CReaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

http://create.canterbury.ac.uk

Canterbury Christ Church University

Ideology and Party System Change in Consociational Systems: The Case of Non-nationalist Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina

John Hulsey and Soeren Keil

Abstract

Following a period of nationalist party dominance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, alternative parties have emerged to challenge the established parties with ideologies that seek to bridge ethnic divides. This paper examines the ideological positioning of non-nationalist parties relative to nationalist parties and the challenges for such parties in supplanting the dominance of ethnicity in politics. Based on elite interviews and detailed analysis of party documents, we argue that these parties have identified sufficient electoral support for alternative conceptions of politics and inter-ethnic relations in post-war Bosnia to promote their non-nationalist agendas. The parties couple distinct non-nationalist ideas with ideological formulations that have the potential to bridge across ethnic groups. However, the stability in support for non-nationalist parties, even as individual parties with distinct ideologies rise or fall, suggests that the appeal of this approach is limited by the necessity of governing with nationalist parties and the appeal of state contestation.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina[1] attracted international media attention again in Spring 2014, as protests in numerous Bosnian cities resulted in the burning of a government building, mass demonstrations and the fall of numerous local governments. In May 2014, Bosnia was hit by the worst ever flooding in the country, with damage estimated to be several billion dollars. In October 2014, elections took place for the Bosnian central institutions (House of Representatives and Presidency) and for entity and cantonal institutions. However, neither the 2014 elections after the protests and the flooding, nor the elections in October 2018 have brought fundamental changes to Bosnian politics. So far, there has been very little positive news from Bosnia. The country is still treated like a backward, post-war state by most Western media observers, and even informed scholars have little faith in positive change coming from Bosnia, in which the results of the violent conflict (1992-1995) remain visible and continue to play a key role in day-to-day politics.[2]

While these developments have put Bosnia back on the map of international media attention, there remains a lack of academic engagement with the institutional structure and the political processes within this unique system. Having said this, in addition to the large body of literature on state-building and intervention in Bosnia,[3] there is also a growing body that looks at elements such as power-sharing,

federalism and institutional design in the country.[4] It is to this body of literature that this paper hopes to contribute. Our aim is to look at the dynamics within Bosnia's political system, more specifically to look at the party system in post-war Bosnia. Most observers point out that the party system in the country is ethnically divided, dominated by nationalist parties and that voting and institutional rules clearly favour this kind of parties.[5]

Bosnia follows in its institutional set-up the consociational model, which strongly emphasizes elite cooperation and group autonomy in deeply divided societies.[6] Hence, parties representing one national group play a key role in separate institutions, as they are representatives of their group's interests. In fact, Lijphart promotes parties that represent only one group strongly, arguing that only these parties will contribute to power-sharing and consensual decision-making effectively.[7] Yet, this paper will focus on parties that declare themselves as *multi-ethnic* and *non-nationalist*. Multi-ethnic parties are strongly promoted by advocates of a more inclusive, centripetalist institutional design, most notably Donald Horowitz and Benjamin Reilly. They argue that multi-ethnic parties (or party coalitions) can play a key role in political moderation and easier decision-making, criticizing the divisive nature of consociational power-sharing arrangements.[8] Naša Stranka, Democratic Front (DF) and the SDP, together with a number of smaller, liberal parties, are the main examples of non-nationalist parties. They can be categorised as such, because in contrast to nationalist parties, which 'typically claim to represent the interests of one group alone,' they 'appeal to a broader support base, and thus tend to have a more centrist impact, aggregating diverse interests and de-emphasizing mono-ethnic demands'.[9]

Our interest in the non-nationalist parties in Bosnia stems from a theoretical puzzle: Despite the existence of strong incentives for nationalist parties in Bosnia's institutional provisions, non-nationalist parties have seen continued support amongst voters. Neither consociational power-sharing, nor more integrative approaches can explain this phenomenon. According to consociationalism, these parties should not exist, as voters will prefer nationalist-exclusive parties to represent their group's interest, while integrationalists would argue that the institutional provisions in Bosnia do not make moderation pay, and thereby contribute to party polarization and voting along national lines. Yet, while these parties exist and receive support from a recognisable share of voters, they have been unable to fundamentally change Bosnian politics – whenever they have entered governing coalitions at regional and central level, they have been caught in ethnic outbidding and have been punished in the next election. In short, there is electoral support for these parties despite an institutional set-up that does not favour them, yet when they get support they cannot really influence the system and push for any changes, as they are unable to compete and sustain themselves in the ethnic game of "zero-sum-politics." This is why the research question for this paper is as follows: "In a post-war society that remains deeply divided, and in which electoral and institutional provisions favour nationalist exclusive parties, how do non-nationalist parties place themselves ideologically relative to nationalist parties, how do they perform in elections and why have they been unable to change the system despite numerous participations in government?"

The consociational and centripetalist schools of post-conflict political institutions share the same goals of promoting governance that is inclusive and responsive to the interests of a broad range of groups in society. They differ primarily in tools they bring to bear in order to accomplish moderate and shared governance, particularly in the mechanism whereby elites will gain the incentive to cooperate with parties from competing groups. Accordingly, they differ in the kinds of parties and party systems that they hope to promote, in large part through an implicit preference for political coalitions that emerge between parties after elections or a preference for coalition- and party-building before the election takes place.

The consociational approach put forward by Lijphart seeks to promote moderation by securing the basic interests of the ethnic groups. The risks of majoritarian democracy are lessened by guaranteeing representation of all groups, giving all groups the ability to block threatening actions through a veto, and, when possible, devolving power to homogenous federal territories. The consociational approach rests on the idea that this basic security will create a situation in which ethnic groups and their leaders can engage in compromise without fear.[10] The demand for cooperation emerges from the inability to act alone in order to produce progress. So, the model for cooperation under consociationalism is cooperation by elites representing ethnic parties. Crucially, this cooperation across ethnic lines takes place after the election.

The centripetalist school takes as its starting point that ethnic elites are unlikely to engage in compromise as long as they see themselves exclusively as representatives of a single group.[11] They argue that the demand for cooperation in order to achieve governance is unlikely to be met by a corresponding supply of parties willing or able to reach compromise despite being elected from only one ethnic group. In order to produce this supply of compromise-oriented parties, centripetalists argue for institutional mechanisms that reward parties for gaining votes across ethnic group lines. Rather than lowering the stakes of elections in the hope of compromise after the election, centripetalists argue that incentives for compromise must be built into the electoral system. This takes the form of encouraging pre-election coordination across ethnic lines.

The non-nationalist parties in Bosnia are attempting to use the mechanisms for moderation sought by centripetalists in a political system that is deeply consociational in terms of its institutional set-up. They often focus on overcoming the polarisation of ethnic divisions that have been a key part of Bosnian politics and society since the end of the war.

In order to address our research question, we have interviewed a number of party elites in Bosnia and have analysed major party documents to understand the motivations of non-nationalist parties.[12] Our findings demonstrate that these parties have identified "multiethnicity" and the label of "non-nationalist parties" as key elements not only of a future vision for the country, but also as a programmatic platform, which has found increasing voter support in Bosnia. However, these parties have mainly been successful in areas with a Bosniak majority, meaning that mainly Bosniak voters

support their visions and ideas. Our analysis focuses on the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Socijaldemokratska Partija Bosne i Hercegovine, SDP) and Naša Stranka (Our Party) as two examples.[13] The SDP is the oldest and most important non-nationalist party and has been part of several governments at entity and central state level, while Naša Stranka was founded in 2008 and has so far not been part of entity and central state level governments, although it recently joined the government in the Sarajevo canton. While both parties are very different in their history, organization and electoral performance throughout Bosnia, what they have in common is a strong focus on multi-ethnicity as a key principle to overcome ethnic divisions.

To analyse the role of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia, we progress in the following way: First, we will provide an overview of post-war Bosnian politics to highlight the dominance of ethnicity and power-sharing as key elements within Bosnia's political system. Second, we will look at the party system and its development more in-depth, in order to highlight the impact of consociational political institutions, the dominance of nationalist parties and demonstrate the positioning of non-nationalist parties within the system. Third, we look at the SDP and Naša Stranka in more detail by analysing the party programmes and a number of elite interviews we have held in Bosnia. By doing so, we aim to assess the ideological self-positioning of these parties within the system and their main motivations for using the multi-ethnic and non-nationalist labels as key messages. Finally, we will conclude by discussing what the evaluation of these two parties tells us about wider Bosnian politics and why there is a need to re-think our understanding of party politics in transitional post-ethnic conflict societies.

Post-war Bosnian Politics: Ethnic Division and International Intervention

When Bosnia became an independent country in April 1992, its society and politics were already deeply divided. The first multi-party elections in November 1990 were won by parties that represented the main ethnic groups. These were the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije, SDA), which represented Bosnian Muslims,[14] the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka, SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine, HDZ BiH). While the SDA was the first non-Communist party founded in Bosnia, the SDS and the HDZ BiH were strongly linked to similar parties in the neighbouring countries, the HDZ in Croatia (under leadership of Croatian President Franjo Tuđman) and Slobodan Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia. Together, these parties accounted for nearly three-quarters of all votes, while the reformed League of Communists scored only 12% of the vote.[15]

In a political environment that was characterized by conflict over the future of Yugoslavia and the growing economic and political crisis of the state, Bosnia, like the other Yugoslav Republics, saw a rise in ethno-nationalist parties, which were able to win elections and form governments. The three ethnic parties campaigned together against the socialist party representing the old system, but the

coalition that the SDA, SDS and the HDZ BiH formed after the elections was more a political agreement of convenience, than an alliance which would be able to manage Bosnian politics in times of economic, social and political crisis. Hence, as Neven Andjelić argues, these parties had a complete lack of the 'understanding of the meaning of democracy. [...] Electoral success was translated into a "green light" for the elected to do, or attempt to do, whatever they wanted.'[16] The parties were consequently unable to agree on any major policy reform, and the coalition fell apart over the question of Bosnia's relationship with Yugoslavia once Slovenia and Croatia had declared independence in June 1991. While the SDA and HDZ pushed for Bosnia to have a referendum on independence as well, the SDS wanted the country to stay in Yugoslavia. What followed is well-known, Bosnia's declaration of independence resulted in Serb opposition, which was expressed through the establishment of autonomous Serbian districts, which were then united and expanded in order to build the Republika Sprska (RS), i.e. an independent Serb state on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[17]

After three and a half years of bloodshed with approximately 100,000 people losing their lives, the Dayton Peace Conference in Ohio, USA not only established peace between the former Yugoslav states, but also provided a new institutional architecture for Bosnia. The constitutional framework of the state is part of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), it can be found in Annex IV. In short, what Dayton provided was a blueprint for a new Bosnian state, a state that would be based on a highly decentralized federal system,[18] whose main feature is ethnic power-sharing between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.[19] However, the elections in 1996 brought to power the same parties that led Bosnia into the war, and like in 1990, they were unable to agree on any major policy issue. Too different were their policy preferences and long-term goals. While the SDA wanted to protect the unity and independence of Bosnia and centralize the state, SDS and HDZ focused on the integration of territories under their control into the neighbouring countries. Bosnia after 1995 was a state of three currencies, in which the freedom of movement was severely limited between the different parts of the country and in which reconstruction efforts were hindered and blocked by political interests, despite an impressive provision of reconstruction and developmental assistance from other countries.[20]

As a result of continued political stalemate in the first post-war years, international actors became more active in Bosnia. In December 1997, the High Representative, who oversees the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement, was given the power to impose, suspend and amend laws, and dismiss officials who acted against the spirit of the DPA.[21] Consequently, Bosnia became a prime example of international state-building, with the High Representatives since 1998 imposing a number of controversial decisions, including a new law on citizenship, a new law on state symbols, a law on constitutional changes in the entities, a law on Bosnia's currency and a number of laws related to security issues. Some argued that Bosnia became an example of a new style of neo-colonial rule,[22] while others welcomed this form of international activism.[23] This externally-driven process came to an end in 2006, because most international observers, particularly the European Union (EU), believed that Bosnia was a consolidated state and it was time for Bosnian elites to take responsibility for the future of their

country. The main framework for Bosnia's future development was the integration into the EU, and the EU remained involved in many policy areas, not least by taking over key security provisions from NATO and other international actors.[24] Yet, the heavy international involvement between 1998 and 2006, particularly the dominant role of the High Representative, resulted in a situation in which Bosnian elites neither had the willingness to cooperate, nor the experience of finding compromises and looking for avenues of cooperation. Little progress has been made since 2006, and key questions about constitutional reform and Bosnia's future remain contested. Bosnian Serb elites have again started to use the language of "secession" openly,[25] while the Croats under the leadership of the HDZ BiH in Bosnia demand a third entity to address their perceived discrimination.[26] Overall, the elites continue to "capture the state" – or the territories under their control, and by doing so utilize state contestation and general dissatisfaction with the Dayton arrangements to their advantage.[27]

International state-building and democratization efforts have also affected party politics in the country. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was put in charge of organizing Bosnia's post-war elections, and they remained in charge of electoral conduct and supervision until 2006. The OSCE, as well as the High Representative, have attempted to promote certain parties and political elites, have banned others, and have changed the electoral rules numerous times to promote what they perceived as the better party/ candidate.[28] Particularly after 1998, there was strong support for moderate and non-nationalist parties. International actors played a key role in putting together the "Alliance for Change" which was a multi-ethnic party coalition that defeated the nationalist parties and briefly remained in power between 2000 and 2002 under the leadership of the SDP. Furthermore, international actors also tried to work with nationalist parties in order to transform them into more moderate parties. However, these efforts have fundamentally failed on two levels. First, despite intensive intervention in electoral procedures and the banning of certain parties and officials, international actors have been unable to break the dominance of nationalist parties in Bosnia. While there are now more parties in Bosnia (more on this below), the vast majority of parties competing for electoral support remain nationalist, i.e. they only refer to one ethnic group and promote the interests of this group. Second, even where international actors have been able to promote "moderate" elites as alternatives to nationalists, these "moderates" did not turn out as easier partners. Biljana Plavšić, a former associate of Radovan Karadžić and previously a member of the SDS, was promoted as a moderate by international actors, yet her political career ended abruptly when she was indicted (and later convicted) for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Milorad Dodik, the former Prime Minister and President of the Republika Srpska (RS), and since 2018 the Serb member of the Bosnian State Presidency, was promoted as the West's favoured politician since 1998, however since 2006 he has turned into a full-blown nationalist, who has called Bosnia an "artificial Frankenstein-like monster" and has challenged international policy in Bosnia numerous times.[29] The support given to Haris Silajdžić, a former member of the SDA who has since

created his own party, the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, SBiH), particularly by the United States, for his return to Bosnian politics in 2006 has also backfired, as he became one of the main spoilers in Bosnian politics once he was elected as the Bosniak Member of the Presidency. Hence, while external intervention and democratization efforts by international actors may have had a significant influence on the electoral rules and also shaped Bosnia's party system by promoting certain elites over others, overall international intervention has been unable to break the dominance of nationalist elites and nationalist parties in the country.[30] As a result, the most important stances taken by parties concern competing preferences relative to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and eventually the EU accession process.

The next section will look in more detail into some of the changes within the Bosnian party system to demonstrate how nationalist parties remain of key importance and to discuss the role of non-nationalist parties.

The Bosnian Party System

The most important factors shaping party politics in post-war Bosnia are deep societal divisions, a political and electoral system that reflects and reinforces those divisions and the efforts of international actors to push politics in Bosnia away from ethnonationalism. Bosnia's consociational electoral rules and political system in interaction with the demographic results of ethnic cleansing and territorial partition create very low barriers to entry for smaller parties but very high obstacles for broad parties or coalitions that could draw support from all ethnic groups in all parts of the country. The result is a very large number of parties that largely compete against only a few other parties seeking to represent the same ethnicity. Against this backdrop, attempts by both Bosnians and international actors to foster broad, moderate parties and coalitions have failed.[31]

Political competition and therefore the local party system takes a completely different form in the RS than in the cantons of the FBiH, while the cantonal assemblies themselves are made up of wildly different groupings of parties depending on the balance of ethnic groups in the canton. Parties that are dominant in one area are tiny or non-existent in elections in other parts of the country.[32] The structure of Bosnia's political system contributes to fragmentation of the party system because of the absence of state-wide elections in favour of electoral constituencies that follow ethnic boundaries created by the war. In the most egregious example, the Serb member of the three-member BiH Presidency is elected from voters registered in RS while the Bosniak and Croat members are elected from voters registered in the FBiH. No party ran a candidate in all elections for all three members of the Presidency in 2010, 2014 or 2018.[33] The situation is similar for the Bosnian House of Representative elections, where the top parties are different for the election of seats from the RS than from the FBiH.

Rather than having a single party system for the whole state, it is useful to think of Bosnia as having at least three party systems built around the three constituent peoples and the state bodies

constructed to represent their interests. These three party systems result from the fact that the nationalist parties representing different ethnic groups are not in competition with one another over the same voters. Added to this is the existence of electoral districts and offices where almost all voters are of one ethnicity. There is competition among nationalist parties seeking to represent the same ethnicity. These parties are very similar ideologically but differ across ethnic groups based on which group they claim to represent. Competition between nationalist parties representing the same ethnicity focuses primarily on which elites and which patronage networks will gain the most power. Ideological differences between such parties are at best secondary and at worst completely irrelevant.[34]

Ideologically, non-nationalist parties attempt to crosscut these three party systems by presenting an alternative rationale for representation than for it to be based on ethnicity. These parties field candidates and seek votes across ethnic boundaries and are organized around ideology. The SDP-BiH is the most established non-nationalist party and fields candidates broadly across Bosnia at all levels of government. The success of the SDP and similar parties shows that there is a significant bloc of voters who reject ethnonationalism in politics in favour of an ideology that bridges ethnic interest.[35] However, when looking at the success of the SDP and other non-nationalist parties more in detail, it becomes obvious that these parties are particularly successful in areas with a Bosniak majority (in 2018 for example, the SDP became the strongest party in the Tužla canton, both SDP and NS did very well in Sarajevo canton).[36] Hence, while liberal and moderate Bosniak voters will support non-nationalist parties, they are getting no to very little support in the Croat cantons and in the RS. The reasons for this are twofold, first Bosniaks are the majority of the population. Their numerical dominance allows those voters dissatisfied with SDA or in opposition to ethnic politics to support non-nationalist parties. Second, Bosniaks are the only constituent people that does not have a kin-state, and they generally do not contest Bosnia as an independent state (or the integrity of Bosnia's territory). While liberal Serbs and Croats exist, they are unlikely to vote for non-nationalist parties, because they see them as Bosniak parties, and they would instead choose more moderate Serb or Croat parties. So, non-nationalist parties are a distinct type of party, which compete in all three party systems in Bosnia. While there is a significant group of voters who consistently vote for non-nationalist parties across elections, some voters go back and forth between voting for non-nationalist parties and nationalist parties of their group.[37] In this way, non-nationalist parties are in competition with nationalist parties of all groups, but receive votes mainly from Bosniak voters.

Following the 2014 general elections, ten parties and electoral coalitions are represented in the 42-seat BiH Assembly. Since 2018, this number has increased to 14, with more parties represented in the two Entity parliaments. There are even more parties receiving votes in cantonal assemblies and municipal councils. The large number of parties shows how easy it is for a party in Bosnia to build sufficient regional support to gain and keep mandates in representative bodies. This ease of entry into office carries both opportunities and dangers for new parties wishing to break the post-war dominance of nationalist parties on Bosnian politics. Ease of entry means that even small, localized parties can

quickly gain seats in legislatures, with the access and visibility that entails. However, the large number of other parties makes it more difficult for parties to form governing and opposition coalitions that can be the basis for passing legislation and holding the government accountable. A good example of this is the evolution and participation of Naša Stranka within Bosnian politics. As will be demonstrated below when discussing Naša Stranka, while the party was only founded in 2008, it has been able to send representatives to the Sarajevo cantonal parliament following the 2010 election, and has been in governing agreements at municipality and cantonal level in Sarajevo. It has recently also entered the central Bosnian and FBiH parliaments after the 2018 elections, in which the party received its highest support to date.[38]

Politics in Republika Srpska is dominated by the SNSD (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata – Alliance of Independent Social Democrats) and the SDS. The SDS was the dominant wartime nationalist party, which has been supplanted by the SNSD at the Entity and BiH level while still holding sway in many municipalities in RS. As with other parties representing the other ethnic groups in Bosnia, it is difficult to discern a clear ideological difference between the SNSD and SDS, although the SNSD originally rose to prominence by portraying itself as more moderate and conciliatory than the SDS. Furthermore, it used to highlight its nature as a Social-Democratic party much more strongly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the party was first coming into power. This stance won the SNSD support from the international community, which helped build the party and create opportunities for SNSD's leader, Milorad Dodik. However, Dodik and the SNSD came to dominate the RS in part by turning away from a conciliatory approach and have since become a nationalist party that in some stances has been even more radical than the SDS.

The party system among Croat-oriented parties shows even less ideological differentiation than existed among Serb parties. HDZ-BiH (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*), was by far the largest Croat party and dominated municipalities and cantons where Croats were the majority. The split before the 2006 election into HDZ-BiH and HDZ 1990 can be explained best as a disagreement over who should run HDZ, and particularly over the influence of leaders with ties to Zagreb rather than as a new ideological direction for HDZ. The relatively low barriers to new parties in the Bosnian political system facilitated the split in HDZ as well as the persistence of a number of smaller Croat parties. The split between HDZ and HDZ 1990 is one of the main causes of the election of the SDP candidate, Željko Komšić, as the Croat member of the BiH Presidency in 2006. The split between the two parties makes sense given the electoral incentives at the municipal and cantonal level where Croats are the dominant group, but the split acts against the interests of Croat nationalist parties in state-level elections.

Like the other two party systems, the Bosniak Party system also has a dominant, ethnic party. The mainstay of Bosniak nationalist parties is the SDA, which has been challenged both by a series of splinter nationalist parties built around popular Bosniak figures and by the non-nationalist approach of the SDP. Parties like SBiH and SBB (Savez za Bolju Budućnost – Union for a Better Future of Bosnia) differ from SDA primarily by offering alternative leadership rather than a distinct ideology. Like

SNSD, SBiH at times has been seen as a more moderate alternative to SDA, but by 2006, this distinction was difficult to justify. The SDP-BiH can be considered a Bosniak party in that the vast majority of its voters are Bosniaks and the party has represented Bosniak interests relative to Croats and Serbs while in office. However, unlike nationalist parties, the SDP explicitly embraces a non-nationalist ideology and maintains Croats and Serbs in its leadership hierarchy. So, it crosses ethnic boundaries in ways that SDA and SBiH do not.

Within each sub-party system, there is meaningful competition among nationalist parties that are differentiated less by ideology and more by the personal networks of their leaders. The personalization of party politics in Bosnia is worsened by the relatively low barriers to new parties, which makes it easier for factions within parties to split off into new parties than to fight for control of the existing party. This dynamic has played out in both nationalist parties and non-nationalist parties. The leadership fight within the SDP between Zlatko Lagumdžija and Željko Komšić resulted in the departure of Komšić and the formation of the Democratic Front (DF) rather than either accommodation or leadership change within the party. However, the DF sees itself very much as a social-democratic party and also promotes the principle of multi-ethnicity, therefore has little ideological difference to the SDP. This also highlights that there is a recognizable electorate that supports non-nationalist parties, so much so, that a new party like the DF will take the gamble of leaving the older and more established SDP and compete independently.[39] In the 2014 elections, DF was the most successful non-nationalist party throughout Bosnia.[40] However, in 2018, the SDP recovered from its losses to DF and has once again established itself as the leading non-nationalist party. The DF support shrank substantially.[41] While certainly Komšić's image and personal prestige continues to attract voters for the DF, and for Komšić personally in the election to the members of the Presidency, it remains to be seen if the DF will be able to establish itself long-term. Despite the reduced votes for the DF, overall support for non-nationalist parties as a whole has remained stable at around 20% of the vote share.[42] However, as Table 1 below demonstrates, non-nationalist parties, mainly competing in the FBiH, compete with each other, and with Bosniak parties – yet over time their vote remains relatively consistent, meaning they are mainly in competition with each other.

Table 1: FBiH Election Results 2010-2018

Year	SDA	SDP	HDZ	DF	SBB	NS	PDA	NB	A-SDA	HDZ 1990	NIP	ENPV
2010	20	25	11	0	12	1	0	0	2	5	0	7.19
2014	28	10	12	13	15	2	0	0	2	4	0	6.87
2018	25	15	14	9	7	5	4	4	3	2	2	7.86

In the following section, we analyse the ways in which the non-nationalist parties frame their differences relative to both the nationalist parties and one another in their attempt to win over voters.

Naša Stranka and SDP – Non-nationalist parties in a divided system

Scholars on conflict resolution, especially coming from the integration approach, have for years argued that non-nationalist, multi-ethnic parties are one of the keys for long-term stability in post-ethnic conflict societies. Yet, the political system in Bosnia, as described above, is characterized by strict power-sharing between the three constituent peoples. Representation rules in the Presidency and the House of Peoples, as well as the electoral rules for the House of Representatives and for Entity and cantonal parliaments favour parties that appeal to only one group, because most territorial units, which are also used as electoral districts, are ethnically homogenous as a result of ethnic cleansing and political engineering after the war.[43] This explains the dominance of nationalist parties and their persistence after the Dayton Agreement in 1995, despite electoral engineering and outside intervention in the electoral process by international actors, especially after 1997. However, what it does not explain is the existence and relative success of multi-ethnic, non-nationalist parties in the system.

For Bosnia, there have been a number of previous studies that have engaged with the role of non-nationalist parties and their relative electoral success, particularly in some municipalities. Pugh and Cobble, for example, argue that there is a correlation between pre-war ethnic diversity in a municipality and the support for non-nationalist parties after the war.[44] Paula Pickering finds a link between support for non-nationalist parties and secular, left-leaning Bosniaks, who previously would have supported the Communist system.[45] Caspersen argues in her discussion that the nationalist parties were not predominantly successful because they played the "ethnic card," but because they had more financial and logistical support than non-nationalist parties.[46] Most recently, Murtagh brings to bear comparative evidence that links specific power-sharing institutional arrangements to civic party strategies.[47] While all these discussions have made important contributions to our understanding of the role of nationalist and non-nationalist parties in post-war Bosnia, they leave several questions unanswered. First, with the exception of the Murtagh study, these studies are based on data collected before the emergence of non-nationalist alternatives to SDP, which inevitably pushes non-nationalist parties to present an ideology that goes beyond a rejection of ethnic politics. The emergence of alternatives parties challenges explanations that focus on organizational strength of the parties, as parties have successfully challenged the SDP despite its overwhelming advantage of resources and prior organizational capacity. What is more, while some of these studies explain the success of non-nationalist parties, we are also interested in their ability to influence government decisions and their long-term viability. Our argument is therefore that while non-nationalist parties can challenge, and on occasion match nationalist parties in elections, they fail to deliver when joining government coalition (at cantonal, regional or central

level), and often get punished for their inability to challenge the political system and its focus on ethnic politics.

What our research has demonstrated is that Naša Stranka and SDP clearly define themselves as non-nationalist parties, not only in their programmes which refer to "multiethnicity" and civic, rather than ethnic values, but also in relation to the existing nationalist parties. The electoral programme of Naša Stranka for the 2014 general election[48] for example refers to ethnic divisions which influence "everything from employment, health and education, to art, culture and daily entertainment." According to the party, the current system is characterised by "nepotism....to the benefit only of party elites, their relatives and friends." In contrast to the dominant nationalist elites, Naša Stranka describes itself as a "social-liberal party, which wants to restore dignity and social security of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and establish a modern and efficient system of protection of [the] natural and human resources." They argue against ethnic division, instead highlighting that "the nations [in Bosnia] are artificially divided and territorially fragmented." Instead, their party programme focuses on the equality of citizens and individual rights as cornerstones of a more equal and just society. Naša Stranka was founded in 2008 by a number of NGO activists, and this is also reflected in the programme, where civil society plays a key role. Our interviews with leading Naša Stranka representatives have confirmed this picture of the party. One leading member said that "We see ourselves as an emancipatory force within the political system."[49]

The SDP on the other hand has a strong focus on social-democratic values in its programme. It refers to the "principles of freedom, equality, justice, humanism and solidarity."[50] While SDP highlights topics such as education, justice and economic development in its 2014 electoral programme, it is less critical of the "established" parties, mainly because it has been part of different government coalitions at cantonal, FBiH and central level in recent years. Yet, the party's focus on "equality of all citizens and peoples and ethnic groups" as well as its self-declared status as a "multinational political party in the entire territory of the state [that is] committed to the harmonious democratic development of the national and spiritual [conscience] identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina," allows for its classification as a non-nationalist party. It is clearly distancing itself from nationalist parties, by stating that it is a party "in the entire territory of the state" i.e. not solely focused on certain regions in Bosnia, where its majority support can be found. Indeed, for many years SDP was the only party that participated in most elections throughout Bosnia, including local elections in the FBiH and RS. In our interview with a local SDP activist in Sarajevo, he pointed out that equality is key to the SDP's programme, "we are talking about the [...] rights for everyone no matter about their ethnic or religious beliefs."[51] The SDP is the oldest and biggest non-nationalist party in Bosnia. It is the successor of the former League of Communists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as such its values and its vision for Bosnia have a lot in common with the multi-ethnic and harmonious concept promoted by the Communists before 1991. Its link to the previous

ruling party has given it certain strategic advantages – it has inherited property and wealth from the League of Communists, and it continues to profit from a portion of the Bosnian population which were persuaded Communists and supported the system prior to 1991. However, nowadays, it attracts voters from a variety of backgrounds, in addition to former Communists, youth activists who champion the social democratic values, and disappointed voters of SDA.

Both parties identify themselves in opposition to nationalist parties. This is very strongly reflected not only in their focus on civic (rather than ethnic) rights, but also in their choice of policy priorities and major issues of concern, which include areas such as employment, public debt and welfare policies – political considerations that are clearly crossing the ethnic divide and affect all of the people in Bosnia. Both parties position themselves as centre-left parties, concerned mainly with issues such as welfare, environmentalism and employment rights. Both parties also represent different ethnic groups and minorities in leading positions within the party hierarchy. In addition, there are guidelines on the representation of women and youth (in the case of the SDP), furthermore Naša Stranka limits the terms of its President to two consecutive terms. Both parties have emphasized their visions for Bosnia as being "multi-ethnic" with a strong focus on individual rights and equality among different groups. While Heleen Touquet has characterized Naša Stranka as a postethnic party,[52] that believes ethnic divisions are artificial, and should be overcome, our interviews found no substantial difference in the vision of SDP and Naša Stranka. The programme of Naša Stranka states that

> We expect that there is no equality of peoples without equality of citizens. The collective equality is an implied companion, but not a guarantee for human, individual equality. Individual rights are the basis of all human rights.

Similarly, the programme of SDP points out that

> The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina's programmatic vision is directed towards building a modern society based on the principles of justice, humanism, and solidarity. We will build a society based on equal social and political opportunities, rights and freedoms and equality of all citizens and peoples and ethnic minorities.

Both parties emphasize the importance of the category "citizens" rather than constituent peoples or ethnic groups. Hence, both parties prefer a future Bosnia, which is based on civic values, a classic liberal democratic tradition in which everyone enjoys equal rights as a citizen, independent of their ethnic affiliation. This alternative vision of Bosnia, which overcomes ethnic divisions is very important when trying to categorize non-nationalist parties in Bosnia. These parties offer an alternative vision in which ethnic division would be overcome by a strong focus on individual rights and the treatment of everyone as a "citizen" rather than a member of their ethnic group. The key difference between both parties became obvious between 2012 and 2014. While NS avoided any discussion on ethnic issues and instead focused on policies such as unemployment, local government and corruption, the SDP tried to compete

with nationalist parties in their bid to secure a stronger Bosniak vote. By doing so, it alienated a lot of its voters, the party split in two (with the creation of the DF), and the SDP lost substantial support in the 2014 elections. Taken together, total support for SDP and DF is similar to SDP support in prior years. This turn in SDP policy was a direct result of its participation in government, after the 2010 elections. After its success in the elections for the central state level and the FBiH House of Representatives, it joined several coalition governments, working together with nationalist parties including the SDA and the SNSD. As a result, the party was unable to push for its agenda as reforms are notoriously difficult in Bosnia due to the deeply entrenched ethnic divisions in the political institutions. In a bid to increase its vote share amongst Bosniaks, the then party leader Zlatko Lagumdžija pushed for a stronger focus on Bosniak interests, while at the same time agreeing to several unpopular reforms in the media and justice sector together with SNSD. This, however, alienated many voters who saw the SDP as an alternative to these nationalist parties, and the result was not only the electoral support for DF, but also substantial losses for the SDP in the 2014 elections. In the 2018 elections, the party was able to somewhat recover, because it profited from the DF's disastrous decision to join the FBiH governing coalition after the elections in 2014, only to leave the coalition again after less than 100 days. This indecisiveness, and the inability of DF to stick to its electoral promises and tackle the major problems in the system explain the above-mentioned reduction in support for the party, and the increased vote share for the SDP (and NS) in the 2018 elections.

Neither Naša Stranka nor SDP are classic anti-regime parties, which "wish to change the regime and do not accept the norms and structures of authority of the current regime".[53] While they have a different vision for the future of Bosnia, they accept the current system, they participate in regular elections and hope to change the system through formal means, i.e. constitutional reform. This, however, explains that while they are able to challenge nationalist parties in elections (at least in the FBiH, and at times also in the central institutions), they will always loose out when joining governing coalitions, because they accept rules that are designed for nationalist parties, and parties with agendas representing only one group in Bosnia. The inability of policy changes and the failure of wider reforms to the political structure mean that non-nationalist parties might enjoy electoral success, due to their support from moderate Bosniak voters, but they will always be punished much more harshly by voters when joining coalition governments. Their programme focuses on a fundamental reform of Bosnia, and even moderate successes towards achieving this have proven futile in the past.

<<Figure 1 and 2 about here>>

The main reason why these parties exist in the first place is because there is electoral support for an alternative vision of Bosnia. Above in Figures 1 and 2 is an overview of the support for non-nationalist parties in recent years, which highlights that their support is relatively consistent, and that they mainly compete with each other, and at times, with Bosniak nationalist parties.

In addition to these reasons for the existence of these two parties, others can be highlighted as well. For example, Bosnia's Communist legacy, the fact that the country had the highest number of inter-ethnic marriages in the former Yugoslavia and the dissatisfaction with nationalist parties have also benefitted these parties (especially in the 2010 elections, as seen in Figure 1). What is more, as argued above, voters seem to "jump" between nationalist and non-nationalist parties across different levels of elections (Canton vs. Entity elections, for example) while there has been steady support for non-nationalist parties as a group (see Figure 2), even as the fortunes of individual parties have waxed and waned. This highlights that voter volatility might be important to consider in the Bosnian case – which might raise further questions about how important ethnic identities actually are in electoral choices in deeply divided societies such as Bosnia.

Programmatically, there is little difference between Naša Stranka and SDP. If one would apply Western party system-categories to these parties, the SDP would be a traditional social democratic party, while Naša Stranka could be considered a left-leaning Green party, although with less focus on environmental issues and a stronger profile on human rights. However, in an ethnically divided system like the one in Bosnia, these categories do not help very much in explaining the positioning of certain parties, as the left-right spectrum is unable to catch the political essence of major parties in divided post-conflict societies. Both parties support a vision of Bosnia, which focuses on human and individual rights, and in which people enjoy equality through the status of citizens rather than as members of different ethnic groups. Yet, as in many other post-Communist countries, Bosnia, too is characterized by "issues on which all parties declare the same objective but dispute each other's competence in achieving the desired policy".[54]

Conclusion

Our research started with the question: "In a post-war society that remains deeply divided, and in which electoral and institutional provisions favour nationalist exclusive parties, how do non-nationalist parties place themselves ideologically relative to nationalist parties, how do they perform in elections and why have they been unable to change the system despite numerous participations in government?"

What we have demonstrated in the discussion above is that non-nationalist parties exist, because there is electoral support for their policy proposals and their vision of a Bosnia which is not characterized by ethnic division but in which everyone enjoys equal rights. The political motivation of these parties arises from their electoral support and their willingness to change the current system, which they see as discriminatory and backwards. Yet, they have been unable to instigate major reforms, despite the fact that some non-nationalist parties (SDP and DF) have been part of several governing coalitions at entity and central state level. This is a novelty of the Bosnian political and electoral system – while

non-nationalist parties can electorally compete and challenge nationalist parties, they are unable to use their electoral support in order to push for substantial changes to the system, even when they are major players in the governing coalition. The reason for this is Bosnia's strict power-sharing system, which requires agreement amongst a number of parties, including nationalist ones, and in which reforms and wider structural changes have become almost impossible.[55]

Our discussion above comes to three main conclusions. First, despite the strong focus on ethnic power-sharing and strict electoral rules that favour nationalist parties, there is a surprising large support for non-nationalist, multiethnic parties in Bosnia. This raises new questions for the theoretical discussion on institutional design in post-conflict societies and the strict distinction between Lijphart's consociational model and the centripetal approach favoured by Horowitz and Reilly. As our discussion in the case of Bosnia has demonstrated, the strict distinction might not be appropriate, at least when analysing the party system – and this raises a number of further theoretical questions, for example can mixed models of power-sharing be used to address different post-conflict societies; or to what extent can a post-war society change from the consociational model to more integrative elements in the political system, and what role do voters (and voting incentives) play in this? It may be that there is sufficient demand for non-nationalist parties that even a moderate rollback of the consociational nature of the system could produce significant results. Second, we found that non-nationalist parties in Bosnia, while having accepted the rules of the game, nevertheless present a vision for Bosnia that is detrimental to the demands of nationalist parties. The non-nationalist parties do not function as a bridge between ethnic groups for the purpose of compromise, rather, their programmes reveal a challenge to the overall shape of politics in Bosnia. Therefore, despite taking the form of the parties encouraged by Horowitz and Reilly, they are not fulfilling the function foreseen by the centripetalist approach. Yet, the institutional provisions beyond electoral rules have made it impossible for non-nationalist parties to influence any changes to the system that they challenge. So while they might be successful electorally, they are unable to influence policy or major structural changes, because they are caught within the provisions of a power-sharing system that is designed for nationalist parties.

Indeed, looking at party dynamics and the role of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia, there remains a clear lack of strategy. Neither Naša Stranka, nor SDP could tell us how they will achieve their overall aims within the current system, instead pointing towards the need for long-term change, that might start at a local level. Yet, Bosnia has seen constitutional reform debates since 2004, and there has been literally no progress since. It remains to be seen how SDP and Naša Stranka can push for their visions, in a system that has been mainly characterized by stalemate.

Figures

Figure 1:

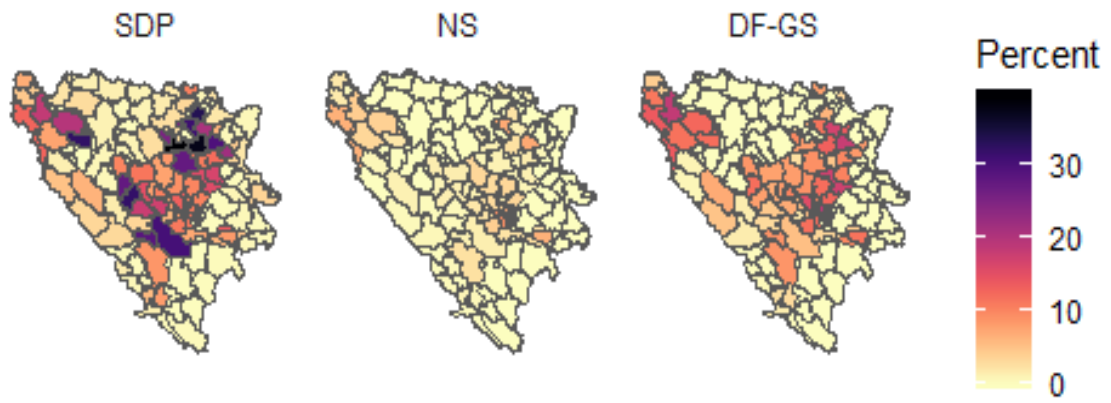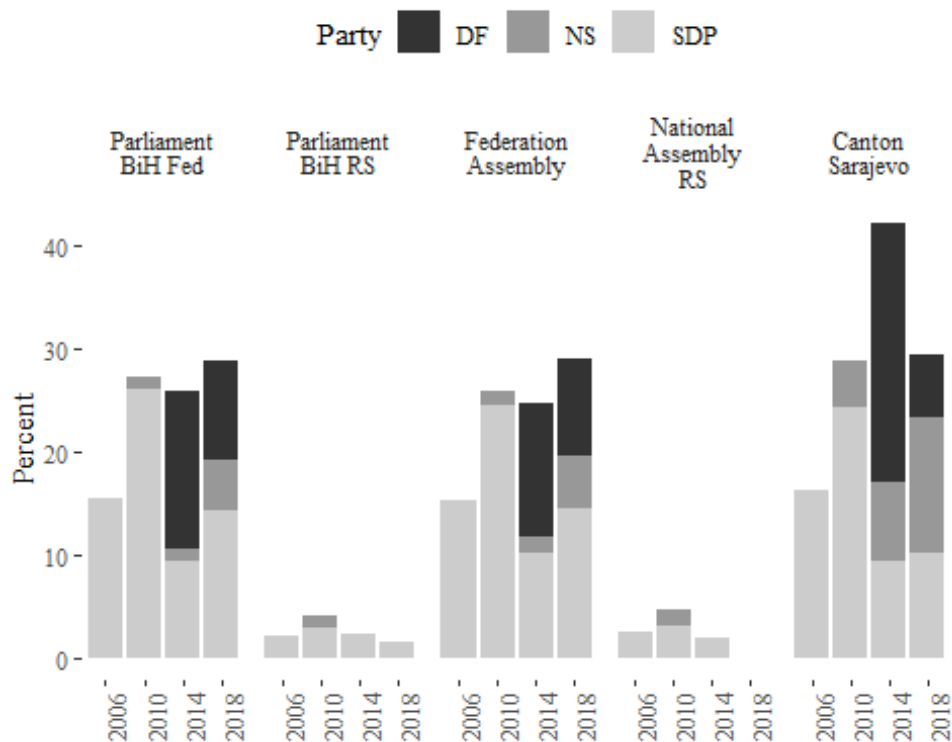Percent Vote in 2018 BiH Parliament Elections

Figure 2:

Note on Contributors

John Hulsey is Associate Professor of Political Science at James Madison University. His work on party politics, ethnic politics and Balkan politics has been published in Democratization, International Peacekeeping and Communist and Post-Communist Studies.

Soeren Keil is Reader in Politics and International Relations at Canterbury Christ Church University in the UK. His work focuses on territorial autonomy and conflict resolution, the Western Balkans and state-building and democratization. He is the author of *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Ashgate 2013), and his most recent edited collection is *The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans* (with Jelena Dzankic and Marko Kmezic, Palgrave 2018).

Notes and References

[1] Following the general use of term, the short form Bosnia will be used. This always refers to the whole country.

[2] See for example: Florian Bieber, "Why Constitutional Reform will not Solve the Bosnian Blockade". 28 July 2014, available at: http://fbieber.wordpress.com/2014/07/28/why-constitutional-reform-will-not-solve-the-bosnian-blockade/; Soeren Keil, "Whatever Happened to the Plenums in Bosnia?" *BalkanInsight*, 16 June 2014,

available at: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/whatever-happened-to-the-plenums-in-bosnia; Valery

Perry, "More Muddling Through in Bosnia?" *Transconflict,* 31 July 2014, available at:

http://www.transconflict.com/2014/07/more-muddling-through-bosnia-herzegovina-317/; Jasmin Hasić and

Dženata Karabegović "Elite responses to contentious politics on the subnational level: The 2014 Bosnian

protests" *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18 no.3, (2018): 367-380; Damir Kapidžić, "A mirror of

the ethnic divide: Interest group pillarization and elite dominance in Bosnia and Herzegovina" *Journal of Public

Affairs*, online first: 20 February 2019, available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pa.1720

(accessed 4 May 2019).

[3] David Chandler, *Bosnia – Faking Democracy After Dayton* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Sumantra Bose,

Bosnia after Dayton. Nationalist Partition and International Intervention (London: Hurst & Company, 2002);

Roberto Belloni, *Statebuilding and International Intervention in Bosnia* (Abington and New York.: Routledge

2007).

[4] Florian Bieber, *Post-War Bosnia – Ethnicity, Inequality and Public Sector Governance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave

MacMillan 2006); Soeren Keil, *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Farnham and Burlington:

Ashgate 2013), Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice – Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns* (Ithaca and

London: Cornell University Press 2013); Sabrina Ramet and Ola Listhaug, (Eds.), *Bosnia-Herzegovina since

Dayton: civic and uncivic values* (Bologna: Longo Editore Ravenna 2013); Jens Woelk, "Federalism and

Consociationalism as Tools for State Reconstruction? The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina" in *Federalism,

Subnational Constitutions and Minority Return*, edited by Alan Tarr et. al. (Westport and London: Praeger,

2004) 179-198.

[5] Florian Bieber, *Post-War Bosnia*; Birgit Bahtić-Kunrath, "Of Veto Players and Entity Voting: Institutional

Gridlock in the Bosnian Reform Process" *Nationalities Papers*, 39, no.6, (2011) 899-923; Soeren Keil,

Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina; John Hulsey, "Why did they Vote for Those Guys again?

Challenges and Contradictions in the Promotion of Political Moderation in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina"

Democratization, 17, no. 6, (2010): 1132-1152.

[6] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy" *World Politics*, 22, no. 2, (1969): 207-225; Arend Lijphart,

Democracy in Plural Societies (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1977); Arend Lijphart,

"Constitutional Design for Divided Societies" *Journal of Democracy*, 15, no. 2, (2004): 96-109.

[7] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies,* 61-65.

[8] Donald Horowitz, "Making Moderation Pay: The Comparative Politics of Ethnic Conflict Management" in *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, edited by Joseph Montville (New York: Lexington Books, 1991) 451-476; Donald Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies" *Journal of Democracy*, 4, no. 4, (1993): 18-38; Benjamin Reilly, "Political Engineering and Party Politics in Conflict-Prone Societies" *Democratization,* 13, no. 5, (2006): 811-827; Benjamin Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies: Consociationalism, Centripetalism and Communalism Compared" *European Political Science*, 11, (2012): 259-270.

[9] Benjamin Reilly, "Political Engineering and Party Politics in Conflict-Prone Societies", 811.

[10] Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies", 97-98.

[11] Benjamin Reilly, "Institutional Designs for Diverse Democracies: Consociationalism, Centripetalism and Communalism Compared", 265.

[12] We have interviewed a number of party officials from Naša Stranka and the SDP, as well as two members of the DF. These interviewees were contacted beforehand by the lead researchers, additional interviewees were identified using the snowball system. We are also grateful to Adnan Huskic, who provided the initial contact to the Naša Stranka leadership.

[13] The third important non-nationalist party in Bosnia is DF – Democratic Front. After splitting from SDP, the party had dramatic success in the 2014 elections, gaining many votes from the SDP but was reduced to a fraction of its previous vote in the 2018 election, partly because of its problematic decision to join the FBiH government in 2014 but leave it after less than 100 days. While the party leader, Zeljko Komsic was able to gain the Croat seat of the Presidency in 2018, many voters returned to the SDP, which saw a revival of its vote share. We have chosen to focus on the SDP at the expense of DF because of the ideological similarity of the parties, allowing us to focus on the greater differences vis a vis NS and the nationalist parties.

[14] In 1993 an Assembly of Bosnian Muslims decided to use the term *Bosniak* instead of the religious affiliation of *Bosnian Muslim.* This was done in order to strengthen the claim that Bosniaks represent an ethnic group instead of a religious community and also to strengthen Bosnia's bid for international support during the war, particularly from the United States.

[15] Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, *Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2011).

[16] Neven Andjelić, *Bosnia-Hercegovina – The End of a Legacy* (Portland: Frank Cass 2003), 195.

[17] On the war in Bosnia see the excellent analysis in Steven Burg and Paul Shoup, *The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[18] The Dayton Agreement divided Bosnia into two Entities, one of them – The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) is further divided into ten cantons. The other Entity, the Republika Srpska (RS) is mainly inhabited by Serbs, while Bosniaks and Croats mainly live in the FBiH.

[19] On the Dayton Peace Agreement itself, see Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War.* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999) as well as Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton – The Making of America's Bosnia Policy,* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution 2000). The full text of the Agreement is available at: http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=380

On power-sharing in Bosnia, see: Florian Bieber, *Post-War Bosnia*; Soeren Keil, *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

[20] In fact, a New York Times article in 1999 highlighted the major issue of political interference and corruption in post-war Bosnia as the main obstacle to implementing foreign assistance. See: Chris Hedges, "Leaders in Bosnia are Said to Steal up to $1 Billion", *The New York Times*, 17 August 1999.

[21] For the full-text of the decision to award the High Representatives these powers see the minutes of the Peace Implementation Council, available at: http://www.ohr.int/pic/default.asp?content_id=5182

[22] Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin, "Travails of the European Raj" *Journal of Democracy,* 14, no. 3, (2003): 60-74.

[23] International Crisis Group, *Bosnia's Incomplete Transition: Between Dayton and Europe*. Europe Report No. 198, 9 March 2009, available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/balkans/bosnia-herzegovina/198-bosnias-incomplete-transition-between-dayton-and-europe.aspx

[24] Jelena Dzankic and Soeren Keil, "The Europeanisation of Contested States: Comparing Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro" in *The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans – A Failure of EU Conditionality*, edited by Jelena Dzankic, Soeren Keil and Marko Kmezic, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 181-206.

[25] Gerard Toal, ""Republika Srpska will have a referendum": the Rhetorical Politics of Milorad Dodik" Nationalities Papers, 41, no. 1, (2013): 166-204.

[26] Valery Perry, "A 'Segment state' vision of the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina?" *Transconflict,* 10 February 2014, available at: http://www.transconflict.com/2014/02/segment-state-vision-future-bosnia-herzegovina-102/

[27] Jelena Dzankic, "Capturing Contested States – Structural Mechanisms of Power Reproduction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro" *Southeastern Europe*, 42, no. 1, (2018): 83-106.

[28] Carrie Manning, "Elections and Political Change in Post- War Bosnia and Herzegovina" *Democratization*, 11, no. 2, (2004): 60- 86.

[29] Gerard Toal, ""Republika Srpska will have a referendum": the Rhetorical Politics of Milorad Dodik"; Vedran Džihić, "Bosnien und Herzegowina in der Sackgasse? Struktur und Dynamik der Krise fünfzehn Jahre nach Dayton" *Südosteuropa*, 59, no. 1, (2011): 50-76.

[30] Carrie Manning, "Political Elites and Democratic State-building Efforts in Bosnia and Iraq" *Democratization*, 13, no. 5, (2006): 724-738.

[31] John Hulsey, "Party Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in *State-Building and Democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, edited by Soeren Keil and Valery Perry, (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2015), 41-60.

[32] In technical terms, Bosnia demonstrates poor linkage or nationalization across elections within the country as a result of regional power bases that reflect the varying ethnic make-up of electoral districts and the absence of parties that successfully win votes across ethnic divisions.

See further: Gary Cox, "Electoral Rules and Electoral Coordination". *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2, no. 1, (1999): 45-161 and Daniel Bochsler, "The Nationalisation of Post-Communist Party Systems" *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62, no. 5, (2010): 807-827.

[33] However, in 2006 the SDP did run candidates in the Serb and Croat elections but not the Bosniak election.

[34] John Hulsey, "Institutions and the Reversal of State Capture – Bosnia and Herzegovina in Comparative Perspective" *Southeastern Europe*, 42, no. 1, (2018): 15-32.

[35] This was also pointed out in the interview with D, a former Senior SDP official, who has since joined DF. D confirmed that the SDP was aware of this, and that they used it as part of their 2010 campaign, promoting a clear alternative to the established nationalist parties. Interview with D, former SDP senior official and current DF senior official, Sarajevo, 30. May 2014.

[36] For more detail see Figure 1.

[37] John Hulsey, "Why did they Vote for Those Guys again? Challenges and Contradictions in the Promotion of Political Moderation in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina".

[38] Naša Stranka has 2 members in the Bosnian House of Representatives and 6 members in the FBiH House of Representatives as a result of its success in the 2018 elections.

[39] Interview with E, youth activist of DF, who confirmed that DF saw itself as the better non-nationalist alternative in Bosnia. Interview with E, youth activist of DF, Sarajevo, 28 May 2014.

[40] John Hulsey, "Party Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

[41] The number of DF MPs in the Bosnian House of Representatives was reduced from 5 in 2014 to 3 in 2018.

[42] See on this also Figure 2.

[43] Gerard Toal and Carl Dahlman *Bosnia Remade. Ethnic Cleansing and its Reversal* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2011).

[44] Michael Pugh and Margaret Cobble, "Non-nationalist Voting in Bosnian Municipal Elections: Implications for Democracy and Peacebuilding" *Journal of Peace Research,* 38, no. 1, (2001): 27-47.

[45] Paula Pickering, "Explaining Support for Non-nationalist Parties in Post-Conflict Societies in the Balkans" *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61, no.4, (2009): 565-591.

[46] Nina Caspersen, "Intra-Group Divisions in Ethnic Conflicts: From Popular Grievances to Power Struggles" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 14, no. 2, (2008): 239-265.

[47] Cera Murtagh, "The Plight of Civic Parties in Divided Societies. *International Political Science Review,* forthcoming 2020.

[48] The electoral programme, as well as the party programme are available at: www.nasastranka.ba All translations are done by the authors.

[49] Interview with A, leading Naša Stranka member, Sarajevo, 29 May 2014.

[50] The programme of the SDP is available at: www.sdp.ba All translations are done by the authors.

[51] Interview with B, SDP activist in Sarajevo, Sarajevo 28 May 2014.

[52] Helen Touquet, "Multi-Ethnic Parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Naša Stranka and the Paradoxes of Postethnic Politics" *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11, no. 3, (2011): 451-467.

[53] Anna Bosco, "Four Actors in Search of a Role: The Southern European Communist Parties" in *Parties, Politics, and Democracy in the New Southern Europe*, edited by Diamandouros, P. Nikiforos and Richard Gunther (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 321.

[54] Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Manfeldova, Radoslav Markowski, and Gabor Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137.

[55] Valery Perry, "Frozen, stalled, stuck, or just muddling through: the post-Dayton frozen conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina" *Asia Europe Journal*, 17, no. 1, (2019): 107-127.