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Cathie Carmichael  
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## A CONCISE HISTORY OF BOSNIA

*A Concise History of Bosnia* integrates the political, economic and cultural history of this fascinating, beautiful, but much misunderstood country. Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary literature, this objective and engaging history covers developments in the region up to the present day and offers an accessible interpretation of an often contested and controversial history. Importantly, Cathie Carmichael looks at Bosnia over the long term, moving away from a narrow focus on the 1990s to offer a historical rather than a nationalist perspective on events. Integrated within the narrative account, there is a particular focus on the themes of culture and religion and the effect of geography and regional changes in the landscape on Bosnian history. Engaging and authoritative, the book succinctly explores how Bosnia has changed over many centuries, and focuses on the dynamic and creative aspects of Bosnia's past as well as on the darker elements.

CATHIE CARMICHAEL is Professor of History and Head of the School of History at the University of East Anglia. She is the author and editor of several books including *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State in the New Europe* (with James Gow), *Language and Nationalism in Europe* (co-edited with the late Stephen Barbour), *The Routledge History of Genocide* (co-edited with Richard Maguire), *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans: Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition and Genocide before the Holocaust*.

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CATHIE CARMICHAEL  
*University of East Anglia*



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## PREFACE

Since 1988, I have been to the country formally known as Yugoslavia almost every year. I was lucky enough to receive a British Council Studentship in 1989 that allowed me to study at the University of Ljubljana, which proved a great base not only to read about but to explore the region. At that time, Bosnians lived in every republic of the country taking their culture, food, religious practices and upbeat worldview with them. There was a discernible uneasiness about daily interactions between Yugoslavs by this time and the political system looked shaky. Nationalism seemed to be on the rise and almost everywhere I went people would stop me to talk about the wrongs that had been committed against their nation. The exception to this general pattern of urgency and radicalization seemed to be in Bosnia. Staying with a Croat family in Hercegovina in 1990, I was told about the way in which they respected the religion of their neighbours while we all watched an Orthodox service on the television. This embrace of tolerance, which has sometimes been described as the Bosnian spirit (*bosanski dub*), was not just the forced repetition of the Communist regime's mantra of brotherhood and unity and it came from the heart. If Bosnia came late to nationalism, then it suffered the most for its tardiness and the belief of its citizens that a multi-faith society was possible, even preferable.

As a historian I have always been fascinated by the change that occurs over time as well as the deeper currents that only move very slowly. It is unlikely that many regions have changed as much in those

years. In just one generation, Bosnia has generated more history than most of its inhabitants would have wanted. I started to write this book in the summer of 2011 in Sarajevo and travelled through many of the towns mentioned here including Bugojno, Jajce, Livno and Travnik and was at all times struck by the energy, intellectual zest and vision of the Bosnians that I met. But it has always proved impossible to accept every aspect about the current status quo and to even contemplate a return to Mostar, last visited on a hot April day in 1990. The rationale behind this decision is that, although the paramilitaries destroyed the sixteenth-century bridge in 1993, they have not destroyed my memory of it. The eighteenth-century Sarajevan chronicler Mula Mustafa Ševki Bašeskija believed that only those ideas that are committed to paper endure and that which is mere memory will eventually disappear.

In the book, I have used the terms ‘Muslim’, ‘Catholic’, ‘Jewish’ and ‘Orthodox’ as well as ‘Roma’, ‘Vlach’, ‘Bosniak’, ‘Croat’ and ‘Serb’. I would have preferred simply to use the word ‘Bosnian’ and do not intend to engage in an essentialist discussion about who has or does not have the right to belong. In my view, essentialism is a long-term symptom of violence and a rejection of the very notion of overlapping identities and shared heritage. One symptom of an attack can be defensiveness and a desire to reify that aspect of the self that is being targeted, but this very defensiveness can also be a form of intellectual capitulation. It would be giving Vjekoslav Luburić or Ratko Mladić too much power if one were to reject all that is positive about Croat or Serb civilization because of their actions. The primary cause of genocide in 1941 was the fascist Ustaša movement. Although it represented a very small minority among the Croats, they were in power long enough to attempt to wipe out the Serb population of the Independent State of Croatia, which included modern-day Bosnia and Hercegovina. Similarly the primary cause of conflict in 1992 was a small group of Serb radicals who galvanized a larger part of the Orthodox population to support a disastrous fratricidal war aimed at driving a large part of the non-Serb population out of those parts of the country that they claimed. In carrying out this strategy, those radicals were prepared to commit genocide. Once conflicts begin, the balance of responsibility for any ensuing violence is clearly more complex, but in

*Preface*

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cases of genocide, it is important to establish the *intent* to destroy a people in whole or in part.

Hundreds of thousands of Bosnians of all religious affiliations know the real meaning of genocide and now live in places miles away from their hometowns, often fundamentally disconnected to the past at least physically. But in this book, I wanted to tell a story that conveys Bosnia's stunning and positive qualities as well as acknowledging the suffering that came with the modern era and the three wars that have been fought by Bosnians in the past 100 years. This book is primarily intended for readers who currently know little about the history of an incredible and diverse European country. The existing literature on Bosnia is very rich and there are excellent academic books and articles to capture the imagination of the reader. Bosnia has also inspired great novelists, poets, artists, sculptors and filmmakers, whose work almost never feels parochial or small and easily compares in terms of literary depth and quality to the best of the canon of any civilization.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN BOSNIAN HISTORY

168 BC	Illyria (including much of modern Bosnia) was taken over by the Romans.
Seventh century	Arrival of Slavs in the Balkans.
Ninth century	Bosnians converted to Christianity.
Tenth century	Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus writes <i>De administrando imperio</i> in Greek, which mentions the place name Βόσωνα or Bosona for the first time.
1189, 29 August	The Charter of Ban Kulin ( <i>Kulinova povelja</i> ), a trade agreement between Bosnia and the Ragusan Republic (nowadays Dubrovnik) was written.
1291	The Franciscan Order started its ministry in Bosnia.
1377	Stjepan Tvrtko became king of Bosnia, the first in the Kotromanić Dynasty.
1389, 28 June	Battle of Kosovo polje. Bosnian King Stjepan Tvrtko fought under the command of Serbian Prince Lazar.
1463	Ottoman conquest of Bosnia. Execution of the last Christian king Stjepan Tomašević. Conversions to Islam and Orthodoxy commenced and the Franciscan Order retained the right to minister to the Catholic <i>rayah</i> .



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- 1526 The Battle of Mohács. Orthodox-born Mehmed-paša Sokolović fought on the side of the Ottomans against a Hungarian Alliance.
- 1531 Gazi Husrev-beg mosque founded in Sarajevo
- 1566 An Ottoman bridge, later known as *Stari Most* was built in Mostar over the Neretva river. The bridge was destroyed in 1993 and subsequently rebuilt, reopening in 2004.
- 1570s Construction of the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge on the Drina at Višegrad.
- 1656 Turkish writer Evliya Çelebi described Bosnia in his travel book *Seyâhatnâme*.
- 1699 Prince Eugen of Savoy attacked and burned Sarajevo.
- 1783–1786 Plague in Bosnia.
- 1809 Napoleon Bonaparte annexed the Illyrian Provinces, which were restored to the Habsburgs in 1815.
- 1831–1833 The Great Bosnian Revolt (1831–1833) led by Husein Gradašćević in protest against the Tanzimat reforms of the Ottoman Empire.
- 1875–1876 Christian peasants rebelled against the Ottomans.
- 1878, 13 July Treaty of Berlin divided South-East Europe. Bosnia came under Habsburg administration.
- 1881 Pope Leo XIII established new Catholic dioceses in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar.
- 1900 At the *Exposition Universelle*, a world fair in Paris, the Bosnian pavilion was decorated by Alphonse Mucha.
- 1908 Bosnia and Hercegovina were formally annexed by the Habsburg monarchy.
- 1912–1913 The Balkan Wars lead to the enlargement of the states of Serbia and Montenegro.
- 1914, 28 June Habsburg Heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip.

- 1914–1917 Bosnian troops fight on the Eastern Front against Imperial Russia.
- 1915–1917 Bosnian legions fight on the Isonzo Front against Italy.
- 1918, 28 April Gavrilo Princip died in prison of tuberculosis.
- 1918, 1 December The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes created under the Serbian Karadjordjević Dynasty.
- 1919 Lawyer Mehmed Spaho founded the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslovenska Muslimanska Organizacija*).
- 1920 Strike by Bosnian miners (*Husinska buna*).
- 1929 Bosnia divided into districts of *banovine* called Drinska, Zetska, Primorska and Vrbaska.
- 1934 Assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseilles by a gunman financed by the fascist Ustaša.
- 1939 The *Sporazum* (Mutual Agreement) gave the Croats some territorial autonomy within Royalist Yugoslavia and included some Bosnian towns that had been in Primorska.
- 1941 Collapse of Royalist Yugoslavia in April after invasion by the Third Reich under Adolf Hitler. Bosnia incorporated into the fascist Independent State of Croatia led by the Ustaša under Ante Pavelić. Atrocities against Serbs, Jews and Roma perpetrated by the Ustaša.
- 1941 Catholic nuns from Pale were killed in Goražde by Serbs nationalist guerrillas or Četniks in December and thrown into the River Drina. The so-called ‘Drina martyrs’ were beatified by the pope in 2011. Atrocities against Muslims perpetrated by the Četniks.

*Chronology of events in Bosnian history* xix

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|-------------------|---|
| 1942              | The Second Proletarian Brigade was formed in March by Josip Broz Tito, the head of the Yugoslav Communists and now leader of the left-wing Partisan guerrillas.                     |
| 1943, 29 November | Tito formed a temporary government in Jajce.  |
| 1944, 7 May       | German attack on Drvar. Tito escaped by rope from a cave. After his death, the town was renamed Titov Drvar in his honour.  |
| 1945              | Partisan victory is accompanied by reprisals against fascists and Četniks as well as the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Bosnia. Some Ustaša leaders escaped to Austria and Italy. |
| 1946, 1 January   | The victorious Communist Partisans create a new Constitution. Bosnia-Herzegovina was given the status as a Yugoslav Republic.   |
| 1948              | Yugoslavia expelled from Cominform. Trials of Muslim leaders in Sarajevo, including Alija Izetbegović who was imprisoned.   |
| 1950              | Peasant uprising ( <i>Cazinska buna</i> ) against the Communist regime in Cazin.  |
| 1959              | Death of Ante Pavelić in Madrid.  |
| 1961              | Ivo Andrić won the Nobel Prize for Literature.  |
| 1971              | Muslims allowed to identify as such in the Yugoslavian census.  |
| 1972              | The Bugojno group ( <i>Bugojanska skupina</i> ) tried to start an armed uprising against the Communists codenamed Phoenix ( <i>Feniks</i> ).  |
| 1980, 4 May       | Josip Broz Tito, Communist leader of Yugoslavia since 1945, died.   |

xx	<i>Chronology of events in Bosnian history</i>
1981	Apparitions of the Virgin Mary began in Medjugorje.
1983	Alija Izetbegović imprisoned for religious beliefs and released in 1988.
1984	Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo in February.
1984	Vojislav Šešelj imprisoned for nationalism and released in 1986.
1990, 31 July	Bosnia-Herzegovina declared a democratic state of equal citizens, free elections followed in November.
1990	The foundation of new political parties. The Serb Democratic Party (SDS) was founded by Radovan Karadžić, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH) inspired by Franjo Tuđman's party and the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) founded by Alija Izetbegović.
1991, 25 June	Croatia and Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in June. Fall of the Croatian town of Vukovar in November accompanied by war crimes.
1992, 29 February	Bosnia-Herzegovina voted for independence from Yugoslavia but the referendum was boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs.
1992, 6 April	The European Community recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, followed by the USA.
1992	Fighting engulfed Bosnia. War crimes committed and the capital Sarajevo under siege for more than three years.
1992	Extension of United Nations Protection Force mandate to Bosnia in June.
1993	Creation of the United Nations 'safe areas' in Sarajevo, Žepa, Srebrenica, Goražde, Tuzla and Bihać.
1993	Failure of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan.

*Chronology of events in Bosnian history* xxi

1993	Break down of Muslim-Croat Alliance. Creation of Herceg-Bosna.
1994	NATO jets shot down four Serb aircraft in February for allegedly violating the UN no-fly zone.
1994	Washington Peace Agreement ended the war between Croats and Bosniaks.
1994, 5 February	Massacre of shoppers at the Markale market in Sarajevo. Another bomb fell on the market on 28 April 1995.
1995	Ratko Mladić took the town of Srebrenica; 8,000 Muslim men and boys killed by Serb soldiers under his command.
1995, 21 November	Dayton Peace Treaty signed by Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman and Alija Izetbegović. Division of Bosnia into 'Federation' (51 per cent) and 'Serb Republic' (49 per cent). Right of return for refugees established. Brčko District became an International Protectorate. Appointment of a European High Representative.
1997	Bosnian government signed the Ottawa Treaty, which aimed to stop the use of anti-personnel mines in military combat. Landmines remained a particular problem in Bosnia after the 1992–1995 war.
1998	The Neum Agreement allowed Croatian vehicles to pass through Bosnia territory on the Adriatic coast unimpeded.
2003	Death of Alija Izetbegović.
2004	Massacre at Srebrenica in 1995 deemed to be a case of genocide in The Hague.
2008	Radovan Karadžić arrested and sent for trial to The Hague.
2011	Ratko Mladić apprehended and sent for trial to The Hague.

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2013      The Bosnian census reported an overall decline in population by 585,411 compared to the previous census of 1991, or about 13 per cent of the population.

2014      Austerity protests in Tuzla dubbed the ‘Bosnian Spring’.