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Are peace agreements destructive for a state's quality of democracy?

A study into voter turnout in a post-conflict state with an imposed
peace agreement



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Abstract

This thesis studies an imposed peace agreement's effect on a state's voter turn-out and its relationship with low voter turn-out. The study focuses on the case of Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH), which has had a mandated peace agreement since December of 1995: the Dayton Peace Agreement. My key expectation for the research is that BiH citizens do not perceive their vote as a factor that could implement change in the electoral process and eventually incorporate their political changes through politicians and their parties. Furthermore, the consociational aspect of the state, corruption and violence may lower voter turn-out. The analysis has been executed through in-depth interviews with 12 citizens in BiH, deriving from different ethnic backgrounds and equally divided by gender, age, and voters and non-voters. The analysis has strongly brought forward a relationship between corruption and low voter turn-out. The results also show that one of the causes of citizens not heading to the ballot box is that their vote will not imply significant change. This is also because of the consociational nature within the state that uses peacebuilding and power-sharing. The presence of nationalist parties and the DPA's administration also raised issues with respondents through the analysis.

Introduction

The 14th of December of 1995 is a special day marked in the history of Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH); The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) came into force. This General Framework Agreement for peace ended the Bosnian war. The agreement brought forward mixed interpretations amongst the public at the time, and still today. According to Malik (2000), this debate has two sides. On the one hand, the DPA was sufficient as it ended the worst conflict in Europe since World War II. This war has seen atrocities, such as the Srebrenica genocide. Other Bosnian citizens found that the agreement carried a certain ignorance for the general facts. A history of friction between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, is present, which at the same time are the largest ethnic groups in the Balkans. This resulted in the Serb Republic and a somewhat fragile Bosniak-Croat Federation through the DPA (Malik, 2000). A unique characteristic of the DPA is that it provides one person, the High Representative of the International Community in BiH, with a wide range of power. Given this fact, BiH cannot be defined as a full democracy, as the international community has significant, institutionalised power in the system. (Muhamerovic, 2016).

The agreements and regulations are spelt out clearly in the DPA. To ensure the quality of democracy in BiH, the DPA covers an entire annexe on the arrangements made for elections. Annexe three is set to promote the free, fair, and democratic election and to lay the basis for a representative government. Furthermore, it aims to achieve liberal-democratic outcomes for BiH by enforcing the right to vote, ensuring civil liberties, and the interference of the OSCE in the elections. The question remains of what effect the DPA has brought on the quality of democracy, its elections, and political participation. This research aims to analyse the impact of the DPA on political participation (Christopher & Holbrooke, 1995). More specifically, this thesis shall analyse the quality of democracy and compare the quality before the enforcement of the DPA and after it. Analysing voter turn-out will allow us to consider the effect of the DPA on the quality of democracy in BiH. The focus that the thesis seeks relies on the mentioned above features of the DPA. Since the enforcement of the DPA, international organisations are monitoring BiH until this day into upholding the agreement and maintaining peace between the different ethnic groups in BiH. A specific feature is elections. Elections are, since 1995, supervised and monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The question here is whether this interference of international influences in elections has triggered something for citizens and influences their perspective on voting or even abstaining from voting.

Voter turn-out has been chosen because it is a fundamental feature for the legitimacy of representative democracy. Furthermore, voter turn-out has become a widely discussed topic in academic literature. According to Smets and Ham, it is an embarrassment of the riches; political participation seems like an excellent thriving element in democracy. It poses a significant issue in today's politics (Smets & van Ham , 2013, p. 344). BiH will examine how an externally power-sharing enforced agreement between different ethnic groups affects democratic participation. Therefore, the thesis will be formulated by asking: *How has the Dayton Peace Agreement impacted voter turn-out in Bosnia and Hercegovina?*

Theoretical Framework

The key dependent variable introduced in this theoretical framework is voter turn-out. I shall set out a section on why turn-out is essential, what explains turn-out, present my fundamental expectation and other possible mechanisms, and discuss other important variables for my study.

Why turn-out?

Voter turn-out is seen as a fundamental feature in democracy. Dahl (1971) discusses the importance of participation. According to Dahl, democracy should be understood in terms of two different dimensions: the concept of public contestation and inclusiveness (Dahl, 2008). In this thesis, I will focus on inclusiveness by examining turn-out. An aspect of the democratic ideal is that citizens can participate in the democratic process and choose to influence the democratic process. A necessary, though not sufficient, condition for a system to be a democracy is if nearly all mature citizens can vote, despite their gender, class, or ethnicity (Dahl, 2008). Mature citizens play a crucial role in turn-out. Voter turn-out is linked to democracy and analysed through citizen satisfaction and how citizens perceive the quality of democracy in their state (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2016). A wide range of studies states that levels of citizen satisfaction are connected to voter turn-out (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Clarke et al., 2004; Franklin, 2002, 2004; Karp and Banducci, 2008; Norris, 2002). Citizens that show more satisfaction towards their democracy are more likely to vote. On the other hand, the literature suggests that dissatisfaction amongst citizens could lead to political participation in an unconventional form, such as protesting. This leads to a demand for change within the electorate and citizens turning out (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2016). Citizen satisfaction is crucial to consider in this study as it stimulates turn-out and other forms of political participation. Furthermore, citizen satisfaction will be measured through the analysis of this study.

High voter turn-out also reflects political equality. Political equality refers to the idea of 'one person, one vote': no individual is superior to another, and each citizen has equal influence in the political process (Lijphart, 1997). The equal right to participate is one of the core elements of representative democracy, and voter turn-out is the most egalitarian form of participation (Persson & Solevid, 2013).

On the other hand, low voter turn-out could be critical for democracy, according to Lijphart (1998). Low voter turn-out also refers to many faults within a state and could potentially question democracy and its overall accountability and transparency towards its citizens. This potential failure of the democratic regime can occur when the relationship between democratic ideals is imbalanced. Voter turn-out is part of a democratic dilemma, which is the conflict

between the two democratic ideals: political participation and political equality. These two factors are not incompatible and correlated; they have to operate in balance to guarantee a well-operating democratic state. If political participation is low, this immediately stimulates political inequality. This process is systematically biased in favour of privileges, who have higher education, incomes, and wealth, and it is biased against less privileged citizens. This inequality creates unequal participation and this, then, brings forward unequal political influence. The arguments by Lijphart indicate that there is a disbalance or an inevitable inequality with the political involvement that is arising in European democracies. These developments could easily undermine the core of political participation and lower voter turn-out, and the key to democracy. The fewer citizens participate, the larger the inequality (Lijphart, 1998).

What explains turn-out?

A wide range of hypotheses in empirical research is available that explains turn-out, yet in this thesis, I want to focus on the mechanisms that explain voter turn-out. Smets and Ham (2013) cover several explanations for voter turn-out, particularly the reward of voting (utility of voting). From this perspective, there should be a cost-benefit calculation. The profit of voting should exceed the costs to draw voters to the ballot box (Smets & van Ham, 2013). Geys further explains the reward of voting by Downs and considers whether or not it is rational to vote. The instrumental view of rationality explains that voting, in this case, has values if it influences political outcomes (Geys, 2006). This model demonstrates that if a voter decides whether to cast their vote or abstain from it, it depends on whether the expected utility of voting is larger than zero. The benefits are understood as the product of the chance that one's vote matters and the benefit from having one's preferred party in power. Crucial for my study is this chance that one's vote matters. If the probability of affecting the political outcome is small, the utility of voting cannot exceed the costs. The costs might be minor, but when the chance that one person's vote can be decisive is non-existent, the costs might be of great importance (Downs, 1957). The utility of voting is a significant mechanism for this particular study. More specifically, I want to research if voters think their vote matters and how this translates in the context of a state with an externally enforced power-sharing agreement. I hypothesise that voters would argue that their vote matters less and does not implicate much change for citizens who live in a state where an external peace agreement has been enforced and has stimulated power-sharing amongst different ethnic groups.

The paradox of voting sketches a clear idea of the utility of voting and the balance between the costs and benefits within this process. Yet, what drives this mechanism, and more specifically, what are the costs that will outweigh the benefits in this study? In this study, I want to use low

voter turn-out and analyse if it carries any relation to an imposed peace agreement. To explain this, I want to focus on three aspects and link these aspects to elements that can negatively affect turn-out. Firstly, the international community's role; secondly, consociationalism's effect on turn-out, post-conflict countries' nature and peacekeeping. These three concepts are interconnected, as the case study concerns a state that exercises power-sharing through the international community's assistance after conflict. The following paragraphs will explain these aspects in depth.

The international community and post-conflict peacebuilding

According to Brown, Langer, and Stewart (2011), a state that endured internal conflict, receives in most cases, interference and external assistance to regain security and financial help for the recovery of the state. Therefore, the international community comes into place. The international community is defined as a unit that re-establishes state authority, peacebuilding, and socioeconomic development within a post-conflict environment. The peacebuilding aspect that the international community executes is a form of post-conflict management. It is challenging to conceptualise the post-conflict element of a state or event, as every conflict carries different characteristics and circumstances along the way. Brown, Langer, and Stewart have decided not to attach a specific definition to post-conflict yet set a few peace milestones essential within a post-conflict environment. Two crucial milestones are establishing a functioning state and achieving reconciliation and societal integration (Brown, Langer, & Stewart, 2011). The international community ensures a safe environment for combatants to unite without violence, and without this security, the pathway to peace can be blocked. Once this is set in place, the international community can develop a peace settlement (Hartzell, Hoddie, & Rothchild, 2001). Some evidence suggests that the international community tends to have a positive effect and can operate as a third party to prevent friction between involved parties and secure the stability and safety of its citizens (Brown, Langer, & Stewart, 2011). The international community's intentions might be positive and aim for the enhancement of peace within the state of conflict; a crucial question is how the international community performs in the long run?

The international community can always encourage the idea of peace during conflicts but can never force it upon the involved parties of disputes; it always remains a process within a society. Thus, this also includes all citizens who are eligible to vote (Kivimaki, Kramer, & Pasch, 2021). According to Muhamerovic (2016), a part of the citizens will not agree with enforcing a peace agreement and the international community's involvement (Muhamerovic, 2016). Despite this disagreement, the international community must organise elections as a necessary step for post-

conflict peacebuilding. Elections are usually held immediately after the conflict. Brancati and Snyder suggest two sides of the debate. One side argues that facilitating elections after a conflict speed up democratisation and enable stability, and the other side argues that it stimulates the renewal of conflict and fighting (Brancati & Snyder, 2012). According to Rielly (2002), initiating an election too soon after a conflict enables nationalist parties who represent other ethnic groups in society to come forward and dominate elections. Democratisation and stability are tricky as democracy and nationalism do not go hand in hand. If nationalist parties dominate straight after the first post-conflict elections, the political situation will most likely remain the same throughout time. This leads to no political change and makes election results somewhat predictable and continuous, despite proportionality being granted in a state (Reilly, 2002). This mechanism is highly relevant in a case study presented in this thesis. In a country of predictable election outcomes and a continuous cycle of nationalist parties running for office, it would be logical for some citizens to abstain from voting, as the cost of voting eventually exceeds the benefits and accomplishing political outcomes that a voter aims for (Geys, 2006, pp. 16-18). But why is this crucial for turn-out? Since there is no realisation of change, voters could abstain from voting and decrease overall voter turn-out. In my thesis, I want to test the behaviour of voters after the instalment of a peace settlement and analyse if the predictable election results and the dominant position of nationalist parties lead voters to vote less or abstain from voting in general.

Consociationalism

One conflict resolution approach the international community tends to take in deeply divided societies is the implementation of consociationalism. Consociationalism and power-sharing are widely discussed amongst scholars in academic literature. But what is the practical manner of applying consociationalism in deeply divided post-conflict societies? According to Lijphart (1969), consociational democracy is defined as ‘government by elite cooperation designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy (Lijphart, *Consociational Democracy*, 1969). A core example of consociationalism used through the literature is Switzerland. Ethnic aspects within their power-sharing agreements might not connect this state, but it demonstrates an identical problem where low turn-out is present. Turn-out is 35 percentage points lower than predicted in this state. Two variables are responsible for Switzerland's low voter turn-out: the agreement amongst the major parties to share executive power. The consequence, in this case, is that votes cast by citizens have no result or much influence on government formation and makes the election uncompetitive (Blais, 2014, pp. 520-521). The aim of consociationalism in a multi-ethnic society divided by many aspects, such as religion, is for political opponents to transform into cooperative partners by granting leaders a

guaranteed stake in the democratic process. Consociationalism is often seen as an effective measure to implement peacebuilding in post-conflict states. However, in practice, it is rather difficult to solve the deeply embedded issues of a society and attain such a system's proposed aims (Norris, 2009). The other side of the debate considers consociationalism problematic, as conflict cleavages are still embedded in society. This results in a continuous power of conflict-based party competition and voter behaviour (Garry, 2011, p. 113-114). It enables candidates and voters to represent their ethnic, racial, or religious identity and belong to a specific group in society. This is considered an ongoing problem, as it grants voters and electoral candidates to represent a particular identity in society and potentially exclude others. Furthermore, this type of representation allows nationalist parties to participate in elections and emphasise the ethnic and religious aspect instead of elements promoted by democracy in the electoral process, representing all citizens (Bieber & Wolff, 2005).

Alternative mechanisms

Two other mechanisms may play a role in explaining voter turn-out in a post-conflict country. Firstly, there is the link between voter turn-out and corruption and how these two variables interact. Political corruption, finally, is, according to Dahlberg and Solevid (2016), '*a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status, and wealth*'. For example, once corruption arises in a political system, bribery, nepotism, patronage, and clientelism occur. But what consequences does it have? Corruption lowers economic prosperity and undermines a state's political system, the electoral process, and the citizens within the state (Dahlberg & Solevid, 2016, p. 492). The literature's more significant part suggests that corruption is a drain for voter turn-out. Scholars such as de Vries, Solaz, and Ecker, further unfold the corruption problem in their work. In theory, the occurrence of a corruption scandal affects voter behaviour, increasing voting costs. Political corruption is, in this argument, linked to trust in local and national politicians. It harms their trust, voter apathy and makes individuals less likely to vote in existing corrupt political parties (Costas-Perez, 2013, pp. 2-4). This is a mechanism Costas explores, which can be linked to the utility of voting by Downs. Suppose a corruption scandal occurs and eventually increases voting costs. In that case, this indicates that the costs will outweigh the benefits of voting, which results in a voter either abstaining from its vote, or the vote will not implicate any reasonable change in the electoral process. Costas explores this mechanism by examining two political corruption scandals in Spain. Corruption scandals demotivate citizens to go to the ballots. Even though mistrust in politicians functions as an instrument to hold politicians accountable, lower turn-out

will help corrupt office-holders remain in office and continue with the negative side of corruption that affects the economy and social welfare (Costas-Perez, 2013). Other scholars, such as Stockemer, Lamontagne, and Scruggs, have also analysed the macro relationship between corruption and political participation. Citizens might turn their backs to elected officials and decide not to interact with them once the relationship between corruption and participation is damaged. This could mean that trust in politics and the fairness of elections can be questioned or doubted by citizens. This, ultimately, results in certain citizens not participating in politics at all (Stockemer, LaMontagne, & Scruggs, 2011). The perception that politicians are corrupt might reduce turn-out, and therefore, that will be an alternative mechanism presented in my study.

The second alternative mechanism I want to discuss is violence. Alacevich and Zejcirovic discuss the relationship between violence and voter turn-out. According to Alacevich and Zejcirovic (2020), violence against civilians could influence voter turn-out. The authors state that citizens with a higher experience of violence are less likely to vote. If a citizen is exposed to violent occurrences, such as war intensity, it can affect their behaviour, preference and damage trust; this could ultimately lead to a citizen abstaining from voting due to a lack of confidence in the political system and government. In this case, the cost of voting is greater than the benefits, as violence functions as a high cost that brings fear to a citizen. In their analysis, the authors compare violent cases before, during, and post-war elections to gain insight into turn-out and differences in voting behaviour once a violent act or trauma has happened to them (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020). Mechanisms connected to, for example, ethnic composition are examined. The core mechanism coming forward in their analysis is that respondents living in areas with a higher percentage of violence have lower general and institutional trust and therefore vote less often (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2018). This is a mechanism that I consider relevant for this particular study, as we discuss a post-war state that carried ethnic conflict and plenty of violence in multiple areas. Violence could be an essential indicator that influences voter turn-out, especially if a state has had an ethnic conflict and is still trying to exist in harmony together post-war.

Case selection

Before shedding light on the specific case of Bosnia and Hercegovina, I want to focus on the broader sense of what there is available of similar cases to BiH. I shall discuss a range of cases that find similarities to the case of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Furthermore, a specific sub-chapter provides information on BiH and voter turn-out in BiH.

Case selections similar to BiH

BiH carries a unique system through the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Yet, there is a wide range of similar peace agreements across the globe. Table 1 demonstrates a wide range of cases that find similarities with BiH. In all of the listed countries, an imposed peace agreement has been set in place through power-sharing. Most countries listed below have solved either ethnic conflict and armed conflict through these peace agreements, with the main priority to cooperate and create stability and security for its citizens, with the supervision of the international community. BiH is representative of these cases as they share similarities in the scope of international intervention, power-sharing, and conflict.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name Agreement</i>
<i>Afghanistan</i>	5/12/2001	The Bonn Agreement
<i>Kosovo</i>	9/02/2015	First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations
<i>Ireland</i>	13/10/2006	St. Andrews agreement
<i>Israel</i>	26/10/1994	Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
<i>Jordan</i>		
<i>Palestine</i>		
<i>Libya</i>	17/12/2015	Libyan Political Agreement (Sukhairat Agreement)
<i>Somalia</i>	03/04/2016	Agreement Between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Government of Puntland State of Somalia
<i>Cambodia</i>	23/10/1991	Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict (Paris Accords)

South Sudan	01/02/2015	Areas of Agreement on the Establishment of the Transitional Government of National unity (TGoNU) in the Republic of South Sudan
Rwanda	04/08/1993	Peace Agreement between the government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front
Sudan	3-10-2021	Sudan Peace Agreement (Juba Agreement)

Table 1: Overview peace agreements and countries similar to BiH ¹

The case of Bosnia and Hercegovina

The Bosnian war is a memorable moment in history and marks one of the bloodiest genocides after World War II: the Srebrenica genocide. The war emerged when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was broken apart, and BiH declared its sovereignty in October 1991. During that time, BiH already had a multi-ethnic existence with 44 per cent Muslim Bosniaks, 31 per cent Orthodox Serbs, and 17 per cent Catholic Croats. The remaining eight per cent were minorities, mostly Jews or Romanian. The territory in BiH has been equally divided, indicating that different cantons belong to a specific ethnic group in BiH (Bosniac canton, Bosniac-Croat canton, Croat canton, and Republika Srpska). This is a crucial factor for this study, as the ethnic division in BiH are of great importance within politics and the electoral process. When a referendum was initiated for citizens regarding their views on the independence from the SFRY in 1992, the Bosnian Serbs decided to boycott the referendum and respond with violence. Even though most of the Croats and Bosnian Muslims favoured independence and were granted that recognition by the international community, the Bosnian Serbs had different plans. They aimed to unify Serbian-majority territories and create a greater Serbia with ethnically homogeneous features. Municipalities with mostly Bosnian Serbs already distrusted Muslim leaders of Bosnia and started with forming armed forces in 1991, which was followed by The Yugoslav Army, under the leadership of Milosevic, placing Serbian soldiers in local units in BiH. This eventually led to an armed conflict, which resulted in an ethnic civil war. The war was fought for ethnic and territorial reasons and ended in 1995 by the enforcement of the DPA between representatives of Bosnian parties, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020, p. 843).

¹ Table 1: Information about peace agreements are retrieved from the database on <https://peaceagreements.org>

BiH was, within the DPA, defined as a federal democratic republic. Through the DPA, several rules and regulations were arranged to create peace and stability within BiH. BiH carries a complicated political system, as it is separated into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and the Republic of Srpska. Moreover, another entity is separate from the other two since May 2000: Brčko District. The DPA also discussed that internal administrative units must be equally divided by all groups for everyone to have approximately the exact amounts of territory, municipalities, and cantons. The aims of these divisions are that every ethnic entity is equally divided in municipalities. The number of seats in parliament and other bodies is divided equally amongst Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, the political structure and constitution are shaped by the Dayton agreement. BiH has a three-member rotating presidency, who are elected through votes of the three main ethnic groups (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020, p. 844). Elections are held every two years, switching between local and national elections.

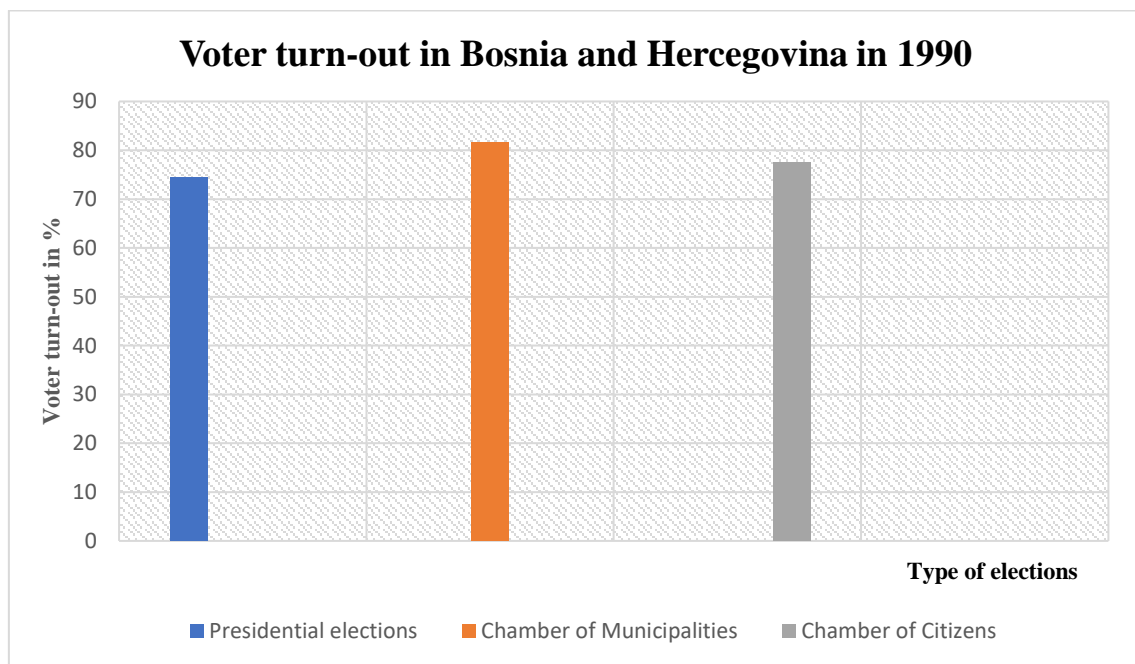
BiH's ethnic composition has brought forward power-sharing, which means that ethnic voting is in place and does not leave a door open for other parties, particularly non-nationalist parties (Krajina & Prochazka, 2018). This also means that, through the DPA, the OSCE arranges and sets the requirements for elections in BiH. The lack of analysis and research about voting processes in BiH has made it rather hard to identify voter behaviour and specific patterns.

Even though BiH is considered a democratic republic in the DPA, literature has shown that BiH cannot be regarded as a full democracy due to the international community's involvement and the power invested in them (Muhamerovic, 2016). BiH can be considered a hybrid regime, in which democratic institutions and mechanisms co-exist with non-democratic ones and where both parties have an important task to govern the polity. In doing so, they have to hold one another accountable. In the case of BiH, the non-democratic characteristic is more prominent, backed up by international actors who want to restore peace, stability, and security within the state (Bojkov, 2003). The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and the Freedom House are two bodies that examine a democracy index. Under their measures, BiH would be considered a hybrid regime. The EIU defines a hybrid regime as a system in which elections contain irregularities, preventing them from being free and fair. Governments may pressure opposition parties and candidates. Furthermore, serious weaknesses come forwards in the category of political participation (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). The Freedom House mentions a few features in the Bosnian regime and further elaborates on why BiH falls under this category. BiH scored relatively low in multiple divisions; the lower the rates, the lower the democratic development in a state. BiH did not particularly excel in any field that the Freedom House

considers a necessary step towards more democratic development. BiH scored low on democratic components such as independent media, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption. This is somewhat problematic, as these factors are essential for a citizen's civil liberties and rights and essential to promote fair and free elections (Brezar, 2021)

Data collection turn-out 1990-2018

General elections in BiH were held in November of 1990. These were the last elections in BiH while it was still ruling as a republic of SFR Yugoslavia. In 1990, the elected candidates would consist of seven members, who would operate within the republic as presidents. The presidential elections of 1990 already carried a particular element of the so-called "representation of the ethnic backgrounds" and tracks similarities with the power-sharing agreement BiH is in today. Two presidents would represent the Bosnian Muslims, the Bosnian Serbs, and the other two would represent the Bosnian Croats. The remaining president would represent the others, such as the minorities, and was a Yugoslav. Since Yugoslavia fell apart, citizens were either part of their minority or called ex-Yugoslavs (Meier, 1999). Turn-out in 1990 is displayed in the figure below. The presidential elections had a turn-out of 74,4 per cent. The Chamber of Municipalities showed the highest number with 81,6 per cent of voter turn-out, and the Chamber of Citizens had a turn-out of 77,5 per cent. There were irregularities within the elections in Brcko, Doboj, Nevesinje and Sarajevo, as there were more votes counted than the actual registered voters present during the elections (Nohlen & Stöver, 2010).



Since implementing the DPA in 1995, BiH has had seven presidential elections and eight parliamentary elections. The percentages on voter turn-out from 1996 until 2018 have been retrieved from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and are displayed below through a chart and percentages (IDEA, 2021). What is noticeable in the rates is that the first elections after the DPA have significant differences in percentages, and the numbers are still relatively low. 1998 seems like a successful year amongst voters. When comparing the various data, it is noticeable that the presidential elections have shown a decrease of approximately 20-25 per cent from 2002 and onwards, compared to 1990. As for the parliamentary elections, the percentages have stagnated from 2002. Despite the differences with previous years not being as tremendous in percentages as the presidential elections, there is a significant decrease of approximately 10 %. Overall, it is pretty concerning that almost half of the citizens in BiH did not vote at all and compared to other democracies, voter turn-out in BiH is very low.

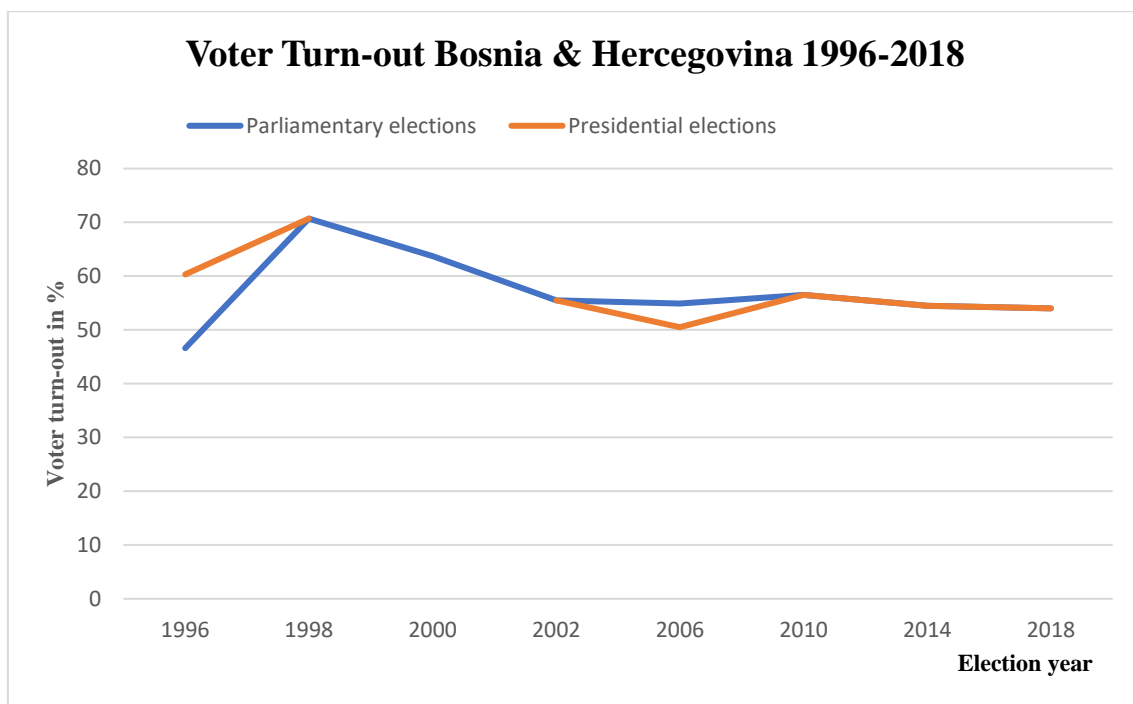


Chart 2

Election year	Parliamentary elections	Presidential elections
1996	46,1 %	60,3 %
1998	70,7 %	70,7 %
2000	63,7 %	-
2002	55,5 %	55,5 %
2006	54,9 %	50,5 %

2010	56,5 %	56,5 %
2014	54,5 %	54,5 %
2018	54 %	54 %

Table 2: Election results 1996-2018 BiH

Data and methods

This section provides an overview of the different research methods used in this study. In principle, my study is focused on qualitative research through data collection and interviews. I shall set out a section on the data source, the quantitative analysis, and explain the methods within the qualitative analysis.

Data source and short quantitative overview

In anticipation of the voter turn-out percentages of BiH throughout the years, several data institutions will be used during the research. Firstly, the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has kept track of parliamentary and presidential elections from 1996 up until the last elections in 2018. A second body that provides electoral percentages in BiH is the Council of Europe (CoE) through ElecData. This is a collection of the electoral data of the Member States of the CoE. This page also redirects to the official Electoral Management Body website, where all the electoral outcomes and voter turn-out percentages are from 1996 until the latest election (Central Election Commission BiH, 2021). Finding voter turn-out percentages before 1995 was hard, so I have decided to reach out to the OSCE for this information, as this organisation has handled the elections in BiH since the DPA. All of these data sources allow the research to reach voter turn-out numbers and show a contrast between different years.

Qualitative analysis

This study will also include qualitative research through the use of interviews. Face-to-face interviews has been a well-known process within research. I will use a different way of interviewing, varying from face-to-face conversations with respondents to a telephone interviewing (Opdenakker, 2016). In selecting respondents, three criteria played a crucial role: whether respondents turned out, their ethnicity, their gender, and age. For the first three, I aim for diversity: with respondents turning out and staying home, three ethnic groups and two genders, there are twelve combinations of these variables. I have included one respondent from each of these combinations. For age, I want respondents of roughly a similar age. Firstly, interviewed voters and non-voters. It is important to distinguish these groups, as they both carry different views on politics and different reasons why they do or do not decide to engage in

political participation. The core of the study is based on why citizens do not turn out, yet including voters in the interviews sheds light on the difference in motives of voters and non-voters and enables an open discussion and two sides in the debate. Furthermore, I interviewed equal numbers of Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats. In light of the ethnic conflict in BiH and the different divisions within the state, it will be a crucial to interview these different groups and see if there are differences in voting and if one group has particular reasons to vote or not vote. This would examine what was discussed before regarding that there is barely any change in election turn-out as nationalist and representative political parties of each ethnicity wins elections and change is barely there. To conclude, the research will contain 12 different interviews, and this translates to six different boxes. There will be four respondents per ethnicity. Per ethnicity, two respondents will be voters and two respondents will be non-voters. Gender will also be considered to have an equal amount of both male and female, which means that two out of four respondents from each ethnic group will be male, and the other half will be female. Lastly, the respondents will be determined by age. The study will focus on respondents who were both eligible to vote in 1990 as in the past national elections in 2018. This indicates that respondents will be 49 years of age or older.



Figure 1 : Federation of BiH with all the cantons ²

² Figure 1: the image is retrieved from the Office of High Representative

The respondents derive from different regions in BiH and have been retrieved through different manners. Five out of twelve respondents derive from the region Una-Sana and have been retrieved through personal contacts and via-via contacts within my personal social network. Four respondents derive from the regions Republika Srpska (RS) and where firstly found through via-via contacts and secondly through social media platforms. Two respondents from the region Sarajevo and one respondent from the region Hercegovina-Neretva were recruited through social media platforms as well; individuals that came forward through social media posts that knew individuals who were suited for the interview and would fit within the selected criteria. The twelfth respondent derived from the region Tuzla Podrinje and is a contact of one of the previous respondents. Figure 1 indicates where the interviewees derive from by marking the places with a colored dot.

Analysing the interviews

I will analyse the interviews using a codification scheme. I will use this to code whether non-voters (and voters) refer to the extent to which they feel³¹ that with their vote they can make a difference. Codes are defined as assigning tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011, p. 137) Based on coding, I have formulated a set of interview questions which could be used to code these outcomes and see if the respondents bring forward any of these codes in their answers.

CODE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
MY VOTE HAS IMPACT	Voting matters and voters have a feeling that their vote matters and can create change in policies or other political views that they carry. Voters have trust in their political system and do not see any barriers that make them want to abstain from voting.	"I vote every election and I am invested in politics. I have witnessed fair elections and notice a positive development in politics. I have had several standpoints on certain issues and I feel that my perspectives are well represented in politics".
MY VOTING DOES NOT HAVE IMPACT	Voting is not seen as a form of effective representation in	"The political system does not engage enough to grant

democracy and does not see any change through their voting or gives a voter the sense that their vote even matters. Additionally, the political system carries many flaw that undermine democracy and influence the turn-out rate in elections.	trust between the system and voters. The state cannot be considered fully democratic and I have seen many improvements that still need to be made. As long as a proper democracy is not in order, I can see why turn-out is low and will continue to do so".
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Table 2

Two other mechanisms that will be part of the analysis are corruption and violence. I will also code whether respondents mention this. Corruption is a widespread issue across democracies, and in particular with hybrid democracies, such as BiH. It is shown that it could endanger the core of democracy, and create a distrust between the government and the citizens (Dahlberg & Solevid, 2016). The other component, is violence. This is a mechanism that Alacevich and Zejcirovic touch upon and use the theory by Riker and Ordershook, where voting is determined by the benefits of the winning candidate, being a pivotal voter, the private costs, and the expressive benefit from it. They would argue that, then, violence does not fit these criteria, and that it has a weak relationship with voter turn-out (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020).

CODE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
CORRUPTION	A manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.	"The state of BiH has a lot of corruption. Not only in politics, but also amongst police, border control, etc. The corruption within the political system is very

	<p>Additionally, undermining the chance of fair and free elections that should grant all eligible citizens to have the right to vote.</p>	<p>frustrating, as it makes me question if I can trust the system and political parties. If the OSCE would not be involved in managing elections, I think corruption would have gotten a free pass in our system."</p>
<p>VIOLENCE</p>	<p>Physical force that is used on citizens that leads to a distrust in the system and trauma.</p>	<p>"I, and many others, have seen many tragedies and violence in war. This was a rather traumatising time, which has made me doubt politics in general. Therefore, I decided to not cast my vote anymore. I do not want to participate in a system that normalises violence against its citizens."</p>

Table 3

Results

The following chapter will delve deeper into the analysis of this study. In this chapter, I shall delve into the more significant part of the analysis, which is the interviews that were conducted with 12 citizens in BiH and discuss the results.

Analysis interviews

Twelve interviews have been conducted with the respondents. From each ethnic background, (Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs), four respondents were selected. Amongst each four respondents, there were two voters and two non-voters selected. From the two voters, for each category one male and female were selected, and vice versa. All the respondents are 49 years or older. The research focuses on turn-out between 1990 and 2018, which would indicate that respondents should be eligible to vote in 1990 to comply with the set criteria for the interview. This means that the interviewees are all 49 years of age or older. Throughout the interview, several questions were posed to the respondents (appendix 2) with sub-questions based on the respondent's answers. All the respondents will remain anonymous in the study and will be numbered from respondent one up until respondent 12. The interviewee overview is listed in appendix 1.

Why do we vote or do not vote?

Respondents were asked what their reasons were for voting or not voting. The core reason why respondents went to the ballot box is that they felt it was their duty as a citizen to vote, because it is their right and towards the community they feel it is their duty. Others mentioned to vote for the good of the country, in hopes that someday something would change in BiH. In other words, there was still hope for the improvement of the state. Reasons for not voting was because it does not matter whether if you go voting or not. Election outcomes were quite predictable and throughout the years the state has not had any significant changes. Respondents three and eleven did mention that there were enough political parties available to vote for, especially in the municipal elections there were more non-nationalist parties coming forward, which they perceived as positive. Furthermore, next to predictability of election outcomes, respondents two, six, nine and ten did not see hope for the state or ways of improving anytime soon. They simply stated not being interested in politics, since the state is not heading into the right direction, respondents have lost focus or the will to follow politics or get informed about it.

Driving factors and concerns

Another important element within the interviews was what stimulates voters to head to the polls, and what barriers made them less likely to vote. Driving factors were similar as in the previous

paragraph but another stimulating factor came forward: voting for the future of their children. This was indicated by respondent one and five. They hope that they can create change for the future of their children by the time they are eligible to vote or grow older, to provide a stable political situation for them with particularly economic prosperity. When asked what makes respondents less likely to vote, plenty of aspects came forward. All respondents have encountered or believe in political corruption and state that trust in the political institutions is rather low; some respondents do not classify BiH as a democracy at all. One respondent stated, *"Bosnia is a lot of things and there are plenty of negative aspects to mention, but it is everything but a democracy"*. This respondent specifically hinted towards political corruption and how BiH could not be considered a democracy when there is corruption in every segment of the state. Respondents do not expect their vote to change their political needs, mainly because of corruption and predictable election outcomes. Respondents expressed that power-sharing and the focus of nationalistic parties was a problem, as society is too focused on the ethnic background of a political party instead of focusing on what is best for all. The solution for several respondents was to remove nationalist parties, who merely focus too much on ethnicity and to increase parties that merely focus on the left and right political scale, instead of ethnicity. Respondent three and respondent 11 both indicated that municipal elections contain less nationalistic parties and that from there we should work from the bottom up to apply this in national politics. Nationalist parties/ ethnically focused parties reminds citizens of the divide during the war and people are scared and to some extent threatened by the current political situation in BiH. Two respondents mentioned having witnessed political corruption through buying votes. One respondent stated *"It does not matter who votes, what matters is who is counting the votes"*. Furthermore, respondent five stated *"My vote only counts as one vote in theory. In practice it does not change anything, and it has not for years now"*. There is a strong belief and confirmation amongst respondents that political corruption is an absolute present factor within the electoral process.

Voting through time

When being asked about political change from the 1990's to now, respondents would argue that the situation has become worse after the war. Corruption has increased significantly in the state and there is barely hope for economic improvements and ways forward for the state. The DPA is merely seen as an agreement that brought peace to BiH for the time being and respondents could state that the influence from the international community has not changed anything. Respondents have not shown any change in their voting behaviour and do not think that the DPA has made their vote matter less. The DPA is not seen as an initiative by the international community that has meant anything significantly for the political aspect. One respondent even

expressed that *"The influence of the international community has put BiH in the ground and they have destroyed our country"*. The respondent referred to the fact that BiH should have been independent by now and that the DPA has only costed BiH unnecessary money to install all of its administration. Respondents would assign corruption as one of the main reasons for the low voter turn-out, alongside the nationalist parties that focus too much on ethnic background and the consociationalism element within the state. Since the installment of the DPA, respondents have not seen major progressive steps forward and they claim that citizens abstain from voting because they are tired of the absence of any type of progress in the electoral system.

Respondents would assign corruption as one of the main reasons for the low voter turn-out, alongside the nationalist parties that focus too much on ethnic background and the power-sharing amongst the institutions is not effective in their opinion. Since the implementation of the DPA, respondents have not seen a significant step forward in terms of democratising BiH and respondents number two and four could even understand that turn-out is so low and the absence of any type of progress in the electoral system, such as solving the problem of corruption.

Additional features

An unexpected factor mentioned by several respondents was an element of progressive politics in the future. Several respondents mentioned getting rid of the current politicians and allowing younger candidates to step forward, who carry a modern perspective for the future of BiH. BiH has a tendency over the past years, due to unemployment, to force people to the western-European countries, to establish wealth and a future for themselves or their families. *"If only they would assign candidates who are young, since they have broader sense of how democracies work in this time and age, that would already show significant change, I think. I even argue that people would be more interested to participate within politics if we have a whole new range of candidates who are ready to look at the future and not look back at the misery we have had to endure"*.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that BiH has a difficult political system, yet many different countries are in a similar position as BiH. When comparing the predicted hypothesis and alternative mechanisms within the thesis to the results within the analysis, there are multiple notable patterns. Firstly, by collecting voter turn-out percentages from 1990-2018, there is a decrease visible in voter-turnout throughout the years. The decrease is not remarkably large, yet still a little less than half of the population does not vote, which is problematic.

By conducting in depth interviews, people have indicated that their vote does not affect that much of a change in BiH. In national elections, the election results are most of the time the same and respondents have said that it is a vicious cycle that the state cannot get out of. Despite casting their vote, there is not a change of elected parties that will run for office. The presence of nationalist parties still shows the ethnic division that is embedded in society and respondents want this focus not to be present in the political arena, but there to be more focus on the democratisation of the country, which is usually one of the key aims of a peace agreement. Another solution to obtain an effective democratisation process, is by reducing or eliminating political corruption in the state. There is a clear negative relationship present between corruption and low voter turn-out in this case. Respondent that did not vote also did not vote because of corruption scandals in the state, yet the voters did not want to abstain from voting because of it. It is of great importance for BiH to repair the trust with its citizens and be transparent at all times; perhaps this could lead the non-voters to the ballot box.

The other alternative mechanism violence was not mentioned as much as expected. The theory shows enough empirical evidence to demonstrate a negative relationship between low turn-out and violence, yet the respondents have not expressed it that much. It was indirectly sensible that the respondents were a bit held back to speak open and honest; perhaps this fear or violence is the reason behind this. Lastly, the perception of the DPA and its connection to low turn-out. Proposed theory does not necessarily refer to the peace agreement but does to implemented features through the peace agreement, such as consociationalism and the utility of voting. Furthermore, the respondents perceive this peace agreement as a feature that brought peace to the country, and they have not seen a significant change in a political sense through the DPA.

To take the research question that the research initially started with: *How has the Dayton Peace Agreement impacted voter turn-out in Bosnia and Hercegovina?* The DPA has not impacted voter turn-out much through its enforcement and is merely seen as a sign of peace and stability. Perhaps it is wiser to say that through what the DPA has allowed in BiH, it could have potentially harmed the turn-out percentages in the state. Perhaps ethnic division should have not

been so prominent in the DPA by dividing the state, and with that said, citizens in different cantons, districts and so forth. Furthermore, stricter regulations and supervision should be installed by the international community against corruption are. The case study of BiH has plenty of potential for further research, as it resembles to many similar peace accords worldwide that are in externally imposed peace agreements, due to ethnic conflict. There is a wide range available in the academic literature, and perhaps it would be a good additional step to conduct more field work, and interviews to analyse if the theory is applicable in the real world.

Limitations

The research has been executed with full capability. A few limitations came at hand. Firstly, despite being Bosnian, it was at times rather difficult to not get lost in all the news, developments, and history surrounding the DPA. BiH is not an easy 'democracy' to understand and the DPA is a functioning agreement and measure until this day; this means that news about the DPA still comes forward and brings new progress or concerns to the table. Secondly, as a researcher, it would have been preferred to do the interviews in a face-to-face environment. Small details, such as weak internet connection and time management would be much more favorable. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was unable to travel to BiH to conduct those interviews. Respondents were also spread throughout the country, which even made it more difficult to consult them face-to-face. Another limitation that came forward during the interviews was to gain trust from the respondents. This is an aspect of the research that was unexpected. The respondents were in most cases rather hesitant to speak openly about politics and were quite formal and tried to be correct in their answers, rather than honest. Throughout the interviews, I have decided, then, to incorporate a small introduction before the interview, to ensure their anonymity, specify that the recordings would be deleted and only shown to the instructor, and had an open conversation if the respondents were perhaps fearful to speak their mind. This was a better approach and worked for the respondents to be more open and honest about their thoughts. On the other hand, there were a few respondents that were quite frustrated throughout the interview and emotional, which was a challenging factor as sometimes the interview would shift towards different topics of frustration or war memories from respondents.

The future of Bosnia and Hercegovina

Future research regarding this study and topic would be a necessity, especially with the current fear of arising conflict within Bosnian politics. As mentioned before, the DPA is still implemented in BiH and current news flashes have brought forward a breach of the DPA by the Serbian entity within BiH that is causing a conflict. The international community and the citizens see recognisable signs of concern that were similar as when the situation unfolded itself

to a bloody war in the 1990s. There is justified concern and the response of the international community is crucial in this matter to prevent a catastrophe from happening. The developments in BiH will particularly be interesting as the state is a protentional EU state. The independence of its state without external influences is an unimaginable aim, yet it will be grasping to see the development of the power sharing feature within its political system and see if this will ever develop to a democratised BiH that works under one democratic front without parties and candidates that focus on nationalism and ethnicity.

Appendices**Appendix 1: List of interviewees**

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEES	AGE RESPONDENT	GENDER	ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION	VOTER OR NON-VOTER	DATE OF THE INTERVIEW
RESPONDENT 1	50	Male	Bosniak	Voter	29-11-2021
RESPONDENT 2	69	Male	Bosniak	Non-voter	2-12-2021
RESPONDENT 3	57	Female	Bosniak	Voter	24-11-2021
RESPONDENT 4	62	Female	Bosniak	Non-voter	28-11-2021
RESPONDENT 5	49	Male	Serb	Voter	12-12-2021
RESPONDENT 6	65	Male	Serb	Non-voter	4-12-2021
RESPONDENT 7	61	Female	Serb	Voter	2021
RESPONDENT 8	65	Female	Serb	Non-voter	2-12-2021
RESPONDENT 9	71	Male	Croat	Voter	10-12-2021
RESPONDENT 10	52	Male	Croat	Non-voter	29-11-2021
RESPONDENT 11	49	Female	Croat	Voter	26-11-2021
RESPONDENT 12	64	Female	Croat	Non-voter	7-12-2021

Appendix 2: Interview questions

As mentioned before, the interviews will be conducted amongst 12 individuals in BiH. Confidentiality and ethics within the research is an important part to ensure the validity of the research. The interviewees will each be handed an informed consent form (appendix 2) that states the purposes and aims of the research and the manner in which the interviews will be conducted. The interviews will be recorded. In terms of anonymity, the interviewees can remain anonymous within the research if they wish to. The validity of the research is not determined by the name of the respondent, but rather the ethnic group the respondent belongs to, the age and gender of the respondent. These factors demonstrate that through the interviews different ethnic groups in BiH have been covered, ranging from different ages, genders, and voters and non-voters. The interviewee, can then, for example, be named respondent number X or be stated under a pseudonym.

1. Turn-out in elections in BiH is low; there are citizens who do vote and citizens who abstain from voting. I want to research the reasons behind low voter turn-out in BiH. My question is, therefore, if you have voted in the past elections?
2. What is the reason you did vote/ did not vote?
3. What factors encourage you to go vote?
4. What factors make it less likely for you to vote?
5. How important is voting for you and why? (reaching the answer if their vote actually matters)
6. I want to talk to you about the changes in your political participation over time. The first multiparty election in BiH were in 1990. Did you vote in those election? Why did you or did you not vote in those elections?
7. Have the factors that lead you to vote or abstaining you to vote changed since those elections? Why?

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

- 1) Thesis title: The impact on voter turnout in Bosnia and Hercegovina through the Dayton Peace Agreement
- 2) Research description and aim: The research aims to research why there is a low voter turnout in elections in BiH and if this is by any chance influenced by BiH's international peace agreement. Since the Dayton Peace Agreement came into force, in 1995, BiH has had international interference from institutions such as NATO and the OSCE. This also means that the OSCE is involved in supervising elections in the BiH. The research aims to answer its research question using collecting data and sources, yet also through the use of interviews, to gain a realistic perspective by using opinions of different citizens in BiH. To ensure credibility and variety in respondents, interviewees of different ethnic groups have been selected. Furthermore, interviewees are also distinguished through being a voter or a non-voter.

If you agree to participate in this study, please read the following statements and sign the form if all criteria are agreed upon.

- I am 18 years of age or older.**
- I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered any raising questions about the research to ensure clarity and transparency.
- I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.
- I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:
 - All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study.
 - Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher and relevant university assessors. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.
 - The respondent can request to check the research before it is handed in, to ensure the interview, quotations, and transcript it used accurately.
- I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the outlined guarantees above.

Signature interviewee: _____

Date: _____

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