

SYMBOLS AND NATION-STATE: LEGAL REGULATION OF SYMBOLS OF POWER OF CROATIA FROM MID OF THE 19TH CENTURY TO 1990

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies and analyzes the medieval roots of the modern Croatian symbols of power, their modeling and regulation in the 19th century and re-shaping in the dynamic context of the 20th century up to the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, and the respective regulation currently in force. This study shows how medieval symbols of the land were transferred by selection and reinterpretation into symbols of the nation and nation-state.

KEYWORDS

*symbols of power of Croatia
Croatian state symbols
Croatian coat of arms
Croatian flag
Croatian anthem
nation building
state building*

1. Introduction

One of the specificities of the interrelated processes of nation-building and state-building in Europe is their entanglement with symbols and myths that embody the identity and community of a particular nation and state.² Nations become visible through symbols and thereby manifest the right to a certain territory and their own political identity and independence.³ It was Anthony D. Smith in particular who indicated how modern nationalism, confronted with challenges of modernity, revealed the heritage of the past through the reinterpretation of symbols, myths, memories, and values from

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2 | Sinclair, 2007, p. 2.

3 | Elgenius, 2011, pp. 2, 3.



ethno-history.⁴ Other studies following the same trail have also underlined the importance of symbols as a kind of markers of nation-building.⁵

Based on this, we will reconstruct and analyze the regulation of the symbols of power of Croatia—coat of arms, flag, and anthem—from the beginning of the Croatian nation- and state-building in the first half of the 19th century up to the contemporary regulation of the state symbols of the Republic of Croatia passed by the Croatian Parliament in December 1990. Our focal approach will therefore be a legal-historical one that avoids the detailed description of symbols and iconographic characteristic of heraldic research. The main research issues are the origin and meaning of the symbols of power of Croatia in the formative period of Croatian nation- and state-building, changes in the principal symbols of power through time and their reasons, the content and forms of the regulations of these symbols, and the meaning of contemporary Croatian symbols of power and their relations with the past.

This study is focused on the modern Croatian symbols of power. The full understanding of these symbols demands a brief reconstruction of their medieval origins, followed by a presentation of the emergence and regulation of national and official symbols of power in the 19th and 20th century, up to the establishment of the Croatian state symbols in 1990.

2. Territorial framework and symbolic antecedents

The territory of the early medieval Croatian Kingdom from the River Drava to the Adriatic Sea included the core of the state (Croatia), the associated peripheral Pannonian region (Slavonia), and the coastal cities acquired from Byzantium (Dalmatia). The official title of this kingdom from the middle of the 11th century was *Regnum Croatiae et Dalmatiae*.⁶ The Arpad kings, who assumed the royal power over that area at the beginning of the 12th century, kept the names Dalmatia and Croatia in their official title even though they used the unofficial name *Sclavonia* for the whole area and avoided the term *regnum*.⁷ In any case, each of these three areas had its own organization of local government, and as a result of various determinations the terms *Regnum Croatiae* and *Regnum Dalmatiae* emerged from the mid-14th century.⁸ Finally, *Regnum Slavoniae* was included in the title of the King as the entire area between the Drava and Sava Rivers in the first half of the 16th century.⁹

The coat of arms of Dalmatia was the first to be recorded in these lands, at the end of the 14th century. It consisted of three crowned golden lion's (leopard's) heads with red tongues on a blue shield, and it was used as a symbol of the whole Croatian-Dalmatian Kingdom, that is, *Sclavonia*.¹⁰ However, at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the

4 | Smith, 1998, pp. 223–224.

5 | Elgenius, 2011, p. 1.

6 | Božić and Ćosić, 2021, p. 60.

7 | To suppress earlier traditions, the Arpads put Dalmatia in the first place, which was passed on by the Angevins. Božić and Ćosić, 2021, pp. 49–51, 60; Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 28.

8 | Beuc, 1985, pp. 93–94.

9 | *Ibid.*, p. 159.

10 | Božić and Ćosić, 2021, pp. 33, 103; Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 20.

16th century, new coats of arms appeared that reflected the changes of meaning of the existing coats of arms.¹¹ Thus, between 1490 and 1495, the 'checkered' coat of arms of Croatia with 4×4 white-red fields and an initial white field appeared in Tyrol and Innsbruck, probably as a symbol of the area claimed by Maximilian Habsburg by hereditary right.¹² After the introduction of that coat of arms, the Habsburgs used the coat of arms with three lion heads exclusively as the regional symbol of Dalmatia.¹³ Soon, Wladislaw II Jagiello, in response to Maximilian's heraldic challenge, confirmed in 1496 the coat of arms of *Regnum Slavoniae* as the area between the Drava and the Sava. It consisted of two horizontal silver bars (later blue), between which was a red field (later white) with a marten and a six-pointed star in the upper right quadrant.¹⁴ Thus, toward the end of the 15th century, the former single area of the King's rule between the Drava and the sea was broken into the three *regna* of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, represented by three different coats of arms.¹⁵

However, the pendulum of history swung back to the other side. The Ottoman conquests in the first decades of the 16th century significantly narrowed and condensed the territory of the Habsburg's Croatia and Slavonia, instigating the unification of their two aristocratic diets into a single Diet, and the already existing jurisdiction of the Slavonic ban over the both areas was made a permanent institution. Together with the unification of the institutions, the unified name for the area kingdoms (less often: Kingdom) of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia began to be used as the official title of the King and ban.¹⁶ Accordingly, the coats of arms of the three *regna* began to be presented next to each other, and at the beginning of the 17th century, the unified coat of arms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia appeared.¹⁷ Moreover, the three lands were perceived as a single political area despite the administrative separation of Dalmatia.¹⁸

The unification of symbols in that proto-national period was to be transformed in the 19th century into the symbolic basis of the Croatian national integration movement.

11 | Božić and Čosić, 2021, p. 63.

12 | The coat of arms of Croatia on the wall of the mansion in Innsbruck was presented on a separate shield, and then together with the coats of arms of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and the Counts of Cilli, whose territories Maximilian Habsburg expected to gain on the ground of inheritance. The checkered shield symbolized the fortified wall and probably referred to Croatia's position as *antemurale Christianitatis*. Božić and Čosić, 2021, pp. 67–69, 94 et seq.; Jareb, 2010, pp. 14–15.

13 | On the older Croatian symbol (a hand with a sword) that became the coat of arms of Bosnia, see in Božić and Čosić, 2021, pp. 53 et seq., 66–67. See also Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 35.

14 | Božić and Čosić, 2021, pp. 86–88.

15 | Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, pp. 48–49 et seq.

16 | To justify the inclusion of Dalmatia in the King's title, the coastal area from municipality of Bakar to the Zrmanja River, as well as part of its hinterland, was sometimes called Dalmatia. Beuc, 1985, p. 159; Jareb, 2010, pp. 28–29.

17 | The coats of arms were provided with a schematized crown or the crown of St. Stephen. Jareb, 2010, pp. 29–30.

18 | Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, pp. 89–90.

3. Formation of the Croatian symbols of power in the nineteenth century

The Croatian national integration movement, which influenced the formation of the Croatian symbols of power, arose as part of the Illyrian movement. The Illyrian Party formed this movement with a program of the national unification of the Illyrians, that is, South Slavic peoples, as well as the political unification of the Croatian lands within Illyrian unification.¹⁹ However, Serbs and Slovenes did not accept Illyrian ideas; thus, the movement was reduced to its Croatian core and soon turned into a Croatian national integration movement. As part of its efforts, the Illyrian party created the Illyrian coat of arms as the umbrella symbol of the Illyrian people, which depicted the alleged symbols of the Illyrian deities in the form of a white crescent and a yellow star on a red shield.²⁰ This coat of arms was often displayed on profane objects of a wide use—e.g., coffee cups, playing cards, and bags—together with the related coats of arms of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia, or just with the checkered Croatian coat of arms as a pan-Croatian symbol.²¹ In this way, the previously aristocratic symbols acquired democratic legitimacy and became part of the modern national integration symbolism.²²

Although some bans of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia—which were the highest dignitaries of the country and a symbol of its (virtual) integrity and autonomy—displayed their combined coats of arms on the red flags, official symbols of the country did not exist.²³ However, these flags were a symbol of the ban's honor, that is, a symbol of the function, and not of the country. A significant step forward would come with the appearance of the national tricolor flag and its merger with the 'triune' coat of arms and their use in official protocols.

The Croatian national tricolor with horizontal red-white-blue fields was derived from the characteristic colors of the Croatian, Slavonian, and Dalmatian coats of arms.²⁴ It appeared in 1848 as a symbol of the nation and freedom, modeled after the already existing tricolors in Europe.²⁵ It was a new and modern symbol that represented the nation; at the same time, it connected it to the entire national heritage and virtual historical borders. This was in accordance with the two-dimensional national-integration concept of the time based on the historical right, which embodied lands that once formed the medieval Croatian Kingdom, and on the national right, which embodied the single ethnic community in three regions.²⁶

In the middle of the tricolor, the connected coats of arms of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia crowned by the Illyrian coat of arms was inserted. It was first used by lieutenant field marshal Josip Jelačić during his ceremonial installation as ban in 1848.²⁷ We consider

19 | Banac, 1991, p. 24.

20 | *Ibid.*; Jareb, 2010, pp. 53–54.

21 | Jareb, 2010, p. 53; Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 142.

22 | Banac, 1991, pp. 24–25.

23 | Borošak–Marijanović, 1996, p. 50.

24 | *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

25 | *Ibid.*; Elgenius, 2011, pp. 4–5.

26 | Čepulo, 2019, p. 5.

27 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 57–58.

that occasion the birthplace of the modern Croatian symbols of power. The use of the tricolor coat of arms and flag on official occasions continued after Jelačić, making them *via facti* the official symbols of the Kingdoms of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia—the name that was frequently used in official communication and interchangeably used with the original name Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia. Due to the perception of that area as a single national space, the official name of the land was soon substituted in public communication and part of the official communication with the term ‘the Triune Kingdom’, which emphasized the political singularity of that space. Apart from that, the name Croatia was used as a synonym for the autonomous Croatia-Slavonia and as a synonym for the Triune Kingdom.²⁸ Nevertheless, despite their broad public reception, neither of these names was accepted as an official term.

An attempt to officially regulate the symbols of power already appeared in 1848 but was not realized due to the political turbulence of the time. In the spring or summer of 1848, a Draft Constitution was submitted to the legislative committee of the Croatian State Diet, whose Article 135 provided for the red-white-blue-black as the state colors and for the coat of arms consisting of the Illyrian coat of arms and the coats of arms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia.²⁹ This proposal was not accepted, and new proposals were not submitted after the dissolution of the Diet in early July 1848. The four-color flag probably had no chance to be accepted next to the widely accepted tricolor,³⁰ yet such a proposal reminds us that 1848 was still a formative period of modern symbols.³¹

Further initiatives were prevented by the 1849 centralist March Constitution and open absolutism introduced in 1853. The imperial decree of September 10 1852, prohibited the use of the national tricolor due to its lack of official or historical legitimacy and provided for the mandatory use of the imperial red-yellow flag and the separate flags of Croatia (red-white) and Slavonia (blue-white).³² The turbulent period of the provisional constitution from 1860 to 1867 was also not favorable for the official regulation of symbols of the country, whose status in the Monarchy was not entirely clear. Still, the absence of any regulatory attempt on the Croatian side in this period is surprising considering the strong emphasis on state-building of the Croatian Diet of 1861³³—it would seem that state-building in this period was more substantively oriented, with the regulation of *de facto* already accepted symbols³⁴ left aside. Importantly, all ‘triune’ coats of arms used

28 | Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 23.

29 | Kolanović, 2001, pp. 548–564.

30 | Jareb, 2010, p. 58.

31 | Actors from that era show uncertainty about colors, so the Ban Jelačić described the tricolor as white-red-blue even though he used a red-white-blue flag at the installation, and the imperial decree from 1852 forbade the use of a blue-red-white flag. However, considering the widespread use of the red-white-blue flag it is generally accepted that it had become a national symbol already by 1848. Borošak–Marijanović, 1996, p. 52, footnote 83.

32 | Gross, 1985, p. 81.

33 | Čepulo, 2006, pp. 61–63.

34 | A slightly modified version of the Jelačić flag from 1848 was used at the Ban Josip Šokčević’s installation in 1860, the Rijeka County included the tricolor and checkered coat of arms in its coat of arms, and the triune coat of arms was printed on the official editions of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia. Eugen Kvaternik, the opposition deputy in the Diet of 1861, proposed that the Croatian Home Guard should fight under the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom and the national tricolor. Borošak–Marijanović, 1996, p. 49; Jareb, 2010, p. 64; Kolak Bošnjak et al., 2018, p. 221.

from 1860 to 1867 were crowned with a schematized or Austrian crown but never with the crown of St. Stephen.³⁵

The first regulation of the coat of arms and flag of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia was provided in lapidary form only by the sub-dual Croatian-Hungarian Settlement in 1868. It provided that 'in autonomous affairs within the borders of the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia, coats of arms of the kingdoms with the crown of St. Stephen, shall be used'.³⁶ The settlement also provided for the viewing of the 'united flag of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia' at the building of the Hungarian Diet at the time when it discussed their common affairs.³⁷ Yet, the settlement did not describe the images of these symbols—most likely because they were perceived as already determined, as suggested by the formulation of united colors and coat of arms. One might expect that the autonomous Croatian legislation would soon regulate detailed images of these symbols—but this did not happen. We assume that due to the factual acceptance of these symbols, their more detailed legal arrangement was not perceived as an urgent issue at the time when the modernization of government was of primary importance.³⁸

A shift occurred in 1876 during the administration of ban Ivan Mažuranić (1873–1880), who aimed at raising the capacities of Croatian-Slavonian autonomy and at turning Croatia-Slavonia into a kind of liberal state-like structure based on the French model of state and nation.³⁹ Only his government, 26 years after abolishing absolutism, noticed that traffic signs in some parts of Croatia-Slavonia were still painted in colors prescribed during the absolutism, and immediately ordered their removal and replacement with official colors.⁴⁰ Yet the official colors to which the respective bylaw referred were not provided by any regulation.

That obvious legal lacuna was finally filled by the new decree of the same Home Government of November 16, 1876.⁴¹ It repeated the content of the previous decree⁴² and prescribed the mandatory order of official colors (red-white-blue) on traffic signs. It also prescribed the mandatory use of the official coat of arms and prohibited any other order of colors and use of the Croatian and Slavonic flags from the period of absolutism as well as the individual use of Croatian or Slavonian coat of arms. An integral part of that regulation was the description of the official country's coat of arms, supplemented with the artistic representations of the coat of arms, flag, and traffic signs. The coat of arms consisted of a shield with the coat of arms of Croatia in the upper left field, Dalmatia in the upper right field, and Slavonia below them, with the crown of St. Stephen above the shield. The artistic presentation indicated that the coat of arms of Croatia had 5×5 fields with an initial red field. The regulation did not describe the flag, but the artistic presentation

35 | Jareb, 2010, p. 66.

36 | Art. 61.

37 | For the Croatian-Hungarian Compromise see in Bojničić (ed.), 1911, pp. 3–87; Art. 63.

38 | The installation of the Ban Levin Rauch in 1869 was undertaken under the traditional ban flag with the coat of arms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia provided with the crown of Saint Stephen above it. This individual act rather indicated inertia in the use of the (unregulated) traditional symbols than their regulation. See Szabo, 1934, p. 163.

39 | Čepulo, 2019, pp. 61 et seq.

40 | Kosnica, 2019, p. 196.

41 | Naredba broj 18.307 o izgledu grba i zastave.

42 | It seems that the previous decree was rather ineffective in practice. Kosnica, 2019, p. 197.

showed a tricolor without a coat of arms, with Illyrian symbols on top of the banner. The absence of the coat of arms from the flag is surprising, but it was perhaps a way to avoid displaying the crown of St. Stephen on the Croatian flag while the banner incorporated a folk (Illyrian) symbol. In contrast, such a solution indicates that the country's coat of arms was not yet fully stabilized as a standard part of the flag.

The November 16 1876 decree also served as the legal basis for banning the display of flags and coats of arms of other countries. It was the ground on which the Croatian authorities requested that the local authorities of the Greek-Eastern Church, that is, the Serbian Orthodox Church, remove the red-blue-white flag—that was both the flag of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Principality of Serbia—and remove the coat of arms of the Principality of Serbia painted on the church roof.⁴³ Apart from that, Mažuranić's government passed a decree in 1878 ordering the mandatory use of a red-white-blue thread for office materials and forbidding the use of white-blue and blue-yellow thread.⁴⁴

The decrees of the Mažuranić government were aimed toward the integration of the country as a single community of all its members, based on the Croatian cultural identity—language, state traditions, and symbols—and against particularization based on the historical ground. Any future Home Government would not repeat such concentration on symbols. Yet it seems that the aforementioned regulation did not succeed in its main goal, which was the standardization of the symbols. Croatia's checkered coat of arms, with an initial white field, was painted in 1878 on the roof of St. Mark's church, which stands directly between the Ban's Palace and the Palace of the Diet. Bogoslav Šulek claimed in his 1883 book *The Croatian Constitution* that the Croatian coat of arms consisted of 40 fields.⁴⁵

Still, the description of the coat of arms in the November 16 1876 decree probably served as the model for the 1887 bill on the use by authorized private law subjects of the coat of arms of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia.⁴⁶ This bill was probably intended to be a Croatian *lex specialis*, given that in 1883 the Hungarian Diet passed a law regulating the use of the coat of arms of the lands of the crown of St. Stephen and the land's coat of arms (i.e., Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian)—neither of which was described in that law. The Hungarian Diet empowered the Minister-President of the Hungarian State Government to grant such permissions in exchange for a prior ban opinion.⁴⁷ The Croatian bill, however, bound the use of the coat of arms of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia to the permission of the Home Government and the ban, which was inconsistent with the 1883 law. The Croatian law was accepted in the Croatian Diet and sent for the King's approval, but it was not published in the official gazette, which indicates that it was not approved—possibly owing to the conflict of competences.⁴⁸

43 | Kosnica, 2019, pp. 197–199.

44 | *Ibid.*, p. 198.

45 | Šulek, 1883, p. 82.

46 | Art. 1 of that bill referred to paragraph 61 of the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement and then described the coat of arms of the Kingdoms in the same way as the decree of 1876. The use of the coat of arms was subject to the permission of the Croatian Home Government. The use of the coat of arms contrary to this regulation was defined a misdemeanor punishable by a prison term of up to two months or a fine of up to 300 florins (Art. 10). *Zakon o porabi grba kraljevina Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije*.

47 | Zakonski članak XV:1883. zajedničkoga hrvatsko-ugarskoga sabora.

48 | Art. 9 of the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement proclaimed the regulation of trademarks and intellectual property to be part of the common jurisdiction and therefore part of the exclusive competence of the Hungarian Diet.

Although the Croatian Home Government occasionally consulted heraldic experts on the regulation of symbols, nothing was done, and different versions of the flag and coat of arms continued to be used in practice.⁴⁹ That prompted the ban Ivan Skerlec to pass a new decree on the flag and coat of arms in 1914. This decree referred to the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement and to the November 16 1876 decree. It provided for the mandatory use of a red-white-blue flag with the coat of arms of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia in the middle and the crown of St. Stephen above it—even though it was not in accordance with the image of the flag without the coat of arms in the November 16 1876 decree. The 1914 decree stipulated that anyone could use this flag, provided that they did so in a proper manner; it did not provide sanctions.⁵⁰ The tricolor and the triune coat of arms were widely used in public as national symbols, but the latter was gradually being substituted by the checkered Croatian coat of arms as an all-Croatian national symbol.⁵¹

Along with the design of the coat of arms and the flag, the song 'Our Beautiful Homeland' was emerging as the Croatian national anthem. The song was probably composed in 1846 based upon the lyrics of Antun Mihanović's 1835 patriotic pastoral 'Croatian Homeland',⁵² which was particularly popularized in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Already in the 19th century, the text of the song was treated as a kind of public property and linguistically and stylistically corrected, but it was also subject to politically motivated changes that more clearly delimited the borders of the homeland and promoted the Croatian nation.⁵³ The Union of Croatian Singing Societies proposed in 1907 that the Croatian Diet proclaim the song as an official anthem, but the proposal was not considered under the political turbulence of the time.⁵⁴

4. Croatian symbols in the Yugoslav kingdom

The First World War opened the possibility of South Slavic unification. However, the founding of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs in the South Slavic areas of Austria-Hungary, with its center in Zagreb, had only a provisional significance because, based on the circumstances of the time, that unit had no option other than an urgent unification

49 | The differences regarded the position of the Dalmatian and Croatian coats of arms, the initial red or white field, the flag with or without the coat of arms, and the use of the Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian coat of arms or the checkered Croatian coat of arms. Jareb, 2010, pp. 88–90, 99.

50 | Jareb, 2020, pp. 99–100.

51 | Božić and Čosić, 2021, p. 104; Jareb, 2010, pp. 120, 125.

52 | The song 'Our Beautiful Homeland' was noted down and published in Zagreb in 1862, but oral tradition suggests that it was composed in 1846 by Josif Runjanin, an Austrian Army cadet of Serbian-Orthodox origin. Tomašek, 1990, pp. 30–35, 47–48.

53 | The song 'Croatian Homeland' originally described an idyllic land where two dominant rivers, the Sava and the Danube, convey to the world the Croats' love for their homeland. Yet, in 1862 the Drava River, the border with Hungary, was added, thus more clearly delimiting territory of the homeland, while the word home was replaced with people into the 'Croat loves his people'. Tomašek, 1990, pp. 66–70.

54 | Tomašek, 1990, pp. 87–89.

with the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is understandable that through its one-month duration, that state did not even try to define its symbols.⁵⁶

The projected unification of the South Slavic parts of the former Austria-Hungary with the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro was based on the idea of a single three-named Serbian-Croatian-Slovene nation with a common language.⁵⁷ That concept was expressed in the Corfu Declaration of 1917, which laid the foundations for the organization of the future Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes with the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty on the throne. The declaration provided for the single coat of arms, single flag, and single crown of the future state composed of the existing symbols, but it also granted the equality of individual Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian flags and coats of arms and their free use on all occasions.⁵⁸

Serbia, which annexed Montenegro immediately before unification—proclaimed on December 1, 1918—used its dominant position to dictate unification into a strictly centralized state. The Serbian traditions and government model would be extended to the new state, and in reality, it would function as an expanded Serbia with the hegemonic position of Serbs as a nation of liberators and unifiers.⁵⁹

The new state's provisional coat of arms and flag were already provided in December 1918⁶⁰ and were regulated in the Constitution from 1921. The basis of the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was derived from the coat of arms of the former Kingdom of Serbia with a double-headed eagle in flight and a crown of Karađorđević above it. The shield placed in the middle of the chest of a double-headed eagle consisted of three ethnic symbols: 1) the Serbian coat of arms—a white cross on a red field with four fire strikers—in the left third of the shield; 2) the Croatian checkered coat of arms with 25 red fields, starting with a red field in the right third of the shield,⁶¹ and 3) the three golden six-pointed stars and a white crescent on a blue shield as the Slovenian coat of arms below them. The state flag was defined as a blue-white-red horizontal tricolor, which contained the colors of the three national flags but was not identical to any of them.⁶²

By 1918, the Croatian 'checkered' coat of arms had become a widely accepted Croatian national symbol. It was adopted by the new regime as symbol of Croats and not as a symbol of some territory. Thus, the symbolic-conceptual shift from the previous dominant historical-territorial denomination toward ethnic denomination occurred in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. From that time onward, the 'checkered'

55 | Goldstein, 2011, p. 111.

56 | The Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian flag and coat of arms continued to be used in Croatia-Slavonia, now without the crown of St. Stephen. Jareb, 2010, p. 174.

57 | Such concept was in the spirit of the then fashionable principle of self-determination of people, regardless of the fact that the branches of the three-named people did not share a common memory of the past, nor the myths and symbols characteristic of a nation. Comp. Ramet, 2009, p. 75.

58 | Corfu Declaration see in Šišić, 1920, pp. 96–99.

59 | Banac, 1984, p. 142; Ramet, 2009, pp. 77–78.

60 | Jareb, 2010, p. 166.

61 | The first image of the Croatian coat of arms proposed by the government structured the fields in the form of a double white cross that resembled the white cross of the Serbian coat of arms or even the double cross of the Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarchate. This solution caused outrage among the Croatian public, after which a traditional solution was proposed. Jareb, 2020, pp. 167–168; Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 176.

62 | Comp. Art. 2 of the Ustav Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca.

coat of arms remained the exclusive Croatian symbol of power in all subsequent state structures.

The anthem of the new state was not determined, but a ceremonial song was performed on official occasions, consisting of parts of the ceremonial songs of each of the three nations, including the first half of 'Our Beautiful Homeland'.⁶³

In the territory of former Croatia and Slavonia, the official use of the flag and coat of arms of the former Triune Kingdom continued until 1924 without the crown of St. Stephen.⁶⁴ From then, until 1929, Croatian symbols were used in politics only by the Croatian political parties and individuals. The checkered Croatian coat of arms with 25 fields was used most often; tricolor flags were mainly used without any coat of arms, but flags with the checkered coat of arms were also present.⁶⁵ Although the regime was suspicious about the Croatian symbols, there were no serious obstacles to their use until 1929.⁶⁶

However, after the *coup d'état* of January 6, 1929, and the introduction of the absolute power of the King, the previous concept of a single but three-named and, therefore, multicultural nation was replaced by the ideology of radical Yugoslav integralism and the intention to build a newly unified nation while fully erasing individual ethnic identities and their symbols.⁶⁷ The country was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the law allowed the display of only the state flag. Yet the three-part coat of arms was not changed,⁶⁸ and no regulation expressly prohibited or sanctioned the display of tribal flags. Nevertheless, the 1931 Constitution, which retained the symbols of the state unchanged, omitted the national adjectives of individual coats of arms and banned all associations and political parties formed on a religious, tribal, or regional basis.⁶⁹ Despite this, decorations of the former Kingdom of Serbia with exclusively Serbian symbols were retained as decorations of the new regime as well.⁷⁰

After the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille in 1934, organized by the radical Croatian movement *Ustaše* and radical Macedonian nationalist organization VMRO, the Croatian flag and coat of arms were used more freely in public.⁷¹ Complex conditions in Europe and inside the country triggered a change in the attitude of the regime toward the 'Croatian Question', and in 1939 the new autonomous unit of the Banate of Croatia was established on a quarter of the state territory with an ethnic Croatian majority.⁷² The founding acts of the Banate of Croatia did not provide for its symbols, which were regulated only by a circular of the Cabinet of the Banate of Croatia in September 1940. The circular described the large and small coats of arms of the Banate of Croatia, which had already appeared in practice a few months earlier. The small and large seal contained the checkered Croatian coat of arms with 25 fields, with the initial red field. The large coat of arms consisted of the mantle with double eagles, Karađorđević's crown atop, and shield with the checkered coat of arms in the middle. The small coat of arms consisted of a shield

63 | Tomašek, 1990, p. 87.

64 | Jareb, 2010, p. 175.

65 | *Ibid.*, pp. 194–195.

66 | *Ibid.*, pp. 179 et seq.

67 | Ramet, 2009, pp. 123–124 et seq.

68 | Comp. Zakon o nazivu i podeli Kraljevine.

69 | Comp. Art. 2 and Art. 13 of the Ustav Kraljevine Jugoslavije.

70 | Jareb, 2010, p. 204.

71 | *Ibid.*, pp. 222 et seq.

72 | On the Banate of Croatia see Šlabek, 1997, pp. 19 et seq.

with checkered fields and Karađorđević's crown above it.⁷³ The flag and anthem were not regulated. However, in practice, the national tricolor flag was used, as a rule, without a coat of arms;⁷⁴ the 'Our Beautiful Homeland' was performed as a ceremonial song.⁷⁵

Authorities of the Banate of Croatia did not pay serious attention to symbols. Such an attitude is understandable considering the circumstances in which that unit built its institutional order. However, it is still surprising considering the identity and state-building potentials related to the Banate of Croatia and the respective importance of symbols.

5. Independent State of Croatia

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Banate of Croatia collapsed in the short war of April 1941. The *Ustaše* movement, whose main forces returned to their homeland from exile in Italy and Germany, established the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) on April 10, 1941, a totalitarian puppet-state of a Nazi-fascist character with the concentration of all powers in the hands of the Leader.⁷⁶ This state annexed the remainder of Bosnia and Herzegovina but ceded the greater part of Dalmatia to Italy.

Soon after the proclamation of the ISC, it provided for regulation of its symbols. The Legal Order on the State Coat of Arms, State Flag, Leader's Flag, State Seal, and Seals of the State's and Autonomous Offices was already passed on April 28.⁷⁷ According to this regulation, the state coat of arms consisted of a shield with 25 square fields, with an initial white field, above which was a red triple-braided tendril that framed an empty white field with a large eared letter U, a characteristic symbol of the *Ustaša* movement. The flag was described as a tricolor, with a checkered coat of arms implemented in the middle; on the left side of the red field stood a red triple-braided tendril with an eared U, the same as in the coat of arms. The tricolor flag, without any markings, remained in use as a transitional solution. The description of the mentioned symbols was detailed and accompanied by illustrations. The flag of the Navy and the Leader's flag were designed upon the elements of the fundamental state symbols; later, the flags of the Air Force and of the Army were also provided.⁷⁸ Elements from the coat of arms were also present in the large and small state seals provided by the same regulation. The special order on the viewing of flags provided that all state offices and public institutions should display the flag; it also provided the way in which they should be displayed.⁷⁹

Thus, the ISC apparently accepted the same concept of the main Croatian symbol, that is, the checkered coat of arms, as the previous Yugoslav state. Of course, the *Ustaša* symbol was not taken over from the Yugoslav state but decided independently; however, the *ratio* of both solutions was identical, that is, representation of the nation/ethnicity.

73 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 236–238.

74 | Heimer, 2008, p. 51; Jareb, 2010, pp. 238–241.

75 | Tomašek, 1990, p. 87.

76 | On ISC see Goldstein, 2011, pp. 131 et seq.

77 | Zakonska odredba o državnom grbu.

78 | Jareb, 2010, p. 273.

79 | Naredba ministarstva unutarnjih poslova br. 399.

Nevertheless, the same symbol in the *Ustaša* context implied the exclusive nature of the Croatian state and its ethnically determined scope that included Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the belief that its Muslim population was part of the Croatian people.⁸⁰ The initial white field in the *Ustaša* coat of arms was probably set as a difference from the coat of arms of the previous state. It also corresponded to the first registered image of the ‘checkered’ coat of arms.⁸¹ Regarding the implementation of symbols of the *Ustaša* movement in the state coat of arms, it complied with the authoritarian ideology of the movement and the actual nature of the ISC as a totalitarian party state.

According to the 1941 Legal Order on the Protection of Aryan Honor and of the Blood of the Croatian People, passed upon the Nazi model, non-Aryans and members of the state—that is, persons who were not full citizens of the ISC—were prohibited from displaying the Croatian state, national flags, and national colors and symbols.⁸² A similar provision was contained in the 1941 Decree on Changing of Jewish Surnames and on Marking Jews and Jewish Companies, forbidding Jews from wearing the Croatian national colors and displaying the Croatian state and national flags on their apartments.⁸³

In addition to the state coat of arms and the flag, the symbol of the *Ustaša* movement itself—the ‘eared’ letter U, at the bottom of which was a bomb with a burning flame—worn by members of that movement on their uniforms, was often underlined. The new salute ‘For the Home Ready’ was promoted in public, even though neither of these was regulated by any act.⁸⁴ Neither of these features had the character of a state symbol.

The ISC did not provide an anthem, but the song ‘Our Beautiful Homeland’ was performed as the national anthem; in June 1941, the mandatory text and tune were already standardized. Apart from that, the Drina River—the eastern border of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which became the border of the NDH—and the ‘blue sea’—which was not mentioned in the original text of the anthem—were added to the text,⁸⁵ effectively incorporating the new borders of the state.

6. Yugoslav federation and Croatian state symbols

On the opposite side, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia organized a nationwide partisan resistance movement to liberate the country and implement a political and social revolution. Therefore, in addition to the military organization, the Partisan movement also built civil governmental structures aligned with the communist social ideology and the state’s attempted federal structure. Based on the criticism of the Great Serbian hegemony in Yugoslavia, the Communist Party had already accepted a federal organization, grounded on the Soviet federal model, as a solution for the multinational state.⁸⁶ In 1943, the Antifascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia (ACPLY), a political

80 | Jelić–Butić, 1977, p. 100.

81 | Jareb, 2010, p. 272.

82 | Art. 5 of Zakonska odredba o zaštiti arijske časti.

83 | Art. 8 of Naredba o promjeni židovskih prezimena.

84 | Comp. Goldstein, 2021, pp. 496–498.

85 | Tomašek, 1990, pp. 87–88.

86 | Vujošević, 1985, pp. 144, 150–151.

representation founded in 1942, declared itself a pre-parliament, elected the government and the presidency, and made certain fundamental decisions. Among its most important initiatives were the decision to build Yugoslavia on federal and democratic principles with the right of every nation to self-determination and secession and the decision on the appropriate federal structure of the country. In accordance with these decisions, individual Yugoslav countries were proclaimed the following year—Federal Democratic Croatia being among them.⁸⁷ After communists took over all the power in the country, Yugoslavia was formally constituted as a federation in 1946, and in the following year, the People's Republic of Croatia was proclaimed. Just like the other five Yugoslav republics, it had the status of a federal state in Yugoslavia, with its own constitution, autonomous jurisdiction, and symbols of power.

The first provisional symbols of power of federal Croatia were established by the Supreme Headquarters of the Partisan Army, which in 1941 provided for the use of Yugoslav and national flags with a red star in the middle.⁸⁸ In 1943, the provisional coat of arms of Croatia was derived from the provisional coat of arms of Yugoslavia. It consisted of a large red five-pointed star framed by a yellow ear of corn tied with a red-white-blue tricolor and a ribbon with the partisan slogan 'Death to fascism—freedom to the people'. However, flags with the Croatian checkered coat of arms were also used in practice.⁸⁹ The song 'Our Beautiful Homeland' was informally performed as an anthem on the partisan side as well,⁹⁰ of course, without the changes on the ISC side.

A similar practice in the use of symbols was formally provided after the war by the Croatian authorities,⁹¹ but the final arrangement of the flag and coat of arms in the spirit of Soviet heraldry was provided by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia of 1947.⁹² According to the Constitution, the frame of the coat of arms was formed by two curved sheaves of gold-colored grain ears on top of which was a red star; at the bottom of the ear-framed field was an iron anvil and above it a slightly wavy sea from which, in the focal point of the entire coat of arms, rose the Croatian checkered coat of arms with the sun rising above it.⁹³ This coat of arms and that of all other republics was established upon the common template by a federal commission in cooperation with the republican authorities.⁹⁴ The Constitution also provided for an image of the flag, which remained basically the same, that is, a tricolor with a red five-pointed star in the middle.⁹⁵ The symbols of the federal units and state provided by the constitutions of 1946 and 1947 were not changed until just before the breakup of Yugoslavia, with the exception of the addition of the sixth torch to the emblem of the federation in 1963. Thus, the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia from 1963 Articles 9–19⁹⁶ and the Constitution of the Social-

87 | For the respective decisions of ACPLY of 1943 see in Prvo i drugo zasjedanje AVNOJ-a, pp. 224–228. On the official name of Croatia see Radelić, 2006, pp. 237–238.

88 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 287–288.

89 | Ibid., pp. 290–291.

90 | Tomašek, 1990, p. 90.

91 | Naredba o vješanju zastave.

92 | Ustav Narodne Republike Hrvatske.

93 | Art. 4 of Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia of 1947.

94 | Jareb, 2010, p. 304.

95 | Art. 5 of Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia of 1947.

96 | Ustav Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske, 1963.

ist Republic of Croatia from 1974 Articles 6–7⁹⁷ contained the same description of the coat of arms and flag as the Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia from 1947.

Neither the Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia nor the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia from 1963 mentioned the national anthem, although the song 'Our Beautiful Homeland' was continuously performed in that capacity.⁹⁸ Finally, with 1972 Amendment I to the Croatian Constitution, that song was officially declared the anthem of the Socialist Republic of Croatia;⁹⁹ this provision was retained by the 1974 Croatian Constitution Article 8. It was an expression of the strengthened position of the republics introduced by the constitutional reform of the federation but only after the repressive suppression of the 'Croatian Spring' movement that demanded wider Croatian autonomy and protection of Croatian culture and language.¹⁰⁰

The acceptance of historical Croatian national symbols of the federal statehood in communist Yugoslavia complied with the basic principles of the organization of the Yugoslav federation. Each republic, except Bosnia and Herzegovina, was based on the right to self-determination of its own constituent nation; each Yugoslav constituent nation was supposed to have its own republic.¹⁰¹

Since 1945, the Croatian flag has been displayed on all public buildings and offices together with the Yugoslav flag and almost regularly with the flag of the Communist Party, although the latter was not provided by any formal act.¹⁰² In the areas of Croatia with a significant share of Serbs, the Serbian national flag was displayed, which was identical to the flag of the Socialist Republic of Serbia; national minorities displayed their national flags with an added red star.¹⁰³

Displaying the Croatian flag and coat of arms without the prescribed socialist features was not well received by the authorities. However, it was not incriminated, though it could have been prosecuted depending on the context. The legal basis that was initially used to sanction such cases was Article 2.2 of the Law on Offenses Against Public Order and Peace from 1949, which provided for a sentence of up to 90 days in prison—reduced to 30 days in 1951, and raised to 60 days in 1960—for anyone who provoked, insulted, or belittled the moral and patriotic feelings of citizens in a public place by speaking, writing, or otherwise.¹⁰⁴ The new Law on Offenses against Public Order and Peace from 1977 was more specific and lenient because it penalized displaying the republican flag or coat of arms in a public place without the prescribed features, for which it provided a fine or a prison sentence of up to 30 days.¹⁰⁵ That law also provided for fines for displaying dilapidated, untidy, or damaged flags.¹⁰⁶

The regime's rigid policy regarding the public displays of symbols became more tolerant after 1966, with the dismissal of Aleksandar Ranković, the powerful head of the secret police. After that, the checkered Croatian coat of arms without a star or other features

97 | Ustav Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske, 1974.

98 | Tomašek, 1990, p. 91.

99 | See Amendment I, in Ustavni amandmani I do XXXVI.

100 | See Goldstein, 2011, pp. 177–183.

101 | Čepulo, 2022a, pp. 43–44.

102 | Jareb, 2010, p. 305.

103 | Heimer, 2007; Jareb, 2010, p. 303.

104 | Zakon o prekršajima protiv javnog reda i mira (1949).

105 | Art. 21 of Zakon o prekršajima protiv javnog reda i mira (1977).

106 | Art. 22 of Zakon o prekršajima protiv javnog reda i mira (1977).

and red-white-blue patterns appeared on numerous consumer products, signs of cultural societies and sports clubs, and even in individual use.¹⁰⁷ It was indicative that in 1969, a misdemeanor charge for public display of the Croatian flag without the red star, which was assessed in the report as displaying the *Ustaša* flag, was rejected on the ground that displaying the Croatian flag without the red star was not punishable by itself, and that such a flag did not contain characteristic features of the ISC flag.¹⁰⁸ The situation changed after the suppression of the 'Croatian Spring' in 1971 when the same judge sentenced five young men to 30 days in prison for drawing a checkered coat of arms without the prescribed features on the mountain gorge above the town. The judge stated that displaying a coat of arms without socialist features is not in itself illegal when such use is part of folk customs, but that in other cases, such use represents a violation of the socialist feelings of citizens that are connected with the national liberation war.¹⁰⁹ Similar practice was used in the 1980s, in the era of deepening political and economic crisis.¹¹⁰ However, widespread public use of the Croatian coat of arms in consumer products and emblems of various types—with both red and white initial fields—continued unhindered and was not paid particular attention.¹¹¹

Interestingly, despite the decentralization and strengthening of the identity of the republics after 1974, republican symbols did not enjoy explicit protection in criminal law. The largest and most important part of criminal law remained part of the federal jurisdiction, and the federal Criminal Code of 1976 sanctioned only violations of symbols of the federation, not the violation of republican symbols.¹¹² The weaker protection of republican symbols indicates a weaker significance of republican statehood.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the use of seals and stamps with the coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Croatia was provided by Croatian legislation from 1947, with the respective amended law from 1977 remaining in force up to 1995.¹¹³

7. State symbols of the Republic of Croatia

The regulation of symbols of power in Croatia was significantly changed after the multi-party elections in Croatia in April 1990, followed by the constitutional amendments on July 25, 1990, and the legal regulation of symbols in December 1990. The constitutional amendments accepted by the multi-party parliament removed ideological content from the Croatian Constitution. As a provisional solution, the amendments provided that the coat of arms of the Republic of Croatia is the historical Croatian coat of arms with red and white fields and the flag is a tricolor with the Croatian coat of arms in the middle; however, the detailed image of the coat of arms should have been provided by a special law. The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, adopted on December 22, 1990, introduced only

107 | Jareb, 2010, p. 308.

108 | *Ibid.*, p. 310.

109 | *Ibid.*, p. 311.

110 | *Ibid.*

111 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 312–323.

112 | Krivični zakon Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije.

113 | Zakon o pečatima i žigovima s grbom Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske.

cosmetic changes to the existing provisions on the coat of arms and flag. However, the Law on the Coat of Arms, Flag, and Anthem of the Republic of Croatia and the Flag and Sash of the President of the Republic of Croatia (LCAFA), enacted just the day before the Constitution,¹¹⁴ elaborated the details of the images and use of these symbols.

LCAFA elaborated that the coat of arms consist of 25 red and white fields with an initial red field and a crown above it consisting of five historical Croatian coats of arms—namely, the oldest known coat of arms of Croatia and the coat of arms of the Republic of Ragusa, Dalmatia, Istria, and Slavonia. It also confirmed the historical tricolor with the coat of arms in the middle as the state flag.¹¹⁵

The government's explanation of this final design emphasized the color of the initial field. The acceptance of the red field was explained by the fact that it was more typical of the checkered coat of arms as an all-Croatian symbol, contrary to the white field, which was more typical of its use as a regional symbol. The inclusion of the coat of arms on the flag was explained by the need to distinguish the Croatian flag from other states' flags with the same color combination.¹¹⁶ The final image of the coat of arms with the added crown was determined by an expert advisory committee composed of historians and one famous designer assembled by the President of the Parliament, an art historian himself.¹¹⁷ According to him, the crown was added as a symbol of Croatia's integrity and long history as a kingdom.¹¹⁸ However, the crown has been criticized by a part of the professional public as over-designed, complicated, and not in compliance with heraldic rules and tradition.¹¹⁹ Potential flaws in the crown were the price paid for the urgent symbolic de-ideologization and quick symbol arrangement despite the turbulent environment. Nonetheless, the provided solution was implemented; however, the modernist concept of the coat of arms released publicly in 2000 did not get a favorable response.¹²⁰

The law determined the text and tune of the anthem, to which the verse blue sea was added; with this change, the territory of the homeland, that is, state territory, was additionally determined.

In addition to the coat of arms, flag, and anthem, the LCAFA regulated the images and rules of use of the sash and flag of the President of the Republic. However, the analysis of LCAFA and other regulations indicates that these symbols were not considered state symbols and did not have characteristic protection.¹²¹ Conversely, Article 18 of the Law on Institutions and other regulations suggests that the name of the state should be considered state symbol with the respective protection provided in criminal law, law on intellectual property, and company law.¹²²

LCAFA provides that the coat of arms, flag, and anthem can be used exclusively in the forms established by the Constitution and laws. It also allows parts of the coat of arms and

114 | Zakon o grbu, zastavi i himni Republike Hrvatske.

115 | Comp. Arts. 7 and 10 of LCAFA. The image of 'the oldest known coat of arms of Croatia' reproduces the motif from a coin from the end of the 12th century—a six-pointed yellow star with a white new moon on a blue shield. Božić and Ćosić, 2021, pp. 153–155.

116 | See Jareb, 2010, pp. 343–345.

117 | Peić Čaldarović and Stančić, 2011, p. 207.

118 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 352–354.

119 | Banac, 1991, p. 26; Comp. Božić and Ćosić, 2021, pp. 153–155.

120 | Jareb, 2010, pp. 386–387, footnote 676.

121 | Čepulo, 2022b, pp. 9–10.

122 | Čepulo, 2022b, pp. 8–9, 12–13; Zakon o ustanovama.

flag to be used as part of other emblems if this is established by the statute or other act of a legal person, provided that this does not offend the reputation of the Republic of Croatia.¹²³ Under the same condition, LCAFA allows the free use of the coat of arms, flag, and anthem for artistic, musical, and educational purposes.

Even before their introduction, the new symbols were met with fierce opposition from a part of the Serbian population in Croatia, supported by a media campaign from Serbia that called them *Ustaša* symbols without any particular explanation.¹²⁴ The attacks were motivated by how the symbols represented the Republic of Croatia as an *Ustaša* state, whose formation had to be prevented in accordance with the plans of the Serbian leadership, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army; these plans included turning Yugoslavia or its greater part into the Greater Serbia.¹²⁵ Fierce attacks on the Croatian state symbols continued after the formation of Serbian para-states on the territory of Croatia; however, after reintegration of the occupied Croatian territories in 1995 and 1998, Croatian state symbols were introduced throughout the state.¹²⁶

Thus, right before Christmas 1990, the symbols of the Croatian state were definitively regulated. The Constitution and the LCAFA, which determined their images and principles of use, provided the basis for several other laws that regulated various aspects of their use and protection in the coming years.¹²⁷

8. Conclusion

Modern Croatian symbols of power were shaped in the middle of the 19th century based on the symbols of the three medieval *regna* linked together in the single coat of arms whose colors determined the outlook of the tricolor flag that appeared in 1848. These symbols expressed the duality of the territorial and national principles and represented a single nation and its (virtual) territory with delimited external borders. The mentioned symbols were first *via facti* accepted as official symbols; only then were they regulated by law and stabilized through practice in the turbulent circumstances of the time. In their further development, the dominant symbolism of the land was replaced by the nation's symbolism through separation. It intensified the factual use of one of the territorial symbols, the checkered coat of arms—the one closest to the nation's name and medieval heritage. It became an all-Croatian national symbol and a symbol of the emerging nation-state.

123 | Art. 4 of LCAFA.

124 | Goldstein, 2011, pp. 215 et seq.

125 | *Ibid.*, pp. 216–217; Ramet, 2009, p. 488.

126 | On reintegration of the occupied parts of Croatia see Goldstein, 2011, pp. 252–263. Attacks on the Croatian state symbols by the Serbian side gradually ceased after reintegration of the state territory but then aroused the question of public use of the checkered coat of arms with white initial field. The judgment of the High Misdemeanor Court from 2021 stated that such coat of arms is one of variants of the historical Croatian coat of arms, not specific to the coat of arms of ISC and not evoking the memory of the ISC, and therefore did not constitute a misdemeanor. Čepulo, 2022b, pp. 15–16.

127 | Čepulo, 2022b, pp. 11 et seq.

This transition of use of the Croatian checkered coat of arms from an informal national symbol to an official state symbol, denoting the nation, was carried out in the frame of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on the ground of legitimacy of that symbol and its wide public acceptance. This shift contributed to the development of the checkered coat of arms into the only Croatian national and state symbol. The selection of the same coat of arms and the tricolor flag for the symbols of the Banate of Croatia was seen as a precursor of the Croatian nation-state; The Croatian Peasant Party, which stood behind the formation of the Banate of Croatia, had a different motivation to the use of these symbols. Finally, the third independent acceptance of the checkered coat of arms took place within the *Ustaša* movement and in the ISC, despite the previous inclusion of that coat of arms among the symbols of the Yugoslav state. In each of these three cases, the checkered coat of arms symbolized the national principle in different contexts—as an element of the wider Yugoslav national structure, as a symbol of the autonomous nationally marked Banate of Croatia, and as a symbol of the exclusive Croatian national state within the imagined ethnic space (ISC).

In any case, the checkered coat of arms and the Croatian tricolor were established as the national symbols by the 1940s. These symbols were deprived of ideological connotations and, therefore, acceptable to a wide range of users with different ideological postures—from the creators of the integral Yugoslav nation through moderate and radical Croatian nationalists to the Yugoslav communist federalists.

The end result of this non-linear development, the one with a stable core, is the acceptance of the checkered coat of arms as the core of the coat of arms of the Republic of Croatia, whose territorial scope and integrity as well as regional diversity are indicated by the regional coats of arms in its crown.

The transition from symbols of the land into symbols of the nation was even clearer in the case of the anthem; following the same original pattern, the Croatian character of the homeland and prosperous nation-state was emphasized together with a clearer delimitation of its borders.

All these features should be also viewed in the context of a broader regional perspective, where other and potentially concurrent nation-states—Hungary, Serbia, and Italy—or their traditions have been grounded upon the same conceptual and symbolic foundations.

The features of legal regulation of Croatian symbols of power reflected the character of the government that stood behind it. The fact that the symbols of power were shaped in 1848, *de facto* accepted in official use, and only afterward regulated by laconic bylaws suggests that they were not prioritized before 1918. It was similar to the surprising case of the Banate of Croatia from 1939 to 1941. It seems that awareness of the importance of the state symbols was present only in the state ambience of the ISC and the Republic of Croatia, albeit in different contexts. In the first case (ISC), the checkered coat of arms was used as the symbol of an authoritarian party-state program of an exclusive nation-state on the allegedly ethnic and historical Croatian territory. In the other case—the Republic of Croatia—it was used as an ideologically neutral symbol adjoined with historical regional symbols in the crown that confirmed the country's existing borders and territorial integrity.

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