serie de textos jurídicos y debates contemporáneos, que revelaron que las élites políticas responsables del diseño de los símbolos de Bosnia-Herzegovina oscilaban a menudo entre las inspiraciones heráldicas tradicionales de la Edad Media y las de la Edad Media. heráldicas tradicionales de la Edad Media y el deseo moderno poco convencional de soluciones neutrales.

Palabras clave: Heráldica, Escudo de armas, Vexilología, Bandera, Yugoslavia, Bosnia y Herzegovina.

Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. The first half of the century (1900-1945). 3. Socialist period (1945-1992). 4. The last decade of the century – times of war and the Dayton peace (1992-1998). 5. Conclusion. 6. Sources and bibliographic references

Cómo citar: Filipović, Emir O. "The State Symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Twentieth Century". En *Heráldica: un sistema de comunicación visual en renovación entre la Edad Media y la actualidad*, editado por Miguel Metelo de Seixas. Monográfico temático, *Eikón Imago* 14 (2025), e97723. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/eiko.97723>

¹ This article is a translated, revised and adapted version of the paper "Grb i zastava Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. stoljeću" published in *Bosna Franciscana*, 28 (2008), 103-126. I would like to thank the editorial board of the journal for the kind permission to have the text translated into English.

1. Introduction

Frequent changes of political regimes throughout the turbulent twentieth century in Bosnia and Herzegovina also led to regular alterations of the symbols which had during that time been used to represent this small multi-ethnic Balkan country either as a condominium, crown land and province of the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Monarchy (1878-1918), as a federal unit of Socialist Yugoslavia (1946-1992), as an independent republic from 1992, or as an undeclared protectorate of the international community from 1998. Considering the fact that symbols, such as the coat of arms and flag, are in themselves a statement, reflection and visual manifestation of political ideas, and that every mentioned regime excluded the preceding one from an ideological point of view, elements of previous Bosnian and Herzegovinian symbols could not have been incorporated into the design of new ones. Consequently, Bosnia and Herzegovina stands out as one of the rare few European countries that had its symbols changed on four different occasions during the twentieth century, without there being any kind of visual or symbolic continuity between them as they stood in stark contrast to each other.

Observed together, these four, or rather eight emblems display an obvious wavering between medieval heraldic traditions or “ethno-cultural heritage” on one side, and modernity on the other, which always implied more neutral solutions that would seemingly better accommodate the country’s complex ethnic and religious diversity. However, since coats of arms and flags usually serve as crucial instruments of nation building, being able to foster unity and common identity in fragile multicultural states, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina their neutrality invalidated their unifying quality, and instead of affirming shared values among the different ethno-religious groups, the symbols’ lack of distinctive character ultimately failed to contribute in the strengthening of a cohesive national unity.

This paper will examine the basic legal texts and relevant contemporary discussions in order to present a chronological outline of these changes of emblems that have been used throughout the twentieth century, either as symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, or as symbols of other larger state structures of which it had been an integral part. The survey will attempt to investigate and explain the historical background, context and significance of each coat of arms and flag, their subsequent use, application and reception. Appropriate attention will also be given to the reasons why it had been necessary to modify them later on and the political circumstances and conditions in which they were changed, with a particular focus on failed efforts to draw upon medieval heraldic heritage as a means of bridging ethno-religious divisions and encouraging the consolidation of a unified Bosnian and Herzegovinian identity.

2. The first half of the century (1900-1945)

Bosnia and Herzegovina entered the twentieth century as a component, but distinct part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy within which it had been considered a *corpus separatum* that was supposed to have its own distinct “provincial”, or “territorial” coat of arms, i.e. *Landeswappen*. However, due to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s precarious position as a condominium

between the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Monarchy and the obvious lack of heraldic traditions after the centuries-long rule of the Ottoman Empire (1463-1878), the choice of a particular official symbol for Bosnia and Herzegovina became a sensitive and heated topic. Various Hungarian, Austrian and Croatian experts took part in this decade-long passionate debate about what the “authentic Bosnian coat of arms” actually might have looked like, each providing their own sources, visual examples and explanations. The discussion was ultimately reduced into a dialogue between two camps; on one side were those who advocated the adoption of symbols used by the medieval kings of Bosnia aiming to highlight and emphasize Bosnia’s distinctive history and individuality, and on the other those who thought that the coat of arms should be derived from Habsburg heraldic traditions, thus indicating a closer association and relationship of the imperial and royal house with the land of Bosnia². The lively conversation eventually ended in 1889, after more than a decade had passed since the initial act of occupation in 1878, when the Provincial government of Bosnia and Herzegovina decided that the coat of arms should be *or, issuing from the sinister flank an arm embowed proper, vested gules and holding a sabre argent*³ (**Fig. 1**). This symbol was chosen despite the fact that it had previously been convincingly argued and proven that it had not been in any way connected to the royal dynasty of Bosnia from the Middle Ages⁴. Actually, it was based on the arms of the Bosnian voivode and duke of Split, Hrvoje Vukčić (d. 1416), a powerful magnate who ruled significant portions of Bosnia, Dalmatia and Croatia at the turn of the fifteenth century (**Fig. 2**), while in the Habsburg heraldic imagination this symbol had represented their aspirations to rule the land of Bosnia ever since the time of Emperor Maximilian (r. 1486-1519) when the country had already been conquered by the Ottoman Turks and was under their firm control⁵. Embracing it as an official emblem of the occupied province of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1889 moved it from the realm of imagination and desire into the world of political reality where it was supposed to demonstrate the realization of the centuries-long Habsburg claim over the territories of the erstwhile Kingdom of Bosnia⁶.

² Emir O. Filipović, “Lajos Thallóczy und die bosnische Heraldik”, in *Lajos Thallóczy, der Historiker und Politiker*, eds. Dževad Juzbašić - Imre Röss (Sarajevo - Budapest: ANU BiH - MTA, 2010), 89-102.

³ Tomislav Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini 1882-1903*, Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1987, 213; Hugo Gerard Ströhl, *Österreichisch-ungarische Wappenrolle, nach seiner kaiserlichen und königlichen Apostolischen Majestät grossem Titel*, Wien: Verlag von Anton Schroll & Co., 1890, xi.

⁴ Franjo Rački, “Stari grb bosanski”, *Rad JAZU - Razredi filološko-historički i filozofsko-jurisdički*, 30 (1890): 127-169.

⁵ Emir O. Filipović, “Trijumfalni slavoluk cara Maksimilijana i bosanska heraldika”, *Godišnjak Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja*, 39 (2010): 173-187.

⁶ Emir O. Filipović, “Kako je ‘grb Rame’ postao ‘grb Bosne’”, in *Bosanski ban Tvrtko “pod Prozorom u Rami”*, ed. Tomislav Brković (Prozor - Sarajevo - Zagreb: Synopsis, 2016), 233-263. This symbol also appeared on the many various iterations of the Habsburg-Austrian coat of arms prior to 1878, where it merely represented arms of pretension. See: Michael Göbl, “The Constant Reformation of the Habsburg-Austrian Coat of Arms from 1740 to the End of the Monarchy Through Times of Political Upheaval”, *Genealogica & Heraldica*, 35 (2022): 10-24.

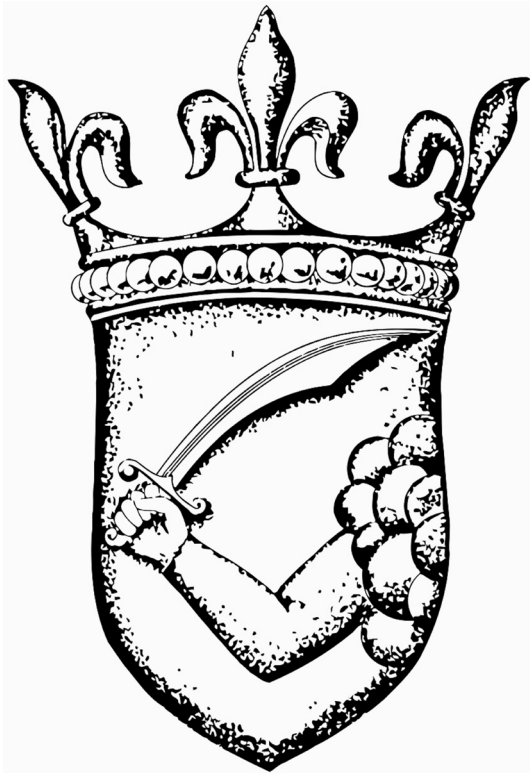


Figure 1. Coat of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian administration (1889-1918).

Source: Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, *Zajedničko ministarstvo finansija 859-1892*.



Figure 2. Coat of arms of Hrvoje Vukčić (d. 1416), Bosnian vojvode and duke of Split from his Glagolitic missal, ca. 1404.

Source: Topkapı Sarayı müzesi, Istanbul.

Aside from that, the chosen colours, red and yellow, represented a useful circumstance as they were also applied to the flag and could conveniently be used to suppress the pan-Slavic red, white and blue tricolour of the Croat and Serb flags which had created many problems for the Habsburg authorities in the implementation of their imperial policies⁷. The then minister of finances of Austria-Hungary and *de facto* governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Benjamin Kállay (1839-1903), thought that red and yellow “as nationally neutral colours seem to be completely pertinent for Bosnia and Herzegovina and that they will put an end to abuses made with the Croat and Serb colours”⁸ (Fig. 3). The chosen emblems were intended to indicate the distinctive position of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Austria and Hungary, Croatia and Serbia, and the use of each was supposed to affirm the newly constructed idea of the supra-ethnic Bosnian nation. They were then subsequently placed on all official documents and buildings, and were also included in the combined coat of arms of the Habsburg Monarchy, where the Bosnian and Herzegovinian symbol curiously appeared twice, on both the Austrian and Hungarian shields, denoting the complex position that this province occupied within the composite structure of the dual monarchy⁹ (Fig. 4).



Figure 3. Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian administration (1889-1918).

Source: Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, *Zajedničko ministarstvo finansija 859-1892*.

Despite the fact that they were imposed by a foreign occupying power and that they were an obvious instrument of imperial policy, these symbols were particularly well received by the Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, in one segment of the “Memorandum of the United Muslim Organization”,

⁷ For a brief overview of the Habsburg administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see: Robert J. Donia, “Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austria-Hungary. From occupation to assassination, 1878-1914”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and South-east European History*, ed. John R. Lampe – Ulf Brunnbauer (London – New York: Routledge, 2021), 135-143. Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg “Civilizing Mission” in Bosnia, 1878-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), provides a more detailed insight into the Habsburgs’ cultural policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁸ Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 213.

⁹ *Die Protokolle des cisleithanischen Ministerrates 1867-1918, Band VIII: 1914-1918, Teilband 1 (23. Juli 1914 – 22. November 1916)*, eds. Franz Adlgasser – Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2023), 157.



Figure 4. Middle imperial and royal coat of arms of Austria-Hungary (1915-1918).

Source: Hugo Gerhard Ströhl, *Die neuen österreichischen, ungarischen und gemeinsamen Wappen*. Wien: Verlag der Kais.-Kön. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1917.

that was presented to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl (r. 1916-1918, d. 1922) in 1917 by Šerif Arnautović and Safvet-beg Bašagić, renowned Bosnian Muslim intellectuals and politicians, after a brief exposé on the “historical freedoms and independence of Bosnia”, it was claimed that the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims “always defended that freedom with our sword, as is shown by our coat of arms”¹⁰.

After the end of the First World War in 1918 Bosnia and Herzegovina lost its previous status and with it the former coat of arms and flag as its territory was fully included into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which would later become known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The symbol of the newly created monarchy evolved from the old coat of arms of the Kingdom of Serbia that had been established in 1888, with the main difference being displayed in the heraldic escutcheon on the chest of a white double headed eagle. (Fig. 5) Namely, instead of only depicting the tetragrammatic cross with four firesteels as a symbol of the Serbian people, the whole field was changed and quartered in order to also include the red and white checkerboard as the historical emblem of the Croats, as well as the crescent moon and Morning star which were supposed to represent Slovenes¹¹ (Fig. 6). On this new symbol there was no place for the old arms of Bosnia which had been imposed by the Austro-Hungarian authorities since their presence did not suit the newly established political situation in which there was no room for any kind of particular Bosnian and Herzegovinian subjectivity.

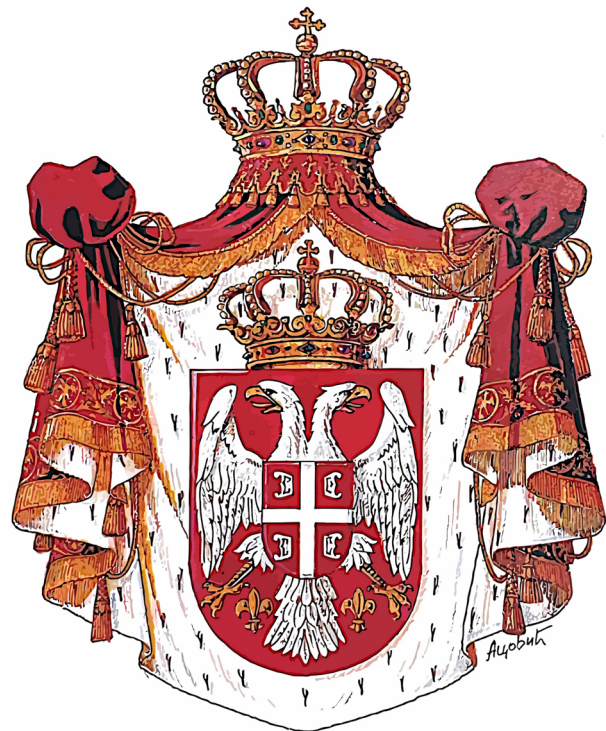


Figure 5. Coat of arms of the Kingdom of Serbia (1882-1918).

Source: Dragomir Acović, *Heraldika i Srbi*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2008.

For the duration of the Second World War the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina had been, without any recognizable individuality whatsoever, incorporated into the composition of the Nazi and Fascist puppet Independent State of Croatia, which was proclaimed on 10 April 1941 and had its own symbols based on the historical chequered arms of Croatia¹².

¹⁰ Luka Đaković, *Položaj Bosne i Hercegovine u austrougarskim koncepcijama rješenja jugoslavenskog pitanja 1914-1918* (Tuzla: Univerzal, 1980), 164.

¹¹ *Ustav Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, od 28. juna, 1921. God* (Beograd: Izdavačka Knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1921), 1.

¹² Mario Jareb, *Hrvatski nacionalni simboli*, (Zagreb: Alfa d.d. – Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010), 269-328. For the history



Figure 6. Coat of arms of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes / Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1945).

Source: Dragomir Acović, *Heraldika i Srbi*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2008.

Here it is important to note that the Croat SS volunteer division (established in 1943), which later became known as the *13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS Handschar*, used an emblem that undoubtedly resembled the Austro-Hungarian version of the Bosnian coat of arms¹³ (Fig. 7). As it has been positively determined that members of this paramilitary division did not carry “special throat-slitting knives” known as *khanjars*, they were obviously not an inspiration for the division’s name. In fact, it was designated *Handschar* after the identification symbol which appeared on its vehicles and the collar patches of the uniforms its members wore, as the emblem was much older than the official name of the division¹⁴. The *13th SS Handschar* division was composed mostly of Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and there is a distinct possibility that the old Bosnian coat of arms from the Austro-Hungarian period served as a direct model for the formation of its emblem. This

would be plausible due to the fact the Muslim population was obviously fond of this symbol in previous times, but its use and implementation in the achieving of goals which served the Nazi authorities meant that it could not possibly be considered as a symbol that would represent Bosnia and Herzegovina in the future and it was therefore necessary to search for inspiration in other places.

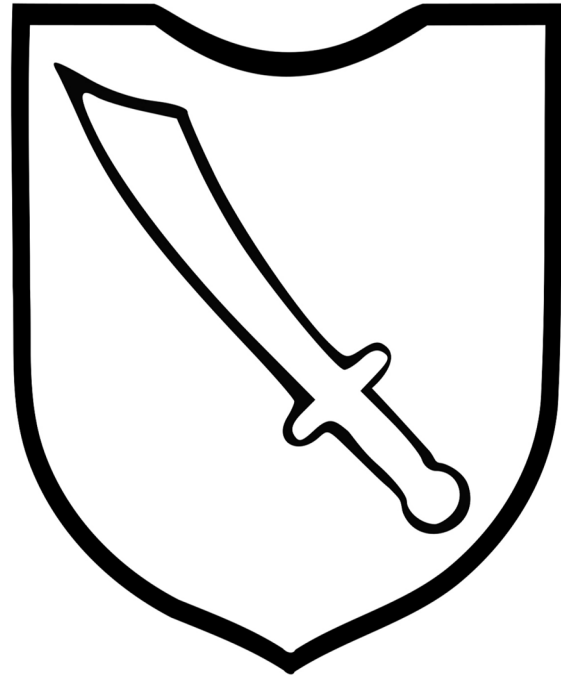


Figure 7. Vehicle symbol of the *13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS Handschar (1st Croatian)* (1943-1945).

Source: John Keegan, *Waffen SS: The Asphalt Soldiers*. London: Pan/Ballantine, 1970.

3. Socialist period (1945-1992)

During the Second World War Josip Broz Tito’s (1892-1980) partisans undertook the monumental task of driving out Nazi and Fascist occupiers, thereby laying the foundation for a new socialist political order in Yugoslavia. Acknowledging that Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed greatly to the success of this liberation struggle, the Yugoslav communists recognized its political subjectivity by giving it the status of a People’s Republic and one of the six constituent units of the newly established Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, alongside Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Consequently, the question of an appropriate emblem that could denote Bosnia and Herzegovina’s new position within the federation was raised once again, together with the matter of whether Bosnia and/or its Muslim inhabitants should be represented on the coat of arms of socialist Yugoslavia. The latter issue in particular was accompanied by a fiery debate about the number of torches which were supposed to be depicted in the field of the newly chosen Yugoslav emblem. It had initially been prescribed that the emblem should contain five burning torches which would symbolize the brotherhood and unity of five Yugoslav nations (Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Slovenians and

of the Croatian coat of arms, see also: Stjepan Ćosić – Mate Božić, *Hrvatski grbovi – Geneza, simbolika, povijest* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naknada, 2021).

¹³ The obvious association of this emblem with the Bosnian coat of arms is also well illustrated by the fact that in the 5th book on the “German intelligence service”, printed by the State Secretariat of Interior Affairs of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, there is a text underneath an image of members of the Handschar division which states: “The uniform of the Handschar division was same as the uniform of the armed SS, with a difference that on its collar it had the old Bosnian coat of arms, and next to it a swastika”. Zija Sulejmanpašić, *13. SS divizija Handžar – Istine i laži* (Zagreb: Kulturno društvo Bošnjaka “Preporod”, 2000), 147.

¹⁴ Sulejmanpašić, *13. SS divizija Handžar*, 152.

Macedonians), because it was thought that every nation should have its own torch. (Fig. 8) However, this was contested by Husein Čišić, a representative of the Constituent Assembly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who openly objected to the Presidency for not having included the Muslims among the other nations in the Constitution, as well as not portraying them in the new emblem with an additional torch¹⁵. Despite of this proposition, the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was passed on 31 January 1946 without the suggested change. With the next Constitution from 1963 the Yugoslav emblem was altered in order to receive an additional sixth torch, but now with a completely different motivation as the torches were supposed to represent six federal republics of Yugoslavia rather than nations or peoples¹⁶.



Figure 8. Coat of arms of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1946-1963).

Source: Milan Popović – Miloš Jovanović, *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ*. Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979

¹⁵ Stating that the Assembly received a large number of suggestions, the minister for Montenegro and deputy minister for the Constituent Assembly, Milovan Đilas, particularly pointed out “a characteristic proposal from one Muslim for the inclusion of the sixth torch in our state coat of arms. The suggestion is motivated by the fact that the Muslims are a particular national group, that they approved the draft of the Constitution in all its details, but that they were dissatisfied with the fact that the sixth torch was not included in the state coat of arms as a symbol of the Muslim nation ... If one such suggestion was motivated by the fact that the sixth torch should be included as a symbol of the sixth federal unit, it could be a subject of discussion. But, as it has been decided that each nation should receive their own torch, then in any case there should be only five torches. With this, it should be understood, I do not intend to deny certain particular features of the Muslims that exist today”. Šaćir Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u XX. Stoljeću* (Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998), 201-202. Čišić was persistent in his opinion and refused to vote for the Constitution.

¹⁶ Milan Popović – Miloš Jovanović, *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ* (Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979), 28-30.

The choice of particular symbols for the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1946 also did not run completely smoothly. In the draft of the Constitution that the Government sent to the Constituent Assembly the provision on the coat of arms reads as follows:

“Article 4.

The state coat of arms of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a field surrounded by sheaves of wheat. The sheaves are tied at the bottom with a ribbon inscribed with the date ‘1-VII-1944’. Between the tips of the sheaves is a five-pointed star. In the centre of the field are the contours of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian mountains, and in front of them a torch held by three hands”¹⁷ (Fig. 9).

Aside from certain doubts within the Constitutional Committee itself, one could also encounter objections in contemporary press where it was publicly suggested that “the torch which was, according to the proposal, held by three hands, should be held only by one hand, as an expression of the unified will of the people”¹⁸. Although many liked this conception of the emblem because it symbolized the unity between Muslims, Serbs and Croats, the main ethno-religious groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina, further debates moved away from this solution, but not because this questioned the issue of whether Bosnian Muslims should be considered a separate and particular national group, but because it was noticed that similar tendencies were absent in the coats of arms of the other Yugoslav federal republics, and that such symbols were not appropriate for state coats of arms¹⁹. In connection to this, an amendment was also submitted to modify Article 4 because the three hands did not reflect the symbol of unity expressed by the torch and because they were not executed in an aesthetic way. Namely, from a technical point of view it was really difficult to portray the hands, especially the fingers, making it almost impossible to place them on stamps and seals²⁰. With this explanation, the Committee gave unanimous support to the proposed amendment so that Article 4 was then adopted in the following form:

“Article 4.

The state coat of arms of the Peoples Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a field surrounded by sheaves of wheat. The sheaves are joint in the bottom with a ribbon. Between the tips of the sheaves is a five-pointed star. In the centre of the field are the contours of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian mountains, and in front of them is a torch”²¹.

¹⁷ “Nacrt Ustava NR BiH”, *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 429, Sarajevo, 15/11/1946, 2.

¹⁸ “Diskusija članova pozorišta o nacrtu Ustava NR BiH”, *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 457, Sarajevo, 19/12/1946, 4.

¹⁹ Duško Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (grb i zastava) sa posebnim osvrtom kako su utvrđeni”, *Pravna Misao*, 9-10 (1971): 6.

²⁰ “Zastava Republike Bosne i Hercegovine biće crvena”, *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 453, Sarajevo, 14/12/1946, 2.

²¹ Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, 5.

ВНИК

ДОШТАРИНА ПЛАЋЕНА У ГОТОВУ

Издавач и власник: Издавачка задруга новинара Босне и Херцеговине — Управа, редакција администрација Сарајево, Титова ул. 70 — Телефони: Управа 35.62, Редакција 35-63, 32-33, 32-40; Администрација 35-61. Чек. рачун број 22.33

SARAJEVO, UTORAK 19 NOVEMBAR 1946

Cijena 2.— динара

VOTVORNOM ODBORU

IZRAĐEN NAČRT HERCEGOVINE

njenu jedinstvenu narodnu republiku. One uživaju suverena prava a ograničene su samo u onim pravima koja su dobrovoljno prenijele na zajedničke savezne organe državne vlasti i državne uprave. I ovo stanje nacrt Ustava registruje. O ovome će se docnije reći više, jer ustavi narodnih republika imaju razlog svoga donošenja i postojanja prvenstveno radi pravilnog i stvarnog rješenja nacionalnog pitanja u našoj zemlji. To je njihov osnovni zadatak.

Dakle, izrada nacarta Ustava Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine vršena je na bez istih osnovnih načela na kojima je izrađen Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije. I ne može biti drugačije. Isti osnovni ciljevi su se postavljali pred sve naše narode u toku narodno-oslobodilačke borbe. Iste društvene promjene su se izbile u svim narodnim republikama, kod svih naroda Jugoslavije. Nova politička društvena ekonomska stvarnost je karakteristična za sve naše narode, koji, zbratimljeni, imaju svu vlast u svojim rukama. Baš to, ta ista stvarnost, opredijelila je da nacrt Ustava Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine bude u osnovnom isti kao i Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije. I jedini drugi su samo pravno formulisanje iste konkretne društvene, ekonomske i političke stvarnosti naše zemlje.

Ali nacrt Ustava Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine je zasnovan i na daljnjem nizu načela koji proizilazu iz bosansko-hercegovačke državnosti i rješenja nacionalnog pitanja kroz tu državnost. On reguliše pitanje unutrašnjeg uređenja naše uže domovine, naše Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine. On određuje položaj naše Narodne Republike u okviru FNRJ u odnosu na druge narodne republike i na samu saveznu državu. On to čini tako, da bi narodi Bosne i Hercegovine, koristeći svoju državnost, mogli imati potpuno obezbijeđen svoj puni nacionalni razvitak, koji će baš zato što je potpun, uvršćivati i još jače razvijati bratstvo unutar Bosne i Hercegovine, a i svih naroda Federativne Narodne Republike Ju-



Државни грб Народне Републике Босне и Херцеговине претставља поље окружено житним класем. Класе је доле повезано траком на којој је исписан датум 1-VII-1944. Између врхова класа је петочрана звијезда. Усред поља налази се обрис босанско-херцеговачких планина, а напријед бубњина коју држе три руке.

(Члан 4 Наврта Устava Народне Републике Босне и Херцеговине)

ma u saveznu državu, — Federativnu Narodnu Republiku Jugoslaviju.

Naša federacija je postavljena tako da rješava nacionalno pitanje svake osnovne narodnosti. Zato se dosljedno ostvarenje principa federacije ogleda u tome što su narodne republike suverene države. One su ograničene samo u pravima koja su narodi Jugoslavije i narodnih republika po vlastitoj odluci, prenijeli na Federativnu Narodnu Republiku Jugoslaviju. Prenošenje ovih prava bilo je potrebno da bi se ostvarila ekonomska i politička saradnja uzajamna pomoć svih narodnih republika, njihova zajednička odbrana, državna bezbjednost i samostalnost, i u cilju jedinstva demokratskih načela državnog i društvenog uređenja svih narodnih republika u sastavu FNRJ. Osim ovih najvažnijih poslova opštenarodnog značaja, koje savezna vlast vrši u op-

san je tako da u Narodnoj Republici Bosni i Hercegovini uživaju ista prava kao i njeni građani.

Svojim Ustavom narodne republike, u okviru svoje suverenosti i svoje nadležnosti, izgrađuju svoju državnu organizaciju u skladu sa osobenostima naroda i narodne republike. Naš nacrt polazi od ove postavke i donosi odredbe o svojoj državnoj organizaciji. Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije već je dao načela za državnu organizaciju i postavio okvir. Naš nacrt je razradio i odredio oblike, rad, međusobne odnose i strukturu državnih organa Republike, kako bi kulturni i privredni razvitak naroda Bosne i Hercegovine bio snažniji i brži. On je odredio prava i nadležnost, te strukturu kako Narodne skupštine i Privrednih organa kao najviših organa državne vlasti Republike, tako i nadležnost i strukturu Vlade kao najvišeg organa državne uprave Na-

Figure 9. First proposal for the coat of arms of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Source: *Sarajevski dnevnik*, no. 432, 19 November 1946.

However, this improved suggestion did not encounter the expected overwhelming approval and intensive discussions had to be continued in search of alternate solutions. The whole Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia met on several occasions to debate this issue and the apparent seriousness of the matter is well demonstrated by the fact that these meetings were attended by Đuro Pucar, the secretary of the Regional Committee, as well as by a greater number of painters, artists, historians, lawyers, and others, who looked through various encyclopaedias, constitutions, and armorials, making numerous sketches. Painters Voja Dimitrijević and Ismet Mujezinović were particularly engaged in

this activity²². Rodoljub Čolaković, the president of the Government, also stated a few times that “comrades” in Belgrade, especially Edvard Kardelj, one of the leading communists and Deputy Prime Minister of Yugoslavia at the time, requested, as much as it was possible, to express elements of the continuity of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s history and statehood in

²² The authorship of the final version of the socialist coat of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still an open issue, even though it can be claimed with a lot of certainty that it was made by the graphic designer Đorđe Andrejević-Kun who was also the author of the new Yugoslav coat of arms and of the coats of arms of some other Yugoslav republics.

the new emblem, taking into account some features from the medieval coat of arms of King Tvrtko (r. 1353-1377-1391)²³. Because of this, Čolaković consulted historian Anto Babić and together they reached a rather misguided conclusion that “in the coat of arms of King Tvrtko there are no elements which would confirm the identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since all coats of arms from that time were coats of arms of individual nobles”²⁴. Subsequently, in order to serve as a link between the Middle Ages and the contemporary period, they chose the medieval fortified town of Jajce which represented the continuity of Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood from the “earliest times” as it was the seat of the monarchs of Bosnia in the fifteenth century, and also the place where on 29 November 1943 the Second meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia was held where Bosnia and Herzegovina received all attributes of a modern state.

When all parties finally agreed on this matter, the previous amendment was withdrawn and a new one was submitted which was then finally adopted in the following formulation:

“Article 4.

The state coat of arms of the Peoples Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a field surrounded from the left side with branches of deciduous plants, and from the right side with branches of coniferous plants, joint in their lower part by a ribbon. Between the tips of the branches is a five-pointed star. In the field above the ribbon there are two factory chimneys, and underneath it are two sheaves of wheat. Behind it is the outline of the silhouette of the town of Jajce”²⁵ (Fig. 10).

The last change was also implemented because it had been thought that the initial version of the coat of arms did not sufficiently reflect the economic wealth of Bosnia and Herzegovina as it did not display the Bosnian forests and its new ideological orientation towards industrialization. It is interesting to notice that the initial proposal could not be accepted as it contained sheaves of wheat, which also did not adequately represent the natural resources of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This new coat of arms was made according to Soviet principles and in the spirit of the art of social realism. Namely, this was not an art movement but an official artistic doctrine in which the key requirement was to portray reality truthfully and in a concrete historic manner which implied that the historicity of the artistic illustration must be connected with the goal of ideological transformation and education of workers

in the socialist spirit. As this requirement inferred the accessibility of the artwork to a broader audience, this also meant the acceptance of realist traditions. Aside from that, the basic idea of social realist art was the sharp distinction it had drawn between itself and the old arts, so that its artists were familiar with heraldry, but consciously rejected it because they thought that the history of art should not be credited with creative contribution in the contemporary moment. Therefore, in the construction of new coats of arms in the socialist period, there is a marked break and deviation from heraldic tradition in order to create an artistic expression which was realistic in character, but only in the spirit of “painting reality” (Russian: *лакировка действительности*), so that it was simple, optimistic, and bright, without too much stylization. According to this, the coats of arms from this time completely fit in the revolutionary understanding of “art as propaganda” and are more resemblant of posters, emblems, and badges, made up from wreaths, decorated with red stars, gears and cogs, sheaves of wheat, etc., while the free fields of the symbol were usually filled with depictions of contemporary industrial objects, or more frequently with natural beauties of the country. These coats of arms were supposed to describe the land, its geographic and historical development, the struggle of its peoples for liberation, and their desire for the progress of state and economy, all of which imply that these were tendentious and a part of an ideological programme²⁶.



Figure 10. Coat of arms of the People's (1946-1963) and Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1963-1992).

Source: Milan Popović – Miloš Jovanović, *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ*. Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979.

²³ In conversation about the symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina Edvard Kardelj expressed an opinion that it would be good if something adequate could be found from older history which would express the statehood of the country, in a similar way to the other Yugoslav republics, but that this should not be of utmost importance. He also emphasized that historians were to be consulted on this issue. Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, 8.

²⁴ Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, 6

²⁵ “Odluka o proglašenju Ustava SRBiH”, *Službeni list SRBiH*, 4/74.

²⁶ Nadezhda Aleksandrovna Soboleva, “From the History of Soviet Political Symbolism”, *Russian Studies in History* 47, 2 (2008): 59-91; Anton Iurevich Chistiakov, “Regional Heraldry and Identity. Ethnic Symbolism in the Emblems of the Republics of the Russian Federation”, *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia* 51, 4 (2013): 52-62.

Despite the fact that coats of arms made in the Soviet mould, which were present in almost all socialist, non-aligned and lands of people's democracy, rejected the standard rules of heraldry, the doctrine of socialist realism implied that art should be socialist in its contents, and national in its form, so some of these countries added certain traditional elements to their coats of arms so that old heraldic motifs from the past were not completely eliminated. Thus, for instance, the coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Bulgaria retained its medieval lion, the coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Croatia retained its "checkerboard" from the fifteenth century, and the coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Serbia retained the firesteels and the initial year of the First Serbian Uprising (1804), etc.

In the case of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian coat of arms, historical precedence was ignored and the "national form" was skilfully evaded as both obviously represented a problem in a multi-ethnic society, so the new emblem did not only fail to retain any historical motifs from the country's "ethno-cultural heritage", but it did not even contain any identifiable Bosnian symbols. Elements pointing to the agricultural and natural wealth of the land, particularly its forests, are overly generic to be recognizable as particularly Bosnian, while the silhouette of the town of Jajce was too abstract and placed in the background of the image, so much so that one could not even recognize the outline of the towers of the Jajce fortress on the emblem unless they read about them in the official documents. As for the factory chimneys, they were supposed to represent the apology of industrialization and symbolize the basic energetic orientation of the country's economy on the account of Bosnia and Herzegovina's rich mineral resources and due to geostrategic and military considerations since it was physically the central republic of the Yugoslav federation. But they are not in any way specific for Bosnia and Herzegovina, so that any observer of this particular coat of arms could be forgiven for thinking that it represented the arms of some completely different socialist country.

The choice of the new flag, in the same way as the choice of the new coat of arms, was also accompanied by certain efforts to resolve the many complex problems and find the best solutions. Debates about this issue were also very intensive, and they became particularly strained after the first suggestion of the Republic's flag was publicized in the draft of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which regulated the visual appearance of the flag:

"Article 5.

The state flag of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of three colours: blue, white and red, in horizontal arrangement. The ratio of width to length of the flag is one to two. In the centre of the flag there are two five-pointed stars, a red one and a golden one, whose points intersect each other. The bottom, golden five-pointed star is smaller, with broader angles and smaller points. Its lower point enters as far as one third of the red colour of the flag, so that the upper points of

the star receive an appropriate place in the blue colour of the flag. The top, red five-pointed star is larger, with a golden border. Its upper point enters up to one half of the blue colour of the flag, so that the lower points of the star receive an appropriate place in the red colour of the flag"²⁷ (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. First proposal for the flag of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Source: Sarajevski dnevnik, no. 432, 19 November 1946.

The basic stumbling block in the case of the new Bosnian and Herzegovinian flag was its colour. Opposing opinions about what the flag was supposed to look like appeared as soon as public discussions about the draft of the Constitution were opened. Namely, one group advocated the idea that for the new flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina they should adopt the first suggested version, i.e. the Yugoslav tricolour (blue, white, red) whereby only the five-pointed star in the middle would be designed differently in order to differentiate this flag from the Yugoslav one²⁸. The other group requested that the flag be red. As the two groups could not agree on this issue, a third possibility arose which was supposed to show on the flag that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the homeland of the Muslims, Serbs and Croats. But since this was not something that was usually represented on flags, and it was difficult to execute from a technical point of view, this idea was quickly abandoned.

Since almost all those who took part in these debates opted for the red flag, it eventually became the main option. The stated suggestions in public discussions also went in the same direction, so during the meeting of the Constitutional Committee it was concluded that the suggestion from the draft of the Constitution was dissatisfactory. The president of the Committee stated that "from the general and popular debate about the draft of the Constitution, and from the suggestions submitted by the union branches and popular conferences, it could be seen that the proposed flag will be changed according to the will of the broadest layers of the people"²⁹. After the end of the discussion, the Committee was supposed to return to Article 5 of the Constitution in order to implement the desired change.

²⁷ Popović – Jovanović, *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ*, 30-32.

²⁸ "Zasjedanje Ustavotvornog odbora Ustavotvorne skupštine NR BiH", *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 450, Sarajevo, 11/12/1946, 4.

²⁹ "Zasjedanje Ustavotvornog odbora Ustavotvorne skupštine NR BiH", *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 450, Sarajevo, 11/12/1946, 4.

The importance given to the resolution of this issue is well illustrated by the fact that discussions about the flag in the house of Regional Committee of the Communist Party often lasted long into the night. The basic motives used to justify the need for the flag to be red were that the uprising in many places in Bosnia and Herzegovina was begun under the red flag, and that on the territory of this country the most blood was spilled during the fierce battles with the enemies. But even though the reasons for the adoption of this flag were truly very strong, certain contemporaries still considered “that this was in collision with the political line of the construction of our society on the current level of its development”³⁰. However, this opinion changed after Rodoljub Čolaković spoke to Edvard Kardelj in Belgrade, who requested a few days to think about the best possible solution for the issue of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian flag. Dušan Šakota, the Government’s commissioner in the Constituent Assembly, went to Belgrade with Dušan Josipović, the secretary of the Constitutional Committee, where they met with Kardelj in his office within the building of the Government of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. There he explained to them that the arguments for the red flag were sufficiently strong and that the new flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina could and should be red in colour. The only thing that he added was that it would be necessary to construct the flag in such a way so that it could be seen that Bosnia and Herzegovina was an integral part of Yugoslavia. While he clarified his opinions, he took a piece of paper and drew possible solutions improvising the future look of the flag. Šakota and Josipović took these sketches to Sarajevo where they showed them to Rodoljub Čolaković, who exclaimed: “If Bevc [Kardelj’s nickname] says that we can have a red flag, then there will be no problems here. We are all for the red flag”³¹. After that, an amendment on Article 5 was submitted in the following form:

“Article 5.

The state flag of the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is red in colour. The ratio of width to length is one to two. In the upper corner of the flag, next to the hoist, are the golden (yellow) edged colours of the state flag of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, with a red five-pointed star in the centre, which encompasses one quarter of the width and length of the flag. The star has a regular five-pointed shape and a golden (yellow) border. The upper point of the star enters as far as the half of the blue colour, so that the lower points of the star receive an appropriate place in the red colour”³² (Fig. 12).

The first proposed flag was considered not to have had any kind of tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the people who took a significant part in the many organized conferences and debates about the Constitution stated very clearly and openly that they wanted their flag to be red. In the discussions about this amendment, many representatives unreservedly supported the new suggestion, each one particularly explaining

their reasons. They emphasized that the uprising was initiated under the red flag, that it was a most beautiful symbol since it represented Bosnia as an industrial land of the working people, and that it expressed the feelings of the Yugoslav peasants who rose up against the occupiers under it. The new Article 5 was then accepted unanimously.



Figure 12. Flag of the People’s (1946-1963) and Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1963-1992).

Source: Milan Popović – Miloš Jovanović, *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ*. Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979.

Apart from everything that was said it symbolized, it was also stated that the newly adopted red socialist flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Yugoslav tricolour in the canton was a clear reference to the famous saying that “Bosnia was a small-scale Yugoslavia”, even though one could also find statements which thought that this flag “negated the historical roots of the state and legal subject that it was supposed to symbolize”³³.

4. The last decade of the century – times of war and the Dayton peace (1992-1998)

The fall of communism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990’s led to the declaration of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent republic in March 1992. This transition also required a fresh reimagining of state symbols as the socialist coat of arms and flag were considered outdated remnants of a failed system that were far too generic and unrecognizable, without any distinctive “ethno-cultural” features of the country and its population. The specific circumstances of that time finally allowed the quest for new symbols to again be expanded to the Middle Ages when Bosnia had been an independent monarchy ruled by a dynasty with clearly defined and obvious heraldic heritage. Taking inspiration from the medieval period was supposed to emphasize the link between Bosnia and Herzegovina’s historical and modern statehood, while also maintaining “ethno-religious neutrality”. Namely, relying on symbolic elements from a past in which there were no modern ethnic or religious divisions was intended to prevent exacerbating the already heightened national tensions of the time. The new coat of arms and flag were supposed to guide the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards a path of multi-ethnic unity, underpinned by principles of peace and mutual tolerance for all its citizens, irrespective of their national or religious affiliations. However, despite these intentions, the symbols adopted in 1992 have, unfortunately,

³⁰ Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, 7.

³¹ Josipović, “Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, 8.

³² “Zastava Republike Bosne i Hercegovine biće crvena”, 2.

³³ Mesud Šadinlija, “Jedno vještačko poglavlje o zastavi”, *Prilozi. Institut za istoriju*, 34 (2005), 278.

perpetuated divisions within Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has become apparent that in newly formed multi-ethnic states flags and other symbols often struggle to successfully embody the unity of the country and may, in fact, further contribute to the already existing disagreements. It is important to note that symbols are usually not the root cause of the divisions; rather, the divisions come first and the disagreements about state symbols are just their consequence³⁴.

The creation of the new coat of arms and flag for Bosnia and Herzegovina began on 27 February 1991 when the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina accepted an initiative to amend its Constitution and establish a constitutional law on the name and state symbols of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In response, the working group for the legislative, executive and judicial authority of the Commission for constitutional matters of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina then named an expert group consisting of various prominent scholars who were tasked with designing the new state symbols. This group included historians and archaeologists from the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Institute for History. The team also included dr. Enver Imamović, archaeologist and professor of ancient history at the University of Sarajevo, as well as independent designer Zvonimir Bebek who was supposed to visually shape the final proposal³⁵.

Members of this group suggested that the basic colour of the new flag should be light blue, which was supposed to symbolize the positive characteristics of peace, prosperity, unity, and was modelled after the flag of the United Nations. They recommended a rectangular shape with a 5:3 ratio³⁶. In the middle of the new flag they proposed to place the “new” Bosnian coat of arms which was based on the heraldic symbol of the medieval Kotromanić dynasty that was depicted on several of their seals and coins – *azure a bend argent between six fleurs-de-lis or*³⁷. (**Fig. 13**) Nevertheless, the design was ultimately based on heraldic elements from the burial shroud of the first Bosnian King Tvrtko (r. 1353-1377-1391) discovered in his tomb beneath the remains of the church of St. Nicholas in the village of Arnautovići near Visoko in Bosnia³⁸. (**Fig. 14**) It was then decided that the new state symbol should become the lily, or fleur-de-lys, from the time of the Bosnian Kingdom, and this choice was made to avoid representing any specific ethnic or religious group within modern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Along with that, the expert team stressed that the origin of the lily should be based on the specific and endemic subspecies of the lily flower (*Lilium Bosniacum Beck*), which grew on the slopes of the Igman and Sutjeska

mountains in the vicinity of Sarajevo³⁹. However, it is important to take into account the fact that the fleur-de-lys used in medieval Bosnia is undoubtedly connected to the influence of the Angevins of Naples and Hungary who significantly impacted the development of heraldry in fourteenth-century Bosnia.



Figure 13. Artist reconstruction of the image on the reverse of the great seal of Tvrtko Kotromanić as king of Serbs and Bosnia.

Source: Drawing after Radmila Jovandić and Slobodan Perišić.

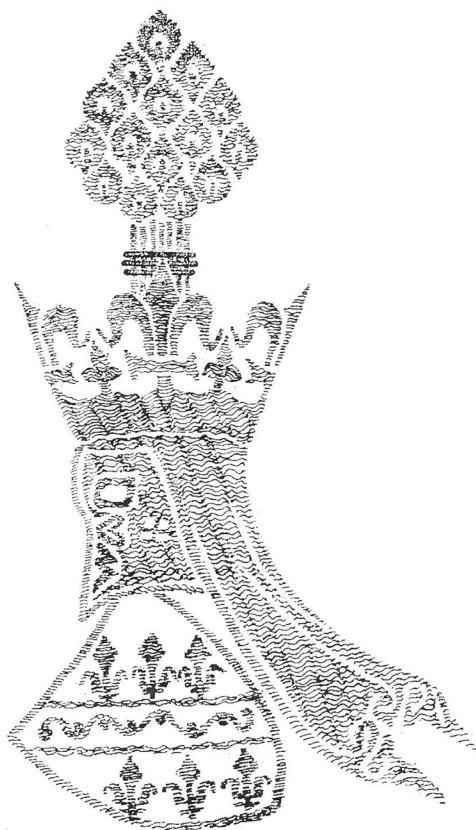


Figure 14. Coat of arms of King Tvrtko (r. 1353-1377-1391).

Source: Drawing after Jelena Aćimović.

³⁴ Pål Kolstø, “National symbols as signs of unity and division”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, 4 (2006): 679-681, 697.

³⁵ Enver Imamović, “Historička podloga državnih i vojnih obilježja Bosne i Hercegovine sa znakom ljiljana”, in *Naučni skup Bosna i Hercegovina prije i nakon ZAVNOBiH-a*, ed. Muhamed Filipović, Sarajevo: ANU BiH, 2007, 202.

³⁶ Enver Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, Sarajevo: Međunarodni centar za mir, 1995, 367-368.

³⁷ Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, 139.

³⁸ Emir O. Filipović, “‘Creatio Regni’ in the Great Seal of Bosnian King Tvrtko Kotromanić”, in *A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laura Whatley, Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2019, 264-276. On the Kotromanić dynasty, see: Emir O. Filipović, “The Most Noble and Royal House of Kotromanić. Constructing Dynastic Identity in Medieval Bosnia”, *Südost-Forschungen*, 78 (2019): 1-38.

³⁹ Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, 140. On the Bosnian lily, see: Safer Mededović, “Citogenetička istraživanja vrste *Lilium bosniacum Beck*”, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja n.s. Prirodne nauke*, 15 (1976): 80-90.

The new symbols were presented to the cultural societies of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and Jews, in order to hear the various suggestions. All societies accepted the proposal, except the Serb one, whose representatives considered that the new flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina should also contain Serb national symbols⁴⁰.

As the group was finalizing proposals for the new state symbols, war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo, the capital city, was placed under an effective siege by the Serb military forces, meaning that the initiated work could not be completed. Namely, the designs were supposed to be submitted into constitutional procedure, after which they were to be officially proclaimed as new state symbols, but the whole process was stopped as the group just broke up. Following this interruption, Enver Imamović and Zvonimir Bebek took over and spent approximately forty days making “cosmetic changes” to the initial designs. They adjusted the shield’s border from silver to gold, and changed the flag’s primary colour from light blue to white⁴¹.

On 4 May 1992 the presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina approved the proposed designs for the coat of arms and flag without any objection, whereby these symbols became the official state symbols, initially as a temporary measure⁴², until they were accepted as a final and permanent solution with the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

“Article 7.

The coat of arms of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the shape of a shield, blue in colour, divided into two fields with a diagonal white band and three golden yellow lilies in each field.

Article 8.

The flag of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is of a rectangular shape with the coat of arms of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the middle on a white background. The ratio between the width and length of the flag is one to two⁴³ (Fig. 15).

Due to the wartime conditions, there were substantial challenges in the making of the first state flags of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Aside from the everyday shelling and shooting, there was not enough adequate material in Sarajevo from which the first two flags could be made. The whole city was devastated, there was no electricity, and all the shops were either robbed or closed. In such circumstances, the authors of the designs reached out to Salem Malović, the owner of the graphic studio “Linea”, who provided invaluable assistance. Despite the numerous obstacles, the project was successfully completed. The

first flag was soon hanged on the Presidency building where it remained only for fifteen days. Namely, during the heavy shelling of the building, the flag was damaged with numerous wholes and tears so much so that it became unusable⁴⁴. However, as such it has been preserved and is now exhibited in the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo where it is displayed as one of the objects of the “Sarajevo under siege 1992-1995” exhibition. Additionally, a flag was also sent to the United States of America where it was officially presented in front of the United Nations Building in New York on 21 May 1992.

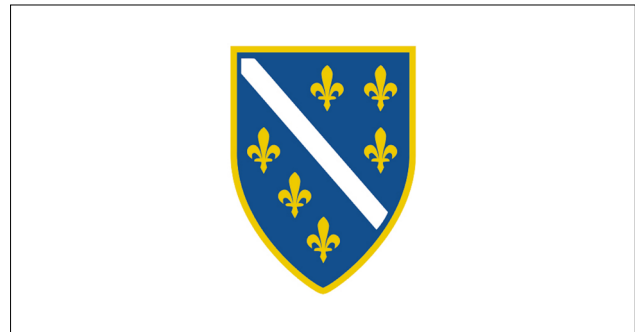


Figure 15. Flag of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1998).

Source: “Uredba sa zakonskom snagom o utvrđivanju privremenog grba i zastave Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, *Službeni list R BiH*, no. 4/92.

The flag and coat of arms were swiftly adopted across both official and unofficial settings. The coat of arms appeared on passport, banknotes, licence plates, identity cards, driving licences, etc., while the fleur-de-lys was used as an emblem of all sport teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The flag was prominently displayed at a range of events, from ceremonial and official occasions to private and local gatherings such as weddings, sports games, and school plays. However, over time, this flag began to be exclusively associated with Bosnian Muslims, even though it was initially well accepted by some Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, “this originally civic, supra-ethnic flag was closely associated with one of the warring parties, and in a sense ‘ethnicized’”. The flag that had been deliberately designed as a symbol of unity became a sign of division and discord⁴⁵. Apart from that, for the duration of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina other emblems appeared which symbolized either the warring sides or their fractions. The Croat side used the stylized “checkboard” with a three-ribbon interlaced wreath on its top, while the Serbs utilized the heraldic traditions of the Serbian state.

With the conclusion of the war and the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995, it became evident that the state symbols needed to be revised again since the existing coat of arms and flag had become politicized and were associated with the conflict and war crimes. The prominent role played by the international community in ending

⁴⁰ Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, 368.

⁴¹ Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, 370.

⁴² “Uredba sa zakonskom snagom o utvrđivanju privremenog grba i zastave Republike Bosne i Hercegovine”, *Službeni list R BiH*, 4/92.

⁴³ “Ustav Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (Prečišćeni tekst)”, *Službeni list R BiH*, 5/93.

⁴⁴ Imamović, *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*, 400-402.

⁴⁵ Kolstø, “National symbols as signs of unity and division”, 681.

the war and shaping the peace process ultimately turned Bosnia and Herzegovina into an international protectorate and this is well illustrated by the way in which its new state symbols were chosen. Namely, the current Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is merely Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and Article I.6 of this Constitution foresees that Bosnia and Herzegovina “shall have such symbols as are decided by its Parliamentary Assembly and approved by the Presidency”. On its Conference held in London, United Kingdom, on 4 and 5 December 1996 the Peace Implementation Council, an international body charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement, stated that a settlement on the flag and other common symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina needed to be found until 15 February 1997 at the latest⁴⁶. However, despite of that, the issue of the state flag and coat of arms did not become a focal point of discussions among local politicians. Therefore, in paragraphs 26 and 29 of the Political Declaration from the Ministerial Meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council held in Sintra, Portugal, on 30 May 1997 it was once again stressed that it is “of great significance that the external representation of the country, as well as its flags and symbols, are truly representative of the new constitutional order”, and that the Steering Board “expects a quick decision on the common flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina” with a deadline set for 1 September 1997. After that date, the Steering Board “will recommend to all countries and organisations that existing flags and symbols will not be recognised as the flags and symbols of the country unless so decided as laid down in the Constitution”⁴⁷. When the Bosnian authorities failed to address the issue even after a year had passed, rumours began circulating that the international community might consider removing the Bosnian and Herzegovinian flag in front of the United Nations building in East River in New York in order to punish the uncooperative politicians. In response, the ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN, Mohamed Sacirbey, stated that he would not allow the flag to be taken down until a new one was prepared and until instructed to do so by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁴⁸.

One of the basic provisions of the Peace Implementation Council conference held on 10 December 1997 in Bonn, Germany, also dealt with the new state symbols. The Office of the High Representative, an international institution established by Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement to oversee its implementation, was therefore advised to inaugurate a process which would ultimately lead to a final decision about the visual appearance of the new flag and symbols. If a

resolution was not achieved in parliamentary procedure by 31 December 1997, the High Representative, Spanish diplomat Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza, was then authorized to impose a flag he deemed most appropriate⁴⁹. As the deadline passed without a solution, on 12 January 1998 the High Representative appointed a seven-member independent multi-ethnic commission comprised of distinguished figures from Bosnia and Herzegovina’s academic and intellectual community who were tasked with proposing alternatives for the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁵⁰. The members of this commission were: Mladen Kolobarić, Neđo Milićević, Sadudin Musabegović, Marko Oršolić, Ranko Risojević, Vehid Šehić and Gajo Sekulić⁵¹. They were supposed to find an urgent solution and had agreed to submit their propositions to the High Representative before 30 January 1998 at the latest, since the new flag had to be selected in time for the beginning of the 18th Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, scheduled to be opened on 7 February 1998.

Between 12 and 22 January 1998, this commission formed under the patronage of the Office of the High Representative convened four times, and after extensive consultations and deliberations, the group presented its report with three different proposals on 26 January⁵². The commission’s guiding principle was that all elements of the new flag, as well as the symbol itself, must be equally acceptable to all citizens and to all groups within the state. Consequently, they chose not to incorporate ethnic colours or symbols into the design, even though the High Representative personally favoured the three-coloured flag solution: green, red and blue, symbolizing the Muslim Bosniaks, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stylized to resemble the flag of the Czech Republic. Instead of that, the commission decided that each of the suggested alternatives should be made up of geometrical symbols and colours which would be equally acceptable to all (**Fig. 16**). Each proposal featured a basic light blue background which was supposed to symbolize the Organization of the United Nations and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s place in the global community of states. The inclusion of yellow in certain elements of each proposal was motivated by the fact that this colour was equally acceptable to all as it could not be connected to any particular group within the country, and that it symbolized the sun as the source of all light and life (**Fig. 17**). Two versions of the flag had a universal geometric symbol of the triangle which vaguely resembled the geographic shape of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its three points could stand for three constituent peoples who made up the country. One of the proposals had a certain number of white stars which were supposed to represent the European Union (**Fig. 18**).

⁴⁶ Office of the High Representative, “PIC Main Meeting London”, 5/12/1996. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-london-conferencesummary-of-conclusions

⁴⁷ Office of the High Representative, “PIC Sintra Declaration”, 30/05/1997. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-sintra-declaration; Alternative Information Network, “Prijedlozi zastave BiH – Za Olimpijadu i budućnost”, 2/02/1998 (Mirko Mirčetić). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199802/80202-012-pubs-sar.htm

⁴⁸ Alternative Information Network, “Sudbina bosanskih ljljana – nismo mi, kriv je Westendorp!”, 4/09/1997 (Sandra Kasalo). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199709/70904-034-pubs-sar.htm

⁴⁹ Office of the High Representative, “PIC Bonn Conclusions”, 12/10/1997. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-bonn-conclusions

⁵⁰ Office of the High Representative, “Press Release, 12 January 1998”, 12/01/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/the-high-representative-declares-the-establishment-of-an-independent-commission-to-propose-alternatives-for-the-flag-of-bih

⁵¹ Jos Poels, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new ‘neutral’ flag”, *Flagmaster*, 89 (1998) 9-12.

⁵² Office of the High Representative, “Flags Commission proposes three models”, 26/01/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/flags-commission-proposes-three-models

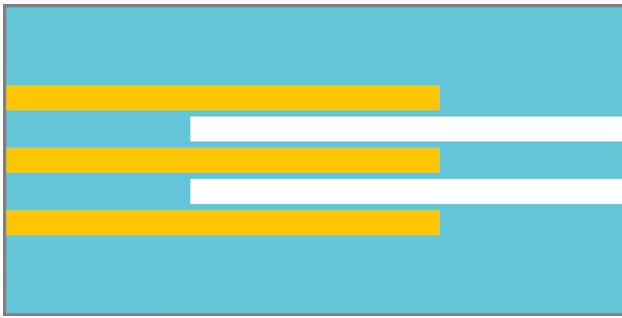


Figure 16. Proposal for the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998.

Source: Jos Poels, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *Flagmaster*, no. 89, 1998.



Figure 17. Proposal for the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998.

Source: Jos Poels, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *Flagmaster*, no. 89, 1998.



Figure 18. Proposal for the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998.

Source: Jos Poels, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *Flagmaster*, no. 89, 1998.

Carlos Westendorp forwarded the three proposed flag designs to members of the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament for approval, but meetings held in Lukavica on 3 February were not productive since not a single flag received the necessary number of votes. Namely, the Serb delegates rejected every suggested solution "not so much because they objected to any particular details in the draft design, but simply in order to deny legitimacy to the state as such"⁵³, remaining firm in their stance that the new flag should contain symbols of ethnic groups. Croat members shared a similar opinion, while the Bosniak representative, Zlatko Lagumdžija, only suggested that the basic colour should be changed from light

blue to "European" dark blue⁵⁴. The first design, known as "Alternative 1" secured sixteen positive votes, sixteen abstentions, one vote against, and no absolute decision could be reached. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina's parliamentarians failed to unanimously adopt one of the three designs, the High Representative "regretfully" had to inform the public "that the Delegates have shown themselves lacking in the courage to take a binding decision on the important and sensitive issue of a common flag for Bosnia and Herzegovina" and that he was left without choice but to act in the framework of his authorities to impose the flag that had received the most votes⁵⁵. The following day, the spokesperson of the Office of the High Representative ceremoniously unveiled the new flag at a press conference⁵⁶, with the colours adjusted to darker shades in order to align with those of the Council of Europe. The visual appearance of the symbol was defined by the Law on the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina that entered into force on 4 February 1998 with immediate effect on an interim basis, and was later adopted on 11 February 1998 by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

"Article 3.

The flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina is of a blue colour. Right of centre there is a triangle of yellow colour. Running parallel to the left side of this triangle is a row of white five-pointed stars in a line from the top edge of the flag to the bottom edge. The flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina is of a rectangular shape. The relationship between the length and width is 1:2"⁵⁷ (Fig. 19).

This flag was then carried by the Bosnian and Herzegovinian athletes on the opening ceremony of

⁵⁴ Speaking about a letter that the High Representative Carlos Westendorp sent him, appealing on the unification of the social-democratic opposition, the leader of the Social-Democratic Party, Zlatko Lagumdžija, stated: "I do not want to be chosen by Westendorp and then to seek the support from the people, but for the people to choose us and then for Westendorp to help us. We do not need Westendorp to create a party for us! We are not a flag which he can draw!" Alternative Information Network, "Nismo mi zastava da nas Westendorp crta", 7/02/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199802/80207-015-pubs-sar.htm

⁵⁵ Office of the High Representative, "Decision imposing the Law on the Flag of BiH", 4/02/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/decision-imposing-the-law-on-the-flag-of-bih

⁵⁶ While presenting the flag at a press conference, Duncan Bullivant, the spokesperson of the Office of the High Representative, stressed that this was a "flag of the future. It represents unity not division", and that "it is the flag that belongs in Europe", however, he could not contain his laughter when one journalist claimed that it mostly resembled a "cornflakes box". Robert M. Hayden, "Why political union cannot be imposed by foreign powers - Bosnia: The Contradictions of 'Democracy' without Consent", *East European Constitutional Review* 7, 2 (1998): 47-51. Apart from this, the visual appearance of the new Bosnia and Herzegovina flag was compared to the packaging of a Danish yoghurt, and it was stated that it combined African design with Scandinavian colours.

⁵⁷ "Zakon o zastavi Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 19/1. The flag colours are: Reflex blue and yellow 116c. See also: "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o zastavi Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, 23/04.

⁵³ Kolstø, "National symbols as signs of unity and division", 682.

the Winter Olympic Games⁵⁸, whereas a day earlier it was officially hung in front of the United Nations building in New York.



Figure 19. Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1998-).

Source: Jos Poels, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *Flagmaster*, no. 89, 1998.

Although the newly chosen flag was supposed to express the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constituent peoples, the choice of nationally neutral and generic elements basically resulted in a symbol that many critics found completely lacking in character. As Pål Kolstø rightly puts it, the new flag looks more like a commercial logo rather than a national emblem⁵⁹. He further adds, that while compromises in design do not necessarily need to be aesthetic or artistically consistent, that they could also be "a collage of seemingly incompatible elements", but that a "minimum of heraldic conventions must be respected"⁶⁰, which was not the case in Bosnia. Immediately after Westendorp imposed the flag, intellectuals in Sarajevo sent a formal protest note to the High Representative, decrying the decision as "the final act in the murder of a state", and calling for a referendum to allow citizens to choose the flag themselves⁶¹. Politicians also voiced their dissatisfaction, with many press conferences reflecting their concerns. They criticized the removal of national and ethnic elements from the flag and expressed disappointment with its aesthetic, arguing that it failed to capture the rich heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some also said that the commission tasked with the construction of the flag did not adhere to the basic principles which should reflect the symbols of a state and emphasized that these considerations should be taken into account in the creation of the new coat of arms.

This, however, did not happen.

Pleased with the commission's work on the flag proposals, the High Representative extended their mandate to include the development of a new coat of arms for Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶². On their meetings held between 9 and 11 April 1998, the commission reviewed numerous ideas and submissions. Ultimately, they selected three designs that they forwarded to the High Representative and his Office⁶³. All three proposals were made with the intention to create a link between the coat of arms and the new flag, so that the symbols would be adopted more easily and function together as unified state emblems.

In crafting the proposals for the new coat of arms, several important institutions were consulted, with the British College of Arms in London being the most significant. Ranko Risojević, a member of the commission, travelled to London where he spoke to esteemed heraldist Thomas Woodcock who confirmed that the proposals were done professionally and that the commission could be proud of their work. On that occasion, it was also established that the use of a continued row of stars in the coat of arms represented an innovation in heraldry. However, it was acknowledged that such a deviation from traditional rules was acceptable for the group because "its position, just like the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, was such that it required a new way of thinking. This new way implied clear geometric and strictly neutral solutions"⁶⁴.

The commission explained their proposals in the following way: "The commission suggests to Mr. Carlos Westendorp, that is to say to the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, three solutions for the state coat of arms. All proposals follow the basic idea of the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That means that the commission, taking into account the coat of arms as a particular form, remained loyal to the visual elements and universal symbols contained in the appearance of the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All the proposals of the coat of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the usual shape of a shield that is pointed at the bottom. In relation to the flag there is an innovation in the first proposal a line structured triangle with an unbroken diagonal row of stars, and in the third proposal lines that permeate each other and form a triangle with an unbroken horizontal row of stars above it. The background colour of all the proposals was dark blue which could symbolize the belonging of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union. The yellow colour symbolized the source of light and life. The important elements of the proposals of the coat of arms, as well as the flag, are the basic dark blue colour, the yellow colour of the triangle, and the unbroken diagonal row of stars that are here, as in the case of many other coats of arms in the World, even those medieval, family ones, a symbol of

⁵⁸ On the eve of the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games, Foreign Ministry of Japan Spokesman Sadaaki Numata held a press conference expressing satisfaction that such "an important step forward along the path toward national reconciliation and unity of the nation" was taken in Japan as the Nagano Olympics were "an excellent opportunity for this appeal to be made to the international community at large". He also stated that "the new Bosnian flag which was produced in Sarajevo has been making a very quick flight from Sarajevo to Nagano", where it arrived that morning. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Press Conference by the Press Secretary February 6, 1998". Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1998/2/206.html

⁵⁹ Kolstø, "National symbols as signs of unity and division", 683.

⁶⁰ Pål Kolstø, "Nationale Symbole in neuen Staaten Zeichen von Einheit und Spaltung", *Osteuropa* 53, 7 (2003): 1013.

⁶¹ "Bosnian intellectuals wash their hands of flag 'like soap powder box'", *The Times*, Thursday, February 5, 1998, 14.

⁶² Office of the High Representative, "The Independent Commission to Propose Alternatives for the Coat of Arms of BiH", 19/02/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/the-independent-commission-to-propopose-alternatives-for-the-coat-of-arms-of-bih

⁶³ Alternative Information Network, "Simboli BiH - Grb stroge neutralnosti", 17/04/1998 (Mirko Borjević). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199804/80417-011-pubs-sar.htm

⁶⁴ Alternative Information Network, "Simboli BiH - Grb stroge neutralnosti".



Figure 20. Coat of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1998-).

Source: "Zakon o grbu Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 19/01.

permanence and stability, since they resemble stars which always remain in the same place on the celestial sphere. The new coat of arms, as a symbol of a new state, does not evoke any associations of the past, but with its universal symbolism opens a perspective to the afflicted people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a belief in a better future. It should be exclusively used in the spaces of the common institutions, as well as on the seals which will certify documents issued by those institutions. The traditional coats of arms will still be used in those areas which used them thus far, because they do not stand in collision with this new, common coat of arms"⁶⁵.

As with the flag, the commission's proposals for the coat of arms were carefully considered. However, since Bosnian and Herzegovinian politicians quite expectedly could not reach an agreement before 15 May, which was set as the deadline for the adoption of the new coat of arms, the High Representative selected the design which had received the most votes during the Parliamentary session, and which incidentally resembled the flag the most. Therefore, exercising the authority granted to him under Annex 10 of the Peace Agreement and Article XI of the Bonn Document, he decided to place the Law on the coat of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina into power on 18 May 1998, but only temporarily, until it was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly in the appropriate form. In that Law the visual appearance of the new coat of arms was regulated in the following way:

"Article 4.

The Coat-of-Arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina is of a blue colour and in the shape of a shield

with a pointed tip. In the top right-side corner of the shield there is a triangle of yellow colour. Running parallel to the left side of this triangle is a row of white five-pointed stars"⁶⁶ (**Fig. 20**).

5. Conclusion

The quest for appropriate state symbols which would represent Bosnia and Herzegovina as a political entity has arisen several times throughout the twentieth century, which is unusual for a country with such a rich heraldic tradition. While symbols often serve as enduring or even permanent categories in many countries, the frequent modifications of Bosnia and Herzegovina's state symbols were mainly motivated by the changes in its legal and political status, as well as by the opposing positions of different political regimes which swapped in power throughout the twentieth century. Each new regime typically deemed the existing symbols unsustainable and "ideologically incompatible", opting instead for designs that aligned more closely with their own political preferences. Besides that, practical considerations caused the debates about "authentic" or "original" symbols of Bosnia. One such discussion took place during the Austro-Hungarian period when Bosnia and Herzegovina received its first flag and coat of arms in modern history. This was driven by the Habsburg Monarchy's requirement for standardized symbols across its provinces and lands, which were used on

⁶⁵ Alternative Information Network, "Simboli BiH – Grb stroge neutralnosti".

⁶⁶ "Zakon o grbu Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, 19/01; Office of the High Representative, "Decision on the shape and design of the coat-of-arms of BiH", 18/05/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/decision-on-the-shape-and-design-of-the-coat-of-arms-of-bih. See also: "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o grbu Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, 23/04.

seals, documents, and official buildings. Similarly, after the Second World War, there was a need to establish new symbols for Bosnia and Herzegovina, since they did not exist in the previous regimes during the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Independent State of Croatia.

In such situations when a new coat of arms and the flag had to be invented virtually from nothing, the creators often looked to the past for elements or emblems that best capture the history, tradition, and unique position of the land, as well as the role which the authorities intended for it. This search can lead to a broad spectrum of ideas and proposals for state symbols, reflecting the political climate of the time. Some of these suggestions drew upon Bosnia and Herzegovina's history and realistic interests, aiming to choose symbols that would authentically represent its rich and varied heritage. However, these proposals were frequently ignored or overlooked in favour of symbols that aligned more closely with contemporary political agendas. This divergence sometimes stemmed from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the country's extensive symbolic history, leading to the adoption of various "neutral" coats of arms and flags that completely lacked historical relevance. At other times, the choices were deliberately crafted to achieve specific political objectives. Consequently, the coats of arms and flags of Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout the twentieth century failed to reflect its history, tradition, or unique status as a state. The only exception being the symbols used between 1992 and 1998, which have, although without deeper roots among the population, had a realistic historical background. Considering the complicated and difficult situation in which the state found itself in 1992, they fulfilled almost all of the "nationally sensitive" criteria and seemed like a successful and long-term solution. Nonetheless, later on they became associated with only one of the three Bosnian and Herzegovinian ethnic groups, which eventually prevented the symbol from being used as a state emblem.

Even more than a quarter of a century after they were introduced, the current state symbols have yet to be embraced as genuine representations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although they were developed by a multi-ethnic commission composed of Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens, their implementation was ultimately imposed by the Office of the High Representative. Despite substantial efforts by the international community to promote these symbols, they are not uniformly used across the country, with many regions continuing to favour the old ethno-religious symbols.

The selection of Bosnia and Herzegovina's coat of arms and flag in the twentieth century, although reflecting the specific political circumstances of the time, did not always achieve widespread acceptance. While coats of arms and flags typically play a vital role in nation-building by promoting unity and a shared identity in diverse multicultural states, the neutral symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina fell short in this regard. Instead of reinforcing common values among the various ethno-religious groups, their lack of distinctiveness undermined their ability to foster a cohesive national unity and develop strong emotional attachment to the state. The described experiment

of choice of the state symbols from 1998, which rather resembled the one from 1946, showed that compromises and strictly neutral symbols had not always been the most effective solutions. In both instances, Bosnia and Herzegovina's rich heraldic heritage had been ignored thus disabling the symbol's unifying potential. Therefore, any future efforts to develop new state symbols will also need to consider this heritage as a vital source of inspiration.

6. Sources and bibliographic references

6.1. Sources.

- Alternative Information Network, "Prijedlozi zastave BiH – Za Olimpijadu i budućnost", 2/02/1998 (Mirko Mirčetić). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199802/80202-012-pubs-sar.htm
- Alternative Information Network, "Sudbina bosanskih ljiljana – nismo mi, kriv je Westendorp!?", 4/09/1997 (Sandra Kasalo). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199709/70904-034-pubs-sar.htm
- Alternative Information Network, "Nismo mi zastava da nas Westendorp crta", 7/02/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199802/80207-015-pubs-sar.htm
- Alternative Information Network, "Simboli BiH – Grb stroge neutralnosti", 17/04/1998 (Mirko Borojević). Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199804/80417-011-pubs-sar.htm
- Die Protokolle des cisleithanischen Ministerrates 1867-1918, Band VIII: 1914-1918, Teilband 1 (23. Juli 1914 – 22. November 1916)*, edited by Franz Adlgasser – Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik. Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2023.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Press Conference by the Press Secretary February 6, 1998". Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1998/2/206.html
- "Odluka o proglašenju Ustava SRBiH", *Službeni list SRBiH*, 4/74.
- Office of the High Representative, "PIC Main Meeting London", 5/12/1996. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-london-conferencesummary-of-conclusions
- Office of the High Representative, "PIC Sintra Declaration", 30/05/1997. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-sintra-declaration
- Office of the High Representative, "PIC Bonn Conclusions", 12/10/1997. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/pic-bonn-conclusions
- Office of the High Representative, "Press Release, 12 January 1998", 12/01/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/the-high-representative-declares-the-establishment-of-an-independent-commission-to-propose-alternatives-for-the-flag-of-bih
- Office of the High Representative, "Flags Commission proposes three models", 26/01/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/flags-commission-proposes-three-models
- Office of the High Representative, "Decision imposing the Law on the Flag of BiH", 4/02/1998. Consulted

- on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/decision-imposing-the-law-on-the-flag-of-bih
- Office of the High Representative, "The Independent Commission to Propose Alternatives for the Coat of Arms of BiH", 19/02/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/the-independent-commission-to-propopose-alternatives-for-the-coat-of-arms-of-bih
- Office of the High Representative, "Decision on the shape and design of the coat-of-arms of BiH", 18/05/1998. Consulted on 27 July 2024. www.ohr.int/decision-on-the-shape-and-design-of-the-coat-of-arms-of-bih
- "Uredba sa zakonskom snagom o utvrđivanju privremenog grba i zastave Republike Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni list R BiH*, no. 4/92.
- Ustav Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, od 28. juna, 1921. god.* Beograd: Izdavačka Knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1921.
- "Ustav Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (Prečišćeni tekst)", *Službeni list R BiH*, no. 5/93.
- "Zakon o grbu Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 19/01.
- "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o grbu Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 23/04.
- "Zakon o zastavi Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 19/01.
- "Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o zastavi Bosne i Hercegovine", *Službeni glasnik BiH*, no. 23/04.
- ## 6.2. Bibliographic references
- Aleksandrovna Soboleva, Nadezhda. "From the History of Soviet Political Symbolism", *Russian Studies in History* 47, 2 (2008): 59-91.
- "Bosnian intellectuals wash their hands of flag 'like soap powder box'", *The Times*, Thursday, February 5, 1998, 14.
- Ćosić, Stjepan – Mate Božić. *Hrvatski grbovi - Geneza, simbolika, povijest*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naknada, 2021.
- "Diskusija članova pozorišta o nacrtu Ustava NR BiH", *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 457, Sarajevo, 19/12/1946, 4.
- Donia, Robert J. "Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austria-Hungary. From occupation to assassination, 1878-1914". In *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, edited by John R. Lampe and Ulf Brunnbauer, 135-143. London – New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Đaković, Luka. *Položaj Bosne i Hercegovine u austrougarskim koncepcijama rješenja jugoslavenskog pitanja 1914-1918*. Tuzla: Univerzal, 1980.
- Filandra, Šaćir. *Bošnjačka politika u XX. stoljeću*. Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998.
- Filipović, Emir O. "Lajos Thallóczy und die bosnische Heraldik". In *Lajos Thallóczy, der Historiker und Politiker*, edited by Dževad Juzbašić and Imre Röss, 89-102. Sarajevo – Budapest: ANU BiH – MTA, 2010.
- Filipović, Emir O. "Trijumfalni slavoluk cara Maksimilijana i bosanska heraldika", *Godišnjak Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja*, 39 (2010): 173-187.
- Filipović, Emir O. "Kako je 'grb Rame' postao 'grb Bosne'". In *Bosanski ban Tvrtko "pod Prozorom u Rami"*, edited by Tomislav Brković, 233-263. Prozor – Sarajevo – Zagreb: Synopsis, 2016.
- Filipović, Emir O. "'Creatio Regni' in the Great Seal of Bosnian King Tvrtko Kotromanić". In *A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, edited by Laura Whatley, 264-276. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2019.
- Filipović, Emir O. "The Most Noble and Royal House of Kotromanić. Constructing Dynastic Identity in Medieval Bosnia", *Südost-Forschungen*, 78 (2019): 34-37 (1-38)
- Göbl, Michael. "The Constant Reformation of the Habsburg-Austrian Coat of Arms from 1740 to the End of the Monarchy Through Times of Political Upheaval", *Genealogica & Heraldica*, 35 (2022), 10-24.
- Hayden, Robert M. "Why political union cannot be imposed by foreign powers – Bosnia: The Contradictions of 'Democracy' without Consent". *East European Constitutional Review*, 7/2 (1998): 47-51.
- Imamović, Enver. "Historička podloga državnih i vojnih obilježja Bosne i Hercegovine sa znakom ljljajana". In *Naučni skup Bosna i Hercegovina prije i nakon ZAVNOBiH-a*, edited by Muhamed Filipović, 201-213. Sarajevo: ANU BiH, 2007.
- Imamović, Enver. *Korijeni Bosne i bosanstva*. Sarajevo: Međunarodni centar za mir, 1995.
- Iurevich Chistiakov, Anton. "Regional Heraldry and Identity. Ethnic Symbolism in the Emblems of the Republics of the Russian Federation", *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia* 51, 4 (2013): 52-62.
- Jareb, Mario. *Hrvatski nacionalni simboli*. Zagreb: Alfa d.d. – Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010.
- Josipović, Duško. "Sadašnji amblemi Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (grb i zastava) sa posebnim osvrtom kako su utvrđeni". *Pravna Misao*, 9-10 (1971): 2-12.
- Kolstø, Pål. "National symbols as signs of unity and division". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, 4 (2006): 676-701.
- Kolstø, Pål. "Nationale Symbole in neuen Staaten Zeichen von Einheit und Spaltung", *Osteuropa* 53, 7 (2003): 995-1014.
- Kraljačić, Tomislav. *Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini 1882-1903*. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1987.
- Mededović, Safer. "Citogenetička istraživanja vrste Liliium bosniacum Beck", *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja n.s. Prirodne nauke*, 15 (1976): 80-90.
- "Nacrt Ustava NR BiH", *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 429, Sarajevo, 15/11/1946, 2.
- Okey, Robin. *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg "Civilizing Mission" in Bosnia, 1878-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Poels, Jos. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *Flagmaster*, 89 (1998): 9-12.
- Popović, Milan – Miloš Jovanović. *Državni amblemi i druge javne oznake u SFRJ*. Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979.
- Rački, Franjo. "Stari grb bosanski". *Rad JAZU – Razredi filološko-historički i filozofsko-jurisdiksi*, 30 (1890): 127-169.
- Sulejmanpašić, Zija. *13. SS divizija Handžar – Istine i laži*. Zagreb: Kulturno društvo Bošnjaka "Preporod", 2000.
- Ströhl, Hugo Gerard. *Österreichisch-ungarische Wappenrolle, nach seiner kaiserlichen und königlichen Apostolischen Majestät grossem Titel*. Wien: Verlag von Anton Schroll & Co., 1890.

Šadinlija, Mesud. "Jedno vještačko poglavlje o zastavi".
Prilozi. Institut za istoriju, 34 (2005): 275-281.

"Zasjedanje Ustavotvornog odbora Ustavotvorne
skupštine NR BiH", *Sarajevski dnevnik*, 450,
Sarajevo, 11/12/1946, 4.

"Zastava Republike Bosne i Hercegovine biće crvena",
Sarajevski dnevnik, 453, Sarajevo, 14/12/1946, 2.

