Abstract

Nineteenth century Bosnia and Herzegovina became the principal early battleground for the clash between absolute Ottoman centralisation and the local Bosniak autonomy, a status that she maintained throughout Ottoman rule and fought to preserve against Ottoman reforms. The decline of the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the various ethno-nationalisms in the Balkans, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina this process was inverted and Bosniaks were never promoted to a separate nation. The development of Bosniak nationality and state were thwarted and forcefully curtailed by both external factors: the ‘reformed’ Ottoman–Turkish Empire and the Great Powers. In their approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina they both maintained totalitarian and autocratic attitudes during which the inability of the Turkish rule to substitute the former Ottoman supremacy over Bosnia was settled by the Europeans – not by giving independence to Bosnia – but by drafting the negotiated agreement that placed Bosnia under Austro–Hungarian supervision. Following the break-up of Yugoslavia and 1992–5 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this mimic was reproduced in the Dayton peace agreement signed in 1995. Tight supervision and brokerage of the international community settled Bosnia as an international protectorate, continuing refusal to incorporate Bosnia and Herzegovina in the contemporary system of nation states.

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1. Introduction

The comprehensive historiography on identity, origins and political position on Bosniaks, an ethnic name for Bosnian Muslims, remain muted. This is despite an explosion of literature following the break-up of Yugoslavia and the 1992–5 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly because of the fact that the analyses stayed copious, nominal and incomplete. This is due to the absence of comprehensive in-depth study of the historiography of Bosniaks, partly caused by unavailability of original documents as well as the lack of Bosnian language translations of primary sources into foreign languages most commonly used in academia. Even the most widely cited reference sources, such as Encyclopaedia Britannica (1987: 1047–57), when discussing former Yugoslavia contained no specific reference to Bosnian Muslims, and they were only marginally mentioned in the section under Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, it is almost unknown that Bosnian Muslims were the major impediment to successful implementation of the Ottoman reforms during the Tanzimat period\(^2\), as well as a sticky European quandary during the rise of ethno-nationalism in the nineteenth century and post-Ottoman territorial carve-up in the Balkans. Both of these have regional and international consequences on contemporary political development of Bosniaks. In this sense, it is not coincidence that the break-up of Yugoslavia turned most violent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that Bosniaks were the principal victims of the war. Rather, these need be observed as a continuation of the nineteenth century ethno-national arrangement for the former ‘Turkey in Europe’ that reserved no place for Islam.

In the nineteenth century Bosnia and Herzegovina became the principal early battleground for the clash between absolute Ottoman centralisation and the local Bosnian autonomy, a status that she maintained throughout Ottoman rule and fought to preserve against Ottoman reforms. The decline of the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the various ethno-nationalisms in the Balkans, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina this process was inverted and Bosniaks were never promoted to a separate nation. Whilst Great Powers, such as Britain, France and Russia encouraged Christian millets to form a concept of a single ethno-national unit carved-up of post-Ottoman territory, the devel-

\(^2\) The Tanzimat period commenced in 1839 with the prorogation of Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayun. It took the roots from the earlier initiated reforms of Lale Devri (Tulip Reforms) 1718–30. The Tanzimat lasted to the prorogation of the first Ottoman Parliament in 1876.
Development of Bosniak nationality and state were thwarted and forcefully curtailed by both external factors: the ‘reformed’ Ottoman–Turkish Empire and the Great Powers. In their approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina they both maintained totalitarian and autocratic attitudes during which the inability of the Turkish rule to substitute the former Ottoman supremacy over Bosnia was settled by the Europeans – not by giving independence to Bosnia – but by drafting the negotiated agreement that placed Bosnia under Austro–Hungarian supervision. The European decision was led by the British and emerged as a result of a defeat the Ottomans suffered at the 1877–8 war against the Russians.

When the enthusiastic Russian army arrived at the outskirts of Istanbul, Yeşil Köy, the Ottoman army surrendered and signed the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. The agreement, which concluded the Russian victory of Russo–Ottoman war, stipulated – amongst other demands – the formation of the separate large Bulgarian state and partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Montenegrin occupation of Herzegovina and Serbian appropriation of Bosnia. However, this treaty conflicted with the interests of Britain, who was anxious to maintain its Indian possessions and remain involved in the Eastern Question³, unleashed her fully equipped ships to the Dardanelles in support of the Ottoman fleet. Lord Derby (1879: 362), the British Premier of the time, was urged to woo the public support explaining the government action:

‘We have in that part of the world great interests which we must protect. ... It is said that we sent the fleet to the Dardanelles to maintain the Turkish Empire. I entirely denied it. We sent fleet to maintain the interests of the British Empire...’

Lord Derby was telling the truth since it was not love and affection for the predicament of the Ottoman Empire that urged Britain to offer a helping hand to the ‘Sick Man’ on his death bed, a name under which the Ottoman Empire became known in the nineteenth century. Enlarged and well strategically positioned the Bulgarian kingdom presupposed penetration of Russian influence.

³ The Eastern Question emerged as a by-product of the decaying Ottoman Empire, the lengthy process that gave birth to the concept of nation state maintained by the European mercantile capitalism. The most concisely accurate definition of Eastern Question was perhaps offered by Anthony Guernsey (1877: 364), who claimed that it consisted of a riddle of how to manage the bounty of the dying ‘Sick Man’, as the Ottoman Empire was often referred to, around whose bedside ‘all the other Powers were watching, each determined that none of the others should gain the greater share in his estates when he died.’ The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca brokered on 21 July 1774 is generally considered as a starting point of Eastern Crisis (Hurewitz (ed), 1956; Anderson (ed), 1970).
The Russians were longing for exit to warm waters and possession of India, a British colonial jewel. To obstruct the Russian ambitions, Britain rejected to acknowledge the Treaty of San Stefano. Moreover, in February 1878 Sultan Abdülhamid II abolished the Ottoman Parliament reinforcing the adoption of his role as a Khalif. This appealed to the Muslim world in the fight against Western imperialism, during which period Indian Muslims formed a considerable part and were watchful of the Sultan’s moves. This alarmed the British, who annulled the Treaty of San Stefano, and, inadvertently, preserved Bosnia and Herzegovina. In July 1878, declining the invitation to the Sultan to participate (Goodwin, 1999: 312), great powers led by the British signed the new agreement that became known as the Treaty of Berlin. Abdülhamid II placed a great emphasis upon his status as a Muslim ruler, and in this respect he departed from the practice of his Tanzimat Ministers, and three of his Tanzimat-orientated Sultan predecessors, who all had sought to play down the Muslim exclusiveness in favour of a newer doctrine of ‘Turkish–Ottomanism’, which they hastily swapped for ‘Turkishness’ immediately after the Revolution. Rather than advancing interest of the Islamic state that embodied the ethos of the Ottoman Empire, westernised and secular Tanzimat Ministers endorsed the Treaty of Berlin, in which Ottoman Empire literally lost almost all of its territory in Europe and the Black Sea Region. Not only that, they also agreed to the costly treaty as the Ottoman Empire was bound to pay 60 million roubles of war compensation to Russia (Seyrek, 2000: 184) that added further burden to already bankrupted and heavily indebted Ottoman economy. The verdict coincided with the British and French timely colonial invasions of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. To celebrate the occasion, the British Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield, purchased the Suez Canal shares and proclaimed Queen Victoria an Empress of India (An Old Diplomats, 1878: 392).

As with the post-Ottoman territory in the Balkans, the Great Powers such as Britain, France, Russia and Prussia carved it up in accordance to their whims and interests. They granted separate nations and independence, albeit to remain under Great Power’s diplomatic supervision, to all the newly emerged Slav states; except one – Bosnia and Herzegovina. Great Powers agreed with Turkish

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4 As soon as the Young Turks came to power in 1908, they confounded civic and ethnic definitions of the Turkish nation: every citizen of the Empire, irrespective of his or her ethnic background, was declared to be a Turk, only later in the aftermath of the formation of the Republic in 1923 all to be told that they were in fact the descendants of Turkish tribesmen that had come from Central Asia (Bruinessen, 2000).
Tanzimat Ministers that Bosnia and Herzegovina is to lose almost half of its territory and the major port. In addition, they left her status politically undefined and she was given to Austro–Hungary to administer.

Since that time the complex web of international Realpolitik was a decisive factor in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s fight for its national recognition. She managed to achieve it during the formation of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1943 when she was awarded the status of a republic and became constitutionally equal to all of the other five republics of former Yugoslavia. However, this resolution for Bosnia was only temporary. The war of the 1990s brought the question of the Bosnian nation state anew, placing Bosnia at the centre on international political interests. The internationally brokered Dayton peace agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina reproduced similar settlement as that of the Berlin Treaty of 1878. The Dayton Accords signed in 1995 dismantled the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and she became the only one of the six former Yugoslav republics to end as an international protectorate.\(^5\) The Bosnian constitution, a dowry from the Yugoslav period, was annulled even though it was identical to the constitutions of all the other republics – which were allowed to preserve theirs.

Following the Dayton Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina is run by a whole array of ‘international community’ institutions that jointly refer to themselves as the Peace Implementation Council, which consists of 55 countries and agencies as well as a fluctuating number of observers.\(^6\) The Office of High Representative (OHR) was created and granted ‘final authority in theatre’ (ICG, 2011: 2) regarding civilian implementation of Dayton.\(^7\) The status of the international protectorate reopened the question of the identity of Bosnian Muslims and their place in Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina remained an unresolved national issue for the Europeans; Ottoman–Turkish heritage for the Turks, whilst for Bosniaks the national recognition persisted as a part of the ideology they are still fighting for. Bosnia and Herzegovina was not recognised as a separate nation state during the

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\(^5\) After Yugoslavia fell apart, four of the five former republics became sovereign nation states. Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was also one of the republics, became an international protectorate. Kosovo lived the same fate, but Kosovo is different as it was never a republic but an autonomous province.

\(^6\) For a full list of the PIC countries, organizations and observers refer to the Office of the High Representative (OHR) website http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content_id=38563, [Accessed on 01.11.2009].

\(^7\) The US was adamant that the office must have no say in military matters.
nation-building bonanza of the nineteenth century, nor was it endorsed as a sovereign nation state following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. This article offers a contribution of historical context to understanding the 1992–5 war and settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a continuation of an inverted principle of nation and state building that was adopted towards Bosnia during the promulgation of the nineteenth century ethno-nationalism in Europe.

2. Bosniaks between Ottomans and Tanzimat Reformers

Bosna Vilayet-i (Bosnian Province) was never a classical colony of the Ottoman Empire (Smajlović, 1991: 29). When the Ottomans eventually conquered Bosnia in 1463, though some parts were not to succumb until 1528, Sultan Fatih Mehmed II granted Bosnia and Herzegovina unprecedented autonomy because of en masse voluntary acceptance of Islam on the part of Bosnian Bogumils, who remain subject to pondering analysis in relation to their ethnic origins and religious practices. The Sultan’s grace stemmed from having fulfilled his worldly duty of spreading and preserving Islam, a mission he successfully accomplished by establishing deep roots of the faith in a conquered province. The Bosniaks replied to the gesture with loyalty, reliably equipping the Empire with the most able military and political men. In turn, Bosniaks were ordained to enjoy a ‘de facto autonomy’ (Glenny, 2000: 74). In this regard, it had a very particular administration different from any other region within the Ottoman Empire. It was ruled by a council of âyans (local representatives) rather than having a direct decree from the Porte. Its peculiar position even conditioned the Imperial Court to change and adapt its laws and regulations in relation to the governance of the provinces so as to suit and fully incorporate the Bosnian reality on the field into the Empire (Zulfirkarapašić, 1995). For example, a local leader of Bosna Vilayeti was the only province leader

8 Bosnian Bogumils were adherent of the Bosnian medieval religion called Bogumilism, which was very established in Bosnia and almost all of its rulers were Bogumils. Both Catholic and Orthodox Churches considered Bogumils as heretics, for which reason Bosnia was continuously raided by Papal crusades during thirteen and fourteen centuries. To protect themselves they generally lived as crypto-Christians (Klaić, 1971; Vilar, 2007), and thus academic sources argued that Bogumils were a deviation or a certain form of Christianity and were often referred in literature as the Bosnian Church. The following scholars considered Bogumils a form of Christianity, making special reference to the Orthodox Church: Leon Petrović (1953), Jaroslav Šidak (1969), Vaso Glušac (1992), Dragoljub Dragoljović (1987), John Fine (2007), Noel Malcolm (1994) and Dubravko Lovenović (2006). Some scholars argued in favour of Manichaean and Paulician nature of the Bosnia Bogumils such as Franjo Rački (2003), Ivo Pilar (1927), Dominik Mandić (1973), Sima Ćirković (1964), Vladimir Ćorović (1930), Aleksandar Solovjev (1948), Miroslav Brandt (1989) and Franjo Šanjek (1975). A group of scholars took them to represent early Protestants, especially in the second part of the nineteenth century following the Ottoman withdrawal from the Balkans (Brockett, 1870; Evans, 1877). However, Imamović (2001) asserted that Bogumils were associated with Islam since the second Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab (592–644), when a delegation of Balkan Bogumil elders pledged allegiance to him. As both (1896), Arnold (2005) and Jalimam (2002) also examined symbiosis between Bogumils and Islam claiming that there were fundamentally common features between the two. The debates remain inconclusive and Bogumils continued to be the most contested issue in the historiography of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is especially relevant for the identity issue of Bosnian Muslims because they consider themselves heirs to Bogumils.
in the region who was not answerable to the Grand Vizier of Rumelia (the Balkans), but was obliged to report directly to the Sultan. When Bosniaks boycotted or challenged a decree from the Porte their representatives were invited personally by the Sultan to come to Istanbul for negotiations. At the talks, the Sultan himself was present whereas in other rebellious parts, like Albania, the negotiations were done through the Grand Vizier, or rather his large army would be sent to quench the rebellion. This is not to say that the entire relationship between Bosniaks and the Ottomans was without its problems. Cerić (1968) states that between 1621 and 1824 there were 27 open conflicts between Bosniaks and the Sultan’s armies in the so called ‘anti-Viziers’ rebellions. Nevertheless, each time the delegation would be sent away to the Porte and, usually, the Sultan would grant Bosniaks’ requests, which would mainly concern preserving the autonomy of Bosnia and keeping autonomous prerogatives of Bosniaks. The rationale for cherishing shared relations was that both were united through Islam which compelled them to preserve mutual interests. But there were differences in perceptions: whilst for Ottomans it meant safeguarding borders of the Empire by maintaining the balance of power in the conquered province, for Bosniaks the fundamental impact was to sustain identity for themselves and their community. In other words, if Bosnia and Herzegovina was attacked the defence is not to preserve the Empire and faith but to protect their lives and the lives of their families.

That is why, when the 1826 reforms initiated by the Tanzimatçilar curtailed the autonomy of Bosnia and Herzegovina introducing a considerably centralised and weaker army due to the abolition of the janissaries, Bosniaks bitterly opposed the reforms and initiated the longest resistance the Empire ever sustained from any of its subjects. The previously known ‘Anti-Vizier rebellions’ transformed into fully fledged wars and constituted the longest political and military battle within the entire Empire. The Bosniaks detested the reforms and the resentment between the Bosniaks and the Tanzimatçilar was deep and uncompromising. Glenny (2000: 73) has outlined the bitterness felt towards the reforms:

‘Men of the Tanzimat, attempted to reconcile economic change with the reform of the millet. The experiment was doomed to heroic failure. Nowhere was the problem they addressed more acute than in the vilayets of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By the early nineteenth century, chronic poverty, strained social relations, arbitrary official cruelty and bitter resentment towards Istanbul flowed through the Ottoman Empire like poisoned
blood, but no other province could match Bosnia and Herzegovina for the severity of its symptoms.’

The Bosnian âyans were determined to reject the reforms because they observed them as a foreign imposition leading to an erosion of their own right to their own land that for centuries belonged to their ancestors. Sućeska (1995: 33) has summarised that Bosniaks considered reforms:

‘directed not only against their own privileges but against the fundamental principles of the Islamic faith as well as the vital interests of the Ottoman state, especially against the interests of Bosnia.’

The battle between Bosniaks and Tanzimat Ministers was bitter and uncompromising as was the affection and zeal between Ottomans and Bosniaks.

3. Europeans and Bosniaks

Europeans, for their part, misunderstood the Bosniaks’ protection of their lives, faith and land to signify the unconditional devotion to the Ottoman masters. Consequently, when Bosniaks refused to adopt the reforms Tanzimatçılar introduced to terms winsome to Europeans, these immediately classed Bosniaks as unruly and disobedient Muslim subjects of the Empire as it will be further illustrated in the original nineteenth century reports from the region. For Europeans, the Bogumils’ voluntary embracement of Islam and subsequent piety came ‘in consequence of very particular circumstances that seem to have been frequently overlooked that all of Bosnia became Mahommedan, and is still in the hands of Moslemin’ (Fraser Magazine, 1876: 226). The author was referring to the arrival of the Sufi Sheikh of Mevlevi Tariqat (order) with Mehmet Fatih’s army at the foot of Igman mountain near Hodidjed, today’s Sarajevo, during which time the last Bogumil Djed (Elder) presented him with his holy stick (Imamović, 2001). Malkić (2009: 220) stated that this holy stick was preserved for over 500 years in the Mevlevi Tekke in Sarajevo, but vanished when the Tekke was demolished in 1958. Moreover, another Bogumil Djed, Ayvaz Dedo, openly and collectively with his Bogumil followers submitted to Islam some 600 years ago before the Ottoman Sultan Fatih the Conqueror at the Mount Ayvatovica. Up to the present day the shrine of Ayvatovica Mount has preserved a special place in the Bosniaks’ spiritual life, religious symbolism and closeness to God.
The Bogumils’ unconditional acceptance of Islam had been puzzling European scholars and explorers ever since it was discovered that Bosnia and Herzegovina is populated by an indigenous Muslim population. Evans (1877: 89) was stunned by ‘familiar sights of Asia and Africa reproduced in a new world’ he found in the province of European Turkey called Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although Oriental in their appearance and customs, the Arabic and Persian were unknown languages to Bosnian Muslims as ‘the Bosnian oligarchy speaks nothing but Slave, and [they] are not remarkable for any deep knowledge of the Koran (Freeman, 1876: 75). The rationale for adoration and piety to Islam on the part of Bosnian Muslims was thus underpinned by the critique of imperialistic malaise:

‘Europe has mainly to thank the Church of Rome that an alien civilisation and religion has been thrust in their midst, and that Bosnia at the present remains Mahometan’ (Evans, 1877: iv).

Even though the imperialistic rivalry was the dominant context, the rejection of Islam was unquestionable. Owning to the Islamic presence Bosnia was ‘the most barbarous of the provinces of Turkey-in-Europe, standing savage and oriental in between Adriatic shores and more advancing cultures of Serbia and Croatia’ (Irby, 1875: 643). Geographically speaking Bosnia was in Europe, but it was its cultural orientalism that distanced it from a wider European subconscious (Said, 1978).

Within the European cultural memory Bosnian Muslims had a reputation of ‘Mohammedan fanatics’ (Irby, 1875: 643) and were reported to have perpetuated the unjust Islamic rule. Bosnia and Herzegovina was imprinted in the European collective subconscious as the remote westernmost border of Turkey in Europe that at the slightest sign of the Ottoman weakness Bosnia was the first to attack, ravage and redeem from Mohammedan oppression. The Bosnian degree of fanaticism was variably described in literature, diplomatic correspondence and other documents to range from mild such as ‘the Mohammedans of the Slavonic origin, who make up two thirds of the population and are as devoted Mussulmans as are the Osmanlis themselves’ (Guernsey, 1877: 62); ‘It is said that the Bosnian Muslims are the greatest fanatics of all the Muslims who have ever lived within the borders of the Ottoman Empire’ (Strausz, 1884, cited in Godišnjak, 2006: 358); to the most pernicious sort of loathed Mohammedans who rule over their Christian subjects with sheer force, oppression and persecution so that ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina have given him notice to quit
and from them he must go at once’ (Freeman, 1876: 78). It was more than four centuries ago in Bosnia and Herzegovina proper that Christian subjects ‘were first drowned in the flood of Mahometanism’ whose Bosnian greedy renegades ‘cling with furious determination to every privilege and power conferred on them in former times by a religion which treats all but Mahometans as the enemies of God and man, fit only for slavery and abuse’ (The Living Age, April–June 1876: 389).

Greediness and concern for keeping their privileges was commonly presented as the main reason why Bosniaks accepted Islam en masse. The argument most frequently used was that the bulk of Bosnian landowners apostatized in order to keep their wealth whilst the great majority of the population remained faithful. That explanation became a part of common historical accounts and very much persists nowadays, where contemporary historians in great majority maintain this socio-economic hypothesis as a bona fide cause for the mass conversion on the part of Bosnian population. The fact that this hypothesis failed to account for the spiritual side of embracing Islam and, above all, its failure to explain why Islam had continued to flourish in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even when Muslims became subjects to persecution and killings, has remained frequently overlooked.

The analysis of Islamisation of Bosnia is particularly important for the discussion on national identity of Bosniaks, who were continuously regarded as interlopers in the region. This argument gains more significance in the light of Bosniaks being the only Muslim community of the former ‘European Turkey’ that did not succeed in gaining nation-state status but also rejected nationalisation by any other emerged nation state in the nineteenth century. Refusing being incorporated into a dominant nationhood, but simultaneously being denied a modern ethno-nation of their own, left the Bosniaks abandoned in a no man’s land. For this reason, they were often labelled as a remaining Muslim–Turkish heirloom, adherents of an ‘imported religion’, ready to be ‘exported back’ when the time is ripe. Islam was a religion considered as a ‘late comer’ to Bosnia and the Balkans in general and, thus, not indigenous to the region. However, historical evidence testifies that amongst the great majority of South Slavs the appearance of Christianity was not older then the appearance of Islam (Hadžijahić et al., 1977; Balić, 1995; Ibrahimi, 2008). Nevertheless examination of the primary sources, this analysis remained confined mainly to the Bosnian language litera-
ture and ignored for the major part, never accepting Islam as an ‘equal’ inhabitant of the Balkans. The immediate consequence of this perception led to the conclusion that the Bosnian landowners turned into Muslim nobility acquiring the right to rule over the country subjugating a large proportion of Christian subjects. This was used as justification for the expulsions, persecutions and killing of Muslims during the ethno-national upraise of the Christian Millet at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The greatest massacres of Muslims were committed when the administrative system employed by the Ottomans, which was based on the Islamic principle of self-administered religious communities known as millet system [Arabic millah], was transformed into ethno-national units based on the European model of nation states.

The nineteenth century Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, was also known to the European explorers as the province of ‘European Turkey’ which formed ‘the most fertile plains of Europe, the most luxuriant crops and the hottest human blood’ (Norman, 1896: 64). Bosnian luxurious plum-crops were famed for their excellent quality and dried to perfection ‘in the secret art only known to themselves’ (J.R.J, 1876: 640).

Travelling through Bosnia in search of an answer to the everlasting Eastern Question, Norman (1896: 676) further sympathetically observed that ‘the country itself is Norwego–Tyrolean... and some day it will be as fashionable and as familiar as Switzerland.’

Indeed, throughout history the natural resources and raw materials of Bosnia attracted many settlers. The most important natural mineral and a potential source of lucrative profits was salt. The

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9 The author observed: ‘The plums after being gathered, are mostly dried in the forms of prunes, the secret of the Bosnian plums are considered of a better quality then those either from Servia, Croatia or Austria’. For more see J.R.J. (1876). The plums apart for being used in general culinary were mainly distilled in a spirit, or plum brandy known in the region as ‘Slivovitz’. The art of making Slivovitz has been preserved to the present day and is commonly made by all populations, be it Catholics, Orthodox or Muslims.

10 Based on Malcom’s (1994: 24) findings, as early as the thirteenth century German Saxon miners from Hungary and Transylvania came to Bosnia to exploit minerals such as gold, silver and lead. The little town of Olovo, which means ‘lead/plumb’, got and retained its name to the presented day by the rich plumb mineral resources. Olovo is situated some 50 kilometres from Sarajevo. It is also famous for its water with thermal properties and even nowadays it has thermal spas with healing properties. However, the greatest source of wealth in Bosnia was silver by which name Argentaria or Srebrenica has been recorded in history since the Roman times. In the medieval Bosnian state Srebrenica was a major commercial centre with the large Ragusan colony. Coins were minted from silver and gold at that time so it is easy to imagine the precious value of the places that naturally produced it. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a number of Franciscan monasteries clustered around Srebrenica region, who bestowed it a name Bosnia Argentina (‘Silver Bosnia’ or ‘Bosna Srebrna’). The monasteries were built by Franciscan monks who, like their predecessors, Dominicans, were sent by the Pope to exterminate the heresy of the Bosnian Bogumils. The Franciscans were the only functioning Catholic clergy at the time that managed to maintain its influence in Bosnia and to preserve it to the present day. The motives that
supply of salt in the nineteenth century Europe was scarce; it was only to be found in Venetia, to some extent Ragusa or shipped to the Central and Northern European regions from Sicily (Basakar, 2000: 10–11). The salt must have been so precious that even in the common folk culture salt smugglers and illegal salt transporters found their way as popular heroes. By contrast to the region, the town of Tuzla in the North–East region of Bosnia was abundant in salt reserves. The town had derived its name from the rich salt-pans as ‘tuz’ means ‘salt’ in Turkish language.

The industrial development of the imperial Europe demanded new sources for industrial development and in the nineteenth century they were timber and iron, both of which were present in Bosnia and Herzegovina in large quantities and good quality (Glenny, 2000: 74). The reforms instigated by the Tanzimatçılar were warmly welcomed by the Great Powers since they only granted concessions to extract minerals and cut timber to foreign companies forbidding any domestic business activity in this direction. Thus, English companies were working on the mines of copper and iron, obtainable ‘not only in large quantities but also of excellent quality’ with the best Bosnian iron being equal to that of Sweden, whereas cutting timber proved ‘a source of wealth to many Austrians and Frenchmen who have embarked in it’ (JRI, 1876: 640).

helped in their stamina were, perhaps, a choice to settle around the rich sources of wealth, as well as safe proximity to the faithful to the Pope as those settlers from Ragusa and Saxony were at the time. Handzić (1992–3) has undertaken a large study on the Franciscan monasteries across Bosnia and Herzegovina and he states that in the period between years 1340 and 1463 the Franciscans managed to build 17 monasteries. In his findings it transpires that many of them were clustered around rich mines like, for example, a rich silver mine in Fojnica, a small town placed at the outskirts of Sarajevo. For that monastery he says that in the year 1468 – when the town of Fojnica fell under the Ottoman rule – it had a Franciscan monastery and more than 300 tax-paying Christian households attached to it (see also Handzić, 1997).

This was mainly due to the French continental blockade of Britain, for which reason the salt remained a source of high revenue and subject to heavy taxation and tight licensing laws. See Kurlansky (2003: 232).

Most notable of ‘salt heroes’ folk tales was, perhaps, a peasant story of Martin Karpan, whose witty trickery over the Habsburg Emperor, glorified him into a mythological icon, which later became the most important component of nation-building literature that was transmitted in Slovenia. Interestingly, even nowadays the trademark of ‘Martin Kaplan’ salt is to be found on the shelves of the supermarkets in Slovenia, although in reality it is not a Slovenian salt but a rock salt imported from Slovakia. For a detailed discussion on the importance of salt see Baskar (2000).

In Serbia, by comparison, according to the accounts of Kanitz (1872: 228), who explored Serbia between years 1859 and 1868, ‘the most necessary mineral of all, common salt, is totally wanting: the whole country has been geologically explored by competent persons at various times in search of salt, but hitherto in vain.’ The lack of salt supply in Serbia was a matter of international geo-strategic concern and it had much wider implications than it was immediately apparent. To ensure the supply of salt Serbia had the salt treaty with Austria, which to a certain extent made it dependent on Austria and its policy. This became especially important when at the Berlin Congress in 1878 Serbia became an independent state and Bosnia and Herzegovina was placed under Austro–Hungarian administration. The salt treaty, in this effect, served as a safeguard against deeper Russian influence in the Balkans by keeping Serbia under control and blocking further Russian penetration towards which Serbia was naturally more inclined. For more on the Serbian salt treaty with Austria see Fraser Magazine (1872: 228).
In the consequences of the conferred entrepreneurial prerogatives, the Europeans gratefully adjusted the way they were reporting on the Ottomans, whom they frequently started referring to as Turks and whom they commenced representing as a separate group within the Muslim world:

‘Unlike the Saracens or Arabs the Turks from the beginning, were the most tolerant of human beings. They never practised that fanaticism which compelled conquered Christians to adopt their creed or perish by the sword, as is popularly stated. On the contrary they allowed the largest liberty and treated non-conformity in religion with an indifference worthy of (a) French philosopher or an American citizen’ (De Leon, 1872: 606).

The aim of the revised tone of the travelogues and correspondence was to redeem the image of the Sick Man so that nascent Turkish nationalism would be: (a) separated from other nascent Muslim–Arab nationalisms; and (b) legitimately accepted in the emerging ethno-liberal geopolitical structure of the New Enlightened Europe void of multicultural empires and comprised of the homogenised system of nation states. The strategy of amicable reporting on Turks was in particular important since the renewed Turkish nation would become a homeland of many expelled Muslims from European and Central Asian lands Ottomans lost to the Great Powers throughout Eastern Crisis. Legitimate Muslim–Turkish nationalism would host and subsequently assimilate incoming Muslim population. The Europeans in effect returned the courtesy towards the Tanzimatçılar – who would first transform themselves into the Party of Union and Progress, and later into Young Turks movement – since Tanzimatçılar were administering reforms under whatever terms the Great Powers came up with, as well as supervising expedient Ottoman withdrawal from the territories to be occupied by Great Powers or their newly born client nation states. An illustrative useful example of the symbiosis of the Great Powers and Tanzimatçılar, came from a ‘sympathetic writer’, who was reporting on Turkish withdrawal from the battlefield through the lost Bulgarian territory. The author asked his readership to be regarded as ‘an accurate witness’ because he believed that he had a ‘faculty of keen observation’ and none of the ‘conscious prejudice, except in a favour of a good fighting man’ so as to his account of the astonishing Turkish tolerance can be fully trusted:

‘I have said that the Turks are barbarians and that they are ruthless savages when their fighting blood is up; but there is no inconsistency between this attribute and the attribute of the contemptuous good-natured humanity, or rather perhaps tolerant ingressiveness, when nothing has occurred to stir the pulse of the savage spirit’ (Forbes, 1877: 643, 650).
But these reports also operated on a geostrategic level of imperial rivalry creating various spheres of influence and ensuring supremacy of one over the other. Analyzing the tone of the discursive strategies deployed in literary works in English language Hopkirk (1992: 361) concluded that it was ‘Russophobo–Turcophile’, whereby it was elevating Turks and demonizing Russia, due to the fact that it had a defined agenda of curtailing Russian expansionism during the Eastern Crisis. The following quotation is a fine example of the adjusted and transmitted narrative that retains Islamophobic continuity, but through more measured intonation offers an altered view on Turks:

‘I feel thankfully indebted to the Porte. And I do not, like many other people, consider gratitude to be a burden, but to be a dear obligation. I learned to esteem highly the noble personalities of the Turkish national character..... it does not follow that Europe is in love with the Turks, but only that it abhors the increase of the Russian preponderance’ (Kossuth, 1878: 94).

Concurrent to the increasing popularity of writing and publishing accounts of imperial adventure and travel accounts was a growing reading audience who was receptive towards the propaganda for pro-imperialist political views. This is an important factor in understanding the relationship between literary authorship and political stage. As demonstrated above, foreign affairs were closely followed by a vast number of ‘explorers’, writers, essayists and Western intelligentsia and espionage. As the diplomatic efforts of the time were taking a different course so did the language of the reports and travelogues from the region adjusting itself in accordance with the political atmosphere. Their impact on the lack of national recognition of Bosniaks is dealt with in the following section.

4. Inverted Principle of Bosniak Nationhood

Nineteenth century literary works represented a political statement concurring with the New Imperialism emerged from aggressive territorial aggrandisements during the larger period of Eastern Crisis. Moreover, popularity of the adventure and travel accounts overlapped with the increased reading audience which not only found this genre highly amusing, but was also expanding beyond class boundaries from the 1860s onwards across Europe. This was specifically true of trends in Britain, from which the largest numbers of travelogues originated. Altick (1957) argued that the

New Imperialism refers to the period of aggressive territorial acquisition by European imperial powers roughly between early 1870’s and World War I. For detailed accounts of New Imperialism, see Cohen (1973), and Smith (1982).
emergence and growing of a mass reading audience in Britain from the 1870’s onwards was a result of concurrent technological, social, economic and political developments. Therefore, in effect, this vein of travel writing also functioned as a channel of propaganda for pro-imperialist political views (Akilli, 2009). In this respect, Frye (1990: xiii) observed and summarised that the central role of literature is to preserve imagination, extend mythology and retain its continuity in the popular consciousness:

‘The central structural principles [is] that literature derives from myth, the principles that give literature its communicating power across the centuries through all ideological changes. Such structural principles are certainly conditioned by social and historical factors and do not transcend them, but they retain a continuity of form that points to an identity of the literary organism distinct from all its adaptations to its social environment.’

In regard of shaping public opinion and influencing formulation of foreign policy, this shift in sentiments towards Turks on the part of Europeans was significant for Bosnian Muslims in two ways. Firstly, encouraged by the pro-Europeans reforms the Europeans embarked on a salvation crusade in order to reclaim back Bosnia from Islam. Evans (2007: 34), a missionary explorer assigned to Bosnia and Herzegovina on a fact-finding mission, noted that Slavonic Mohammedans, as Bosniaks were often referred to, were not opposed to re-converting to the faith of their fore-fathers. Whilst travelling through Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1877 and 1878, Evans (ibid) wrote in his Illyrian Letters:

‘An active leader among the Begs answered as follows the question whether he would imitate some of his associates, who were already receiving baptism from Bishop Strossmeyer and his priests: “Not yet, but when the time comes and the hour of fate strikes, I will do so in another style. I will call together my kinsmen, and we will return to the faith of our ancestors as one man. We would choose to be Protestants, as are you English; but if need be, we will join the Serbian Church. Latin we will never be. If we go into a Roman church, what do we understand?”’

The subject of re-Christianisation was dealt with anachronistically, creating a historicised image of opportunistic Bosniaks who notoriously accepted Islam to preserve property in the first place. Adelina Irby (1875: 646) after years of residing amongst ‘Slavonic Mussulmans’ could speak from personal experience about the Bosnian begs ‘who are not indisposed to embrace Christianity professed by their forefathers, and they preserve with care patents of nobility of their Christian an-
Irby was a Norfolk born schoolmistress who spent most of her adult life in Sarajevo with the aim to enlighten local Christian population by virtue of founding a school for Orthodox girls, which she did successfully in 1869. She first travelled to the Balkan region in 1867 with her friend Georgina Mackenzie. The visit was perpetuated in the book subsequently published in London under the title *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*. This travelogue is a detailed report of their journey during which they obtained a fully fledged account of the habits of the peoples in the Balkans. The general feature of the entire work was that it had an extremely Islamophobic tone. For example Muslims were described as savage illiterates; by contrast, Christian schools were run by a ‘remarkable Serb, Mother Katarena, as the subject of education, indeed, actively concerns all the Christian Slavs’ and not Muslims; next they met with scary Muhamedan tax-gatherers; they further offered full description of the ruins of the Church converted into a mosque which ‘stones still bear the sign of the cross’ where Slav Muslims ‘tolerate accumulated filth of one sort or another, under windows, under divans, in short everywhere’ (Irby, 1875: 303, 305, 306). The book was endorsed by British Prime Minister of the time, William Gladstone, who wrote a foreword for it. This formal authorization serves as a convincing symbiosis of the travel writing and reiteration of political views through it. It further lends support to the claim of anti-Muslim propaganda that had an aim to purge Europe of Islamic presence through the establishment of a New Enlightened Europe, in which expelled Muslims would find their homeland in the redeemed Turkish nation. Tanzimat Ministers supported the plan to substitute ‘Turkishness’ for Islam which was, indeed, their ultimate aim of the Enlightenment project for ‘Turkey in Europe’. For this reason they deliberately maintained the ambiguity between the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Turkish’, with the intent to ‘Turkificate’ Bosniaks. They favoured the migrations as an extended tool of ‘Turkification’ offering to transport Bosniaks by boats from Salonika. To this testifies a widely circulated and quoted memorandum from şehbender (consul) in Ragusa (Dubrovnik). The memoran-

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15 Irby’s character is significant in a contemporary way too because a street in the center of city of Sarajevo still bears her name. Even when the so-called Bosniak-Islamist government got the control over the city government they have not changed it even though they have changed almost all the others, especially those from the Yugoslav times. Logic counsels that to discard Irby’s name from the street would have been a natural course of action for Islamists due to her notorious anti-Islamic views. This seemingly small and overlooked lapse is important on two levels: on the overall note, it purports to the claim that only presence of Islam in itself is not a satisfactory explanation for the break-up of Yugoslavia and subsequent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the more immediate impact, it serves as a convincing evidence of the participation of Islam in the establishment of New Enlightened Europe in the nineteenth century – one which continues until today, manifesting itself through synthesis of Neo-Liberals and Islamists.
dum served as a foreign policy document in the Ottoman cabinet to formulate its final views on migration from Bosnia, wherein it was suggested to intensify the migrations of Bosniaks as a tool to increase the Muslim population and counterbalance the ratio of Armenians and Greeks inhabitants in the Ottoman lands (Bosna-Hersekg Belgeleri, 1901: 168–81). The Tanzimat Ministers prepared for the large influx of the Muslim refugees by establishing Muhacirin-i İslamiyye Komisyonu Alisi (The High Commission of Muslim Immigrants) that was set up to resettle the Muslim, who started pouring into the Ottoman Empire in large numbers to escape pogroms from the newly formed Christian nation states.

European reports and Tanzimat migration policies were generated at the time of national awakening in the Balkans and border drawing for emerging Balkan nation states, as well as during the embryonic stages of nascent Turkish nationalism. The task of the European reports was to blend historical, anthropological, military and political perspectives setting the framework to explore ideas in case of revolution or forthcoming revolts, for which Christian population was cordially psychologically prepared and militarily equipped, whether ‘such men [Bosniaks] may turn back again as easily as their forefathers turned in the first instance’ (Irby, 1875: 75). In other words, they were assessing the significance of the Islamic component for the Bosniaks’ ethnic identity and probability of their Christianisation. Since Bosniaks refused the latter, they became subject to harsh persecutions and slaughter (Mušovič, 1992: 104; Memić, 1996: 165–6). The Muslim minority in a Christian state was neither allowed nor tolerated, nor were there any specific laws that would insure Muslim safety once a new nation state is formed out of the former Ottoman lands (Ekmečić 1996: 254). This European practice of the time served Tanzimatçılar and they further encouraged Bosniaks’ emigrations to Turkey. Focusing on the oppressive policies of newly independent neighbouring countries rather than Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, they concluded that emigration was the only solution and it was a religious and human duty to help Bosnian Muslims to emigrate ( Başvekalet Archives, 1894). Tanzimatçılar were appalled by the Islamic interpretations used by the Bosnian Ulema (religious scholars) who were advising against emigration by citing the Hadith attributed to the Prophet: ‘the love of fatherland is a part of true adherence to the faith.’ They recommended to the Cabinet that Islamic scholars of the Porte write up the ‘real’ meanings of the Sunna and Hadith and distribute them to Bosnia so that migrations could be resumed. Paradoxically, the Young Ottoman writer, Namik Kemal, had begun to popularize the same Hadith: Hubb al-
**Watan, min al-Iman** [Love of the Homeland is the love of the faith]. Thus, the battle against Bosniaks over the accurate interpretations of the verses in the Qur’an and the Sunna on the migrations, Tanzimatçılar nested within the protection of narrow ‘national’ interests.

Second, and consequent implication, came at the time when it became apparent that neither Christianisation of Bosnian Muslims nor emigration from their land for the great part was possible. For this reason Bosniaks were assigned the image of unruly Muslims. It was an intentional misunderstanding and deliberate mismatch of traditional Bosnian tolerance emerged from hundreds of years of common life and intermingling of different faiths with the inclination towards apostatising and resistance to emigration. They were proclaimed disruptive and rebellious ‘large Muslim element [that] represents a great difficulty’ (Irby, 1875: 647) which ‘although very fanatical, very hostile to the Stmboul government’ (Godkin, 1877: 124.) This in effect represented an admonition for the resistance to the reforms which **Tanzimatçılar** incorporated to the conditions suitable to the European Great Powers. But more importantly, perhaps, it had a role of clear demarcation between insubordinate Bosnian Muslims on the one hand, and cooperative Turkish Muslims on the other. Due to the demonstrated disobedience, Bosniaks were proclaimed as ‘immediate oppressors’ over the people of their own race, and their image of a savage brutal was separated and demoted below that of Turks as Bosniaks were not ‘Turk by blood but artificially turned Turk’, a sad peculiarity that made matters worse and less respectful:

‘A foreign conqueror may command a certain kind of respect which a native renegade certainly cannot. In some cases it is a certain softening of tyranny when one’s tyrants are one’s countrymen; but that rule can hardly apply to the dominion of such a caste as this’ (Freeman, 1876: 75, my italics).

Bosniaks were not integrated in the European system of nation states but remained confined to the demonized figures of ‘fanatic Mussulmans’, who are still venerating Christian patron saints and who ‘nourish blind and savage hatred against their Christian fellow-countryman (Irby, 1875: 646):

‘This hatred finds vent in quiet times in many hidden acts of cruelty. At the present moment of licensed insult and revenge, we read of Christians being impaled, flayed alive and cruelties of the worst ages being committed on helpless women and children.’
It was the ‘oriental other’, a euphemism for Islam and Muslims that Bosniaks were corrupted with and should be mistrusted at all levels. The Islamic component influenced the way Bosniaks saw themselves and the way their immediate neighbours perceived them. It was internalization of Islam in the remote European province of the Ottoman Empire that influenced ‘Bosniaks’ most developed sense of their own national identity in the entire Empire’ (Glenny, 2001: 77). The distinguished sense of self-identity emerged from an unusual peculiarity for the inhabitants of Europe at the time: Bosniaks shared the religion with the Ottomans from whom they were separated by the language, which they shared with their Christian brethren alongside culture and to some extent tradition. Still, Bosniaks did not consider themselves a trustworthy partner of their Euro–Christian fellow-countryman, but the only devoted European ally of the ‘Commander of Faithfull’ with whom Islam was the main unifying power.

Consequently, when the Turkish Tanzimat Ministers commenced reigning in the influence of Islam in the conduct of the Ottoman state affairs, they encountered fervent clash and bitter opposition from the Bosniak elite. Their target was to reign in a de facto autonomy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosniaks’ resistance provoked a huge rage of Tanzimat Ministers, who had selectively chosen a close acquaintance of theirs – Omer Paša Latas, to launch a massive assault on rebels (Glenny, 2000). Omer Paša Latas was a Serb convert from Lika region, the northwest border between Bosnia and Croatia which was then under the Austrian occupation. He left the Austrian army under mysterious circumstances, switched sides and found himself attaining a high rank of Ottoman Pasha. He entered Sarajevo in 1850 and ruled with utmost cruelty for seven consecutive years after which systematic rampage he succeeded in ‘crushing of the entire Bosnian aristocracy and its most noble and influential members’ (Šišić, 1938: 17). To ensure a ferocious retribution against the Bosniaks, alongside large regular army and two thousand Albanian irregulars, the Tanzimat Ministers, dispatched a special murtad (traitors’) unit made up exclusively of ‘hard-drinking desperados from Poland and Hungary, most of whom could speak neither Turkish nor Bosnian and whose attachment to Islam was questionable’ (Glenny, 2000: 82). Lack of discipline and unbearable behaviour of army and irregulars, coupled with a spree of plunder and pillage against the peasants turned whole Bosnia into ‘one enormous prison, [where] every rank of mullahs, kadis, begs, are wandering around the streets in chains or dragging around materials to repair roads’ (Šišić 1938: 17). Omer Paša’s rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina left deep scars, and in a broader sense the Bosniaks
never truly recovered. Nor they had a chance since Tanzimatçılıar were eager to exterminate the autonomous prerogative the Ottomans pledged to the Bosnian Muslims. Jukić (cited in Cerić, 1968: 108) recorded that the damage inflicted was such that the Bosnian Muslims would not be able to recover even for one hundred years. Irby (1875: 646), earlier explained schoolmistress for the Orthodox girls, gleefully triumphed the plight of Bosnian Muslims:

‘The Bosnian beg, par excellence, is a chained monster with drowned teeth and cut claws. He was decidedly too big a megatherion of our age. Omer Pasha, the Croat, a renegade, did a good deed for humanity in the Turkish service, when he thrust him back among the fossil curiosities of history. The brute force of the savage is broken, and he has acquired no other.’

Based on the Irby’s comment, taken as a representative view of the European intelligentsia at the time, it is clear Europeans perceived Bosniaks through the Islamic prism too; however, they did not see them as a unique European diversity, but as a reminder of a Muslim stronghold at Europe’s doorsteps and, hence, ultimately as a foe.

This is why all the Bosnian independence movements from the beginning of the nineteenth century were never supported by the European powers because Islam was seen as a part of the problem and not a solution to building New Enlightened Europe. This perfectly served Tanzimatçılıar, who were building Turkish nation incorporating all the other expelled Muslims from the former Ottoman provinces. Great Powers cordially instigated and assisted all the other Christian Millets in their nationalistic revolts. When the Ottomans were sufficiently weakened, the great powers convened a Congress in Berlin in July 1878 and signed the declaration that became known as the Treaty of Berlin. This document endowed all the newly emerged Slav states from the Balkans with their territorial borders and proclaimed them as independent polities, except one – Bosnia and Herzegovina. Paragraph 25 of the Treaty stipulated that Bosnia and Herzegovina was to become an international protectorate and was to be placed under Austria–Hungary to administer. Ever since

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16 Despite her long experience of living in the Balkans, Miss Irby mistakenly referred to Omer Paşa Latas as a Croat. He was geographically from the region of what is nowadays Croatia, but ethnically he was a Serb. This is a classical example of difficult task in differentiating between various Balkan peoples in absolute terminology of modern European nationalism that even for their most ardent supporters proved a challenge that lead to mismatch.
this time political affirmation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was decided by great powers of ‘international community’ and this remains her predicament until the present day.

5. Conclusion

Nation-building projects in the Balkans are characterised by the creation of nationally homogenised religion, territorial aspirations, assimilations and persecutions of Muslims. In this respect, nineteenth and twentieth centuries for Bosniaks are engraved with slaughter, struggle for political recognition, reduction of the territory they populate and the destruction of their cultural heritage (Čaušević, 1992). The past skirmishes engulfing Bosnia and Herzegovina were generated from outside and were dependant on interests vested within international political climate. These left no space for establishment of internationally recognised Bosnian nation state. Bosniaks lived in peculiar political conditions for which reason they had developed a distinctive sense of belonging to a certain ethnic group. The centrifugal forces generated from the outside would not recognise their own unique ethnic fabrics expressing a continuous tendency to condense them to a confessional group rather than recognise them as a fully-fledged national unit. This was evident in the international policies towards Bosnian Muslims in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The underlying reason for these imported disputes appears to be generated by the way the Bosniak identity was misapprehended, firstly by Papal inquisitions in medieval Bogumil Bosnia, then by the Enlightened European and the ‘reformed’ Turkish disapproval of a separate Bosniak ethnic identity.

In the Ottoman conscience the Bosniaks were seen firstly as members of the Muslim millet, and then as linguistically and culturally distinct associates of the Slav tribe, by which the Ottomans commonly referred to all other non-Turkish speaking Slav Muslims from the Balkans as Bosniaks.17 The special treatment of Bosniaks was the case until the Tanzimat (The Ottoman Reforms) scheme, which triggered the proliferation of the bearers of modern ethnic politics, who aimed to carve-up a New Enlightened Europe by evoking national movements exclusively amongst Christian millets and move the bed of the ‘Sick Man’ away from Europe. Bosniaks were primarily seen by the modern ethno-liberals as the legacy of Ottoman Muslim millet and as such considered debris

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17 Ever since the Ottoman establishment in the Balkans and during its entire rule the term Bošnjaci (Bosniaks) encapsulated all the Slav Muslims from Bosnia, Herzegovina, Lika, Kravaja, Slavonija, Sandžak, some of the border regions around Smederevo Sandžak (Užice etc.), including the west part of Kosovo (up to the town of Mitrovica), as well as regions in nowadays Montenegro such as Plav and Gusinje, and Podgorica. See Mušović 1992: 147–8.
around Ottoman ‘deathbed’. The ultimate expectation was that they were to decamp ‘back’ to Turkey, to which geographic and national unit Ottoman Empire eventually transformed itself.

Both of these synchronised events have political consequences to the present day, and lay at the roots of identity conflicts immersing Bosniaks. Rise of nation state and nationalism postulated diligent and guided development of national awareness programmes, an initiative that altogether was taken away from the political stage of Bosnian Muslims. In other words, Bosniaks did not lack the self-awareness in regard to their separate ethn-o-national identity, but they were neither presented with opportunity nor given the appropriate tools for building a modern nation. Even when they attempted to attain national recognition in an armed struggle their resistance was bitterly clashed. Most critically, they lacked Great Power support to achieve national recognition.

The signatories to the Berlin Treaty unanimously concluded that Bosniaks are not to become a nation and Bosnia and Herzegovina is not to become the state but a protectorate. This mimic was reproduced a century and a half later in the Dayton peace agreement in 1995, in which the ‘International Community’ settled Bosnia and Herzegovina as International Protectorate under the rule of an internationally instated High Representative, who has an upper hand in the decision-making process. As to all the other former Yugoslav republics, they emerged as independent nation states, just as they did at the Berlin Congress. In the political carve-up following the break-up of Yugoslavia, the approach of the ‘International Community’ led by major European powers (UK, France, Germany) remained unchanged and need to be observed in the context of political continuation of the nineteenth century ethno-nationalism that never incorporated Bosniaks in the current system of independent nations. As a result Bosniaks are still fighting for their national recognition and independence. Would they succeed? The history taught us that in the absence of independent Islamic polity, it will very much depend on the centrifugal forces of the Enlightened Europe to endorse them or reject, yet again.
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