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**THE NARRATIVE OF SECESSION AND A THIRD ENTITY: DE-
EUROPEANIZATION AND THE CRITICAL ROLE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA SINCE 2015**

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Overview of Europeanization Literature	9
i. Debates about Europeanization.....	9
ii. Identity in the Context of Europeanization and De-Europeanization.....	11
Chapter 3: Design and Methodology	14
i. The Merit of Examining Identity.....	14
ii. Why Use BiH as a Test Case?.....	14
iii. Theoretical Framework and Analysis.....	16
Chapter 4: Ethnic Turmoil in the FBiH: Bosnian Croats and a “Third Entity”	19
i. Europeanization with Conditions.....	19
ii. The Return of Herceg-Bosna and Croatia.....	23
iii. Re-Hashing War-Time Narratives	27
Chapter 5: Ethnic Grievances in the RS: Bosnian Serbs and the Quest for Secession	29
i. Europeanization’s Incompatibility with Bosnian Serbs.....	29
ii. “Greater Serbia” and Serbian Identity.....	32
iii. A Troubled History and Contemporary Grudges.....	35
Chapter 6: Overview and Conclusions	38
References	41

List of Abbreviations

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

CEE – Central and Eastern European; refers to the 10 countries who obtained EU membership in 2004

DPA – Dayton Peace Accords

EU – European Union

FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (entity)

HDZ BiH - Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine (Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

HDZ 1990 - Hrvatska demokratska zajednica 1990 (Croatian Democratic Union 1990)

HVO - Hrvatsko vijeće obrane (Croatian Defense Council)

ICTY – International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

OHR – Office of the High Representative

PDP - Партија демократског напретка (Party of Democratic Progress)

RS – Republika Srpska (entity)

SAA – Stabilization and Association Agreement

SDA - Stranka demokratske akcije (Party of Democratic Action)

SDP - Socijaldemokratska partija (Social Democratic Party)

SDS - Српска демократска странка (Serb Democratic Party)

SNSD - Савез независних социјалдемократа (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since its conception in the 1990s, Europeanization has become one of the most popular theoretical approaches in the field of EU enlargement¹. Originally defined by Ladrech (1994) as “an incremental process of re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the extent that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the [organizational] logic of national politics and policy making”, Europeanization became a theoretical framework commonly used to describe the EU’s influence and impact on institution-building, political processes and norm transmission in candidate countries in the middle of the enlargement process, otherwise described as “EU conditionality”². The critical role that EU conditionality played in the ascension of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEs) in 2004 served to further cement the potent presence of Europeanization as a theoretical framework, being labeled as a “success story” and generating optimism towards future enlargements³. The CEE ascension portrayed the image that Europeanization was a linear process that was guaranteed to occur as long as the EU continued to provide incentives and rewards⁴. That optimism would unfortunately not last. The next cycle of enlargements taking place in the Western Balkans and Turkey quickly challenged the dominance of EU conditionality, forcing Europeanization and EU conditionality to be re-evaluated. As EU conditionality weakened and candidate countries faltered in their institutional reforms, ascension was awarded to the singular country of Croatia in 2013 while countries like Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro remained trapped in a tangle of corruption and non-compliance that even EU incentives could not overcome⁵. The previous certainty that EU conditionality was the key driver of Europeanization was no longer watertight⁶.

Countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia, all candidate countries that continue to experience serious compliance problems with Europeanization reform since 2013, have robustly challenged the success and efficacy of EU conditionality, calling into question the perception of Europeanization as a “linear process”, and demonstrating that Europeanization can

¹ Ladrech 1994; Castaldo & Pinna 2018

² Pg. 199; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005

³ Castaldo & Pinna 2018, pg. 264

⁴ Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005

⁵ Subotic 2011; Castaldo & Pinna 2018

⁶ Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2019; Zhelyakova et. al 2019

regress, stall, or even fail outright in a process called “De-Europeanization”⁷. Lingering warring identities and ethnic conflict in particular have played a significant role within the current wave of candidate countries, blocking the transmission of EU institutions and values and stalling progress on further Europeanization, creating the compliance problems currently seen in countries like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina⁸. This has called into question whether the EU’s civic approach to norm and institution transmission is able to overcome lingering factors such as warring identities or if Europeanization is even compatible at all with certain identities.

Especially within the last few years it has become clear that, while Europeanization is still an appropriate framework for understanding the phenomenon of enlargement and there are certainly still successful instances of Europeanization, the possibility of failed, stalled, or even regressed Europeanization is quickly turning into a reality in the Western Balkans while the literature lags behind⁹. Only in the past few years has the concept of De-Europeanization emerged within Europeanization literature, leaving the topic of stalled Europeanization in a precarious and underdeveloped state as much of the Europeanization literature has adopted an EU-centric focus on positive outcomes. Not only is a more elaborate and clear understanding of the impact of domestic factors needed in Europeanization literature, but also further elaboration on the concept of De-Europeanization is needed in order to provide Europeanization literature with a renewed perspective on both the current muddled situation in the Western Balkans and potentially future enlargements.

In order to both further the study of De-Europeanization and further elaborate on the role of identity in stalling Europeanization, this paper will focus on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (here forth known as BiH) and the role that ethnic identity plays in creating a situation of De-Europeanization within the state of BiH. To illustrate my case I will focus on ethnic groups from both entities: Bosnian Croats in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Bosnian Serbs in the Republika Srpska (RS). Focusing on these ethnic groups makes for a particularly potent test case as it demonstrates how ethnic identities and domestic factors can be exploited to stall Europeanization and overpower other influencing factors.

⁷ Castaldo & Pinna 2018, pg. 264

⁸ Subotic 2011

⁹ Ibid.

In the FBiH, The Bosnian Croat narrative has consistently centered itself around exclusion and victimhood; constituting only 22% of FBiH's population, Bosnian Croats "...continually have had to negotiate their identity within the Bosnian state, as well as in relation to Croatia –as full 'co- ethnics' or as 'ethnically privileged migrants'". As a result, "Bosnian Croats never forged a strong Bosnian identity; their identity remained, fundamentally, Croatian"¹⁰. Bosnian Croat political elites repeatedly use this Bosnian Croatian identity to emphasize their status as the smallest recognized ethnic group within BiH and portray themselves as a victim of the DPA. Victimization narratives focused on the deprivation of their own "autonomous entity"¹¹, reconstructing narratives surrounding the Bosnian War (1992-1995) to portray Bosnian Croats as noble victims that fell victim to international intervention and ethno-nationalist politics¹². The distinct lack of a universal Bosnian identity, combined with strongly ingrained beliefs about victimhood and loss, paints a picture of both domestic and international skepticism. Belonging neither to BiH or to the EU, Bosnian Croat political elites actively distance themselves from adopting European norms in favor of promoting ideas of a third Croat entity within BiH and strengthening the presence of their ethnic group. Because the constitutional structure of BiH mandates that 5 of the 15 seats within the House of Peoples is reserved for Bosnian Croats and the tripartite rotating Presidency ensures that a Bosnian Croat holds the presidency within each 24-month period, the political significance of Bosnian Croats and their conceptions of identity cannot be ignored¹³.

Within the RS, where more than 80% of its residents are Bosnian Serbs and the entity makes up 49% of BiH's territory, the significance of Bosnian Serb identity also cannot be underestimated¹⁴. Like Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs have no conception of a universal Bosnian identity and do not want one, preferring to identity as either purely Bosnian Serbs or as part of the Serb diaspora; as Perry (2018) claims, "In the RS, one seldom if ever hears the words 'Bosnia and Herzegovina', but it is rare for an official sentence to be uttered without the two words 'Republika Srpska...'"¹⁵. At the core of Bosnian Serb identity is a pervasive and

¹⁰ Subotic 2016, pg. 120

¹¹ Hasic 2020, pg. 21

¹² Subotic 2016

¹³ Swimelar 2019

¹⁴ Hulse & Keil 2020

¹⁵ Perry 2018, pg. 122

consistent denial of war crimes. To Bosnian Serbs, the “West” is a bogeyman dedicated to blaming Bosnian Serbs for the Bosnian War and the RS is the physical manifestation of the Bosnian Serb cause to fight for their ethnicity and identity¹⁶. There is little room for negotiation within Bosnian Serb identity narratives; external actors such as the EU that support the widely accepted conclusion that Bosnian Serb committed war crimes in the Bosnian War are routinely denounced and dismissed.¹⁷ Like Bosnian Croat political elites, Bosnian Serb political elites actively distance themselves from Europeanization. Their deeply ingrained beliefs about war crime denial effectively prevent Bosnian Serbs from complying with the EU’s demands for cooperation with the ICTY and creates an environment of De-Europeanization, wherein the EU becomes the enemy of Bosnian Serb identity. Both ethnic groups and their respective political elites view Europeanization as an uphill battle precisely because Europeanization threatens deeply ingrained beliefs regarding their ethnicity and identity. This leads me to my research question: To what extent does ethnic identity create conditions of De-Europeanization?

The paper will proceed as follows. I first discuss the broader scholarly debate over Europeanization and provide definitions for identity and De-Europeanization within Europeanization literature. I then elaborate on the significance of studying ethnic identity within the field of Europeanization, justifying my decision to use BiH as a case study. Introducing Subotic’s (2011) theoretical framework on identity divergence as my main method of analysis, I then provide an informal set of codes to shape my analysis and elaborate on how identity divergence can help explain the phenomenon of De-Europeanization. This theoretical framework is then applied to the cases of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs, focusing on their rhetoric towards the EU and Europeanization. In order to properly identify and analyze ethnic identity, I use archival research, public surveys, public speeches and interviews, and newspaper articles to present a structured and focused hybrid content analysis of political elite rhetoric. It is my expectation that ethnic identity poses a significant negative influence on the process of Europeanization, particularly when ethnic identity becomes entrenched in political discourse.

¹⁶ Hronešová 2021, pg. 6-7

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 9

Chapter 2: Overview of Europeanization Literature

Debates about Europeanization

Before delving into the situation in BiH, it is important to discuss the contemporary state of Europeanization literature. As Castaldo & Pinna (2018) claim, “Europeanization has become one of the most widely used theoretical approaches for studying the EU and its impact on domestic policies, institutions, and political processes of both member states and candidate countries”¹⁸. It is thus safe to say that Europeanization encompasses a wide variety of debates. This literature review however will focus only on the debates relevant to my research question.

Much of Europeanization literature has focused on and emphasized the idea of Europeanization as a top-down rationalist process that has been interpreted to simply mean “the process by which states adopt EU rules”¹⁹. The top-down approach elaborates on mechanisms of conditionality and external pressure from the EU as the primary driver of Europeanization²⁰. Top-down rationalist arguments have been dominated especially by the External Incentives Model (EIM), coined by Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005) in the wake of the 2004 CEE accession. Viewing EU membership as a bargaining chip, EIM is a “rational-choice bargaining model” rooted in reciprocal conditionality; the EU enforces its rules by providing rewards to candidate states for fulfilling its demands, and the framework of this model hinges on four prongs: determinacy, credibility, state capacity of candidate countries, and domestic costs²¹. Despite the model’s intention to provide a dual focus on both the EU and the candidate country, proponents of the model have focused heavily on the issue of Europeanization predominantly from an EU-centric perspective, attributing stalled Europeanization to EU failures in reciprocity and credibility²². This perspective, while highlighting the differences between the Eastern and Balkan enlargement, has taken a narrow approach to the issue that has the potential to exclude historical considerations and underestimate domestic actors²³. Scholars such as Pech (2016) and Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2019) place an emphasis on conflicts between member states and candidate states and subsequent enlargement fatigue experienced by current member states,

¹⁸ Pg. 264

¹⁹ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, pg. 7; Subotic 2011, pg. 311

²⁰ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005

²¹ Zhelyazkova et. al 2017, pg. 3; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005

²² Vachudova 2013; Pech 2016

²³ Castaldo & Pinna 2018

while glossing over domestic costs faced by the Western Balkans that could be contributing to these issues²⁴. These perspectives portray an assumption of a receiver-giver relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans, where the Balkans merely respond to the behaviors of the EU, instead of having agency or behaviors of their own. In addition, the EU conditionality model has already been somewhat challenged in recent years. Bieber (2011) and Börzel (2011) for example claim that state capacity is the biggest domestic impediment to Europeanization; states like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia function as “minimalist states”²⁵ with extremely low decision-making capabilities and low domestic control that severely hinders their potential to follow the EU’s conditionality and influence²⁶.

Given the broad umbrella that Europeanization encompasses, scholars like Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber (2016) and Kaliber (2012) have advocated for a distinction between EU-ization and Europeanization; while the first term represents “a formal and technical process of alignment with EU institutions, policies and legal structures”²⁷, Europeanization is defined as “a context or situation where European norms, policies and institutions are (re-)negotiated and constructed by different European societies and institutions and have an impact on them”²⁸, making the distinction that Europeanization is meant to be understood from a socio-political and socio-cultural standpoint that places an emphasis on domestic contexts. A prominent example has been the social-learning model, which aims to describe events from a constructivist approach; it emphasizes that states adopt Europeanization because of a “logic of appropriateness” and believe that Europeanization is driven by “socialization, persuasion, and habit” rather than the prospect of external rewards and material benefits²⁹. Although a well-elaborated and explained model that expanded the Europeanization literature to consider socio-cultural factors, the model tends to assume states who Europeanize do so only because of this logic of appropriateness while excluding other factors and tends to exclude cases of failed or stalled Europeanization³⁰. As the paper will show, the BiH case of stalled Europeanization is not due to issues of appropriateness,

²⁴ Pg. 824-825

²⁵ Minimalist states are states who contain limited legitimacy, weak and decentralized domestic strength, and a very weak scope of command (Bieber 2011, pg. 1786)

²⁶ Ibid, pg. 1791

²⁷ Castaldo & Pinna 2018, pg. 266

²⁸ Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber 2016, pg. 4

²⁹ Subotic 2011, pg. 311; Zhelyazkova et. al 2019, pg. 2

³⁰ Subotic 2011

as socialization of certain norms and values has continued within BiH even as Europeanization is negatively impacted by prominent political elites³¹.

The literature on domestic factors expanded further as the social-learning model failed to fully explain variations of Europeanization. Scholars like Konitzer (2011) and Vachudova (2013) focused on the role and competitiveness of local political parties and how successful pushes for Europeanization can influence Europeanization acceptance³². While these branches of Europeanization literature come closer to explaining the phenomenon of domestic factors and their influence on Europeanization, the BiH case struggles to fall into these categories as well. Political parties in BiH have been described as existing in a “stalemate” and contain a distinct “lack of competition”. Since 1990, Bosnian Croat politics has been largely dominated by just one political party, the HDZ BiH, specifically because HDZ BiH exists to validate the Bosnian Croat narrative of a Croatian homeland and unity for Bosnian Croats. Pushing the narrative that the Bosnian Croat population is under threat and allowing multiethnic and civic-based political parties would be “too risky”³³, HDZ BiH has long used ethnic identity to dominate local politics and influence Bosnian Croats to support ethno-nationalism. Similarly in the RS, Bosnian Serb nationalist parties have also dominated local politics, with little room for civic-oriented, multi-ethnic political parties. Since the RS’s inception, the entity has been dominated by just two political parties, both of which are aggressively-ethnonationalist and have monopolized RS politics³⁴. The almost unilateral dominance of singular ethno-nationalist political parties indicates that in the case of BiH, local political parties do not exert a significant amount of influence and we must look elsewhere³⁵.

De-Europeanization and Identity

The struggle to Europeanize and the insufficiency of current debates has merited a closer look at De-Europeanization and the possible causes. For the purposes of this analysis, I will use Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber (2016)’s definition of De-Europeanization, which is “the loss or weakening of the EU/ Europe as a normative/political context and as a reference point in

³¹ Swimelar 2019

³² Pg. 1857

³³ Subotic 2016, pg. 121

³⁴ Hronešová 2021

³⁵ Hulse & Keil 2020, pg. 343

domestic settings and national public debates”³⁶. Under this definition, the phenomenon of De-Europeanization represents negative attitudes and perceptions of the EU within the political and domestic sphere, especially towards values and norms that the EU embraces and demands of candidate countries; certain domestic factors create an environment of contestation wherein EU values clash with other domestic attitudes and beliefs. It also means that, similar to how processes of Europeanization can have varying outcomes, De-Europeanization also lies on a spectrum where responses to Europeanization can range from mild disagreement over certain EU norms to complete incompatibility with the EU. While numerous factors can contribute to negative perceptions of Europeanization, the case of identity appears to play a distinct role in BiH’s De-Europeanization phenomenon, meriting a closer examination of how identity falls into Europeanization literature.

While there are also many definitions of identity and what it encompasses, for the purpose of this analysis I will refer to Subotic’s (2011) definition of identity, which is “...a broadly shared understanding of a collective self as having distinctiveness and purpose in relation to other states” in addition to “a commitment to shared political goals and purpose... a collective understanding of what are appropriate political principles and practices—what kinds of political acts are right, which ones are wrong”³⁷. In this sense, a state’s decision to Europeanize or not to Europeanize requires both a shared understanding that Europeanization is a good political decision for the identity as a whole and an acceptance that joining the EU will not compromise the distinctiveness and purpose that constitutes the identity in question. The “distinctiveness and purpose” also allows for narratives that separate certain communities from others; identities can choose to identify themselves as what they are not³⁸. In the case of BiH where ethnicity is enmeshed with identity, ethnicity is often presented as the reason why Europeanization is not fully compatible with the state of BiH; Europeanization either compromises their distinct identity or is insufficiently accommodating for their specific ethnicities and beliefs. In addition, identities are often rooted within an ethnic and historical narrative; alternative narratives that seek to deny or present a different version of historical

³⁶ Pg. 5

³⁷ Pg. 312

³⁸ Subotic 2011

events are routinely rebuffed and rejected³⁹. Recent historical events play a critical role in conceptions of identity among ethnic groups in BiH and provide a plethora of reasons why ethnic groups like Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs reject Europeanization.

In the literature, discussions of identity have largely revolved around EU-centric perspectives and have mostly been used to explain the EU's influence on candidate states. Scholars like Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2002) and Hakverir (2020) envisioned Europeanization as the EU attempting to create a "Pan-European" identity, claiming that EU appealed to historical and ideological beliefs of candidate countries to portray them as inherently European and "one of us"⁴⁰, while other scholars like Tudoroiu (2004) noted that the norm transmission from the EU to the CEEs was a vehicle of identity change; the success of the CEE accessions was because they changed their identity to become more European. A smaller subset of scholars like Heller & Reyni (2007), Ashwood (2010), and Subotic (2011) have discussed how domestic perceptions of identity in specific countries like Hungary and Croatia influenced their respective decisions to adopt Europeanization in the face of initially strong opposition, which pushed the study of identity and Europeanization further, but still left a considerable gap in our knowledge of how identity can create the opposite effect. An even smaller handful of scholars such as Nancheva (2013) and Castaldo & Pinna (2018) have attempted to approach the gap and touched upon the relatively new concept of De-Europeanization to describe the phenomenon of stalled Europeanization in countries like Serbia and North Macedonia.

However, the literature is still missing a deep and comprehensive understanding of the role ethnic identity in deconstructing Europeanization, particularly within BiH⁴¹. The relative newness of De-Europeanization also means that focusing on De-Europeanization in research and analysis provides a fresh look to previously touched upon topics, filling in small gaps left behind by prior research. While BiH itself has been extensively discussed in the context of Europeanization during its formative years, there is still a dearth of literature providing a comprehensive overview of BiH's two entities, including the concerning rise of nationalist secessionist rhetoric and the growing prominence of secession-based identity narratives within

³⁹ Moll 2013; Swimelar 2019

⁴⁰ Hakverir 2020, pg. 5

⁴¹ Subotic 2011; Castaldo & Pinna 2018

both entities⁴². The case of BiH also remains to be viewed through a De-Europeanization lens, offering a new approach that emphasizes the negative outcomes of BiH's Europeanization. It is thus the intention of this paper to further contribute to the concept of De-Europeanization by analyzing ethnic identity within BiH and demonstrating how a candidate country can be sufficiently distanced enough from Europeanization to the point where Europeanization is not desirable and thus challenged by political elites and states as a whole.

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

The Merit of Examining National Identity

As mentioned in the literature review, domestic factors have increasingly come to the forefront of Europeanization literature, and identity is no exception. As we saw with countries like Hungary and Croatia, Hungary and Croatia's respective political elites often framed Europeanization in the context of identity: Europeanization either aligned with their recognized national identities or represented an incompatibility to notions of national identity⁴³. The difficult and murky process of Europeanization in the Western Balkans has served to weaken the strength of rationalist-bargaining models and social-learning models of Europeanization, encouraging further study of other theories and explanations⁴⁴. EU mechanisms of conditionality and bottom-up political processes have largely failed to overcome the deeply ingrained warring identities that have pervaded BiH's two entities, suggesting that a sufficiently divergent ethnic identity pushes Europeanization to its limits and crosses the line into De-Europeanization.⁴⁵ BiH's issues with ethnic identity are deeply institutionalized and are fundamental to BiH politics⁴⁶. However, this does not preclude the possibility that identity can contribute to De-Europeanization within the Western Balkans or even within future candidate countries. It is thus critical to separate BiH from the generalized label of "Western Balkans" and examine whether the negative influence of ethnic identity is purely restricted to BiH's deep institutionalization or whether warring identities pose a threat to Europeanization more broadly.

⁴² Mujanovic 2019; Hronešová 2021

⁴³ Heller & Reyni 2007; Ashbrook 2010; Subotic 2011

⁴⁴ Subotic 2011

⁴⁵ Perry 2015

⁴⁶ Biermann 2014

Why Use BiH as a Test Case?

BiH has posed a significant challenge to prevailing theories of Europeanization, largely due to the significant, long-term presence of the EU within BiH and the material benefits that EU membership would grant BiH. According to the logic of EU pre-accession conditionality, the EU's enormous institution-building efforts and high levels of intervention within BiH should have made Europeanization the "most likely outcome".⁴⁷ However, BiH has appeared to regress in Europeanization reform within the last several years, especially as ethnic identity has become further amplified and exploited by BiH political elites. To differentiate this paper from other works on BiH, the analysis of BiH will begin from the year 2015, for two reasons. The first is that the time period of 2015-2021 has been marked by a sharp rise in ethno-nationalism and an increased resistance to EU conditionality that has severely challenged Europeanization's presence in BiH⁴⁸. While BiH has made definitive steps towards EU ascension such as ratifying the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2015 and formally applying for EU membership candidacy in 2016, its biggest obstacles to further accession can be directly tied to grievances held by ethnic communities within BiH and deliberate actions undertaken by ethno-nationalist political elites⁴⁹. The second is that Europeanization literature on BiH has largely placed a focus on analyzing the turbulent 1990s and initially optimistic 2000s, while lacking a comprehensive analysis of more recent years. Isolating the time period of 2015-2021 therefore serves to update the literature on BiH while also recognizing that BiH has gone through phases of contestation which provide valuable insights.

There is no doubt that BiH serves as an exceptional case and as such must be treated as a distinct phenomenon. The unique power-sharing arrangement enshrined by the DPA has, as Toal (2013) claims, "institutionalized an ethno-territorial division of BiH organized around war territories, locking nationalist antagonism into the very structure of the state," ethnic identity an essential facet of political discourse within BiH⁵⁰. Political elites in BiH have capitalized on the ethno-territorial division to push their own respective versions of an identity narrative, making the issue of ethnic conflict incredibly complex. The additional recognition of only three ethnic

⁴⁷ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Castaldo & Pinna 2018, pg. 266

⁴⁸ Subotic 2011

⁴⁹ Perry 2018

⁵⁰ Pg. 199

groups (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) as the only eligible ethnic groups capable of running for and holding governmental positions has engrained the idea that ethnic identity is a critical component of being a BiH citizen, making identity a critical issue for the civilian population as well⁵¹. It is therefore not surprising that BiH serves as a potent example of the effects ethnic identity on Europeanization; because ethnicity has become institutionalized within the very fabric of BiH's existence and is a critical part of daily life, it is far easier for political elites to both exploit it for their own gain and drown out other considerations and factors when discussing Europeanization⁵².

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this paper will make no claims for the Western Balkans as a whole and focuses solely on the ethnic conflict of BiH. However, the applicability of this topic to future case studies has already been at least somewhat demonstrated. Scholars like Subotic (2011), Castaldo & Pinna (2018), and Nancheva (2013) have written about Serbia and Macedonia's respective struggles with Europeanization in the context of ethnic and national identity, suggesting that the phenomenon of warring identities is not restricted to institutionalization and is therefore not fully explained by the institutionalization of ethnic identity in BiH. Therefore, BiH's exceptional case can offer us clues on when institutionalization matters and when it does not.

Theoretical Framework and Analysis

Given that relations with the EU are largely handled by political elites, it is appropriate to base the analysis on political elite rhetoric within the two entities. As noted in the introduction, this paper will focus on Bosnian Croats within the FBiH and Bosnian Serbs within the RS for two reasons. The first is that political elites from these two ethnic groups wield a significant amount of influence over BiH politics; Bosnian Croats are guaranteed a level of political representation similar to Bosniaks due to the DPA's provisions, and Bosnian Serbs hold even more significance within the RS, comprising over 80% of the RS's population⁵³. The second is that politicians representing both ethnicities have increasingly cited their respective ethnic identities as justification for moving away from Europeanization; Europeanization has become

⁵¹ Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁵² Hronešová 2021

⁵³ Swimelar 2019

either an imperfect fit for their identity narratives or is outright incompatible with their perceptions of identity.

Due to limited space, the analysis will focus on two political parties and their respective leaders. The first chapter will largely revolve around on the largest Bosnian Croat political party, HDZ BiH and their party leader Dragan Čović. The second chapter will revolve around the largest Bosnian Serb party, SNSD and its leader and current BiH President Milorad Dodik. These two parties and especially their leaders have been incredibly dominant within their respective ethnic communities for several years and both have risen to power specifically because of their nationalist and ideology-based rhetoric. Occasional references to other BiH politicians will also be made but the bulk of the analysis will focus on these actors as they exert the largest amount of influence on their respective populations.

In order to properly analyze their behavior and their impact on Europeanization I will use Subotic's (2011) theoretical framework of "identity divergence" to explain how both Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb political elites in Bosnia frame discussions of identity and ethnicity in order to distance themselves from the EU and promote Europeanization as an antithetical to domestic conceptions of ethnicity and identity. Subotic's (2011) framework is as follows: for identity divergence to occur, three factors must be fulfilled⁵⁴:

- (i) the idea promoted is not universally shared and is underdeveloped;
- (ii) alternative identity narratives are strong and clearly elaborated;
- (iii) the previous relationship with the desirable group was negative, and so expectations of policy success are low

As further described by Subotic (2011), the essence of identity divergence is that⁵⁵,

⁵⁴ Subotic 2011, pg. 314

⁵⁵ Ibid.

“...political elites oppose Europeanization either on principled grounds or because they believe this opposition will bring them votes. If there is strong and sustained identity contestation in the polity, and there is a critical mass of the electorate that can be moved to support an anti-European policy, political elites choose to pursue a divergent strategy and emphasize the contradictory or incompatible elements of European vs. state identity, while minimizing the presence and strength of shared norms.”

Using a carefully selected combination of public surveys, local media, interview quotes, primary documents, archival research, and secondary sources, I employ a qualitative content analysis in order to critically analyze and interpret the rhetoric of selected Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb political elites from 2015 to the present. To accomplish this, I rely on language found within media and local interviews, political party platforms, online newspaper articles, public political speeches, and text written by political elites themselves. In order to gauge the civilian public’s attitudes towards Europeanization and illustrate the presence of sustained identity contestation, I also employ public surveys to demonstrate that this phenomenon is not restricted to political elites. Due to language and travel limitations, this paper employs local media wherever possible but also relies on English-language sources to provide contextual background and further analysis. All interview quotes are taken from previously conducted interviews and public media.

In order to properly code for Subotic’s three criteria, each of Subotic’s (2011) criteria corresponds to key concepts and themes echoed by political elites. In order to prevent overlap between the three criteria, each criterion corresponds to a specific theme related to the definition of De-Europeanization mentioned in the literature review. The first criteria will focus on non-compliance with EU demands and norms; for Bosnian Croat elites this represents negative responses to certain EU demands and occasional hesitancy while for Bosnian Serb elites it represents outspoken rejections and criticisms of EU demands. The second criteria will focus on prominent alternatives to Europeanization; notions of a “Greater Croatia” and “Greater Serbia” alongside proposals to re-draw BiH’s borders constitute alternative identity narratives. The third criteria will focus on past grievances and misgivings; negative interactions with the EU in the 1990s have shaped contemporary negative responses to EU demands. Because of the similarities between the first and third criterion, the first criteria will solely focus on events from 2015 onwards while the third criteria will touch upon negative interactions prior to 2015 and place an

emphasis on events that occurred throughout the 1990s to prevent overlap. Brief mentions to post-2015 events will be mentioned in the third criteria. However, the bulk of the post-2015 research will be contained in the first criteria. While the themes for the three criteria are inductive and pre-determined, further literature explored in the following chapters will also provide deductive concepts and phrases.

Chapter 4: Ethnic Turmoil in the FBiH: Bosnian Croats and a “Third Entity”

Europeanization with Conditions

Following the definition of De-Europeanization as “the loss or weakening of the EU/Europe as a normative/political context and as a reference point in domestic settings and national public debates”, it is clear that Bosnian Croat political elites have become increasingly resistant towards Europeanization. Discussions around Europeanization are framed around the interests of Bosnian Croats and in some cases, certain provisions of Europeanization are rejected due to their incompatibility with Bosnian Croat values. Because the Bosnian Croat ethnicity is constitutionally guaranteed political seats and influence, and because HDZ BiH has effectively dominated Bosnian Croat politics since its inception in 1990, it is therefore logically appropriate to determine how big of a role the HDZ BiH and its identity narratives have played in halting Europeanization since 2015.

According to the 2019 EU Commission Opinion on BiH, one of the most significant criteria required for EU accession is the removal of ethnic criteria in legislative decision-making⁵⁶:

“The Constitution contains ethnic and residence-based provisions which are not in line with the European Convention on Human Rights... certain electoral rights are reserved for citizens who affiliate to the ‘constituent peoples’ – Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Significant incremental reforms are therefore needed to ensure that all citizens can effectively exercise their political rights... The composition and decision-making of several administrative bodies are based on ethnic criteria, which risks affecting the implementation of the EU acquis... The political environment is not yet conducive to reconciliation and to overcoming the legacies of the past.”

⁵⁶ EU Commission 2019, pg. 7, 9

When looking at Bosnian Croat political elite rhetoric however, it becomes clear that eliminating these ethnic provisions is considered unacceptable. As of 2021, HDZ BiH's official platform states⁵⁷:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina is possible only as a state union of three fully equal, sovereign and constituent peoples of Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks and others who live there. This can only be achieved through a new consensual constitutional and administrative-territorial reorganisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina...formed in four or more constitutional-administrative territorial units with the possibility of discontinuity of the territory...We are firmly committed to the principles of ethnic federalism, and against ethnic majoritarianism. We will never agree to the concepts of "civil universalism" and "Bosnian integrationism" that manifest themselves in practical performance as ethnic majoritarianism.”

It becomes quickly evident that Europeanization is “a bitter pill to swallow” for politicians of HDZ BiH⁵⁸. The emphasis on “ethnic federalism” and the maintenance of Bosnian Croats as a constitutionally protected ethnicity is prominent within HDZ BiH's rhetoric; HDZ BiH would rather commit to territorial re-organization of BiH than cooperate with the EU Commission and work to eliminate these ethnic criteria. Especially in domestic contexts, rhetoric about the protection of the Bosnian Croat ethnicity and the refusal to commit to ethnic reconciliation has featured prominently, disseminated by political elites like Dragan Čović. While Bosnian Croat elites like Čović have repeatedly affirmed their commitment to EU accession, his rhetoric throughout the last several years has revealed a clear distancing from EU norms in a desire to remain rooted in Bosnian Croat ethnic identity beliefs. In a 2018 interview for the Bosnian branch of Croat newspaper *Večernji list*, Čović implied that compliance with further Europeanization reform would take place only if the Bosnian Croat ethnicity would be legally protected, claiming⁵⁹:

“The one who is ready to build a European BiH with us in order to ensure equality of the Croatian people in every part of the country, protected, through legitimate representation, will be our partner at every level of government.”

Despite the fact that legitimate representation and constitutional protection of Bosnian Croats would clearly violate the EU criteria for human rights, Čović and HDZ BiH have prioritized their Bosnian Croat ethnic group over the values of Europeanization and EU

⁵⁷ HDZ BiH Program, <https://www.hdzbih.org/hr/gospodarski-rast-razvoj>

⁵⁸ Subotic 2011

⁵⁹ Dragojlovic 2018, <https://balkaneu.com/dragan-covic-the-election-law-must-be-amended/>

membership, indicating that the validity and relevancy of Europeanization has decreased in comparison to attitudes from Bosnian Croats in the early 2000s.⁶⁰ Domestic attempts to ethnically reconcile and promote Europeanization have also been rebuffed. In response to a 2020 SDA proposal for a three-person multi-ethnic mayoralty in Mostar, a city that had not conducted elections since 2008 and whose right to election was listed as a criteria for accession by the EU Commission, HDZ BiH was the only political party involved to reject the proposal, with Čović stating that a multi-ethnic mayoralty was “...such unreasonable action and [a] serious challenge to the establishment of city government” and “...has left a deep scar on the fabric of the city”, suggesting that for HDZ BiH, ethnic reconciliation is a line that they are unwilling to cross⁶¹. On several occasions, the resistance to Europeanization turned into outright contestation and defiance. In 2016 HDZ 1990 leader and former HDZ BiH politician Božo Ljubić filed a complaint to the Constitutional Court of BiH, arguing that “...Croats from Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bihać should be legally banned from becoming members of the House of Peoples of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina” due to the fact that those three cities were predominantly Bosniak, an action that “[hijacked] the political process in the country”⁶² and a disenfranchisement that runs entirely counter to the European Convention on Human Rights and Europeanization as a whole. The Constitutional Court partially ruled in favor of Ljubić, ruling that the election laws of BiH must be changed “...to prevent the outvoting of constituent ethnic groups in elections for ethnically-designed institutions”, while stopping short of total disenfranchisement⁶³.

Since 2018, the rhetoric from Čović and HDZ BiH has only intensified, illustrating a further distancing from Europeanization and the immense influence of warring identities. During

⁶⁰ Biermann 2014

⁶¹ Spaić 2021, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/hdz-bih-leader-urges-intl-officials-to-prevent-three-member-mayorality-in-mostar/>

⁶² Suljagic 2019, pg. 32

⁶³ Croatian News Agency, <https://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/52660-dragan-covic-for-euractiv-stop-discrimination-against-minorities-and-outvoting-of-croats>

the 2021 Fifth Congress of the Association of the Croat community of Herceg-Bosna in Mostar, Čović employed harsher language towards the EU's demands, claiming⁶⁴:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina will never be a unitary state. It will not be a civic state either, in the way that some are thinking and trying to implement it through domination over others... This is non-negotiable.”

The outright rejection of a unitary state and a civic state represents an intensification of anti-Europeanization rhetoric and an outspoken refusal to comply with EU demands and norms. As the rhetoric of HDZ BiH prioritizes Bosnian Croat ethnicity and distances itself from EU values it believes to be incompatible with Bosnian Croats, a potential incompatibility between Europeanization and Bosnian Croat ethnicity has come to the forefront, suggesting that ethnic identity can serve as a counter and a roadblock to the EU's civic approach to the transmission of norms and values.

Among the Bosnian Croat civil population, retaining the importance of Bosnian Croat identity also holds a greater importance than Europeanization. According to a 2015 poll conducted among Bosnian ethnic groups, the majority of Bosnian Croats (56.7%) wish to live in either a three entity BiH or a “BiH without cantons or entities, with the strong local authority of municipalities”, suggesting that Čović's push for a third entity and discriminatory electoral reform resonates with a large portion of the population⁶⁵. In addition, over a third of all Bosnian Croats (35.2%) consider their ethnicity to be more important than “being a BiH citizen” and “Being a citizen of my entity”⁶⁶. In other words, over a third of Bosnian Croats prioritize the preservation and survival of their ethnicity in BiH over unity or reconciliation, suggesting that Europeanization and desires to adopt EU norms are not a priority for a significant portion of the Bosnian Croat population.

To a significant extent, it is evident that ideas of Europeanization and EU integration as promoted by the EU do not have a widespread and universal following among Bosnian Croats. While much of the Bosnian Croat resistance to Europeanization can be explained by their disdain for EU values that seemingly threaten the Bosnian Croat ethnic identity, the departure away from

⁶⁴ Spaić-Kovačić 2021, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/leader-of-major-bosnian-croat-party-bosnia-will-never-be-a-unitary-state/>

⁶⁵ United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2015

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Europeanization also lies in alternative pathways to EU membership that Bosnian Croat political elites are eager to explore. In other words, Bosnian Croat political elites are in a position to challenge EU conditionality and demand that it follows their terms because alternative conceptions of BiH and the cultural position of Bosnian Croats have a strong following that Bosnian Croat political elites have not hesitated to pursue.

The Return of Herceg-Bosna and Croatia

Unlike Croats within Croatia, whose political elites successfully propagated the idea of Europeanization by claiming that Croatia belongs to Europe and holds a common history⁶⁷, Bosnian Croats have for decades looked elsewhere to identify with. For much of BiH's history, Bosnian Croats have clung to two historical narratives that have shaped their perceptions of identity and belonging. The first revolves around the idea that for Bosnian Croats, BiH fundamentally belongs to them in the form of "Herceg-Bosna". Recent historical events like the brief establishment of the Croat Herceg-Bosna in the 1990s and the Bosnian War (dubbed the "Homeland War" by Bosnian Croats) serve as evidence that Bosnian Croats have resided on the territory for thousands of years and the country fundamentally belongs to the Bosnian Croats – it is therefore critical to Bosnian Croats that BiH is recognized as a Croat territory, not a multi-ethnic one⁶⁸. As Božo Ljubić claimed in 2011 when Bosniak politicians attempted to form an FBiH coalition without HDZ BiH and HDZ 1990⁶⁹,

“They [SDP] are trying to exclude Croats from the Constitution, take away our right to have a home and a homeland in Bosnia and Herzegovina where our roots run deepest, which we have been ennobling and defending for more than a thousand years.”

Especially within the last several years, this desire to revive Herceg-Bosna and provide Bosnian Croats with their own independent entity separate from Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs has appeared in HDZ BiH rhetoric in multiple forms and has severely posed a threat to further EU integration and Europeanization. One form has Bosnian Croat elites explicitly calling for a return to Herceg-Bosna as it was in the 1990s. In 2018 the head of the Bosnian Croat caucus in BiH's House of People's Mario Karamatic claimed that several Bosnian Croat political parties are

⁶⁷ Moll 2013

⁶⁸ Ashbrook 2010

⁶⁹ Moll 2013, pg. 920

“discussing the re-creation of [Herceg-Bosna]” and further claimed that “We are not speaking about a third entity... We had a republic... if one side is cheated [in an agreement] it has the right to go back to square one”⁷⁰. Implying that the DPA has disadvantaged and “endangered” Bosnian Croats, Karamatic makes the claim that Bosnian Croats are entitled to a Herceg-Bosna and explicitly expresses that maintaining its own entity within BiH is not sufficient, a sentiment that the EU has explicitly cautioned against and refuses to support⁷¹. Other Bosnian Croat political elites have also echoed Karamatic’s sentiments. In 2019 on the anniversary of Herceg-Bosna’s formation, Božo Ljubić called the entity of Herceg-Bosna “a roadmap in which direction we should seek a solution to the Bosnia and Herzegovina constitutional and institutional crisis”⁷², one of the most public calls for Bosnian Croat separation from BiH and an action that the SDA called “effectively dividing Bosnia into separate regions based on ethnicity”.⁷³

Other, more subtle allusions to Herceg-Bosna have also been mentioned by Bosnian Croat elites during public speeches and visits. Although the language has notably shifted, the essence of the message has remained the same: Croatia deserves a bigger influence and recognition within BiH. Dragan Čović for example consistently places an emphasis on how Bosnian Croats are fundamental to BiH’s existence in order to justify their demands for a Herceg-Bosna and a third entity. During a visit to Polog in 2021 on an important anniversary for Bosnian Croats, Čović stated⁷⁴,

"I believe that today only the Croatian people want Bosnia and Herzegovina and I am making that clear because both of these other policies, be they unitarian under the cloak of citizenship, or then other separatist ones lead to it – to the disappearance of BiH..."

By portraying Bosnian Croats as the only ethnic group to attach significance to BiH and as critical to the function of the state, Čović crafts an image that Bosnian Croats deserve a greater

⁷⁰ Spaić 2018, <https://ba.n1info.com/english/news/a304140-bosnian-croat-politician-we-are-talking-about-re-establishing-herzeg-bosnia/>

⁷¹ Spaić-Kovačić 2020, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/a479191-bosnian-croat-leader-eu-candidate-status-soon-if-we-change-election-law/>

⁷² Srzić 2019, <https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/bozo-ljubic-herceg-bosna-je-putokaz-u-kojem-smjeru-bismo-treballi-traziti-rjesenje-za-ustavnu-krizu-u-bih-20190828>

⁷³ Spaić-Kovačić 2020, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/a479191-bosnian-croat-leader-eu-candidate-status-soon-if-we-change-election-law/>

⁷⁴ Ivona B 2021, <https://kamenjar.com/dragan-covic-jedino-hrvati-zele-bih-a-separatizam-i-unitarizam-vode-njezinu-destanku/>

amount of political and cultural influence within BiH. Since 2018, Čović has employed this rhetoric of Bosnian Croat importance in public settings a further seven times, indicating that this narrative for him is consistent, important, and non-negotiable. This rhetoric also further marginalizes other involved parties such as the EU – by claiming the “unitarian” approach will lead to the disappearance of BiH, Čović is signaling that he fundamentally disagrees with the EU approach and instead is proposing that lending power to Bosnian Croat elites will result in a better outcome for BiH, serving as a direct challenge to Europeanization and EU integration.

The second identity narrative, arguably the narrative causing the most difficulty to EU accession as of late, is the Bosnian Croat belief that Croatia is the spiritual ancestor of Bosnian Croats, or a “Greater Croatia” and is thus entitled to make political decisions on behalf of Bosnian Croats⁷⁵. After a long period of inaction throughout the 2000s, Croatia has returned to the forefront of Bosnian Croat policies; HDZ BiH, itself a “proxy party” of one of Croatia’s largest nationalist parties, the HDZ, has largely taken cues and political standpoints directly from Croatian nationalists⁷⁶. Since the formation of HDZ BiH in 1990 up until the early 2000s, Zagreb had a direct hand in HDZ BiH affairs, actively swapping HDZ BiH party leaders back and forth out of a desire for “a candidate more loyal to Zagreb” and forcing HDZ BiH politicians to have their decisions be “cleared with the mainland”⁷⁷. The Croat signatory of the DPA was not a Bosnian Croat but Croatian President Franco Tuđman, illustrating the level of representation and control Croatia claimed to hold over HDZ BiH⁷⁸. Since Croatia’s accession to the EU in 2013 however, Croatia has once again chosen to actively interfere in Bosnian Croat politics and go against the Europeanization playbook.⁷⁹ The rhetoric of “ethnic federalism” and the rejection of ethnic reconciliation echoed by elites like Čović comes directly from from Croatia’s HDZ, a party that has once again established close ties with HDZ BiH⁸⁰. A prominent example of Croatia’s interference took place during the 2018 Presidential elections in BiH. In the days before the elections, HDZ MPs like Zeljana Zovko claimed that a “final solution” for BiH “...should be found within the three communities” – meaning Bosnia's Croats, Serbs and

⁷⁵ Suljagic 2019, pg. 24

⁷⁶ Subotic 2016

⁷⁷ Subotic 2016, pg. 122

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ Suljagic 2019

⁸⁰ Gadzo 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/12/18/is-croatia-undermining-bosnias-sovereignty/>

Bosniaks – and not in EU”⁸¹. Echoing Dragan Čović, Croatian President Zoran Milanović called labeled the multi-ethnic candidate Željko Komšić “a parasite to the detriment of Croat people in Bosnia” and repeatedly pressured the EU to grant Bosnian Croats their own electoral entity, an action that alarmed three former OHR High Representatives so much that they sent a formal letter to the EU asking the EU to halt Croatia’s actions within BiH⁸². In response to this, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, president of the HDZ, claimed that “no one knows Bosnia better than Croatia” and rebuffed the concerns of the OHR and the EU⁸³.

HDZ BiH has more than welcomed the defiant presence of Croatia, suggesting that HDZ BiH also approves of the Croatian strategy and is more than willing to defy EU demands in exchange for a close relationship with Croatia. During the 2018 election, Čović accepted a significant amount of financial and political support from Milanović and Plenković and has repeatedly travelled to Croatia in order to conduct diplomatic talks with the two Croatian elites, even after losing the 2018 election⁸⁴. For HDZ BiH, Croatia has taken the place of the EU in political contexts; instead of The wholehearted acceptance of Croatia’s anti-EU playbook by HDZ BiH illustrates yet another facet of warring identities and their impact upon Europeanization; the desire to return to a “Greater Croatia” where Croatia is at the helm of political decision-making has overpowered and overridden the pull of EU conditionality and presents a serious challenge to future cases of Europeanization; what happens when a candidate country feels socially and culturally closer to a single country rather than Europe as a whole? In the case of BiH, this closeness to Croatia and willingness to adopt anti-Europeanization strategies is rooted in their previous grievances with the EU. This disdain for the past EU has continued to shape contemporary negative responses to Europeanization.

Re-Hashing War-Time Narratives

The general relationship between the EU and Bosnian Croats has been largely marked with disappointment, feelings of neglect, and a general pervasive sense that the EU is unreliable

⁸¹ Vladislavljević & Lakić 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/09/03/ghost-of-herceg-bosna-haunts-bosnia-s-election-campaign-08-31-2018/>

⁸² Gačanica 2020, <https://ba.boell.org/en/2020/10/06/25-years-separatism>; Gadzo 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/12/18/is-croatia-undermining-bosnias-sovereignty/>

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Perry 2018

when ethnic groups are threatened⁸⁵. Since the 1990s, Bosnian Croats have held the belief that international institutions set out to systematically discriminate and “exterminate” them⁸⁶. Military generals from the HVO, high-ranking politicians of the former Herceg-Bosna, and some HDZ BiH leadership, seen as defenders of the Bosnian Croat homeland, were investigated and indicted throughout the 1990s and early 2000s by the ICTY, who labeled Herceg-Bosna, the “bedrock of the defense of Croat identity and the right to Bosnia and Herzegovina”⁸⁷, a “joint criminal enterprise”⁸⁸. The discrimination and extermination narrative gained further validity when the OSCE in 2000 released a proposal to abolish the principle of minority ethnic protections in BiH elections, an action that was interpreted as a threat to Bosnian Croats and their autonomy. This was more than evident in HDZ BiH’s actions, which proceeded to produce the campaign slogan “Self-Determination or Extermination” and in March 2001 illegally declared a third Croatian entity within BiH, withdrawing all of its representatives from non-Croat BiH institutions and proposed the formation of an exclusively Croat military⁸⁹. After the OHR removed several HDZ BiH elites for promoting the idea of a third entity and froze all funding sources, HDZ BiH politically backed down, but resentment for the OHR and other EU-supported institutions remained in the conscience of HDZ BiH politicians.

Contemporary disdain towards the ICTY and the OHR, two institutions that the EU requires compliance with for EU accession, has been especially prominent among HDZ BiH in recent years. After an ICTY tribunal reaffirmed a 111-year sentence for six senior Herceg-Bosna officials in 2017, Božo Ljubić negatively remarked “The decisive role in the Decision of the Court of Justice in the Hague was played by the EU and NATO”⁹⁰, implying that Western institutions like NATO and the EU had a significant investment in demolishing the Bosnian Croat claim that Bosnian Croats were victims, not perpetrators. This language is particularly dangerous because it portrays the EU in an outspokenly negative light; By implicating the EU and Western institutions as a whole as the masterminds behind the guilty verdict, Ljubić crafts the image of Europe as an antagonist to Bosnian Croat cultural legacies and traditions, a

⁸⁵ Mujanovic 2019

⁸⁶ Grandits 2007, pg. 117

⁸⁷ Moll 2013, pg. 921

⁸⁸ Subotic 2016, pg. 126

⁸⁹ Ibid, pg. 126

⁹⁰ Bećirević & Pećanin 2017, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/hdz-bih-dodik-covic-rusija/28888178.html>

significant departure from Europeanization. In response to the 2017 tribunal, the Croat National Counsel (HNS), led by Dragan Čović, supported Ljubić and passed a declaration rejecting the tribunal decision, claiming that the HVO “fought a just and legitimate war”⁹¹.

In a similar vein, Dragan Čović has on several occasions advocated for the complete closure of the OHR or in other words, a removal of EU influence from the region. During a UN Security Council meeting in 2020 Čović negatively remarked about the role of the OHR in BiH, pointing to the OHR’s ignorance of Bosnian Croat problems, claiming⁹²:

“...What worries me the most is that [OHR] did not present the complete picture in BiH. There is no real understanding of the problem...The Dayton Agreement is being violated by numerous challenges...These are illegal qualifications of the Croatian people as a minority, contradicting the Constitution...The decisions of the High Representatives in BiH created new problems that the European Court of Human Rights had to deal with.”

By tying the OHR’s behavior directly to grievances committed against Bosnian Croats, particularly that they are the “minority” and are forgotten, the language references the marginalization of the 1990s that Bosnian Croats experienced, in particular the fear that the OHR or someone else may again commit illegal actions against Bosnian Croats.

Chapter 5: Ethnic Grievances in the RS: Bosnian Serbs and the Quest for Secession

Europeanization’s Incompatibility with Bosnian Serbs

Among both Bosnian Serb civilians and political elites, there is a significant amount of skepticism directed at the EU and Europeanization in general. Unlike Bosnian Croat elites, who have considerably reduced their optimism towards Europeanization but are still willing to cooperate under certain conditions, Bosnian Serb elites are much more hostile and aggressive towards the EU, suggesting outright incompatibility with EU values. Initially supportive of EU integration in the early 2000s, Bosnian Serb elites quickly learned that the idea of Europeanization held very little weight among Bosnian Serbs, with multiple political parties

⁹¹ Spaić 2019, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/a365733-bosnian-croat-parties-reject-un-tribunal-ruling/>

⁹² Dragojlovic 2020, <https://balkaneu.com/bih-dodik-and-covic-address-the-un-security-council-no-one-wants-to-hear-it/>

promoting nationalist, anti-EU rhetoric. The result is a robust and uncontested rejection of EU demands, most of which have lost their presence in Bosnian Serb politics.

In addition to the EU's demands for an abolition of ethnic criteria, the EU has been exceptionally clear on matters concerning international tribunals. In the EU Commission's 2019 report, the Commission states⁹³:

“Established facts about the wartime events are frequently contested by high-level political leaders, who cast doubts on the independence and impartiality of international tribunals. All actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to demonstrate full cooperation with the international tribunals by acknowledging and respecting their decisions. Revisionism and genocide denial contradict the most fundamental European values.”

However, revisionism, genocide denial, and ethnic criteria are widely embraced by most Bosnian Serb political elite and often comprise the core of Bosnian Serb politics. All three major political parties in the RS (SDS, SNSD, and PDP) share key positions: the preservation of the RS as an autonomous entity, maintaining the ethnic veto, and an emphasis that Bosnian Serbs did not commit genocide⁹⁴. The denial and revision of critical war-time events such as the genocide of Srebrenica in particular is the core of Bosnian Serb nationalism⁹⁵. As Majstorović (2019) puts it, “being a Serb today... [means] saying that no genocide against Bosniaks during the 1992–1995 war took place... and any contrary opinion is most likely going to be dismissed as unpatriotic, traitor-like, and anti-Serb”⁹⁶.

Non-compliance with the ICTY is indicative of the general attitude towards Europeanization within the RS. In the aftermath of the ICTY's 2017 decision to convict Ratko Mladić for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, both the SNSD and opposition parties like the PDP denounced the decision, labeling it as discrimination against Serbs and praising Mladić as a hero-like figure for Bosnian Serbs. Mladen Ivanić, leader of the PDP and then Serb President of the BiH Presidency claimed: “When you look at the hundreds of years [in sentences] that Serbs have received and compare it with the 50 years that the Hague gave for

⁹³ EU Commission 2019, pg. 9-10

⁹⁴ Basta 2016, pg. 960

⁹⁵ Hronešová 2021

⁹⁶ Pg. 212-213

crimes against Serbs, that says enough about this court”⁹⁷. Milorad Dodik, president of the SNSD, took the sentiment even further, claiming: “We see this as a slap in the face for Serb victims, of whose suffering no one has been convicted”⁹⁸ and followed up in 2018 with “the Srebrenica crime is a conspired tragedy with the intention of demonising Serbs”⁹⁹. Both statements reflect both a distrust for the Court and a clear denial of the established interpretation of events, preferring to instead perpetuate victimization narratives. Despite the end of the ICTY’s tenure in 2017, Dodik has continued to engage in genocide denial. In late 2019, Dodik formally announced the creation of two “truth commissions” to “re-examine” the perpetuation of war crimes in Sarajevo and Srebrenica, employing “experts” who strongly support Serb narratives of history and who seek to downplay Bosnian Serb war crimes¹⁰⁰. To the international community, Bosnian Serbs were undoubtedly the largest perpetrators of genocide during the Bosnian War and admission and reconciliation is a necessity to move forward with EU integration and European values. However, the denial of war crimes and protection of Bosnian Serb pride is a belief deeply ingrained in Bosnian Serb political parties of all ideologies.

Among the RS civil population, attitudes surrounding the EU are the lowest among all ethnic groups in BiH. In a 2019 survey conducted by the National Democratic Institute, more than a third of RS citizens (39%) said they opposed BiH’s ascension to the EU and over half (51%) believe that EU ascension would either “not improve [economic conditions in life and in general] much” or “would not improve [economic conditions] at all”¹⁰¹. In addition, a 2015 survey by the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed that almost two-thirds (64.9%) of Bosnian Serbs consider “belonging to my ethnic group” as more important than “being a BiH citizen”, reflecting both the distrust that Bosnian Serbs hold for the EU and the importance they place on maintaining Bosnian Serb identity¹⁰². Bosnian Serbs also share the opinion that external actors want to eliminate Bosnian Serbs. When RS citizens are asked about why they personally choose to vote for SNSD and Dodik (who has served as the

⁹⁷ BIRN 2017, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/11/22/mladic-verdict-highlights-bosnia-s-ethnic-divisions-11-22-2017/>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Hronešová 2021, pg. 12

¹⁰⁰ Sorguc 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/02/25/bosnian-serbs-war-commissions-fact-seeking-or-truth-distorting/>

¹⁰¹ NDI 2019, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/BiH%202019%20Poll.pdf>

¹⁰² United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2015

RS's president from 2010 – 2018 and was elected as the Serb member of BiH's rotating Presidency) and the SNSD, responses largely hinge around "defense of Bosnian Serbs" and an overall desire to reduce external "Western" influences. In the aftermath of the 2018 presidential elections, local residents claimed that "[Dodik] protects Republika Srpska"¹⁰³ and that "he was the only capable politician to counterbalance 'Sarajevo politics'"¹⁰⁴. The term "Sarajevo politics" is particularly loaded, because it not only refers to the general distain that Bosnian Serbs hold for Bosniaks (particularly due to their propensity to advocate for a unified BiH), but also a large distain for international organizations, most of whom insist on going through Sarajevo during official dealings¹⁰⁵. It is clear that for the most part, a significant number of Bosnian Serbs hold deep reservations towards the EU, indicating that Europeanization is not accepted among the population. As Hronešová (2021) aptly put it, "such group-based solidarity is maintained by glorifications of the past, victimhood tropes and a growing sense of pride to be a member of RS that is widely propagated by the...public discourse and media in RS"¹⁰⁶. This glorification of the past serves as a potent explanation as to why Bosnian Serb elites choose to pursue alternative paths to Europeanization and norm adoption.

"Greater Serbia" and the Act of Being a (Bosnian) Serb

Similar to the situation of Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs have largely sought two alternatives to Europeanization rooted in their Bosnian Serb identity. The first narrative has largely revolved around the RS's secession from BiH. Since 2015, Bosnian Serb political elites have increasingly presented secession as an alternative to EU integration, portraying it as a fight for greater Serb autonomy and self-determination. In 2015 the SNSD adopted a resolution "[proposing] to the Federation a peaceful dissolution and mutual recognition" in 2018 if the entity was not granted greater autonomy, with Dodik claiming "The Serb Republic cannot accept any further takeover of its authorities by the state under the guise of reform."¹⁰⁷. This marked the first time that RS politicians formally adopted a resolution for secession, making secession a possible reality. Going against the decision of BiH's Constitutional Court and strong warnings

¹⁰³ Quoted by local resident Branka Trninić, Edwards 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/01/serb-president-dodik-bosnia/579199/>

¹⁰⁴ Hronešová 2021, pg. 13

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pg. 15

¹⁰⁷ Zuela 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bosnia-serbs-secession-idUSKBN0NG0NB20150425>

from the EU, Milorad Dodik went forward with a referendum in late 2016 that would make January 9th, the day the RS was founded in 1992, an annual statehood holiday. After 99.79% of Bosnian Serbs voted “yes”, Dodik used that as justification for his consistent anti-Europeanization behavior, claiming¹⁰⁸:

“Today we have written one more page of our glorious history and we said that we are people who fight for freedom... for the rights of the Republic... This was more than playing heroes, more than anger, this was for the people. That is why I have to announce here that today’s referendum has succeeded.”

Dodik’s loaded language referencing freedom and history illustrates that for the Bosnian Serb identity, freedom and autonomy are key priorities and the legacies of Bosnian Serb history are not compatible with further Europeanization.¹⁰⁹ The usage of the word “freedom” by Dodik further serves to portray the RS as a victim of both BiH and the EU, institutions that according to Bosnian Serb political elites, attempt to take rights away from Bosnian Serbs through constitutional reform and calls to abolish ethnic-based privileges¹¹⁰. This poses critical problems for Europeanization because an autonomous RS is the direct opposite of EU calls for ethnic reconciliation and tribunal cooperation. Among the civil population, Europeanization is challenged even further. In a 2015 survey of RS citizens, a majority of Bosnian Serbs (53.4%) answered “yes” to the question "Should Republika Srpska's independence be a political goal for the future?", indicating both the public’s lack of desire for Europeanization and a lack of interest for a unified BiH¹¹¹.

Bosnian Serb elites have not shied away from emphasizing Serb ethnicity and identity in order to promote the idea of a “Greater Serbia” and step away from the label of European. A day after his 2018 inauguration as the Serb member of the BiH president, Dodik proudly proclaimed, “I am a Serb. I love Serbia more than I love Bosnia. Bosnia is only my place of employment,” and emphasized that he only uses a Serbian passport to travel¹¹². In an interview for a Belgrade-based newspaper in 2019, Dodik stated: "I have no doubt that unification will happen, I'm just

¹⁰⁸ BIRN 2016, <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/09/25/republika-srpska-referendum-early-results-09-25-2016/>

¹⁰⁹ SRNA 2015, <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Anketa-Vise-od-polovine-ispitanika-za-samostalnost-RS-vole-Dodika-a-vjeruju-crkvi/319950>

¹¹⁰ Basta 2016

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Edwards 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/01/serb-president-dodik-bosnia/579199/>

afraid that I, or someone else, will...miss that moment."¹¹³. In the same year, Dodik implied that the RS is “already separated” from BiH and that “the most stable option would be if Serbs were to unite in a single prosperous state of Serbia”¹¹⁴. This rhetoric aligns with Dodik’s repeated claims that integration with Serbia is the “final frame” of the RS’s battle for autonomy, suggesting that for the SNSD, Europeanization is no longer a viable option ¹¹⁵.

The second narrative revolves around the concept of a “Greater Serbia”. Similar to Croatia, Serbia has played an active role in encouraging Serb identity within the RS. Since 2000, every Serbian president has sought to establish strong relations with the RS and its leadership, with some leaders encouraging secessionist sentiment. In 2003 prominent Serbian Europhile Zoran Djindjic called into question the RS’s position within BiH, claiming that “borders in the region would have to be completely redefined” followed by a 2005 statement by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic that the RS should receive independence and self-determination if Kosovo achieves the same¹¹⁶. This rhetoric from Serbia not only legitimized the RS’s claims to self-determination and autonomy but also provided Bosnian Serb elites with a foundation to continue rejecting Europeanization; if Europeanization didn’t fit the mold, then Bosnian Serbs could turn to Serbia.

In the past several years, support from Serbia has intensified. Since 2016, Serbia has donated 22 million Euros to the RS, with current Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić claiming that Serbia has a “moral obligation” to assist Bosnian Serbs, in order to “...preserve what their grandfathers, great-grandfathers and fathers left behind.”¹¹⁷. This carries the heavy implication that the entity of RS fundamentally belongs to the Serb ethnicity and that Serbia acts as the protector of Bosnian Serbs. This was further affirmed by Vučić when in February of 2020 he claimed¹¹⁸:

¹¹³ Radio Slobodna Evropa 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/29881747.html>

¹¹⁴ Matić 2019, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:789119-MILORAD-DODIK-Srpska-je-samostalna-ali-jos-nema-papir>

¹¹⁵ Gadzo 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/8/10/are-ethnic-borders-being-drawn-for-a-greater-serbia>

¹¹⁶ Fraser 2013, pg. 232

¹¹⁷ BIRN 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/26/in-spending-on-serbs-abroad-serbia-looks-to-maintain-influence/>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

“We talked about the need for unity and solidarity and to always stand with our people in Republika Srpska... We will continue to support the Republika Srpska... via all institutions.”

Vučić’s statements calling for support for the RS and emphasizing the historical presence of Serbs in the RS’s territory while notably neglecting references to BiH bear a close resemblance to the rhetoric used by Bosnian Serb political elites, notably their desire for autonomy from BiH and less EU intervention. And Vučić is no stranger to the Bosnian Serb rhetoric. From 2017 to 2020, Vučić has met with Milorad Dodik “at least 36 times” and has also met with prominent political elites like RS President Zeljka Cvijanovic, indicating that Vučić is quite close to the RS and actively involved in Bosnian Serb politics¹¹⁹.

Political elites within the RS have capitalized on Bosnian Serb identity and public attitudes to push forward a “Greater Serbia” narrative that involves either secession, integration with Serbia, or both. Ideas of independence and secession are consistently inflamed by promises of freedom, sovereignty, unity for the Serb ethnicity, and disdain for international institutions. Although these narratives have intensified only recently, their roots lie in a distinct bitterness for the EU’s role in rebuilding BiH.

A Troubled History and Contemporary Grudges

The relationship between the EU and the RS has been one of great tension, largely because of the EU’s desire for a monolithic, multi-ethnic BiH and the RS’s opposite insistence on RS autonomy. In the aftermath of the Bosnian War, the EU was seen as one of the RS’s largest enemies; obstructionism of the EU was a primary goal for the RS from 1995-2000 as the ruling nationalist party at the time (SDS) rejected Sarajevo as the central government and claimed that “We want the unification of all Serbs in one state, which will be called Serbia”¹²⁰. Anger and frustration directed at the EU was compounded because of the EU’s refusal to aid in the reconstruction of the RS due to the SDS’s secessionist rhetoric. The OHR became a particular sore spot for Bosnian Serb political elites because the OHR had considerable authority within BiH and the RS, the EU was a key player in formulating the OHR, and the OHR did not

¹¹⁹ Ibid.; Pašić 2021, <https://rs.n1info.com/region/dodik-vucicu-situacija-u-bih-veoma-losa/>

¹²⁰ Biermann 2014

hesitate to use its coercive power. After the OHR gained a substantial amount of power in 1997, the OHR directly targeted the SDS and “...isolated the radical Serbs in Pale, seized and closed Serb radio stations and pushed Belgrade...to stop meddling in Bosnia’s affairs”, further alienating Bosnian Serbs¹²¹.

The time period of 2000-2006 proved to be even more catastrophic for the RS-EU relationship as the EU doubled down on its support for the OHR and attempted to push forward reform that provoked RS leadership. By 2000, the preservation of the DPA as it existed was a critical objective for Bosnian Serbs, as it was perceived to be the only way to preserve the RS’s existence¹²². This came at a time when both the EU and the OHR increased their coercion efforts, attempting to force constitutional reform and compliance with war-time tribunals. As early as 2002, the EU Commission specifically targeted the RS with forceful coercion, claiming “Entity powers may have to be ceded to the State. Republika Srpska (RS) in particular must consider that a strong state is compatible with a strong Entity.”¹²³ At the same time OHR High Representative Paddy Ashdown attempted to “force the SDS to its knees”¹²⁴ and force them to comply with ICTY tribunals and publicly accept that Srebrenica was a genocide committed by Bosnian Serbs, an action that was simply unthinkable to the majority of Bosnian Serbs who deeply believed that their actions were just and the declaration of genocide was an attack on the RS¹²⁵. The intense disdain for the actions of the EU and the OHR were palpable within the RS; in 2002 the RS government sent an official report to the ICTY claiming that the Srebrenica genocide was an “alleged” affair and made the false claim that “less than 100” Bosniaks were murdered, in effect alleging that “personal revenge” or “simple ignorance of international law” were the causes of Srebrenica, not genocide¹²⁶. The metaphorical nail in the coffin came in the wake of the failed 2006 constitutional reforms pushed by the EU; Bosnian Serb political elites would no longer attempt positive relations with the EU and the deeply negative attitudes towards the EU have largely shaped contemporary Bosnian Serb rhetoric¹²⁷.

¹²¹ Ibid, pg. 497

¹²² Basta 2016

¹²³ Commission of the European Union 2002, pg. 17

¹²⁴ Muehlmann 2008, pg. 17

¹²⁵ Hronešová 2021

¹²⁶ Ibid, pg. 8

¹²⁷ Biermann 2014

Contemporary bitterness towards the EU has come about in several forms. SNSD and Milorad Dodik have become increasingly vocal about the legacy of the OHR, claiming that the OHR is biased against Serbs and calling for the complete abolishment of the OHR¹²⁸. During a UN Security Council meeting in 2020, Dodik resorted to personal attacks, claiming¹²⁹:

“At the BiH level, two-thirds of political representatives want the High Representative to disappear. Tonight, he [Valentin Inzko] continues to manipulate the Security Council, presents inaccurate facts, speaks based on expectations of a “pat on the back” in Sarajevo and the hefty benefits he received because of that.”

In the same meeting, Dodik also proceeded to specifically attack the actions of former Representative Paddy Ashdown, a clear sign that Ashdown’s actions are a significant contributor to the SNSD’s negative attitude towards the EU and the OHR. Referencing Ashdown’s forceful coercion in the early 2000s, Dodik claimed¹³⁰:

“That is why Paddy Ashdown was biased, unfair and criminal, who used every possible play in the book to break the Dayton Agreement, and wrote in his book that his role was to abolish the Dayton Agreement and create a new BiH,”

The aggressive and often personal rhetoric towards the OHR office serves to emphasize the deeply negative attitudes that Bosnian Serb political elites continue to hold against the EU; the only expectation among Bosnian Serbs is that EU-supported institutions like the OHR will continue to victimize Bosnian Serbs and by extension try to eliminate the RS’s autonomy.

Attitudes towards the EU are largely the same. Milorad Dodik in particular has been especially vocal about his contempt for the EU. In 2017, Dodik claimed¹³¹:

“The European Union is fading away...The very fact that Britain is going out, that any elections are observed traumatically, it tells a lot about the whole story of the situation of the EU. And it shows that the EU image now is not the same as it was 10 years ago.”

¹²⁸ Dragojlovic 2020, <https://balkaneu.com/bih-dodik-and-covic-address-the-un-security-council-no-one-wants-to-hear-it/>

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Dragojlovic 2020, <https://balkaneu.com/bih-dodik-and-covic-address-the-un-security-council-no-one-wants-to-hear-it/>

¹³¹ Macdowall 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/milorad-dodik-bosnia-serb-republic-serbia-leader-no-breakaway-vote-next-year/>

In the same breath, he also claimed that Serbs would only consider EU integration “if it [the EU] gets stabilized” and portrayed the EU as too “pressuring”¹³²:

“They [Russia] haven’t asked anything from me, to do anything impossible. But when I go to Brussels, when I went to Washington previously, pressure was put on me and on many other politicians from here as well. So what’s natural? Is it natural that you go somewhere where you are welcome, or to go somewhere where the pressure is put on you?”

The harsh language directed towards the EU is a clear indication that perceptions of the EU are extremely negative and lack confidence, with Dodik implying that the EU is simply incompatible with the interests of Bosnian Serbs and does not belong in discussions with the RS. There is also the implication that other states outside of the EU’s orbit such as Russia are much better suited for Bosnian Serbs, further denigrating the confidence that Bosnian Serbs hold towards the EU.

Attitudes towards the existence of BiH are largely similar. During a 2021 interview for an RS news agency, Dodik claimed that the state of BiH as a whole has been propped up on an “international infusion” and claimed that the RS could achieve EU membership “within 3 years” if it was allowed to secede¹³³. Presenting BiH as a dying state that the EU is desperate to prop up is a clear reflection of the resentment and dislike that Bosnian Serbs hold for the EU; given that the EU has expressed its unwillingness to accept anything other than a unitary BiH, it is clear that Dodik’s disdain for BiH can be traced back to his disdain for the EU as well. Under this context, it is immediately clear that Europeanization is considered the antithetical to Bosnian Serb identity and thus explains the reasons why Europeanization has lost relevance for many Bosnian Serbs.

Chapter 6: Overview and Conclusions

Within both entities of BiH, 2015 has marked a turning point for Europeanization. The phenomenon of warring ethnic identities has reared its head again in BiH and severely challenged the prospects of Europeanization within its borders, meriting a serious consideration of whether BiH has entered a definitive state of De-Europeanization. This paper has illustrated several key points and concepts. The first one is an answer to my research question. My research

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Mitkovski 2021, <https://rs.n1info.com/region/dodik-samostalna-republika-srpska-bi-za-tri-godine-postala-clanica-eu/>

sought to answer the question: to what extent does ethnic identity play a role in shaping De-Europeanization? The case of BiH has demonstrated that not only do ethnic identity and identity as a whole play a significant role in domestic attitudes towards Europeanization and can make a sizable contribution to De-Europeanization, the level of influence also falls on a spectrum. For Bosnian Croat political elites, Europeanization represented a contested topic that was not quite incompatible with Bosnian Croat identity, but simply needed to fall in line with Bosnian Croat demands, suggesting a middle-ground position where Europeanization is not fully accepted, but not shunned either. For Bosnian Serb political elites however, Europeanization represented a hard-line incompatibility that was impossible to reconcile with Bosnian Serb identity, posing serious conditions of De-Europeanization that may be near impossible to surmount using the EU's current approach of norm and institution-transmission. Although the two ethnic groups have taken different stances on the phenomenon of Europeanization, it is clear that throughout the entire country of BiH, Europeanization as a whole has lost the potency it once held and has become increasingly replaced by rhetoric that emphasizes domestic ethnic identities while portraying other identities as outsiders.

In order to reach this conclusion, I borrowed Subotic's (2011) theoretical framework of identity divergence in order to operationalize my research into three distinct categories and illustrate the consistent presence of ethnic identity among political elite rhetoric. The three categories focused on distinct responses to the EU and Europeanization; the first category focused on contemporary non-compliance with Europeanization reform, the second category illustrated several alternatives to Europeanization that have been embraced by both ethnic groups, and the third category elaborated on past negative relationships in order to contextualize contemporary negative responses to Europeanization. Using both deductive and inductive themes and concepts, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of public rhetoric from both Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb political elites to fully demonstrate how they fulfill the conditions of identity divergence, and more broadly, De-Europeanization within BiH. Following the definition of De-Europeanization as the weakening or loss of Europeanization in a normative and/or political context as defined in the literature review, the three categories also helped to illustrate how conversations and perceptions of ethnic identity contributed to this weakening of Europeanization within the domestic context of BiH; in that sense, I also set out to provide

evidence for De-Europeanization and suggest that BiH's struggles with warring identities has regressed Europeanization in the region since 2015.

Another key point that this research has demonstrated is that institutionalization of ethnic identity is not strictly necessary to create a scenario of De-Europeanization and therefore can occur outside of BiH as well. The similarities between Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb rhetoric suggest that mechanisms of De-Europeanization caused by and correlated with identity are not strictly tied to specific ethnicities or identities, but rather can emerge within any ethnicity or identity group given the conditions of identity divergence are met. The initial willingness to Europeanize from both Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs in the early 2000s is proof enough that the shift to De-Europeanization and a return to warring identities from 2015 onwards is not inherent to Croat and Serb identity, but rather is something that developed as a response to public attitudes, political success, and opportunism. Although there is no doubt that BiH's unique power-sharing structure contributes to the presence and success of ethno-nationalist political elites, it does not explain the whole story. As current OHR High Representative Valentin Inzko once remarked in 2019¹³⁴,

“Dodik has said...publicly that when he used moderate, constructive speech, nobody supported him, that he switched because in order to gain votes, you have to use ethnic, nationalist rhetoric...In a way, he was right: Since then, he has won every election.”

Public attitudes and perceptions of Europeanization hold significant weight in deciding who is at the helm of BiH politics; if Europeanization was a popular belief among the civilian population, political elites would be much more incentivized to promote Europeanization in order to achieve greater political success and favor¹³⁵. Instead, ethno-nationalist rhetoric within both entities of BiH has been rewarded by re-election, protests against cross-ethnic coalitions, and support for secession, suggesting that public attitudes about ethnic identity and identity as a whole contribute to the phenomenon of Europeanization¹³⁶. The public support for ethno-nationalism has reached a critical point where ideas of secessionism and further splitting apart BiH are received more heartily than discussions on EU ascension and constitutional reform. That

¹³⁴ Edwards 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/01/serb-president-dodik-bosnia/579199/>

¹³⁵ Ashwood 2010; Subotic 2011

¹³⁶ Hulsey & Keil 2020

such severe and potent identity divergence can come about from political opportunism and public attitudes unsupportive of Europeanization suggests that this phenomenon is not limited to BiH, as political opportunism and ethno-nationalism have been present within both other candidate states and current member states, at times to a similarly severe extent¹³⁷. Nevertheless, this deep entrenchment of ethno-nationalist rhetoric has plunged BiH into a dangerous crossroads where further Europeanization is uncertain and regression is a mainstay in BiH politics.

The decision to focus on ethnic identity and identity narratives was to expand the literature on domestic factors of Europeanization, but especially to further the literature on De-Europeanization and propose ethnic identity as a potential factor of De-Europeanization. As Subotic (2011) claims, studying identity provides an invaluable perspective wherein EU incentives and conditionality is placed “...in a domestic social context and [given] locally resonant meaning”¹³⁸. This is especially true within BiH, where notions of Europeanization were especially subject to the whims of political elites wielding ethnic identity as their own personal brand of politics. Researching the phenomenon of ethnic identity provides a constructivist alternative to other works on domestic factors that focus on institution-building and constitutional reform, which also were unable to fully illustrate the picture within BiH. However, because this analysis solely focused on domestic discourse and attitudes from domestic political elites, this thesis is inherently limited in its analysis in that, it does not comprehensively cover the phenomenon of BiH and De-Europeanization from many angles. It also has naturally excluded EU-centric perspectives that could provide more insight to this phenomenon, and while further literature discussing the EU’s response to conflicting identities matters a lot in the context of De-Europeanization, it is outside the scope of this thesis.

Ultimately, the findings of this paper have contributed to Europeanization debates in several ways. In a broader context, it is clear that ethnic identity continues to play a significant role in EU accession; differing and occasionally incompatible attitudes with clearly defined EU accession demands poses a serious challenge to the future of Europeanization and merits a renewed look on whether the EU’s approach to enlargement needs to be redefined and adapted to new circumstances of warring identities and ethnic conflict. The current EU approach has

¹³⁷ Castaldo & Pinna 2018

¹³⁸ Pg. 327

attempted to impose a universal European and civic identity with well defined rules and norms – but this civic identity has severely clashed with entrenched ethnic identities that do not have a desire to alter their identities and interpret the EU approach as an imposition. The research suggests that there is little to be optimistic about – ethnic identity has served as a roadblock in the case of BiH, with accession becoming a pessimistically unlikely outcome. Outside of BiH, this clash between the EU’s civic identity and other domestic identities may pose a severe threat to the prospects of Europeanization in future candidate countries, challenging current Europeanization approaches and whether EU conditionality can ever overcome difficult domestic contexts.

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