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Then Yugoslavia, Now Bosnia? The Impact of National Identity on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Probable Fragmentation

1. Introduction

The violent breakup of multinational Yugoslavia between 1989 and 1995 devastated the Balkans, claiming over 200,000 lives and redrawing the Balkan political landscape along ethnic lines. The Yugoslav Wars officially ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) in 1995, which established today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and established a new political structure in the country. BiH consists of two semi-independent entities, Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation). Three distinct ethnic groups reside in this country: Croats and Bosniaks1 in the Federation and Serbs in RS.

A complex interaction of multiple factors brought about the downfall of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia scholar Dejan Jović identifies and comments on several arguments for why the country fragmented. These arguments include the following: economic, role of personality, nationalism, cultural, fall of empires, ancient ethnic hatreds, and international politics arguments.2 The transition from Yugoslavia to BiH was not easy, and BiH still bears the scars of Yugoslavia’s bloody past. Many scholars analyzing post-DPA BiH provide a grave forecast for its future. Patrice C. McMahon and Jon Western’s article, “The Death of Dayton: How to Stop Bosnia from Falling Apart,” identifies “rising ethnic nationalist pressure, weak central governance, and endemic corruption” as threats to BiH.3 Roberto Belloni’s “Bosnia: Dayton is

1 Bosniak refers to an ethnic or cultural Muslim living in BiH.
3 McMahon and Western, 80.
Dead! Long Live Dayton!” discusses political gridlock as a result of ethno-politics and the subsequent negative implications this has for the stability of BiH.⁴

Present-day BiH suffers from omnipresent ethnic tension, present in every level of society, including the government. This has led to the existence of an enlarged, inefficient, and financially burdensome political system marred by corruption and organized crime. In some parts of Bosnia, members of different ethnic groups live side-by-side but remain estranged from each other. In addition, nationalist leaders capitalize on ethnic polarization by acting in opposition to the other ethnic groups or even by threatening their ethnic group’s political secession from the country. The root of each of these problems lies in the fact that three different national groups lacking a “shared vision for the country” have been forced to exist in one country by the international community, which currently appears to be distancing itself from the Balkans.⁵ BiH is still plagued by the same issues that brought down Yugoslavia. As as enumerated by Jović, these include problems of an economic nature, the role of personality, nationalism, cultural questions, and international politics. What this suggests is that BiH is also likely to fragment.


Ethnicity is at the root of various Eastern European national identities, including those present in BiH. When describing an ethnic group, Anthony Smith uses the French term *ethnie*, and defines it as cultural and historical individuality that set populations apart from each other, giving them a “definite identity, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of outsiders.”⁶ According to Smith, individual Eastern European national identities “emerged out of the situation of

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⁴ Belloni, 361–365.  
⁵ Simonsen, 32.  
incorporated ethnic communities or *ethnies*, whose intelligentsias sought to liberate them from the shackle of various empires.”  

From these groups emerge individuals ready to “identify themselves emotionally with ‘their’ nation and to be politically mobilized” as such.  

Due to the inseparable connection between religion and national identity in the Balkans, the most important event for the evolution of Bosniak, Croat, and Serb national identities was the introduction of Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. Sometime during the seventh century, missionaries from Rome and Byzantium introduced Catholicism and Orthodoxy to the Croatian and Serbian lands, respectively. Before the emergence of the Ottoman Empire, those living in Bosnia included a mixture of Orthodox and Catholics, whose numbers increased during the Middle Ages. However, the Ottoman Empire conquered Bosnia and then Herzegovina in 1463 and 1482, respectively, introducing Islam to the region. Many Slavs converted to Islam in order to meet the religious requirement to own property or be employed in the fields of government or trade.

Centuries of foreign rule under the various empires had a “catalyzing effect leading to a widening of the cultural difference between the Slavic peoples” in the Balkans, particularly for the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. Though foreign occupation threatened to assimilate the different ethnic groups, “the memory of former glory helped to preserve national language and cultural heritage throughout centuries of foreign rule.” When the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires collapsed in the First World War, the Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks were united with

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8 Ivanov, 35.
9 Andjelić, 120.
10 Friedman, 6–7.
11 Ibid, 7.
12 Keane, 47.
13 Ivanov, 29.
other ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on December 1, 1918. This kingdom became known as Yugoslavia in 1931. While there were border changes during World War II, Josip Broz Tito reunited the country and turned Yugoslavia into a socialist nation after the war. Six republics made up Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. These borders remained unchanged until Yugoslavia collapsed in the early 1990s. Though the central government of socialist Yugoslavia attempted to quash the different national identities and force them to adopt a Yugoslav national identity, “the sense of [preexisting ethnic] nationalism had already taken root and lay fertile underneath a thin surface.”

3. The Yugoslav Wars and the Dayton Peace Accords

Between the 1960s and 1980s, Yugoslavia experienced increasing political and economic disintegration. Yugoslav political and economic decentralization in the 1960s and 1970s set the stage for confrontation between those who opposed changes and the reformers who initiated these changes. Then, “the conflict took on nationalist overtones as ethnic particularism became the tool that national elites wielded in order to forward their own agendas.” Political conflict made much-needed reform impossible. But, as a result, Yugoslavia was not prepared for the economic recession of the 1980s. Because of economic and political degradation, “the economic crisis in turn altered the potentially modern social relationships within the society, turning them into bonds of clientilism based on ties of blood, religion, ethnicity, and region.” Nationalist polarization in Yugoslavia was also made evident during the multiparty elections of 1990, as

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14 Friedman, 13–20.
15 Belloni, 357.
16 Keane, 57.
17 Friedman, 28.
18 Ibid, 28.
nationalist parties emerged as the overwhelming victors. In short, these elections “finally accommodated the manifestation of such ethnic division.”

Soon after the elections, both Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. Slobodan Milošević then launched a war in Croatia in 1991. In February 1992, BiH held a referendum to decide on the issue of their independence. This referendum was boycotted by Serbs in BiH, but of the 64% of the population that voted, 98% voted for an independent BiH. The Serbs and the Croats engaged in war against the Bosniaks in 1992 and 1993, respectively, as they each tried to claim territory in which members of their national groups lived. Conflict between the Bosniaks and Croats ended with the Washington Agreement in 1994. Croatia regained their territories that had been conquered by the Serbs and Croatian and Bosniak forces reclaimed land that had been taken by the Bosnian Serb forces. In response to the massacre of 7,000 Bosniaks in Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces, NATO bombed Bosnian Serb military locations. A cease-fire was negotiated and the war was over, but the bloody conflict and ethnic cleansing had left 250,000 dead, 1.5 million as refugees in other countries, and one million “internally displaced” within the former Yugoslavia.

The Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) settled the fate of BiH. Alija Izbetgović, Franjo Tudjman, and Slobodan Milošević, the respective presidents of BiH, Croatia, and Serbia, signed the treaty in Paris on December 14, 1995. The DPA established BiH as a democratic state composed of two entities divided by the Inter-Ethnic Boundary Line. The first entity was the Federation of BiH (the Federation), which made up 51% of the geographical territory and was

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20 Keane, 61.
21 Belloni, 357–358.
22 Friedman, 53.
23 Robinson and Pobrić, 237.
24 Bieber, 26–27.
25 Carr and Callan, 160.
composed of Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats. Furthermore, the Federation was divided into ten cantons. Of the Federation’s ten cantons, eight were either homogenously Croat or Bosniak; the remaining two cantons were ethnically heterogenous, consisting of a mixture of Croats and Bosniaks. The second entity established was RS, which included 49% of the territory and was composed of Bosnian Serbs.

The DPA set up the power-sharing system that consists of the state and entity level governments as well as the international authority that oversees BiH’s political life. In order to appease BiH’s three ethnic groups, the DPA established a political structure “organized on the basis of an ethnic key which guaranteed representation to all three sides” at the state, entity, and municipal levels. The resulting government contains “redundant government offices” at each level, making BiH “the state with the highest number of presidents, prime ministers, and ministers per capita in the entire world.” In addition, the DPA allotted for the governance of the international community when establishing BiH’s political structure through the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Holding both executive and legislative powers, “the High Representative has emerged as the most influential position in Bosnia—and the only one not to be governed by power-sharing or democratic principles.” Different countries and international organizations are involved with the OHR, which has successfully passed laws, removed past governmental officials, regulated political parties, and enacted reforms. This position has proven

27 Belloni, 359.
28 Bieber, 45.
29 Carr and Callan, 160–161.
30 Chandler, 67.
31 CIA World Factbook.
32 Belloni, 359.
33 Bieber, 84.
necessary in BiH, as it allows the international community to make decisions for BiH when their own political leaders cannot.\textsuperscript{34}

With the signing of the DPA, Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia were to accept international stabilization forces, endorse BiH's election policy, endorse the constitution of BiH, accept a variety of human rights decrees, co-operate with war-crime investigations, and comply with the DPA's annexes and articles.\textsuperscript{35} After it was signed, 60,000 troops from 36 countries supported by NATO arrived in BiH to enforce the treaty. Ultimately, the DPA “stopped the bloodshed, and it created the conditions for life to return to normal—at least on the surface.”\textsuperscript{36}

4. Arguments for Yugoslavia’s Demise and the Persistence of these Arguments in BiH

The Economic Argument

The economic argument identified by Jović attributes the economic crisis that shook Europe in the early 1980s as one of the factors that caused the fragmentation of Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{37} Due to the conflict between economic reformists and those opposing economic changes, the country was unable to prepare itself for the economic crisis of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{38} As a result, Yugoslavia was susceptible to economic stresses including inflation, unemployment, and economic differences among the republics. In Yugoslavia in 1989, inflation was 2,000%, unemployment was 20%, and 60% of workers “lived under the official minimum subsistence level.”\textsuperscript{39} Yugoslavia’s republics differed economically, as some approached Western economic standards, while others exhibited “Third World characteristics.”\textsuperscript{40} Croatia and Slovenia, the

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid, 83–84.
\item Keane, 72.
\item McMahon and Western, 71–72.
\item Jović, Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away, 15.
\item Friedman, 28.
\item Berend, 293.
\item Berend, 293.
\end{enumerate}
developed republics, “felt the attraction of being rid of the heavy load of their more backward and more severely crisis-ridden partner republics,”\(^{41}\) which were the primary motivations in both of their declarations for independence in 1991.\(^{42}\) Ultimately, economic factors during this time “played a significant role in creating the context to which the narratives of political leaders were forced to respond,” contributing to Yugoslavia’s end.\(^{43}\)

Unemployment and economic inequality continued to plague the region following the DPA. The 2012 and 2013 unemployment estimates were 45.4% and 44.3%, respectively.\(^{44}\) Economic inequality also divides BiH’s ethnic groups. In 1997, the average gross wage in RS was approximately half of the average gross wage in the Federation; however, by 2002 the economic situation in RS improved slightly, and the average gross wage grew to 71.9% of the Federation’s average.\(^{45}\) In the Federation, the average household income exceeds the costs needed for basic household and family needs, while this is not the case in RS. The economic situation is the best in Croat households, followed by Bosniak and, finally, Serb households.\(^{46}\) Economic inequality along ethnic lines may provide an economic motivation and justification for BiH’s fragmentation, just as it did in Yugoslavia.

BiH’s weak economy also faces additional economic stress, including the financial burden induced by governmental and political corruption, which creates a financially precarious situation reminiscent of the economic argument for Yugoslavia’s demise. Approximately 56% of BiH’s budget is used to finance an enormous government apparatus, which is especially large

\(^{41}\) Ibid, 293.
\(^{43}\) Ibid, 14.
\(^{44}\) CIA World Factbook.
\(^{45}\) Bieber, 36.
\(^{46}\) Ibid, 36.
due to the need for ethnic representation at every level.\textsuperscript{47} In addition, corruption, a product of ardent national representation in the government, economically hurts the state. For example, between 1996 and 1999, approximately $5 billion of aid funding was given to BiH; in 1999, an investigation revealed that $1 billion had disappeared.\textsuperscript{48} Also, in 2008, RS’s president, Milorad Dodik, was being investigated, as the construction of a new governmental structure in Banja Luka cost four times more than was expected.\textsuperscript{49} In addition, organized crime, which is “perhaps the only Bosnian structure that is truly multinational,” dominates BiH’s economy; customs and taxes are widely ignored, as “almost half of Bosnia’s economy is underground.”\textsuperscript{50} Such corruption has deterred foreign direct investment and private sector development, hurting the potential for economic growth. Just as during communist Yugoslavia, nationalist politicians determine leadership in economic organizations, and as a result, “there is…no transparency in the companies or in the government.”\textsuperscript{51}

Economic inequality between the ethnic groups is reminiscent of earlier Yugoslav conditions. In addition, the financial burden of sustaining the Bosnian economic sector and the corruption within it stunts potential economic growth. The dominance of ethnic interests over all others has led ethnic politicians to exploit the population to achieve their political goals. It has also prevented politicians from working together to create reform to limit corruption and create an economically favorable atmosphere for private sector development and foreign direct investment. As a result, BiH “in its post-Dayton incarnation can only survive on international

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{47} Belloni, 366.
\textsuperscript{48} McMahon and Western, 75.
\textsuperscript{49} Toal, 190.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 103–104.
\textsuperscript{51} Friedman, 103.
\end{footnotesize}
charity. Yet it is not clear exactly how, and in what amounts, that charity will flow.”52 As a result, BiH remains on the brink of an economic crisis, which could erupt the moment that the international community decides to withdraw funding from BiH. A future economic crisis may provide the motivation for the more economically prosperous ethnic groups to split from BiH, resulting in the disintegration of the country.

The Role of Personality Argument

In examining the breakup of Yugoslavia, the role of personality argument analyzes one person’s contribution to the events of the early 1990s: Serbian Communist-turned-nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević. Milošević was preceded by Josip Broz Tito, the undisputed president of Yugoslavia, who alone was responsible for state affairs; Tito was not only the “supreme politician, but the state itself.”53 According to this argument, when Milošević took power in the years following Tito's death, he “disturbed the newly achieved balance between republics and provinces” by aligning himself exclusively with one ethnic group: the Serbs.54 One example of such behavior occurred in the summer of 1988, when Milošević delivered a speech in the Field of Blackbirds during a memorial service commemorating the 600-year anniversary of the Serb defeat by the Ottoman Turks during the Battle of Kosovo Polje.55 During this speech, Milošević proclaimed that Kosovo's rights as an autonomous province in Serbia were exchanged for Serb control.56 This assertion of Serb nationalism against the Kosovars “identified and stigmatized a national enemy, rallied and homogenized Serbs against this threat,

52 Dyker, 6.
55 Berend, 295–296.
56 Gilbert, 580.
and called for resistance.”  

The speech was followed by nearly one hundred pro-Milošević rallies and countless additional nationalist rallies which drew almost five million Serbs. This “alarmed the other republics, particularly the Slovenes, who believed that they ‘were next.’” These events ultimately mobilized both Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence, triggering the chain reaction that was the bloody end of Yugoslavia.

While Milošević cannot be identified as the sole reason for Yugoslavia's fragmentation, his actions, specifically the way he utilized the political atmosphere under which he came to power, allowed him to incite nationalist sentiment in the country, ultimately contributing to the downfall of Yugoslavia. Similarly, one politician appears to have the potential to help bring about the fragmentation of BiH: Milorad Dodik, the president of RS. Dodik's rise to power, ability to keep a position of authority, and ability to employ nationalist rhetoric suggests that he can play a role as an “undisputed” leader and encourage BiH’s fragmentation. Specifically, his inflammatory and anti-BiH rhetoric, consideration of RS as being entitled to self-determination, and threats to hold a RS referendum for independence have jeopardized the integrity of a unified BiH.

Dodik evokes anti-BiH sentiment as well as Serb nationalism in RS through his actions, speech and interview content, and speech delivery methods. Dodik frequently reveals his disapproval of BiH. Such actions involve “storming out of a gathering or throwing a [BiH] flag from a meeting table” as well as stating that he would never support a BiH national sports team.

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57 Božić-Robertson, 404.
58 Berend, 296.
59 Friedman, 34.
60 Berend, 296.
62 Jović, Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away, 30.
“unless it was playing Turkey.” At the same time, he evokes Serb ethnic sentiments by claiming that “Serbs are a victimized people . . . [suffering] daily humiliations and silencing” at the hands of the international community, Bosniaks, foreigners, and the OHR, enemies which threaten the Serbs’ political legitimacy to protect their own interests. Dodik has tried to maintain a distinction and separation between RS and BiH, saying, “I am positive that Bosnia has no future. . . . We Serbs do not live in Bosnia, we live in the Serb Republic. Bosnia is a burden for us, something we want to shake off our back.” As shown in these examples, Dodik’s inflammatory actions and words have the potential to stimulate ethnic nationalism and thus create a great divide between the Serbs and the other ethnic groups in BiH.

Dodik and the Serbs of RS also claim that “if one did grant that Bosnia had a right to secede from the former Yugoslavia, then the Bosnian Serbs would share an equal right to secede from Bosnia.” Ethnic politicians ultimately believe that the ethnic groups are “so specific that they require a separate state or separate state-like administrative bodies to protect a ‘distinct cultural and political life.’” However, politicians from the opposite ideological camp maintain that such ideology results in “an invitation to armed conflict and ethnic cleansing, as every neighborhood becomes a potential claimant of statehood…” In addition, the ethnically homogenous RS was created in war through violence and ethnic cleansing; increasing autonomy would essentially reward the means through which this entity was established. The political tug-of-war between Dodik and his proponents and politicians from the Federation has resulted in a

63 Toal, 171.
64 Quoted in Toal, 171.
65 Quoted in Toal, 166.
66 Sokolović and Bieber, 33.
67 Andjelić, 122.
68 Ibid, 37.
polarized BiH, complete with ethnic tension between the two entities that demonstrates the likelihood of a partitioned BiH.

Finally, Dodik’s goal for an independent RS is clearest when analyzing his use of referendum rhetoric beginning in 2006. Toal and Maksić have identified four different occasions when talk of a RS referendum peaked by analyzing the frequency with which referendum key words with reference to RS appeared in the RS newspaper *Dnevni Avaz*. According to these statistics, Dodik’s discussion involving a possible referendum for RS independence began at the same time as Montenegro’s referendum for independence from the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro. Dodik made a statement “supporting the democratic and legitimate right of Montenegrins to decide on their future,” implying that RS should be allowed that same right. The second peak occurred before the September 2006 state elections, during which a vote for Dodik was almost synonymous with a vote for RS independence, as he discussed the ill treatment of Serbs in BiH and promised that he would secure either equality or independence. Dodik and his Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNDS) party were tremendously successful in the elections, rising in opposition to the Bosniak nationalist party. The third peak occurred in 2008, at the time that Kosovo declared independence, as “Dodik welcomed the idea of a referendum on Kosovo as the basis for reaching a decision on its status.” Most significantly, the RS Assembly passed a constitutional law regarding the option of holding a

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69 Toal and Maksić, 284.
70 Toal, 176.
71 Toal and Maksić, 284.
72 Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata.
73 Toal, 184.
74 Toal and Maksić, 284.
75 Toal, 176.
referendum in January 2010, accounting for a fourth peak in referendum-related terminology in RS news.\textsuperscript{76}

The fourth peak in referendum-related terminology has garnered the most analysis and attention in BiH because it explicitly proposed a path that would lead to a referendum. In 2009 and 2010, RS was in a state of political turmoil, as the ruling by the OHR to increase the number of foreign judges serving on BiH’s courts infuriated Dodik and RS politicians. Dodik then launched an effort to change the RS law to allow a referendum, which, if passed, would be closely followed by an actual referendum. The OHR cautioned that RS would be in violation of the DPA if they held a referendum for independence; however, they did not resist the passing of referendum law because it was not accompanied by an actual proposed referendum for independence. However, Dodik’s intentions have been ambiguous because he contradicts himself when commenting on what a referendum would decide.\textsuperscript{77} On one occasion he explicitly stated “a referendum on secession will never be on our agenda,” but on another occasion he stated that his government “ultimately planned a referendum on independence.”\textsuperscript{78} Then, in 2011, Dodik stated his intentions to hold a referendum that would allow RS’s residents to veto decisions made by the OHR and decide on whether or not to pursue NATO membership.

Though the referendums never came to fruition, Dodik remains vocal regarding self-determination issues in national politics, specifically relating other European referendums for independence to RS’s right to hold a similar referendum. In September 2014, Scotland held a referendum deciding whether they would become an independent nation or remain with the

\textsuperscript{76} Toal and Maksić, 284.
\textsuperscript{77} Toal, 192-194.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 192.
Although the Scots decided to remain in the United Kingdom, Dodik discussed the implications of this referendum for RS in Nezavisne Novine, a daily RS newspaper, saying:

The results are not important. The only thing that is important is that the institution of a referendum involving the disintegration of one of the strongest countries on the earth leisurely walked under the arches of Brussels. So, regardless of the outcome, the European Union has no more rights to challenge anyone’s use of the institution of the referendum in order to protect their rights, including the right to a better life.\textsuperscript{80}

According to Dodik’s logic, RS should be able to conduct a similar referendum without interference from the international community, specifically the European Union (EU). Then, in a March 2014 article in Nezavisne Novine, Dodik commented on Crimea’s referendum, stating:

I congratulate the people of Crimea for conducting a democratic and fairly decided referendum on their decision on independence in which they voted in support of leaving [Ukraine] and on today’s agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the independent Crimea, which indicates the beginning of the process of including Crimea in the framework of the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{81}

Again, through commenting on other referendums, Dodik draws attention to himself and the situation in RS, which prohibits a referendum on RS independence. Through these statements, Dodik clearly indicates that while a 2011 referendum might have been withdrawn, discussion regarding a future referendum on RS secession is far from over.

\textsuperscript{79} BBC, September 19, 2014.
\textsuperscript{81} Čestitam narodu Krima na demokratski i čer provedenom referendumu, na njihovoj odluci o nezavisnosti koju su izglasali i odabrali, a podrшка ide i današnjem sporazumu koji je postignut između Ruske Federacije i nezavisnog Krima, koji podrazumijeva početak procedure o uključivanju Krima u okvire Ruske Federacije. Nezavisne Novine, March 18, 2014. My translation.
In May 2015, Dodik revisited the option of a referendum, explicitly stating that this referendum would determine RS’s status on independence. In a Nezavisne Novine article, Dodik said:

We have told everyone that we want dialogue. If you are not willing to have dialogue with us, if you are not willing to align BiH with Dayton, then in 2017, our proposal will be a referendum on the status of [Republika Srpska]. And that status will imply a free and independent Republika Srpska.82

The dialogue that Dodik refers to is a dialogue to change the DPA because he believes that the DPA, specifically international governance, is unsustainable as it stands. Dodik has been continually upset by the international community’s choice of international leaders appointed to BiH, saying that they are incapable and use this experience as training for future assignments.83 Dodik adamantly believes that these international leaders violate the DPA, and that this justifies RS in their right to hold a referendum for independence.84 The renewal of dialogue explicitly stating that the goal of RS is to conduct a referendum for independence proposes a definitive mechanism for the likely future breakup of BiH.

Through his use of anti-Bosnian inflammatory language, professed right to self-determination, and referendum rhetoric, Dodik has set up a clear political trajectory. Dodik greatly contributed to the ethnic polarization of BiH, widening the distinction between the Serbs of RS and the Croats and Bosniaks of the Federation. He politically justifies his beliefs by claiming that RS possesses a legitimate claim to self-determination. Most significantly, Dodik has proposed an actual mechanism through which to separate the two: a referendum, and he has

84 Ibid.
remained faithful to the idea of a referendum since 2006. His referendum rhetoric is most significant in the cases of Montenegro and Kosovo; as an ethnic Serb, Dodik would be expected to side with Serbia when both Montenegro and Kosovo declared their independence. However, Dodik did not oppose either, even though Serbia has not recognized Kosovo as sovereign; instead, he used these events to strengthen his claim that RS is also deserving of a referendum. This reveals that Dodik’s identity as a RS Serb supersedes his identity as a Serb. Just as Milošević was instrumental in the downfall of Yugoslavia, Dodik appears extremely likely to emerge as the individual that will lead BiH toward fragmentation.

The Nationalism Argument

A new Yugoslav constitution initiated in 1974 identified the six republics as sovereign states, encouraging nationalism based on “historical, economic and cultural differences” within the ethnic groups. The rise of the republics coincided with the decline of Yugoslavia as a unified nation, particularly due to the absence of “Yugoslav political institutions that would represent the citizens of Yugoslavia.” As a result, nationalist interests dominated political activities, causing Yugoslavia’s failure to prepare a “fast and decisive response to economic and political crises when they appeared in the early 1980s.” In addition, the Serbs proposed the Greater Serbia concept, escalating nationalist confrontation between the Serbs and the neighboring republics. With the Greater Serbia concept, the Serbs advocated for the expansion of Serbia’s border to encompass their minorities living in BiH and Croatia. In response, Croatian president Franjo Tudjman enacted nationalist policies in Croatia, as he demanded “the replacement of Cyrillic or bicscriptual signs with Latin ones, purged Serbs from the state

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85 Ibid, 105.
86 Ibid, 106.
87 Ibid, 104–105.
administration, and replaced the Serbian police force in areas of the Serbian minority." The war that followed this mounting nationalism was an attempt to relieve the nationalist tension and secure political autonomy for the republics.

Each of BiH’s three ethnic groups has developed a political agenda for the future of BiH based upon the interests of their groups. The Bosniaks want an ethnically integrated political system with a weakened or abolished RS; the Croats desire the creation of a separate Croat entity; and the Serbs want to retain the status of RS as an entity. Because BiH’s “political institutions support ethnic partition at every level of government,” the ethnic groups essentially possess the ability to veto any legislature due to national interests. Each of the ethnic groups will agree with or veto legislation dependent upon whether or not it supports the political agenda that their ethnic group developed to protect their national identity. Because of this, the large government of BiH is plagued by political gridlock. Essentially, the political structure set up in 1995 by the DPA is “tailor-made for those who wish to stoke ethnic antagonisms for political gain.”

Political gridlock has prevented OHR-mandated police reform. In February 2005, the OHR requested that BiH reform their police by meeting three criteria that would allow BiH to sign an association agreement with the EU. The three reform measures included transferring decisions of police budget and legislature to the state government, redrawing police districts in a manner that would allow the police to cross the Inter-Ethnic Boundary line, and freeing police

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88 Berend, 297.
89 Tuathail, O’Loughlin, and Djipa, 65.
90 McMahon and Western, 73.
91 Andjelić, 121.
92 McMahon and Western, 73.
“from political interference.” RS reacted dramatically to this proposition, seeing it as an attack on the entity. Dodik, who was then the RS prime minister, perceived this as an attack on RS’s legitimacy as an entity and “temporarily withdrew Serb ministers from the Council of Ministers and threatened to quit his job.” Because protecting RS’s entity status is central to their ethnically-motivated political agenda, Dodik prevented these reforms, even though their fulfillment would have led to a pact between BiH and the EU. However, the EU ignored BiH’s failure to enact police reform and signed the pact with them anyway.

Then, in April 2006, several political parties under the guidance of the United States attempted to institute governmental reforms. Most notably, these reforms would give more power to the Council of Ministers, as well as create a ministry for agricultural policy and a ministry for science, technology, and the environment. These ministries would be responsible for enacting related policies that are required for European integration. This would have been extremely significant, as a Ministry of Agriculture, which determines agricultural policy in most EU states, is absent in BiH and, as a result, there is no process for food certification and farmers cannot export their products to the EU. However, these reforms, collectively known as the April Package, narrowly failed in the Parliament, as both Bosniak and select Croat politicians vetoed it. Rather than vote for reforms that would improve multiethnic cooperation to work for European integration, Bosnian and Croat politicians feared that a stronger central government would weaken their authority as ethnic groups and rejected the April Package.

Numerous scholars of BiH describe the impending consequences for a failure of reform. McMahon and Western specify that the decline of an ethnicity-based political structure is

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93 Belloni, 364.
94 Ibid, 365.
95 Ibid, 361.
necessary to prevent the disintegration of BiH, and the international community must play a central role in political restructuring.\textsuperscript{96} According to Gerard Toal, “Bosnia is a stick in the mud, moving neither forward or backward. There are two ways out, one involving Euro-Atlantic integration and the building of a multiethnic state; the other, break up.”\textsuperscript{97} Sokolović and Bieber also claim that as long as power sharing is so ethnically polarized, BiH cannot function and will instead “remain a paper state waiting to disintegrate.”\textsuperscript{98} Such ethnically-motivated politics are reminiscent of the situation in Yugoslavia; these scholars suggest that future political reform is very improbable and that a likely consequence is fragmentation of BiH.

\textit{The Cultural Argument}

According to the cultural argument, the differences between Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam were irreconcilable and promoted the formulation of independent national identities rather than a unified Yugoslav national identity, weakening the integrity of Yugoslavia as an independent state. Cultural differences between the ethnic groups gave rise to the desire for political autonomy. As a result, “fragmentation of the country was hence inevitable and somehow natural.”\textsuperscript{99} In today’s BiH, the same differences between the three faith traditions have fueled the existence of distinct Bosniak, Croat, and Serb national identities. In particular, tension between the Bosniaks and Roman Catholic Croats is clearly seen in Mostar, which is located in Herzegovina-Neretva, a mixed Bosniak-Croat canton in the Federation. Mostar was the sight of the most intense fighting between the Bosniaks and Croats during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, which culminated in the Croat bombing of the Stari Most Bridge over the Neretva

\textsuperscript{96} McMahon and Western, 83.
\textsuperscript{97} Toal, 189.
\textsuperscript{98} Kofman, 52.
Today, the city is divided into halves and the border is “marked by the partially destroyed buildings that bore the brunt of the shellfire in the war.” The Croats live to the west of this border and the Bosniaks live east of the border.

The religious and therefore cultural division of the city is visible, as “visual symbols . . . mark zones and boundaries of the space dominated and controlled by each community.” Mosques and minarets that have been constructed since the end of the war mark the Bosniak-dominated eastern district of Mostar. Two things mark the Croat-dominated section of Mostar: a large cross on Mount Hum, the mountain range that overlooks Mostar, and a large cathedral. Croat-run political institutions inaugurated the installation of the cross on Mount Hum in June 2000. The large cathedral, named the Franciscan Church of St. Peter and Paul, is visible for miles because of its tall spire; some residents of the Muslim quarter reacted to its construction with disdain, calling it a “giant one-finger gesture to local Muslims.”

In addition to being physically separated, the Bosniaks and the Croats operate separate public systems that cater to their respective groups. In BiH as a whole, “children are taught according to three different curricula in three separate and highly politicized educational systems.” Because Mostar is home to two ethnic groups, it has two school systems: a Bosniak system and a Croat system. In addition, the Bosniaks and the Croats control separate universities in Mostar. The Bosniaks and the Croats also maintain their own football teams, hospitals, bus
services, theatres, and cultural centers. The city’s police system is also divided; there are three police stations in the Bosniak district and three stations in the Croat district. When communicating, the stations in the Bosniak and Croat districts use a common radio frequency only for emergency calls and maintain separate frequencies for all non-emergency calls. The police stations in Croat-dominated west Mostar are also adorned with Croat symbols, including but not limited to the red and white checkerboard that serves as the Croatian national symbol, Roman Catholic images, and portraits of former Croatian president Franjo Tudjman.

According to Dejan Jović, the “separate cultural systems, recognized…in the six Yugoslav constituent nations, resulted in creating six political nations and—ultimately—their independent states.” In Mostar, segregation based on Catholic and Muslim cultural differences acknowledge the Bosniaks and Croats in Mostar have separate cultural systems. In addition, with the separate infrastructures specific to the Bosniak and Croat communities in Mostar, the communities already appear to be separate political states. This separation has only strengthened the Bosniak and Croat national identities, hindering the existence of a wider BiH national identity. Just as in Yugoslavia, the next step may just as well be independent statehood for the three constituent peoples.

The International Politics Argument

The international community played a significant role in the creation of Yugoslavia both in 1918 and in 1945. However, the international community largely viewed Yugoslavia as irrelevant in the events leading up to the fall of the Soviet Union and “showed little concern for

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111 Ibid, 110.
the events unfolding in the Balkans.” 112 The action or lack thereof from the international community contributed to growing economic instability, as the international community failed to support the proposed economic reforms (market reform and “shock therapy”113 reforms) of prime minister Ante Marković in the late 1980s. 114 In addition, the triumph of Western ideals championed by the United States as the Soviet Union fell led to the ideological disintegration of Yugoslav socialism. 115 When conflict broke out in Yugoslavia during the early 1990s, the international community lacked a “coherent Euro-Atlantic strategy toward the Yugoslav crisis” because of the time constraints in creating a strategy following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the international community’s involvement in the collapse of the Soviet Union, a lack of “common purpose and interest in addressing the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991,” and an underestimation of the lasting global effects of the crisis. 116

A parallel trend of declining international involvement is seen in BiH, as the international community, most notably the United States, orchestrated the creation of BiH through the DPA and continues to oversee Bosnian political life through the OHR. Additionally, the international community has been financially supportive of BiH: “from 1996 to 2007, $14 billion in foreign assistance flooded into Bosnia—amounting to approximately $300 per person per year.” 117 In comparison, the international community has only pledged about $65 per person per year for residents of Afghanistan. 118 However, it appears that international involvement in BiH is on the decline, especially since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. The

112 Hadžić, 59.
113 Pugh, 470.
115 Ibid, 111.
116 Hadžić, 62.
117 McMahon and Western, 71.
118 Ibid, 72.
United States, led by the Bush administration, diverted its attention from BiH and towards Afghanistan and Iraq. This is most evidently seen by a 60% decrease in monetary aid leading up to 2004. In addition, “the rest of the international community also appears to be eager to end its involvement in the Balkans, as they see it as a messy place, full of animosity and intractable problems.”

The decline in monetary assistance is accompanied with the decreasing interest of the 55 countries that compose the Peace Implementation Council, the international group charged with the task of implementing the DPA. The political representatives attending the council meetings have decreased in political prestige. In addition, all but one of these countries have removed BiH from their political agendas, signifying that the situation in BiH is no longer an international priority. Most significantly, talks began in 2006 within the Peace Implementation Council to close the OHR and replace it with an EU office to promote European integration. However, the closure of the OHR will be postponed until certain policy requirements are met. Because the OHR is the highest governing body in BiH, its closure may have serious implications for the country’s future, yet the international community appears unwilling to continue taking on this responsibility.

Currently, the decreasing international interest in BiH parallels the deceased international involvement in Yugoslavia that contributed to its fall. Because “Bosnia’s existence as a state is still inextricably linked to the persistent presence of the international community,” continued

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119 McMahon and Western, 77.
120 Friedman, 115.
121 Ibid, 116.
122 Belloni, 369.
123 Ibid, 370.
international disinterest could plausibly result in a return to a Yugoslav state of affairs, making BiH susceptible to disintegration in the event of some political or economic conflict.\textsuperscript{124}

5. Conclusion

Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs are three distinctive ethnic groups, who lived together with the Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Kosovars in Yugoslavia. However, in the 1990s, the republics of Yugoslavia began to declare their independence and the nation erupted into a bloody civil war. The DPA in 1995 put an end to the war in BiH and established an independent nation of Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. In addition, the DPA established BiH’s governance system with ethnic representation central to every level. However, according to David A. Dyker:

\textit{The sobering conclusion is that most of the successor states suffer from exactly the same problems as the first two Yugoslavias suffered from. That is not necessarily grounds for despair. But it does mean that the governments and peoples of these states, and the international community, will have to do much better in the future than they have done in the past, if the nightmares of the past are not to return.}\textsuperscript{125}

Dyker, along with numerous other scholars of the Balkans, continually address the issues plaguing the Yugoslav successor states, particularly BiH, and identify the measures that must be taken to prevent fragmentation. The government, people, and the international community all have to avoid making the same mistakes that were made prior to the fall of Yugoslavia. However, the three conflicting national identities of BiH make improvement very difficult, suggesting that there are indeed “grounds for despair.”\textsuperscript{126}

The government has not changed. BiH politics, led by leaders that attempt to incite ethnic nationalism, remain ethnically polarized. This results in gridlock that prevents any type of reform and bountiful corruption that threatens the country’s economy. The people have not changed, as

\textsuperscript{124} Friedman, 117.
\textsuperscript{125} Dyker, 6.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, 6.
differences in religious beliefs and cultural background have resulted in a segregated infrastructural system, like that in Mostar. Presently, the international community appears unlikely to change their behavior as well, as they are they withdrawing from BiH. The nation currently rests on a fragile equilibrium that depends on the current political and economic system, an uneasy peace between neighbors, dialogue under the threat of a referendum, and funding of the international community. In its current state, BiH is vulnerable to the “nightmares of the past” if there is a sudden change in one of these factors. Due to the dynamic nature of politics, it is unlikely that BiH can remain in this uneasy equilibrium for long.

It is impossible to hypothesize the manner in which BiH will break apart, if it would be, for example, through war or a peaceful referendum. However, the issues that caused Yugoslavia to break apart still persist in BiH. Because these issues can all be traced back to national identity, it is possible to conclude that BiH is likely to fragment due to differences in national identity between BiH’s three ethnic groups.

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