

# Admir Lisica “Bošnjaci Pred Izazovima Globalnih Političkih Procesa: Političko Stasavanje Jedne Nacije”


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Reviewer: Omer Merzić

The book “Bosniaks Facing the Challenges of Global Political Processes: The Political Maturation of a Nation” provides a synthetic overview of the development of Bosniaks as a nation amidst various historical and societal challenges. Author Admir Lisica explores significant political, social, and cultural events in Bosniak history, focusing particularly on the period from the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and

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Herzegovina to the creation of an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lisica conducts a detailed analysis of different political currents, activities, and attitudes of Bosniak political parties and leaders in various historical contexts, as well as the Bosniaks' relationship with authorities and political circumstances.

The first chapter, "The Bosniak Perception of Austro-Hungarian Occupation," examines how Bosniaks reacted to the arrival of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lisica describes divisions among Bosniaks, portraying how some expressed gratitude to the new monarchy for the unhindered functioning of religious life, while others showed dissatisfaction through protests, boycotting the education system, engaging in armed resistance, and emigration to the slowly dissipating Ottoman Empire.

The second chapter, "Priorities of the Bosniak Autonomy Movement During the Occupation," analyzes the key priorities of the Bosniak autonomy movement, focusing on the role of religious hierarchies and political leaders in the political organization of Bosniaks after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The following chapter, "Bosniak Political Parties and the Issue of the State-Legal Status of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Their Politics," explores the Bosniak political parties' stance on the state organization of BiH during that period. The author examines the role of the Muslim National Organization (MNO) and the Muslim National Party (MNS), as well as their attitude towards the autonomy of BiH within Austro-Hungary.

After this, the fourth chapter, "Bosniak politics at the time of the Annexation Crisis" discusses the events leading up to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary on October 5, 1908. It mentions the preparations made by Austria-Hungary, including support from Russia and Germany, the planning of the Minister Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal and the meeting of Dr. Krass with Bosniak and Serbian politicians in August 1908 to discuss the annexation. The author points out that while some Bosniaks might have welcomed the perceived economic stability

under Austro-Hungarian rule, the annexation was widely condemned by Serbs and many Bosniaks.

The next chapter, "Parliament, the Political Stage" is a prelude to the first serious pluralist political engagement of Bosniaks. While the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908 exacerbated existing divisions among Bosniak politicians, a shared sense of territorial identity remained a unifying factor. Bosniak political demands centered on achieving equal citizenship rights for Bosnian-Herzegovinians, who were viewed as second-class residents compared to their Austrian and Hungarian counterparts. The chapter also showcases the relationship between Bosniaks and the various national policies in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Continuing from that, the sixth and seventh chapters deal with times of unrest. Firstly, the Balkan Wars in chapter "Balkan wars, consolidation of a new course in Bosniak politics" and secondly the First World War in the chapter "The First World War - A Fair of Political Conceptions on the Solution of the State-Legal Status of Bosnia and Herzegovina". In the aftermath of the annexation (1908) and the subsequent Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which saw the Ottoman Empire's defeat by a Balkan alliance, Bosniak political strategy underwent a significant shift. The author highlights a growing reliance on Austria-Hungary for protection against perceived Serbian territorial ambitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This strategic realignment likely involved collaboration with Croats who shared similar concerns. The pre-World War I period witnessed the rise of Šerif Arnautović's influence within the Bosniak political sphere. Lisica suggests that Arnautović's leadership style, characterized by a focus on personal power and deal-making (the personalization of policy), ultimately led to the dissolution of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Assembly.

The text further explores Bosniak anxieties concerning their future within the region. The decline of the Ottoman Empire, a traditional source of support, likely heightened these concerns. Lisica suggests

that Bosniaks actively sought new alliances to safeguard their interests. The author highlights the visit of Dr. Anton Korošec to Sarajevo in 1917 and his meetings with prominent Bosniak figures. These interactions likely played a role in securing Bosniak participation in the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918.

The eight chapter, “Bosniak Politics Between the World Wars” is primarily focused on the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, its leaders, and the role it had in Yugoslavia’s politics as the leader of Bosniaks. Lisica places special emphasis on Mehmed Spaho, the leader of JMO and a minister in the Yugoslavs government. His passing and sudden death in 1939, coinciding with the Cvetković-Maček agreement, left a void in Bosniak political leadership. Criticisms have been leveled at Džafer Kulenović, another prominent Bosniak political figure, for his perceived lack of decisive action during critical moments.

Following this chapter is “Bosniak Anti-Fascism Before the Challenges of the Second World War” in which Lisica follows a segment of the Bosniak elite who actively resisted the fascist ideology and atrocities perpetrated by the Ustasha regime in Croatia. This resistance manifested through the drafting and publishing of Muslim resolutions in major Bosnian cities, including Mostar, Sarajevo, Zenica, Banja Luka, and Tuzla. The author acknowledges the debates held between leaders of the Yugoslav partisan leadership and their perception of Bosniaks as an unequal partner while simultaneously highlighting the Bosniak Muslim elite’s active resistance against fascism.

The tenth chapter, “Life in Socialist Yugoslavia – The New Political Reality of Bosniaks” deals with the situation of Bosniaks in the Socialist Yugoslavia and its emigre factors. The author views that the lack of official recognition of Bosniak national identity by the Yugoslav state motivated some Bosniak emigrants to advocate for this cause on a global stage. The recognition of Bosniaks as a “nation” with a capital ‘M’ in Yugoslavia did occur, but was not without limitations, and the path to full national equality within Yugoslavia remained complex.

In the eleventh and twelfth chapters “The Road to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia” and “Independent, Sovereign and Indivisible – Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” the author follows the event which led to the dissolution of the Socialist Yugoslavia and creation of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rise of nationalism and the gradual deterioration of cooperation among member republics led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and referendum for the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion, the book offers an overview of Bosniak policies and political actions from the end of Ottoman rule up until the 1990s. The author chronologically follows the emergence of a political elite which started to manifest during the Austro-Hungarian times and continued to develop in the inter-War period. Lisica explores the ups and downs which coincided with external factors such as the World Wars and the changes of the political climate and how these factors affected Bosniaks and their leaders. Lisica concludes his book with an analysis of the Yugoslav wars and their effect on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosniaks and thus represents a beneficial addition representing a significant addition to ethnic and national identity discourse..