Annual Theme
The Yugoslav Wars and the Year 1995: Reflections. Resilience. Reverberations

Article

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When Drniš Came to the Sea: Croatian Nationalism, Dalmatian Regionalism, and the Politics of Identity, 1990–2001

https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2024-0045
Received September 22, 2024; accepted February 6, 2025

Abstract: This article analyzes the politicization of identities in Dalmatia during the turbulent decade of the 1990s. It argues that during the Croatian War of Independence (or the Homeland War), several factors led to the politicized delegitimization of Dalmatian identity outside a Croatian nationalist context. These included the proximity of the Serbian Krajina rebellion, the flood of displaced persons from the Croatian hinterland to the coastal cities, the attacks of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)-led government on the regionalist Dalmatian Action party and regionalism in general. The author also analyzes how many coastal Croats reacted to and described their hinterland cousins, mirroring the rural/urban divide that characterized descriptions of Serbs by nationalist Croats during the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Dalmatia; regionalism; nationalism; 1990s; Yugoslav Wars; The Yugoslav Wars and the Year 1995

Introduction

The official symbol of the Republic of Croatia is the *šahovnica*, a shield-shaped red and white chessboard with a stylized crown representing five of the country's regions. In that crown, Istria is represented by the she-goat, "Civil Croatia" by a six-pointed star above a crescent moon, Slavonia by a six-pointed star with a marten between two rivers, Dubrovnik by alternating blue and red horizontal stripes, and Dalmatia by three lion heads. This official coat of arms, symbolizing Croatia's unity

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under a single crown, highlights distinct regions that constitute the national whole.[1]

In the early 1990s however, overt political expressions of regionality were few and far between in Croatia. Only two regional political parties showed any potential during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and at the beginning of Croatian independence: the *Istarski Demokratski Sabor* (Istrian Democratic Assembly, IDS) and *Dalmatinska Akcija* (Dalmatian Action, DA). While the former party was wildly successful (Ashbrook 2008), the later failed miserably.

A key reason for the Dalmatian regional party's failure was the different perceptions of national and regional identities among Dalmatians and how the region fit into a nationalizing Croatian state (see Figures 1 and 2). These differences, in part, stemmed from their experiences in the post-World War II era. By the 1990s, many urban, coastal Dalmatian Croats identified as tolerant, cosmopolitan, and multicultural with Slavic and Italian elements. In contrast, Croats in the hinterland primarily identified as Croatian nationals, with a secondary affiliation to some sort of regional identity. This does not mean Dalmatian Croats lacked a strong connection to Dalmatia. The passion of Torcida Split, the supporters' group for the Hajduk soccer club, clearly demonstrates the deep ties its members have to the region. Notably,

Figure 1: Croatia. The two red dots represent Knin (to the north) and Drniš (to the south). Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b0/Croatia_Regions_map.svg (accessed 19 February 2025).

1 "Zakon o grbu, zastavi i himni Republike Hrvatske te zastavi i lenti predsjednika Republike Hrvatske." Članak 7. 21 December 1990.

Figure 2: Dalmatia (in solid blue). Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dalmatia_(Kotor).svg#filelinks (accessed 19 February 2025).

Torcida's hyperpartisanship embraces both Dalmatia (especially Split) and Croatian nationalism (Tsai 2021, 1-16), reflecting in some ways the politicized perception of how many rural and hinterland Dalmatians viewed themselves and their place in Croatia. Most nationalists viewed the region as a *national* space, which diverged from the cosmopolitanism and regionalism embraced by many living along the coast.

In the following, I argue that during the Croatian War of Independence (1991–1995), Dalmatian regional identity was delegitimized due to a combination of factors: the Serbian Krajina rebellion, the influx of displaced persons from the hinterland, the nationalist *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*'s (Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ) attacks on Dalmatian regionalism, and the weakness of the Dalmatian Action party (DA). Furthermore, divisions between urban Croatian natives and hinterland settlers shaped perceptions of Dalmatian and Croatian identities, even after 1995, when most of the Serbian population had left or been displaced. The conflict, and the political struggles that shaped it, politicized identity, deepening the divide between the more nationalist hinterland Croats and cosmopolitan, coastal Dalmatians. In my study, I analyze how these tensions contributed to the failure of political regionalism in Dalmatia and to the dominance of a deeply politicized Croatian nationalist identity.

Methodology and Verbal Map

This article examines the politicization of Croatian national and Dalmatian regional identities during the turbulent 1990s into the early 2000s, focusing on how different groups framed their identities in response to war and political upheaval. While

ethnic categories are often central to discussions of nationalism, my analysis avoids ethnic determinism. Instead, I highlight how Dalmatian Croats used national, ethnicized, and symbolic language to define themselves and their opponents, demonstrating that identity was shaped as much by political and regional dynamics as by ethnic distinctions. By examining these narratives, I avoid an ethnicized framework of thought. By way of alternative, I explore the mobilization of national and regional identities in response to the broader (geo)political crises.

The article draws on written and oral sources, including regional newspapers, academic studies, and histories of Dalmatia and its population. In order to determine whether or not these politicized expressions of identity were still relevant among young people into the early 2000s, a survey of 200 students from the University of Split and the University of Zadar was conducted in Spring 2001. The sample comprised 100 university students from each institution.

Of the respondents in Split 74 identified as ethnically Croatian; 3 Italian; 15 mixed ethnicity or Yugoslav; 6 Serbian; and 2 did not answer. When delving further into how the respondents primarily identified, 71 answered Croatian; 3 Italian; 7 Yugoslav; 6 Serbian; 9 Dalmatian; and 4 did not answer. Of those expressing a primarily Dalmatian identity, 2 ethnically identified as mixed Croatian–Serbian, 3 as Italian–Croatian, and 4 as Croatian. 60 were from coastal Dalmatia, mostly from Split, with others from Trogir, Makarska, Šibenik, and nearby islands. 26 were from the Dalmatian hinterland, including 8 from Drniš and 3 from Knin, while the others lived in smaller towns and villages. Of the 6 Serbs, 5 were from Knin or the vicinity. Respondents identifying as Dalmatian or Yugoslav lived in Split or nearby, except 1 who was from Zadar. 23 claimed they had been displaced due to the war.

In the Zadar sample, 66 were ethnically Croatian; 12 Italian; 17 mixed ethnicity and/or Yugoslav; 1 Serbian; and 4 did not answer. The primary identities they reported were: 59 Croatian, 13 Italian, 4 Yugoslav, 1 Serbian, 16 Dalmatian, and 7 did not answer. Those claiming Dalmatian as their primary identity included 2 Croatian–Serbian respondents, 3 Italian–Croats, and 4 ethnic Croats. 49 reported being from coastal Dalmatia, with about two-thirds from Zadar or its environs, and others hailing from Vodice, Šibenik, Nin, and other coastal towns. 32 came from the Dalmatian hinterland, including Maslenica, Gračac, Obrovac, Knin and its surrounding areas, Otočac and Benkovac, among others. The lone self-identifying Serb lived in Rijeka. Of the Zadar group 37 reported that they or their families had been displaced due to the war. The hometowns or residences of 9 of the 11 self-identifying Yugoslavs were Dalmatian urban centers along the coast, while the remaining 2 lived in Zagreb or Rijeka.

Contextualizing from other research, this fits the pattern that most who identified as Yugoslavs before the dissolution of the state tended to be multiethnic city-dwellers. Those claiming their main identity as regional were all from coastal cities. While not conclusive, this suggests that those expressing a Dalmatian identity were concentrated in urban spaces and presumably had urban cultures (see Hodson,

Sekulić, and Massey 2007; Coward 2007; Rumiz 1994, 79-80; and Allcock 2002). In fact, my surveys and interviews highlight the urban/rural divide as key to national and regional identity expression. A total of 66 % of the sample claimed that the close proximity of the conflict forced many Dalmatians to prioritize national unity over regional distinctiveness. However, the differences in perceptions of identity between many of the urban coastal residents and those displaced from the hinterland illustrated the divisions existing among Croats.

When it came to interethnic division, the way interviewees framed this issue was strongly reminiscent of the nationalist Croatian/Serbian rhetoric during Yugoslavia's dissolution. I heard the phrase "Drniš came to the city" three times from different people, used derogatorily to describe displaced persons fleeing Serbian militias and the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija*, JNA) early in the war. Its meaning was explained to me in an interview in March 2001 with dissident journalist and sociologist Srđan Vrcan.[2] He claimed Split had changed from an inclusive, cultured, and multicultural urban space to one filled with "our country cousins" who "support the nationalist HDZ" and did not know how to behave "outside the village". When asked to expound, he replied that coastal Dalmatians were cultured, cosmopolitan, and multicultural. In contrast, the Croats from the interior, particularly cities like Drniš, were rural, uncouth, and monocultural. A reference to Drniš in this context is akin to the slur *seljak* (farmer, colloquially "rube"). These stereotypes of hinterland Dalmatians were common; anthropologist Michaela Schäuble also recorded similar articulations. Upon telling her Zagreb colleagues of her intent to research in the Dalmatian hinterland, they warned her it was dangerous and should rather be avoided. They explained that "the region is a stronghold of Croatian nationalism that liberal urban Croatians did not want to be associated with", and that the culture there was crude and rural (Schäuble 2006). These perceptions colored the relationship between the coastal and hinterland Dalmatians and became especially pronounced when Croats from the interior were ethnically cleansed in the early 1990s and displaced persons flooded into the coastal cities.

A Brief Look at Dalmatian History

The region collectively known as Dalmatia since Roman times spans from just north of the city of Zadar to Montenegro's northern border and eastward to the border of Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Figures 1 and 2). It is famed for its coastline, often viewed as Italian-influenced and Mediterranean in character. However, its lesser-known hinterland is mountainous and rural, relying on agriculture and some industry. The widely accepted perception is that the hinterland is distinctly Slavic in nature.

2 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001.

These geographic, economic, and cultural contrasts have made it challenging to identify a single Dalmatian identity.

Complicating this issue is Dalmatia's history as a borderland. Numerous empires – Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Croatian, Serbian, Venetian – interacted here and, to varying degrees, settled the region, creating a multiethnic territory.[3] From the mid-19th century, the traditional rural/urban divide took on a more ethnic character as the Slavic populations began challenging the dominance of the urban and coastal Italians. The initial Slavic unity fractured with the growing political animosity between the Croatian and Serbian populations over the question of Dalmatia's inclusion in a unified Croatian entity under the Habsburgs. The world wars and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire in 1918 led, by the end of World War II, to the "exodus" of most Italians from both Istria and Dalmatia (Ravlić 1969; Reill 2012; Vrandečić 2009; Markus 2010).[4] Dalmatia remained multiethnic, as Serbs maintained a significant presence in parts of the hinterland (Štitkovac 2000, 170-71). Despite periods of cooperation during the late 19th and 20th centuries, which ultimately helped build the foundation for Yugoslavism, issues between the two ethnic groups were politically problematic, as the fragile interwar Yugoslav state demonstrated (see Banac 1984).

The interethnic atrocities between the two groups during World War II gave nationalists of subsequent generations the historical "justification" for lasting division. Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's postwar leader, reduced ethnic animosity, promoting Yugoslavism, which found considerable acceptance in mixed coastal cities.[5] Meanwhile, the poorer hinterland, with its more limited opportunities, saw tensions between rural communities – despite their greater ethnic homogeneity – worsen amid the crises of the mid-1980s.

While many Dalmatians would not have felt overt ethnic tensions before these crises, media reports on the increasingly antagonist political discourses in Yugoslavia worried both ethnicities. This concern came to a head in the summer of 1989, when Serbs around Knin demonstrated due to reported attacks on their conationals by supporters of the abovementioned nationalist *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (Croatian Democratic Alliance, HDZ), a political party that formed in June 1989 (Lampe 1996, 346). Following its 1990 electoral victory in Croatia's first multiparty elections, some nationalist Serbs labeled the HDZ fascist, drawing parallels to the

3 For a history of Dalmatia that discusses the cultural bifurcation of the region and the competition between the major urban centers, see Praga 1993.

4 For an analysis of ethnic change in censuses for Dalmatia, see Perselli 1993. According to Paul Magocsi (2002), 130,000 Italians fled Istria and Dalmatia between 1943 and 1954 (164).

5 See the official Yugoslav censuses between 1948 and 1981 that illustrate the presence and growth of mixed ethnicity or Yugoslav-identifying populations, most of whom resided in urban areas. "*Popis stanovništva FNRJ 1948 godine*." Savezni zavod za statistiku, Beograd, 1954; and "*Popis stanovništva SFRJ 1981 godine*." Savezni zavod za statistiku. Belgrade 1982.

World-War-II-era *Ustaša*. In response, Dalmatian Serbs – encouraged by Slobodan Milošević's government in Belgrade and Serbian nationalists who opposed greater Croatian autonomy within the Yugoslav federation – erected roadblocks across northern Dalmatia in August 1990. These blockades effectively cut off central and southern Dalmatia from the rest of the republic, creating a physical and political barrier that deepened existing tensions (Štitkovac 2000, 161-2).

Compounding this crisis was Croatia's adoption of its first constitution on 22 December 1990, which many Serbs saw as a direct threat. Before it was passed, much of its content was already known, including provisions redefining the status of Serbs living in Croatia. The new constitution revoked the Serbian community's designation as a constituent people (*narod*), instead classifying them as a recognized national minority. While the document guaranteed minority rights (Article 15) and permitted the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in Serbian-majority areas (Article 12), it also declared Croatia the national state of the Croatian people (Article 1). Additionally, the Croatian language and Latin script were formally established as the sole official language and alphabet.[6] For many Serbs, the constitutional downgrade of their legal and political status signaled a resurgence of Croatian nationalism and their exclusion from the state, contributing to the growing ethnicization and politicization of identities as the crisis escalated. The day before the constitution's adoption, Serbian leaders in Knin declared a breakaway province – later the *Republika Srpska Krajina* (Republic of Serbian Krajina, RSK, see Figure 3) – openly rejecting Zagreb's authority.

Figure 3: The Self-Declared Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK), 1991 (in red). Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1500797 (accessed 19 February 2025).

6 "Constitution of the Republic of Croatia." *Narodne novine* 56/90. 22 December 1990. https://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/hr01000_.html (accessed 15 February 2025).

Following these developments, Serbian radicals, backed by the *Jugoslovenska narodna armija* (Yugoslav People's Army JNA), initiated ethnic cleansing against Croats in the hinterland. These actions precipitated a wave of displaced persons as Croats flooded ill-prepared coastal settlements. In response to the growth in ethnic tensions, a number of Serbs, whether voluntarily or not, abandoned the coastal cities.[7]

The escalation of violence in Dalmatia during the 1990s reveals parallels with earlier historical episodes of intracommunal strife. Tensions among local residents were relatively manageable until certain outsiders and discontented individuals ignited fears about the "other". This echoes the dynamics described by Max Bergholz (2016), who analyzed the descent into ethnic violence in and around Kulen Vakuf, Bosnia-Herzegovina, during World War II. Bergholz illustrates how local grievances, amplified by external influences, created an environment of fear that led to violence and ethnic cleansing. Similarly, one could argue that the instability and violence in Dalmatia during the 1990s reshaped perceptions of ethnicity and nationalism, rather than preexisting ethnic tensions. This dynamic fueled interethnic violence in the 1990s.

This instability and influx of displaced persons intensified identity politicization. As hinterland Croats poured into coastal areas, they carried firsthand accounts of atrocities, fueling fear and a strong urge to counter the Krajina rebels. As Serbian paramilitaries and JNA allies seized land in Bosnia-Herzegovina, many Dalmatians backed a party they believed would protect them: the HDZ. For them, national unity was essential in resisting the rebellion, making a nationalized Croatian identity far more palatable than the decentralized, negotiation-driven regionalism promoted by the DA (Stjepanović 2018).

Given its control over the national government and military, the HDZ was the only party perceived as capable of restoring order. However, its leader, Franjo Tuđman, framed any identity outside his narrow vision of Croatian nationality as threatening, including Dalmatian regionalism.[8] This rigid approach, combined with Dalmatia's historical urban/rural divide, deepened the rift between Croats. Competing notions of "Croatianness" and "Dalmatianness" fueled divisions that had lasting political and social consequences. These tensions persisted after the fall of Serbian Krajina in 1995 and the Serbian population's departure following Operation Storm

7 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). "Prosecutor v. Milan Martić." Trial Chamber I, Judgement, 12 June 2007, IT-95-11-T, paragraphs 351-2 and 429-32. For more on the Republic of Serbian Krajina, see Nikolić 2023. For an extensive review of the book in English, see Savković 2024.

8 Antulov, Dragan. "Regionalism in Croatia: Between Tradition and Reality." *Central Europe Review* 2 (19). 15 May 2000. https://www.pecina.cz/files/www.ce-review.org/00/19/antulov19.html (accessed 16 February 2025).

(*Oluja*), which ended the Homeland War. During *Oluja*, the Croatian military left an escape route for Serbs, ensuring rapid departure (Ashbrook and Bakich 2010). This forced displacement not only ended centuries of Serbian presence in much of Dalmatia but also contributed to the region's increasing ethnic homogeneity (given that much of its Italian population had left scarcely half a century earlier). This shift further reinforced a dominant Croatian national identity, eclipsing the multicultural traditions that had once been characteristic of the region.

Competing Concepts of Dalmatian Identity among Croats

To understand the politicization of regional and national identities in Dalmatia, it is essential to consider it within the broader debates on European identity. In Eastern and Southeastern Europe, ethnonational differences are often framed within a civilizational hierarchy, with the West perceived as the normative standard (see, for example, Kaplan 1993, xxiii). Extensive scholarship challenges such perceptions (e.g., Wolff 1994; Wolff 2002; Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 2009). Pamela Ballinger (2002) and Emilio Cocco (2006, 2010) have demonstrated how, in the late 20th century, Adriatic communities resisted Balkan stereotypes by embracing cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism. My own work (Ashbrook 2006, 2008, 2011) explores how regional identities are constructed in contrast to national ones, with regionalists presenting themselves as "Western" – multiethnic, tolerant, and urbane – while depicting nationalists as "Balkan": rural, crude, and intolerant. The politicization of Dalmatian identities from the late 1980s to the early 21st century fits within this framework.

What does it mean to be Dalmatian in this context? The answer is complex and situational. Researchers must generalize based on individuals' self-expressions, shaped by unique experiences and biases (Johansson 1999, 26), who construct narratives of belonging and exclusion (Applegate 1999, 1,175).

All Dalmatian groups have such narratives. As I argue below, some antinationalist regionalists describe the region as an area of multiethnic cooperation, while nationalists tend to see it historically as an area of national struggle and sacrifice. In terms of personal identities, nationalists solidly identify with the Croatian nation, albeit recognizing the differences between Dalmatians and other Croats. However, in the 1990s, their regional experiences shaped their understandings of being Croatian. The proximity of the Serbian rebellion, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the perceived existential threat represented by Serbs, Montenegrins, and the JNA during the Homeland War, in particular, influenced their perceptions.

The most common generalization for both Dalmatian nationalists and regionalists is geographical. Territoriality, defined as "a special relationship between an individual or a group and a given area" (Johansson 1999, 2), was consistently highlighted by respondents in my research surveys, with Dalmatia serving as the foundation for identity expressions. Furthermore, Croatian nationalists often highlighted a sense of shared spirit or connectedness with all Croats – a "national soul", if you will. They cited language, history, and Catholicism as key to their identity, which they firmly linked to all Croatian territory. To them Dalmatia is unequivocally a national space – historically, culturally, and ethnically Croatian (Vezić 1994, 20). They argue that to be truly Dalmatian, one must be a Croat from the region. One self-identified Croatian nationalist stated, "Serbs cannot be Dalmatian any more than I can be Macedonian. They came in as invaders and remain invaders."[9] Nationalists also emphasize that the hinterland is as integral to Dalmatian identity as the coastal urban areas – an idea that, at least within my fieldwork, appears unique to nationalists' arguments, as 72 % of the self-identified regionalists described the hinterland as not truly Dalmatian. One respondent even remarked that the hinterland had more in common with Bosnia-Herzegovina than with the Dalmatian coast. She humorously quipped that the only things Herzegovina – and, by extension, hinterland Dalmatia – produced were "rocks, snakes, and fascists".[10] While war and division fostered solidarity with Croats outside Dalmatia, Dalmatian nationalists distinguished themselves from nationalists elsewhere. Nearly 80 % of the sample used their victim status to affirm their Croatian credentials over Zagreb Croats, who did not bear the war's burden to the same extent (Schäuble 2006 found this as well).

During the war, promoting Dalmatian identity as hybrid was antithetical to national unity. Regionalists were seen as enemies undermining the unity needed to resist rebels and reclaim territory. They were deemed villains, threats to the nation, and traitors (Brown 2004, 233-52) – a narrative the HDZ eagerly embraced and leveraged. Nationalists likened regionalists, especially DA supporters, to Italian irredentists and late 19th and early 20th century Autonomists who allegedly opposed Croatian unification (Vezić 1994, 20), calling them "anti-state elements" ("To Fill the Void" 1994, 39-40).

Many Croats who lived in or bordered on what would become the Republic of Serbian Krajina fled to the relative safety of the coast, bringing with them their distinct culture, identities, and, perhaps most importantly, their experiences of ethnic cleansing. To them, Serbian "outsiders" and "rebels" pushed a "Greater

9 Interview with L. A., Zadar, 30 March 2001.

10 Interview with A. L., Zadar, 25 March 2001.

Serbian" agenda, threatening Croatia. This perceived danger led more Croats to support the HDZ, as election results show.[11]

Meanwhile, advocates for regionalism and decentralization faced insurmountable challenges. On 16 December 1990, they had founded the center-left Dalmatian Action party (DA), advocating for a culturally and administratively autonomous Dalmatia within a decentralized Croatia, which, they argued, would protect the rights of all Dalmatians, including Serbs. However, the DA faced strong opposition from nationalists, who labeled it anti-Croatian and separatist. During a time of crisis, when Croats were subjected to ethnic cleansing in the hinterland, a party promoting multiculturalism and decentralization was seen as a threat to Croatian survival, leading many Croats to emphasize their Croatianness over multicultural Dalmatianness (Banovac 1997, 28).

The Dalmatian Action Party and the Failure of the Regional Movement

While Croatian nationalists felt a connection to a larger territory and the nation itself, self-proclaimed regionalists expressed more connectedness to Dalmatia,

11 For Dalmatian election results, see Lamza-Posavec 1996, 196, and Deren-Antoljak 1993, as well as the following newspaper articles: Dragičević, A. "Makarska: Pobjednici HDZ i SDP." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 4; Gazda, S. "Trijumf oporbe." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 16; Ljubić-Lorger, Mira. "Izvan kruga podobnih (Pregovori, izbori, činjenice)." *Glas Dalmacije* 21-22 (Winter 2000), 1-4; Ramljak, Olga. "HDZ u 11 županija prek 50 posto." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 4-5; Pekas, D. "Omiš: HDZ i oporba podjednako." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 4; Ramljak, Olga. "Kako je glasovala Hrvatska." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 12 February 1993, 4-5; Žarkovački, K. "Hvar: Nezavisnima 9 mjesta." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 4; Žaknić, S. "Korčula: HDZ, pa HSLS." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 5; Ramljak, Olga. "HDZ u 11 županija prek 50 posto." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 9 February 1993, 4-5; Bajruši, Robert. "Ova vlada je umjetnik u guljenju vlastitog naroda." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 13 October 1995, 7; Radić, Ivica. "Za regiju sretnih ljudi." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 21 October 1995, 2; Grijidić, Lidija. "Naš ulazak u Sabor može spriječiti samo krađa!" *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 October 1995, 7; Stazić, S. P. "HDZ-u 44.82 posto glasova!" *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1 November 1995, 3; Ramljak, Olga. "HDZ-u uvjerljivo vodstvo." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 31 October 1995, 3; "Glasovanje: ni pošteno ni regularno." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 3 November 1995, 2; Selimović, Š. "Živimo u preskupoj državi." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 2 April 1997, 16; Lozo, Stjepan. "Regije plaćaju cijenu centralizma." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 8 April 1997, 8; Selimović, Š. "Lokalna vlast u većini HDZ-u." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 16 April 1997, 16; Selimović, Š. "HDZ-ovih 25 vijećnika oporbenih 15." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 16 April 1997, 16; "HDZ-i na otocima i na kopnu." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 17 April 1997, 16; Malenica, Anita. "U srijedu rezultati za podunavlje." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 16 April 1997, 56; Blažević, D. "HDZ učvrstio poziciju." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 17 April 1997, 14; and Pavić-Stazić, Silva. "Birači su bili racionalni." *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 April 1997, 7.

particularly to its coastal and urban areas. Dalmatian Action's first president, Đermano Senjanović, served approximately one year, followed by Mira Ljubić-Lorger, who served until the party was removed from the official register of political parties by the Croatian government in 2003. The party defended human rights, minority recognition, free media, and a socially conscious market economy (Erceg and Pekorari 1999, 5; Milas and Rimac 1994, 20). It promoted a distinct Dalmatian identity (Banovac 1997, 31) aligned with Western European regionalism, calling for Croatia's regionalization and decentralization.[12]

From the start, the party stirred controversy, particularly with its 19 May 1991 "no" vote on Croatia's independence referendum.[13] It claimed that the Serbian rebellion could be quelled if the Yugoslav federation remained intact. Barring that, decentralization and regionalization would guarantee the autonomy initially demanded by the moderate leaders of what would become the Republic of Serbian Krajina.[14] To assuage fears, Senjanović distanced the party from Serbian rebels, claiming the JNA and militias in hinterland Dalmatia were tools of Belgrade centralism, just as Zagreb nationalists had used the referendum to secure Croatian centralism.[15] The party's resistance to HDZ centralization was seen by many Croats as playing into the hands of the Republic of Serbian Krajina and Milošević's Serbia. This rhetoric allowed the HDZ and nationalists to label the party as *Četnik* cat's paws, separatists, Italian irredentists, and anti-Croatian.[16]

The DA's only major electoral success came in the first post-independence election on 2 August 1992, when it secured, in coalition with other regionalist parties, a single seat in the Croatian parliament's (*Sabor*) lower house.[17] Though the DA won a few regional and city seats in the 1990s, its numbers were too low to matter politically.[18] Part of the reason for these disastrous results and the party's eventual delisting was a series of political blunders and scandals. One of the earliest of these was the 28 September 1993 bombing of DA's Split office. Law enforcement,

12 Ivančić, Viktor. "Demokracija u koloru." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 2 June 1991, 14. It also touted opposition to violence of all kinds, claiming antifascist bone fides (Erceg 1999, 5).

13 Ivančić. "Demokracija u koloru," 14. This stance alienated a number of moderate Croats, who otherwise supported some elements of the party's platform.

14 "Zašto smo protiv." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 16 May 1991, 6 and Profaca, Ivica. "Hrvatska može biti simpatična i svijetu." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 14 July 1992, 7.

15 "Zašto smo protiv," 6.

16 Ivančić. "Demokracija u koloru," 14.

17 "Broj i postotak stranačkih zastupnika u Hrvatskome saboru od 1992. do 2001. godine." Parlamentarne stranke. Croatian Information–Documentation Referral Agency. https://web.archive.org/web/20110927071821/http://www.hidra.hr/cro/politicke_stranke/parlamentarne_stranke/zastupljenost_stranaka_u_saboru (accessed 25 February 2025).

18 For Dalmatian election results, see Lamza-Posavec 1996, 196, and Deren-Antoljak 1993, as well as the newspaper articles mentioned above in footnote no. 11.

supposedly working on a tip that the party had destroyed its own offices, arrested a number of members, including Srećko Lorger, husband of the DA president. According to Mira Ljubić-Lorger, the HDZ and prosecution used the bombing to paint the party as criminal and anti-state.[19]

By 1995, the DA was seen as a party of criminals and cranks. A former spokesperson accused Ljubić-Lorger of using the party for self-promotion, a claim widely believed by the Dalmatian electorate. Furthermore, the same person called the DA president a tyrannical, Yugonostalgic, leftist leader–educator–ideologue.[20] The vice-president of the DA at the time attempted to refute these claims by suggesting the accuser was merely a foil for the HDZ, frustrated with her lack of advancement in the party.[21]

Whether accurate or not, these criticisms were echoed in interviews and casual conversations during my 2001 fieldwork in Dalmatia. For example, a former member of Dalmatian Action, K. T., claimed that in 1992, she worked diligently to ensure the DA coalition passed the electoral threshold to gain a seat in the *Sabor*. She claimed that after the election, Ljubić-Lorger, despite having won a seat, was extremely angry with the results and emotionally berated some of the party members she felt had not met her expectations.[22] Another former member said such behavior was typical and contributed to DA's low membership numbers. He laughingly related that when Ljubić-Lorger was unseated in 1995, she went back to zodiac readings and daily horoscopes, an activity "that no serious person would do or believe in".[23] Many others related this same idea in much the same way to discredit her.

Throughout the 1990s and into 2000, Ljubić-Lorger offered a number of excuses to explain the failure of the regionalist movement.[24] She argued that opposition parties discredited the DA,[25] the media restricted its message, and the ruling HDZ held too much power.[26] However, she also provided some credible explanations for the decline in Dalmatian regionalism. First, she recognized the rural/urban divide in electoral support in the 1990s, emphasizing that the HDZ had a poor showing in

19 Gaura, Orhidea. "Ljudi koje je 90-ih trebalo ukloniti." *Nacional: Dnevno Online Izdanje* 741, 26 January 2010. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/76462/ljudi-koje-je-90-ih-trebalo-ukloniti (accessed 15 February 2025).

20 Vukman, Zoran. "Dalmatinsku Akciju uništila je Mira Lorger!" *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 4 October 1995, 9.

21 Kečkemet, Radovan. "Četvrti član 'četveročkne bande'." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 16 October 1995, 10.

22 Interview with K. T., Split, 17 March 2001.

23 Interview with I. I., Split, 17 March 2001.

24 Ljubić-Lorger, Mira. "Dalmacija ponovo pred izborima." *Glas Dalmacije*. February–April 1999, 1-2.

25 Ljubić-Lorger, Mira. "Izvan kruga podobnih (Pregovori, izbori, činjenice)." *Glas Dalmacije*. Winter 2000, 1.

26 Ljubić-Lorger, "Izvan," 2 and 4.

larger cities compared to the hinterland, which had more direct experiences with the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Second, she identified how the Dalmatian subregions historically distrusted and rivalled one another, and how this impeded a unified effort in the political struggle against the ruling party. For example, during the war, urban regional centers, particularly Split, attempted "to impose [themselves] on other Dalmatian cities", all of which had traditions "of campanilism [parochialism, or attachment to one's place of origin or residence]".[27] Ljubić-Lorger concluded it was no wonder the DA and regionalism never gained traction.[28]

Other factors also hindered the party's growth. The dominance of the HDZ over the state and political system stifled political heterogeneity (Lučić 1998, 15). As Dejan Stjepanović argues, "ethnically legitimized substate political communities [in Yugoslavia] were frowned upon by central states that in most cases themselves used ethnic criteria for membership" (Stjepanović 2015, 1031), so identity hybridity presented a problem to ruling parties (Stjepanović 2015, 1035). When the DA sought to establish a multiethnic polity in the former Association of Municipalities of Dalmatia, the HDZ intervened (Stjepanović 2015, 1043). It gerrymandered Dalmatian counties into ahistorical subregions with Croatian majorities to "offset Krajina Serb secessionist attempts and also regionalisms in […] Dalmatia" (Stjepanović 2015, 1036).

The most relevant explanations for the DA's failure were the war, the ethnic cleansing of hinterland Croats, and the Republic of Serbian Krajina's proximity (Bellamy 2003, 125). Bellamy, citing an interview with Ivan Rimac, claims that "the war assisted the ruling party's quest for a homogenous Croatian nation. Those regions most exposed to the ravages of war, such as […] Dalmatia […] did not develop political identities that deviated from the Franjoist view of 'Croatianness'. These regions also tended to support the HDZ" until about 1999, because its "program focused solely on the protection of Croatian sovereignty and territorial integrity. To those who had first-hand experience of the violence that accompanied that threat to sovereignty, this issue overwhelmed all others" (Bellamy 2003, 128). This is what ultimately delegitimized regionalist arguments and policies (Stjepanović 2015, 1042-3).

Lingering Perceptions of National and Regional Identities in 21st-Century Dalmatia

Did perceptions of Dalmatian identity persist in the post-Tuđman period after his death in 1999? My respondents provide clues in answering this question. While the surveys

27 Ljubić-Lorger, "Izvan," 3.

28 Ljubić-Lorger, "Izvan," 3. Also see Bellamy 2003, 125.

represent a student population at a single point in time, some of their free-form responses were more than illuminating. For example, the 25 who primarily identified as Dalmatian had somewhat favorable or neutral views of the DA. Most of the disappointment directed toward this party stemmed from its poor showing in elections and the erratic behavior of its leadership. Of the regionalists, ten claimed support for or affiliation with the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (*Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske*, SDP), the successor party of the League of Communists of Croatia.

When asked what it meant to be Dalmatian, all of the 25 answered multicultural, urban, tolerant, and/or European – or some combination of these characteristics. Conversely, 23 suggested that nationalists, regardless of ethnicity, were intolerant, closed-minded, and/or ignorant. 15 bolstered their arguments with examples (albeit sometimes vague) about how Dalmatia was a meeting place of at least three different ethnic groups (Croatian, Serbian, and Italian), all of which generally got along, particularly in the port cities. Like Istrian regionalists in the 1990s (Ashbrook 2008), they linked themselves to Western traditions of tolerance, multiculturalism, and high culture. To some extent their opinions and explanations illustrated the continued presence of nesting Balkanisms, in which those individuals living to the north and west were described as more "cultured" and "civilized" than those living farther east and south (Ashbrook 2008; Bakić-Hayden 1995). To 14 of my respondents, purely national identities symbolized rural culture and intolerance, supposedly anathema to Western ideology and identity.[29]

Unsurprisingly, the more nationally oriented Croats and Serbs blamed the other group for the problems of the 1990s. The majority in both groups identified themselves as "defenders" of their respective peoples and expressed victimization at the hands of the other group. They justified these opinions through the prisms of both history and the more recent experiences of the war and its aftermath.[30] Serbs in the sample argued that the nationalist HDZ wanted a state of, by, and for Croats, in which Serbs would be second-class citizens or even forced out altogether. Though none supported the Republic of Serbian Krajina, the Serbian respondents understood why it had been formed. Five of the seven Serbs surveyed mentioned in some way their feeling of sadness or regret that Croatia's Serbian population had been reduced from a little over 12 % in 1991,[31] to approximately 4.5 % by 2001.[32]

29 Schäuble (2006) too saw this in her fieldwork in Croatia.

30 Schäuble (2006) too reported that hinterland Croats tended to describe themselves as "true Croats", offering images of themselves as fierce and courageous fighters, defenders of Catholicism and tradition, and the protectors of Christendom and of Europe.

31 Savezni zavod za statistiku. "Popis stanovništva SFRJ 1991. godine." Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1992.

32 Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske. "Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2001. godine." Zagreb: Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, 2002.

Curiously, the Serbian respondent from Rijeka volunteered that Serbs were a "warrior people", and more rural and "less cultured" than Croats. He insisted that this could be seen from the recent wars and the ethnic cleansing of their Croatian neighbors. He emphatically stated he did not support such actions and pointed out that his family had long resided in Rijeka and were a part of that city's culture. He also made it abundantly clear that as supporters of the SDP, he and his family rejected the HDZ and its anti-Serbian rhetoric.

Another interesting aspect that emerged in my survey and interviews was reminiscent of the World War II scenario analyzed by Bergholz (2016). A few respondents claimed that people they knew or neighbors of the other ethnicity had turned on them for various reasons, forcing them to surrender goods or money, and/or into leaving their homes. For example, and fairly representative of the responses, one hinterland Croat explained that her uncle and his family were expelled from Kijevo, one of the first Croatian villages to be ethnically cleansed by the rebelling Serbs and the JNA in 1991, by some local Serbs who were supposedly known ruffians. She herself fled from Drniš – the town that lent itself to the abovementioned metaphoric statements – that same year for a similar reason.[33] Others from the Dalmatian hinterland had similar stories or knew people that suffered much the same way. More often than not these experiences led some respondents (36) to support more nationalist-oriented parties at the time.

Nationalist Croats understandably distanced themselves from Serbs, often using language that reflected the region's longstanding rural/urban divide. However, what was striking was how similar their rhetoric was to that of Dalmatian regionalists when describing their fellow Croats. Other scholars have observed comparable patterns of differentiation in other contexts. For example, Marek Koter (1995, 11) argues that expressions of regional identity were often triggered or intensified by "catalyzers", such as a "feeling of menace resulting from an influx of foreign settlers [or] immigrants". While Koter was not specifically referring to internally displaced persons, in Dalmatia, many coastal city residents viewed the arrival of traumatized "rural" Croats as both destabilizing and threatening.

This perception was reflected in the sentiments of a self-proclaimed "moderate HDZ supporter", who repeatedly referred to the "unrefined" Croats, "who had lost everything". He claimed that with their arrival, violence and destitution in the city streets increased, and a tenor of suspicion and jingoism pervaded Split with an almost "Herzegovinian accent".[34] Similarly, in late spring 2001, a young woman who

33 Interview with I. P., Zadar, 2 April 2001.

34 Interview with S.K., Split, 18 April 2001. There is a common stereotype that Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina are ultranationalist, crude, violent, and often criminal in their behavior, thus this allusion to Herzegovina was pregnant with meaning.

strongly identified with her Dalmatian identity expressed her frustration using the abovementioned Drniš-related metaphor, remarking, "when Drniš came to the city, they were tired and hurt and angry. They argued with people who wanted Split to be an open, multicultural town. But what do you expect from a bunch of rubes (*seljaci*)?"[35]

For some, like this young woman, Dalmatian identity was associated with a number of positive attributes, all of which were typically related to urbanity. Multiculturalism was one of the most frequently evoked. Parallels, both cultural and historical, were drawn between Italian cities, principally Venice, and most of the ports of the eastern Adriatic, and historical "evidence" was given to suggest some kind of organic blending or hybridity that symbolized the region. This was a typical talking point for regionalists and their supporters. For example, Goran Rukavina, a reporter for the newspaper *Glas Dalmacije* in late 1999, argued that through language analysis it can clearly be seen that, in Dalmatia, two cultures, Romance and Slavic, coexisted and blended in many ways. While acknowledging the well-documented struggles between the two worlds, cooperation was, to him, by far the more common and reflected the true nature of a historically multicultural Dalmatia.[36]

Furthermore, coastal-dwelling Dalmatians expressed their belief that they were cultured, particularly in comparison to their hinterland conationals. They described this higher culture as akin to Western Europe and the Mediterranean, expressed in practice through their refinement, cleanliness, good education, and a deep appreciation of the arts. Such things were linked to "Europe" with its cosmopolitan values and disdain for what they perceived as "irrational", which included expressions of intolerance, religion, and "rural culture".[37]

But, as recognized by many scholars of politicized identities (Anderson 2016; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Gellner 2009; Said 1979; Todorova 2009; Wolff 1994), the most important factor when describing oneself is not so much what one is as what one *is not*. Easy targets arose in the self-proclaimed regionalists' and non-nationalists' description of Serbs as a group, as it had for the more nationally oriented Croats in the sample. But far more comparisons were made to hinterland Croats. Many interviewees described hinterland Croats as filthy with poor hygiene, suggesting this did not bother them as they were "used to the stench" in their villages.[38]

They were also widely described as uncouth, engaging in a number of habits that would bring shame to the average Dalmatian. Spitting, "pissing on the streets",

35 Interview with K. M., Split, 29 March 2001.

36 Rukavina, Goran. "Dalmatski jezik u svjetlu romansko-slavenskog suživota u Dalmaciji." *Glas Dalmacije*. October–November 1999, 29-32.

37 Interview with M.N., Zadar, 30 March 2001; interview with I.Ž., Split, 20 February 2001; interview with J.P., Zadar, 3 April 2001.

38 Interview with G.V., Split, 17 February 2001.

cursing,[39] and rude and violent behavior were just a few examples offered. Furthermore, they engaged in aggressive political arguments with their hosts, openly expressed disdain for effete urbanites, and called into question their hosts' manliness or sexuality.[40]

Similar opinions were also expressed by the abovementioned Srđan Vrcan in March 2001. Vrcan claimed that before the war, Split and other coastal ports were vibrant, multicultural, and bilingual (Serbo-Croatian in his words and Italian). According to him, Split was open, tolerant, and politically leftist with an intellectual spirit. It was a microcosm of the urbanity and multiculturality associated with Yugoslavism (also see Vrcan 2001, 97). In contrast, the hinterland was monocultural in that both the Serbian and Croatian communities self-segregated; thus, multiculturalism existed "only on a demographer's paper".[41] While the coast was distinctly Mediterranean (Italianate), the interior was rural Dinaric (Slavic), and ultimately two agonistic worlds existed: a traditional, rural Dinaric mentality promoting zero-sum cultural conflict versus an urban, Mediterranean, modern spirit. According to Vrcan, by the late 1990s, the rural mentality had prevailed in Dalmatia.[42]

Vrcan too claimed that once the Serbian rebellion was in full swing, the Dinaric world flooded into the Mediterranean one. He claimed that, almost overnight, the urbane nature of Split was challenged by conationals who began a slow process of "ruralization" of the coastal cities. Rural Dalmatians and Herzegovinans moved into dilapidated central buildings, some of which had been abandoned by the city's prewar Serbian population, detracting from the urbanity and culture of the city, changing its "spirit", and threatening its identity. Vrcan described the city of 2001 as "monocultural, monoethnic, and unilingual", he too using the phrase "Drniš on the sea".[43]

In the same interview, Vrcan maintained that the outsiders also brought their "alien" political nationalism. Because of this the parties of the left, including the SDP and the DA, were marginalized. In election cycles, even inside the city, voters chose the HDZ, something that would have been unthinkable had circumstances been normal.[44] In his writings, he described this focus on nationalism by the HDZ as a "thinning" of politics, as everything had to be seen through the prisms of ethnicity and ethnic struggle (Vrcan 2001, 97). Any resistance to Zagreb's policies, including the

39 In some ways this was rich because I heard some Dalmatian respondents curse like sailors in the presence of a stranger on more than one occasion.

40 Interview with S.U., Split, 7 March 2001; interview with J.D., Zadar, 4 April 2001.

41 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001.

42 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001. Also see Vrcan, Srđan. "Dvije duše Dalmacije." *Glas Dalmacije*, Winter 2000, 38.

43 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001.

44 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001.

challenges of the regionalist parties in Istria and Dalmatia, was labelled secessionist and traitorous (also see Pusić 1995, 8; Tadej 1994).[45] Because of this, the regional movement was stigmatized in Dalmatia and expressions of Croatian nationality and nationalism dominated the political and social spheres of the region throughout the 1990s.[46]

Conclusion

Drniš experienced two major waves of ethnic cleansing during the Croatian War of Independence, resulting in a dramatic demographic transformation. The first occurred in September 1991, when Serbian militias and paramilitary units, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), captured the town and its surrounding areas. Following Drniš's occupation, Croats were expelled, their homes looted or destroyed, and many properties given to Serbian settlers. Subsequently, Drniš was incorporated into the self-declared Republic of Serbian Krajina for nearly four years. The second phase of ethnic cleansing took place in August 1995, when the Croatian Army (*Hrvatska vojska*, HV) launched Operation Storm (*Oluja*) and retook the Krajina. With the collapse of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, over 90 % of the Serbian population fled, seeking refuge in Bosnia and Serbia, fearing reprisals or forced displacement. The aftermath of these events led to a significant depopulation. By 2001, Drniš's population had fallen from 24,169 (in 1991) to just 8,595. Even though many expelled Croats returned, the total population and demographic balance shifted sharply, with Croats becoming the overwhelming majority – growing from 77.5 % in 1991 to 91.16 % in 2001, while the Serbian population declined from 20.6 % to just 7.63 %.[47] These events reflect the broader ethnic realignment that took place in Croatia following the war.

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45 Croatian nationalists and parties continually made this point throughout the 1990s. See Lalić, Dražen. "Protiv promjena granica." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 4 April 1991, 23; Jelić, N. "Regionalizam je patološka pojava." *Glas Istre*. 19 October 1995, 4; Plevnik, Danko. "Svehrvatska ravnoteža." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 13 February 1993, 3; Mandić, Vlado. "Istra je itekako Hrvatska." *Glas Istre*. 26 May 1991, 2; Aljinović, Silvije. "Politički ekskluzivizam." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 19 October 1995, 18; Ramljak, Olga. "Doživotni presjednik? Ne pada mi na pamet!" *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 7 October 1995, 3; "Srce za Croatiju." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 7 January 1990, 3; Bonković, I. "Neopterećene i mlade u Sabor." *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 15 July 1992, 24; and Gabrić, Anđelko. "Kakvo kameleonstvo Dalmatinske akcije!" *Slobodna Dalmacija*. 19 May 1991, 19.

46 Interview with Srđan Vrcan, Split, 9 March 2001.

47 For these demographic shifts, see *"Popis stanovništva SFRJ 1991. Godine"* for information on the prewar numbers; and "*Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2001. godine: Rezultati za Republiku Hrvatsku*" for the postwar numbers.

This demographic transformation was closely linked to the rise of nationalist politics in Dalmatia during the 1990s. The proximity of the war, the decrease of ethnic diversity since World War II, and the delegitimization of the regionalist movement contributed to this shift. Unlike in Istria, Dalmatians did not have the luxury of distance from the war; thus, many Dalmatian Croats, including those from traditionally left-leaning coastal cities, believed that the only realistic way to ensure their security was to support the HDZ and embrace national unity.[48]

However, this "unity" trope was specious in that divisions among Croats mirrored the national debates of the time. Once rural displaced persons flooded coastal cities, divisions were increasingly expressed between conationals. The nationalists and hinterland Croats often described their city cousins as effete and ultimately dangerous, on the grounds that those expressing regional identities supposedly supported the partition of Croatian territory or were pawns of revanchist Italians, Serbs, or Montenegrins.

To demonize their opponents, the HDZ-controlled media "brand[ed] regionalists as remnants of the old regime – Yugonostalgics or traitors, whose divisive politics threatened the national war effort".[49] They derided the regionalists as crackpots and enemies, intimidating the DA's leadership and discrediting regionalism. Thus, the HDZ defeated the regional party since it "failed to withstand the pressure and by 1995 had receded to the margins of national, regional, and even local politics".[50]

The reasons for the collapse of the regional movement in Dalmatia were manifold. Geographic limitations, historic divisions between the coastal cities and hinterland, the rural/urban divide between the coastal urban centers and hinterland, the pressures of the war and Serbian rebellion, and the failure of the DA to maintain voter trust all contributed to this failure. Though showing potential in the first two years of the 1990s, the regional movement succumbed to the pressures of the war and the tactics of the ruling HDZ.

What emerged in the 1990s was two major competing concepts of Dalmatian identity (though there are many others), in which the more nationalist hinterland Croats generally championed the position that Dalmatia was a Croatian space. Furthermore, to be Dalmatian meant to be a tougher, more loyal Croat than those living elsewhere who did not experience the war so intensely. In contrast, many members of the coastal and urban Croatian population interpreted Dalmatianness as not necessarily national, but instead as a hybrid identity closely associated with

48 Magosci (2002, 158) estimates that approximately 150,000 Serbs fled from the Krajina with only a third returning by 2000.

49 Antulov. "Regionalism in Croatia: Between Tradition and Reality."

50 Antulov. "Regionalism in Croatia: Between Tradition and Reality."

historical multiculturality (real or imagined) and exclusively with urbanity and cosmopolitanism. In the end, the national movement clearly outpaced and delegitimized the regional one.

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Bionote

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