

INTEGRATION OF THE SOUTHERN DALMATIA THE CASE STUDY OF THE HERZEGOVINA- -NERETVA CANTON

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to present the consequences of the accession of the Republic of Croatia on 1 July 2013 to the European Union, taking into account the geographical location of the country. Croatia is a country without territorial integrity, which stems from the fact that the southern part of the tourist region of Dalmatia is separated from the northern part by the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina or, more specifically, the Herzegovina-Neretva canton. This in turn is a consequence of certain historical events. In 1699, the Republic of Ragusa ceded a narrow strip of coast to Turkish domination. This area found itself within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton Agreement in 1995. Despite the abolition of the visa requirement for citizens of the European Union in 2006, the problem of crossing the border persists. Despite the expansion of border crossings, tourists may experience problems with more accurate checks when crossing to Bosnia and Herzegovina on their way to Dubrovnik. Prior to EU accession, crossing the Croatian-Bosnian border only required presenting a passport or ID card. Since 1 July 2013, documents entitling travelers to cross the border must be scanned, which extends the process of border checks. However, the EU's position in this case is quite clear. First of all, an agreement between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina has to be made on a mutually satisfactory solution.

At the moment, there are some potential solutions to the problem. They include:

- construction of bridges connecting the main part of Croatia with Dubrovnik using the neighboring islands;

- construction of a transport corridor in the form of a flyover over the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- construction of a tunnel under the town of Neum.

All of these initiatives were effectively blocked by the government in Sarajevo before Croatia joined the EU. However, one of the conditions of Croatia accession was the promise that the problem would be solved within the next few years.

2. HISTORICAL BASIS

For centuries, the area of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, particularly the port of Neum, was an area of contention between different countries. Since the beginning of the tenth century, the canton was under the rule of Croatia. This did not prevent Venice's attempt to abolish the tribute for the kingdom of Dalmatia and Croatia paid in exchange for the free shipping on the Croatian Adriatic Sea. The situation changed after 997, when a civil war broke out between the sons of Držislav, the first king of Croatia and Dalmatia. Venice interfered and seized islands and towns along the Adriatic coast, breaking them apart which in agreement with the Byzantine emperor. Croatian authority over this territory was re-established by Stephen I. Due to his good relations with the Byzantium, it contributed to the collapse of southern Italy. Normans took the Apennine peninsula, which had a significant impact on international relations on the Adriatic coast for decades to come. By 1390, Bosnian ban Stephen Tvrtko I conquered the entire Croatia south of Velebit and assumed the title of the 'King of Croatia and Dalmatia, and Raška and Primorska'. Ladislaus of Naples interfered to win the Hungarian crown to gain influence in Bosnia and Croatia. He landed with his troops in 1403 in Zadar and was crowned as a king there. However, when he realised that he would not be able to get the Hungarian throne, he decided to betray the faithful Croats by selling cities such as Novi-grad, Vrana and Zadar to Venice, along with his alleged right to Dalmatia. At the same time, in 1420 the Venetians took control of almost the entire territory of the Adriatic coast. The canton was ruled by the Republic of Venice, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Croatia and Dalmatia.

Through the expansive policy of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia fell in 1463, followed by Herzegovina in 1482. This was caused by the lack of desire to defend against the invasion and the relatively greater fear for the papacy than for the Turkish invasion.

Another opportunity to take control of today's Herzegovina came with the election in Hungary and Croatia. Through disagreements between the Hungarians and Croats in 1527, a civil war broke out, which was used by Bosnians to invade other parts of Croatia.

The origins of the division of the coastal area which is now considered Croatian dates back to 1699, when the Treaty of Karlowitz was signed (Pavličević 2004, p. 194). The Republic of Ragusa¹ ceded part of their territory (today's Neum) to the Ottoman Empire. This was done to ensure their own security from possible attacks from the Republic of Venice.

This area finally split from the Ottoman Empire on 5 October 1908 with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This situation was caused by the economic overexploitation of the local population. In 1875, an uprising erupted in Herzegovina and in a few months spread to Bosnia. In a relatively short time, the uprising found support in the Principality of Montenegro and the Principality of Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian Empire with the support of the German Empire took the political initiative. On April 24, 1877, the army of the Russian Empire invaded the territory of Bulgaria. On March 3, 1878 a peace treaty in San Stefano was signed. Under the terms of this treaty, Bosnia and Herzegovina gained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. This led to the empowerment of the Russian Empire in the Balkans, which in turn sparked opposition from other European empires. A peace conference was organised in Berlin. The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina found itself under armed occupation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the end of 1878, the Croatian Sabor petitioned the emperor for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Croatia. Hungary protested and the petition was rejected. By 1908, the final annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary took place.

After the First World War, the territories of Croatia and Herzegovina were united as a single country for the first time since the 14th century. On October 26, 1918, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was created, which on December 1, 1918 transformed into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS). It included the Kingdom of Serbia, the Kingdom of Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian rule, the Duchy of Carniola, the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, the Hungarian Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and the Austrian Kingdom of Dalmatia (Giza 1994, p. 97). As a result of Puniš Račić's attack on members of the Croatian Peasant Party on June, 20

¹ Republic of Dubrovnik.

1928 (Benson 2004, p. 63), Alexander I Karadzordzević, King of SHS, decided on 6 January 1929 to suspend the constitution and dissolve all political parties in the Kingdom of SHS. On October 3, 1929 the name of country was changed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Giza 1994, p. 112). After the defeat of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the war against the Third Reich, the Independent State of Croatia (Trawczyńska 2009, p. 153) was created on April 10, 1941, which joined the Tripartite Pact.

As a result of further military operations and activities of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed on November 25, 1943 and, owing to the Constitution, became the federal republic of the Yugoslavia on January 31, 1946 as part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Felczak and Wasilewski 1985, p. 497).

3. SOCIAL BASIS – ETHNIC GROUPS

In 1961, 18 years after its formation, the territory of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was largely inhabited by Serbian population. It accounted for almost 42.9% of the population of the republic. Muslim population accounted for 25.7% and Croats accounted for 21.7%. However, the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina professing Islam could not define their nationalities. This situation began to change in the 1960s. In the census of 1961 the possibility of self-determination as a 'Muslim in the ethnic sense' was allowed. In the 1971 census, the expression 'Muslim in the national sense' was included for the first time. Announcement of national identity caused controversy among inhabitants of the country in terms of naming. In September 1993, the government decided to replace the term 'Muslim' with 'Bošnjak' (Tanasković, 1995, pp. 45–52).

Between 1961 and 1991, the share of the Muslim population increased from 25.7% to 43.5%, while the Serbian decreased from 42.9% to 31.4% and, despite a nominal increase in the number of residents describing themselves as Croats, their share fell down from 21.7% to 17.3%. The difficulty with Bosnia and Herzegovina was based on the location of various ethnic groups. Different groups lived in the same places or close to each other. These were mostly groups of Serbs and Muslims, which explains the fact that fights erupted most often between the two. In contrast, the population of Bosnian Croats remained concentrated near the border with Croatia, mainly in the area in question (Fig. 1). It should be noted that there are no recent data on the ethnic affiliation of the

population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is caused by the lack of agreement on the census, which originally was to be held in 2011. However, as a result of the boycott of Bosnia and Herzegovina's government by Bosnian Serbs, the census was delayed by two years. Bosnian Serbs sought to include questions concerning ethnic origin in the census. At the same time, Croatian and Bosnian Muslims were strongly opposed to that idea. As a result of the agreement, questions of ethnicity were included as voluntary in the 2013 census. However, the lack of compulsion to answer all questions resulted in the inability to obtain information about the current ethnic structure of the country.

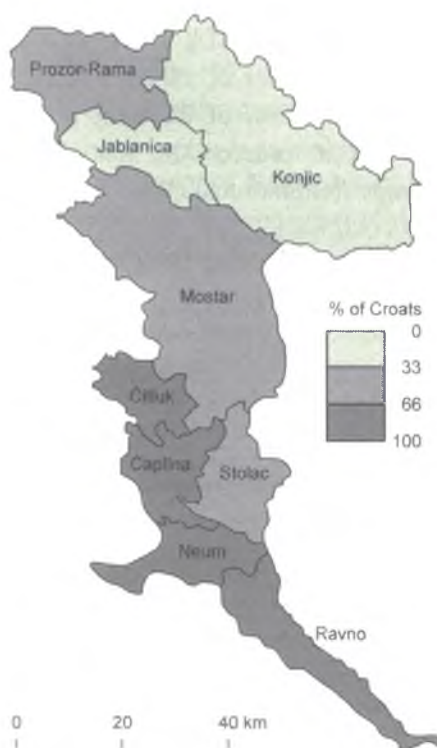


Fig. 1. Croatian minority in Herzegovina-Neretva canton in 1991

Source: own elaboration

According to unofficial data on the ethnic structure of the canton, more than 51% of the population declare themselves as Croats. At the same time, when we analyse the national structure based on the 2011 Croatian census for the Split-Dalmatia County, which directly borders with the canton, we can see that the percentage of Muslim population in the various municipalities rarely exceeds 0.5%, with the highest concentration in the municipality of Podgora with 1.63%

of the total population. Overall, Bosnians are just 0.31% of the population in the county.

Such ethnic structure of the canton shows in the education system prevailing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Education is managed by canton, city or school-level local authorities. Current education system is in disarray in terms of the curriculum. Sometimes two schools with different curricula, Bosnian and Croatian, occupy the same building. This is mostly reflected in history classes. This system was introduced in 1997 as a temporary solution and was to be changed by the end of 1998. However, continuous distrust between nations and a strong need to preserve the cultural differences have led to a situation in which that system has prevailed until today. In 2012, a hearing was held in the court in Mostar concerning the discrimination of students based on their national and religious backgrounds by application of different requirements at schools in Stolac and Čapljina. The court ordered the schools to merge Bosnian and Croatian classes into a single multinational class. However, the decision was not executed and the students continue to learn in separate schools, even though they are often in the same building. According to official sources, there are 34 such educational institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of them in Herzegovina-Neretva canton.

Despite internal divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia is one of the most ardent supporters of the country's integration with the EU and the integration of the whole Dalmatia. Croatia proposed that the EU move away from the traditional form of the accession negotiations and the preparation process in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under these new rules, the accession criteria would not be reduced for a candidate country, but the EU would have to change certain activities. Currently, negotiations cannot start until all internal problems are solved. Croatia proposes that such problems be solved during the process. But to be able to start talking about integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina would need to get the candidate status. According to Croatia, the process would be able to start in October 2014, following the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4. THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

High level of unemployment is a major problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Hercegovina-Neretva canton. According to various estimates and depending on the recognition of the informal economy, it amounts to between 35 and 45% of the total working-age population. The situation is even worse among

young people. As many as 52.27% of people aged between 16 and 24 years are unemployed. The employment levels in the canton are similarly poor. In 2012, it amounted to 40.83% of unemployment for the general population and 74.52% for 16 to 24-year-olds (*Zaposlenost...* 2013, p. 53 and 115).

Such a high rate of unemployment and the almost effortless ability to obtain by a passport of the Republic of Croatia has led many of Bosnian Croats to seek employment outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of them are leaving for neighbouring Croatia where, despite the economic crisis, they can find a job much more easily. At the same time, after Croatia joined the EU, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina holding Croatian passports have a better chance of working in the EU. Many Member States announced that they planned to end all work-related restrictions for Croats. Bosnian Croats finding employment in Croatia affects the growth of unemployment in the area, and is thus frowned upon by local population.

The need to pass through the town of Neum, which divides Croatia into two parts, is an additional restriction for the population of the Republic of Croatia in the Southern part of Dalmatia. After Croatia joined the EU, its border has become the external border of the Union. Related regulations require all passengers to be controlled and divided into transit passengers who are EU citizens and others. For this purpose the border crossing has been expanded in both directions from Neum. This resulted in a reduction of travel time with a simultaneous increase in the level of control.

At the same time, this feature of the territory of Croatia is one of the obstacles to it joining the Schengen zone. Consequently, almost since the end of the war, the government in Zagreb has been working to assure territorial integrity through different means.

5. DEVELOPMENT PATH

Croatia's accession to the EU on July 1 had many implications for the development of the whole region. As was the case with the countries joining the EU in 2004, there was an initial sharp increase in the number of tourists. The opportunity to use EU funds is an additional benefit of membership. Money obtained in this way can be used for the development of tourist infrastructure and restoration of monuments. The new possibilities associated with increased investment attractiveness will help develop accommodation facilities. Environment will also be improved. This will be possible through the introduction of a significant number of EU directives related to this subject. In the long term,

transport accessibility should also be improved. The country will also be able to acquire funds to complete the projected motorway network and attract more low-cost airlines. In the long term, this should also lead to increased tourism. This will happen through the accession of Croatia to the Schengen zone. However, this depends on the territorial integrity of the country. Croatia has been considering a few solutions in this regard.

Unfortunately, the Croatia joining the EU may have some negative effects. The first one, quite visible to the citizens, are intensified checks at border crossings with Bosnia and Herzegovina on the way to Dubrovnik. The EU's position is quite clear on that. First of all, the countries have to agree on a mutually satisfactory solution.

The first idea to provide territorial integrity was proposed by the government in Zagreb. It involved buying back or exchanging the narrow strip of land with the town of Neum on the Adriatic from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The government in Sarajevo rejected that idea arguing that the Bosnian Neum is a window on the world and a location for a future commercial port.

In 1997, the first plan emerged to solve the conflict that involved building a bridge connecting the Pelješac peninsula with Klek. This idea was rejected by Bosnia and Herzegovina, who argued that this would restrict the access to Neum. The idea was also protested by environmentalists, who argued that this would mean severe environmental degradation.

Ideas for solving the problem also included a proposal of building a tunnel under the city or an extraterritorial motorway flyover over Neum to connect two parts of Croatia. However, these ideas involved significant financial outlay and were not supported by Sarajevo. The idea returned after July 1, 2013. The government in Zagreb hoped for financial support from EU funds. However, the European Commission has categorically rejected the plan, arguing that they would not release such a large amount for an investment that would be constructed outside the EU.

Considering the current geopolitical and economic situation in Croatia, the only possibility is the construction of the bridge. Many social groups argue about the actual economic viability of the investment and submit their calculations regarding other possibilities, but these do not include the cost of redemption of land for investment, nor the legal problems arising from construction works in another country.

However, none of these solutions will lead to the actual integration of the region of Dalmatia. They will instead result in longer and deeper differences between Croatian and Herzegovinian parts of Dalmatia. The lack of willingness is visible between the countries which were, until recently, a single state.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The political situation of the Republic of Ragusa in the late 17th century forced it to donate a small part of coastline to Turkey. It was a method of providing protection and independence of the country in the face of an invasion of the Republic of Venice. However, this event proved to be a key for today's dismemberment of Croatia into two areas, despite the time that passed.

If we analyse the situation in southern Dalmatia, it is not hard to see that the full integration of the region will not be possible within the next decade, perhaps even longer. The situation that prevails in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not conducive to deepening the cooperation between the regions since the war. The youth have been taught different, often conflicting, approaches to the events of the first half of the 1990s. Under the Dayton Agreement, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a smaller version of Yugoslavia from the early 1990s. Antagonisms and mistrust are still alive among its inhabitants. This situation is effectively used by the politicians, whose programs are based largely on nationalisms. It also has a direct impact on relations with its neighbours, both Serbia and Croatia. Any attempts at reaching an agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia regarding the territorial integration of Croatia have always been seen as an attack on the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a betrayal of the national idea.

On the other hand, the integration of Croatia by any of the solutions proposed above may lead to further marginalisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the eyes of potential tourists and investors. Considering the current level of unemployment, this situation could lead to internal conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina with mutual blame for the failure.

One argument for the integration of the region is Croatia's position on the matter. They are the most ardent supporter of integrating Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU. We should, however, take their support with a grain of salt and really consider if it is only a political move related to the investment they have been planning since the mid-1990s or a true striving for integration of the whole region.

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