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Ensar MUHAREMOVIC
Born on 23 January 1986 in Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Dissertation defence committee

Dr Josip Glaurdić, dissertation supervisor
Professor, Université du Luxembourg

Dr Christophe Lesschaeve
Université du Luxembourg

Dr Anna-Lena Högenauer, Chairman
Professor, Université du Luxembourg

Dr Dražen Barbarić
Professor, University of Mostar

Dr Sead Turčalo, Vice Chairman
Professor, University of Sarajevo

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is more than anything else my decision to confront the relentless need to understand Bosnia. I am not sure if I succeeded, but even if I didn't it was worth it. For Bosnia.

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Introduction

Thinking about Bosnia-Herzegovina can be a difficult and at times daunting prospect. The country's recent history has been marked by the terrible war that led the country to the brink of collapse and left it destroyed and divided. In the war's aftermath the country was stitched together and rebuilt by the enormous effort undertaken by the international community led by the United States. The political leaderships of three ethnic communities that comprise the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, had very little say in defining what post-war country would look like. The constitution of the country was essentially imposed on both politicians and citizens.

Today Bosnia-Herzegovina functions as an asymmetric federation with strong elements of consociationalism and a lack of consensus among political elites. The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) implemented all four mayor elements of the consociational political system (grand coalition government, proportional representation, veto powers, and group autonomy) (Lijphart, 1996; Tzifakis, 2007; Trlin, 2017; Stojanović, 2020). While some authors argue that Bosnia is a de facto confederation (Bose, 2002; Kasapović, 2005; Choudhry, 2008), others emphasize the importance of structural power-sharing mechanisms which make Bosnia's ethno-federalism unique (Bieber, 2006; Keil, 2013; Vanjek, 2021). What the DPA created was at best a mixed or shared sovereignty between ethno-political elites and the external regulators (Krasner, 2004; Williams, 2004; Oellers-Frahm, 2005; Belloni, 2008; Merdzanovic, 2017) in a very complex institutional setting and at worst an internationally managed protectorate (Yannis, 2002; Chandler, 2006; European Stability Initiative, 2007; Rehn, 2009; Baros, 2010). In turn, this created an insurmountable gap between the state and the people in addition to the deeply rooted ethnic divisions. Despite this, the DPA was and still is celebrated as an important achievement of international interventionism for one key reason: it stopped the war. This fact has been stressed in both

academic literature and public statements given by both domestic and international actors. But stopping the war does not necessarily lead towards conflict resolution or reconciliation. The conflicts that tore the country apart during the war are still very much present in everyday political life and in a large measure determine the strategies of political elites and voters' party preferences.

For the same reasons that thinking about Bosnia-Herzegovina can be challenging, it can also be rewarding. It is rare that one singular case offers an abundance of potential research avenues for political scientists to explore. In addition, the field of state-building and democratization in post-conflict societies has dedicated remarkably little attention to Bosnia. While in the immediate period after the war and the singing of the DPA there was a pronounced interest in understanding how to make Bosnia work, in the last two decades that interest has rapidly dwindled away and has been directed towards other problematic areas of the world. Today when there is a realistic threat of the war in Ukraine spilling over into the Balkans and affecting stability, primarily in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it seems that there is an alarming need for political scientists to rekindle their interest in the region. This thesis is a small contribution to bringing spotlight back to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The thesis is composed of five individual articles defined by three major themes: democratization and post-communist transition, legacies of war and their impact on electoral politics, and political representation and interethnic dynamics in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. From these five connected but nonetheless distinct research topics, we formulated a set of broad research questions that try to encapsulate the main objectives:

What were the main causes of the failed democratization in 1990 and what were the consequences of that failure? How are war-related discourses in the parliament affecting relations among political representatives? What separates and what brings closer the ethnopolitical elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Each article tackles at least one but in most cases multiple shortcomings in the existing literature or it challenges widely accepted interpretations. These range from the characterization of the Bosnian communist leadership in the period prior to the first democratic elections as being reformist to redefining our understanding of relations among the dominant ethnonationalist parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While only one article directly deals with the consequences of the Bosnian War and the control that the memory of that war still exerts over the population to this day, it is an important part and connective tissue of all five articles. But this research is not a history or political historiography of the Bosnian War. It is primarily an inquiry into how war legacies survive in politics long after wars end and continue to shape worldviews of decision makers. Contrary to the historiographical literature on the Bosnian War where politicians are often treated as pawns of invisible historical forces and ancient hatreds, in this thesis they are approached as active perpetuators of war related topics and main beneficiaries of such discourses.

Besides being geographically anchored to the region of Western Balkans and Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, research presented in the thesis deals with two separate time periods: pre-war communist era (1978-1990) and post-war Daytonian Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995-2022). The five years not directly covered in this thesis 1990-1995 is the period during which war happened. Certain aspects from this period are dispersed throughout the thesis as a whole and in some articles they constitute important parts of the central argumentation.

Pre-war period (1974-1990)

The political development of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the post war period has been in large parts conditioned by the fall of Yugoslavia and the subsequent war that erupted. It would be safe to claim that the country's post-war political situation cannot be properly understood without a firm grasp of the events that happened prior, during, and in the immediate period after the fall of Yugoslavia. Thus, understanding key components of pre-

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war politics became the essential precondition for any dedicated inquiry into the country's present and future. While this thesis does not pretend to offer a complete history of Yugoslavia's breakup and it does not prophesize any such goals in the first place, it does dedicate significant space to the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the Yugoslav socialist federation. For this reason, it was of critical importance for this research to provide a comprehensive analysis of divisions and cleavages under communist rule that delineated elite choices and influenced subsequent events. Without understanding what was the underlying cause of divisions that persisted even when faced with systematic and continuous attempts at monolithization of society by the communists, it was impossible to properly determine the positions taken by the decision makers during the period of political crisis that started taking shape in 1974.

In the first article titled "Cleavages Under Communism: Voters and Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1978-1990" our goal was to uncover the communist cloak and identify the hidden divisions buried under the totalitarian system. Our aim was to challenge the view in the literature which treats communist societies as completely engulfed by the one-party systems in which voters were mere consumers of ruling parties' propaganda. Under communism, opportunities for citizens to express their true political views were few and far between. Prosecutions of dissidents for political beliefs and crackdowns on first signs of emergence of true civil society groups were all common occurrences. In addition, elections were little more than a rehearsed performance of regimes' legitimacy. All these factors significantly reduced the spaces for political scientists to recreate the conditions under which social life was developing under communist rule. But the fact that there were divisions and cleavages remains. We set out to understand how these cleavages were formed and what the main drivers of cleavage formation were.

This article identified three major factors that determined the strength and support for the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine – SKBiH): population's ethnic makeup and distribution, education, and the level and nature of exposure to World War II violence. In comparison, economy played a far less important role. This finding strengthens the decision that this thesis, while acknowledging importance of different aspects of social life during and after communism, would be asking questions that are political in their essence. Its main research objectives stem from the focus on choices that political elites make, attitudes that shape these choices, and worldviews that give them grounding and boundaries. From this point of view, the actor-centered approach was employed as a key theoretical component of the thesis. Questions pertaining to the conditions under which political actors make important decisions became the center part of the whole project.

In the second article titled "Constrained Choices: How Bosnian Communists Lost Their Party Before Losing Elections" our focus moved from the exogenous factors that were key for understanding cleavage formation in the late stages of socialism to the endogenous circumstances within the SKBiH in the final months prior to the first democratic elections in 1990. This article introduces the theme of war and democratization or defined more closely, war as one of the consequences of failed democratization. In post-1974 Yugoslavia, political establishment split along two lines: federalists and confederalists. The dominant approach in the literature on Yugoslavia's breakup is to position all political actors (republican leaderships) on one of these two poles. The Bosnian party is thus generally grouped together with the rest of the reform-oriented leaderships primarily those in Croatia and Slovenia and partially Macedonia. On the other side, Serbia and Montenegro along with the leaderships in Kosovo and Vojvodina (after the purges by the Milošević regime) were grouped under the conservative/federalist banner. We provide evidence that this approach is significantly flawed

since it forces the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina to fit into a predefined reformist model which does not adequately capture the political essence of the Bosnian regime at the time. More importantly, from this position it is difficult to explain why, contrary to the decisions made in Slovenia and Croatia, the Bosnian leadership decided to decelerate and intentionally postpone the elections. This choice led to further loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the voters and gave time and space to the nationalist opposition to better prepare and organize.

In order to understand why this misguided decision was made, we adopted the idea of "reading history forward" (Ahmed, 2010). This qualitative methodological approach is based on gathering significant amount of data from a wide range of sources to create a rich artificial historical environment in which the researcher can immerse himself. The goal was to simulate the conditions under which leaders of the SKBiH found themselves and evaluate their decisions from within this context. This approach allowed us to understand why in the critical moment for transition to democracy the Bosnian leadership, pressured by the ethnically and ideologically divided membership and the unified nationalist opposition, decided to double down on its ideological commitment to socialist Yugoslavia at a time when everyone else seemed to understand that Yugoslavia's days were numbered. This finding makes the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina unique compared not only to other cases within the Yugoslavian political microcosms but also in the wider communist context of Eastern Europe. The article demonstrates the importance of ideological beliefs of those in power and connects regime change and democratization literature to discussions on the role of ideology in the periods of regime transformation and crisis. The analysis presented in the articles challenges the notion that decision makers act only as rational seat-maximizers and advances the argument that ideologically motivated behavior can seem very rational and beneficial from the standpoint of those making decisions.

The political rationality theory was further tested in the third article "Rokkan Rules? Communist Elites and the Choice of Electoral Systems in the Yugoslav Republics, 1989–1990". The main goal of the article was to employ classical theories of adoption of electoral rules in Western democracies and test their validity in the East European post-communist context. Instead of being a single case study our approach for this article was further developed and expanded to include all six Yugoslav republics with a special focus on Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. The diversity of ways in which democratization unfolded in Yugoslavia and the degree of variance in the choice of electoral rules justified the application of comparative approach.

The main finding of the article shows that the balance of power between intra-party unity and the strength of opposition proved to be the deciding factor in electoral system choice. In a scenario where strong and unified left wing party faced weak right wing opposition this led to the adoption of majoritarian rules while proportional representation was the result of a weak and disunited left and strong right. If the balance of power was unclear this resulted in the adoption of variations on the ideal types of electoral rules. The article also shows that, while communist elites did act as rational seat-maximizers, their decision making processes have been guided by ambition to retain political power and cannot be reduced only to the logic of "winning seats". Winning seats was certainly high on the list of priorities of those in power but maintaining intra-party control played a big part as well.

Post-war period (1995-2022)

The second part of this thesis consists of two articles that utilize data from the both houses of the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina - House of Representatives (Predstavnički dom/Zastupnički dom) and House of Peoples (Dom naroda) in the period of almost twenty-five years (1998-2022). The main goal that connects both articles was to identify and systematically analyze determinants of political representation in the post-war period based

on a rigorous empirical analysis and backed by a dataset that is to the best of our knowledge unparalleled for Bosnia-Herzegovina. We problematize view in literature which threats Bosnia-Herzegovina as a country that is hopelessly split and divided among its three ethnic groups. The political leaderships of these groups are treated as almost identical in their appetite for domination over what they perceive as their own political and geographically territory. The only difference is in perceptions of what each ethnopolitical elite views as "their territory".

The general idea which guided our topic selection was that in order to understand Bosnia-Herzegovina and its political elites today we first need to understand the consequences of the Bosnian War. The article titled "The Abyss of Ethnic Division: Two Decades of Discussing War in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina" represents our attempt at understanding how memories of war were used by the politicians for their own goals and benefits. The principle aim of the article was to improve our understanding of patterns of war related discourses used by MPs. The article challenges understanding of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a country in which three different conceptions of what happened in the Bosnian War are continuously competing for interpretational dominance. Very early in our research we realized that our understating of how memory of war is used by the political elites is insufficient and clouded by preconceived ideas.

Based on the mixed method analysis that combines natural language processing (NLP) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) we came to conclusions that the war is still the most dominant source of political polarization at the top level of Bosnian politics. The DPA stopped the war but it failed to enable any kind of meaningful reconciliation. The fundamental disagreement between Bosniak and Serb MPs on the character of the war defines how majority of MPs use war memory in their speeches. At almost every instance when the war is debated in the parliament Bosniak MPs insist on the view which treats the

war was an aggression against independent and sovereign Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serb MPs, on the other side, strongly dispute these claims and perceive the war as an internal conflict among Bosnia's ethnic groups. The rest of the war related discourses by MPs from these two groups are built around these opposed framings. Contrary to expectations, Croat MPs rarely partook in these debates and we could not find evidence that would prove that for Croat MPs war memory constitutes a crucial part of their political worldview. What we did prove is that Croat MPs often intentionally evade discussions about the war. Based on these findings our research introduces a new model for understating what was previously believed to be a three-sided conflict. We argue that $2 + 1$ model in which Croat MPs play a balancing role and often rely on strategic concealing of their attitudes towards the war better describes the actual practice of war memory usage in the institutional setting.

The final article of the thesis titled "What Is Keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina Together? Interethnic Dynamics in Post-War Period and the Promise of EU" aims to redefine our understating of Bosnia's interethnic relations. We offer a systematic data based analysis of positions taken by the political representatives in parliament on crucial questions in the period of almost twenty-five years. We used the same database as in our fourth article but we further expanded it by including the data from the last completed term of the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina (2018-2022). This allowed us to ensure that our analysis is relevant for recent political developments as well as those from the past. The article challenges two dominant interpretations of interethnic relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina that have been consistently used in both literature and policy analysis to describe how Bosniak, Serb and Croat politicians relate to each other. The first set of interpretations reduces and boils down politics of all three groups to discourse of domination and survival in order to present them as being in a state of permanent conflict. We named this approach "all against all". The second interpretation takes alleged Serb-Croat alliance against the state as the foundation on which a

simple system of pro-state and anti-state political forces is built. This view became dominant in the last few years when election of Željko Komšić as the Croat member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina became a major thorn in the Bosniak-Croat relations.

Our goal was to prove that both interpretations are flawed and do not accurately represent the true nature of political relations among ethnic groups. In order to achieve this goal we designed a system consisting of six major policy topics – state, people, entity, OHR, NATO, and EU. We tested our dataset for these six dimensions on the level of ethnic groups. The selection criterion was a twofold process. We first mapped and created visual representation of the general political discourse in the Assembly to help us understand connections between most prominent topics. Once we had a "big picture" we were able to identify which topics formed and defined the major clusters that were formed on our discourse map. We verified importance of these topics by going back and conducting a qualitative analysis of the transcripts from the Assembly sessions.

Our findings show that the political representatives of the three ethnic groups engage in a complex political environment which cannot be reduced to a simple "all against all". In reality there are very few areas of politics where Bosniak, Serb and Croat MPs have completely opposite attitudes to each other. The main line of political conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina is among Serbs and Bosniaks. Their understating of what the country is, why it exists and how it can be improved to ensure better life for its citizens are opposite and fundamentally irreconcilable. This finding confirms validity of research presented in the previous article on war related debates in the parliament which identified failed reconciliation among Bosniak and Serb MPs. On the other hand, we detected that Bosniaks and Croats share significant number of domestic and foreign policy goals. The defining feature of the Bosniak-Croat relation is the shared belief that Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent and sovereign country should exist and that its future is within the EU and NATO. This is

opposed to the view shared by majority of Serb MPs. This finding challenges the theory that there is a principal Serb-Croat alliance against the state. We show that alliance of Serbs and Croats under their present political leaderships can be nothing more than a temporary strategic convergence. It can work for as long as both parties are focused on their short term goals. If and when those goals are achieved their long term visions for Bosnia-Herzegovina will lead them in completely opposite directions. This finding is of crucial importance for the immediate future of the country and can serve as a valuable basis for policy adjustments of both domestic and international political actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This thesis makes significant contributions in historicization of previously neglected and under-researched periods that were indispensable parts in molding Bosnia-Herzegovina into a country that it is today. The legacies of the World War II and the Bosnian War influenced political actors and in a large measure impacted their rise and fall from power. The findings presented in the thesis help us to get a firm grasp on political consequences of these two terrifying events. The data used and the methods applied were crucial parts in making these findings meaningful and impactful.

In addition to contributions in understanding major historical events, the thesis offers valuable insights into contemporary political developments in the post-Dayton period. It provides a systematic analysis of how political attitudes are to this day shaped by the events of the Bosnian war and how these events are in turn used for political benefits. It also sharpens our understanding of what separates and what brings closer political elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

While the scope of this research was from the start limited by its focus on one particular country in two specific time periods, the research does offer certain value when it comes to the generalisability of the research results. This is particularly true for its methodological and historical contributions. The innovative character of methodological

approaches and diversity of data used can serve as an example of how to conduct mixed method, quantitative and qualitative research in vide variety of social sciences or even in a considerably different scientific environments. It solves some of the practical problems such as issues of integration, embedding and interpretation when it comes to the combining of different methods and different data sources. Our historical research demonstrated how rigorous qualitative analysis of wide range of textual sources as we as primary, archival sources can on one hand enrich and contribute to the value of statistical and computational analysis and, on the other, serves as additional testing and corrective layer in verification and application of the results.

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Cleavages Under Communism: Voters and Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1978-1990[1]

Scholarship on political divisions under communism remains limited. We use the data from Bosnia-Herzegovina's last three non-democratic and the first democratic elections in the period 1978-1990 to expose the sources of strength of and support for the communist regime. Our analysis demonstrates that the pattern of communists' local power had little to do with the economy, but was instead determined by ethnicity, education, and exposure to World War II violence. This is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the social foundations of communist regimes, the enduring political impact of war violence, and the collapse of Yugoslavia into interethnic conflict.

The literature on life under communism is vast and still expanding in virtually all disciplines of humanities and social sciences. Despite the understandable decline of interest in the years after the end of the Cold War, the desire to explain the interaction between individuals, their communities, and the totalitarian state is likely to remain a potent force. At this point, it is safe to say that we understand that societies under communism were not monolithic. After all, we know there were dissidents. We know that communist states put millions into prisons and gulags, often without cause, but often also because of individuals' or social groups' views that were seen as a threat to the system (Applebaum, 2012). We know that millions were surveilled – again, because of perceived threats to the system (Pucci, 2020). We also have the various official statistics on the social stratification of membership of the various communist parties (e.g. Rigby, 1968; Vušković, 1984). However, we lack real systematic analyses of the social foundations of divisions or cleavages within the communist systems. Who supported and who opposed the communist regime and where? What were the determinants of the strength of communist parties in the local communities? Can our

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understanding of the relationship between voters and political office holders in democracies be applied to communist polities?

Part of the reason for the fact that these questions still lack systematic answers backed by solid data analysis lies in theory and the highly influential school of thought which saw communist societies as at the same time atomized and homogenized due to the influence of the state that destroyed the institutions of civil society (Evans, 2006). This view also permeated the studies of early political competition in post-communist Eastern Europe where interests and political preferences were seen as amorphous and poorly articulated, and the voters were perceived as disoriented (or, rather, more oriented toward the state, as opposed to the structures of the civil society or the political parties) largely due to the communist regimes' efforts at erasing social structures and identities (Bernhard, 1993; Lewis, 1993; Ost, 1993). Part of the reason why the aforementioned questions still remain relevant is also practical and concerns the lack of reliable data on the social foundations of support for and strength of communist parties beyond the various official aggregate-level statistics, as well as the lack of opportunities for the citizens of communist countries to meaningfully express their views about the system they were living under. In other words, our understanding of cleavages under communism is limited because citizens had few opportunities to make those cleavages apparent.

Obviously, the essence of the problem lay in the nature of elections under communism and the lack of any organized political opposition that could present an alternative to the voters. Elections in communist countries have been rightfully perceived as a sham, whose purpose was a form of social control where voters were forced to legitimize the system by partaking in a clearly fraudulent process with no real choice (Zaslavsky and Brym, 1978; Karklins, 1986). While we agree with this assessment, we believe that some data related to the elections under communism can offer valuable insights that can help us shed

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light onto the nature of this system of government, the social sources of its strength and weakness, as well as the character of the relationship between the ruling party and the citizens.

Other scholars have in the past looked at turnout figures in the communist countries – as flawed and as artificially inflated as they were – as useful datapoints (Shi, 1999). We take a different approach. We use the data on the presence of the members of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine – SKBiH) among individuals elected into municipal representative bodies in three elections (1978, 1982, and 1986) on the level of more than a hundred municipalities of former Yugoslavia's central republic. We complement that data with the data on the results of Bosnia-Herzegovina's first democratic (and last pre-war) elections of 1990, and we pair that with a wealth of economic and socio-demographic data, including data on the geographic pattern of severe violence Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced during World War II.

Our analysis convincingly shows that the pattern of strength of and support for the SKBiH during the period of late and ultimately collapsing socialism had little to do with any economic factors, even though the geographic distribution of the severe economic crisis Yugoslavia was going through was highly unequal. Instead, it was critically determined by the population's ethnic makeup and distribution, education, and – crucially – the level and nature of exposure to World War II violence. Our article makes a valuable contribution to the literature in three important ways. First, it exposes the social foundations of the communist regimes and sheds light on the nature of the relationship between the ruling parties and the people. Second, it contributes to our understanding of the deeply pervasive and long-lasting legacies of war violence that had sizeable political consequences even in single-party regimes. And finally, it improves our understanding of late socialism in former Yugoslavia as well as of the character of the country's breakdown into interethnic violence.

Political divisions and sources of regime support in communism

The recent spread of hybrid regimes and electoral authoritarianism has sparked new interest into various forms of competition in non-democratic politics. While this literature has convincingly shown us that the institutions we generally consider essential to democracies – like representative bodies, political parties, and elections – also play important roles in (semi) authoritarian regimes (Brancati, 2014), our understanding of the social, economic, and political foundations of deep popular divisions under such regimes is still rather limited. This is not only the case with the studies of the more recent hybrid regimes, but also with the vast literature on domestic politics in the communist countries of the second half of the twentieth century.

Some may say that any talk of political cleavages in such systems of government is misplaced. After all, if we consider cleavages to be "strongly structured and persistent lines of salient social and ideological division among politically important actors" (Whitefield, 2002: 181), and we know that many communist countries for long periods of time had virtually no "politically important actors" beyond the organizations of the ruling system, can we even speak of cleavages in the classical sense? We believe that we can, and we should. Political life under communist regimes was defined by the question of who the supporters and the opponents of the ruling party were. The opposition often may not have been organized due to the repressive apparatus of the ruling regime, but we believe that for our discussion of political cleavages under communism it is far more important that the level of support for and opposition to the ruling party among the general population was not uniformly distributed.

In some ways, this view goes against one particularly prominent school of thought about political life under communism – the so-called "mass society" interpretation of social and political relations in communist countries (Kornhauser, 1959). According to this view, the destruction of various organizations of civil society by the communist regimes at the same

time atomized societies by erasing social identities and collectivized them into an amorphous mass with direct relations to the state that was hijacked by the ruling party. Any articulation of interests that may be on the level of individual communities or different social strata was deemed as either ephemeral or simply pointless (Evans, 2006). This "totalitarian model" of domestic politics under communism (Przeworski, 1999: 2) did not see true conflict in communist societies as even possible because the system was based on repression and dogmatic allegiance to the ruling party. Unsurprisingly, this view (of course, without the focus on regime dogma and repression) was also popular with many social scientists loyal to the regime. As one of them put it, "aside from working people there is no one else in a socialist society" (Volkov, 1973).

In contrast to this view of political life under communism, many scholars saw the societies behind the Iron Curtain undergoing transformations similar to those experienced by Western societies. Economic and educational modernization and urbanization were seen as giving rise to the new communist middle class with its own goals and demands that did not necessarily sit well with the traditional focus of Marxist parties on the proletariat. Buoyed by the results of new research by local social scientists who were allowed to seek answers to many (though not all) questions related to social stratification during the period of destalinization (Lipset, 1973), as well as by the cumulative figures of the communist parties themselves on party membership among different occupational and ethnic groups (Rigby, 1968), these scholars created a picture of communist polities marked by class differences resembling those in democratic societies. What mattered was, obviously, access to political power and it was increasingly available only to those who satisfied certain occupational and educational criteria. This was a much broader extension of what the famous Yugoslav communist revolutionary and later dissident Milovan Đilas (1957) termed as "the new class" of communist functionaries, managers, administrators, and ideologues. Basically, in contrast

to those who saw life under communism dominated by the "mass society" of working people, modernization theorists saw it structured around social groups defined in economic/occupational and educational terms.

The gist of the problem in establishing the nature of political cleavages in communist societies lies in the fact that the people simply did not have avenues to freely express their views. Elections under communism were commonly and rightfully considered a sham. Most Western scholars of the period simply ignored them or considered them meaningless (Dinka and Skidmore, 1973). At face value, how could they not? Communist elections were either plebiscitary (i.e., the number of candidates was equal to the number of seats) or limited choice (the number of candidates, all chosen by the party, was slightly higher than the number of seats), and they featured extreme social and institutional pressures on the citizens to vote (Pravda, 1978).

These elections did, however, serve important purposes in the functioning of the communist system of government. They helped the regime mobilize the population partly through a wave of propaganda and indoctrination, and partly through minor bargaining between the office holders and the electorate (Zaslavsky and Brym, 1978). They also helped the regime identify and recruit new cadres, as well as provide a regimented institutional avenue for the regeneration of personnel. The highest communist functionaries were obviously not elected by the people, but the economic policy cycles in communist countries of Eastern Europe demonstrated that these functionaries understood their need to placate the general population and their different constituencies (Bunce, 1980). The elections were a tool in that process.

However, even if the scholars understood the importance of and the role played by the electoral process under communism, the problem of the lack of reliable data remained. Some researchers chose to focus on cumulative figures for turnout in different

regions as signifiers of the potential for dissent. To which extent one could draw any conclusions from "the missing one percent" on such a high level of aggregation is questionable (Gilison, 1968). Others tried to decipher larger trends related to voting in communist elections from surveys of Soviet emigrants, but the obvious bias of such samples made the empirical reach of any conclusions very limited (Karklins, 1986). These understandable problems with data availability, together with the nature of communist elections and the lack of avenues for the free expression of views, as well as the theoretical approaches to the study of communist politics that saw either no possibility for true social divisions or identified stratification largely based on economic/workforce criteria, all resulted in a rather incomplete view of domestic politics and social cleavages under communism.

Unsurprisingly, this line of thinking about politics and social structures under communism was hugely influential on the early theorizing about post-communist cleavages and electoral competition. Scholars of the so-called "tabula rasa" school of thought saw the interests and political preferences of voters in early transition as easily malleable and poorly articulated, and the political parties as weakly institutionalized, ideologically inconsistent, and inadequately embedded into social structures – all largely on account of communist regimes' supposedly successful campaigns against popular identities (Bernhard, 1993; Lewis, 1993; Ost, 1993). Relatedly, other scholars believed that it would be the early experiences of transition to capitalism – i.e., who wins and who loses from the process of social and economic transformation from socialism – that would dominate at least the initial period of post-communist politics (Kitschelt, 1992). As the region experienced wave after wave of elections, however, it soon became clear that post-communist voters were not an amorphous body and that the slate of social and political identities was not wiped clean by more than four decades of communism. Public identification with parties was proven to be relatively

strongly structured (Miller et al., 1998) and voters demonstrated a reasonably high level of not only political identity, but also economic rationality in their choice (Pacek, 1994).

This resulted in more complex views of early post-communist cleavages that first included ethnic identities and questions of statehood (Evans and Whitefield, 1993), and then expanded to reflect the social, political, and economic legacies of three distinct periods in the evolution of East European societies: the interwar period of flawed democracies, the long period of communist rule, and the most recent experiences of transition to democracy (Whitefield, 2002). In a particularly influential study that typified this line of research, Kitschelt and colleagues (1999) proposed that post-communist politics were determined by the historical legacies of both pre-World War II and post-World War II regimes with the decisive factors being the differing levels of clientelism/corruption of the interwar state apparatuses and the strategies of the communist regimes to maintain rule either through cooptation or repression.

Interestingly, and curiously, none of the models of post-communist cleavages accounted for anything related to the actual experiences of World War II violence or the patterns of resistance and collaboration. Of course, this is not unique to the studies of political cleavages in post-communist Eastern Europe but can also be observed in the studies focused on Western Europe where the narratives of political competition, party development, and cleavage structures often simply skip over the most violent period in the history of the continent. This is unfortunate as new research shows the long-lasting political legacies of violence from this period in both Eastern and Western Europe. Costalli and Ruggeri (2019), for example, show the positive impact of the strength of communist resistance during World War II in Italy on the communists' post-war electoral fortunes. And Rozenas et al. (2017) show the long-lasting impact of the legacy of Stalinist violence on post-communist electoral

loyalties in western Ukraine. All of this suggests that our understanding of political divisions during communism (as well as during transition and beyond) are at best incomplete.

Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina during late Yugoslav socialism

In many ways, Bosnia-Herzegovina represented the heart of socialist Yugoslavia. It was a multicultural, multiconfessional, multiethnic republic in the center of a similarly multicultural, multiconfessional, and multiethnic federation. It was also the site of virtually all the major World War II battles that the communist partisan resistance movement survived and ultimately won. Bosnia-Herzegovina was the essential element of the Yugoslav myth that the communist revolution was rooted in the brotherhood and unity of its peoples. Deconstructing this myth, however, reveals some very important and necessary qualifications. First, prior to WWII, communists were a nearly non-existent force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with members and sympathizers counting at most in the hundreds (Banac, 1984). Second, the biggest battles of the partisan movement may have taken place on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but most of the partisans who were fighting in these battles came from other lands of the South Slav kingdom destroyed by the Axis. And third, the distribution of support for the communists during World War II was not uniform. All three of the largest ethnic communities – Serbs, Muslims, and Croats – were internally split among those who supported the partisans, those who supported one of the collaborationist outfits, and those who simply wished to stay on the sidelines. However, the level of support for the partisans was much higher among the Serbs who were targeted by the extreme violence of the collaborationist Ustaša regime. Bosnia-Herzegovina during World War II was not just one theater of a global conflict, but also the site of a particularly bloody civil war fought among the members of the three largest ethnic groups.[2]

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[2] Yugoslavia conducted a census of WWII victims in 1964. Only 18% of the victims from Bosnia and Herzegovina identified in that census died as resistance fighters and 82% died as civilians. Most tellingly, for only 5.6% of the victims the outside occupying forces (Germans and Italians) were identified as perpetrators,

After the war, Bosnia-Herzegovina quickly became the most disciplined republic in the new communist regime, though not for lack of popular opposition. The communist party leadership and membership were disproportionately Serb, and the party apparatus struggled mightily to even enter many Muslim and particularly Croat communities that supported the other side during the war (Shoup, 1968: 121). For the first two postwar decades, Bosnia-Herzegovina was run by the generation of revolutionary leaders who derived legitimacy from their war records. The most obvious consequence of this were the vast ethnic disparities in access to power and elite status in all aspects of the republic's political life (Cohen, 1989: 304). As Titoism moderated after Yugoslavia's break with Stalin in 1948, Bosnia-Herzegovina became the hard version of this soft totalitarianism (Andjelic, 2003: 49) with the strongest growth in party membership in all of Yugoslavia, especially among the youngest generations. Ethnic disparities in political power were alleviated over time, though not as much in party membership as in the party leadership which became more reflective of the republic's ethnic makeup.[3]

Elections under Yugoslav socialism – despite its idiosyncrasies like greater openness or the system of workers' self-management – played a very similar role to the one they played in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. In the evolution of elections under the Yugoslav ruling regime after World War II, we can identify three distinct periods: elections overtly directed by the party between 1948 and 1963, experimentations with semi-pluralism between 1963 and the promulgation of the 1974 constitution which substantially decentralized the country, and the so-called delegate system from 1974 until the final collapse of socialism in 1990 (Seroka and Smiljković, 1986). The delegate system under scrutiny in this article was instituted after a decade-long attempt of the regime to make the elections

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whereas for 39.1% of the victims the perpetrators were identified as some of the local – Croat, Serb, or Muslim – forces (Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1966).

[3] In 1981, the ratio of proportion in the SKBiH membership over proportion in the republic's population was still only 0.66 for the Croats, 0.96 for the Muslims, and 1.29 for the Serbs (Vušković, 1984: 130).

partially competitive, but with the candidates obviously still loyal to the ruling party. This experiment, however, failed embarrassingly as many local electoral competitions – particularly in Serbia – turned toward both nationalism and neo-Stalinist dogmatism, prompting the chief ideologue of the Yugoslav political system Edvard Kardelj to call for "guided" nominating procedures, lest things devolved into "anarchy" (Carter, 1982: 137-150).

The system that was developed to prevent this "anarchy" could best be understood as a multilayered system of indirect political representation. Voters could ostensibly influence the electoral process at two stages – both at the local/municipal level. First, they were supposed to participate in nominating councils in their workplaces and precincts. These councils served as a form of primaries and determined the lists of candidates for municipal assemblies (Skupštine općina – SO), the local delegations of the various sociopolitical organizations of the socialist system (Društvenopolitičke zajednice – DPZ), and the workers' delegations of the different sectors of the self-management economy (Samoupravne interesne zajednice – SIZ). The second form of voters' influence was at the local level of elections where, every four years, they could vote for or against these lists of candidates.

In practice, however, the nominating councils were to varying degrees dominated by the local branches of the ruling party. Crucially, though, that domination was not uniformly distributed throughout the republic. In the three elections we examine in this article (1978, 1982, 1986), the municipal SIZ delegations had on average 44.9% of its delegates from the SKBiH, with the minimum figure being 21.4% and the maximum 75.9%. For the municipal DPZ delegations, the average was 53.2%, the minimum 28.5%, and the maximum 86.6%. These figures were the highest for the municipal assemblies: 75.7% was the average, 38.8% the minimum, and 95.4% the maximum (Republički zavod za statistiku 1979, 1983, 1987a).

Once the local assemblies and delegations were elected, their representatives then "delegated" from within their ranks the deputies (almost uniformly members of the ruling party) to the assemblies of the republics, who then subsequently "delegated" from within their ranks the deputies to the federal assembly (Seroka and Smiljković, 1986: 194). This complicated system was designed to protect the privileged position of the party within the system, while at the same time providing legitimacy by involving as much of the society as possible in a semi-permanent form of political activism where every working person was supposed to serve as a delegate at some point (Oslobođenje, 1982).

The ruling party initially put great faith in the delegate system. In the runup to the 1978 elections, Yugoslavia's leader Josip Broz Tito said there were those who thought the parliamentary system was better but that this "skepticism needed to be crushed" (Oslobođenje, 1978). Tito's death in 1980, however, marked the onset of the country's deep socioeconomic crisis with the communist elites of the federation's six republics and two autonomous provinces quarreling over seemingly every major political issue: from the status of the province of Kosovo, through the hotly debated constitutional reforms, to the various attempts at reining in rampant inflation and fixing the country's deep economic problems (Burg, 1986).

The notoriously inefficient Yugoslav enterprises crumbled under the pressures of the continental economic malaise of the early 1980s (Palairet, 1997). Crucially, however, the crisis did not affect all parts of Yugoslavia equally, with the less developed regions – including large parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina – being particularly hard hit and their populations being less able to cope with the dramatic decline in the standards of living (Kukić, 2020). The response of the Bosnian communist elites to the economic downturn and the real and imagined challenges of the post-Tito era was characteristically firm. Although unemployment rose strongly in the republic – particularly among younger generations

(Woodward, 1995) – and the large industrial enterprises struggled to stave off insolvency, party organizers kept the workers at bay for the better part of the decade. Unlike in the rest of the federation, strikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina took off only in 1987 (Vladisavljević, 2008: 112) and the system made it clear how it would deal with dissidents in a string of show trials in 1983 and 1984 (Andjelic, 2003: 45).

By the 1986 elections, however, the shortcomings and outright failures of both the Yugoslav economy and the delegate system were patently obvious. Many municipal organizations failed to even report on the conduct of the nominating councils (Šarac, 1986) and those that did report suggested that the level of public engagement ranged from low to non-existent (Oslobođenje, 1986). People simply realized that the delegate system did not lead to any real policy impact (Musić, 2021). Despite massive mobilizing efforts by the ruling party, turnout figures in 1986 for the first time dipped below 90%, even though the electoral rules were changed so that now there were more candidates than seats, and voters could vote for individual candidates rather than whole lists.

After the 1986 elections, Yugoslavia plunged into an even deeper crisis. The federation was split between two camps with diametrically opposite views of the needed reforms. On the one end was Serbia under Slobodan Milošević with his platform for the recentralization of Serbia and Yugoslavia, as well as a firmer commitment to a more streamlined socialist economy. On the other end was Slovenia with its calls for the decentralization of the federation and economic openness to the West. The Bosnian communist elite found itself stuck between a rock and a hard place. Milošević's campaign of marrying Serb nationalism and socialism was hugely popular among the SKBiH's Serb rank and file, but it alienated other ethnic groups and threatened the hard-earned equality of Bosnia-Herzegovina with its neighbors. More important, it threatened the very foundations of interethnic harmony in the republic because Serbia's intellectual elites and media that were in

Milošević's pocket actively worked to transform the dominant narrative of multinational resistance during WWII and instead focused on the suffering of Serbs at the hands of other ethnic groups (Dragović-Soso, 2002; Vujačić, 2015; Glaurdić and Mochtak, 2022).

Bosnia-Herzegovina's communist leadership, newly installed after a massive Agrokomerc scandal took down many functionaries in the Bosnian League of Communists in 1987, tried to keep the middle ground for the better part of the late 1980s. Ultimately, however, it veered too close to Milošević's camp and thus alienated many centrists and liberals in its ranks (Muharemović, 2023). In the first democratic elections held in the fall of 1990, the League of Communists suffered a catastrophic loss to the three nationalist parties representing the three largest ethnic groups – the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije – SDA), Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka – SDS), and the Croat Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ). What made the loss even more complete was the split on the left end of the spectrum where many SKBiH liberals defected to the newly formed Alliance of Reformist Forces (Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije – SRSJ) (Glaurdić et al., 2022). After the elections, the three nationalist parties formed a tenuous coalition which soon collapsed in tandem with the breakdown of the Yugoslav federation and the country's descent into war that was particularly brutal in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Deriving empirical expectations in the Bosnian context

Considering this historical context and our understanding of the theoretical literature on politics under communism, we propose three sets of empirical expectations. First, much has been made of the significance of inequalities in the levels of economic development and performance in former Yugoslavia (Kukić, 2020), particularly when it comes to unemployment (Woodward, 1995). It is important to note that these inequalities went beyond short-term performance but were in fact firmly embedded into the structure of the local

economy. While we recognize the importance of the overall economic crisis for the evolution of political conflict in Yugoslavia and the ultimate outbreak of violence, we are skeptical of the importance of economic factors for the pattern of support for and strength of the League of Communists as we could see legitimate arguments being made for the communists being stronger in both economically propulsive and depressed areas. We thus remain agnostic on the importance of differences in economic development and performance, but we are keen to establish their relevance as it directly answers an important and influential literature on late socialism in Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe in general.

Similarly, our second set of empirical expectations concerns the structures of the local economies. Data on party membership in Yugoslavia and in countries behind the Iron Curtain clearly suggested there were significant differences in the penetration of the ruling party into various strata of the workforce with particular weakness in agriculture rooted in the historically conflictual relationship the communists had with farmers virtually everywhere (Rigby, 1968; Malenica et al., 1984). Workforce composition was also found to be an important determinant of the geographic pattern of party support in other early post-communist elections like in East Germany (Kopstein and Richter, 1992). Moreover, political and economic life in late Yugoslav socialism revolved around the conflict between "productive" (i.e. industry) and "non-productive" (i.e. administration) sectors of the economy (Musić, 2021), and the populist campaign of Slobodan Milošević himself was unofficially known as the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" (Grdešić, 2019; Vladisavljević, 2008). Our expectations here would thus be that the Bosnian communists would be stronger in areas with larger segments of government administration and that they would be weaker in areas with larger segments of agricultural workers.

Finally, our third set of empirical expectations concerns the sociodemographic makeup of local communities. Here our focus is on three sets of variables. First, past research

has found Yugoslav identity to be closely related to both communist party membership and the level of support for Yugoslavia's socialist system. It also found it to be closely related to respondents' urban status and higher level of education, since the urban environments served as points of interethnic contact and the better educated found the supranational character of Yugoslavism more appealing (Sekulić et al., 1994; Kukić, 2023). We wish to establish the extent to which the pattern of strength of and support for the communists was also related to these criteria. Our expectation would be that the communists would be stronger and perform better in areas with more urban and better educated populations.

Second, as already noted, the League of Communists' own data has shown disparities in the levels of party membership among the different ethnic groups. We wish to expose the extent to which these trends manifested themselves in the geographic pattern of strength of and support for the party. Here we primarily believe that the level of communists' strength should be negatively related to the proportion of Croats and positively related to the proportion of Serbs in the local population, though we believe the latter effect is unlikely to be valid in the 1990 elections, considering the dramatic rise of the nationalist Serb Democratic Party that year.

Furthermore, we are not only interested in the impact of ethnic identity, but also of ethnic distribution and balance. Past research on the 1990 elections in the Yugoslav republics has found the votes for left-wing candidates to be positively related to ethnic fractionalization (as a measure of ethnic diversity) and negatively related to ethnic polarization (as a measure of interethnic competition) (Kapidžić, 2014; Glaurdić et al., 2022). Moreover, historically speaking, communists have been known to do better in ethnically diverse communities (Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2003). We wish to test these propositions in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina's non-democratic and first democratic elections as well. Our expectation is to

find the level of strength of and support for the communists to be positively related to ethnic fractionalization and negatively related to ethnic polarization.

Lastly, we wish to establish the relationship between the communities' exposure to World War II violence and the level of strength and support for the communists. As noted above, WWII in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a complicated mixture of global conflict and civil war among the three ethnic communities. The dominant narrative of the communist regime was that the war was both a revolution and the triumph of a multiethnic partisan force against the occupiers and their local nationalist collaborators. This narrative, however, was transformed in the late 1980s by the Serbian intellectual elite and media into one of conflict where the Serbs were the primary victims whose suffering for the revolution and victory was not properly rewarded. As the chief ideologue of Serbian nationalism during this period, the writer Dobrica Ćosić, put it, the Serbs had been courageous in war, but humiliated in peace (Dragović-Soso, 2002: 92). Considering this context, and the salience of the pattern of communist resistance in post-WWII elections in places like Italy (Costalli and Ruggeri, 2019), we expect the level of strength and support for the communists to be proportional to the local strength of partisan resistance. We are also keen to establish the relationship between the level of intercommunal war violence directed at the civilian populations and the level of communists' strength and support. Here our expectation is primarily that this aspect of Bosnia-Herzegovina's World War II experience would become salient in the 1990 elections, in tandem with the campaign to change the dominant narrative of the communist regime. To be specific, we would expect the legacy of interethnic violence to begin to have a negative effect on the level of support for left-wing candidates as the competition among the three ethnic communities became more relevant in the environment of the explosion of nationalism at the turn of the decade and in the runup to the breakdown of the Yugoslav federation and war.

Data and method

Our analysis relies on a comprehensive set of political, economic, and sociodemographic data on the level of Bosnia-Herzegovina's 109 municipalities in the period between 1975 and 1990. Due to the fundamental differences between the non-democratic elections in 1978, 1982, and 1986 on the one side, and the first democratic elections in 1990 on the other, we separate our analysis into two parts. In the first part dealing with the non-democratic elections, our dependent variable is the proportion of the three sets of municipal bodies – municipal assemblies (SO), delegations of the self-management communities (SIZ), and the delegations of the sociopolitical organizations of the ruling system (DPZ) – that was filled by the members of the League of Communists. Although voters under communism did not have avenues to freely express their views, it was possible for candidates from outside the ruling party to be elected to these three sets of municipal bodies. Is it this variation we exploit to gauge the level of support for the League of Communists.

As noted above, the composition of these various local bodies was de facto determined in the nominating procedures for the 1978 and 1982 elections, with things changing slightly in the 1986 elections when the nominating procedures could finally generate more candidates than the seats they were running for. Nonetheless, even in those elections there were still only 13,973 official candidates for the 10,369 seats in the municipal assemblies (Republički zavod za statistiku 1987b: 60). The proportions of these municipal bodies that were filled by the SKBiH members should be primarily seen as signs of the strength of the local party organizations, but they can also be considered as signs of local popular support for the League of Communists or the ruling system in general.

In the second part of our analysis dealing with the first democratic elections in 1990, the dependent variable is the proportion of votes given to the leftwing lists of the League of

Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its allies[4], as well as the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (SRSJ) in the elections for the republic's Chamber of Citizens that were conducted under proportional representation rules. We make that methodological choice for two reasons. First, we believe the elections for this Chamber are the closest approximation of the actual level of popular support for any party due to their PR rules. And second, we pool the votes for all leftwing lists because the SRSJ in many respects represented the liberal splinter wing of the ruling party in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Glaurdić et al., 2022). As a robustness check, however, we perform the same analyses using just the votes for the SKBiH and its direct allies. Figure 1 shows our dependent variables mapped out across Bosnia-Herzegovina's 109 municipalities.

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[4] In the 1990 elections, the organizations of the socialist system, in addition to the SKBiH, also ran candidates under the banner of the Democratic Alliance of Socialists (Demokratski savez socijalista – DSS) and the Alliance of Socialist Youth (Savez socijalističke omladine – SSO) (Glaurdić and Muharemović, 2023).

Figure 1.
SKBiH members in representative bodies 1978-1986 and vote for the left in 1990
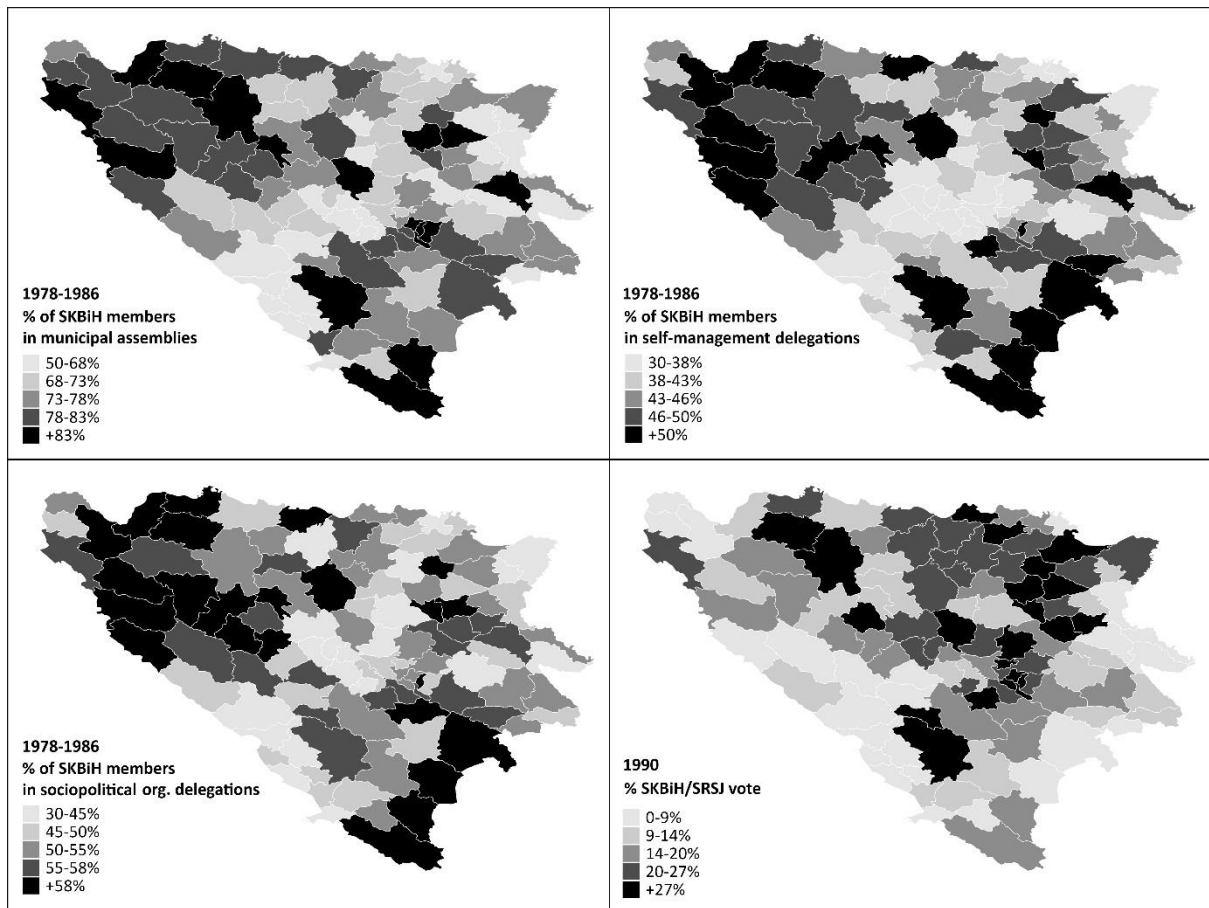
In both parts of our analysis, we use the same sets of explanatory variables. They can be split into three groups, following our three sets of empirical expectations. The first group is composed of ten socio-demographic variables. The variables *Activity*, *Average Age*, *Urban*, and *Education* represent the proportion of the municipal population in the electoral year that is economically active, the average age of the municipal population, the proportion of the municipal population living in urban dwellings, and the average years of education of the municipal population older than 15 years of age – all calculated using the 1981 and the 1991 census figures.

Capturing the impact of ethnicity in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina is not easy, primarily due to the strong political determination of ethnic identification as Yugoslav during this period, i.e. ethnic identification as Yugoslav was a rather good proxy for the supporters

of the ruling system or even members of the League of Communists (Sekulić et al., 1994; Kukić, 2023). This trend was arguably only amplified in the 1991 census as it was conducted after the 1990 elections, so Yugoslav identification was a political statement of an even greater magnitude. We therefore capture the possible impact of ethnic identification on the pattern of SKBiH representation and support with four variables derived from the 1981 census: *Croats*, *Serbs*, *EFI*, and *EPI*. The first two variables capture the proportions of municipal populations identifying themselves as Croats and Serbs – two ethnic communities disproportionally underrepresented (in the case of Croats) and overrepresented (in the case of Serbs) in the ranks of SKBiH membership. We also include the indices of ethnic fractionalization (EFI) and ethnic polarization (EPI) guided by the literatures on ethnic conflict and elections (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005; Esteban and Ray 2011; Esteban, Mayoral, and Ray 2012; Kapidžić 2014). EFI can be considered a measure of ethnic diversity, and EPI a measure of ethnic competition.

Lastly, we model the heritage of World War II with two variables: *WWII dead partisans* and *WWII dead civilians*. Both variables are derived from the census of war victims Yugoslavia conducted in 1964 (Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1966) and represent the ln-transformed number of resistance fighters or civilians who died in World War II per 1000 municipal inhabitants. We believe these two figures capture two separate, though obviously related, legacies of World War II violence. The variable *WWII dead partisans* captures the legacy of communities' resistance and commitment to the partisan movement led during World War II by the Communist Party and its charismatic leader Josip Broz Tito. The variable *WWII dead civilians*, on the other hand, captures the legacy of violence and suffering perpetrated against the civilians most often by the members of the other local ethnic groups in the gruesome civil war that took place at the same time as the global conflict played out in the

region. Figure 2 presents these two variables mapped onto Bosnia-Herzegovina's municipalities.

Figure 2. Legacies of WWII violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina
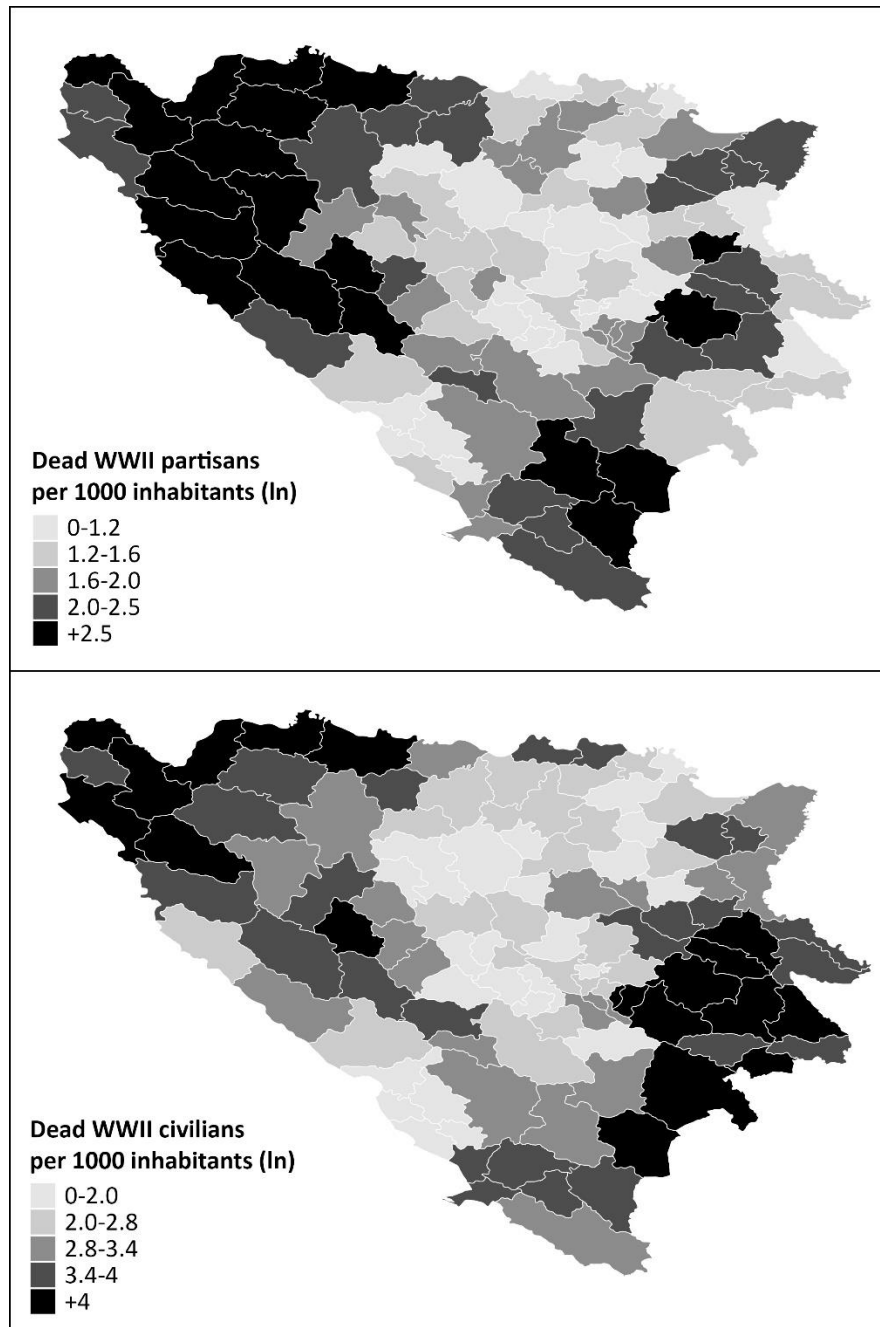
In addition to the variables capturing the sociodemographic characteristics of municipalities, we also test for possible effects of the health and structure of the local

economy on our dependent variables of interest. We capture the state of the municipal economy with five variables: *Private Sector*, representing the proportion of the workforce employed in the private sector in the electoral year; *Unemployment*; as well as *Personal Income*, *Investments*, and *Social Spending*, representing the average monthly per capita values for salaries, public sector investments, and public spending on education, health, and social services during the preceding electoral term (i.e. 1975-1977, 1979-1981, 1983-1985, and 1987-1989), all deflated to 1980 levels and ln-transformed. Finally, following studies on the effects of workforce structure on the patterns of electoral support during this period (e.g. Kopstein and Richter, 1992; Glaurdić et al., 2022) and the fact that there were serious discrepancies in the levels of SKBiH membership in different sectors of the economy (Malenica et al., 1984), we capture the composition of municipal workforce using the data tallied by the Federal Bureau of Statistics in each electoral year and we use *Industry* as the reference category in our models.

To test our empirical propositions in the analysis of the non-democratic elections, we create a panel including the three electoral cycles and rely on a generalized estimating equations (GEE) modeling approach. This modeling strategy is appropriate to analyze panel data when the number of cases is relatively large, and the frequency of examinations or measurements over time are relatively sparse, as is the case here (Hardin and Hilbe, 2013). We specify the model with a logistic link as the dependent data is a proportion, bounded by 0 and 1 (Diggle et al., 2013: 146–147). In addition to the logistic link, our model incorporates an autoregressive correlation structure. Specifically, we model the correlation between two adjacent temporal observations in the panel data. Furthermore, we utilize robust standard errors to account for potential heteroskedasticity, ensuring the robustness and reliability of our statistical inferences. The models were generated using Stata's Xtgee and Qic commands (Cui, 2007). Because the GEE method is grounded in quasilikelihood theory, while the GLM

method relies on the maximum likelihood theory, Akaike's information criterion, a commonly employed approach for model selection in GLM, cannot be directly applied to GEE. Instead, we use the quasilikelihood information criterion (QIC) developed by Pan (Pan, 2001).

In our analysis of the first democratic elections, on the other hand, we use the fractional logit model – a generalized linear model with a Bernoulli quasi-likelihood specification (Papke and Wooldridge, 1996) – in a process of stepwise building towards the full model using the aforementioned three groups of variables (demographic, economic, and workforce). We employ the quasi-likelihood approach because it fits our model well due to the distribution of our dependent variable, and because it requires no transformations of data at the extreme values of zero or one.

Results

As noted in the previous section, we split our analysis into two parts due to the fundamentally different nature of the non-democratic elections in 1978, 1982, and 1986 on the one hand and the first democratic elections of 1990 on the other. We present the findings of the first part of our analysis in Table 1 where each of the three models represents a test of the impact of our explanatory variables of interest on the level of presence of SKBiH members in the three forms of representative bodies on the municipal level: municipal assemblies, delegations of the self-management interest communities, and delegations of sociopolitical organizations. We pool the data from the three electoral cycles, but we also conduct the same analyses using the fractional logit model in each of the three elections separately as a robustness check and present them in the online appendix Tables A1-A3.

Table 1. Determinants of proportion of SKBiH members in representative bodies on municipal level, 1978-1986

	Municipal assemblies			Self-management delegations			Sociopolitical organizations' delegations		
	Coef.	*S.E.*	*Sig.*	*Coef.*	*S.E.*	*Sig.*	*Coef.*	*S.E.*	*Sig.*
Unemployment	0.424	0.948		0.634	0.800		-2.178	0.789	**
Private Sector	-2.945	1.431	*	-1.232	1.332		1.171	1.040	
Personal Income	-0.213	0.158		-0.030	0.139		-0.042	0.165	
Investments	-0.027	0.043		0.034	0.031		0.097	0.041	*
Social Spending	0.038	0.091		-0.094	0.068		-0.060	0.080	
Industry (ref.cat.)									
Agriculture	-0.942	0.381	*	-0.548	0.308		-0.127	0.351	
Construction	0.605	0.435		0.260	0.315		0.176	0.342	
Trade	-0.116	0.417		-0.336	0.355		-0.424	0.344	
Social Services	0.674	0.672		0.517	0.504		0.492	0.700	
Government	-0.312	2.147		1.422	1.664		1.409	1.768	
Activity	-0.335	0.846		-0.002	0.860		-2.005	0.913	*
Average Age	0.003	0.019		0.009	0.013		-0.004	0.011	
Urban	0.128	0.238		-0.165	0.152		-0.133	0.156	
Education	0.142	0.056	*	0.098	0.040	*	0.115	0.038	**
Croats	-0.544	0.196	**	-0.564	0.169	***	-0.414	0.158	**
Serbs	0.101	0.230		0.159	0.166		0.341	0.166	*
EFI	0.600	0.464		0.230	0.450		-0.044	0.421	
EPI	-0.676	0.343	*	-0.257	0.333		0.014	0.343	
WWII dead partisans	0.166	0.045	***	0.089	0.040	*	0.122	0.044	**
WWII dead civilians	-0.007	0.044		-0.021	0.034		-0.047	0.039	
Constant	2.588	1.689		-0.357	1.632		0.333	1.864	
Obs/n	327/109			327/109			327/109		
QIC	356.9			447.1			450.2		

Notes: Generalized estimating equations (GEE) modeling throughout; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Several things are immediately apparent from Table 1. First, the impact of the variables capturing the distribution of the workforce exhibit virtually no statistical significance. Guided by the differences in the penetration of the League of Communists in the different segments of the workforce – particularly its historically determined low level of representation among agricultural workers (Palairet, n.d.) – and the unequal distribution of challenges Yugoslavia's economic crisis presented to different sectors of the economy, we hypothesized this set of variables could help us get at the economic foundations of social cleavages. Apart from *Agriculture* being significant at the 5% level and in the expected negative direction for the municipal assemblies, however, there is little to suggest that the geographic strength of and support for the League of Communists in Bosnia-Herzegovina was decisively influenced by the structure of the local workforce. Interestingly, this story is confirmed even in stripped down models including only the structure of the local workforce which we perform as robustness checks and present in the online appendix Table A5.

Our conclusions are only slightly different if we look at the set of variables capturing the performance of the local economy: *Unemployment*, *Private Sector*, *Personal Income*, *Investments*, and *Social Spending.* None of these variables exhibits any consistent influence of the level of SKBiH representation across the three forms of municipal political bodies, with only *Unemployment* reaching the 1% level of significance in the model for the DPZ delegations. Unlike the workforce variables, however, the economic variables do exhibit some interesting trends in the pared down models in the online appendix Table A4.[5] These variables, however, do not hold up with any consistency in the full models presented in Table

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[5] Those models suggest a negative relationship between the level of SKBiH representation and the size of the private sector as well as workers' personal incomes. This suggests the League of Communists was less present in the representative bodies in municipalities with more propulsive enterprises that were less reliant on the socially owned sector. The models also suggest a positive relationship between the level of SKBiH representation and the level of public sector investments. A different research design would be needed to determine the direction of the arrow of causation in this case, i.e., whether members of the League of Communists were being rewarded by the voters locally for the higher levels of investments or the levels of investments flowed disproportionally to municipalities with the higher density of communist control and influence.

1, making it difficult to conclude that the dominant cleavages during communism in Bosnia-Herzegovina had anything to do with the economy. The level of SKBiH presence in the three representative municipal bodies largely and consistently seemed to depend on three factors: the level of education, the proportion of Croats in the local population, and the community's legacy of participation in the World War II communist-led partisan resistance movement.

Throughout the whole period of late socialism, the lagging representation among the working class and the increasing reliance on the new managerial and professional class was a constant preoccupation of the party's leadership (Vušković, 1984; Cohen, 1989). Education – as the perfect measure of the true class differences in late socialism (Pavlović et al., 2019) – proved to be the consistent predictor of the strength of communist representation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The proportion of Croats in the local population was an even stronger predictor of the level of SKBiH presence in municipal assemblies and the delegations of the sociopolitical organizations and self-management interest communities. That much was already apparent in Figure 1, with the areas of the lowest SKBiH representation neatly corresponding to the majority Croat regions in Western Herzegovina and Central Bosnia. Croats were the most underrepresented ethnic group in Bosnia-Herzegovina's League of Communists, partly stemming from the BiH Croats' support for the Independent State of Croatia during World War II and partly from the contentious relationship between the communist regime and the Catholic Church after the war (Perica, 2002; Banac, 2013).

Lastly, the level of SKBiH presence in municipal assemblies and the delegations of the sociopolitical organizations and self-management interest communities was strongly positively related to the level of the local communities' participation in the World War II communist-led resistance movement. This finding is basically confirmed in our fractional logit models conducted on each electoral cycle separately and presented as a

robustness check in Tables A1-A3 – *WWII dead partisans* is, for example, statistically significant in all three cycles of elections for municipal assemblies. Costalli and Ruggeri (2019) found that the pattern of communist guerilla activity in Italy during World War II had a positive influence on the level of popular support for the communists in the early years of Italian post-World War II democracy. We have shown that a similar legacy of World War II violence also had a profound impact on the level of the communists' local strength and support in a non-democratic polity like Bosnia-Herzegovina three to four decades after the war ended.

Estimating the actual size of the effects of these three variables is challenging. The coefficients presented in Table 1 indicate the change in the log odds of the outcome variable in response to a one-unit increase in the independent variable. However, interpreting the substantive effect sizes of the independent variables solely based on these coefficients is not straightforward. This is because of the non-linear relationship between odds and probabilities, where a change in odds does not correspond to a consistent change in probability. A more effective method for assessing effect sizes involves examining the impact on the dependent variable resulting from a one standard deviation shift in the independent variable, starting from its mean value. Our analysis reveals that a one standard deviation increase in *Education* enhances the proportion of SKBiH members in municipal bodies by between 2.43 and 2.86 percentage points. Conversely, the proportion of ethnic Croats shows a consistently negative influence: a one standard deviation rise in *Croats* reduces the proportion of SKBiH members in municipal bodies by 2.77–3.74 percentage points. Lastly, a one standard deviation increase in *WWII dead partisans* elevates the proportion of SKBiH in municipal bodies by 1.77–2.43 percentage points. What is crucial to highlight here is that it would be difficult to claim any omitted variable bias because the level of communists' support and organizational capacity prior to World War II in Bosnia-Herzegovina was essentially negligible (Shoup, 1968; Banac,

1984). We present the impact of this form of exposure to WWII violence on the level of SKBiH representation in graphic form in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Impact of pattern of WWII resistance on SKBiH representation, 1978-1986
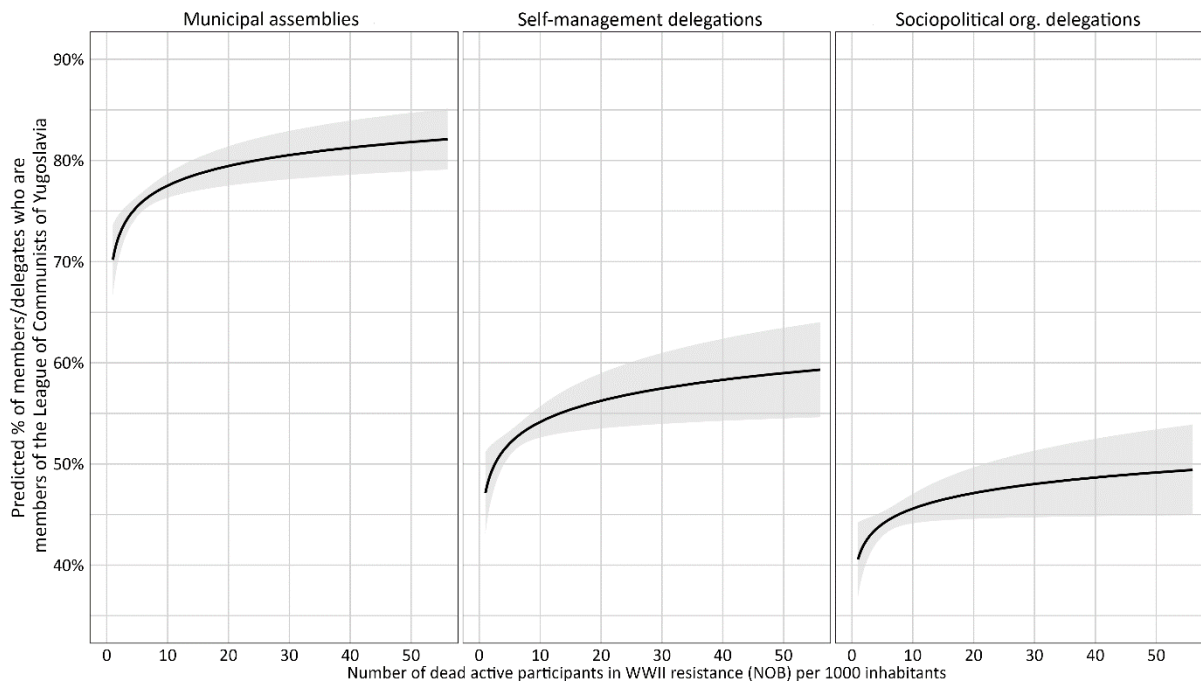
As could have been surmised from the maps in Figure 1, things changed significantly in the 1990 elections. Obviously, these were the inaugural democratic elections where the communists and their allies faced real – mostly nationalist – opposition for the first time. Some change in the geographic pattern of support for the SKBiH, therefore, could have been expected. Table 2 presents the results of our analysis of the 1990 vote for the parties of the left, with stepwise building of the full fractional logit model whose variable selection corresponds exactly to the one in the models presented in Table 1 for the non-democratic period. Here we should note that, as a robustness check, we conducted the same analysis using just the vote for the SKBiH as the dependent variable (online appendix Table A7) and we got substantively the same results. As can be seen from Table 2, what remained identical to the non-democratic period were the near complete irrelevance of economic and workforce

composition variables, as well as the significance of *Education* and *Croats* for the level of support for the left. Models 1 and 2, capturing in turn the impact of the economic and workforce variables exhibit low explanatory power with only *Social Spending* and *Personal Income* exhibiting statistical significance in Model 1, implying that the parties of the ruling regime did better in areas with higher levels of public spending and higher workers' salaries. This would suggest a dose of economic rationality among the voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, none of these variables survived the inclusion of the sociodemographic variables in the full Model 4. Just as in the period 1978-1986, what really made a difference were the proportions of *Croats* in the local population and the level of *Education* of the municipality's adult population. A one standard deviation increase in the average years of *Education* (0.93) implied a 2.8 percentage points higher level of support for the communists and their allies, and a one standard deviation increase in the proportion of *Croats* in the municipal population (0.27) implied a 7.6 percentage points lower level of support.

Table 2. Determinants of vote for the left wing (SKBiH and SRSJ) in the 1990 elections

|	Model 1: Economy			Model 2: Workforce			Model 3: Demographics			Model 4: Total		
	dy/dx	S.E.	Sig.	dy/dx	S.E.	Sig.	dy/dx	S.E.	Sig.	dy/dx	S.E.	Sig.
Unemployment	0.073	0.230								-0.008	0.247	
Private Sector	-0.732	0.438								0.353	0.422	
Personal Income	0.174	0.073	*							-0.084	0.073	
Investments	-0.017	0.014								0.014	0.012	
Social Spending	0.074	0.019	***							-0.002	0.034	
Industry (ref.cat.)												
Agriculture				-0.296	0.172					-0.136	0.155	
Construction				0.234	0.139					-0.068	0.108	
Trade				0.325	0.191					0.140	0.132	
Social Services				0.597	0.363					-0.152	0.395	
Government				-2.201	1.267					0.524	0.639	
Activity							-0.177	0.223		-0.350	0.336	
Average Age							0.004	0.003		0.004	0.004	
Urban							-0.093	0.054		-0.087	0.067	
Education							0.033	0.011	**	0.030	0.012	*
Croats							-0.253	0.046	***	-0.279	0.048	***
Serbs							-0.069	0.051		-0.048	0.049	
EFI							0.600	0.120	***	0.672	0.112	***
EPI							-0.313	0.106	**	-0.319	0.104	**
WWII dead partisans							0.014	0.013		0.011	0.015	
WWII dead civilians							-0.030	0.010	**	-0.030	0.010	**
n		109			109			109			109	
Log-pseudolikelihood		-37.2			-37.4			-35.7			-35.6	
R²		0.28			0.24			0.61			0.62	

Notes: Fractional logit used throughout; average marginal effects reported; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Where things really changed, however, was in the importance of the distribution of ethnic groups – captured by EFI and EPI – and in the legacy of the pattern of World War II violence. As noted in the previous section, the Ethnic Fractionalization Index is a good proxy of ethnic diversity of the local community. The Ethnic Polarization Index, on the other hand, is a good proxy of ethnic competition between two ethnic groups. Historically speaking, communists have been known to do better in ethnically diverse communities (Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2003). The tendency of the voters to support leftist candidates more in communities that are more ethnically diverse, but less in communities with higher levels of competition between two ethnic groups, has also been noted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the other Yugoslav republics in the first democratic elections (Kapidžić, 2014; Glaurdić et al., 2022). We made similar predictions guided by those findings and the more general literature on elections in ethnically complex societies which suggested that interethnic contact could foster support for cross-ethnic platforms, but not in communities riven by competition between two closely balanced ethnic groups. These predictions did not materialize for the non-democratic period but did for the first democratic elections when access to political power was truly at stake. In the context of competing nationalisms of a collapsing Yugoslav federation, voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina voted strategically for those who championed their ethnic group at the expense of cross-ethnic collaboration promoted by the communists and their allies.

What is equally important, the results of the 1990 elections perfectly capture the changed relevance of the legacy of World War II violence. As discussed in the previous section, we modeled the legacy of World War II violence with two variables – *WWII dead partisans* and *WWII dead civilians* – capturing two different aspects of the communities' war experience. As noted by many authors writing on the 1980s in Yugoslavia (e.g. Dragović-Soso, 2002; Vujačić, 2015), the late 1980s saw the transformation of the narrative of

interethnic conflict and cooperation during the war. The dominant narrative of the ruling regime was one of a multinational partisan resistance movement defeating the occupying forces and the traitorous nationalist collaborators. This narrative was steadily chipped away at by revisionist accounts – many of them completely detached from historical facts – that highlighted what was essentially a brutal interethnic civil war fought among Bosnia-Herzegovina's three ethnic/national communities. The collapse of the saliency of common participation in the partisan resistance in favor of increasing relevance of violent acts committed by the members of other ethnic groups was especially strong among the Serbs who found the new narratives emanating out of the intellectual, political, and media circles in Belgrade resonant (Grdešić, 2019; Glaurdić and Mochtak, 2022). Their abandonment of the League of Communists in favor of the newly formed Serb Democratic Party (SDS) led by Radovan Karadžić in areas like the Bosnian Krajina and eastern Herzegovina was particularly notable. This transformation in the relevance of the legacy of World War II violence is perfectly on display with the loss of statistical significance for the variable *WWII dead partisans* in comparison to the models for the period 1978-1986 and the accompanying new statistical significance of the variable *WWII dead civilians* and its negative effect on the vote for the leftwing parties. In the non-democratic period, the pattern of strength and support for the communists was positively related to the pattern of WWII resistance. Conversely, in the first democratic elections, the pattern of strength and support for the communists was negatively related to the pattern of WWII violence – mostly perpetrated by the members of the three ethnic communities – against the civilians. We show the substantive size of this effect in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Impact of pattern of WWII civilian deaths on left-wing vote, 1990
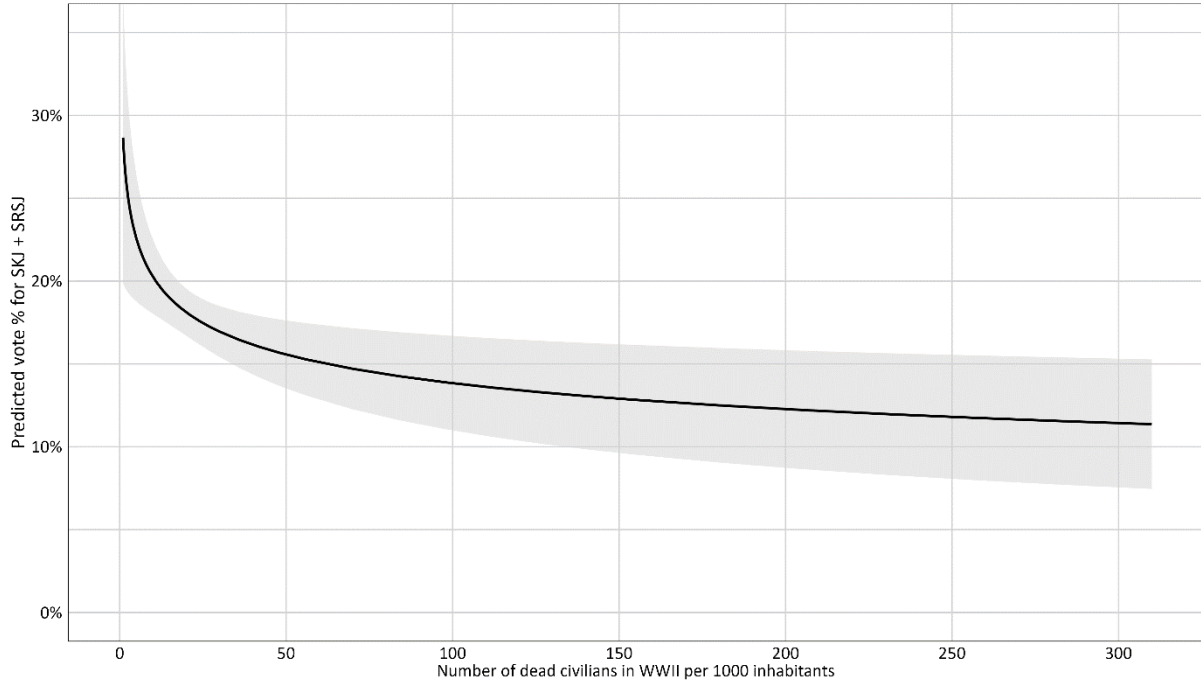
Conclusions

Communist regimes destroyed many institutions of the civil society, but they did not erase identities. The ruling parties may have introduced the concurrent processes of social atomization and homogenization, but the structures, divisions, and cleavages among the populations of communist polities not only remained, but in some cases were even more deeply entrenched by the regimes' policies and the origins of their ascent to power. Our article presents a rare attempt at providing a data-driven explanation of the sources of strength of and support for the communist regimes at a crucial time of their existence.

The results of our analysis unequivocally show that the pattern of strength of the communist regime in Bosnia-Herzegovina had little to do with economic performance or the sectoral composition of the workforce. We are cognizant of the disparities in the diffusion of the League of Communists into different segments of the economy. We are also in

agreement with those who argue that the severe economic crisis in Yugoslavia primed the country for a violent dissolution (Grdešić, 2019; Musić, 2021). It would be difficult to imagine the nationalist rhetoric of the various political entrepreneurs resonating with the population to such an extent had the Yugoslav socialism of the 1980s been economically prosperous. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the strength of and support for the regime had little to do with the economy.

In some ways, this should not be surprising. The essence of communism always was political control and its Achilles heel, at least in Yugoslavia, was the national question. As the Cold War ended, some hypothesized that the post-communist societies would "return" to ethnic divisions of the pre-communist period and that these kinds of cleavages would dominate the political landscape (Evans, 2006). Our analysis shows that this was no "return". The patterns of ethnic identity, inter-ethnic balance, as well as the legacies of inter-ethnic violence and cooperation during what essentially was a form of a nation-building civil war during World War II, had decisive impact on the pattern of communist strength.

Here we particularly wish to draw attention to the importance of World War II violence to the whole story. Virtually all interpretations of political cleavages in the early post-communist period focused on three historical stages of development: the interwar period, the period of communist rule, or the period of early post-communist transition (Whitefield, 2002). The extraordinary violence of World War II, as well as the different patterns of collaboration and resistance, have been routinely skipped over, as if they were somehow epiphenomenal. This has been an unfortunate shortcoming of the literature on political cleavages – and not only in post-communist Eastern Europe. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the bulk of the violence may have been perpetrated by the three largest ethnic communities against one another, but the context and the means for that perpetration were external, as were the origins of the communist-led resistance movement whose revolution and ultimate

ascent to power were determined on the battlefields of Bosnia-Herzegovina. To neglect the relevance of such momentous events for the development of political cleavages in many European societies – and particularly those in post-communist Eastern Europe – strikes us as deeply problematic.

Obviously, some of our arguments are idiosyncratic to Yugoslavia's central republic and may not be portable across the communist and post-communist polities of Eastern Europe. Their inter-ethnic relations and balances were different, as were their communist revolutions and the patterns of collaboration and resistance. However, the larger lesson of our article is that this line of research is necessary and should be pursued. Elections under communism were clearly an exercise in social control, but we believe there are still data that could be valuable in helping us better understand the nature of communist rule and the underlying social divisions. Moreover, they could help us better understand the interaction between individuals, their communities, and the totalitarian state, as well as the causes of the communist system's ultimate collapse.

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Constrained Choices: How Bosnian Communists Lost Their Party Before Losing Elections

Research presented in this article demonstrates that the process of democratization in Bosnia-Herzegovina was intentionally decelerated and stifled by the ruling party during 1990 due to the ideological conservatism of the communist leadership. This process of active deceleration of democratization directly contributed to the party's ultimate loss of power. Archival documentation, extensive newspaper coverage from this period, and testimonies of key participants are used to recreate the contextual circumstances under which crucial events unfolded. The critical importance of strategic decisions and mistakes made by ruling political elites under extreme time pressure proved to be a key factor in determining the success and nature of democratization. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 demonstrates that slow, indecisive and gradual transformation during transition from communism to democracy can have disastrous consequences for the electoral chances of the incumbent communist parties.

Introduction - When Strong Become Weak

Democratization is often a messy, complex and uncertain proposition. The failure of systematic responses to radical changes in political environment leads to crisis and crisis is a period of fluidity and uncertainty (Volpi and Gerschewski 2020). During this transformative period both historical legacies and actors' strategic choices determine the path toward democracy (Kitschelt 1999) but, fundamentally, the incumbent political elites make the decisions. While regime transitions in Western and Eastern Europe were fundamentally different (Linz 1990), political parties were the main drivers of democratization in both regions (Capoccia and Ziblatt 2010). The absence of organized political opposition in communist societies often produced a plurality of ideas and interests within the ruling parties. Since these diverse positions could not be articulated outside of the one-party system, they created political quasi-pluralism that existed under apparent ideological uniformity (Ramet 1984). High elite reproduction (Adam and Tomšić 2002) in a closed system created a positive feedback loop that shielded communist leaders from any constructive criticism and led towards intense ideological reaffirmation. Ideological commitment thus became the essential quality of political elites and the primary measure of their value. "…[I]deological politics represents a situation in which the utility scale of each actor is altered by an ideological scale.

Hence, and much to the bewilderment of the pragmatist, in this case the logic of interest no longer suffices to explain, and even less to predict, political behavior." Sartori (1969).

The story of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine,* SKBiH) shows how ideological committed leadership can create conditions for its own demise. It is a story of a political party losing almost every advantage over its competitors. In stable parliamentary democracies such miscalculations can produce poor electoral results and lead into ideological and personnel change. In extreme cases, complete party failure can occur. But in societies that are embarking on complete transformation of their political system, these types of failures can have disastrous consequences that can lead to unrest, violence, and war. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a perfect example of a failed democratization (Burg 1997). The unsuccessful transition to democracy (Fink-Hafner 2009) that started in 1990 was violently stopped by the Bosnian War. It was restarted with the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, but with the reoccurrence of the same mistakes that plagued the initial attempt of establishing democratic institutions in a country without a titular nation (Linz and Stepan 1996; Stojanović 2014). In the same way that international community attempts at solving structural issues of Bosnia-Herzegovina without a coherent long term strategy achieved only limited goals in the postwar period (Belloni 2001), the SKBiH failed at introducing constitutional reforms and electoral design that would ensure the emergence of a stable democratic system in 1990. While keeping in mind that "…consolidation of democracy is a product of many factors or conditions operating together" Beetham (1994) and without downplaying the significance of exogenous factors**,** this article insists on the decisive importance of the intraparty, endogenous conditions that determined the positions of the communist leadership. This brings us to the main question that needs to be answered:

What can explain the reluctance of the Bosnian communist leadership to fully adopt a reformist platform during late 1989 and early 1990?

Instead of asking how nationalists won and why the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina opted for ethnonationalism, this article turns this question on its head and wants to show how and under which conditions the communists orchestrated their own demise. As was the case elsewhere in Eastern Europe, those who understood the importance of timing, sequencing, and pacing of reforms usually ended up as winners (Grzymala-Busse 2002a, 279). Gradualists, on the other hand, lost. The SKBiH under the leadership of Nijaz Duraković showed low levels of flexibility and adaptability to the rapidly changing and unfavorable political environment and played poorly with the poor set of the cards they were dealt.

The article is structured as follows. In the first section the literature on the post-communists transitions and the role of the political elites in determining the paths to democracy is discussed along with the literature on the breakup of Yugoslavia. Wider Yugoslav political context of 1980s and the impact that the delamination of the federal League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije,* SKJ) had on the party in Bosnia-Herzegovina is presented and explained in the second section. Crucial events of the 10th Congress of the SKBiH and the 14th Congress of the SKJ are discussed in the following two sections. The fifth section deals with the final months prior to the elections and the emergence of leftist alternatives to the communists. Discussion of the importance of failed democratization in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 for our understanding of the breakup of Yugoslavia is presented in the final section which concludes with thoughts on the decisive role of ideology and timing.

Theoretical Considerations: Ideological Commitment and Timing

Communist elites played a crucial role during the 1989/1990 fall of communism in Eastern Europe and transition to democracy. After all, they were the only source of political power prior to transition and they in many ways could determine the character of regime transformation. In many East European cases "…the elite worked to destroy the system by itself – and largely for itself" Poznanski (1993). This is not to say that the external political environment did not matter. In much of Eastern Europe the withdrawal of Soviet military threat and popular nationalist resentment directed towards "alien communist forces" gave enough incentive to opposition movements, but ultimately the former communist elites acted as "peculiar counterrevolutionaries" and dissolved the system from the inside (Ibid.). The success of the communist elites in navigating the pitfalls of transitional processes and their ability to remain in power depended on the internal characteristics of the ruling parties as much as on the external factors (Ishiyama and Bozóki 2001). Grzymala-Busse underlines the importance of organizational centralization by skillful elites capable of taking advantage of state resources and the usable past in a decisive and rapid manner as pivotal factors for the success of transformation of communist parties in Eastern Europe (Grzymala-Busse 2002a, 11). Centralized parties were in a much better position to respond to the challenges posed by the budding opposition and to create the dimension of competition best suited for their skillsets (Grzymala-Busse 2002b). Organizational centralization undertaken by the reform-oriented elites during the transformative period should not, however, be conflated with internal political coherence. The strong ideological commitment by those in power at times led to a disconnect from the broader electorate and semantic consistency resulted in ideological freezing instead of adaptation (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2020), as for example in the Czech Republic.

While in most of Eastern Europe ideology played a less important role compared to the individual characteristics of the communist leaderships and their practical skills (Grzymala-Busse 2002a, 13), in Yugoslavia the ideological conflict was the main source of discord among its elites and determined the dimensions of competition. Most elite-centric approaches split the Yugoslav communists into two camps and from there extrapolate the dynamics of elite conflict. Gagnon describes the formation of two opposing groups – conservatives and reformers – as a consequence of a power struggle among the Yugoslav elites (Gagnon 2010). Conservatives in both communist and anti-communist nationalist parties are lumped together into one group (conservatives) due to common negative attitude towards reforms. If Gagnon's „conservatives and reformers" frame of political polarization is applied to communist elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it simply does not fit. Bosnian leadership was politically conservative and ideologically committed but it was very receptive of economic reforms championed by the last Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković. If primacy is given to the economic component of reforms, the Bosnian leadership could be described as very reform-minded during 1990. On the other hand, their political conservatism stood in sharp contrast to any form of political reformism. Using openness to reforms as the principal dimension of political polarization in Yugoslavia is useful only if the focus of analysis is on the failure of the reformist alternative that congregated under the leadership of Ante Marković. If the scope of research is expended beyond this limited goal, it becomes inoperable. For this reason, the dichotomy of Yugoslav political elites presented by Vladimir Goati is much more useful. Goati describes the elites as belonging to either the federal or confederal camp based on their attitudes toward the constitutional re-arrangement of Yugoslavia (Goati 1997). But Goati does not differentiate between the Serbian federalists who were interested in tinkering with the constitutional basis of Yugoslavia's socialist federalism as much as their Slovenian counterparts and the conservatives whose main goal

was to preserve the existing balance of power among republics and autonomous provinces by protecting the 1974 Constitution. Again, forcing the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina on either of the two poles is a fruitless endeavor.

A similar dichotomy with a different framing is offered by Dejan Jović who splits the Yugoslav communists into constitutional defenders and constitutional reformers (Jović 2003, 255-256). Jović's framing is useful for understanding the balance of forces up until the point it became evident that the Slovenian communists – and to some extent their Croatian counterparts – were not especially keen on protecting the 1974 Constitution. In this regard, the Bosnian leadership remained committed to the original ideas of 1974 all the way until the end. Out of all republican leaderships, they were the only constitutional defenders left before the collapse of Yugoslavia. One of the key mischaracterizations of the leadership of the SKBiH is that they held the unattainable middle. Bebler describes it as vacillating (Bebler 1993). Goati characterizes them as attempting in vain to formulate a middle position (Goati 1997). They were neither vacillating nor a simple Yugoslav synthesis of all opposing viewpoints. The leader of the Bosnian communists, Nijaz Duraković, along with hardliners in the military and the few remaining loyalists in other republics, constituted the core of conservative Titoists. The mischaracterization of the ideology of the leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina stems directly from the oversimplified dichotomies which reduce the complex web of relations within the SKJ to only two opposing poles. By forcing the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina to fit into the predefined patterns of conservatives and reformers, federalists and confederalists, or constitutional defenders and reformers, the reality of elite-driven processes during the transitional period in Yugoslavia remains a conundrum.

Steven Burg's classification of three camps within the SKJ - confederalists, ideological conservatives, and liberal reformers - comes closest to encompassing the full spectrum of opposed ideological groups in Yugoslavia (Burg 1986). Writing in 1986, Burg

went as far as claiming that the ideological conservatives camp was the strongest of the three and that they held the key to any possible resolution of the Yugoslav crisis. The question that to this day remains largely unanswered is how this conservative tendency among the Yugoslav communists completely evaporated in only a few years. To answer this question, the elite conflict in Yugoslavia needs to be reinterpreted as a political competition among three distinct groups: centralists, confederalists and Titoists. The problem with Burg's trichotomy is that the constitutional (centralism and confederalism) and economic (reformers and conservatism) debates are mixed together. The elite conflict in Yugoslavia was first and foremost conflict over Yugoslavia's constitutional arrangement. The nationalist liberal line that had been dominant in the Serbian party since 1970s evaporated with the rise of Milošević in 1986 which was in large parts enabled by the failures of the liberals (Guzina 2003). While their attitudes towards redefining of Yugoslavia's constitution and Serbia's relations with its two provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) shared common traits, their answers to this problem were diametrically opposed. Thus, the main line of conflict was undeniably between the Serbian dominated centralists and Slovenian led confederalists. However, without the inclusion of the third component, the complex web of relations that paralyzed Yugoslavia's federal center and allowed the republican leaderships to run the game according to their own interests cannot be explained. The case of the fall of the SKBiH in Bosnia-Herzegovina is for this reason a crucial part for understanding the disintegration of Yugoslavia precisely because it offers direct insight into the last remaining stronghold of the ideological conservatives.

The Gathering Storm (1987-1989): Who Wants to Destabilize the SKBiH?

In the late 1980s, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, SR BiH) was on a downward trajectory both in its economic and political spheres. The Yugoslav workers' self-management was in a deep crisis, and this put serious stress on the extraction- and export-oriented Bosnian economy. In the political

domain things seemed even less stable. Political order in the republic that gained the reputation of being tightly controlled by the communist regime was deteriorating rapidly. Before the 1960s, Bosnia-Herzegovina could hardly be considered a republic mainly due to the national status of its Muslims being constantly challenged and disputed (Ramet 2006, 285). This rhetoric of denying the Muslims the right of national identity and prescribing them with either Serb or Croat origin would reemerge on the eve of the Bosnian war and remain present to this day in ethnonationalist circles. But from the late 1960s and especially during the 1970s, Bosnia-Herzegovina underwent rapid economic transformation that changed its status from an underdeveloped to a developing economy and consolidated its political and cultural status within Yugoslavia (Sarač – Rujanac 2020, 213, 230-233).

Some of the key men behind the rise of Bosnia-Herzegovina were Branko Mikulić, Hamdija Pozderac, and Milanko Renovica – a Bosnian Croat, Muslim, and Serb – who all held key federal state and party positions in the mid- to late 1980s.[6] All three, however, fell from power in the late 1980s due to a succession of devastating affairs and scandals, leaving the communist leadership of the republic in disarray.[7] In many ways, these scandals and the crusade against the Bosnian communist leadership waged largely by the Belgrade press, followed the almost identical patterns of directing public outrage that the regime of Slobodan Milošević concurrently used in Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Montenegro in a campaign that became popularly known as the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" (Grdešić 2018). The purpose of this campaign was to remove those politicians seen as problematic for Serbia's ultimate goal – redefining constitutional order that was adopted in 1974 and regaining control over its two provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo.

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[6] Branko Mikulić came to the helm of the Federal Executive Council (Savezno izvršno vijeće - SIV), i.e. the federal government, in May 1986. Hamdija Pozderac was Vice-president of the federation and president of the Federal Constitutional Commission, a highly important and influential body in charge of constitutional reform of Yugoslavia. Milanko Renovica was President of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.
[7] The most impactful were the "Agrokomerc" and "Neum" scandals related to illegal financing of Bosnian enterprises and the building of summer homes for the communist functionaries For more on the "Agrokomerc" scandal, see Mulaosmanović 2008. For the role of the Serbian press in these affairs, see Dupanović 2021.

Following the aforementioned scandals, in the summer of 1989 the president of the party's Central Committee became Nijaz Duraković[8] – a compromise candidate of the party's different strands. Duraković was young and untainted by the sins of the old guard but, at the same time, he was a product of that same establishment. He joined the party as a youth and rose through the ranks by being active and loyal to those above him. Though Duraković could hardly be considered a hardliner at the time, he was a committed communist and Titoist. Moreover, as he publicly acknowledged two decades later, he was deeply affected by the way his predecessors were ousted and the role that was played by the security apparatus in the whole ordeal: "I have reliable information that, at the time, police listened in to most of the functionaries. I know that I was also listened to. I am certain that they also listened to Hamdija [Pozderac]. That was the only time in my life when I was really scared: who really runs the state if the first man of the state is not trusted?" (Šačić and Delalić 2007). As the new leader of the SKBiH, Duraković thus had an extremely difficult task. On the one hand, most of conservative Yugoslav communists saw Milošević as *the second coming of Josip Broz Tito* (Jović, 2003, 76) and Tito's legacy was especially strong in Bosnia. This gave an incentive to the new SKBiH leadership to stay close to the regime in Belgrade. On the other hand, true sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina could hardly fit into Milošević's plans. The existing constitutional architecture from 1974 was better suited for the complex ethnic structure of the republic. Simply said, Yugoslavia's quasi-confederalism gave much needed security to the communists in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Gagnon 2004, 73).

The perfect testament of the difficulty of Duraković's predicament took place just weeks after he became president of the Central Committee. In August 1989, the Serbian State Security Service (*Služba Državne Bezbednosti*, SDB) entered the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina to collect information on local leaders and functionaries in relation to alleged

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[8] For more on Duraković's personal story, see his interview in Avdić, 1990.

threats from Muslim fundamentalism in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac in Eastern Bosnia. The SDBs of the different republics were supposed to co-operate and work together in some capacity on the federal level, but the Serbian SDB never notified its Bosnian counterparts about this operation and the leadership of the republic and the party became aware that such an operation took place only after the Serbian SDB published its official report (Anđelić 2003: 115). The report on the political and security situation in Eastern Bosnia – notably the site of the worst crimes during the Bosnian war several years later – was sent directly to the top of the Serbian state (Milanović, R. 1989) The intrusion of the Serbian security apparatus showed that the Serbian press and intellectuals were not the only ones actively participating in a campaign against the leadership of the SKBiH (Glaurdić 2011, 53).

This caused major uproar within the republic and further widened the gap between the party's conservative and moderate wings (Milanović, Z. 1989; Šarac 1989). Serbian press ("NIN", "Politika", "Politika Ekspres", and "Duga") was quick to pile on and suggested that the new leadership of the SKBiH was following in the footsteps of their corrupt predecessors. Nijaz Duraković was singled out as "the extended hand of Hamdija Pozderac" and "student of bad teachers" (Živković 1989). The SDB affair also showed that cracks were starting to appear between the party and the security institutions of the republic (Mijović 1989a). Ivan Cvitković, a Croat member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of SKBiH, publicly claimed that "the SDB affair" was an "attack on sovereignty of the republic" and called for those who ordered such acts to be held responsible, while Branko Ekret, a Serb member of the Presidency of the SR BiH, denied that anything happened at all (Habul 1989). The letter that the President of the Presidency of SR BiH, Obrad Piljak, sent directly to Slobodan Milošević asking for explanations was simply ignored by the Serbian leader for more than a month (Slobodna Dalmacija 1989). And even when a response was finally given, Milošević simply dismissed Piljak's objections. In the end, the goals of the SDB operation in Eastern

Bosnia during 1989 were arguably largely achieved. The SKBiH entered its 10th Congress pressured from both within its own ranks by the conservative-moderate conflict, but also from the outside by the threat of interference from the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević.

Keep It All Together – The 10th Congress of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The 10th Congress of the SKBiH took place on 7-9 December 1989, directly preceding the 14th extraordinary Congress of the SKJ. Congressional proceedings offer direct insight into the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina's ruling party prior to the collapse of the federal party organization at the 14th Congress. The 10th Congress of the SKBiH was followed with widespread media interest and the party put serious efforts in presenting itself to the public as a modern, socialist party capable of leading the country (Naši Dani 1989). In addition to being held in times of uncertainty, turbulence, and political crisis, the 10th Congress had special significance for the status of the newly elected President of the Central Committee (CK SKBiH) Nijaz Duraković.[9] The congress laid bare that there was a brewing storm of conflict caused by the potent mix of ideological divisions and nationalist sentiments underneath the thin layer of consensus that party leadership was trying to maintain. Duraković came across resistance from certain regional organizations in the first days in power. The party organization in Banja Luka[10], for example, openly criticized the process of selecting candidates for the Central Committee and the fact that Sarajevo had a dominant role in the process compared to other cities (Oslobođenje 1989b). The underlying Muslim-Serb ethnic tension was evident and it made the new leadership much more risk-averse.

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[9] Duraković was in power since June 1989, but at the 10th Congress his candidacy for the President of the Central Comittee of the SKBiH was formally confirmed. In secret voting he recevied 57 votes out of possible 75. The other candidate, Džemal Sokolović, recevied 18 votes. (Oslobođenje 1989a).
[10] Banja Luka was and still is the second largest city in Bosnia-Herzegovina predominantly inhabited by the Serb population. Today Banja Luka is the administrative, economic and cultural capital of the Republic of Srpska entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The SKBiH came out of the 10th Congress with pronounced *Yugoslavism* as its main ideological orientation. In his introductory speech to the congress, Duraković offered a cautious and conservative view of the future of both the party and the republic. Commitment to the idea of Yugoslavia was seen as a response to any and all nationalisms within the republic. While it was acknowledged that, in the spirit of the times, some changes were to be made and those already in progress had to be accepted, Duraković expressed firm support for the unified SFRJ. He also dismissed the idea of Bosniak nationality either as an identity marker only for Muslims or for all peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Oslobođenje 1989c). In essence, this repudiation of Bosniak identity meant that Duraković was unwilling to leave behind the idea of Bosnia-Herzegovina that can only exist within Yugoslavia. His speech placated the reformists within his circle but was carefully constructed not to arouse hardliners. Commitment to democratization was confirmed as an indisputable programmatic orientation but it was never clear what this process would entail (ibid.). The difference between *political pluralism* and *multipartyism* remained obscure and it was only clear that the party would stand strongly against any political organization "that would endanger brotherhood and unity" (ibid.). This indicated that while normatively the SKBiH showed willingness to abandon its monopoly on power, it still saw its role as a leading and directing political force. As a response, liberal voices within the party put forward the ZAVNOBiH Initiative[11] that called for full freedom of political organization and association, as well as free elections (Oslobođenje 1989d). The Initiative was signed by 14 delegates including Zdravko Grebo and Desimir Međedović, both very influential in liberal circles. It received support from the rest of the delegates (with obvious refutations from the hardliners) but in the end went nowhere. In Duraković's words, democratic and reformist lines in the party were

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[11] The initiative took its name from the State Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine) – the legislative body of the partisan resistance movement during World War II which established statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina on par with the other republics. The message of the proponents of the Initiative was clear.

"political reality" (ibid.), but in practice their impact was negligible. The importance of the ZAVNOBiH Initiative, nevertheless, should not be understated since it was a clear indication that an alternative was imaginable, if not outright possible. It does not come as a surprise that "Danas", a weekly magazine from Zagreb, wrote praises of Grebo, Međedović, and others for their efforts calling them one of the "permanently bright spots of the Congress" (Mijović 1989b).

Throughout the congressional sessions, Duraković made multiple references to the upcoming 14th Congress of the SKJ and how nothing would be truly decided until the congress of the federal party took place since there were "a lot of things still unresolved and contradictory" (Oslobođenje 1989c). Duraković saw neither Milošević nor the Slovenian president Milan Kučan as allies. Both were set on fundamentally altering the basis on which Yugoslavia stood, but Milošević was seen as someone who could be reasoned with (possibly with the assistance from the JNA). On the other hand, Kučan's positions were simply inadmissible. On this issue Duraković was very direct: "…we do not accept the confederal concept of restricting Yugoslavia that is being aggressively pleaded for…It is evident that from the standpoint of that concept there is no place for Bosnia-Herzegovina" (ibid.). This approach pushed the SKBiH closer to the centralist agenda championed by Belgrade and Milošević and further away from Ljubljana and Zagreb. The League of Communists of Croatia (Savez komunista Hrvatske - SKH) at its 11th Congress held from 11 to 13 December 1989 set a very clear course toward the legalization of political parties and democratic, competitive, multiparty elections (Štrkalj 1989). The Slovenians went even further. Under the slogan "Europe now", the Slovenian party proposed radical interventions into the core of Yugoslavia as a country and the SKJ as its ruling party (Pjević 1989).

While not unexpected, the turn of Croatian and Slovenian communists toward complete redefinition of fundamental political and economic principles caught the Bosnian

party unprepared. Only a few days prior to the congresses of the Croatian and Slovenian ruling parties, the SKBiH confirmed its commitment to the unified, federal, socialist Yugoslavia and the federal party as the vanguard of the working people. This left the Bosnian leadership isolated from potential allies. The promise of partial reforms served its purpose as a band aid for a deeply divided party but achieved little beyond that. The conservative line saw promises of "controlled democratization" as concessions to those who would like to see Yugoslavia fail, while those keen on following Croatia and Slovenia felt that these promises were nothing short of misleading. And both believed they were right. For the moment, Duraković was able to achieve the goal of preventing further splits within the party but the costs were visibly rising. The 14th Congress would be a second challenge in the short period of time for the new leadership of the SKBiH, and ultimately it would be a failed one.

Who Do You Trust? Duraković between Milošević and Kučan – The 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

For the SKBiH the 14th Congress of the SKJ, held 20-22 January 1990, could not come at a worse time. The party came out of its 10th Congress with an inconsistent ideological orientation and a clear goal of buying time. Preliminary measures were taken to ensure that all Bosnian delegates would toe the party line and that at the biggest meeting of Yugoslav communists the SKBiH would give an impression of a unified party following its leadership despite all internal divisions. The balance of power coming into the 14th Congress was known well in advance: two opposite ideological blocs (Serbian and Slovenian) with irreconcilable visions for the future of the SKJ.[12] *Red and green, old and new, dogmatists and socialists* – these were some of the frames used by the press to report on the Congress.[13] It all boiled down to whether the SKJ would give up its political monopoly and allow the

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[12] The main goal of the Congress was to produce a political platform on which the future of the SKJ would be based. The name of the proposed congressional declaration was: "Novi projekt za demokratski socijalizam i Jugoslaviju" ("New project for democratic socialism and Yugoslavia"). (Pauković 2008).

[13] At the Congress delegates used red and green papers to vote. To make things apsolutley confusing, red papers were used to vote „Yes" and green ones to vote „No". Ideological implications were obvious. (Tomić 1990).

republican branches to transform into fully independent parties that would contest free and democratic multiparty elections (Slovenian proposal) or the Yugoslav communists would stay in power and allow only partial, "socialist democratization" that excluded the formation of political parties outside of the system (Serbian proposal) (Oslobođenje 1990a).

Even before the Congress officially started, chances that the SKJ would at the end of it come out more unified than before were slim at best, but once all amendments proposed by the Slovenians were rejected any possibility of finding common ground collapsed. The Slovenian delegation walked out of the Congress, soon followed by the bulk of the Croatian delegation. For Slovenians "unitarism of the SKJ in the conditions of political pluralism was suicidal stupidity" (Oslobođenje 1990b). Croats saw no point in accepting "market competition without the competition of political ideas" (Oslobođenje 1990c). This left the Bosnian party in a very precarious position. As long as the line of conflict was between the Serbs and Slovenians, the SKBiH could play a quasi-neutral role, but once those conflict lines expanded to include the Croats as well, the SKBiH was left isolated and surrounded by Serbian and Montenegrin delegates. The pressure was visibly weighing down on Duraković. In a moment of astonishing confusion, the leader of the SKBIH gave a speech in which he publicly called out those who criticized the SKJ and *showed them the door* (Oslobođenje 1990d; Srabović 1990). In the context of Slovenian and Croatian delegates leaving, the message was clear - those who did not want to conform to the opinion of the majority were not wanted at the Congress. Later on, Duraković claimed that his message was only directed towards those SKBiH delegates who proposed a controversial plan to split the SKJ into two different parties - social-democratic and communist - and thus disobeyed the agreement that the Bosnian party would support a unified SKJ (Avdić 1990). The so called "Bosnian initiative" was proposed by the same liberal wing of the SKBiH that pushed the "ZAVNOBIH Initiative" at the 10th Congress (Oslobođenje 1990e). It made perfect sense that

Duraković would be furious at his delegates for suggesting such an idea. Splitting the SKJ into two wings would lead towards a similar split occurring in the SKBiH as well, and while on the federal level and in most of the other republics this would indeed be an ideological split, in Bosnia those ideological lines of separation would coincide with the ethnic structure of society.

But the damage had been done already. It did not matter who the intended recipient of Duraković's fierce message was since it was heard and understood by everyone in the congressional hall. Duraković received loud applause and support from the Serbian and Montenegrin delegates (Kurspahić 1990). The Serbian press that had been villainizing Duraković for the better part of 1989 now sang his praises (ibid.). Well past midnight on 22 January, the Bosnian delegation held a meeting to decide whether to stay or leave the Congress. The decision itself was largely superfluous since it was clear that continuing without the delegates from Slovenia and Croatia was beside the point. But the decision needed to be made and for the SKBiH it would have major implications. Duraković gave a speech in which he made an attempt at convincing other SKBiH delegates of leaving under the conditions that leaving the Congress would not mean its final end but only a time-out and that the Bosnian party would not opt for either of the two sides but stay in the middle (Oslobođenje 1990f). It worked and the Bosnians left but nonetheless, the whole strategy of being neutral was exposed. An unnamed member of the Bosnian delegation responded to the promises made by Duraković: "Please, just not in the middle, we are always in the middle…" (Miličević – Mašić 1990).

Once the emotional outbursts calmed down, reality settled in. During the introductory speech given at the 4th Central Committee session held on 15 February 1990, Duraković on multiple occasions positioned the SKBiH on the reformist and democratic side of the Yugoslav communists and openly called for the suspension of democratic centralism both as

an ideology and practice.[14] Bringing an end to democratic centralism meant that the party would no longer wait for the federal party organs for instructions. Although Duraković made it very clear that the one-party system was no longer possible or wanted, the plan presented was not exactly what the critics of the regime expected. The irony of the whole transformative moment that Duraković made after the 14th Congress is that the same turn was suggested by some of the members of the dogmatist line months prior.[15] The SKBiH went from a rigid position of non-party pluralism to controlled multiparty democratization. Zlatko Lagumdžija, member of the CK SKBiH, perfectly expressed the concerns of the party leadership at the time: "How to move from fruitless unanimity to creative plurality without ending up in insanity?" (Lagumdžija 1990). To prevent any possibility of "political insanity", the rules of the game were to be set and decided by the party. Non-existent opposition was to be given a chance as long as they closely followed the instructions laid out by the communists. No nationalist parties were allowed. And when a member of the CK, Emina Kečo, proclaimed "it looks like we are all becoming Slovenians with a delay" (Oslobođenje 1990g) it was evident that the transition from quasi-neutral but conservative attitude towards reformist but not fully democratic position had been completed.

Post Congressional Turn – Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Army Wolf?

In the aftermath of the 14th Congress, the SKBiH entered the second phase of its balancing act and turned from words to action. Once back in Sarajevo, the leadership felt more confident in their abilities to navigate the complex web of challenges and pitfalls that democratization brings. On 26 January 1990 the elections were called for 25 – 27 March 1990 (Oslobođenje 1990h). The electoral system based on indirect selection of delegates remained unchanged. The Assembly of SR BiH also debated the planned constitutional

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[14] Transcript of the 4th session of the CK SKBiH, February 15, 1990 (SDP Archive - Uncataloged)

[15] Mićo Carević, former member of the CK before Duraković became its president, wrote in "Oslobođenje" that the only acceptable way forward would be a middle road between full and partial democratization. In his view, there was no denying that the present system of Party-State synergy could not be defended anymore and that change was needed but blindly diving into multipartyism would be catastrophic. (Carević 1989).

changes and whether to extend its mandate until those changes were implemented but this proposal was rejected by the large majority of delegates (ibid.). On 21 February 1990, the Law on Political Association was put in place. The law was a legal framework for the elections in which political parties outside of the system would be allowed to run. The crucial part of the law was the ban on all political organizations founded on national (i.e. ethnic) basis. The *controlled democratization* that the SKBiH was undertaking had very limited goals in mind: forestall the creation of strong, reformist alternatives and the bloc formation of ethnonationalist parties. The reform wing of the CK SKBiH (Zlatko Lagumdžija, Ivo Komšić, Krstan Malešević and others) insisted that the party should fully commit to reforming its image (even a name change was proposed) along the lines of developments in Slovenia and Croatia (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990a). Some delegates referred to this push by the reformists within the CK as the new "Bosnian Initiative" (Oslobođenje 1990i). But on the other side of the spectrum, even this gradual and partial transformation was harshly criticized by local party organizations in Banja Luka and Prijedor (Oslobođenje 1990j). Member of the CK Nada Đaković claimed that "in Prijedor some are even debating whether the CK SKBiH should resign all together" (ibid.). The underlying message was clear: if the SKBiH does not fully embrace the positions of the federal party institutions, Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina would turn their backs on the leadership in Sarajevo.

In this atmosphere, on 5 March 1990, the Assembly of the SR BiH voted and officially postponed the elections (Oslobođenje 1990k). The delegates voted almost unanimously[16] to extend their mandates until the end of the year under pretext that there were no conditions for democratic, multiparty elections to take place. The President of the Constitutional Commission of the Assembly Zlatko Karavdić emphasized that "order without

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[16] The only vote for holding scheduled elections was by Boro Tadić, a delegate from Sanski Most (Oslobođenje, 1990l). By the end of the year, Tadić would completely switch sides. He was one of the founding members of Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka - SDS) and ended up testifying in the trial against Radovan Karadžić at the Hague Tribunal as a defense witness. (Jungvirth 2013).

democracy is possible but there is no democracy without order" (Oslobođenje 1990m). The reasons given by the delegates for their decision were in general very vague. Ljiljana Lazić, speaking in front of the delegation of the SKBiH in the Assembly suggested that the elections should be synchronized with the elections for the Assembly of the SFRJ (Oslobođenje 1990l). This came as an unexpected turn of events since less than two weeks earlier the same Assembly voted to support the constitutional amendments that enabled the elections.

The likeliest explanation for this sudden change involves the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija,* JNA). During this period, a group of top JNA generals and admirals were doing rounds of secret talks across Yugoslavia with the leaderships of the republican communist parties. The plan was to persuade them to postpone elections and wait for the military to act. In Slovenia they were welcomed to a very cold response (Oslobođenje 1990n) while in Croatia, Ivica Račan politely declined the offer (Varušić 2002). Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, was different. Ivo Komšić, who was a member of the Presidency of CK SKBiH at the time, claims that a visit from the top brass of the JNA[17] played an important role in forcing the party leadership to abandon their election plans (Komšić 2013, 45-49). In his view, it was impossible to hold elections in such circumstances when party leadership was under severe pressure from the military not to do it. This would prove to be one of the key moments in the process of establishing multipartyism in Bosnia-Herzegovina since it allowed time for the nationalist parties to better prepare and organize.[18] Komšić repeated the same story during the 2020 History Fest in Sarajevo, but this time he added that the JNA generals demanded not only that the SKBiH postpone the elections but also that they

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[17] Komšić mentions that the JNA delegation was led by Admiral Petar Šimić and Admiral Stane Brovet along with General Simeon Bunčić.
[18] Komšić suggests that the date of this visit was 8 March 1990, though the elections were officially postponed by the Assembly on 5 March 1990. Croatian press sources indicated that the meeting happened on 9 March 1990 (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990b). Alfredo Sasso uncovered this potential inconsistency in Komšić's testimony in his excellent PhD thesis on the non-nationalist actors in this period (Sasso 2015). Nevertheless, it would be safe to say that contacts between Duraković and the JNA generals likely took place prior to the plan being presented to other CK members.

should join the new federal political organization (if and when it is created) and support the continuation of the 14th Congress (Kamberović 2020). This adds further context to the Army's demand for postponing the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Strengthening the SKBiH and their democratic legitimacy would be counterproductive if the Army's plans were to take power by military means if necessary and to install a puppet party. It is far less important if the JNA actually had the capacity and operational strength to pull off a military coup and take control of Yugoslavia than if they were able to scare the Bosnian leadership into following their orders. Komšić describes the aforementioned meeting with the JNA generals as having a terrifying impact on him and his fellow member of the Presidency of CK SKBiH Zlatko Lagumdžija.

Losing Control: Save the Party but Lose the State?

The debacle of the failed March elections forced the leadership of the SKBiH to revise the strategy of *controlled democratization* and *transitional* introduction of political pluralism. The reformist wing of the party was very much determined on following the developments in Slovenia and Croatia and saw this period of uncertainty as an opportunity to push forward its agenda for the complete democratic transformation of the party. The "Platform for Activities of the SKBiH in New Conditions" that the reformists impelled the CK SKBiH to adopt expressed the need for the SKBiH to become a fully transformed, modern, democratic, and independent political party with a strong Yugoslav orientation (Oslobođenje 1990o). The first test of this new platform came in late March. The Central Committee of the federal party issued a call for its members to attend the session on 30 March 1990. The meeting of the CK SKJ was problematic mainly because it was unclear whether the federal CK was even a legitimate body without the Slovenian and Croatian delegates. Members of the reformist wing of the SKBiH openly criticized the CK SKJ and its

intentions. Krstan Malešević went as far as suggesting that CK SKJ should resign and called it incompetent (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990c).

Despite resistance from the reformists, however, Duraković and the rest of the Bosnian delegation joined the session of the CK SKJ, but only to abruptly leave once they realized that the session would not be consultative in nature as was previously requested by the SKBiH delegation (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990d). Commenting on these events in an interview with "Oslobođenje" Duraković accused the members of the CK SKJ of using the "same old methods" which led to the schism during the 14th Congress" (Šarac 1990). After the session, the CK SKJ issued a public letter calling party members to support its efforts in solving the crisis within the federal party and announcing the continuation of the 14th Congress before the end of April (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990d). The SK-JNA, the party organization within the military, originally proposed the same idea in February and was fully in support (Andrejić 1990). A survey was published in all major newspapers in Yugoslavia asking congressional SKJ delegates if they would participate in the continuation of the Congress (Oslobođenje 1990p). The letter and the survey caused major turmoil within the SKBiH. The majority of Serb members of the CK SKBiH harshly criticized the leadership for the decision to leave the session of the, in their opinion, legitimate institution of the federal party and questioned whether the SKBiH was still for the unity of the SKJ (Smajlović et al. 1990). On the other side, Muslim and Croat delegates firmly rejected the possibility of any continuation of the 14th Congress and accepted only organization of a new Congress which would include all parts of the SKJ (ibid.). Emina Kečo criticized the press for even publishing the survey and said that "we are not that naïve that we do not understand that this is a direct negation of the independence of the republican SKs" (ibid.).

The next session of the CK SKJ was planned to take place on 4 May 1990. This time the Macedonian delegation decided not to attend (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990e). This left only

the Bosnian communists as undecided. In an unexpected turn of the events, the delegates from the SKBiH were given instructions by the party leadership to attend the session that was eventually scheduled for 8 May 1990 (Rakočević – Novaković and Habul 1990). The main purpose of this session was the organization and closure of the revived 14th Congress. The explanation given by the CK SKBiH for this decision was that the SKBiH delegates supported the initiative put forward by the SK-JNA. This initiative called for a "dignified ending of the 14th Congress" (ibid.). However, the results of the "CK SKJ referendum" showed an almost even split between the "Yes" and the "No" votes for the continuation of the Congress among the few of those Bosnian delegates who actually responded to the survey.[19] On 26 May 1990, the so-called "Congress of Resolution" of the SKJ took place and the Bosnian delegation returned to Sava center in Belgrade with almost the full number of delegates that attended the original 14th Congress of the SKJ in January (Oslobođenje 1990q). Only Serbia sent more delegates to this congress. Slovenians, of course, did not show up and only a handful of Serb delegates from Croatia and Macedonia attended.[20] The question of continuation of the 14th Congress was a huge stumbling block within the party and Duraković's decision to attend was deemed as astonishing at the time. At the Congress, Duraković was even elected as a member of the Board for the Democratic Renewal of the SKJ that was supposed to organize a new congress of the SKJ (Oslobođenje 1990s).

One day prior to the "Congress of Resolution", on the occasion of Tito's birthday that was traditionally celebrated on 25 May, the SKBiH held a big rally in the center of Sarajevo under the slogan "Bosnia says NO!" (Živković and Habul 1990a). It was the first time that the party tried to reposition and relegitimize itself as a *Bosnia first party* by affirming

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[19] According to the CK SKJ they received 848 responses from all republics to the survey. 735 responded with "Yes", 101 with "No" and 9 were undecided. From the SKBiH, 47 responded with "Yes", 44 with "No" and 4 were undecided. (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990f).
[20] Out of 1510 delegates that attended the 14th Congress in January, 989 delegates showed up for its continuation (65,48%). 399 delegates from Serbia, 205 delegates from Bosnia-Herzegovina, 142 from Vojvodina, 103 from Montenegro, 79 from JNA, 75 from Kosovo, 22 from Croatia and 18 from Macedonia. No delegates from Slovenia attended. (Oslobođenje 1990r).

Bosnia's centuries old existence and multiculturalism, while defending the party's traditional values of *Titoism* and *Yugoslavism.* Something else was noticeable as well – something that arguably goes a long way in explaining Duraković's decision making at the time. In his speech titled "*Bosnia does not want a tutor*" at the rally, Duraković made a strong case for the JNA as a safeguard against the nationalist forces: "*…we decisively condemn and reject any attacks on the Yugoslav People's Army. The Army is here to protect the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Yugoslavia along with its people.*" (Živković and Habul 1990b). Duraković was determined that the SKBiH would not support formation of any republican armies (ibid.), but the opposition with a radically different ethnonationalist view was now coming into the limelight after months of organizing on the ground in secret. The Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije,* SDA), a Muslim national party, was registered on 26 May 1990 despite the ban on political organizing still officially being in place (Numanović 1990). The SDA was soon followed by the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka,* SDS) on 12 July 1990 and the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH*, HDZ BiH) on 18 August 1990.

The fact that the main ethnonationalist parties organized on the ground despite the prohibitive Law on Political Association had a serious impact on the public's perception of the strength of the communists to enforce the law (Bieber 2014). This was compounded by the fact that the Constitutional Court decided to revisit the Law on Political Association – a clear sign that the communists no longer had control over the judicial branch of the government. On 6 June 1990, the Constitutional Court made public their decision to proclaim the Law on Political Association unconstitutional (Constitutional Court BiH 1990). The Legislative Commission of the Assembly, still under control of the SKBiH, strongly disputed this decision (Živković 1990). The Assembly's Commission concluded that there was no legal basis for people to organize and act in the domain of political life except on the grounds

of historically recognized socialist association (Legislative Commission of the Assembly of the SR BiH 1990). But the decision by the highest judicial body of the country was already made and the ban was lifted, thus enabling the ethnonationalist parties to be officially recognized. Kasim Trnka, the President of the Constitutional Court and member of the Commission for Constitutional Questions of the Assembly of the SR BiH resigned from the parliamentary commission, signaling the seriousness of the rift between the judiciary and the legislature (Oslobođenje 1990s). This would prove to be the final nail in the coffin of the strategy of controlled democratization by the SKBiH leadership. As a last-ditch attempt at saving their failed strategy, the leadership of the SKBiH proposed a referendum on lifting the ban on nationalist parties. On 27 June 1990, however, the Assembly voted against the referendum (Oslobođenje 1990t). In the space of several weeks, it became clear that the leadership of the SKBiH lost not only the judiciary, but also the legislature.

Storming Heaven: The Fall of the SKBiH

The loss of control over the state apparatus further increased the dependency of the SKBiH on the strength of the political forces on the federal level. In the autumn of 1990, the only two remaining pan-Yugoslav forces were the federal Prime Minister Ante Marković and the JNA. While both Marković and the army wanted to preserve Yugoslavia, they had very little else in common. In Marković's vision, Yugoslavia was to transform into a modern liberal democracy with a market economy and eventual membership in the European Union (Oslobođenje 1990u). The promise of the "Western future" and Marković's executive credentials attracted many disillusioned members of the SKJ. But Marković's "shock therapy" for Yugoslavia's failing economy meant that very little of Yugoslav socialism would remain intact. For the JNA, this was simply unacceptable. If Marković's "new socialism" (Glaurdić et al. 2022) was to ever become reality, the role of the military would have to be drastically reduced. For this reason, the *natural alliance* of these two political

camps that were set on protecting Yugoslavia never really materialized. The consequences of this troublesome relationship had important ramifications for the SKBiH since both the federal prime minister and the army saw Bosnia-Herzegovina as a major battlefield due to its dependence on unified Yugoslavia.

On 29 July 1990, Marković held a rally in front of more than 100.000 people on Kozara Mountain – site of a famous World War II battle –and announced that he would be forming his own political party – Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (*Savez reformskih snaga Jugoslavije*, SRSJ) (Oslobođenje 1990v). The first republican branch of the SRSJ was formed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main political actors in the SRSJ-BiH were Nenad Kecmanović, Džemal Sokolović, and Dragan Kalinić. All three were former members of the SKBiH who were opposed to Duraković's leadership for either ideological and/or opportunistic reasons. Marković's personnel choices for the leadership of the SRSJ-BiH made the creation of a leftist coalition between the SKBiH and the SRSJ-BiH against the right-wing nationalist parties particularly difficult. What made such a coalition even less likely was the fact that the membership of the SKBiH was turning to the SRSJ especially since Markovićs party allowed its members to be members of different parties as well (Filipović 2021).

This challenge from the liberal, reformist left was only part of the problem for the SKBiH. The far-left conservatives in the JNA had plans of entering political competition as well. The League of Communists - Movement for Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista - Pokret za Jugoslaviju,* SK-PJ), also known as "the generals' party", was officially formed in Belgrade on 19 November 1990 (Slobodna Dalmacija 1990g), but the organizing efforts of the army brass took place that summer and early fall. Even before the SK-PJ was founded, the JNA high ranks also identified Bosnia-Herzegovina as perfect grounds from which they could draw large parts of its membership and support (Carević 2003, 186). The JNA perceived

Bosnia-Herzegovina as hopelessly tied to the fate of Yugoslavia (Mamula 2000, 298). In his memoirs, admiral Branko Mamula, the Yugoslav Minister of Defense from 1982 to 1988 and one of the key personalities in the formation of the SK-PJ, claims that Duraković was a member of the "Topčider group" (named after the army complex in this part of Belgrade) that was responsible for preparing plans to prevent the dissolution of Yugoslavia by either political engagement or military means and that he turned his back on the SK-PJ only on the eve of the party's inauguration after recalling its representatives from the SK-PJ (Mamula 2000, 191).[21]

Joining the SK-PJ under highly indecisive leadership of the new Minister of Defense Veljko Kadijević and gambling on the success of the ultra-conservative political party with a highly underdeveloped and unstable structure may have been off-putting, but at the same time, disregarding the idea of Yugoslavia in which the JNA was and, in Duraković's mind, would be a key factor of internal cohesion was not something that he was willing to accept. At the time, it was clear that Duraković was interested in a coalition with the Reformists, but that he also kept contacts with the Army as well. His principal ideological orientation did not allow him to fully embrace the reformist positions and he was much more receptive of conservative solutions. Komšić would later say of Duraković: "He was a convinced communist and he never changed. He remained committed. I used to say that he was the last Bolshevik, he was very conservative in this phase. A group of us liberals requested changes, but he believed in the army." (Kamberović 2020).

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[21] Duraković himself confirmed that he attended meetings at Topčider but claimed that he was an unwilling participant and that he feared for his safety at the time (Čabaravdić, 2008). Ivo Komšić wrote in his memoirs that on 25 September 1990 Duraković told him that a day before he attended a meeting in a military bunker with Veljko Kadijević along with Raif Dizdarević (the 10th President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia) and Bulatović and Danev from SK Montenegro and Macedonia. According to Komšić, Duraković was certain that the military would execute a coup and that they believed Marković was used by the "external factors" to destroy the communist system (Komšić 2013, 66-67).

On 31 July 1990, the amendments to the Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the electoral law were passed by the republican Assembly (Oslobođenje 1990w). The elections were scheduled to take place on 18 November and 2 December 1990 under a combination of proportional and majoritarian rules for the bi-cameral Assembly (Chamber of Citizens and Chamber of Municipalities) (Glaurdić and Muharemović 2023). For the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the 2+2+2+1 formula was adopted (Oslobođenje 1990x), under which this body would be comprised of two members from each of Bosnia-Herzegovina's three largest ethnic groups – Muslims, Serbs and Croats – as well as one member from other ethnic communities. According to Duraković, these solutions were imposed on the communists (Tijanić 1990), whatever that may mean in a system with only one ruling party. This again shows how in crucial moments the SKBiH leadership underutilized its institutional control and showed a lack of intra-party discipline. The SRSJ strongly criticized the communists for their role in creating a "national democracy" (Glaurdić et al. 2022). On 22 September 1990, the ruling party presented its electoral program and candidates at a pre-election rally in Sarajevo under the new name of SKBiH – Socialist Democratic Party (*Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine – Socijalistička demokratska partija*, SKBiH-SDP) (Oslobođenje 1990aa). Ideologically, the new name suggested an overhaul of the party's image but substantively very little changed. During the pre-electoral campaign dominated by the strong leaders from all sides, Duraković made sure to affirm and even emphasize the belief in communist ideas (Tijanić 1990). For Duraković, "storming heaven"[22] remained desirable and attainable (ibid.).

In the end, the leftist political forces split into two camps – the former communists and the reformists and both suffered heavy electoral defeats against the nationalist opposition. The SKBiH-SDP won only 15 out of 130 seats in the Chamber of Citizens and 4 out of 110

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[22] The Paris Commune was a popular uprising in Paris (France) that seized power for three months in 1871. In a letter to Dr Kugelmann, Karl Marx described the events of the Paris Commune as „storming heaven" (Marx 1871). The phrase became synonimous with workers' political struggles for emancipation and rights.

seats in the Chamber of Municipalities (Kapidžić 2015). The SRSJ fared even worse – 12 seats for the lower and 1 seat for the upper chamber (ibid.). For the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the candidates from the SKBiH-SDP lost all posts. Duraković won 17.6% votes for the Muslim member of the Presidency, Komšić 16.6% for the Croat member and Lagumdžija 12% for the others (ibid.). Other SKBiH-SDP candidates did even worse. All seats in the Presidency were won by the three dominant nationalist parties – SDA, SDS, and the HDZ. The landslide victory of the nationalists, 84% of all mandates in the Assembly (Arnautović 1996, 124), enabled them to form a coalition government without the SKBiH-SDP or the SRSJ. However, the complete collapse of the left in Bosnia-Herzegovina meant that the nationalist coalition no longer had a common enemy to unite against. Within months, the incompatible views of the three nationalist parties on the future of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina led to complete government breakdown and the bloody Bosnian war ensued in the spring of 1992.

Conclusion

The failed democratization attempt in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 offers two valuable lessons for our understanding of transitions in post-communist societies: time and ideology matter. Prior to the first democratic elections the communist elites were faced with a tough decision of whether they would stay loyal to their Marxist ideals or adopt a more pragmatic approach to politics. And those decisions had to be made fast. The more intransigent the elites were, the less chance they had at an effective makeover of their public image. The slower they were in adopting reforms and persuading their comrades that change is necessary, the quicker they fell from power. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the leadership of the party imprisoned themselves with confusing and misguided decision making rooted in strong ideologically shaped worldview which ultimately left them isolated from main sources of political power and legitimacy. They were in constant fear of nationalist tendencies among

their members but barely paid attention to what was happening outside of their party. Inconsistent approach to democratization, only partial reformation and gambling on the possibility of preventing dissolution of Yugoslavia with military means were essential to the communist loss of power.

The main conclusions of this study show that: *a) ideological beliefs held by political elites can have a significant impact on crucial decisions taken prior to first democratic elections and shape how the democratization process will play out.* While there was a strong liberal, reformist wing of the CK SKBiH that was determined to follow the democratic developments in Slovenia and Croatia, it never fully captured power within the party. Their influence on Nijaz Duraković, party's leader was evident but not decisive. Duraković's ideological commitments to a conservative, communist worldview never allowed him to fully embrace reformist attitudes. This stifled the party's adherence to reforms and democratization; *b) timely decision making and experience of those in charge of the transitional process are key prerequisites for peaceful and successful democratic transition.* Duraković got lost in the highly ambitious game of entertaining ideas of a military coup while at the same time promising reforms to his core supporters within the party. Playing both sides of the political spectrum served the purpose of maintaining any semblance of cohesion within the party but once it became clear that prolonging this quasi-neutral position was no longer feasible there was no willingness at the top of the party to make a clear cut with the past. Strong commitment to Titoist and Marxist ideology made the communist elites slow and indecisive to react to the radical changes in the political environment.

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Rokkan Rules? Communist Elites and the Choice of Electoral Systems in the Yugoslav Republics, 1989–1990[23]

We use the previously neglected cases of the Yugoslav republics to revisit the question of how electoral systems were formed for the first elections during the transition from communism in 1989–1990. By exploring archival and other sources created contemporaneously by the relevant decision-makers, we build on Rokkanian interpretations of electoral system design. Unlike Rokkan, however, we do not see parties as unitary or united actors. Our analysis instead focuses on the leadership and the dominant wings of the ruling parties and shows that their preferences regarding electoral rules served their intra-party ambitions and reflected their intra-party power capacities.

Comparative studies of the decision-making of communist elites in the creation of democratic electoral systems in postcommunist Eastern Europe largely neglect the cases of the Yugoslav republics: Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.[24] This is a serious shortcoming of the literature, since elections in the Yugoslav republics were arguably the most consequential in all of Eastern Europe: in addition to marking the advent of multipartyism, they brought to power politicians who precipitated the federation's descent into dissolution and bloody wars. Explanations based on the fact that these were merely regional elections (Linz & Stepan 1992) are not convincing because Yugoslav republics were constitutionally defined as sovereign states in a very decentralised federation; they had their own communist parties, nascent and unique opposition forces, and distinctive paths to democratisation. Moreover, since no elections on the federal level were ever held, these elections served as the true markers of the republics' transition to multiparty

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[24] The Yugoslav republics barely rated mention in influential monographs and edited volumes on institutional design in the early transition (Lijphart & Waisman 1996; Elster et al. 1998; Birch et al. 2002) or in the general literature on elections and voting during this time (Tucker 2002), and there has been little improvement since.

democracy, however flawed. The Yugoslav brand of communism/socialism had its unique characteristics, given the federation's 1948 split with Moscow.[25] For all the liberties Yugoslavia offered, however, the power logic of its ruling system and the nature of its transition to multiparty democracy had much in common with similar processes elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The neglect of Yugoslavia's six republics in comparative studies of the early stages of transitions to democracy and institutional development is particularly regrettable because Yugoslav republics are ideal subjects for comparative study due to their economic, cultural, political and social similarities, as well as their institutional uniformity prior to the fall of communism and the vastly different institutional choices made by the communist elites during the crucial 1989–1990 period. Without understanding those founding institutional choices, we cannot fully understand the nature of the later stages of democratic transition and the origins of electoral systems not only in Yugoslavia's successor states but also throughout postcommunist Eastern Europe.

This article remedies the literature's shortcoming in this respect. Our approach is rooted in the belief that we can elucidate institutional choices made by policymakers only by 'reading history forward'—by immersing ourselves in the sources created simultaneously with the political decisions we aim to explain (Ahmed 2010). Using internal documents of the ruling communist parties, parliamentary debates and expert opinions uncovered in local archives,[26] as well as contemporaneous press reports, diaries and public interviews with the

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[25] While cognisant of these idiosyncrasies, for the sake of brevity, we refer to Yugoslav ruling party/parties and their elites as communists. After all, that is what they called themselves.

[26] We conducted archival research in the Archive of the Croatian *Sabor* (*Pismohrana Hrvatskog Sabora*) and the Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (*Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine*) where we reviewed more than 2,000 pages of relevant archival materials. In both archives we were forced to rely on the goodwill and memory of archival staff because the collections were, in most cases, either uncatalogued or poorly organised. Materials in the

relevant decision-makers, we reveal how three very different electoral systems were chosen by the communist elites in Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina and Serbia during 1989 and 1990. We focus our comparative case studies on the communist elites of these three republics for three reasons: they were the largest republics in the federation; the results of their elections were the most important for the country's survival; and, most importantly, their diverse political situations represented three different levels of balance between the forces under the respective communist leadership's control, on the one hand, and the nascent opposition forces, on the other, a balance that we believe was the crucial deciding factor in the choice of electoral systems at the time.

Our narrative builds on the politically rationalist interpretations of the choices of electoral systems in West European democracies at the time of the expansion of suffrage more than a century ago, the so-called first wave of democratisation, rooted in the scholarship of Stein Rokkan (Rokkan 1970; Boix 1999; Boix 2010; Leemann & Mares 2014). We also build on the studies of electoral system design in postcommunist Eastern Europe that likewise trace institutional design to politically rationalist actors operating under conditions of uncertainty (Lijphart 1992; Benoit & Schiemann 2001; Benoit & Hayden 2004). We agree with those who see the choice of electoral system as a primarily political decision defined by calculations about access to power. Our set of propositions, however, offers two important caveats to this school of thought that we believe need to be integrated into the literature on electoral system design, particularly in the literature on the third wave of democratisation that began in the 1970s and includes the postcommunist transition of the 1990s.

First, unlike virtually all scholarship in the Rokkanian tradition, we do not see political parties as unitary actors. Instead, we unpack them and focus on actors who had real

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Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina were in a particularly disappointing state of disarray after the 2014 fire, making this kind of research extremely difficult and time-consuming.

decision-making power in the Yugoslav republics: leaderships and the dominant wings of the ruling communist parties. The level of intra-party (or, rather, intra-system) unity is actually one of the critical factors we see as determining party leaders' strategies. Our narrative recognises the messiness of transitional politics and the fact that ruling regimes were often aggregates of different factions. Second, and also in contrast to other scholarship in the Rokkanian tradition, we see power the same way ruling regime leaders saw it when they were defining their preferences over electoral rules, that is, more broadly than their parties' potential to win seats. For us, as well as for them, their intra-party power mattered just as much as their parties' projected electoral strength. Preferences over electoral rules were thus formed with both of these dimensions in mind. Seat maximisation was obviously crucial, but it had to serve the power goals (and reflect the power capacities) of the party leadership.

Aside from these two necessary caveats, the explanation for the adoption of electoral rules in the Yugoslav republics presented in this article follows a Rokkanian logic. Where the communist power-holders controlled their own parties and the left end of the spectrum while facing a weaker and divided centrist/rightwing opposition, they opted for majoritarian rules, as was the case in Serbia. Where the communist leaders had a weak grip over a divided front of system parties and/or they faced an organised challenge on the left end of the spectrum, which was unwilling to engage in electoral coordination, while facing a strong and united centrist/rightwing opposition, they opted for PR rules of high proportionality. This was the case in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Finally, where the balance of power was uncertain—either because system power-holders had limited control over their own parties or because they faced a leftist challenge, while the strength of the divided centrist/rightwing opposition was unclear—they opted for variations on the ideal types of electoral rules that were supposed to provide them with strategic intra-party or electoral benefits. In Croatia, these were the French-style double-ballot rules with low thresholds for entry into the second round, designed

to serve as primaries to first placate and then ultimately defeat the disobedient wings of the ruling regime.

Our analysis makes several important contributions to understanding the choice of electoral systems by ruling elites during the third wave of democratisation. It explains a set of significant and previously neglected cases using rigorous historical research and primary sources. It also tests and ultimately demonstrates the value of classical theoretical approaches in explaining electoral reforms during the first wave of democratisation to our broader understanding of the early transition period, while at the same time highlighting refinements needed to bring theory closer in line with political practice.

Ruling elites and electoral system formation: theoretical and empirical approaches

The study of the origins of electoral systems over the past half a century has been dominated by Stein Rokkan's (1970) seminal analysis of electoral system formation in West European democracies. Rokkan's principal proposition, building on earlier work by Karl Braunias (1932), was that proportional representation in the early stages of West European democracies was adopted by ruling parties where increasing competition led either to potentially destabilising levels of disproportionality of political minorities in culturally diverse polities or to the ruling rightwing parties feeling threatened by the expansion of suffrage and the resulting rise of leftwing parties representing the working class. Rokkan's second proposition understandably garnered far more interest in the field because it fit the popular understanding of the political machinations taking place during the period, and because it was an elegant argument that could be easily understood and formalised.

Carles Boix's (1999) influential study breathed new life into Rokkan's proposition about this second path to proportional representation and sparked a lively debate over the past two decades that is unlikely to be settled. Boix preserved Rokkan's straightforward narrative of the choice of electoral systems being primarily a political question of access to power in an

electoral arena where players are political parties as unitary actors. For Boix, the key aspects of the story concerned the perceived balance of power between the parties in power and the ascendant challengers, and the capacity of the parties in power to coordinate their responses to the changing situation. The proportionality of electoral rules was thus increased (namely, there was a shift from majority/plurality rules to PR) when the leftwing challengers were strong and the rightwing incumbents were weak and/or unable to coordinate a common response. If the rightwing incumbents were strong and/or able to create a coordinated response to the challengers, electoral rules remained in their majority/plurality *status quo*.

This political story of the origins of electoral systems, however, has not been uncontested. Setting aside the challenge presented by the political economists who have tried to relate countries' electoral institutions to the nature of their economies (Rogowski 1987; Cusack *et al*. 2007), the Rokkan/Boix story has been put under the magnifying glass by a number of comparative studies with firmer grounding in historical research. Marcus Kreuzer's (2010) replication of Boix's findings demonstrated that the general story was robust to different specifications, and Boix's (2010) own refinement of his original argument provided evidence that it was exactly the parties that were the most threatened by the ascendant leftwing challengers that supported the institution of proportional representation, as one would expect, based on his original argument. The story that comes through a number of other in-depth accounts of decision-making during crucial episodes of building or altering of electoral institutions in the first wave of democratisation, however, is one of greater complexity.

Similar to Boix, Leemann and Mares (2014) found that the implementation of proportional representation in 1912 Germany was indeed supported by politicians most threatened by the ascendant social democrats but also by those faced with greater disproportionality regardless of the social democratic threat. In other words, they found that

Rokkan's two paths toward PR worked in tandem in the crucial German case. Other studies offered a more fundamental challenge to the Rokkan/Boix story by showing that parties could not be understood as unitary actors in pursuit of seat maximisation. Amel Ahmed (2010) in her comparative study of Belgian and British electoral system choices showed, first, that contention over electoral rules did not only happen among but also within parties and, second, that choices over proportional or majoritarian electoral rules cannot be properly understood outside of parties' and politicians' more general preferences regarding the nature of the process of democratisation. Cox *et al.*'s (2018) study of the introduction of proportional representation in Norway after World War I similarly showed that the choice of electoral system was driven by the nature of intraparty conflicts and demonstrated that proportional representation was the preferred option of party leaders. Party leaders wanted to increase party cohesion and internal control, and having centralised nomination practices under PR helped them achieve that. Schröder and Manow (2020) demonstrated that the same intra-party dynamics were crucial in the reforms leading to greater proportionality in Germany in the early twentieth century.

We draw two general lessons from this more recent scholarship on electoral system formation in the early decades of West European democracies. First, that political conflicts over institution-building cuts not only between but also within parties, making the focus on the intra-party dimension of competition interesting and important. Second, that the goals of those able to effect institutional change were related to political power understood more broadly than their parties' ability to win seats; that is, under certain conditions, intra-party power could be as valuable as inter-party power.

These two lessons have been largely absent from the literature on electoral system design during the third wave of democratisation in Eastern Europe. Early analyses of electoral system design during postcommunist transitions to democracy virtually all adopted

the framework of parties as unitary actors pursuing seat maximisation (Lijphart 1992; Geddes 1996; Elster *et al*. 1998). From the Hungarian roundtable negotiations over electoral rules (Benoit & Schiemann 2001), through debates on the early democratic electoral laws in Russia (Remington & Smith 1996), to electoral system malleability in 1990s Poland (Benoit & Hayden 2004), the narrative of East European electoral system designers during the early stages of transition to democracy has been one of myopic political parties interested in improving their own electoral fortunes. In some instances, some (mainly democratic opposition) parties may have been concerned with larger issues, such as the character of democracy they were building (Renwick 2005) or emulating precommunist institutions (Benoit 2007). Nevertheless, the general picture of the process of design of foundational electoral systems in Eastern Europe (particularly with regard to the ruling communist parties) in the first two decades of scholarship on this period remains rather uniform. Parties were unitary actors, primarily interested in seat maximisation, though with one crucial difference compared to West European parties during the first wave of democratisation: uncertainty.[27] Unlike West European electoral system designers of a century ago who had the benefit of learning through at least some (quasi-democratic) electoral competition prior to the expansion of suffrage, East European parties operated in a much more fluid environment with supposedly unclear electorate loyalties. They were thus much more prone to make colossal mistakes, as the Polish communists famously did in choosing majoritarian electoral rules for contested seats in the partially free 1989 elections (Kaminski 2002).

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[27] For a notable counterargument suggesting West European electoral system designers operated under similar conditions of uncertainty, see Andrews and Jackman (2005). For an important exception to the argument that East European parties were unitary actors, see Birch *et al*. (2002). However, they do not offer a systematic explanation for electoral system design but instead highlight country-specificity and strategic diversity among cases (Birch *et al*. 2002, p. 20).

The literature's focus on parties' electoral calculus as the decisive factor in their decision-making with regard to electoral system design is perfectly understandable, especially in the context of transition from communism where the ruling parties were facing a potential deluge that could not only sweep them out of office for one term but also block them from public life in perpetuity. However, conceptualising the ruling communist parties as unitary actors and not recognising the intra-party dimension of political competition at the time does not reflect reality. The ruling communist parties were in flux throughout Eastern Europe. In some countries, they did remain monolithic; in most cases, they were riven by internal conflict. These conflicts were usually between some variety of reformers/liberals and dogmatists/conservatives, though in a number of places they were also defined along ethnic lines. We believe the ruling parties' internal unity, together with the nature of development of the nascent opposition, played a critical part in the institutional choices of those who had the power to determine parties' policy positions. Crucially, these players—most often found in the positions of authority in party central committees—effected policy with their own goals and power in mind that at times went beyond seat maximisation for their parties.

Over the past decade or so, there have been few new studies of foundational electoral systems during transition from communism in Eastern Europe. In one such excellent study, Nina Barzachka (2014) has shown that we do need to expand our view of how ruling communist elites perceived power in their decision-making on electoral system design. She showed that Bulgarian communists/socialists were willing to compromise with the opposition and agreed to a system that would result in a 'tactical loss' of some seats but would also ensure greater legitimacy of their projected victory and goodwill, which could be useful in the later process of transition. We find great value in this interpretation because it forces us to expand our view of political power beyond short-term seat maximisation. Nevertheless, we deem the portability of its conclusions limited due to the nature of the case under scrutiny.

Our focus is instead on how the communist elites perceived the balance between their intra- and inter-party strength. We believe it mattered whether communist leaders had a firm grip over the whole party apparatus or whether they presided over a divided and/or disintegrating structure of competing wings and platforms, and that it also mattered whether they faced a weak and divided opposition that had limited chances for electoral success or a united and strong opposition front determined to overthrow them. We suggest that the communist leaders' electoral system preferences generally reflected this balance of power in a rather straightforward Rokkanian fashion: intra-party weakness and divisions paired with opposition strength and unity led to communist leaders' preference for proportional rules. The reverse led to their preference for majoritarian rules. Where this balance of power was unclear, however, communist leaders devised electoral rules that reflected their potentially conflicting goals of dealing with intra-party/intra-system challengers and maximising party seats in an electoral competition with the opposition. Throughout that process, they demonstrated a capacity to learn and innovate because they had a reasonably sound understanding of the effects different electoral system provisions would have on the projected electoral results and the nature of intra- and inter-party competition, regardless of the uncertainty inherent in the historical context of that time.

Setting the stage: Yugoslav electoral institutions and the advent of democracy

The decade preceding the first democratic elections in the Yugoslav republics was a time of economic, social and political upheaval. The death of Tito in 1980 marked Yugoslavia's descent into crisis that steadily ate away at the legitimacy of the communist regime. Yugoslavia was a strongly decentralised federation of six republics and two autonomous provinces within Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo. Although it was ostensibly ruled by one communist party—officially known as the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije*—SKJ)—the federation actually had a complex

system of representation and government. Yugoslavia had nine Leagues of Communists—one for each republic and autonomous province, as well as for the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija—JNA)—and all these parties had different ideas how to answer not only the mounting economic problems such as hyperinflation, falling incomes, rising unemployment, international debt and chronic shortages of basic supplies, but also how to respond to the popular challenges to the legitimacy of their rule.

Prior to the first democratic elections held in 1990, Yugoslavia did not have experience with true democracy. In the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, elections were sham affairs marred by political violence and blatant vote-rigging by the parties loyal to the regime (Kasapović 2014). For example, after the 1931 elections where voters were allowed to vote only for the list supporting the royal dictatorship, elections were run under rules inspired by the electoral system instituted by the Italian fascists, bringing massive bonus seats to the parties in power in order to ensure their undisputed grip on policymaking (Balkovec 2017). Unlike some other Eastern European countries, such as Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria (Benoit 2007), Yugoslav republics had no interwar electoral tradition to fall back on.

Communist elections after their victory in World War II also offered voters no real choice and served as mobilising rituals (Spehnjak 1991). After the 1974 constitutional changes that strengthened the country's decentralisation to the republics and autonomous provinces and instituted the so-called 'delegate system', voters could only elect their representatives indirectly, in the tricameral republican parliaments consisting of the Socio-Political Chamber (lowest house), Chamber of Municipalities and Chamber of Associated Labor (Grdešić *et al*. 1986). Parliamentarians were chosen among and by the voters' 'delegates' in the tricameral councils of local municipalities. These municipal delegates were the only directly elected representatives, and they were elected *via* candidate lists for the lowest municipal chamber and in single-member districts with plurality rules for the two

remaining municipal chambers. Crucially, however, elections were preceded by an arduous nomination and candidate approval process in so-called 'people's assemblies', which had to be conducted through the Socialist Alliance of Working People (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda—SSRN), the successor organisation of the World War II Popular Front. This process was essentially directed by the republican Leagues of Communists and their local activists. Unsurprisingly, such a system of representation led to widespread apathy and criticism in spite of artificially inflated turnout figures. This was broadly recognised throughout the country, leading to the 1988 changes in the federal constitution mandating direct elections of representatives to republican and federal parliaments, albeit with the communist-dominated rules of candidate nomination and approval left intact (Sokol 1988).

Faced by the need to bring their republican constitutions and electoral laws in line with the changes to the federal constitution, Yugoslav communists were forced to make important choices regarding setting the rules of the game for the upcoming elections in which they may have had to face real opposition. Their differences became more pronounced throughout 1989, culminating in two opposing approaches taken by the communist leaderships of Slovenia and Serbia that autumn and winter. Although the clash between Slovenian and Serbian camps was dominated by questions of federalism, constitutional reforms and rising nationalism, in its essence it was also a clash of diametrically opposing views of democratisation, representation and electoral competition. Whereas Slovenian communists were for increased decentralisation and liberalisation, the Serbian leadership under Slobodan Milošević was for the recentralisation of the federation and more limited democratisation through so-called non-partisan representation that would essentially continue to be dominated by the communists.

These two approaches clashed at the January 1990 Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Virtually all amendments to the federal party platform by the

Slovenian delegation at the Congress were rejected by the more numerous Serbian delegates and their allies. The Slovenian delegation walked out, closely followed by the bulk of the Croatian delegation. Although the rump congress continued its work later that May, the January congress marked the end of the federal League of Communists. Republican communist organisations continued on their individual paths of internal reforms and building electoral institutions, with very different results and levels of electoral success.

The diversity of the chosen systems of representation was very broad, even though in each republic the process was determined with little input from the emerging opposition. Out of the six League of Communists leaderships, only two chose the same electoral system for the lowest/single house of the new republican parliaments: Croatian and Macedonian communist leaderships opted for the French-style two-round majority/plurality rules with a 7% threshold for entry into the second round. Slovenian, Bosnian and Montenegrin communist leaderships opted for proportional representation rules, although with vast differences in parliamentary size, average district magnitude, allocation formula, and threshold, while the Serbian communist leadership opted for simple two-round majoritarian elections in single-member districts.

The results communist parties and their allies managed to achieve in the six electoral competitions throughout 1990, shown in Figure 1, were as different as the sets of electoral rules they chose. In the spring elections in Slovenia and Croatia, the establishment parties suffered clear defeats, though they did much better than their Hungarian and Czechoslovak counterparts, which earned only about 15% of the votes around the same time. The communist defeat was particularly painful in Bosnia-Hercegovina where the nationalist parties representing the republic's Muslims, Serbs and Croats swept to power. Ultimately, the regime parties won only in Montenegro and Serbia, reaping the benefits of electoral system

disproportionality through clever institutional design and correct assessment of the balance of electoral forces.

Figure 1. Votes and seats won by system parties in 1990 elections

Croatia: managing internal divisions with French-style two-round elections

Throughout 1988 and 1989, the leadership of the Croatian League of Communists (Savez komunista Hrvatske—SKH) became internally split between the hardliners and the liberals, and the membership of the party became split between the supporters and opponents of Serbia's platform for the recentralisation of the Yugoslav federation. The problem was compounded by the fact that this internal cleavage coincided with ethnic identification. Croatian Serbs were disproportionately represented in the party membership: they constituted 11% of Croatia's population and 25% of SKH membership. According to the secretary of the SKH Central Committee Presidency, Drago Dimitrović, Croatian Serb communists found much to like in the platform of the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević and pressured the

Croatian party to fall in line behind Serbia's leader, while threatening to create a splinter organisation of their own if this was not done (Lovrić 1989a). The SKH leadership was also losing popular legitimacy among the majority Croat population because it did not stand up to Milošević. Public opinion polls found all communist functionaries deeply unpopular, with the electoral appeal of those from the dogmatist wing in low single digits.[28] The electorate was, however, adrift because it did not have anyone to support (Jović 1989). The emerging Croatian opposition was so weak and divided that one of its leaders claimed they would all 'fit into two police vans' (Babić 1989). Communist leaders seemed to agree: at a private social event of the communist liberal leaders on 31 December 1989, the intra-party hardliners were seen as a much bigger problem than the opposition (Jović 2003, p. 52).

This was the environment in which the ruling party embarked on the process of bringing republican electoral legislation in line with the 1988 changes to the federal constitution. The blueprint for the new legislation created by the expert group entrusted with drafting the new law by the Parliamentary Committee for the Socio-Political System left the non-democratic essence of the electoral system unchanged by keeping the nomination process intact. Nevertheless, these blueprints did offer some novelties. The lowest chamber of the Croatian Parliament (*Sabor*) was to be elected from an open party list. All candidates, however, would still be pre-validated in highly partisan local nomination processes designed to weed out the opposition.[29] At the urging of local organisations of the socialist apparatus, the national list provision was abandoned and Croatia was divided into eight multimember

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[28] 'Top lista hrvatskih političara', *Danas*, 17 October 1989.

[29] Archive of the Croatian *Sabor*, 'Nacrt Zakona o delegatskim izborima', Republička konferencija SSRNH and Vijeće Saveza sindikata Hrvatske, March 1989.

districts based on its geographical regions with district magnitudes ranging from four to 20, with the average district magnitude being 10.[30]

One day before this new law was passed in the *Sabor* on 19 December, the Parliamentary Committee tried to legitimise it by inviting representatives of some of Croatia's emerging (and still technically illegal) opposition groups for a quasi-roundtable discussion. The transcript of this meeting reveals the profound lack of understanding of the historical moment by many representatives of the regime. Members of the opposition warned them that their law was undemocratic and a sign the system was not truly for multiparty elections. No one discussed the open list proportional representation elements implied in the electoral system because they were meaningless without a liberalised nomination process, and it was clear that even this deeply flawed law had its detractors among the hardliners in the Parliamentary Committee and in the government cabinet. Regime hardliners suggested that the popular sentiment was in favour of stability under their rule because 'even the East Germans were now warning that their society was sliding into anarchy'. Other committee members, however, were fearful of the consequences of implementing an undemocratic electoral system: 'I am really scared ... . Do not, comrades, rigidly interpret [the constitution] ... . Let these wretched [opposition] organisations and associations in'.[31]

In the end, the law was passed as drafted, though crucially without the accompanying regulation defining the multimember districts. This was put on hold because the attention turned to the 11th SKH Congress, which produced the SKH leadership that would face Milošević and his allies at the upcoming 14th Congress of the SKJ that January. In an attempt

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[30] 'Prijedlog za donošenje zakona o određivanju izbornih područja za izbor zastupnika u Društveno-političko vijeće Sabora Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', *Delegatski vjesnik*, 9 December 1989.

[31] Archive of the Croatian *Sabor*, 'Zapisnik sa 47. sjednice Odbora za društveno-politički sistem Društveno-političkog vijeća Sabora SR Hrvatske', 18 December 1989, 20/6/VM–20/8/VM.

to solidify its base and garner support with the congressional representatives, the dogmatist wing of the SKH made calls for early elections in January 1990 under the barely revised electoral rules, something that the Hungarian ruling party had attempted to pull off earlier that spring but had not succeeded due to mass protests (Benoit & Schiemann 2001). The hardliners' gambit, however, failed and the liberal wing under Ivica Račan narrowly won control of the party leadership. Rather than pushing for early elections, the Račan liberals opted to wait until the regular spring date, because they needed time to consolidate their grip on intra-party structures in preparation for the SKJ Congress.

On 11 January 1990—two weeks after the promulgation of the electoral law—the new liberal Central Committee of the SKH initiated the drafting of new electoral rules. It called for revisions of the constitution to accommodate the changing of the nomination rules and electoral procedures. The Parliamentary Committee for the Socio-Political System convened a new expert group the next day to set some guidelines. Although this expert group supposedly represented a variety of political views, its independence from the ruling party in formulating the electoral law was questionable (Kasapović 1997). Its head was Professor Smiljko Sokol, the dean of Zagreb University's Faculty of Law, who was a member of the League of Communists. The transcript of their initial meeting of 12 January 1990 with the Parliamentary Committee reveals that they held a variety of views. The group had in front of it the law passed just days earlier, which instituted PR rules for elections to the lowest house, as well as the recently promulgated Slovenian electoral law, which also instituted a set of complex PR rules in multimember districts with national-level compensatory seats and voting panachage, allowing voters to choose candidates from different parties rather than for a party list (Krivic 1990). Proportional representation, therefore, seemed to be the norm of the time. It was also openly promoted by some members of the expert group as a system that could lead not only to the proportional representation of political groups but also ethnic minorities,

a direct nod to Rokkan's first path towards the institution of PR. However, the leaders of the Parliamentary Committee and Sokol, the head of the expert group, insisted that all electoral system options were on the table. As an expert on the French Fifth Republic, Sokol promoted French-style double ballot rules, ostensibly to moderate electoral competition: 'Wise people of the opposition should be persuaded not to play with fire that could not only burn down communism and take down a group of people from power but would also burn them.'[32]

Transcripts from the two subsequent meetings of the expert group with the Parliamentary Committee on 18 and 24 January reveal how exactly Sokol believed the French double ballot would help cool tempers and offer additional benefits to those in power. In his rather convincing Duvergerian argument, Sokol focused on the projected psychological rather than mechanical effects of the double ballot: French-style elections in two rounds promoted less extremist voting and campaigning because it was sensible for candidates to pursue the median voter and not antagonise potential partners prior to the second round. Elections under PR rules, according to Sokol, were run by national-level leaders who created party lists of loyalists running under banners of unified parties. Croatia did not need such national-level leaders, and his sponsors in the newly installed SKH leadership did not control a unified party anyway. They could not even produce a coherent national party list without leading to further breakdown of the local party branches.[33] Implementing PR may have been a credible strategy for improving internal discipline by party leaders in some of Europe's oldest democracies (Cox *et al*. 2018), but that strategy was not available to the liberal leadership of the SKH in the winter and spring of 1990.

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[32] Archive of the Croatian *Sabor*, 'Zapisnik sa sastanka Odbora za društveno-politički system—Radna grupa za pripremu promjena Zakona o izboru i opozivu odbornika i zastupnika', 12 January 1990, 2/10/JP.

[33] Archive of the Croatian *Sabor*, 'Zapisnik sa sastanka Radne grupe Odbora za društveno-politički sistem Društveno-političkog vijeća Sabora Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', 18 January 1990, 7/6/LJ–8/4/HLJ.

Sokol was particularly taken by the Weimar example, suggesting that Hitler never could have come to power without PR. He was also likely affected by the French experiment with PR in the 1986 election that brought a significant increase in representation for Jean Marie Le Pen's *Front National*. The implication of his lengthy monologues in the meetings of the expert group and the Parliamentary Committee was that a PR system would benefit the opposition groups that were led by nationally recognisable personalities but did not have locally recognisable leaders, as was the case with Franjo Tuđman's Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*—HDZ) and the Coalition of National Accord (Koalicija narodnog sporazuma—KNS), which featured a number of nationally known communist dissidents, but whose local candidates were basically unknown. A double ballot system, on the other hand, would allow the ruling party to run an array of locally better-known personalities. This aspect of the system appealed particularly to the party bigwigs on the committee. One remarked, when asking the expert group to include provisions for MPs to be stripped of their seats if they chose to leave their party, 'The proportional system highlights the role of the party. We have had that thus far and we have seen where it has brought us. A majoritarian system, on the other hand, highlights the quality of individual candidates and their programme'.[34] The SKH label was no longer an asset. Equally importantly, these locally recognisable candidates of the ruling party could compete not only against the opposition but also among each other in the first election round. They would then 'rationally' opt for the more successful one among them before the second round. In other words, a two-ballot electoral system was to serve as a form of a primary: an unofficial electoral purge of the SKH ranks that were independent of the new party leadership but could not be dismissed so easily. As Sokol put it, in the first round both voters and candidates were

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[34] Archive of the Croatian *Sabor*, 'Zapisnik sa sjednice Odbora za društveno-politički sistem Društveno-političkog vijeća Sabora Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske', 24 January 1990, 3/1/JG.

expected to act with their hearts. In the second round, they were expected to act with their heads (Jakšić 1990).

The rest of the expert group and the Parliamentary Committee ultimately agreed with Sokol and the new law was passed, together with amendments to the republic's constitution. Croatia got a system of two-round majority/plurality rules where candidates would qualify for the second round with 7% of the vote if no candidate earned a majority in the first round. They publicly defended the law as a simple mechanism for deciding parliamentary majority, but they also made it clear that the new president of the SKH's Central Committee, Ivica Račan, played an 'indispensable role' in the formulation of electoral rules and the expediting of the process of electoral law design, which in the end took only four days.[35]

In some ways, the motivation of the new liberal SKH leadership behind pushing for this electoral system fit the East European pattern observed by other scholars: the SKH leadership believed they were better organised than the opposition; they anticipated that the local *nomenklatura* bosses would maintain their grip over rural voters; and in single member districts, candidates would run on their personal name recognition. The SKH was indeed thought to have the best organisational structure, although that was highly doubtful, especially in light of remarkable organisational feats of the HDZ in the months leading up to the elections that were plain for all to see in this party's mass rallies and well-attended membership drives (Kasapović 2014). The communists also included a number of eminent public personalities on their slates in order to lower the liabilities of a communist label. The crucial factor, however, was the ruling party's internal division and the weakness of its leadership in disciplining local branches, coupled with the fact that the opposition parties were themselves divided between two blocs: the HDZ and the KNS.

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[35] 'Prvi demokratski izbori u povijesti Sabora', *Vjesnik*, 27 January 1990.

The two-ballot system was confirmed as the electoral system of choice just two days after Ivica Račan pulled the majority of Croatia's delegates from the SKJ's 14th Congress on 22 January, with a substantial number of Croatian Serb delegates remaining behind, leading the Belgrade press to suggest these local functionaries would abandon the SKH and form their own party (Šentija 2005, p. 100). The leading Yugoslav weekly, *Danas*, captured the situation in the SKH with an article titled 'The Schism of Croatian Communists: How To Win Elections and Not Lose the Serbs' (Marinković 1990). The chosen electoral system allowed Račan not to lose the Serbs or the conservative wing of the party by allowing them to run in electoral districts alongside the more liberal candidates loyal to his leadership, all while leaving him with the prospects of winning enough seats in the second round against the opposition that was itself divided into two blocs.

Ultimately, the implemented rules proved to be a disaster for the communists from the perspective of seat maximisation. The opposition may have been divided between the HDZ and the KNS, but the dichotomous nature of the campaign favoured the strongly anti-communist and anti-Milošević platform of the HDZ. The communists presented a divided front, not only of three parties—the SKH (which added to its name the suffix of 'Party of Democratic Change'—Stranka demokratskih promjena—SDP), the Socialist Alliance (Socijalistički savez – Savez socijalista Hrvatske—SS-SSH) and the League of Socialist Youth (Savez socijalističke omladine Hrvatske—SSOH)—but also of a multitude of candidates running in the same electoral districts. Out of 80 districts for the lowest house of the *Sabor*, system parties ran single candidates in only 27. In 12 districts, there were even multiple SKH candidates: those loyal and disloyal to the new party leadership.

On the eve of the election, the communist candidate running in Franjo Tuđman's district, Marija Šola, stated that she 'hoped that the heart does not overrule the mind' (Šola 1990). It was a clear reference to Sokol's defence of the electoral rules he helped design.

Šola's worries were well-founded, since the electoral rules led to massive overrepresentation of the HDZ in the elections held on 22 April and 6 May. With 42% of the vote, they won 69% of the seats. The communists and their allies, on the other hand, won 34% of the vote (26% for SKH and 8% for its satellites) and only 24% of the seats. Ivica Račan recognised between the two rounds that his choice in the trade-off between seat maximisation and maintaining intra-party unity was a mistake, but it was too late (Babić 1990). Neither did the electoral system prevent the eventual dissolution of the SKH, which in many ethnically mixed localities fell apart after the elections. A substantial number of its local members and leaders later joined the Serb rebellion or—on the Croatian side—joined other parties (Filipović 2019), among them, Smiljko Sokol. After a barrage of criticism from his party colleagues, he left the SKH for the HDZ and became one of the main architects of Croatia's first democratic constitution and a government minister (Ribičič 1995, p. 28).

Although the electoral system chosen by the newly installed liberal leaders of the Croatian communists is commonly and rightfully seen as a mistake from the perspective of seat maximisation, the logic behind their choice was clear. They needed to find the balance between keeping intra-party peace and prospects for electoral victory. The electoral rules offered them a chance to weed out internal opposition without direct antagonism in the first round while facing external opposition divided between the HDZ and the KNS in the second round. Proportional representation may have been considered the norm at the time, in light of the the Slovenian communists' choice of electoral system and the electoral rules already in place in Croatia. By 'reading history forward' and unpacking the SKH into its constituent parts rather than considering the ruling party a unitary actor, we can understand why the Croatian communist leadership opted for something completely different from PR. Internal divisions and the nature of the opposition led it to adopt the French style two-round system. Their electoral failure does not detract from the rationality of that choice.

Bosnia-Hercegovina: cushioning the fall with proportional representation

The platform for the recentralisation of Yugoslavia by the Milošević regime in Belgrade resulted in deep cleavages within the Bosnian League of Communists (Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine—SKBiH), which were—as in Croatia—more often than not ethnically based. The SKBiH membership was disproportionally Serb, whereas its leadership was balanced between the republic's three ethnic groups: Muslims, Serbs and Croats (Andjelic 2003, p. 130). Moreover, the leadership of SKBiH was destabilised after a string of financial scandals took down a whole generation of power-holders in the late 1980s. The newly installed leaders, including the president of the SKBiH Central Committee, Nijaz Duraković, tried to secure legitimacy of their rule by being ideologically purist (that is, committed to both socialism and Yugoslavism), while maintaining a balance between the two dominant camps—Serbian and Slovenian—in the federation (Lovrić 1989b).

Throughout 1989, the ruling party was engaged in the process of bringing electoral legislation in line with the 1988 changes to the federal constitution, as were the other republics. This process led to a new electoral law on 28 December 1989 that was similar, though not identical, to the one simultaneously implemented in Croatia (Skupština SRBiH 1989a). The crucial difference was that the Bosnian communists prescribed the exact number of candidates that had to be nominated by the different organisations of the system—the League of Communists, Socialist Alliance, Confederation of Labour Unions (Savez sindikata), Alliance of Organizations of National Liberation War Fighters (Savez udruženja boraca Narodnooslobodilačkog rata – SUBNOR) and the League of Socialist Youth—and agreed to by all of them within the nominating process to be organised by the Socialist Alliance (Article 58). As in Croatia, the lowest Socio-Political Chamber was to be elected from an open national list, and the SKBiH kept its grip on power by controlling the nomination process (Skupština SRBiH 1989b). Elections were projected to take place in March 1990, that is, two months after the 14th Congress of the SKJ.

Three events, however, proved that the communists' hope of retaining power was futile. First, the reactions to the new electoral law within the various organisations of the system, as well as the leading media houses that were growing independent of the communist leadership, were negative (Grković 1989; Habuz & Stanišić 1989). They suggested that the law did not reflect the democratising reality in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Yugoslavia or the rest of Eastern Europe. Second, the 10th Congress of SKBiH, held in advance of the SKJ congress, demonstrated the depth of the rift between the liberal/federalist and dogmatist/centralist camps. Though their differences were papered over in a bland declaration, the congress showed that the SKBiH was anything but a unified organisation and that its leadership had little grip on power within the party. And finally, the schism between the Slovenian and Croatian communists on the one side and the Serbian communists and their allies on the other at the 14th Congress of the SKJ made the position of equidistance played by the SKBiH leadership untenable.

At the 14th SKJ Congress and in the months that followed, it seemed that the SKBiH leadership under Duraković would fall in line behind Milošević. During his speech at the Belgrade congress, Duraković showed the door to all party 'heretics' who were suggesting the SKJ was finished. Though he later tried to suggest otherwise, his theatrics were correctly interpreted as directed against both the Slovenes and the reformers within the SKBiH. Duraković subsequently doubled down on placating the dogmatist wing of his party. On 21 February 1990, the Assembly of Bosnia-Hercegovina passed a new Law on Citizens' Associations banning all parties organised on an ethnic basis. The SKBiH also postponed the planned March elections and announced that it would participate in the resurrection of the 14th SKJ Congress under Milošević's leadership later that May. On 25 May—the date that used to be celebrated as the birthday of Tito—it held a mass rally of supporters on the streets of Sarajevo. Duraković addressed the crowd by asserting that Bosnia's new democracy would

have limitations: 'We are for democracy ... but there will be no democracy for nationalists and neofascists' (Živković & Habul [1990].) The rally also served as a mobilising effort in advance of Duraković's SKBiH participating in the rump SKJ congress together with Milošević and his acolytes in Belgrade the following day.[36]

The strategy of embracing the hardliners, however, proved unsuccessful. Internal documents of the republic's electoral commission under SKBiH control showed that running semi-free elections would be virtually impossible in a number of localities because there was no interest. Out of 109 Bosnian municipalities, 22 did not have any registered electoral candidates for republican positions, and 49 did not have any candidates for federal positions. This was, according to the commission, a worrying indication that political engagement from the party base was in many regions almost non-existent.[37] Unlike the liberal leadership of the Croatian communists, which had to field multiple candidates in individual districts to maintain a semblance of internal unity by placating the conservative wing of the party, Bosnian communist leadership faced a completely different problem: it could not recruit candidates to run in about a third of the republic because its dogmatism turned off significant parts of the party base and the electorate. In the immediate aftermath of the 14th SKJ Congress, it was already clear that the liberal wing of the party would not forgive Duraković his performance (Kamenica 1990). In the months that followed, many of these reformist communists either became politically inactive or joined the party's new challenger from the liberal left: the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (Savez reformskih snaga

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[36] 'Računamo na demokratski raspleť', *Oslobođenje*, 27 May 1990.

[37] Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (uncatalogued), 'Informacija o sprovedenim izbornim aktivnostima za izbor delegata u skupštine društveno-političkih zajednica i o utrošenim sredstvima—mart 1990. Godine', Republička izborna komisija SRBiH, April 1990.

Jugoslavije—SRSJ) led by the federal prime minister, Ante Marković, himself of Bosnian Croat descent (Filipović 2021).

The importance of the formation of the SRSJ in the late spring and early summer of 1990 for the nature of the electoral institutions ultimately designed by the SKBiH and the character of the electoral campaign that would unfold that fall cannot be overstated. The SRSJ poached a number of competent reformist SKBiH functionaries. It also changed the dynamics of the electoral landscape by presenting a credible challenge to the ruling party from the left. Marković and his federal programme of economic stabilisation and reforms were popular in Bosnia-Hercegovina. By embracing the dogmatist wing of the League of Communists, Duraković essentially split the party and provoked Marković's entry into the campaign, with disastrous effects on SKBiH's electoral prospects.

Duraković's strategy collapsed in the summer of 1990. On 12 June, the Constitutional Court struck down the February Law on Citizens' Associations, making it clear that the communist leadership no longer had control over the judiciary.[38] Ethnically based political parties—Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije – SDA) for the Muslims, Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka – SDS) for the Serbs and Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ) for the Croats—began to form and mobilise in plain sight of the authorities in spite of the ban, and there was little that the communists could do to stop it. With Ante Marković holding a rally of 100,000 people to officially launch his party on 29 July, the only thing that the communists could do was to acknowledge reality and minimise their losses by passing a new set of electoral laws two days later on 31 July (Skupština SRBiH 1990).

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[38] Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (uncatalogued), 'Odluka Ustavnog suda SRBiH za ocjenjivanje ustavnosti odredaba čl. 4 stav 2 i čl. 8 Zakona o udruživanju građana', Ustavni sud SRBiH, 12 June 1990.

Although the Assembly was ostensibly still filled with members of only one political option, the debate on these new electoral laws was discordant. After a month-long public consultation, which showed the local organisations of the socialist system divided on the question of new parliamentary institutions,[39] the SKBiH leadership came out with a proposal for the new lower house, named the Chamber of Citizens, to be elected under a system of proportional representation in seven relatively large multimember districts matching the republic's regional chambers of commerce. There was no doubt why the SKBiH leadership wanted proportional representation. In his press interviews, Nijaz Duraković made it clear that he learned from the choices made by his Croatian counterparts (Mikulandra 1990). The official documents prepared for the parliamentary debate by the narrow circle of party officials who drafted the new electoral law (unlike in Croatia, there was no expert group) also stated that the law was created based on observations made in Slovenia and Croatia.[40] Although public opinion polls in Yugoslav media were inaccurate and biased, they were already showing a highly fractured Bosnian electorate where Duraković's communists could at best hope for a third of the votes, with both the reformists and the ethnic parties quickly catching up (Malešević 1991). A testament of the level of confidence regarding electoral results within the SKBiH leadership was the question of electoral threshold. The law's architects suggested a 2% threshold in their final draft, but even this mild measure of disproportionality was dropped from the law that was ultimately adopted.[41] This was done to

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[39] Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (uncatalogued), 'Izvještaj o rezultatima javne diskusije o nacrtu amandmana na Ustav SR BiH', Skupština SRBiH,10 July 1990.

[40] Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (uncatalogued), 'Predlog alternativnih rješenja za Predlog Zakona o izboru odbornika i poslanika u skupštine drušveno-političkih zajednica u slučaju da se amandmanima na Ustav SRBiH utvrdi dvodomna struktura Skupštine SR BiH', Izvršno vijeće Skupštine SRBiH, July 1990.

[41] Archive of Bosnia-Hercegovina (uncatalogued), 'Predlog Zakona o izboru odbornika i poslanika u skupštine drušveno-političkih zajednica', Izvršno vijeće Skupštine SRBiH, July 1990.

minimise SKBiH's projected losses by maximising proportionality and dispersion of seats in the new parliament, as well as by making entry into parliament easier for the communists' minor satellites in the Socialist Alliance (now relabelled the Democratic Alliance of Socialists Demokratski savez socijalista—DSS) and the Alliance of Socialist Youth (Savez socijalističke omladine—SSO), which decided to contest the elections separately from SKBiH. Unlike the Croatian communist leadership, which had to field disloyal candidates in single-member districts to effectively eliminate them out of seats in the first round that was used as a form of primary election, the SKBiH leadership under Duraković could turn to proportional representation because those who did not approve of its platform already left the party for the SRSJ (or, in some cases, for the ethnic parties).

The electoral campaign and the results of the elections held on 18 November proved that the SKBiH leadership had chosen the correct electoral system. Ethnically based parties thrashed the communists and reformists, which were too busy fighting each other for the same sliver of the electorate. Although there were attempts to cut some sort of a deal between the SKBiH and SRSJ during the campaign and to create a coordinated response to the nationalists, this came to nothing, primarily due to animosity between the leaders of the two parties stemming from the days when they were all highly placed communist functionaries (Andjelic 2005, p. 180). The ethnically based parties, on the other hand, were united in their common goal of overthrowing communists. Due to the ethnic makeup of Bosnian municipalities, which most often favoured one of the three dominant ethnic groups, the SDA, SDS and the HDZ were able to carve up different regions of the republic with relative ease, leading to a catastrophic result for the left. In the lower house, communists and their allies received 15% of the votes (12% for the SKBiH and 3% for its satellites) and 13% of the seats (the abolition of the 2% threshold helped both the DSS and the SSO get one and two representatives respectively). The reformists fared even worse. In the lower house, they

received 9% of the votes and seats. The ethnic parties—SDA, SDS and HDZ—swept to power and formed a coalition government. The Bosnian communists' result was comparable to that of their Hungarian and Czechoslovak counterparts. Unlike the Hungarian and Czechoslovak communists, however, Bosnian communists lost to a coalition of nationalist parties, which set the republic on course toward ethnic divisions and, ultimately, war.

The decision of the SKBiH leadership to push for proportional representation in the lower house elections was obviously a reflection of the calculus based on the local balance of forces and on the lessons learned from Slovenia (where the communists were in a similar strategic situation and opted for PR of high proportionality) and Croatia in particular. Unlike the liberal leadership of the Croatian communists, which faced an oversupply of (both loyal and disloyal) candidates, the leadership of SKBiH under Nijaz Duraković was faced with an exodus of a whole generation of liberal party functionaries who opted for the SRSJ because they did not approve of Duraković's courting of the hardliners and the Serbian leadership under Slobodan Milošević. Moreover, unlike the Croatian communists who faced what seemed to be a divided opposition led by the HDZ and the KNS, the SKBiH additionally faced a *de facto* united rightwing opposition of the three main ethnic parties. Proportional representation in the lower house elections cushioned their collapse, which was, nevertheless, the most dramatic of all communist downfalls in former Yugoslavia.

Serbia: Reaping the benefits of majoritarian disproportionality

Unlike the Leagues of Communists of Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, the League of Communists of Serbia was anything but riven by divisions in 1989 and 1990. Under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, who became president of the Presidency of its Central Committee in 1986, the League of Communists of Serbia was purged of all dissident voices in 1987 and 1988. Milošević and his associates created a platform for the solution of Yugoslavia's economic and political crisis that was highly popular in Serbia. This platform

could best be labelled recentralisation: first of Serbia, by limiting the autonomies of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and then of the Yugoslav federation. Faced with an intensifying campaign of demonstrations by Kosovo Serbs, who were protesting alleged discrimination by Kosovo's Albanian majority in 1986 and 1987, the Milošević regime coopted their nationalist platform and used it to re-legitimise its rule, as well as to eliminate opponents of its leadership within the party.

Throughout 1988 and 1989, the demonstrations by Kosovo Serbs were dramatically amplified by the ruling party, turning into the largest protest campaign in Eastern Europe, bringing millions of people to the streets (Ramet 2006). This campaign, which became known as the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' (Grdešić 2019), presented not only a vision of a reformed and recentralised Serbia and Yugoslavia, but also one of a new structure of political representation in which the ruling party would openly embrace nationalism and continue its domination in a system of supposedly 'non-partisan pluralism'. With the help of the Serbian media houses and intellectual elites (Dragović-Soso 2002), Milošević established unparalleled control over all levers of political power within his party and republic. His regime also successfully sabotaged the development of the nascent opposition groups, which remained weak and divided for the better part of the decade to come (Ramet 2006).

Just like Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia passed a new electoral law in the run-up to the 14th Congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists. Unlike Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, however, Milošević's Serbia actually held elections under these, still undemocratic, rules in November of 1989. The new rules remained essentially the same as in the 'delegate system', except that voters could now also directly elect their representatives to the parliament of the republic—the National Assembly—and they could express their views on the candidates for the post of the president of the republic's presidency in a concurrent consultative referendum. The lowest house of the parliament was elected in a version of

partially open-list PR elections where the whole republic was one electoral district, but different institutions of the system (such as the League of Communists, Socialist Alliance, labour unions and youth organisations) put forward parts of the common national list. The electoral process was still closed to the opposition through the usual limitations in the nominating procedures (Romanić 1989). Unsurprisingly, Milošević won the consultative referendum vote for the president of the republic's presidency, with more than 80% of the vote and turnout curiously exceeding 100% in some municipalities.

The collapse of the federal League of Communists that January and the string of democratic elections that swept over Eastern Europe—including other Yugoslav republics—throughout 1990, made the prospects of the Serbian National Assembly serving out its full term untenable. Croatian and Bosnian communists passed the minimum constitutional changes needed to hold democratic elections and left the full constitutional redesign for the first democratically elected parliaments. Serbian communists under Milošević chose a different path. They wanted to lock in what they saw as their principal achievement in the form of constitutional restrictions on the autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina prior to elections and decided to bind the passing of electoral reforms to the promulgation of the new constitution. It was a trap for the emerging opposition parties because their disapproval of the electoral system proposed by the communists could be portrayed by the ruling regime as disapproval of the constitutional 'reunification' of Serbia. Milošević even put the issue of passing of the new constitution prior to the democratic elections to the voters in a referendum held on 1–2 July 1990. Voters overwhelmingly supported his position with 97% in favour, with a 76% turnout. The clear result of the referendum encouraged the regime to push through its preferred set of electoral rules: its true bone of contention with the opposition.

The opposition parties were clearly cognisant of their standing in the electorate and the uphill battle they had to fight against the Milošević juggernaut. This is why they were

united in their proposals for a PR system with the highest possible dose of proportionality. Their proposals, whether in the form of one national list or several relatively large regional districts, were ironically very similar to the system used for the 1989 elections to the lowest house of the Serbian National Assembly, with three crucial differences: nomination procedures were to be liberalised and opened to parties and lists of independent candidates; the number of MPs was to rise from 90 to more than 200 in order to further increase parliamentary access for smaller parties; and seats were to be allocated to lists based on their results rather than to individual candidates of communist-system organisations (Jovanović 1997, pp. 129–30).

The communists, on the other hand, wanted a complete departure from proportional representation and opted for a two-round majority runoff system whereby Serbia was to be divided into 250 single member districts. Their proposed legislation also included a number of provisions that could, at best, be labelled electoral gamesmanship by the ruling regime. For example, candidates needed to collect 500 signatures - that is, on average 2% of registered voters in a district. There was also no guarantee of opposition parties' participation in the monitoring of local electoral commissions or of their equal access to public media (Jovanović 1997, p. 131). The opposition parties announced a possible boycott and demanded roundtable negotiations with the communists. Although the ruling party made some changes to the legislation, the call for roundtable negotiations was rebuffed and the majoritarian rules remained.[42] Moreover, the electoral districts were heavily gerrymandered with dramatic variation in size from 6,240 to 46,642 voters (Republički zavod za statistiku Srbije 1991).

The reasons for the regime's choice of majoritarian electoral rules were simple. Over the previous several years of the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution', Milošević had secured full control over the ruling party and system. That summer, he formalised it by merging the

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[42] 'U Srbiji počinje izborna trka', *Politika*, 30 September 1990.

League of Communists of Serbia with the Socialist Alliance into the Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije—SPS). By doing that, he inherited not only the physical resources of the Socialist Alliance but also its administrative reach into all corners of Serbia's social and political life. He also ensured full control over the whole left end of the political spectrum. The opposition, on the other hand, was weak, divided and simply outplayed by the regime. A clear glimpse into the mindset of Milošević and his associates is provided by the diary of Borisav Jović, Serbia's representative in Yugoslavia's federal presidency at the time and one of Milošević's closest collaborators. In a string of meetings between Milošević and his inner circle throughout 1990, Jović noted that the Serbian leader expressed no doubts that he and his party were going to win the elections and that the opposition presented no real challenge to his rule. On the eve of elections, Milošević apparently believed his party would win 60% or more seats in the National Assembly.[43]

He was proved correct. Milošević's party ran a masterful campaign under the slogan of 'With us, there is no uncertainty', which appealed to wide swathes of the electorate yearning for stability. The SPS trounced the opposition divided between the Serb Renewal Movement (Srpski pokret obnove—SPO) of Vuk Drašković, the Democratic Party, and various other independent and minority groups. The two-round majoritarian rules brought a massive boost to the ruling party, which won 78% of the seats on 46% of first-round votes in the elections held on 9 December, with the second round held on 23 December. The contrast between Milošević's SPS and the communists in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina could not have been starker. Milošević built a disciplined electoral machine, running single candidates loyal to his leadership in each electoral district. The SPS particularly benefited from the

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[43] Particularly instructive are their meetings held on 10 January, 19 January, 21 March, 28 April, 7 June and 26 October (Jović 1996, pp. 88, 92, 124, 144, 152, 218). Jović's diary was also used as evidence in the trial against Milošević at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

electoral boycott by Kosovo Albanians, winning 30 out of 34 seats from this province. Its choice of the majoritarian electoral system, rooted in its internal cohesion and strength in contrast to the weakness and division of the nascent opposition, proved to be not only a rational but also an effective decision.

Conclusions

When Arend Lijphart declared, back in 1992, that Rokkan's explanations of the adoption of PR in Western Europe during the first wave of democratisation were the best explanations for the constitutional choices in Eastern Europe during the third wave of democratisation, he was onto something (Lijphart 1992, p. 207). In this article, we have argued that the logic behind the institutional preferences of the communist elites was definitely Rokkanian. After all, it was the communist power-holders who had the most to lose. They not only faced potential electoral defeats but social irrelevance or worse through possible lustration or retribution. Our in-depth analysis of the communist leaderships in three largest Yugoslav republics clearly confirms that the main driver of their electoral system preferences was the balance between their intra-party unity/strength and the electoral threat by the opposition. In Serbia, the communist power-holders had firm intra-party control and simultaneously faced a weak opposition, so they opted for majoritarian rules. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, the communist leaders had a weak grip over a divided front of system parties, and they faced an organised leftist challenge from the Alliance of Reformist Forces and a strong and coordinated opposition, so they opted for PR rules of high proportionality. In Croatia, the balance of power was uncertain, so the communist leadership opted for electoral rules that were supposed to provide them with strategic intra-party and electoral benefits.

Extending this argument to the remaining three republics is relatively straightforward. The parallel between the strategic position of Slovenia's communist leadership and the position of the leadership of Bosnia-Hercegovina is clear. Slovenian communists opted for a

PR system of high proportionality because they were also divided (in their case, into three distinct parties growing out of the organisations of the socialist system) and had to face a strong opposition united in the Demos coalition. The Macedonian communist leadership, on the other hand, opted for the same French-style majority-plurality electoral system as the Croatian communist leadership because they did not have full control of the system candidates either and wanted to use first-round elections as primaries, while at the same time facing a divided opposition of unclear strength. Indeed, system parties in Macedonia did not run multiple candidates in only seven out of 120 districts and the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity – Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство), which ultimately emerged with the plurality of seats, only recovered in the second round when it received 30% of the votes, as opposed to just 14% in the first round. The only curiosity in this context may appear to be the decision of the Montenegrin communist leaders, considering the strength of their party, to opt for a PR system with a wide range of district magnitudes (from 1 to 29 seats), but we believe one of the crucial factors here was the robust leftist challenge by the SRJS and the strategic benefits districts of such widely differing sizes may bring. More in-depth archival work is needed to fully explain this case. The take-home message from our study, however, is clear: if we do not focus on ruling parties as unitary actors but on their leadership instead, and if we understand their power goals more broadly than seat maximisation, then Rokkan's strategic calculus used to explain electoral system formation during the first wave of democratisation indeed does offer a solid framework for understanding institutional choices of the ruling elites during the third wave of democratisation.

In addition to demonstrating the value of a classical theoretical approach, while identifying refinements needed to bring theory closer in line with political practice, we

believe our article also makes two other important contributions to the literature. First, it highlights the value of the Yugoslav republics as cases in the study of institutional formation during early transition from communism. Yugoslav republics are, unfortunately, often completely neglected by the comparative literature, likely due to their eventual collapse into violent conflict, even though they lend themselves very nicely to comparative study, particularly given their uniformity in institutional structures prior to the end of communism and vastly different institutional choices at the time of transition into multipartyism. Second, we believe the value of our study also lies in its historicisation of a crucial period in the development of political institutions in Eastern Europe. With the transitions from communism passing the 30-year mark most often needed for the opening of the archives, the time is coming to properly test many of our initial conceptions of the transition from communism by using primary sources and 'reading history forward'. We hope our study gives other scholars the impetus to revisit this crucial period in the history of East European political development.

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The Abyss of Ethnic Division: Two Decades of Discussing War in the Parliament of

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The article analyses over two decades of parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to understand the role of war past in the political reconciliation of Bosnian elites. We show that the discourse of war identified in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina structurally differs from the mainstream notion of Bosnian politics. The patterns detected in the parliamentary debates indicate that the central conflict exists primarily alongside Bosniak–Serb grievances, with Croat MPs being far less engaged. We argue that the three-sided conflict, often portrayed by literature as the major obstacle to reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, needs to be re-evaluated as a 2+1 model in which Croat MPs play a balancing role in maintaining the Post-Dayton status quo.

Introduction

War changes people, communities, and states. Its devastating effects can last for decades and become embedded in the collective memory for generations (Kijewski, 2020). Politicians like to use the memory of war instrumentally either as part of broader discursive strategies or as situational rhetoric that supposedly gives them a higher ground and moral superiority (Gelpi & Feaver, 2002; Smith & Barkhof, 2018). It often leads to perpetual commemorative practices making the past sacrifices sacred. The process is common across different models of divided societies with dire consequences for the development and social cohesion. If there is one country embodying this profile on multiple fronts, it is Bosnia-Herzegovina. The siege of Sarajevo, Srebrenica massacre, mass killings, and atrocities shocked Europe in a way not seen since the end of WWII. The horrors of war left the country devastated and deeply divided. As a result, post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina is a witness to the omnipresent memory of the Bosnian war that is remembered by its three constituting nations in their own way (Lovrenović, 2016; Pehar, 2019).

Sadly, the majority of Bosnians continue to embrace homogeneous ethnonational narratives of the war (Kostić, 2012). The literature agrees that rather than talking about the prevailing discourse of war, there are three separate discourses, each maintained by one of the three constituting entities – Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. All three groups uphold their own

historical narrative combining recent history with centuries-long grievances (Moll, 2013; Sokol, 2014). However, the question remains how these patterns, often discussed in the context of extraordinary events and media stunts, manifest themselves under a system that embedded the relative strength of fighting parties into the institutional setting of post-Dayton settlement. What are the patterns of parliamentary war-related discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Have these patterns changed over time? What are the implications and lessons learned? Answering these questions should help us, first, to get a better picture of the war-related discourse of powerholders in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the late 1990s until today; second, to assess the legacy of Dayton settlement in the highest levels of Bosnian politics represented by all elected MPs; and third, to further theorize the long-term legacies of war in the context of political competition in divided societies.

The article analyses over twenty years of parliamentary debates (1998-2018) collected from the official website of the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina for both the House of Representatives (Predstavnički dom/Zastupnički dom) and the House of Peoples (Dom naroda). We use an innovative research design combining advanced natural language processing (NLP) tools for modeling patterns in political discourse with qualitative content analysis in order to explore how war is discussed by politicians when the message is intended as a position-taking signal (Proksch & Slapin, 2015). The article shows that the discourse of war identified in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina structurally differs from the mainstream notion of Bosnian politics (both domestic and international), which presupposes an equal role of all ethnonationalist political elites in promulgating ethnic tensions and conflict-prone war memory (both in an academic and non-academic sense; see Mijatović, 2017; Seizovic, 2019; Selimbegović, 2017; USAID, 2022; Vuković, 2015). The patterns detected in the parliamentary debates indicate that the central conflict exists primarily alongside Bosniak-Serb grievances, with Croat MPs being far less engaged. We theorize that

this effect of 'holding back' results from strategic decisions Croat elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina have made over the years to accommodate their political aspirations and strategic positioning. As a result, Croat MPs are far more cautious when it comes to deliberations about the war and war legacies making the main conflict line between Bosniaks and Serbs far more dominant than it might appear from existing literature.

These findings generally hold through time, giving us an additional layer to the discussion about how the war past resonates in the political arenas of Bosnia-Herzegovina and how it has (not) evolved since the late 1990s. On the one hand, it is a story of failed reconciliation at the top levels of Bosnian politics (Bosniak–Serb grievances); on the other, it shows how strategic concealing might work under the setting of situational alliances, external pressure, and the right kind of potential (future) subsidies (Croat MPs). Although these findings are not automatically generalizable to every aspect of the Bosnian political landscape, the analysis of the war discourse uncovers a less known dimension of power relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which might spill over to other policy areas and issues regularly.

Discussing War

Analysis of discourse of war has a long tradition in political science ranging from a critical examination of only a handful of political speeches (Bratberg, 2011; Kennedy-Pipe & Vickers, 2007; Pujante & Morales-López, 2008) to a systematic review of complex corpora of political debates counting thousands of documents (Mochtak, Glaurdić, & Lesschaeve, 2020; Morley & Bayley, 2009). Scholars have focused on topics such as military intervention (Boucher, 2009), media frames (Hackett & Zhao, 2016), war veterans (Taylor, Murray, & Albertson, 2019), military spending (Lewis & Hunt, 2011), commemoration events (Pavlaković & Pauković, 2019), past grievances (Fraser, 2012), gender based violence (Abramowitz & Moran, 2012), war crimes (Carpenter, 2000), or refugees (Baker & McEnery,

2005). Big part of this research is driven by a notion of symbolic and identitary aspects of politics, how power is legitimized, how it is executed, and what implications it has (Lebow, Kansteiner, & Fogu, 2006).

Although direct violent conflicts have avoided most Western societies since the end of WWII, part of the research on war discourse is almost exclusive to them. While oral histories, critical discourse analyses, and interpretative studies can be found across different contexts and fields, quantitative discourse analysis is heavily skewed towards the developed world or transnational institutions (e.g., US Congress or British Parliament on the one hand and European Union and the United Nations on the other). At least two reasons for that need to be mentioned here. First, many post-conflict societies do not offer resources on par with their Western counterparts. It translates to a lack of high-quality databases, which must be created with the support of ruling elites committed to transparency and general openness. Second, as wars are not events exclusively occurring in English speaking world, English-focused out-of-the-box analytical tools have little to no use for low-resourced languages such as Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS). As a result, it creates an artificial barrier to doing such research in countries actually affected by violent conflicts and their legacies. The missing resources and the limited analytical tools then support the existing gap between what we know about war discourse on different levels of aggregation. These insights are, however, important for a more complex understanding of post-conflict societies and the challenges they face years after the wars are over. While small-N studies can tell us a lot about individual perspectives on war and war past, large-N studies provide a more general view on trends and patterns in political discourse. For many post-conflict societies, this macro perspective is entirely missing, highlighting the gap between what we know about particular actors and their positions on the one hand and more general structures they are part of on the other.

With its three constituting nations and still unresolved grievances, Bosnia-Herzegovina fits the presented pattern well. In the past two decades, most of the research on war discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been dominated by qualitative research designs often combining oral histories with critical discourse analysis. Taking it as a relatively grounded reference point, the existing literature on the war past in Bosnia-Herzegovina highlights predominantly three patterns of how war and war past are discussed and remembered (Moll, 2013; Sokol, 2014). First and foremost, there is the tradition of glorifying one's own battles and heroes combined with a strong accent on own victimhood when it comes to the justification of violent means (Ramet, 2007b, 2007a). The second pattern operates with a strong reference to WWII and is focused on the redefinition of the role of partisan movement and the anti-fascist struggle and their relevance in the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars (Kuljić, 2010, pp. 85–115). The third pattern is based on the homogenous historical continuity through which the ethnic groups construct their *selves*. In this context, history is perceived as a process of endless repetition with the path-dependency of past events to present-day societies (Bijelić, 2005, pp. 81–83).

When it comes to the discursive space of Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the literature agrees that it is dominated by the concepts of 'aggression' and 'genocide' (Jacobs, 2017). The war of 1992-1995 is predominantly remembered as an act of aggression committed by Serbs and Croats against the Muslim population and as an attempt to destroy the newly independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Duijzings, 2007; Moll, 2013). On the other hand, Bosnian Serbs see the 1992-1995 conflict as a defensive war for their fatherland (otadžbina) led against the Muslim and Croat threat. They perceive the 'secession' efforts of Bosniaks and Croats as a betrayal of Yugoslavia and the legacy of WWII (Kostovicova, 2004). The war memory of the smallest constituting ethnic group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croats, is very similar to native Croatia (Moll, 2013). The central component of the narrative

is built around the myth of 'Homeland war' and its political ramifications. The significance of the homeland reference (domovina) is embedded in its cognitive connotation of protecting the home, evoking defense and liberation rather than aggression and hostility (Sokolić, 2019). It is important to emphasize that the concepts of Serbian *fatherland* and Croatian *homeland* are not only two different references embedded in the notion of natural living space for Serbs and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina but also two radically opposed ideological and historical constructs (Milosavljević, 2002, 2006; Sokol, 2014).

Taking the general idea of fragmented memoryspace as a broadly accepted argument, literature tends to portray political strife in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a three-dimensional conflict that leads to political stalemates and endless obstructions (Keil & Perry, 2015) with troubling policy ramifications (Dragovic-Soso, 2016; Muehlmann, 2008; Sebastian, 2009). The way how politicians confront each other in public space (typically through media) further creates an impression that all three ethnic groups invest equal time and effort in defending their political positions (Mijatović, 2017; Mujagić, 2010; Vuković, 2015). This is also supported by academic research, which selectively pays attention to the most vocal representatives of political parties while trying to balance their presence and the attention they get (Hasić, 2020; Majstorović et al., 2010; Majstorović & Turjačanin, 2013; Moll, 2013). Although highly insightful and relevant, this approach portrays only a narrow sample of the most active politicians, with a significant 'grey area' remaining overlooked. Recalling the theoretical discussion above, the current state-of-the-art is almost exclusively formed by qualitative studies with limitations translating to only a partially complete picture of the war discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We address this gap by broadening the scope with original data from the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina and focusing on average war narratives defined as combinations of all speech acts presented by all representatives of the same ethnic group. Although Bosnian

politics is dominated by strong leaders making bold claims (Barton Hronešová, 2021; Majstorović et al., 2010), we approach war narratives from a different angle focusing on a more holistic perspective of political discourse. Using transcripts of political debates, we create a map of over two decades of war discourse in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina as formed by the three constituting ethnopolitical groups rather than their most vocal representatives. To our best knowledge, it is the first attempt to do such analysis in a post-conflict society using quantitative discourse analysis on over two decades of parliamentary debates. The goal is to understand what patterns of parliamentary war-related discourse prevail in the Parliament of Bosnian-Herzegovina over time and their implications for everyday political reality.

Data and Methods

The article analyses an original corpus of parliamentary debates from Bosnia-Herzegovina which contains parliamentary speeches from both lower and upper houses of the federal Parliament – the House of Representatives (Predstavnički dom / Zastupnički dom) and the House of Peoples (Dom naroda). Transcripts of parliamentary debates were collected from the official website of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Parlamentarna skupština BiH, 2020a) and cover the period from 1998 to 2018. Records were originally stored as machine-readable PDF files with a loose structure and fluid form over different terms. Each document was parsed and text-mined using regular expressions (RegEx) in order to construct a proto dataset with a simple structure having just two entries: a speaker (most often first and last name) and a speech (a string of text capturing transcribed spoken word in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian). It was then further populated with meta-information assigned to its parent file – House of Parliament, date, and session number. Finally, the names of MPs were linked with their party affiliation as another level for grouping the presented speeches. The final corpus counts 127,713 speech entries (roughly 9.7 million

words) with a unique overview of political discourse that captures not only war and its legacies but the whole policy space of the country in its modern history.

Using this corpus of relatively modest size, we employ two sets of analytical tools. The first of them utilizes the latest advancements in NLP, especially word embeddings, in order to model the prevailing patterns in language used by parliamentarians. The approach is based on training vector models, which can approximate the semantic as well as the contextual meaning of words (Mikolov, Sutskever, Chen, Corrado, & Dean, 2013; Rodman, 2020). The intuition behind the modeling comes from an influential position in lexical semantics which argues that semantic representations for words in the form of numeric vectors can be derived from the analysis of patterns of lexical co-occurrence in large language corpora (Sadeghi, McClelland, & Hoffman, 2015). John R. Firth (1957) famously coined this position with an argument that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps". The architecture of these models is language agnostic, meaning it performs well across different language families. We train several vector models using *text2vec* package with GloVe algorithm (Selivanov & Wang, 2019). Rather than using raw textual data, we pre-process the collected speeches in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (we do not translate any part of the corpus), so the context of words as well as their form is standardized for further analysis: the speeches are split into sentences and lemmatized, cleaned off of numbers, punctuation, and whitespaces, and turned to lower case. Only words that occur at least ten times in the corpus are kept, effectively disregarding infrequent words as well as misspellings.

The second set of analytical tools builds on an exploratory analysis of the pre-trained vector model. We use the prevailing patterns observed in the corpus across the whole studied period to navigate us back to the raw text and explore actual narratives qualitatively. This allows us to understand both the macrostructure of war legacies in the Bosnian Parliament and follow much more subtle nuances present in the speeches of individual parliamentarians.

In other words, language modeling (quantitative part) tells us where to look and what to look for, while close reading (qualitative part) takes us back to actual speeches. Using this approach, we perform a qualitative discursive analysis focused on specific discourse concerning war modeled as prevailing patterns in over 20 years of political debates.

War Discourse on the Level of the Bosnian Parliament

The following section investigates the relations of most prominent war-related concepts and maps them into a network-like structure. The goal is to summarize over two decades of parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The word embeddings model is trained on the whole corpus (both houses of the Parliament; period 1998-2018) in order to capture semantic relations of words and explore the prevailing patterns they create. After several rounds of testing using grid-search, we settled on two main hyperparameters for the model – the number of dimensions [D] is 100, and the context window is eight words. All other hyper-parameters remain default (Selivanov & Wang, 2019). This setting is both customary and appropriate for a corpus of this size (Rodriguez & Spirling, 2020). The 100D model we explore is stabilized using bootstrapping with 100 iterations (Rodman, 2020). To capture a *discursive network of war*, we assume that the positions words occupy in a high dimensional vector space have semantic meanings (i.e. words with similar meaning or context have similar vector representation, hence are close to each other). By exploring the neighborhood of keywords we are interested in and connecting them into a more complex network-like structure, we can reveal macro relations among wartime vocabulary. To do that, we manually explore the first 15,000 most frequent words in the Bosnia-Herzegovina corpus. Following Zipf's law, this relatively small number actually covers 97.6% of all words present in the corpus (over 9.6M words), which substantially covers any empirically relevant concept ever discussed by the MPs. This process helps us identify 269 words that strongly link to Bosnia-Herzegovina's war past.

To explore the overall landscape of war discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we use the list of war-related words and their neighbors extracted from the stabilized 100D GloVe model and connect them through direct links or shared neighbors into a discursive network (Figure 2). Rather than focusing on plain n-closest words, we include all stable words which are among the 100 closest words (using cosine similarity) in at least 50 iterations of bootstrapping. The visualization is done using Gephi 0.92 and ForceAtlas2 algorithm (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009).

Figures 1 and 2 present an overview of war discourse in the parliamentary debates of Bosnia-Herzegovina, focusing on war vocabulary and its respective within-issue relations. The network structurally identifies four distinct clusters of war-related agenda (see encircled areas in Figure 1 and their zoomed overview in Figure 2): (1) war crimes and their prosecution [Cluster *A*], (2) locations and their role in the war [Cluster *B*], (3) peacekeeping and refugees [Cluster *C*], and (4) political and military leaders during the war [Cluster *D*] (see Figure 2). All four clusters have words that are both frequent and prominent in the corpus (color hue/size of nodes). The identified topics generally mirror findings of qualitatively oriented research that focuses on either peacekeeping aspects of the post-conflict reconstruction [Cluster *C*] or a process of reconciliation, including prosecution of war crimes and their perpetrators [Cluster *A*]. When it comes to names, only a handful of them are predominantly associated with the war, while the majority is separated from the central clusters, hence dominated by different framing [Cluster *D*]. Karadžić and Mladić are an exception here. They are placed close to words like aggression [agresija] and criminal [zločinac], referring to their responsibility for the atrocities during the war in Bosnia. Srebrenica appears in this context to be the most defining word associated with the generic word war [rat]. At the same time, both are positioned between the cluster of war atrocities

and their prosecution [Cluster *A*] and the most important locations referring to war [Cluster *B*] (see the network in high-resolution in Appendix [Figure A1]).

This overview perfectly resonates with the existing research on Bosnian politics, war memories, and the past (Majstorović et al., 2010; Majstorović & Turjačanin, 2013; Moll, 2013; Sokol, 2014). As a robustness check, it further supports the internal validity of constructed vector model and its meaningful representation of semantic relations of the war-related corpus. This intermediary step is important for a more substantial analysis presented in the following section where we split the original corpus into three sub-corpora mapping war discourse for the three constituting ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It replicates both the institutional divisions created by the post-Dayton settlement and the everyday political cleavages existing alongside the ethnic lines.

Figure 1. Visualization of war discourse in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina


Note: Size of nodes and color hue capture the number of sentences in which a word occurs (prominence in the corpus).

Figure 2. Clusters of war discourse in the Parliamentary debates of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Cluster A

Cluster B

Cluster C

Cluster D

War Discourse among Ethnic groups in the Bosnian Parliament

To understand how war is represented in the parliamentary discourse of Bosniak, Croat, and Serb MPs, we employ the same approach from the previous section and map prevailing patterns in words referring to war past. We split the corpus into three subsets based on party/ethnic affiliations of MPs and ran the same kind of analysis we did for the whole Parliament. War vocabulary is then extracted together with its network relations and

visualized using Gephi (Figure 3; high-resolution graphs are also placed in the Appendix). The graphs are explored for prevailing patterns (e.g., topological proximity of words) which are then traced in the raw corpus using a logic of keywords-in-context (KWIC) analysis for extracting substantially relevant speeches (i.e., speeches containing various combinations of the followed keywords). These are then analyzed for the general message, representing the relational patterns of words in the graphs and the general narrative of extracted speeches through time. The data-driven approach allows us to select narratives supported by meta structures modeled on the level of the studied corpus (i.e. co-occurring words having high cosine similarity).

Using the presented approach, we identify three seemingly irreconcilable interpretations of the character of the Bosnian war we organize our analysis around: international aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina championed by Bosniaks, civil war framing pushed forward by Serbs, and Homeland war references made by Croats. These dominant framings of the war past seem to be consistent throughout all six terms (1998-2018), showing their prominence and continuity in the discourse of war and their internal consistency with the previous research. To demonstrate the temporal dimension, the referenced speeches are selected and dated with the purpose of 'reading history forward' (Møller, 2021). Although we use them primarily as an illustration for the patterns modelled on the level of ethnic groups (general pattern → example of actual narrative), their dating constructs a virtual timeline, which helps us keep track of potential changes over time.

Figure 3. War discourse of Bosniak, Croat, and Serb MPs

Bosniak MPs

Croat MPs

Serb MPs
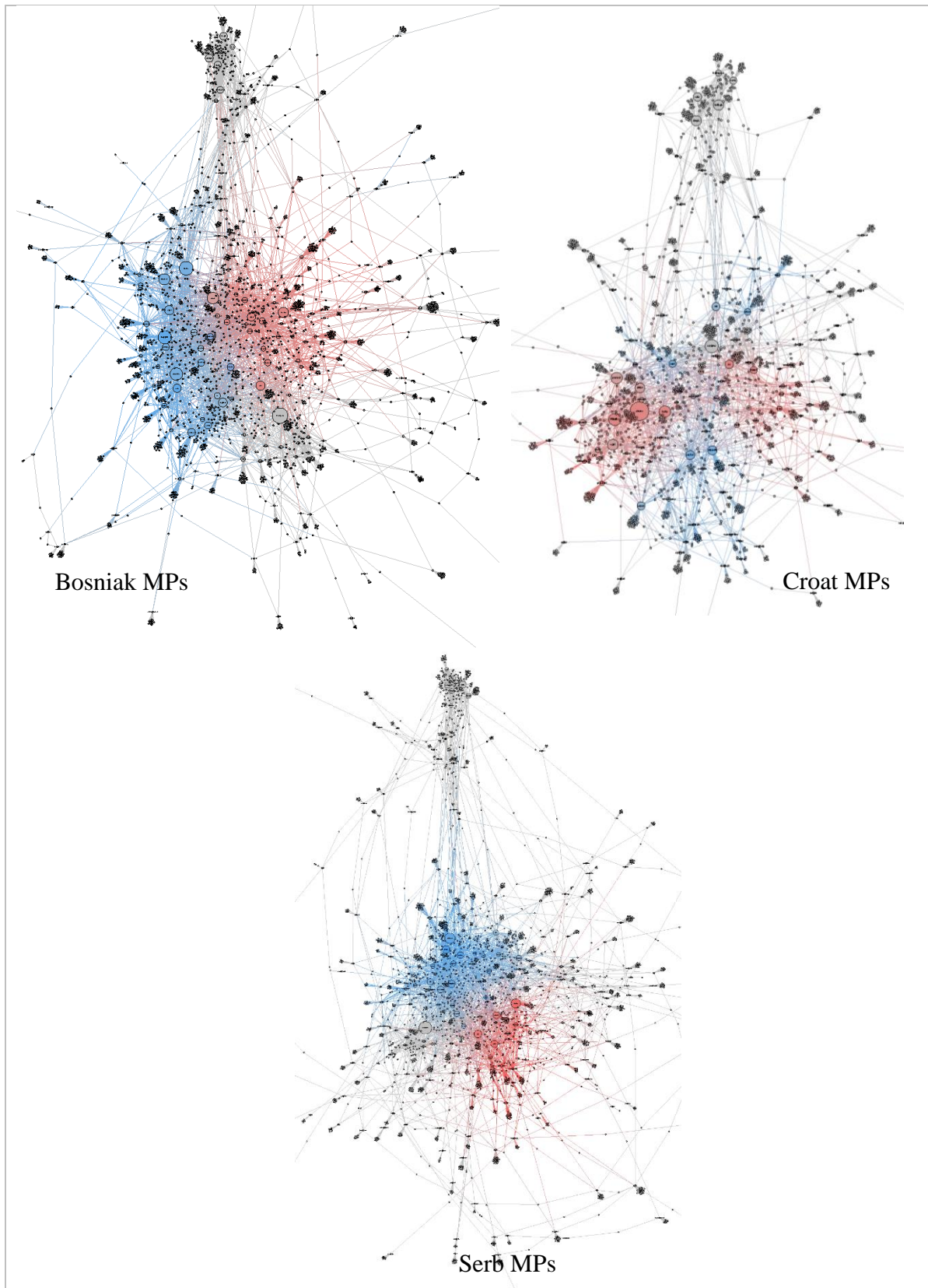
Note: Red color visualizes words associated with the wars in the 1990s, while blue capture more general war terminology (manual coloring).

Both quantitative modeling and close reading of the parliamentary speeches show that Bosniak MPs are committed to the strong belief that the Bosnian war was an international aggression against a newly formed state led by its neighbors, Serbia and Croatia, with pretensions of territorial expansion (Duijzings, 2007; Jacobs, 2017). While acknowledging that elements of civil war and ethnic and religious conflict played an important part, Bosniaks' war memory is principally structured around the idea that the Bosniaks fought an uphill battle against their neighbors who strived to carve out the country and split it between themselves. Speeches made by Šefik Džaferović and Asim Sarajlić from the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije, SDA) document that in a very narrow sense:

... [T]here was no civil war in B&H. There was an aggression against B&H [...]. There are at least three verdicts of the Hague Tribunal confirming that. If you want, I can show you several UN Security Council resolutions from which you will clearly conclude that aggression was carried out against B&H. Moreover, watch the recordings of various TV channels from 1992 to 1995, and you will see where the tanks did come from to B&H, columns of tanks. ŠEFIK DŽAFEROVIĆ, SDA (14/6/2001)

To discuss the State of the Security in B&H like this is just ignoring the facts; it is an attempt to detach it from reality. We do not live in a Disneyland. There was a war in this country, there was an aggression, and there was a genocide. ASIM SARAJLIĆ, SDA (29/8/2913)

The view of the Bosnian war almost unanimously shared by Serb MPs is fundamentally opposed to this *international aggression* framing. For Serb MPs, the tragic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is undeniably a civil war that happened as a consequence of one ethnic group (Bosniaks) forcing their political ambitions (independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina from Yugoslavia) onto others (Barton Hronešová, 2021; Kostovicova, 2004). In

the early terms of the Parliament, this rhetoric was championed by the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka, SDS), the leading Serb party at the time. Gradually the SDS attempted to soften its attitude under the leadership of Dragan Čavić primarily due to pressure from the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and to reform its image as torchbearers of radical right-wing Serbian nationalism (Majstorović et al., 2010). As a result, the vacated position was soon seized by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata, SNSD), which took over the role of the *true defender of Serbs and Republika Srpska*. Unburdened by the actual war responsibility, the rhetoric of MPs from the SNSD became increasingly radicalized after coming into power, effectively preserving the legacy of SDS in the highest level of Serbian political representation. We demonstrate the change with the excerpts from the speeches made by the members of SDS and SNSD from the late 1990s to the mid-2010s:

... [F]or the sake of building trust among peoples of B&H, I sincerely ask you not to mention an aggression. Whose aggression and against whom? Who can say that the RS is a fascist creation which originated from the aggression of the SRY against B&H? MIRKO BANJAC, SDS (5/10/1999)

Do not use the vocabulary from 1990 in 2002. The wounds are still fresh and painful. Get rid of the term aggression. MOMIR TOŠIĆ, SDS (29/5/2002)

Which court has ruled that there was an aggression against B&H? As soon as some court does that, I will be the first to acknowledge it, same as I did for Srebrenica. There was a genocide in Srebrenica, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) confirmed that, and none of us dispute it. I accept the court's rulings, but which court has ever ruled that there was an aggression? Because there was not. SLAVKO SLAVUJ JOVIČIĆ, SNSD (22/10/2008)

What happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a civil war and a conflict, and I am saying that not just for the sake of it but because I believe in it. I stand by my words. What happened here was a conflict among three groups of people. What you say and think is your own business, but you cannot ask others outside of this Parliament to interpret our history [...] the way you perceive it. I see it this way and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina see the same thing. It was a civil war and not an aggression or any other kind of conflict. MILICA MARKOVIĆ, SNSD (11/5/2016)

The main frame Croat MPs use when talking about war is similar to the dominant narrative presented in mainland Croatia (Mochtak, 2020). Their notion of war is characterized through a framework of a 'Homeland war' as a defensive and protective struggle against external threats. The significance of the reference usually highlights the noble cause of protecting *home/homeland,* while the reference itself signifies the sacred legacy of the fight. This can be supported by the speeches presented by members of the two main Croatian parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine, HDZ BiH) and the Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica 1990, HDZ 1990):

Why did the Government of Federation of B&H allow its Ministry for Issues of the Veterans and Disabled Veterans of the Defensive-Liberation War to omit the category of demobilized defenders and remove the term 'Homeland War' during the drafting of The Law on Fundamental Rights of the Disabled Veterans and Families of the Killed Soldiers? It has caused public outrage. MIRKO GRABOVAC-TITAN, HDZ BIH (20/11/2001)

... [A]s a member of the HDZ 1990 I am a pure-blood Croat, both from my father's and my mother's side [...] and in comparison to many of you sitting here and calling

yourselves Croats, I am a volunteer and a veteran of the Homeland War. DIANA ZELENIKA, HDZ 1990 (27/8/2015)

The reconciliatory tone predominantly used when talking about the war in neutral terms gives away to a more defensive attitude once Croat MPs are faced with the actual historical legacy of Herzeg-Bosnia and the HVO (Croatian Defence Council [Hrvatsko vijeće obrane]), the main military organization of Croats during the Croat-Bosniak conflict:

… [W]e often celebrate the Day of the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, which was with all of its political and legal heritage recognized by the Washington Agreement and is one of the building blocks of this country. Unfortunately, we do not celebrate this day enough, and hopefully, we will do better in the future. PREDRAG KOŽUL, HDZ BIH(30/8/2016)

The unsuccessful attempt to establish an exclusively Croat state within the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina is not brought up often and it is far less prominent in the Croatian discourse than might be expected. Even when defending the idea that Croats were the 'good guys' of the Bosnian war, Croat MPs rarely shift blame to the other sides the same way that is common for Bosniak and Serb representatives:

Mr. Sokolović, an argument that genocide happened in Mostar during the war does not deserve a reaction. Mostar is a truly multi-ethnic city and during the fiercest clashes between HVO forces and the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 10.000 Bosniaks and other ethnicities lived there. BOŽO LJUBIĆ, HDZ 1990 (12/6/2014)

This peculiar behavior is probably most apparent when discussing the political and military leadership of the Herzeg-Bosnia proto-state. Being convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on account of participating in a joint

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criminal enterprise (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2013), the whole issue is very uncomfortable for both Croat political leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in Croatia. While Serb MPs are more inclined to engage in debates and defend the war legacy of the Army of Republika Srpska with the intention of protecting the legitimacy of Republika Srpska irrespective of the rulings of the ICTY, Croat MPs have little to gain from advancing the discourse on the historical legacies of Herzeg-Bosnia. On rare occasions when they directly address accusations of war crimes committed on the territory of Herzeg-Bosnia by the HVO forces, they do it in a noticeably less confrontational way even when still attempting to dispute these claims and shift the focus away from the actual events. As an example, we provide an excerpt from a speech made by Mario Karamatić from the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka, HSS) which documents the pattern:

I do not understand how it is possible that members of the Croat Defence Council get systematically qualified as a joint-criminal enterprise. Gentlemen, the territory that was part of the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia is the only part of the country where no mass graves were found, and this is a fact. MARIO KARAMATIĆ, HSS (17/9/2015)

Contrary to a theoretically driven expectation that representatives of all three ethnic groups might invest equal effort in preserving their war-related memoryscapes, our analysis shows that this is not true. Strategic use of war memory for all kinds of short-term political goals, from delegitimizing opponents to pre-emptive accusations, is a common practice by MPs of all three ethnic groups. However, the main line of discursive confrontation on the subject of war in the Parliament is between Bosniak and Serb MPs (see also Campbell, 1998). The graph of Croat MPs war discourse illustrates this difference (Figure 3; Figure A3 in the Appendix). Besides the fact that Croat MPs' war discourse is not clearly split into two separate clusters of war-related words, which is something that we found in both Bosniak and

Serb discourse (one more closely related to war past and one with more general war terminology), war discourse of Croat MPs is also less loaded with references to war atrocities. This is not to say that Croat MPs are completely exempt from using graphic descriptions of war crimes, but those are far less prominent in their discourse when compared to Bosniaks and Serbs.

When it comes to the key discursive alliances, both 'Srebrenica' and 'genocide' [genocid] are associated with the word 'war' [rat], similar to Bosniaks' discourse, but expectedly they are not emphasized in the same way since they do not constitute a crucial part of the war narrative for Croats. Adjective 'civilian' [građanski], while still being close to the main cluster of war words, is not directly connected or contextualized with the noun 'war' [rat] or its adjective [ratni]. Moreover, we did not find any instances of Croat MPs deliberating on the topic of 'civil war' [građanski rat], which we identify as a critical intersection point for war debates for both Bosniaks and Serbs.

The same graphs for Bosniak and Serb MPs show that both are heavily invested in the debates on the topic of the character of war. Adjective 'civilian' [građanski] and the noun 'war' [rat] are positioned close to each other, almost in the center of Serbs' war discourse. In the Bosniak discourse, 'civilian' [građanski] is used in a similar context as nouns 'war' [rat], 'victim' [žrtva], and 'conflict' [sukob] and the adjective 'war' [ratni]. The complete exclusion of Croat MPs from one of the most fierce and persistent debates about the Bosnian war demonstrates that Croat MPs not only did not engage with their Bosniak and Serb counterparts but that their interpretation was rarely directly challenged by either of the two. For Croats, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina could not be disentangled from the Homeland war led in Croatia against Serbia and their experiences are perceived to be closely linked together. When Serb MPs tried to raise the topic of Croatian paramilitaries' involvement in fighting

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during the war and referred to the chain of command that existed between Croatian officials and Herzeg-Bosnia forces, Croat MPs stayed mostly silent and did not participate in these discussions.

We argue that this passive position was maintained mainly because the occasional attacks were not directed towards them in the first place, hence not being politically relevant enough to be vocally opposed. The main purpose of the aforementioned Serb argument was to challenge the *international aggression narrative* championed by Bosniak MPs and to prove that the military involvement of the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija, JNA) is not enough to confirm the international component of the war since combatants from other former Yugoslav republics played a role as well. Although the ruling of the ICTY in the case of Prlić *et al.* [IT-04-74] (2017b) ultimately points to the other direction, it does change the main point we find symptomatic when it comes to Croat MPs: even when Croats are the main targets of belligerent rhetoric, the actual conflict still reflects the nexus of Bosniak–Serb power relations.

Interestingly, the pictured dynamics highlight a strategic concealing on the side of Croat MPs, potentially reflecting more on their political aspirations rather than their true preferences. We theorize that Croat MPs have a deliberate interest in staying out of the Bosniak–Serb strife as a result of being caught between a rock and a hard place of everyday political reality. Even if they might agree with the Bosniak interpretation of the war, Bosniaks are their main competitors for resources within the Federation as well as they are the main source of their political frustrations (e.g., being the main political barrier preventing the creation of a third entity). This is why Croat elites might play a non-confrontational game with the Serb MPs hoping they will repay the favor and help them eventually to get the third

entity, or at least support a change in the electoral law that would stop Bosniak voters from effectively voting for the Croat member of the Presidency.

However, it also might be the case that Croat political aspirations, although fundamentally opposed to Bosniak unitarist tendencies, do not directly influence the moderate war rhetoric of Croat MPs. Both previous attempts to establish an independent Croat entity within Bosnia-Herzegovina, first in 1993 under Mate Boban but also in 2001 under Ante Jelavić failed. Siding with the ethno-(con)federalist agenda championed by Milorad Dodik and Serb SNSD, while undoubtedly an attractive proposition for the dominant western Herzegovina line within HDZ BiH, would be a tough sell for its leadership. Support for such radical pursuit would hardly come from any of the Western countries or even Zagreb. It would also mean turning back on Croats in Posavina, who would be left in the Republic of Srpska as a de facto minority. This is why the idea of creating a "third entity" has received more support from Serbs than Croats when it comes to public stunts. Thus, while the political aspirations of the HDZ BiH leadership are clearly in conflict with those of Bosniaks and, in theory, closer to Serbs, they are kept under tight control and rarely expressed openly in Parliament.

In the end, the restrained usage of war references is actually more beneficial to Bosniak than Serb positions. While any combustible war memory is potentially convenient for Serbs elites to escalate political crises and proclaim the impossibility of a functional central state, Bosniaks, on the other side, have a pronounced interest in making Bosnia-Herzegovina work. Stable Bosniak-Croat relations in this context are crucial to enduring overall stability of the country. For Croats, Bosniak unitarism is simply tolerated in exchange for a favorable share of institutional control. For years Bosniaks have accommodated Croats who held more than a fair share of offices on both state and the level of the Federation of

Bosnia-Herzegovina in exchange for Croats' silent support of Bosniak slow but steady push towards strengthening powers of the central state. In recent years this Bosniak-Croat dynamic came almost to a grinding halt mainly due to the open subversion of the Daytonian order orchestrated by the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Socijaldemokratska Partija Bosne i Hercegovine – SDP BiH). In a highly controversial move, SDP BiH exploited the numerical weakness of Croats and secured the election of Željko Komšić to the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Komšić, while himself ethnically Croat, was elected mainly by the Bosniak votes. This move showed a way forward for those on the left who saw an opportunity to attack the Daytonian political order that favors ethnonationalist parties and animates their voters.

The response from HDZ BiH was a resolute refusal to accept anything less than absolute control over what is deemed to be the political right of Croats as constituent peoples. But the insistence on implementing "legitimate representation" (Krišto & Čolak 2018), while highly destructive to any notion of citizen focus on Bosnian democracy, should not be conflated with attempts to establish a "third entity". As our data shows, no significant change occurred in Croat MPs' war rhetoric even after the political monopoly of the HDZ BiH was highly compromised. In our view, any serious possibility of the Serb–Croat alliance intent on dissolving Bosnia-Herzegovina by any means necessary would be preceded by a noticeable change in the way Croats talk about the war.

For as long as Croats see Bosniaks as possible partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the system under which the country has been operating since the war ended will remain the dominant platform for expressing ethnopolitical interests. After all, when left to their own devices, SDA and HDZ BiH often managed to find common ground in the past. The latest example is their agreement on the Mostar elections in 2020 (Parlamentarna skupština 2020b).

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But if Bosniak political forces continue using Bosniak numerical superiority to establish dominance over Croats, this could cause serious disturbance to the implicit Daytonian ethnic power-sharing model and force Croats into changing their rhetoric and maybe even switching sides.

One way or another, these dynamics introduce a little-known perspective on how the political representation of the three entities interact when it comes to high politics and what it means to instrumentalizing the war past and its relevance in Bosnian-Herzegovina. Although it would be a mistake to generalize the dynamics concerning the war discourse automatically to the overall political landscape of Bosnian politics, it certainly invites to a more thorough analysis of the power relations among the three constituting ethnic groups. Rather than repeat the premise of a three-sided stalemate, it is better to think about Bosnian politics in a 2+1 setting, under which the Bosniak–Serb strife is accompanied by a balancing position of the Croat representation pursuing its own political agenda.

Bosniak–Serb strife

When it comes to Bosniak and Serb MPs there is very little restraint when debating the character of the Bosnian war. Discussions are frequently confrontational and emotionally charged. Personal stories and anecdotes of MPs who had first-hand war experiences are used to effectively challenge the narratives that do not correspond to the views of their own ethnic group. For instance, Serb MPs often use references to camp 'Silos' as a counter-argument leveraging the allegations of war atrocities committed during the war. Personal experiences are often used as evidence against any attempts of the other side to paint a one-sided picture in which Bosniaks are presented as the main victims:

In a prison camp where I was held for 44 months, and do not dare to accuse me of abusing this, late Alija Izetbegović on 247ᵗʰ session in April 1995 said: 'Serbs are held in

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Silos camp as a countermeasure, they are not guilty'. Is anyone going to be held responsible for the fact that 25 of my fellow inmates were killed? Is anyone going to be held responsible for the fact that all men between 14 to 75 were imprisoned without asking any questions? No charges were ever filed. SLAVKO SLAVUJ JOVIČIĆ, SNSD (30/09/2009)

… [I] was here, in Sarajevo, while my family was held in Silos camp for 44 months. Those who accuse me of not being ready for compromises, well, the leader of their party sent a commission to Silos where my mother was held. ALEKSANDRA PANDUREVIĆ, SDS (22/12/2011)

On the Serbian graph, 'Silos' is in close proximity to the words 'Jasenovac', 'Dobrovoljačka' and 'kolona'. Words' kolona' and 'Dobrovoljačka' refer to the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) column incidents in Tuzla and Sarajevo at the beginning of the war in early 1992. On the other hand, Jasenovac is the infamous concentration camp operated by the Ustasha regime during WWII. This discursive retaliation is used frequently by SNSD but also by smaller Serbian parties such as the Party of Democratic Progress (Partija demokratskog progresa, PDP):

I am asking you, how is it possible that there are no names of perpetrators of crimes in Dobrovoljačka in the Resolution? You know it. We were all witnesses. I lived in the city. There is no person I cannot look straight in the eyes. How is it possible there is no mention of the 18 years old kids at Brčanska Malta? Sure, we do not know the name of the perpetrators but let's at least mention them. NIKOLA ŠPIRIĆ, SNSD (3/1/2003)

It is a well-known fact that on the territory of Yugoslavia, Serbs suffered the most during World War II … If you are talking about Europe, then yes, Jews suffered more, nobody should argue against that, but if you are talking about the territory of Yugoslavia at that time, the Serbs suffered the most. SLAVKO SLAVUJ JOVIČIĆ, SNSD (3/2/2010)

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Please do not make me remind you of one of the worst execution sites in Europe, Jasenovac. It is still quite recent when it comes to historical context. It is not acceptable that you emphasize only one tragedy that happened in Srebrenica and forget others. In the context and structure of this country, that is not acceptable and it is not right. BRANKO DOKIĆ, PDP (23/3/2010)

Both quantitative modelling and in-depth qualitative analysis show that names of the places where Serbs were victims are frequently contextualized together. Interestingly, these references often appear in speeches mentioning Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, Serb civilian and military leaders who played an instrumental role in committing atrocities during the Bosnian war (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2016, 2017a). The symbolic link plays an essential role in many of the 'attempted deliberations' in which the recognition of Karadžić and Mladić as war criminals by the Serbs MPs is often conditioned by demands for the recognition of suffering that their own ethnic group endured during different periods in history even when there is no explicit connection between the two:

How to explain the news that the proceedings of The Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina against 50 individuals, mostly members of the SDS, […] have been stopped two years after everyone was well aware that none of them did it? […] There should be some balance: we have on the one hand a stopped investigation against non-existent helpers of Karadžić and on the other the amnesty for those who ordered and executed the massacre in Dobrovoljačka. Do you think we are blind and that we do not see what this is all about? MLADEN BOSIĆ, SDS (16/2/2012)

As expected, we find that Bosniak war discourse revolves heavily around the words' genocide' [genocid], 'victim' [žrtva], and 'Srebrenica'. The word 'Holocaust' [holokaust] is also in close proximity to words 'war' [ratni], 'conflict' [sukob], 'criminal' [zločinac] and 'to

prosecute' [procesuirati]. The main cluster of war-related words is defined by the horrific massacre of Bosniaks in July 1995. In comparison, the Serb war discourse places' genocide' in the main war cluster as well, but the word 'Srebrenica' is contextualized with other names for towns and places and not directly connected to the main war discourse. Unsurprisingly, the association of the word 'genocide' with the word 'Srebrenica' is not very common among Serbian MPs. Conceivably, this warrants a strong reaction from Bosniak MPs and accusations of negating the evidence on genocide and ethnic cleansing:

By denial of a genocide, by persistently refusing to adopt the Law on Genocide and Holocaust, and finally by not supporting the laws on The Court and The Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina, you are obstructing the prosecution of criminals who committed war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica. It concerns the whole B&H, including those seven municipalities for which the Hague Tribunal tries Karadžić and Mladić. And precisely because of the genocide, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing, there are million people missing today in the Republika Srpska and in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole. Ladies and gentlemen, genocide against Bosniaks in B&H was committed and that is a legal, human, and God's truth. ŠEMSUDIN MEHMEDOVIĆ, SDA (16/02/2012)

Bosniaks view themselves as the main victims of the Bosnian war and their role, perceived as morally superior, allows them to use strong rhetoric of blame (Burg & Shoup, 1995, p. 181). Genocide in Srebrenica occupies a central role in Bosniaks' mythogenesis, aspiring to become the *Bosnian Muslim Holocaust* (Miller, 2006). For this reason, Bosniak MPs tend to constantly nurture their victim status and re-establish the aggression premise as two essential elements of the Bosniak war memoryscape:

If anyone has the right to speak about what happened in B&H, it is Bosniaks. They suffered the most in this war, during an aggression, which indeed happened in B&H. ABDURAHMAN MALKIĆ, SDA (5/10/1999)

Both Bosniaks' and Serbs' framings of the Bosnian war are greatly dependent on the narrative concerning the Srebrenica genocide. Recognition of horrific events in Srebrenica as genocide completely negates the Serbian framing of the war and this is why the truth about the number of victims or their status (civilian or military/paramilitary) is often questioned:

I repeat, I feel sorry for every victim of the war, but I expect that one day it will be said that in Srebrenica and the areas around Srebrenica, Bratunac, and other municipalities, out of 3,000 victims, 200 or more were Serbs and that someone killed those Serbs. I feel sorry for every lost Bosniak life, but I expect that you separate those who died innocently from those who were criminals and died while killing Serb civilians. I expect you to do this for yourself and those innocent victims. They do not deserve to have their names next to the names of those who committed crimes. ALEKSANDRA PANDUREVIĆ, SDS (23/5/2013)

And even when acceptance of the Srebrenica genocide is given, it is done in a manner that indirectly implies that Srebrenica was not the only genocide that happened during the Bosnian war and thus undeserving of its special status:

The argument that those who committed war crimes did it in the name of the Serb people is absolutely not true. Nobody did anything in my name, and I represent the Serbian people, neither in Srebrenica nor anywhere else where war crimes or genocide were committed. MOMČILO NOVAKOVIĆ, SDS (29/6/2005)

When debates on 'Law on the Prohibition of Genocide and War Crimes Denial' were held in both houses of the Parliament in 2011, tempers flared. Serb MPs identified this law as

a final confirmation of the dominance of the Bosniak genocide narrative and vigorously fought to prevent it from being adopted:

... I understood the intention of the author of this law to prevent demystification of the events and to preserve the distorted image which was nurtured for 16 years. Why? First, adopting this law would lead to a situation when accused Serbs would not be able to defend themselves against an allegation they committed a genocide. They would be convicts without a trial. DUŠANKA MAJKIĆ, SNSD (8/12/2011)

The pressure of being perceived as the main perpetrators of war crimes and responsible for the Srebrenica genocide, both domestically and internationally, weighs heavily on Serb political representatives. Assuming the role of exclusive protectors of the Serbian people and their interests defines the fundamental inability of Serb MPs to reflect on tragic events in which victims were those *from the other side.* If that account is taken into consideration, it usually comes together with questioning the truthfulness of counter-arguments while entertaining a dose of conspiratorial rhetoric:

... [D]irect witnesses of what happened during the war are getting increasingly doubtful of the black and white picture of the war past in B&H. Let me remind you of an opinion of the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Balkans Yasushi Akashi who said: 'It is still not clear who targeted the Markale marketplace'. DUŠANKA MAJKIĆ, SNSD (8/12/2011)

In the same speech, Dušanka Majkić describes how Bosniak politicians are intentionally preventing the truth about numerous crimes committed against Serbs in Sarajevo from being investigated while questioning the truth about massacres that happened during the shelling of the 'Markale' marketplace in Sarajevo:

... [I]t is well known that most killings of the Serb people happened in Sarajevo from 1992 until the end of October 1993. It all started at Kazani and the chain of Serb suffering continued in Dobrinja, Hrasnica, Novo Sarajevo, Otoka, and other illegal prisons. Authorities of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina still do not want to form a commission for investigating the suffering of Serbs in Sarajevo, although the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska provided a long list of evidence about committed war crimes. Demands made by the families of Serb victims were ignored, sending a signal that Bosniaks are not interested in the sufferings of Serbs in Sarajevo. Evidence documenting a large number of cases from Dobrovoljačka, Central prison, 'Viktor Bubanj' barracks, Tarčin camp, Hrasnica camp, and other killings happening in Sarajevo's municipalities were passed to the relevant institutions. And I stop here. The full truth about war events has not been revealed yet and this is the main precondition for reconciliation. DUŠANKA MAJKIĆ, SNSD (8/12/2011)*

The presented overview shows that narratives about the war are crafted, used, and manipulated by the political elites in order to achieve political goals, discredit competitors, shift focus away from own failures, and '*when most powerful, [...] fuse together the present and the imagined historical past while disconnecting the present from an actual personal past*' (Lieberman, 2006, p. 307). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, where ethnopolitics have dominated public discourse over interest-based politics ever since the war ended, the significance of control over war memory can not be overstated (Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010). Our analysis of the political discourse of the Bosnian war shows that more than twenty years after it ended, the war past is still a highly contested topic among MPs. As we show, the main conflict line considering the war past is driven alongside Bosniak-Serb grievances, with Croat MPs being far less engaged. Moreover, when it comes to the Croat memoryscape, we identify very cautious attitudes and careful deliberations about the war, further highlighting the contrast with the other two groups of MPs.

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Placing the studied narratives on a timeline and 'reading history forward', the analysis shows that very little has changed when it comes to the reconciliation of war narratives over two decades of documented political discourse. The situation might be even worse. This finding is worrying not only because it confirms known arguments about a failed reconciliation on the level of competing ethnic groups (Belloni, 2009; McMahon & Western, 2009; Perry, 2019) but mostly because it shows that political elites and the post-Dayton Parliament have not reconciled over the painful past at all. This does not mean that no form of reconciliation has taken place over the past two decades outside the Parliamentary Assembly. Some of the existing research points out that the hope of fostering reconciliatory attitudes in the broader population is at least a real possibility (Brkić, Zotova, Kuburić, & Popov-Momćinović, 2021; Perišić, Petrović, & Puhalo, 2010). However, our data shows that the Parliament as the highest legislative body and its members have done very little in mitigating the existing conflicts and supporting the bottom-up reconciliatory efforts on a systematic level.

Conclusion

Any post-conflict reconstruction requires a significant effort devoted to overcoming the grievances of past wars. It seems that Bosnian parliamentarians have done very little in this regard, effectively preserving the relative strength of fighting parties and their interests as cemented by the Dayton Agreement back in 1995. Although most politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina like to talk about reconciliation, the European future, and hope, the actual signals they send when it comes to war are bleak at best. We can make this kind of conclusion based on an analysis of over twenty years of parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina which maps the discourse of war of at least two generations of politicians. When it comes to overall patterns, the article shows that parliamentary debates roughly resemble the discourse of war presented in media with one important distinction. The main

conflict line exists alongside the Bosniak-Serb grievances, with Croat MPs taking the back seat. Although the recent development in parliamentary politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina indicates that the discourse of Croat political elites might have started to alter (Index Vjesti 2021), our analysis does not confirm this. On the contrary, we find no substantial evidence that the gradual broadening of the political crisis in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2013 onwards between Bosniak SDA and Croat HDZ BiH led to an increase in the prominence of new war-related narratives among Croat MPs. Interestingly, this seems to be the case for the whole studied period adding an important analytical layer to our understanding of the post-conflict situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, it shows the real face of long-term war legacies that affect actual policies and their implications (Dragovic-Soso, 2016; Muehlmann, 2008; Sebastian, 2009).

Our analysis demonstrates how the past conflicts in the Bosnian Parliament are still alive and vivid as ever. Serb rhetoric has become progressively more radical and defensive of the war legacies and their relevance for Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Defending the semi-autonomous Bosnian Serb Republic has become a sacred goal of the Serb political elite, often used strategically as a bargaining token in the context of separatist ambitions. Bosniaks' response has grown to be equally radical. The call for a dissolution of Republika Srpska on the grounds of collective assignment of guilt for committed genocide demonstrates a new vision some of the Bosniak elites have for the country. Amid open confrontation between Bosniak and Serb political representatives, the Croat MPs' strategy of equidistance seems to be side-tracked at best, putting the official political ambitions of the Croatian entity at odds with the political reality of the Bosnian Parliament.

The way how war discourse shapes the Bosnian Parliament has several theoretical implications. Our analysis shows that reconciliation incentives have never really worked on

the level of Bosnian powerholders highlighting the dubious legacy of the Dayton Agreement and the institutional constraints it created (Belloni, 2009; Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2009; Kostić, 2012). Moreover, war has always been a useful reference whenever blame needs to be assigned, when past conflicts might have any relevance in present-day affairs, or when a morally higher ground is needed. The generational change that occurred in the past two decades in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina has not affected the prominence of war discourse and a new group of ethnic leaders uses the same kind of rhetoric their predecessors had used. Memory politics play a crucial role in this generational stiffness, benefiting those who can capitalize on past grievances and unresolved issues (Božić, 2019; Lazic, 2013; Moll, 2013; Sokol, 2014).

As our analysis shows, the war topic in the Bosnian Parliament functions as a symbol of a failed reconciliation on the level of elites. It does not mean that in other political arenas or policy areas the situation is the same. However, when it comes to the memory politics of the Yugoslav wars, politicians tend to co-coexist but the way they interact is still driven by the unresolved conflicts of the 1990s. While new maps of the country are starting to be drawn again, control over narratives of the Bosnian war will only gain importance, and due to their incandescent nature, they will remain a potent source of ethnic polarization for the foreseeable future. However, rather than portray the political strife in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a three-sided stalemate, our analysis shows that the conflict line between Bosniaks and Serbs appears to be the defining structure for any kind of future reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main finding concerning the comparatively restrained use of war rhetoric by Croat MPs offers an important contribution to the question of why Bosnia-Herzegovina has continued its often-troubled existence in Daytonian constitutional form despite being remarkably stagnant and inefficient. While the Bosniak-Serb conflict line is constantly on the verge of falling into the abyss of open confrontations, Croat MPs rarely engage with any of

the sensitive war topics (e.g. the character of the Bosnian war, Srebrenica genocide, or the prosecution of war crimes) that we identified as key in defining the contested landscape of war memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The role of Croats as neither the principal aggressor nor the principal victim of the Bosnian war enables these moderate attitudes and prevents the communication channels from completely collapsing. Consequently, the identified positions alter the paradigm of the three-sided conflict and call for a more accurate 2+1 model capturing the central Bosniak-Serb strife accompanied by Croat strategic positioning. Although our findings can not be automatically generalized over other policy areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina and used as a catch-all explanation for the complex web of ethnopolitical divisions, they offer a new way of thinking about how the ethnopolitical elites utilize conflict lines from the Bosnian war in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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What Is Keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina Together? Interethnic Dynamics in Post-War

Period and the Promise of EU

We use a corpus of more than twenty years of parliamentary debates in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1998 – 2022) to analyze six major topics that defined the political landscape of the country in post-war period. Our article demonstrates that the power dynamics among ethnic groups are more complex than a simple all against all or Serb-Croat anti-state alliance against Bosniak unitarism. The main axis of political conflict is between Bosniaks and Serbs but we identified significant overlap in the discourse of Croat and Bosniak MPs. EU remains the only policy area where there is a consensus that includes MPs of all ethnic groups.

Introduction

Ever since the end of the Bosnian War a lot of research has been dedicated to the question what is Bosnia-Herzegovina? Is it an ethnic federation or a fully formed confederation (Bieber, 2006; Bose, 2002; Kasapović, 2005; Keil, 2013)? What is the balance between the consociational and consensual aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) (Bieber, 2012; Caspersen, 2004)? Can the Daytonian order even continue its existence without constant international involvement that created a culture of dependency (Chandler, 2006; Guzina, 2007)? Would it be justified to even call Bosnia-Herzegovina a democratic state in the first place (Chandler, 2000, 2001; Hayden, 2005)? These questions have been a source of major disagreements among the scholars. Even less consensus has been on the question what Bosnia should be (Haverić, 2020; Kasapović, 2007; Mujkić, 2006, 2008). While we acknowledge the importance and value of these questions our research offers a significantly different perspective. Instead of asking what Bosnia is or what it should be, we wanted to know what its political elites think it is and what they want it to be. Is it an independent, sovereign nation-state composed of three ethnic groups? Or is it just a temporary blockade put in place by the international powers to stop formation of a second Serb state in the Balkans? Who is the holder of sovereignty, citizens or ethnic groups? Does

the country need external overseeing in order to survive? Is Bosnia's future in EU and NATO or only one of them? Maybe even neither? We believe that these questions are worth researching from the point of view of the political elites that have been in position of power ever since the war ended. While it is certainly true that oftentimes politicians use doublespeak or just plainly paddle with half-truths, we think that it is important to listen to their words. This research is an attempt at systematic understanding of what the politicians have been saying about Bosnia-Herzegovina for more than twenty years in the highest legislative body of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) which has been celebrated as a major accomplishment of the international community led by the United States has been degrading for years (Bonifati, 2023). It stopped the war but offer little in terms of reconciliatory mechanisms or long term stable solutions. But if the power-sharing mechanisms that DPA implemented in reality never satisfied appetites of any of the three ruling ethnocracies and they only worked because there was a credible military and political threat to back them up why are we still talking about Bosnia today? The threat that has kept everything together has not been present for a long time. If the processes of de-Americanization of Bosnia already happened (Ćurak, 2015) why did it survived for this long? Is the sheer external power projection truly the only thing that has been holding it together? That is the puzzle our research aims to answer.

In order to provide an answer to these complex questions we use a corpus of twenty-four years of parliamentary debates in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1998 – 2022) to analyze six major areas of contestation (both domestic and international) that defined the political landscape of the country in the post-war period We believe that our data based approach can help us in determining what the position are, what are the connections between

these positions and how consistently have these positions been expressed by the MPs. In order to achieve this goal we designed a system we designed a system consisting of six major policy topics – state (homeland), people, entity, OHR, NATO, and EU. We used discursive networks built on top of word embedding models to determine what the key topics are and confirmed their validity by going back to our corpus and extracting actual speeches. Our analysis is conducted on the level of ethnic groups instead of individual political parties. We did not test for ideology for two simple reasons: relatively inconsequential importance of ideological differences compared to the ethnic differences and short time spans in which opposition parties had a significant impact in the parliament on the state level. Political landscape of the country throughout the period we analyze has been dominated by three main ethnonationalist parties: Party of Democratic Action - Stranka demokratske akcije (SDA), Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine (HDZ BiH) and Alliance of Independent Social Democrats - Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (SNSD). They defined the topics that we analyze and discourses that were built around them.

Our research demonstrates that the reductionist approach to primarily Croat but also Bosniak politics leads to wrong conclusion that all three ethnic groups are opposed to one another or that there is principle Serb-Croat alliance against Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the question of the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a consensus between Bosniak and Croat MPs in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina that is opposed to some of the more radical ethno-secessionist tendencies among Serb MPs. For Croat MPs this attitude towards the state that they share with Bosniaks is not born out of principle but out of necessity dictated by the regional and international geopolitical context. On the other hand, while the present political leaderships of Serbs and Croats share a common short term goals, their long

term visions for the country led them in completely opposite directions. The main contribution of our research is thus precisely to sharpen our understanding of interethnic relations of political elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina and show that ruling elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina engage in a complex political environment which cannot be forced into a simple "opposed ethnonationalist camps pulling the country apart" narrative or explained by Serb-Croat alliance against the state or resistance to Bosniak unitarism.

In the first section we offer a theoretical framework within which our research is situated. Our methodological approach and analytical toolbox is explained in the second section. The main analysis consisting of six subsections is presented in the third section. It is followed by a discussion on importance of our findings. The fifth and final sections offer concluding remarks and suggestions for potential policy adjustments.

Interethnic Cleavages: What Separates and What Brings Closer Elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

The literature on interethnic dynamics of political life in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been in general defined by two broad approaches: "all against all" model and Serb-Croat alliance against Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unified state. The "all against all" model describes all major political actors as ethnonationalists that have opposed views and goals in all segments of politics except for the shared ambition to dominate every aspect of social life within their own domain. This approach can be useful when for example comparing the ruling ethnocratic order to non-nationalist, democratic counter-powers (Mujkić, 2015) but it offers very little in terms of understanding how those ethno-elites communicate and interact with each other. Their relations are described as being "deeply symbiotic" (Mujanović, 2017) in clientelism driven exploitation and division of state resources while at the same time, "drawing attention to zero-sum issues which follow the logic of the Prisoner's Dilemma"

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(Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010). Their views of the nature of Bosnia-Herzegovina are described as "diametrically opposite" (Koneska et al., 2023) which produces a continues "political deadlock" (van Ham, 2014) and their strategies once boiled down to the bare minimums are presented as "incommensurable ethnopolitics" (Barbarić, 2021). The only aim of such politics thus becomes survival of one's own group which can be accomplished only to the detriment of other two. The "all against all" model is further perpetuated by the international actors within Bosnia-Herzegovina whose discourse has been defined by equalization of all sides ever since the end of the war.

The second approach while being more useful for understanding the interethnic dynamics reduces totality of politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina to the issue of stateness. From this point a relatively simple system of pro and anti-state forces is deducted and used to describe the interethnic dynamics. Bosniaks political goals are subsumed under the idea of centralized state which would enable them to utilize their numerical superiority and establish domination over the other two. Serbs and Croats oppose this view and act in unison to prevent it from being realized (Barton Hronešová & Hasić, 2023; Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2015). From the point of view of those who favor the consociational nature of Daytonian system the aggressive Bosniak unitarism is the main cause for the anti-state position of Serb and Croat politicians. This view has been especially prominent in recent discourse of Croat elites who feel increasingly threatened by Bosniaks (Conley & Melino, 2019). If Bosniaks were to succeed in their intentions this "would lead to new conflicts or the dissolution of the state" (Kasapović, 2016).

On the other hand, those who identify dominance of collectivism and ethnic group rights as a key problem of Bosnia-Herzegovina paint a significantly different picture. Serb and Croat elites are described as "fragmentarians" (Sarajlić, 2010) who want to either

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succeed from the country or further carve it out by establishment of a third (Croat) entity (Grewe, 2018; Novković, 2022). Croat political leadership is seen as helping the Serb ethnonationalist goal of dismantling the country (Hoare, 2021) since establishment of Croat quasi-state modeled on Republic of Srpska is "what Croat parties covet" (Bassuener & Perry, 2021). Neither Serbs nor Croats perceive Bosnia-Herzegovina as their homeland (Hajdari & Colborne, 2018) and both show low levels of identification with the state (Turčalo, 2017).

While the state issue has been the most dominant political question of the country in its post-Dayton existence, the reduction of all dimensions of politics to the issue of state-ownership obscures the full range of attitudes and spaces in which political elites engage and communicate with each other. Our findings show that any approach which disregards other domestic and international policy areas is fundamentally flawed and as consequences produces an incomplete understanding of interethnic dynamics and political polarization in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The complex institutional structure of the country has been intentionally implemented to prevent any possibility of complete state capture by any of the three ethnic groups. The question of state ownership thus while one of the most dominant in the public discourse remains virtually impervious for political elites. Their attitudes and rhetoric are in large parts defined by their relations to the state but ultimately it always remains outside of their reach. This is why the dominant question in political arena has not been *who owns the state* (Bogaards, 2023) but whether there should be a state in the first place.

Data and Methods

The article analyses the corpus of parliamentary proceedings from the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina covering the period of 1998 to 2022 (Mochtak et al. 2022; Erjavec et al.

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2023). The corpus counts 139,899 speeches (roughly 18.65 million words) and captures a complex picture of overall political discourse at the top level of Bosnian politics. To answer the above-mentioned research questions, we analyze the corpus using a mixed-method research design focused primarily on summarizing the prevailing patterns in the discourse of Bosnian political elites and then interpreting them in connection to their natural context. In order to do that, we combine three sets of research methods – the first two focuses on modeling the representation of political concepts in parliamentary discourse using word embeddings; the third aims at understanding the observed patterns in the analyzed data using discourse analysis. While the modeling (quantitative) part helps us to find structure in political discourse, the interpretative (qualitative) part helps us to understand it and empirically substantiate it.

For the purpose of mapping the concepts we are interested in, we rely on two sets of tools – discursive networks built on top of word embedding models on the one hand and estimation of the meaning of context-specific words using the à la Carte embeddings on the other (Rodríguez, Spirling, and Stewart 2021). To create a discursive network that we can explore for high-level patterns in the overall discourse, we train a word-embedding model and explore its semantic space for meaningful association of words (Mikolov, Sutskever, Chen, Corrado, & Dean, 2013; Rodman, 2020). The intuition behind the modeling comes from an influential position in lexical semantics, which argues that semantic representations for words in the form of numeric vectors can be derived from the analysis of patterns of lexical co-occurrence in large language corpora (Sadeghi, McClelland, & Hoffman, 2015). We assume that the positions words occupy in a high dimensional vector space have semantic meanings (i.e. words with similar meaning or context have similar vector representation and, hence, are close to each other). By exploring the neighborhood of keywords we are interested

in (nodes) and connecting them through their cosine distance (edges) into a more complex network-like structure, we can reveal macro relations among traced concepts.

Before training the model, we preprocess the collected speeches so their form is standardized for analysis.[44] We then train a word-embedding model on top of them using hyperparameters that have proved to perform well for this size of corpus (100 dimensions; eight words as the context window) (Mochtak and Muharemović 2022; Rodriguez and Spirling 2020). The embedding model we explore for semantic relations is stabilized using bootstrapping with 100 iterations (Rodman, 2020). We trace the "meaning" of 220 keywords[45] we collected inductively by exploring the first 15,000 most frequent words in the corpus. Following Zipf's law, this relatively small number actually covers 98.5% of all words present in the corpus, which substantially covers any empirically relevant concept ever discussed by the MPs. For each keyword, we extract its semantic neighborhood and select words that are among the 100 closest words (using cosine similarity) in at least 50 iterations of bootstrapping. These pairs of words are connected as a discursive network and explored for meaningful patterns as empirical leads for further analysis. The visualization of the network is done using Gephi 0.93 and ForceAtlas2 algorithm (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009). The second tool for mapping the context of words focuses on modeling existing differences in semantics meaning under different conditions (e.g., ethnicity). We employ à la Carte embeddings regression models as an effective method for modeling the meaning of words in different contexts (Rodríguez, Spirling, and Stewart 2021). The approach builds on Khodak et al. (2018) à la Carte embeddings (ALC), which utilize models pre-trained on large

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[44]The speeches are split into sentences and lemmatized, cleaned off of numbers, punctuation, and whitespaces, and turned to lower case. Only words that occur at least ten times in the corpus are kept, effectively disregarding infrequent words as well as misspellings.

[45]Our dictionary captures the general political language used in both houses of the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina. We included all words related to any of the commonly discussed political topics in the parliament which we identify by qualitative reading of the corpus in order to make our dictionary as neutral as possible.

corpora by combining them with a small sample of example references for a focal word. The result is a new context-specific embedding for the word of interest, no matter how frequent the word actually is (Rodríguez, Spirling, and Stewart 2021, 3). The inductive pipeline relies on a simple linear transformation of the averaged embeddings for words within the context of the focal word. The approach then allows addressing queries like "Do speakers with these covariate values use these terms in a different way than speakers with different covariate values? If yes, how do they differ?" (Rodríguez, Spirling, and Stewart 2021). For a non-technical overview of the method, see Rodriguez (2023).

Knowing the patterns and context, we use these insights as empirically grounded leads to go back to actual speeches and explore the validity of preliminary findings with interpretive methods. Although the paper heavily relies on quantitative modeling, qualitative discourse analysis and close reading are integral parts of the analytical toolbox. The interpretative methods are grounded in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which studies the way social power and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk 2015, 466).

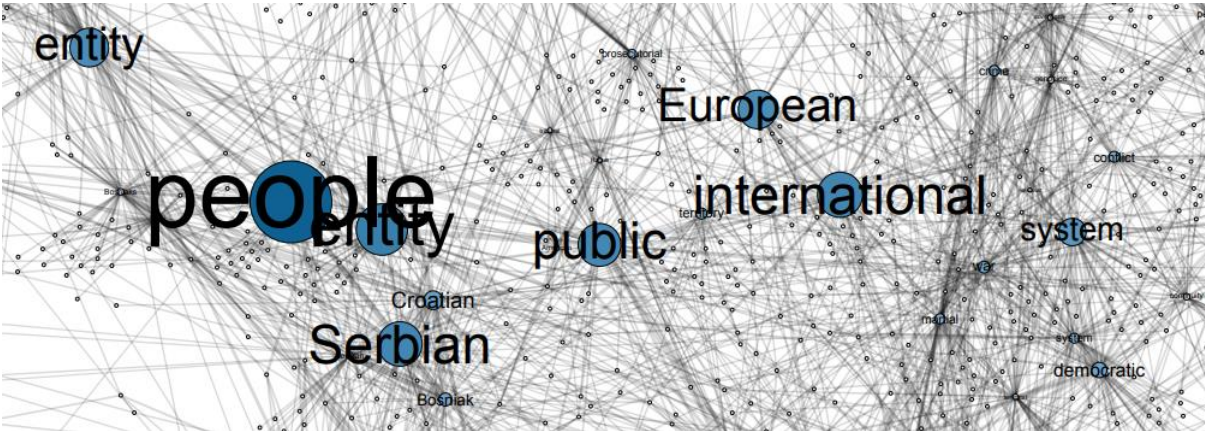Figure 1. State cluster in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Figure 2. People cluster in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

During the first part of our research we used discursive network for high level patterns (see Appendix 2) to identify formation of two major clusters of nodes defined by the words- „state" (država) and „people" (narod). These two clusters were connected by the word "entity" (entitet). We also confirmed the that both clusters were surrounded by words related to the topic of Europe and EU integrations – "Europe" (Evropa), "European" (Evropski), "integration" (integracija). While EU nod did not form a defined cluster around it, the relatively short distance and number of connections of OHR and NATO to EU on one side and to our two main clusters on the other indicated a strong relation between these nods. We identified these six topics (state/homeland, entity, people, OHR, NATO and EU) as key for understanding the political discourse that has been dominant in Bosnia-Herzegovina ever since the war ended. Our goal was to accurately identify, analyze and describe positions taken by the MPs on each of six policy areas in order to discover the nature of relations they form with each other and determine whether there are any spaces for building consensus that can be used as transformative starting points despite the inherent limitations of the system.

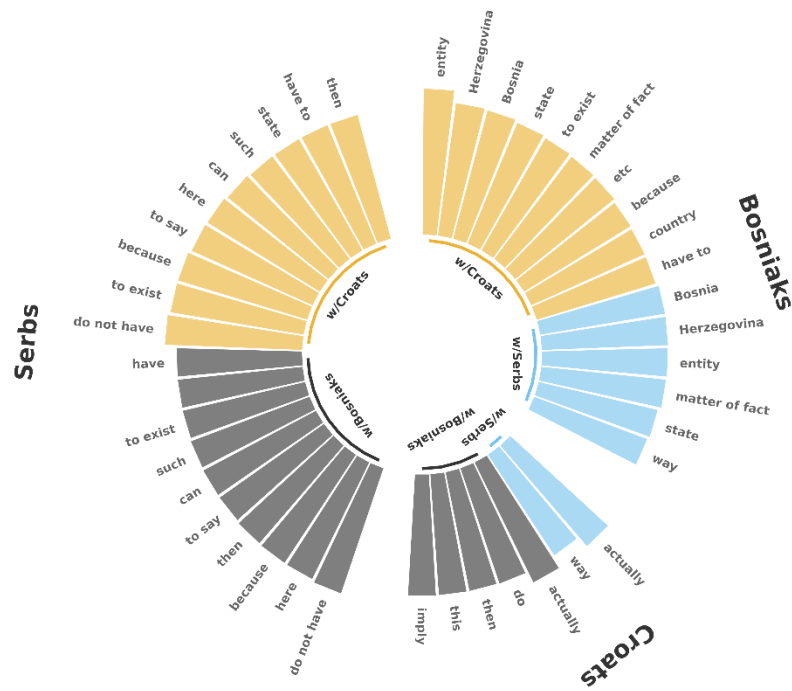**Bosnia-Herzegovina – State, Homeland or Neither?**

Figure 3. Discourse on state in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Neither Serbs nor Croats use "Bosnia" (Bosna) or "Herzegovina" (Hercegovina) when speaking about the state. The neighborhood of words mostly associated with the "state" (država) from both ethnic groups is neutral and in Croats case, reduced to bare minimums. In the discourse of Serb MPs verb "not to have" (nemati) and verb "to be/to exist" (postojati) are typical framed as conditionals. For example - *we do not have a problem with agreeing to this but there has to be something given in return*. In large number of cases when discussing topics related to the state Serb MPs would condition their approval or participation on an explicit recognition of existence of Republic of Srpska as prescribed by the Dayton Agreement. This defensive positioning is often rationalized by Serb MPs with Croats as an example of hypocritical Bosniak politics of marginalizing other ethnic groups. "*...because you think that you've solved the Croat issue. Nobody asks them anything, they do not vote, you outvote them and you probably think that down there is a solved issue. Now you want to deal with us. You see, that is not possible.*"(Drago Kalabić, SNSD, 14/2/2013) Bosniak MPs, on the other hand, strongly associate the state with its name and that is what seperates them from Both Croats and Serbs**.** The importance and consistency of the Bosniak MP discourse on state is aligned with the fact that Bosniaks give premium value to the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosniaks are also the only ones using "country/land" (zemlja) in connection to the state. This is important because use of "country/land" signifies a relation to an actual geographical space and is often used with a certain dose of emotional attachment. When referring to Bosnia-Herzegovina as their "country/land" there is an implicit attitude of loyalty and patriotic bonding.

We also analyzed our corpus for keyword "homeland" (domovina). Inclusion of "homeland" allowed us to capture the emotional component of ones relations to the geographical space in which they live. We wanted to compare the use of these two concepts

(state and homeland) in order to see if there any significant differences in ideological framing. What we saw in Croat and partially Bosniak MPs discourse justified the inclusion of "homeland" into our analysis.
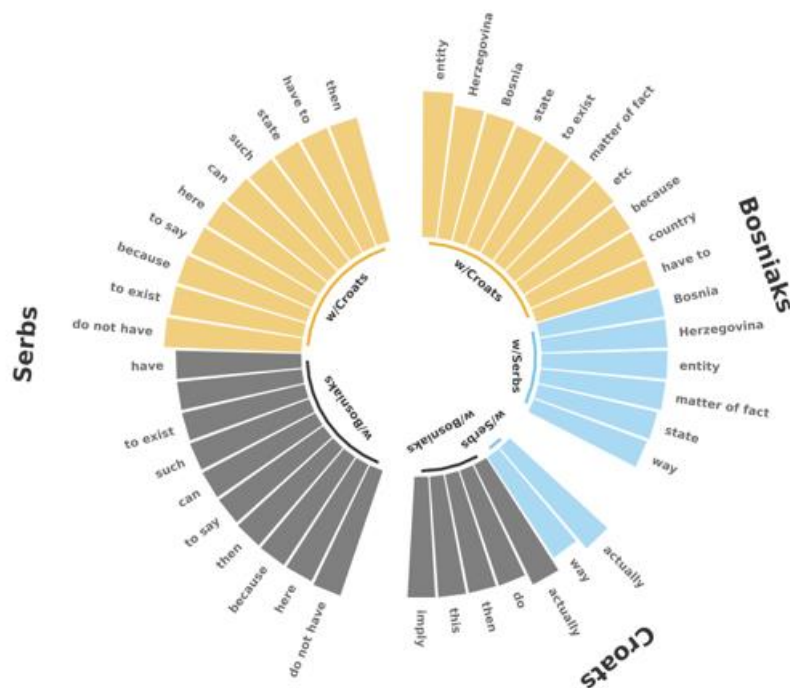

Figure 4. Discourse on homeland in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

For Croat MPs "Herzegovina" (Hercegovina) and "Bosnia" (Bosna) are two most frequently used words on the topic of "homeland" in comparison to Bosniaks. Also interesting is the fact that "Herzegovina" is in front of "Bosnia" in their discourse which is contrary to the official name of the country but correspond to the geographical dispersion of population in the country – Croats mainly living in Herzegovina. On the other hand, when compared to Serb MPs discourse, Croats do not use either "Bosnia" or "Herzegovina". We

believe this to be strategic decision on Croat MPs part. As we have seen in analysis of the same database on the topic of debating war, Croats often tend to circumvent the controversial and polarizing debates (Mochatk and Muharemović 2023) and engaging with Serb MPs on the grounds of Bosnia-Herzegovina being a homeland is simply unnecessary for Croats. This is where the complexity of Croat position on the question of statehood is on the full display. For Croat political elites, Bosnia-Herzegovina is their homeland but they are not quick to identify this homeland with the state. Speaking at the rally in Fojnica HDZ BiH candidate for the Croat member of the Presidency at the time Borjana Krišto said: "*Croatian people are not tenants in Bosnia-Hezegovina*" (Krišto, 2022). Thus, Croats are certainly interested in sharing but also competing with Bosniaks for the ownership of the land but far less with identifying Bosnia-Herzegovina in its present constitutional form as "their state". For Croat political elite, the Croat-Bosniak political relations established in the Washington and Dayton Agreements were made at the expense of Croat political rights and they see their position within the country as a struggle for political equality. Speaking in 2012 Dragan Čović, president of the HDZ BiH, said: "*...God willing that we as people are equal with others in all elements of organization and functioning and in accordance with the Constitution. I will never give up on searching for that equality it is the only thing that secures that Bosnia-Herzegovina survives as a normal, European country."*(Dragan Čović, HDZ BiH, 16/12/2013)

In contrast to the Croat discourse, Serb MPs offer a completely opposite discursive picture when debating "homeland". For Serb MPs homeland is defined by the adjective "Serbian" (srpski), "territory" (teritorija) and "RS" (abbreviation for Republic of Srpska). Very open and direct. Milica Marković, SNSD member, speaking in 2012 explicitly disregarded Bosnia-Herzegovina as nothing more than a temporary confinement for Serb

people: "*...and thank God there are also those foreign officials who are realizing and accepting the reality that Bosnia-Herzegovina is an impossible country...so you should not take to your heart when we say that we are coming from RS because RS is the homeland of our people. Bosnia-Herzegovina is country in which we live because we have to, but it has an expiration date. It is not going to last and we will see how it will end.*" (Milica Marković, SNSD, 19/4/2012) Even when rhetoric is far less explosive and inflammatory Bosnia-Herzegovina is portrayed as little more than a space with in which Serb people live:"*...lets us join as Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats and to try and defend the space in which we live, for some this is a state, for other a homeland, and for some it is a space but this is our address at least for some time...*" (Ognjen Tadić, SDS, 1/2/2017).

Bosniak discourse on "homeland" is a little surprising. No "Bosnia" or "Herzegovina" and nothing that would suggest an emotional connection. The whole discourse looks to be determined by the words "state", "country/land" and "normality" (normalnost). This clearly points towards downplaying the emotional parts and underlying the rationality and commonality of viewing one's own state as homeland. It is also an evidence of primacy of state to homeland in Bosniak discourse. Speaking in 2017, Bakir Izetbegović president of SDA and former member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina said: "*Bosnia-Herzegovina is our only homeland. There is no sane human being that does not want peace and prosperity.*" (Dnevni Avaz, 2017) We can clearly identify the "normalcy" aspect of the discourse which is crucial to understand the Bosniak attitude towards Bosnia-Herzegovina.
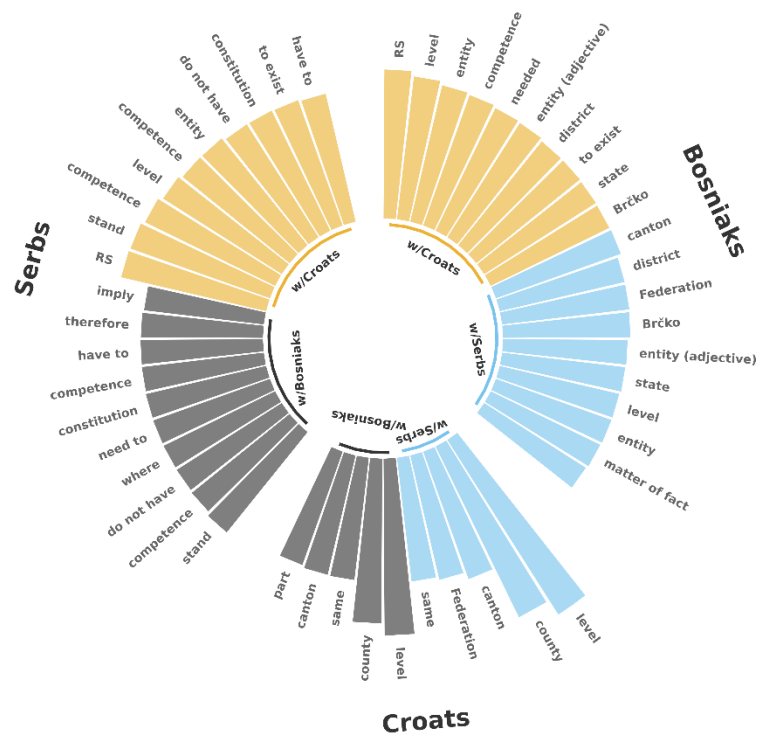
Entitles are (not) states

Figure 5. Discourse on entity in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

In their discourse Bosniak MPs dedicate similar attention to "state", "canton" (kanton) and "district" (distrikt) when speaking about "entity" (entitet), basically connecting all administrative parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They are the only ones brining the state into

discourse on entities. This is consistent with the dominant attitude among Bosniak political elite that the existence of the state cannot be depended on its internal structure. While historical claims of the "thousand years long" existence of the Bosnian state are less prevalent in the discourse of MPs compared with other public statements given in media, the fundamental idea of accepting the internal division as only administrative and treating the country as a unified whole is persistent. Speech given by Haris Silajdžić illustrates this framing: "*But one thing we cannot debate is the Constitution. According to our Constitution entities are not states…and this is why they will be protected by one multiethnic border police of the state Bosnia-Herzegovina. I do not see why this is called centralization and why we question if this is in the interest of all of us……as long as we do not comply with Dayton we are going to have these problems. Bosnia-Herzegovina is the state and entities are entities and that is written in the Constitution.*" (Haris Silajdžić, SBiH, 8/7/1999) In contrast to Croats**,** Bosniaks strongly associated word "entity" with the abbreviation "RS" but do not use either "federation" (federacija) or "canton". On the other hand, compared to Serb MPs, abbreviation "RS" is not present in their discourse but both "federation" and "canton" are. This finding is important because it shows the importance of strategic discourse construction. Bosniak MPs intentionally evaded either starting or participating in debates which could lead towards prescribing or opening possibilities of speaking about "Croat entity" or affirming status of Republic of Srpska.

For Croat MPs there is a clear connection between "entity" (entitet) and "county" (županija). The official name for counties in Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (FBiH) is cantons (kantoni). The linguistic difference here is important. Term "županija" (county) was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of the FBiH (Constitutional Court of FBiH, 1998). The Court declared term "canton" to be the only one in accordance with the

Constitution of the FBiH. Thus, when Croat MPs speak about counties referring to cantons they are technically using unconstitutional terminology. While she was acting as a Vice President of the House of Representative of the Assembly of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Borjana Krišto would respond to accusations on usage of the term "Herceg-bosanska županija": "*Until the decision by the Constitutional Court is implemented the name of my county is Herceg-bosanska and I say that with pride in front of this house.*" (Krišto 2022b) The name "Herceg-bosanska županija" has also been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of the FBiH due to its discriminatory name and symbols. The official name of the canton is "Kanton 10". This distinction is very important since it points towards significantly different understanding of what constitutes Bosnia-Herzegovina. The fact that our data is concerns transcripts from the state parliament makes the heavy usage of "counties" by Croat MPs even more consequential. It would make a lot more sense if this type of Croat discourse is based on the data from the FBiH parliament. While our analysis did not show that ideas of establishing third, "Croat entity" within FBiH plays a major role in Croat discourse on either state or entity it did show that Croats are mainly interested in counties which are administrative divisions within only one part of the country - FBiH. While cantons are supposed to be multi-ethnic, in 8 out of 10 cantons there is a clear ethnic majority - either Bosniak or Croat. The three cantons with Croat ethnic majority are traditionally considered strongholds of HDZ BiH and were part of the secessionist Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia (Hrvatska Republika Herceg-Bosna).

The two key terms used to frame the state-entity relations in Serb MPs discourse are "competence" (nadležnost) and "Constitution" (Ustav). Serbs became the most vocal constitutional defenders out of self-interest for preservation of Republic of Srpska. The system of shared competencies is always a contested topic in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the

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prerogatives of the state have been highly limited by the Daytonian design. The Dayton Peace Agreement prescribed key state competencies to two entities but in Article 3.5 left open a possibility of virtually endless transfers of competencies to the central state organs. This creates a constant tension in the Bosniak-.Serb relations and leads to a never ending blame game. What is common for Serbs and Bosniaks is use of verb "to be/to exist" (postojati). Our initial expectations that these words were used in completely opposite ways were confirmed by qualitative reading of the corpus. Serb MPs often use "to be/to exist" to construct a dependence of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the existence of Republic of Srpska. This type of rhetoric is used to negate any historical continuity of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state and reduce its existence to the post-Dayton period. Even when this argumentation is not primarily used to directly question the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina or make open threats the main line of reasoning remains virtually the same. Speech from Branko Lolić, member of, gives an example of such rhetoric: "*Republic of Srpska is going to exist only if there is Bosnia-Herzegovina and my deep conviction is that Bosnia-Herzegovina can only exist if there is RS.*" (Branko Lolić, SNS – Biljana Plavšić, 24/10/2001 and 25/10/2001) On the other hand, Bosniak use of "to be/to exist" is primarily used to signify existence of organs, procedures and practices which make Bosnia-Herzegovina a state. Speaking on the question of financial distribution Šefik Džaferovič, member of SDA and former member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina said: "*...we lived during times when this state depended on the contributions from the entities. Today that is not the case and thanks to God that we have changed that. Here exist a central state account, single account and there is law and order and that order needs to be respected.*" (Šefik Džaferović, SDA, 22/6/2011)
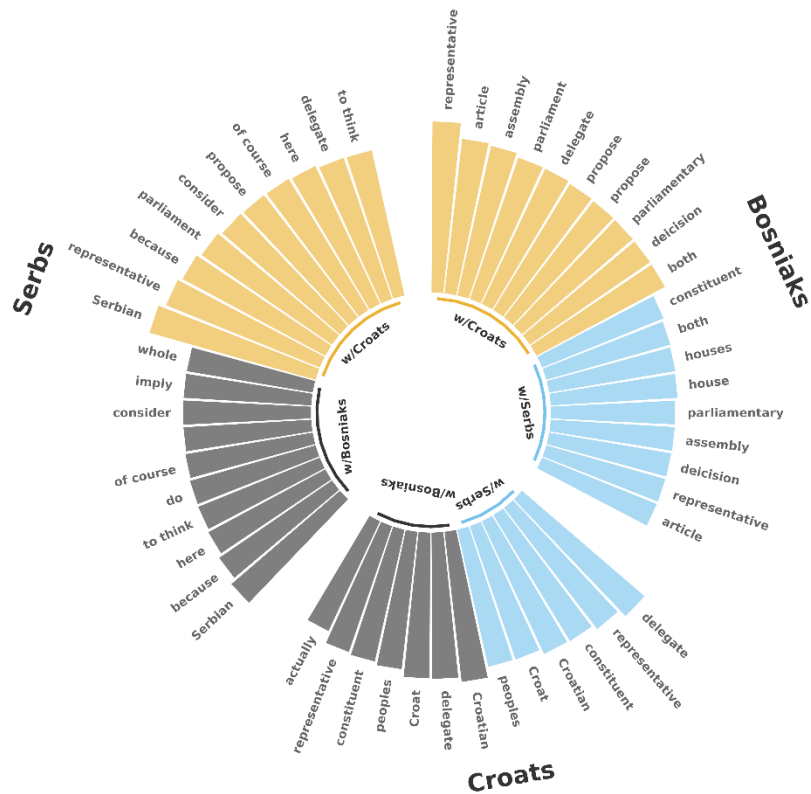
Serbs, Croats and Who Else?

Figure 6. Discourse on people in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Serb MPs use adjective "Serbian" (srpski) and Croats use "Croatian" (hrvatski) when compared to Bosniaks on the topic of "people" (narod) but in their discourse Bosniaks do not use either "Bosniak" (Bošnjak), "Bosnian" (Bosanac) or any other designation that would

signify people. This is a clear indication that while there is a strong collective identification for Serb and Croat MPs with their ethnic group there is very little emphasizes on ethnic belonging when it comes to Bosniak MPs. By far the most consequential is the fact that Bosniak MPs do not substitute lack of group association with any other identification marker that would be expected such as "citizens" (građani), "Bosnians" (Bosanci) or even "people" (narod). Bosniak discourse on "people" is purely technical in nature. The probable reason for this is the opposing Bosnian/Bosniak (Bosanac/Bošnnjak) identification markers which are a consequence of the civic/nationalist split that deeply penetrates politics in urban areas of the country. The inability of the Bosniak elites to create an environment which would foster either neutral, civic identification or strong ethnic bounds among "their population" has been the root cause of perpetually perplexed identity crisis. The Census from 2013 showed that 50,1% citizens out of whole population identify as Bosniaks while only 3.7% identify as "Others" (Ostali) (Census 2013). Anyone identifying as "Bosnian", "Bosnian-Herzegovinian" (Bosanac i Hercegovac), "Yugoslav" (Jugosloven), "Muslim" (Musliman) or any similar designation would fit into the category of "Others". But this fact does not diminish the impact that liberal and left wing intellectual and political forces with an attitude of rejection of ethnic identity have in public discourse. Bosniak MPs associated word people with the word "house" (dom) referring to the upper chamber of the parliament – House of Peoples. This is expected due to the sheer number of references MPs would normally make the in their speeches but what we found suspiring is that neither Croat nor Serb MPs do the same. They both use "representative" (zastupnički) to refer to the lower house of the parliament – House of Representatives but the excepted connection of "peoples" and "house" that we found in Bosniak discourse was missing. On the contrary, the discourse of both Serb and Croat MPs is dominated by the references to their ethnic belonging – Croat (noun and adjective) and Serb

(adjective). Neither Croat nor Serb MPs use any words that would suggest even slightest inclination toward any other identification except the one of their own ethnic group.

For Croat MPs the constituency is the key term that is related to the topic of "people". In the eyes of the Croat elites, the position of Croats is under threat of Bosniak majority rule and they see this as anti-constitutional and highly problematic for the future stability of the country. While for Bosniak political elites using numerical advantage is primarily a sign of healthy, democratic and civic society, Croats see this as a blatant example of outvoting and denying constitutionally guaranteed group rights. Croatia's Prime Minister Andrej Plenković in interview given in 2021 stated that "Croatia is not going to allow that equality of constituent peoples principle is abounded in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Plenković, 2021). Interfering in domestic affairs of another country did not seem to bother the Croatian PM if the political position of Croat people was at stake. On the other hand, Serb MPs do not dedicate nowhere near same attention to constituency as their Croat counterparts. Reason behind this is relatively simple. For political elites of Republic of Srpska those Serbs who live outside of RS are far less important and their impact on political situation in RS is marginal. While "Constitutional Court noted that the Preamble of the Constitution of BH clearly designates all of them as constituent peoples" (Begić & Delić, 2013) on the whole territory of the country, in practice the RS entity functions as a defacto state of Serbian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, the need to insist on constitutional protection of Serb people is less pronounced than in the case of Croats. Protecting quasi state Republic of Srpska is the ultimate goal. It does not come as surprising that the dominant identifications for Serb MPs are exclusively ethnic in character.

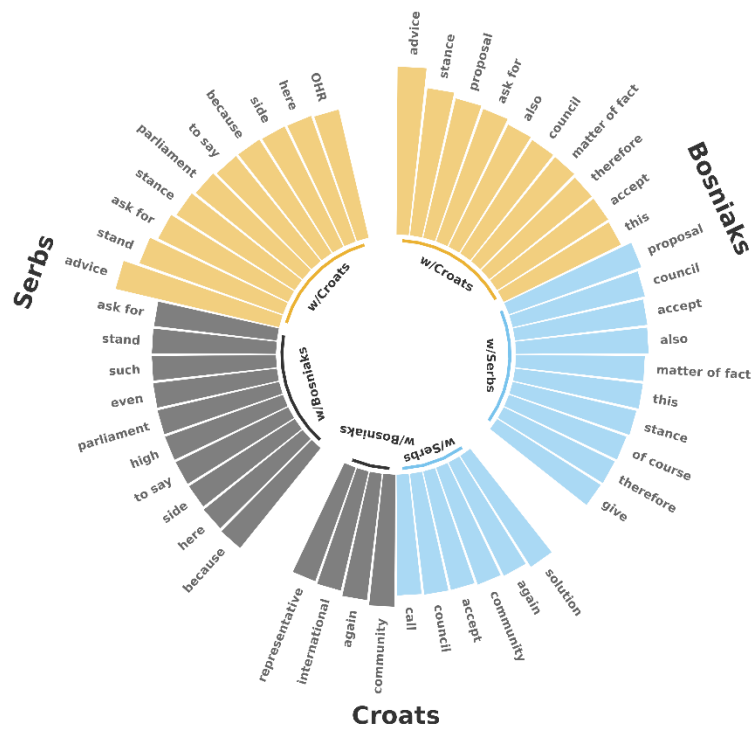**OHR – The True Sovereign of Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

Figure 7. Discourse on OHR in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina
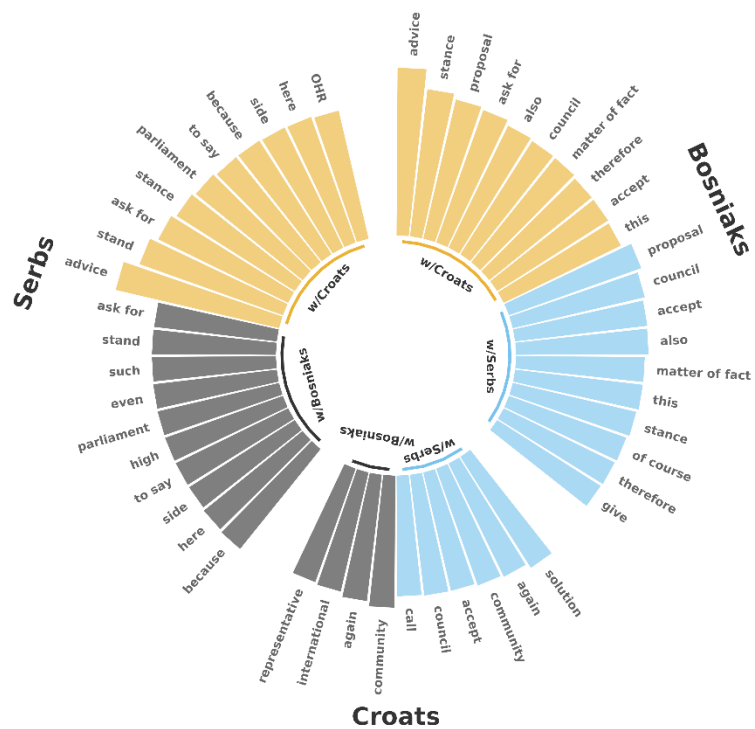
Figure 8. Discourse on OHR in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2014-2022)

On the topic of OHR we conducted two separate analyses. First one concerns our whole corpus (1998-2022) while the second one is based on data from the last two completed terms (2010-2014 and 2014-2018). Our decision to separately analyze last two completed terms was based on the hypothesis that deteriorating political relations within the country in the last few years had a significant impact on the attitudes towards OHR. Our hypothesis was

confirmed. The discourse of Serb and Croat MPs radically shifted during the previous eight years. On the other hand, the discourse of Bosniak remained relatively stable.

Discourse of Bosniak MPs on OHR is close to what our initial expectations were. For Bosniaks the problem with OHR is closely related to the practical issues of implementation of the decisions made. Reason for this type of attitude can be traced in the history of international involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina which for years has been direct towards strengthening central state organs and consequently benevolent towards Bosniak political aspirations. While both Croat and Serb MPs use word "impose" (nametnuti", Bosniaks use "enact" (donijeti) and "implement" (implementirati) instead. The distinction between these discourses is obvious. When Bosniaks talk about OHR they are interested in how and when the decisions are going to be implemented and enforced. They are far less concerned with resistance from Serbs and Croats on the grounds of suspension of democracy and sovereignty of the country.

The most unexpected finding was the use of word "decision/solution" (rješenje) in the discourse of Croat MPs. When Croat MPs talk about decisions and solutions in the context of OHR they do not explicitly see a problem with the undemocratic nature of these decisions but are concerned only with repercussions for Croats. Croats MPs emphasize the destructiveness of these decisions for their position within Bosnia-Herzegovina but nonetheless they concede that they are constitutional and legal. Due to the inherent disadvantages of Croats political position their space for exercising influence is depended on the cooperation with the international powers. They do not have institutional and territorial control over the part of the country where they are dominant ethnic group like Serbs nor numerical superiority of Bosniaks. This is why when Croats talk about OHR solutions there is a certain element of acceptance even if those solutions are not in line with their political ambitions. The political

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standing of the Croat elite within international circles had for a long time been marked by the disastrous secession adventure in 2001 which ended in large parts of its leadership removed from political life by HR Wolfgang Petritsch including Ante Jelavić Croat member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina (OHR, 2001). Only a few years later in 2005, HR Paddy Ashdown removed Dragan Čović from the office on charges from criminal and corruption (OHR, 2005). Čović was also a member of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, when we speak about Croat elites relationship to OHR we have to keep in mind that only recently with the appointment of Christian Schmidt as the HR the things started to turn in favor of HDZ BiH and Croat political establishment. Perfect illustration of this attitude is offered by Bariša Čolak: "...*for a long time we are living in Federation of imposed constitutional amendments, they were never confirmed by the Assembly of the FBiH, out of 109 amendments 73 were imposed by the High Representative and nothing happened, we have to live with that fact...*" (Bariša Čolak, HDZ BiH, 10/2/2021)

On the first look the Serb discourse look completely neutral. Words such as "look for/ask for" (tražiti), "here" (ovdje), "say" (kazati) etc. do not point towards any particular attitude or sentiment on OHR. In general, framings which constitute Serb discourse are very common language without a clear sentiment. In order to test the reason behind this we did a qualitative reading of speeches containing these words and found that behind relatively neutral word choice there is a large number of speeches with very negative sentiment. Word "community" (zajednica) is used to referee to the "international community" and its involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When speaking about OHR Serb MPs often made little difference between OHR and international community as a whole. For example, speaking on negative influence of the interventionist policies on legal system of the country Staša Koštarac said: "*It is clearly visible that the Constitutional Court has ambitions to enact*

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decisions which are not in the interest of all of us in this country and that this is being done by outvoting, by interventionism of international community…foreigners in that court, and that we have consequences if those decisions cannot be implemented…It is clearly visible that there are political elites which want this international interventionism." (Staša Koštarac, SNSD, 3/2/2016) The discourse of Serb MPs is mainly concerned with the legality of OHRs decisions. This is why their discourse is defined by word "impose" which implies certain resistance towards international involvement in domestic affairs. For Serbs the position of the High Representative as such is unacceptable and they invest a lot of effort in portraying OHR as a political actor which is directly undermining the constitution of the country. This rhetoric became increasingly radicalized with the rise of the Milorad Dodik and SNSD. What our analysis shows is that while there are more than few similarities in attitude and negative sentiment towards OHR from both Croat and Serb MPs their root causes are radically different and their alliances can only be temporary.
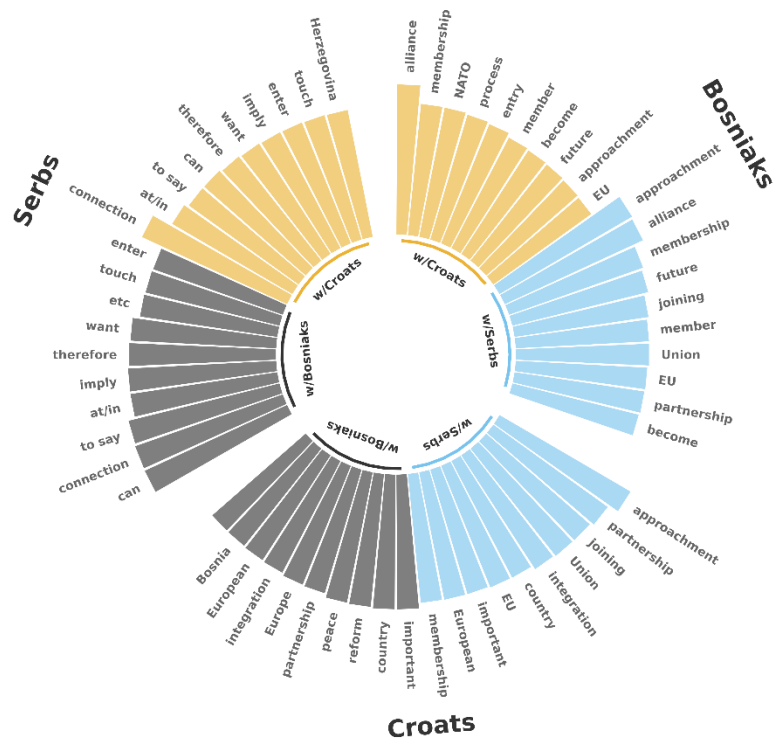
NATO – Two Against One or Is It?

Figure 9. Discourse on NATO in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Bosniak discourse with both Croats and Serbs on NATO is defined by words "full" (punopravan), "membership" (članstvo) and "joining" (pristupanje). This is clear evidence that when it comes to the NATO Bosniaks first and foremost want the full membership. This

goal is perceived to be closely linked with country's security against territorial pretensions from their neighbors. If we were to compare the Bosniak discourse on NATO and EU, the NATO discourse is much more streamlined and focused on the ultimate goal of becoming a NATO member. This goal is perceived to be more realistic as well. We do not have enough evidence to conclude that NATO is higher priority for Bosniak compared to the EU but the initial analysis points towards that direction. When their discourse is compared to Serb MPs discourse, Bosniaks are more inclined to bring the EU integrations into their framing of NATO and word "approachment/convergence" (približavanje) becomes more prominent in their discourse. This is evidence of discourse adjustment in accordance with who the message is intended for. Bosniaks understand that any potential decision on NATO membership would be impossible without political support from the Republic of Srpska.

When it comes to the Croat discourse the first thing that stands out is that Croat MPs link NATO with the EU integrations. Compared with Serbs and Bosniaks, they tend to include significant number of references that are all related to the EU. Words such as "Union" (Unija), "EU", "integration" (integracija), "European" (evropski), "Brussels" (Brisel) are EU related terminology which is not in any way directly connected to NATO. This is the main difference between Bosniak and Croat discourse. When speaking about NATO Bosniaks tend not to bring any other subjects into their discourse. Croats on the other hand frequently tie in EU with NATO as a unified process. Similar to what we have seen in the Bosniak discourse, **Croats use** "approaching/convergence" (približavanje) when compared with Serbs only. The reasoning behind this is virtually the same as in the case of Bosniaks – reluctance of Serb MPs to accept any definitive rhetoric on NATO membership.

Serb discourse resembles the Croat discourse with the inclusion of EU related terminology but Serbs do not use "full", "membership" or "joining" at all. They also do not

use any words that could be interpreted as carrying the same meaning as those words. Instead of using "membership" or "joining" Serbs use "entry" (ulazak) with both Bosniaks and Croats. The difference while at the first look might seem trivial is actually very important and consequential. For Serbs joining NATO is an option but one that is conditioned on the support given only by the citizens of RS on a referendum. The option of having a referendum on a state level is not something they would support. This massage is perfectly conveyed in a speech given by Momčilo Novaković: "*....referendum should not be an act of suspicion but an act of democracy. We think that the orientation of the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be to join NATO. And we also think that we should give citizens the opportunity to express that orientation in a referendum. I really do not see why I should doubt that our goal is to join. Of course, there are other ways, but we decide on this one.*"(Momčilo Novaković, PDP, 18/3/2008) In contrast, referendum on any other level but the state is outright rejected as even theoretical possibility by members of SDP: "*...if it happens that the state and its institutions decide to ask the citizens what they think about joining NATO, or are you for joining NATO, that is certainly not going to be done by any political party individually, nor would that be a referendum in only one entity, canton or any other organizational form within the state. Individuals cannot join NATO, nor political parties or entities but only states. And if there is a referendum, if there ever comes a time for it, it will be a referendum on the state level.*" (Magazinović Saša, SDP BiH, 29/8/2013)

The difference between "entry" (ulazak) and "joining" in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian language is that "entry" does not necessarily imply a definitive decision or a positive attitude while "joining" symbolizes an act that is already in progress. Speech from Dušanka Majkić makes the distinction between the two very clear: "*...the People's Assembly of RS made the decision that we should fulfill NATO standard. We should go towards that goal,*

work on it, because that is a standard which obliges us to be modern, to work and not just sit and hold Ministry of Defense in a state in which it is …but no political party, no matter who it is, can make decision and vote for RS to join NATO… The people that live there have a duty to say whether they want to join the organization which bombed them. That is emotional thing for us. You do not have that experience but we do and we will decide on that."(Dušanka Majkić, SNSD, 29/8/2013) NATOs involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina is part of the Dayton Peace Agreement (Annex 1A) and from this position Serb MPs cannot outright dismiss the idea but the consistent framing of the question in terms of referendum decision is an easy way out. The political elites count on the anti-NATO sentiment in both Serbia and Republic of Srpska. This is why Serb MPs can easily divert from using any explicitly anti-NATO rhetoric by pulling the "decisions of the people" argument.
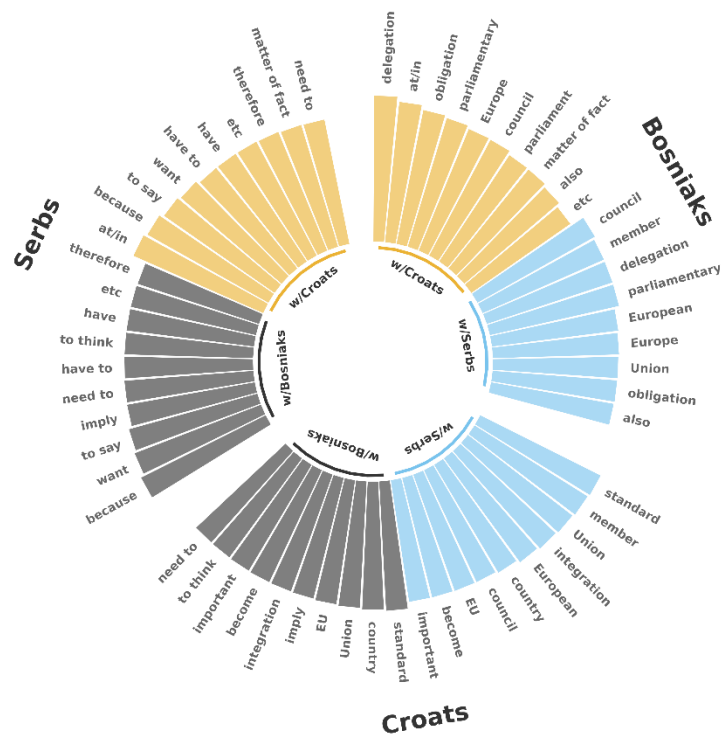
Does EU Still Matter?

Figure 10. Discourse on EU in the parliamentary debates in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Bosniak and Croat discourse show that there is a strong consensus on joining EU. Both use very similar language when talking to each other but also when they talk to Serb MPs. There are very few differences between the two. Words such as "member" (članica) and

"obligation" (obaveza) in the Bosniak discourse demonstrate understanding and willingness to work on implementing reforms. *"We want to accelerate that Euro-Atlantic integration, we want to adapt reform laws and we have to clearly mark those who would prevent realization of these goals."* (Bećirović Denis, SDP BiH, 11/2/2015). In Croats discourse word "standard" is the most dominant accompanied by "member" and "integrations". Compared with all other topics that we analyzed by far the two most similar with the most shared elements and framing conceptions are the Croat and Bosniak discourse on EU.

When it comes to the discourse of the Serbs MP there is undeniably a certain amount of distance in their speeches compared to Bosniak and Croats but verbs like "have to" (morati) and "need to" (trebati) indicate willingness to work and cooperate with EU. This speech from Slavko Jovičić show how direct support for EU membership have been at times: *"We all said – we want EU. We have to make a very swift strategy. Is that going to be trough ministry, direction or I don't know what, but we all have to be involved and eyes towards Brussels."*(Slavko Jovičić, SNSD, 29/7/2008) Somewhat more realistic but nonetheless supportive rhetoric was used by Branko Dokić in 2009: *"If we put our maximalist and political demands and even our frustrations under disguise that these are demands from EU and Brussels during the process of everything we will need to do to join EU and then try to force them it is not going to work."*(Branko Dokić, PDP, 10/6/2009) The main difference in the Serb discourse compared to two other groups is that the support for the EU is less open and transparent but besides a certain lack of pronounced enthusiasm there is very little in terms of direct negation and critique towards the EU. What Serb MPs find problematic when it comes to the process of "Europeanization" and associated "democratization" is that this can be coded language used by the Bosniaks and external actors with the intention of reducing competencies of the Republic of Srpska. In recent times the rhetoric of the governing

coalition around SNSD has become more radicalized in all aspects of political life and certain signs of EU skepticism have appeared in the Assembly debates as well. The immigrant crisis and EU response to the Covid pandemic and shortages of vaccinations were used to create an environment of skepticism and distrust towards EU. For example Sanja Vulić paints the picture of hypocritical EU on the issue of migrants: "*...European Union, if its honest, will help us by opening borders instead of giving us advices of how we should live with them...those people left their home because they are looking for a better, comfortable life, Bosnia-Herzegovina is not the place for that and that is why EU should take care of them, open the borders and they should go...*" (Sanja Vulić, SNSD, 11/1/2021) But examples such as this one are generally far and in-between. What is most striking is how different the Serb MP discourse is when compared to the rhetoric often used by the leadership of these parties in public discourse. Milorad Dodik, leader of the SNSD, is well known for a harsh anti-EU and pro-Russian rhetoric but MPs from his party or other parliamentary parties from Republic of Srpska rarely follow his example in the state Assembly. The general tone for most of the time remained cautiously dedicated to reforms and mostly technical in nature.

Main Findings: Who Needs Bosnia-Herzegovina?

From our analysis of six key dimensions of politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina it is clear that the two groups that have opposed views on almost all major political questions are Bosniaks and Serbs. Bosniak MPs see Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent and sovereignty country whose main foreign policy goals are membership in NATO and EU. While they do acknowledge the existence of Republic of Srpska they predicate it on the existence of the country itself. On the other side, for majority of Serb MPs Republic of Srpska is a de-facto state on its own. Those who are more open to compromise tie the fate of the two together but nobody is willing to even consider a future in which a Serb territorial

unit would not exist. This is something that Serb MPs are not willing to discuss. Bosnia-Herzegovina is at best a compromise and at worst a temporary obstacle on the road to second Serb state in the Balkans. The feeling of belonging is preserved exclusively for the Republic of Srpska. Our research confirms the hypothesis that main line of political conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina is along the Bosniak-Serb axis. This also strengths findings from our previous research on usage of war memory by the political elites which has shown that Bosniaks and Serbs have diametrically opposed views of the war past while Croats for the most part do not partake in these debates (Mochtak & Muharemović, 2022).

While Croat MPs have shown restraint in discussions about war past they are far more involved in debates on the present and the future of the country and here we identified important overlaps in Bosniaks and Croats discourses. More than anything else it is a shared belief that Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent country should exist. After the failed secessionist attempt in 2001 the Croat political establishment in Bosnia made a significant shift from radical to moderate positions when it comes to the view of the country (Pepić & Kasapović, 2019). Not only that among Croat MPs the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign country is not challenged but it is accepted as a homeland. Even if this acceptance is reserved only for those parts of the country where Croats are majority and could be better described as an internal homeland within Bosnia-Herzegovina (Turčalo, 2017) it is rare that Croat MPs make this explicitly clear or overemphasize the fact. In comparison to Serb MPs unmistakable insistence on Republic of Srpska as the only true homeland of Serbs, Croat discourse on homeland is intentionally left open for interpretation.

The question then becomes why aren't Bosniaks and Croats forming a stronger alliance against the increasingly radicalized Serb secessionism and why are Croat elites in recent years adopting some of the skepticism towards Bosnia's future characteristic of the

Serb discourse? Croats are turning to "pure ethnopolitics" (Bošnjak et al., 2020) in order to maximize their pressure on international community and European Union with the help of official Zagreb since they understand that key decisions regarding Bosnia's future and internal institutional order are to be decided. In this bargaining process the Croat leadership around Dragan Čović and HDZ BiH is willing to enter into temporary alliance with the SNSD leader Milorad Dodik but ultimately their goals lead them in a different direction. The DPA has already given Serbs far more than Croats are hoping to gain in a new restructuring of Bosnia and if they are ever to achieve their goals of institutionalizing HDZ BiH as a constituent party they will need strong allies within the Bosniak corpus. Dodik and secessionist Serb elite can be a good partner to leverage influence but ethnoconfederal Bosnia which Croats are hoping for can never be created without a new Bosniak-Croat deal. It is increasingly clear that this is understood among the key international decision makers as well with the unhidden support that was given to those political actors in the Bosniak corpus who showed willingness to find a common ground with Čović. This shows that Bosniaks are willing to share Bosnia with two other ethnic groups but only the whole country not the Federation part of it. For Bosniaks the fact that the country was saved during the war and that a heavy price was paid to maintain its independence and territorial integrity is of utmost importance and stands in the center of most of Bosniak MPs worldview. There is a strong belief that Bosnian War was fought for the country itself and not for dominance over others or even protection of one's own ethnic group. The feeling of uneasiness that Bosniaks have with identifying as "only" one of the three groups is not only frowned upon by certain political groups but also perceived as a potential source of trouble. The balancing act between civic and ethnic by the ruling SDA was from the start riddled with contradictions. Bosniak MPs would much rather embrace a civic, national identity instead of an ethnic one. This will

remain the biggest obstacle in Bosniak-Croat relations and key issue to solve for anyone attempting to re-stabilize Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When it comes to the international dimension and foreign policy goals of Bosnia-Herzegovina Bosniaks and Croats have a clear consensus on the road towards Euro-Atlantic integrations with some minor differences. Croat MPs discourse is strongly pro-EU while Bosniaks put more emphasis on becoming a NATO member but we found no consequential evidence that MPs from either group espouse any serious reservation towards either of the two. Croats understand that EU membership would be improbable without NATO and Bosniaks perceive joining NATO as only slightly more realistic foreign policy goal. What we found surprising is that Serb MPs opposition towards potential NATO membership is not as clear as it might seem. Taking into account that overall sentiment of Serb people is perceived to be negative towards NATO Serbs MPs often fall back to safe cover of "people's decision" but they are not outright rejecting the possibility. Recent research from the Atlantic Initiative has also indicated that there is a certain understanding of advantages to NATO membership over alliance with Russia and China among the population in Republic of Srpska (Barimac, 2023).

What bring the Serbs and Croats closer is negative attitude towards direct external involvement in domestic affairs but this attitude is a result of a significantly different conceptions of why foreigners imposing decisions is problematic. While Serbs are fundamentally opposed to the direct external involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina as such, Croats find issues with the way they have been treated by the external overseers. Their shared resentment brings them closer but only for as long as international interventionism is seen as working in the favor of Bosniaks. The OHR has certainly been of the more polarizing topics in post-war Bosnian politics but we found no evidence that could support hypothesis that

relation to the OHR is what principally brings together or separates political elites. On the contrary, our findings suggest that involvement by the international community is judged only by the usefulness to the goals and ambitions of domestic elites. The Serb MPs are the only ones showing strong and consistent negative sentiment.

The membership in EU is the only question of politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina where conflict among political elites is low in intensity and rare in occurrence. While discourse of Croat and Bosniak MPs is almost unanimously pro-European, Serbs offer a more cautious attitude. But despite this, the overall conclusion is that EU offers a possibility of building a consensus. In recent years we found evidence that the rhetoric of the Serb MPs is slowly but steadily moving from positive-neutral to neutral-negative. This is a worrying trend which was in good measure enabled by the indecisiveness and appeasement shown by the EU. While some authors emphasize the lack of intrinsic motivation for Europeanization by the political elites as a root cause of the failure of conditionality (Džihić & Wieser, 2011), the reality is that the inconsistency of the EU's approach is what enabled and in a good measure inspired the elite behavior. The elites learned not to take the EU's demands too seriously since there was never a significant blowback. Signing SAA in even after failing to reform if a perfect example of how EU will yield if pushed hard enough (Sebastian, 2009). Inherent contradictions of conditionality mechanism that at the same time insists on adopting reforms that undermine restrictive ethnic power-sharing but does not call for substantial alterations of the constitutional framework that enables it in the first place reduced the credibility of Brussels and made the EU look incompetent. Despite this, the population of the country shows persistent belief in European future and discourses of MPs from all three groups reflect this attitude.

Conclusions

In our previous research we have shown how use of war memory in parliament differs from the dominant paradigm of a three sided conflict and is better explained by the "2 + 1 model" (Mochtak & Muharemović, 2022). We learned that when we think about conflictual relations in Bosnia's politics we should always keep in mind that the actual power dynamics are much more complex than simple *all against all.* In this article, we demonstrated that while Serb and Croat MPs tend to stand close but with important differences on questions of institutionalization of collective ethnic identities and opposition to the role of OHR as an external overseer, Bosniaks and Croats form a much stronger bond on the questions perpetuating country's international affairs (EU and NATO). In addition to this, Bosniaks and Croats share a common acceptance of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state and as a homeland. What separates Bosniak and Croats is opposite conceptions of who is the true bearer of sovereignty – individuals (citizens) or groups (peoples). From this we can draw conclusion that any all-encompassing approach which tends to reduce the complexity of ethnic power dynamics in Bosnia-Herzegovina and does not account for significant differences depended on the type and importance of political issue cannot be supported by data. Simply said, Bosnia was and still is a much more than a country in which „obvious" Serb and Croat anti-state coalition is opposed to Bosniak unitarism. This was not true in 1990 and only less so today.

The second most important finding of our research is the potential for a consensus building that includes representatives of all three ethnic groups on the topic of EU. What our research has shown is that any major political issue in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be a source of potential conflict but with one important exception - European Union. What is keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina together is the promise of a better, European future in which majority of

its population still believes. The political elites simply cannot ignore this fact and thus they adjust their discourses accordingly. But waiting for the domestic elites to arrive at the solution of a problem that they were only passive accomplices in creating is nothing more than a wishful thinking. Conditiong them into giving up their interests for uncertain promises is not going to work either. Even if there was a domestic political force capable of gaining enough momentum thought the whole country to transcend the ethnic, religious and political lines of separation it would still need a political tool akin to the Bonn powers to solve the Daytonian constitutional knot. It is illusory to expect that something like this can happen with or without external support. The only true alternative to constant decline further and further into the abyss of ethnocratic kleptocracy and demographic withering is in the hands of Brussels. If Europe wants to be perceived as a global power it needs to show that it can exercise economic and political power in its own backyard if for nothing else then for its own selfish geopolitical reasons. Because if Europe misses another opportunity in Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a high chance that other regional powers won't.

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Conclusions

The post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina is undeniably a country of contradictions. This should not come as surprising to anyone since contradicting elements were built into its constitution by design. The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) was from the moment it was signed in 1995 exercise in politics of compromise. But besides forcing the three warring parties along with Serbia and Croatia to compromise on their aspirations for territorial expansion and dominance, the international designers of the DPA pressured by the goal of achieving success by any means necessary compromised themselves in the process of negotiations. The results satisfied no one and in reality offered no sustainable solutions.

It is unfortunate that these inherent contradictions of the Daytonian political system often find their way into some of the best research in political science on Bosnia. Simply said, any analysis which does not account for the fact that contradicting elements are crucial part of what post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina is cannot escape the destiny of sustaining these contradictions. For some researchers this fact results in losing motivation to understand how these contradictions can be incorporated into their research and consequently losing interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For others, it comes as good excuse to simply dismiss Bosnia-Herzegovina as a valuable case or reduce it to most simplistic theories of historical determinism. This thesis is attempt at not succumbing to either of the two.

The key motivation that guided this research was realization that a significant portion of difficulties with understanding and interpreting critical events from Bosnia's past stem from the lack of evidence used in research. This problem leads to unverifiable conclusions about the present and problematic predictions about the future. With this fact in mind, it was of critical importance that each of the five articles in this thesis is grounded in solid evidence and supported by meaningful data. For the historical research on cleavages, democratization

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and adoption of electoral rules the main sources of data were primary and secondary archival sources and official statistics on municipal elections combined with socio-economic data. For more recent, post-war research the data from the transcripts of parliamentary sessions in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina was used along with the critical discourse analysis of the whole corpus. This data centric research approach was the crucial underpinning of all findings and contributions presented in this project.

The main contributions of this thesis can be grouped into three different categories: theoretical, methodological and historical contributions. The main theoretical contribution consists of advancing our understanding of democratization in post-communist societies. We test and prove validity of classical theories of electoral system choice in Western democracies for East European post-communist context. We use previously neglected cases of Yugoslav republics and demonstrate their importance for understanding of the third wave democratization. In addition, we offer suggestions how to refine and improve the theory. As our research has shown, political parties should not be treated as unitary actors and focus should be on those actors who had real decision-making power. This upgraded and re-worked theoretical approach was applied to the study of the Bosnian communist leadership during the period leading up to the first democratic elections. Focusing on those actors who made the actual decisions and had a decisive influence over when, and under which rules the elections would take place allowed for a sustainably different view to the one which places the SKBiH on the reformist side of the Yugoslav political spectrum in the late 1989 and 1990. This thesis also makes significant contribution in applying theory of political cleavages to a communist context.

When it comes to the post-war period we demonstrated the failures of literature to accurately describe the interethnic relations and positions taken on the war past among the

political representatives of Bosnia's three ethnic groups. We challenge reductionist and simplistic views of interethnic dynamics and prove that when we think about how elites form alliances or engage in confrontation we should take into account that these processes should not be evaluated on case by case bases. Certain topics and certain periods outweigh others in terms of importance and impact they have but in order to understand how they fit into together and form long lasting ideas about politics a more holistic approach is needed. Compared to the existing literature, our approach to test political positions of elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina over long period of time and across multiple dimensions of politics resulted in a meaningfully different view of what Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats want in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a somewhat similar manner, our research on the topic of usage of war memory in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina challenged the dominant "three-sided conflict" interpretation and proposed a new "2+1" model which can help us better understand how politicians use war in the institutional setting.

In the domain of methodological achievement and contributions of this thesis major goals were accomplished in developing and applying a completely innovative research design which combines natural language processing (NLP) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods. Our research demonstrated how quantitative and qualitative methods can be used together in order to extract maximum value from both. We believe that our approach possesses qualities which can be further improved, advanced, and modified to become applicable in a wide variety of different research fields and used to tackle diverse range of problems. In addition to this, we demonstrated how using previously underutilized data in new ways to ground historical research in statistical analysis can help us uncover some of the previously inaccessible part of history.

The major contribution of the thesis is its data based historical approach to legacies of two wars (World War II and Bosnian War) that defined Bosnia's past and present. While we researched both topics from the standpoint of political science and were primarily interested in how legacies of war are shaped and used by the political elites, to which aims, and under which conditions, our research can be further utilized by historians and political historiographers as a roadmap in their own research. Gathering data for this type of research was and still is a challenge. Even when there is a significant corpus of data that can be accessed, the issue of reliability is always present when dealing with regime statistics and outputs from a closed system without mechanisms of validation outside of the party-state structures. Simply said, there are strong reasons why we should be skeptical of regime data. Our article on cleavages under communism demonstrates how different data sources can be combined together in order to best optimize data for reliability and ensure usability. We rely on a generalized estimating equations (GEE) modeling approach for the non-democratic elections (1978, 1982, and 1986) and fractional logit model for the analysis of the first democratic elections.

The value of our historical research on the political consequences of the World War II and the Bosnian War has been further strengthened by contemporary events. Today when there is another war on the European soil the lessons learned from the fall of Yugoslavia and the fall of Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina can be more valuable than ever. Proper understanding of what happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina, why it happened and most importantly how traumatic experiences can be overcome can help us deal with what is to come in Ukraine. In turn, it is of paramount importance to understand why the same amount of support provided to Ukraine was not given to Bosnia-Herzegovina and how these failures to do so resulted in a country that more than thirty years after it was engulfed by the terrible

flames of war is still considered to be Europe's weak spot and potential source of renewed violent conflicts. This fact alone guarantees that this research can be useful source for those who will think about Bosnia-Herzegovina in the future.

The avenues for potential research that would be based on the evidence and findings presented in this thesis are numerous. The thesis deals with diverse range of topics and naturally not all individual segments that tie into the general story could be persuaded to their logical conclusions. This final chapter will offer some ideas about possible ways in which this research can be utilized for further explorations.

The story about the leadership of the SKBiH and their ties to the top generals of the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslovenska narodna armija – JNA) in the final months prior to the elections has been only sketched out in this thesis. The research goal was to understand under which conditions democratization process unfolded in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990. Fully expanding on the story about connections between high ranking politicians of the party in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the JNA generals went well and beyond the principal aim. These connections deserve a dedicated study which would go into much more detail and try to uncover the true nature of this relationship. Based on the evidence we presented we can claim that there were contacts and that the army played a role in the decision to postpone the elections. What we do not know is to what extent was army's influence decisive and primary cause for this decision. For this type of research a rigorous and dedicated archival work would be required in order to uncover all elements that were at play during this time. It would certainly be a complex and challenging endeavor but the article "Constrained Choices: How Bosnian Communists Lost Their Party Before Losing Elections" can serve as a solid starting point.

In our post-war research we provide a systematic overview of positions taken by the political representatives in the parliament on six crucial dimensions of Bosnia's politics, but we believe that our dataset combined with our theoretical and methodological approach can be adopted and expanded to each of the six dimensions individually. Such an undertaking was not possible in this thesis due to the sheer amount of time and space it would take, but it certainly remains an open possibility. Tackling each issue separately would allow for a much more detailed exploration that would be unburdened by the constraints of our systematic approach. The value of such undertaking cannot be overstated. Data based explorations of why political elites cannot seem to find a common language in Bosnia-Herzegovina even after violence stopped would offer serious contribution to the field of post-conflict research.

The parts of this thesis dedicated to the legacies of the World War II and the Bosnian War offer some guideline that can be followed in both historical and political sciences. The application of the theory of cleavages from the article "Cleavages Under Communism: Voters and Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1978-1990" can be in a similar manner used for the Bosnian War as well. The blueprint for this type of investigation is already constructed in the article "The Abyss of Ethnic Division: Two Decades of Discussing War in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina". Availability and reliability of data would be far less problematic than what we have faced and the potential scientific achievement could rival or possibly even surpass what we have accomplished.

In any case, the need for well thought out, carefully planned, meticulously designed and successfully executed research projects dedicated to Bosnia-Herzegovina will certainly not end with this thesis. Today when we are witnessing that the skepticism about the viability of the DPA and its international backers to act as a safety guard against renewed tensions and possible escalation of violence is almost unambiguously conveyed by all major political

forces in the country the importance of understanding Bosnia-Herzegovina, its constitution, its people and political representative is probably the highest since the war ended. The DPA was never supposed to be a permanent, long lasting constitutional arrangement, it was design with a very limited goal in mind, but it became entrenched in the political life of the country to that measure that today it is almost impossible to envision that it is ever going to be replaced with a less perplexing and more democratic constitutional arrangement. With the levels of mistrust only raising among the political elites it is hard to imagine what could be the trigger that would lead to a major, democratic change. It is certainly difficult to expect that it could be a move made by the domestic power holders. Their rule has become synonymous with the Daytonian contradictions. If this research can help future decisions-makers to understand these contradictions at least a little better and dissuade them from making the same mistakes that their predecessors did, it will accomplish its goal.