

## Difficult History: Step 2 Part 1: Yugoslav Wars

### Introduction

During this lesson students will learn more about the Yugoslav wars in order to better understand the context of the videoclip and the different ways of dealing with the past.

### Objectives

- Students will make inferences about how different actors in the war deal with it differently in order to draw conclusions about the reasons for “silencing” or “investigating” history

### Preparation and materials

- Character cards with some protagonists of the videoclip. The characters on the card are: Nikola Kuridža, Nikola’s mother, Fikret Bacic (the man with the shovel) and the inhabitants of Prijedor. They all have different opinions of the war. (annex 1)
- Historical background (prior to the war) for the teacher (annex 2)
- Different sources on the Bosnian war.
  - [Timeline](http://www.tiki-toki.com/previewembed/entry/1251141/9028269110/900/480/) with the events and maps of the main periods: <http://www.tiki-toki.com/previewembed/entry/1251141/9028269110/900/480/>
  - Ethnic distribution before/after the war (annex 3)
  - Maps of the territory from different periods (annex 4)
- Factsheet with information on the war for students to complete.
- Make copies of the character cards (annex 1) for students so they can become aware of different human perspectives during and after the war.
- In order to better understand the different opinions on the war, students will engage with different activities based on the information that is provided. Students will need a copy of the factsheet (annex 5), the link to the timeline and a copy of the sources (annexes 3 and 4) per group.
- If there is not much time, you can skip activity 2b (comparing maps), as it is not essential to understanding the different perspectives of the war.

### Planning Grid

- 1) Introducing and analysing different characters in the video clip
  - a) Give a copy of the character cards to each group of four students. In the whole class discussion, try to remember who the characters are or watch some parts of the video clip to help point out who they are.

- b) Tell students to analyse the information that appears in the cards and identify how each character has dealt with their difficult past (silencing, confronting, etc.).
  - c) Ask students to reflect on why different people think differently about the war. Why do they deal with the issue in different ways? What reasons could they have for doing so? What happened to make some think differently from others?
- 2) Introducing the Bosnian War
- a) Brainstorm with your students about their knowledge of the Bosnian War. Show them a map, so they know where Bosnia is located, and try to answer the 5W question in the whole class discussion. Tell them they will correct/ complete their answers later on.
  - b) You can also ask them to locate the places that appear in the video clip on the map. Give a short explanation of the historical background of the area up to the beginning of the war (annex 1).
- 3) Researching the Yugoslav Wars
- a) Students will learn about the war in order to better understand the different opinions relating to it.
  - a) Yugoslav Wars 5W:
    - i) Organise the class in groups of five. Each student will be in charge of answering one question and finding the information in the given sources to complete the factsheet (annex 5).
    - ii) If the groups are heterogeneous, you can assign the appropriate question to each of them as there are both lower level (when, where, who) and higher level questions (why and how).

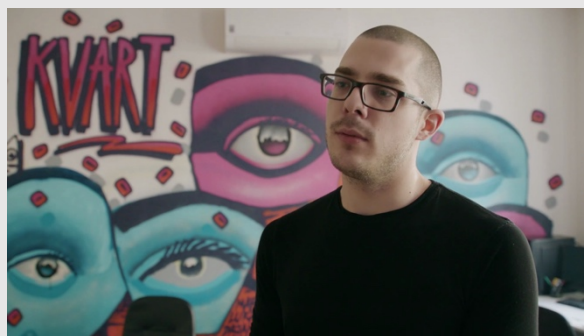
<b>The Bosnian War (as part of the Yugoslav Wars)</b>	
What happened?	
Who & Who?	
When/Where?	
Why did it happen? (causes)	
How did it end? (consequences)	

- a) Comparing territories before/after the war
- i) Give or show the maps of different periods (annex 4) (at least before/after the war). Students will have to comment on the development of these territories in pairs. The last task (explain the reasons...) could be kept for higher level students. You can give the students these guidelines:
    - 1) Write a paragraph comparing the developments in these territories using the following guidelines:
      - (a) Similarities and differences, you can see in both maps
      - (b) Description of the current territorial organisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (states, boundaries, etc.)
      - (c) Explain the reasons for the division of the territory

## **Nikola Kuridža**

Serbian. Born in 20/07/1989. Born and raised in Prijedor.

He was three years old when the terrible crimes took place and as he said, he was unable to understand the seriousness of the situation and the changes it brought about.



His impressions about the remembrance of the war:

*"Our first reaction is to deny it, or to downplay it, or somehow explain it to yourself and to provide some sort of answer for it. I went to an elementary school which at that time, only Serbian students attended. In fact, the entire syllabus was taught from the Serbian perspective, it was hard for me to get out of that. That was the greatest challenge, the lack of information. My parents refused to talk about it. There was nobody I could talk to about it."*

## **Nikola's mother, Desanka Kuridža Knežević**

Serbian.

Her impression about the remembrance of the war



*"We all know what happened. Everyone knows. It can't be that somebody does not know. But people do not talk about it, they simply do not. Here and there when you bring it up you hear: "And what have they done to us?" There, referring to other regions*

*"I thought it would be good to protect him." (by not telling him more about what happened)*

## **Fikret Bačić**

Bosniak. Born in 21/03/1958, in Zecovi (Prijedor) His whole family comes from there.

During the war he was in Germany, until he heard his village had been attacked.

He went to Croatia to a refugee camp in Rijeka. There he found 1 of the 3 family members who survived the massacre: his 17-year-old nephew. The boy confirmed the news of the attack.



Fikret took his nephew with him to Germany and returned permanently to Bosnia in 1998.

Nowadays he works as an independent entrepreneur with a small food shop.

His impression about the remembrance of the war: *"My return to Bosnia, especially my return to Prijedor, my pre-war residence, was motivated by my wish to find my relatives' bodies. From the talks I had with neighbours, I know that most of them know where the bodies are. 99% of them know where the bodies were taken, but none of them want to tell me."*

## **Inhabitants of Prijedor**

Their remembrance of the war:

*"We know there was a conflict, it's over, we're moving on. There has to be conversation. But not in the context of hate or intolerance. The truth has to be known, if you're asking me. It has to be told to younger generations. But we aren't guilty for all of it."*



*"Any victims here? No! You always pretend it was a camp". "That's not a concentration camp". "The Muslims think it is."*

*"I was a child back then; I was just born."*

*"What? I have no information. I was here, and I've had enough."*

## **ANNEX 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

### **Ottoman Rule (1463-1878)**

During the early modern period much of the Balkans were under Ottoman rule. The Ottoman Empire was a fairly tolerant state. People could be relatively autonomous within their own millet. Each religious group was organised in a millet. In Bosnia this meant there were millets for Catholics, the orthodox, Jews and Muslims. All of these groups lived close together – sometimes in neighbouring regions or villages, sometimes as next door neighbours.

### **Nationalism (1878-1918)**

The end of nineteenth century nationalism weakened the Ottoman Empire. The different peoples in the empire claimed an independent national state of their own. The Serbs revolted, the Greeks became independent, the Bosnians had an uprising. Austria and Russia tried to profit from the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, mingling and making new borders that didn't always agree with ethnic or religious lines. Serbia became an independent state and claimed the lead over the Slavic population of the former Ottoman territory in Europe. Bosnia was annexed by Austria, much against the will of the Serbs and Bosnians themselves.

### **World War I**

This war started out as a war between Austria and Serbia for dominance in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Defeated in the war, Austria had to give in. The end of the war also meant the ending of the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Both empires lost a large part of their former territory to new European states. In 1918, the first Yugoslavia was established, comprising Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia had a leading role in the new kingdom of Yugoslavia that lasted until 1941.

### **World War II**

In 1941 Germany invaded Yugoslavia and established satellite fascist states in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia tried to resist but was hit very hard by fascist oppression and cruelty. This fueled feelings of hatred between the Serbs and Croats that would eventually surface.

### **Cold War**

After World War II, Yugoslavia, called the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, came under communist rule, choosing a course independent from Moscow beginning in 1948. Differences between ethnic and religious groups were played down under the guidance of Josip Broz Tito. Until Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia experienced a time of

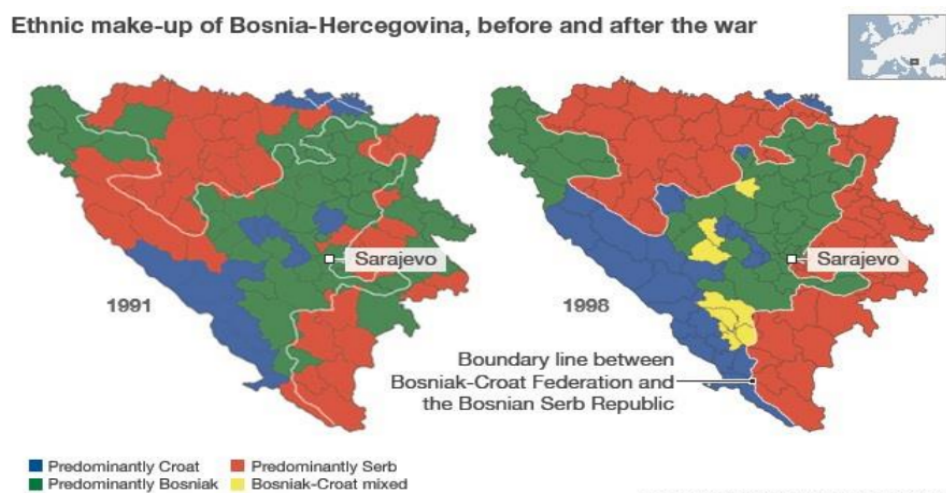
peace and grew to be a modern industrialised country. After Tito's death, Serbia tried to hold on to its dominant position but things started to get complicated. When the Cold War ended in 1989, the Serbian leadership changed its course from communism to nationalism. This set off nationalist politics in the other republics. Yugoslavia was beginning to disintegrate.

### ANNEX 3: ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION

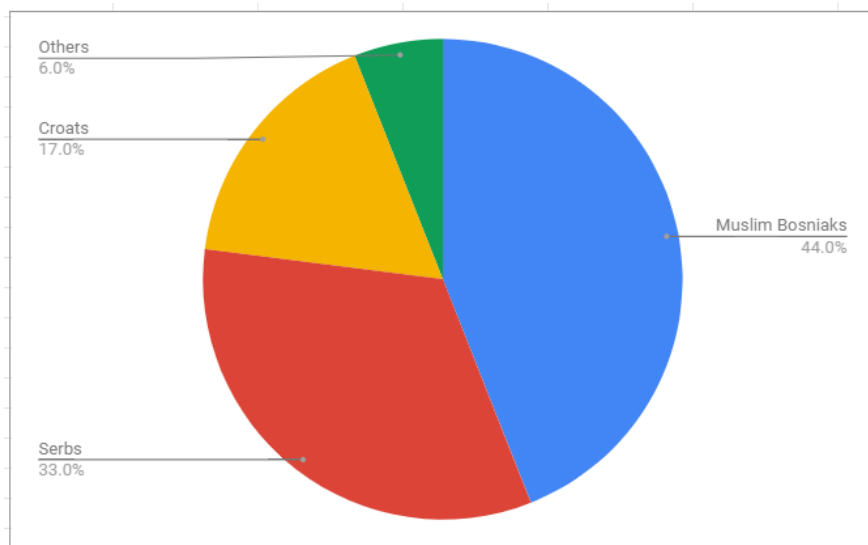
A number of ethnic and religious groups lived together in former Yugoslavia: Orthodox Serbs, Roman-Catholic Croats, Muslim Bosniaks and other minorities.



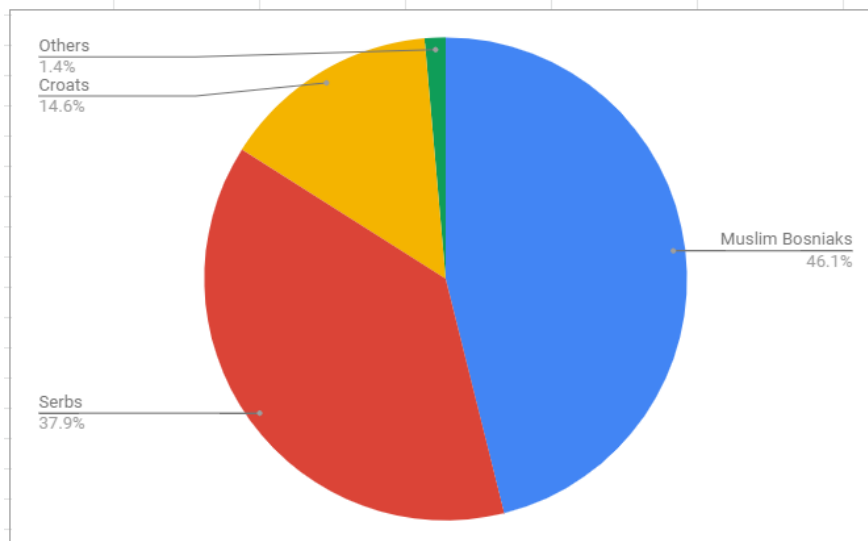
### Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic distribution (1992-1996)



(Source: Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina)



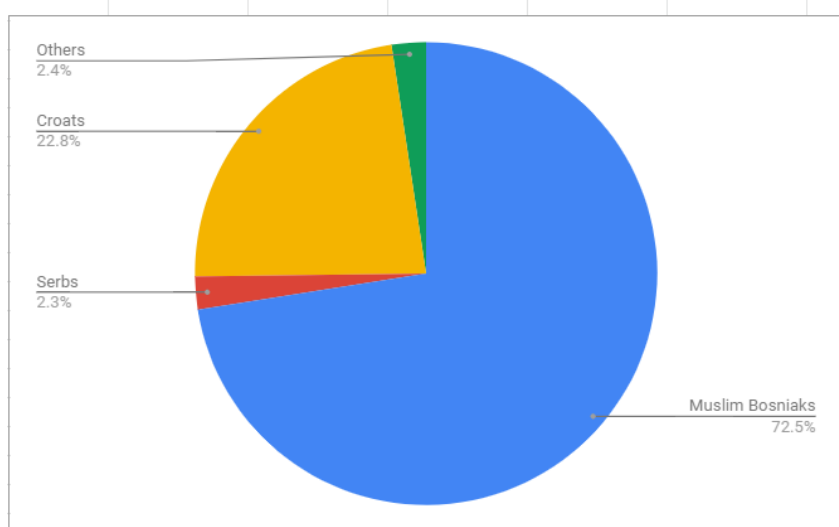
Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic distribution 1992



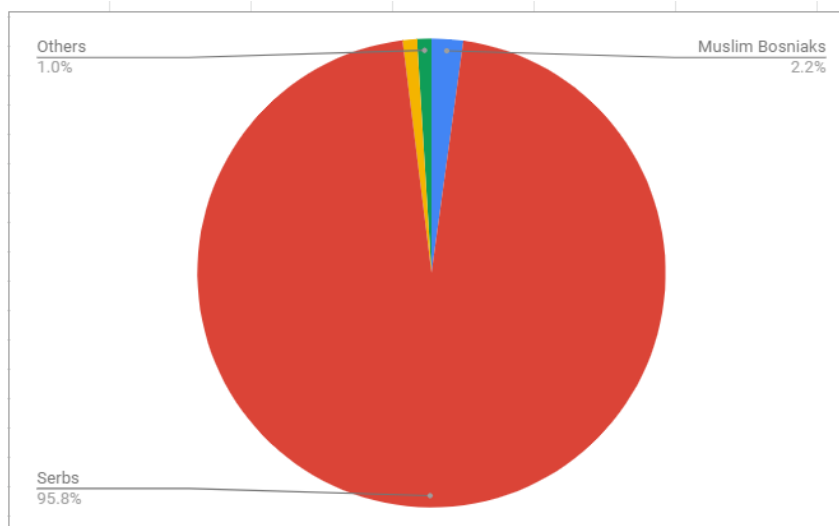
Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic distribution 1996

<https://www.hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Never-again-International-intervention-in-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina.pdf>

## Bosnia-Herzegovina by territories (1996)



Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic distribution 1996

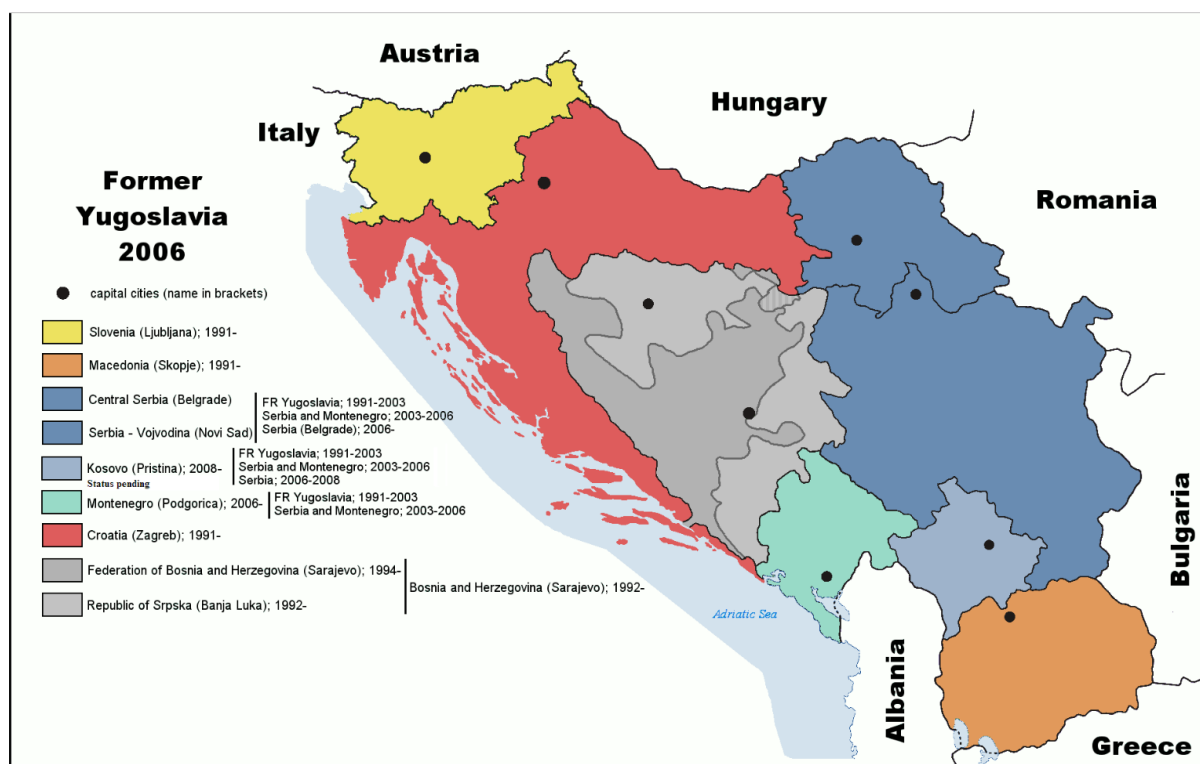


Republica Srpska ethnic distribution 1996

## ANNEX 4: Maps Yugoslavia in 1989



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breakup\\_of\\_Yugoslavia.gif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breakup_of_Yugoslavia.gif)



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/20/Former\\_Yugoslavia\\_2006.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/20/Former_Yugoslavia_2006.png)

## ANNEX 5: FACTSHEET OF THE BOSNIAN WAR

The Bosnian War (as part of the Yugoslav wars)	
What happened?	
Who & Who?	
When/Where?	
Why did it happen? (causes)	
How did it end? (consequences)	