

High Linkage, Low Leverage and the Three Competitive Authoritarian Regimes in
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Explaining Regime Durability

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ABSTRACT:

PATRICK ISAAC DICK: HIGH LINKAGE, LOW LEVERAGE AND THE THREE COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: EXPLAINING REGIME DURABILITY

(Under the direction of Milada Anna Vachudova, Ph.D.)

Bosnia has three main political parties. Their perennial electoral success ensures that Bosnian politics are dominated by ethno-nationalist interests, which are antithetical to the liberal democratic Bosnia to which the European Union hopes to give membership someday. Bosnians are also unhappy. Yet there has been little party turnover since the end of the war in 1995. This thesis explores the reasons behind the electoral success of the SDA, HDZ and SNSD. I find that Bosnia's institutional arrangement has created three distinct political blocs, each run by a single party regime. Each regime follows somewhat predictable patterns of illiberal competition and power maintenance. Consequently, the three-bloc political arrangement severely reduces the leverage of Western actors like the EU pushing for liberalization in the country. This indicates that a more effective approach might be to engage each of the bloc-regimes individually in order to liberalize the whole country in the long run.

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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
HDZ (HDZ - BiH)	Croat Democratic Union (- Bosnia and Herzegovina)
HDZ - 1990	Croat Democratic Union - 1990
OHR	(United Nations) Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SDA	Party for Democratic Action
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SDS	Serb Democratic Party
SNSD	Party of Independent Social Democrats
UN	United Nations

I. Introduction

Each year the National Democratic Institute conducts a public opinion survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter, Bosnia) with the principal objective of determining popular sentiments toward the country's economic, political and democratic development. Bosnians are unimpressed with the current state of affairs, to put it lightly (Public Opinion Poll Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010). The only change in recent years is the rise in percentage of people who think the country is headed in the wrong direction.¹

The political class is doing little to alleviate the pressure and pessimism felt by Bosnians. Since the end of the bloody and costly civil war in 1995, Serb, Bosniak and Croat ethno-nationalists have reliably dragged their feet in passing and implementing important reforms—or blocked them outright. Often they have been necessary measures for future entry into the European Union (EU), a prospect which is generally very popular. The political and economic liberalization of post-communist and post-conflict countries have proven to be difficult processes, but given the EU's successful record in promoting democratization in post-communist countries Bosnia's lack of progress is surprising. What progress that has been made has often depended on considerable pressure by (and the executive authority of) the U.N. Office of the High Representative (OHR), the office charged with overseeing the implementation of the 1995 peace agreement. More recently, despite the popularity of EU accession, Serb and Croat nationalists from the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ), respectively, have continued to block constitutional reforms

1 Public Opinion Poll Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008, 2009. National Democratic Institute.

required by Brussels, demanding more autonomy before the process can move forward (Toal and Maksić 2011). As it stands Bosnia is already one of the most decentralized and institutionally fragmented states in the world, and these demands are antithetical to the centralization considered necessary to move forward toward EU membership. Of the three “constituent peoples”, only Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) elites can be counted on for support for liberalizing agendas, though their support is tenuous and largely based on the fact that they would benefit from a centralized Bosnia due to their demographic advantage. Nevertheless, it would be an overstatement to say that the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) or Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) have been fully cooperative in the reform process—a fact that became all too clear during the 2006 April Package failure (Bieber 2010).

Why are these parties winning? Has EU leverage faded over time, or are their domestic factors that make Bosnia an anomaly? At the very least, with Bosnia’s dismal economic record, high-profile corruption and widespread dissatisfaction we can reasonably expect high levels of turnover at election time as voters punish poor, corrupt performance (Pop-Eleches 2010). International election monitors report that polling takes place with very little fraud, meaning that the SNSD, HDZ and SDA are winning free elections. What accounts for the dominance of wartime nationalist parties since the civil war? And, finally, what opportunities exist for EU conditionality to effect political change?

With the other former Yugoslav republics progressively lining up for accession to the EU, Bosnia threatens to be a hole in the EU map and a source of regional instability. During the past two decades, EU foreign policy has been remarkably successful securing stability in the region. EU enlargement has capitalized on its leverage in the neighborhood, and played an important role in securing liberal

democratic and stable outcomes as Central and Eastern Europe transitioned from Communism (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Vachudova 2005; Whitman and Juncos 2009). In view of its security interests, the EU has sought to reduce its exposure to dysfunctional, neighbors who would pose acute security risks to an economic and political bloc of free trade and movement. Failing to secure a stable Bosnia would undoubtedly be damaging to Europe's position as a normative power and state-builder in the long run.

In this thesis I am interested in two questions: how Bosnia's incumbents have maintained power and why the EU has not been able to do anything about it. In other words, why don't Bosnian voters "throw the bums out" (Pop-Eleches 2010)? Ultimately, I demonstrate that Bosnia is not governed by a fully democratic regime despite the free elections, but an authoritarian one in which competition is distorted. I argue that, like in other authoritarian regimes, the ability of oppositions and alternative parties to compete is highly constrained, making electoral success less a product of appeal than a lack of credible options. This means that there is indeed space for change, but it is limited and must be exploited differently. To show this I do not focus on unsuccessful oppositions but utilize the decidedly incumbent-centered approach of Lucan Way and Steven Levitsky (2010). With this approach I can also demonstrate that Bosnia has effectively been carved into three distinct "competitive authoritarian" regimes in which the incumbents have highly unequal access to political resources and do not compete against each other. Instead, they buttress their counterparts' positions as ethnic defenders. As a result, the ability of the EU to effect change is much more limited than it has been elsewhere because it must influence the development of three regimes with separate goals at once. Therefore, in spite of high levels of linkage with Western actors, this institutional arrangement considerably

reduces EU leverage. The strong organizational capacity of the the SDA, SNSD and HDZ further reinforce this dynamic. In the end, Bosnian voters are left with few choices but an ethnic one, for which only one Croat, Bosniak and Serb party at a time can claim legitimacy.

The fact that Bosnia's major ethno-nationalist parties do not compete against each other is perhaps no surprise to observers (see: Bochsler 2006; Caspersen 2006; Hulseley 2010; Manning 2004). That its political dynamics can actually be explained quite clearly by an existing theory on democratization, however, is not. The country's complicated institutional arrangement, post-conflict legacy and demographic dynamics often make it an outlying case in many respects, whether discussing transition from Communism, ethnic conflict or international intervention. I argue that this is not necessary.

The purpose of this paper is to generally understand the electoral endurance of Bosnia's entrenched ethno-nationalist parties despite high levels of disaffection and EU engagement. This is important for two reasons. First, I hope to better understand under what circumstances voters' preferences will not be reflected in electoral outcomes, especially considering such high levels of disaffection. That the hegemony of wartime nationalists has been linked to poorer local governance as well as state-level intransigence makes this question even more urgent (Hulseley 2010). Second, the tenure of the SDA, SNSD and HDZ is certainly not in the interests of the EU. They have persistently blocked efforts at reform to a state that remains undeniably dysfunctional and very dependent on international aid almost two decades after the end of the conflict there. In fact, several scholars have clearly demonstrated the incentives for the ruling elites that run these parties to maintain the current arrangements (see especially: Andreas 2004; Divjak and Pugh 2008; Donais 2003;

Pugh 2004). Failure to effect change threatens the EU's role as a normative power, and in order to develop more effective Europeanization policies—EU policies that affect domestic politics (Sedelmeier 2011)—it is important to understand what in the country is weakening EU leverage.

The paper proceeds as follows. The following section introduces competitive authoritarianism as a regime type and includes a discussion of power maintenance in illiberal contexts. The third section discusses Bosnia's domestic political dynamics, with special attention paid to its principal actors: the wartime nationalist parties. I then defend my categorization of the country as competitive authoritarian. The international dimension of Bosnia's political development is the focus of the fourth section. It includes a discussion on the development of the EU as a foreign policy actor, and, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Levitsky and Way (2010) and the Europeanization literature, I demonstrate how EU leverage in Bosnia has been limited. The following section briefly discusses prospects for the EU to have a liberalizing influence in the country. The final section concludes.

II. Resource Asymmetries: Maintaining Power in Illiberal Regimes

There is a domestic and an international aspect to the theory of competitive authoritarianism, both of which are important to this study. The domestic aspect incorporates many important theories on political dynamics in illiberal regimes, and I begin with it here because it is critical for understanding the means by which the SNSD, SDA and HDZ have come to dominate politics within Bosnia.

Until now I have mentioned the importance of the access to resources to acquiring and maintaining political control. While resources in general are necessary to compete in any election, in illiberal regimes access to them is limited to a small number of actors and they are used to further restrict the competitiveness of oppositions as well as to appeal to voters.

The theory follows that due to the high degree of legitimacy enjoyed by democratic institutions, political leaders nearly everywhere routinely seek to legitimize their tenure using democratic practices. Concerns for both domestic and international legitimacy make tampering with elections or their results costly. As a result, regular elections, even highly transparent ones, and multi-party systems are tolerated by autocratic leaderships. This, of course, means for such a regime that it cannot be purely authoritarian, like super-authoritarian Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan (Hale 2010; Howard 2006). The regular, if unequal, freedom of movement and opinion will necessarily provide avenues for oppositions and challengers, even if they are limited and narrow.

Meanwhile, the very same regime will certainly continue to face the same

incentives to control these avenues as traditional authoritarians. The access to resources, privilege, influence and—quite simply—power continues to motivate incumbents to reduce the uncertainty of electoral outcomes (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Common methods of control include monitoring of broadcast media, intimidation of journalists and activists or high representation thresholds for parties in legislatures. Though qualitatively very distinct, each method effectively distorts the playing field by reducing the willingness or ability of oppositions to compete. Other less coercive practices like the selective delivery of political goods, services and resources creates political and often personal linkages between voters, interests and political elites. The political goods, which range from pensions to contracts and tax exemptions to legal immunity, are offered in exchange for political support, financing or votes. The linkages that result lead to political association and loyalty (Nichter 2008; Scott 1969; Stokes 2005). Russia provides a good example in many ways. The country has a very high level of Internet usership, and the protests this past winter have demonstrated a sophisticated ability to mobilize. On the other hand, civil society groups continue to be co-opted through corporatist mechanisms or harassed, while potential presidential candidates face strict and often arbitrary requirements for presenting their candidacy. This is to say nothing of ballot fraud (Hale 2010a; Way 2005). Nevertheless, whoever wins the elections wins the presidency and access to many levers of control. Access to resources for rent-seeking, coercion and patronage become both opportunities afforded to winners and the very mechanism for maintaining their tenure. Overall, the effect is that the electoral playing field is distorted and made uneven between elections, reducing the need to undermine the elections themselves directly (Levitsky and Way 2010).

A crucial if easily overlooked characteristic is that regimes such as this will

not have complete control over these levers. This is because with even limited democratic and transparent accountability mechanisms an executive must rely on support of elites in important positions. The top media tycoon, military officials or members of an election commission are common examples. Political parties are one way of monitoring and controlling elite supporters, as is the case in Bosnia (Levitsky and Way 2010; Andreas 2004; Way 2005). Furthermore, domestic and international legitimacy both rely on a least a modicum of rights' protections and fairness on election day, particularly in cases like Bosnia where a large number of election monitors are present. Thus, the regime is competitive in two ways. First, to win sufficient support the regime's leadership can distribute resources, positions and privileges in ways that ensure allies in the right places, or at least the minimal cooperation of the right people. Access to these opportunities can be won in elections or the election of allies. Clearly candidates have real incentives to compete meaningfully for votes and office as a way to secure influence and access for themselves.

Second, since in these regimes elections are mostly seen as legitimate oppositions use them to gain power and influence at the expense of incumbents. In other words, there is always the possibility that oppositions can overcome their disadvantages and gain power. The disappointing democratic development in the wake of the Color Revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan notwithstanding, they are prime examples of this possibility. This necessarily creates uncertainty of outcomes. If such uncertainty grows sufficiently large it can cause elite defection as the attempt to “hedge their bets”, so to speak, against hanging onto the coattails of incumbents who are losing power and influence to some opposition by whom they could be later punished. This is one of the most important developments in periods of

competitive authoritarian turnover. Henry Hale (2005) describes the process as cyclical, in which regimes consolidate power and lose it as support becomes increasingly unreliable and patronage becomes unsustainable. As a result, incumbents will try to reduce the uncertainty by competing, whether by campaigning or making sure the playing field is uneven in the interim.

Incumbents in such regimes undoubtedly have better access to and politically important resources, such as control over regulation, coercion and sources of state financing. The resources at their disposal can be used to garner favor among electorates. The promise of regional or sectoral privileges and the continued distribution of benefits create an interest in the outcome for voters, giving candidates and incentive to campaign and create voter-candidate linkages (Helmke and Levitsky 2004; Kitschelt 2007; Scott 1969). In short, Levitsky and Way (2010) describe competitive authoritarian regimes as

“civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-a-vis their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents. Competition is thus real but not fair” (22).

In my analysis I discuss how Bosnia's elites have effectively limited electoral choices by dividing the country and controlling its resources. Why has the EU and its partners not been able to alter this, either by pressuring parties to moderate or providing incentives to cooperate? One of the principal objectives of Levitsky and Way's (201) study is to determine regime trajectory patterns in this group of countries since the end of the Cold War. They consolidate their theory to test three factors: linkage with the West; strength of incumbent organization, whether the state or party, and; leverage of the West. The different combinations of presence and strength of these factors produce predictable patterns of regime trajectory toward democracy, full

authoritarianism or partial, competitive authoritarianism. As we will see, the combination in Bosnia, a case of high linkage with but low leverage of Western actors and institutions, creates a kind of constant but low-intensity pressure to reform. The ability to maintain these resource asymmetries in the face of international pressure, and therefore ability to limit real competition, has depended on precisely this perhaps counter intuitively low level of leverage.

III. Wartime Nationalist Regimes in Bosnia

In this section, I introduce the SDA, SNSD and the HDZ as the principal domestic actors in Bosnia. I begin with a brief introduction to their poor governance record and explore several explanations of their support in spite of it. Ultimately I argue that an institutional approach focused on incumbents themselves will be the most fruitful. I then defend the categorization of Bosnia as competitive authoritarian, in which nationalist elites have carved out three distinct ethnic blocs. Competition within those blocs is real but unfair, and institutional arrangements encourage competition between them for state resources on an ethnic basis.

I have made several references to the poor governing record of the major nationalist parties, who have effectively been in power in one combination or another since the end of the war. Current conditions within the state are largely a product of this record. Several steps of the policy-making and implementation process urgently need reform: poor oversight has allowed millions of dollars to leak out of Bosnian public coffers to unsustainable public spending programs, financially unviable public firms and patronage schemes (Andreas 2004; UNHCR 2010; Divjak and Pugh 2008); rent-seeking opportunities are plentiful; public offices and tasks are regularly duplicated, both because of ethnic quotas and patronage networks (NDI Assessment Report 2010; World Bank 2009). The multiple, unstandardized layers of governance—which vary between the highly autonomous entities, the Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Federation”)—make policy implementation fragmented at best, and completely unaccountable at worst

(World Bank 2009). The same is true for public financing, with the two entities and ten cantons within the federation all having different financing policies (World Bank 2007, 2009).

Probably most problematic, however, are the treacherously plentiful veto points along the way, the most famous of which is the “vital national interest” veto. This veto allows representatives of one of the “constituent peoples” (Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks) to veto laws almost unilaterally at the state level and in the courts (Bahtić-Kunrath 2011; NDI Assessment Report 2010; on veto points see: Immurgut 1992). The willingness to take advantage of numerous veto points has allowed ethno-nationalist incumbents to strangle the policy-making process, and reform to the process itself has been, quite predictably, the first victim. Given elites’ preference for the status quo (see: Bahtić-Kunrath 2011; Pugh 2002, 2004), the only plausible short-term solution to this stalemate is electoral turnover. Yet the 2008 local and 2010 general elections seem only to have cemented the SDA, HDZ and SNSD in their positions of power, the one exception coming from the victory of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for the race of the Croat seat of the three-man presidency. Over a year followed, however, before a government was formed at the state level.

Thus, in spite of the inability to make important reforms, poor service delivery, high levels of corruption and almost forty percent official unemployment, the wartime ethno-nationalist parties have continued to win. It is instructive to explore some alternative explanations for why this is. The first, and perhaps most popular, concludes that Bosnian voters simply continue to be very nationalist. While this is likely the case for a considerable part of the population, it still does not explain their preference for the SDA, SNSD and HDZ over other less successful nationalist parties, nor why they would continue to vote for parties, whom they hardly trust as it is (NDI

Assessment Report 2010; World Bank 2005), well known for being corrupt (see: Pop-Eleches 2010). Relatedly, another explanation holds that Bosnians are unhappy with the current political arrangement in the country and this is expressed by voting for nationalists, each of whom pushes a different vision of a more or less centralized state (Toal and Maksic 2011). Again, this essentially only explains choice for ethnicity, not the marked preference for the incumbents—whose political record is terrible—over parties with similar goals.

A third hypothesis expects that these parties are offering important and popular programmatic alternatives, essentially following the logic of liberal democratic party competition. A quick glance at the NDI public opinion polls reveal that voter preferences are hardly aligned with those of elite parties with respect to economic issues or governance. Nevertheless, this hypothesis was worth testing. To do so I tested some demographic and socio-economic factors often related to programmatic preferences, such as urban and rural cleavages and socio-economic status for which data was available, against electoral success. These cleavages were very poorly related to the electoral success of any of the major nationalist parties. In short, the results indicated that other explanations needed to be explored.²

In this thesis I explore the hypothesis that there are institutional factors that both distort competition and provide incentives to compete for resources on an ethnic basis. Quotas for ethnic representation cause horizontal competition for resources on

² Using the proportion of seats won in municipal governments by party as the dependent variables, I tested a variety of socio-economic and demographic factors for their effect on electoral success using multiple linear regressions. The Independent variables were: population, voter turnout, location on IEBL, GDP per capita, a dummy variable for the winner's incumbency and a dummy variable for each canton (the RS being counted as a single canton because of its more centralized structure). There were no statistically significant results, and the relationships were quite limited to begin with. Dataset is compiled by the author, using data from the Bosnian state Ministry of Elections and the state Ministry of Statistics. Data can be found at <http://www.izbori.ba/Mandati27102008/index.asp>. Demographic data can be found at <http://mojemjesto.ba/en>.

an ethnic basis at many levels of government, which favors wartime nationalists (Hulseley 2010). This effectively limits the ability to compete of smaller nationalist parties as well as non-ethnic parties who provide real programmatic governance alternatives. Unequal access to resources ensures this arrangement. I have discussed how resource disparities distort political competition in illiberal regimes. It is now important to take a look at the major actors participating in Bosnia's political field.

Wartime Ethno-Nationalist Parties

The designation as “wartime nationalist parties” (Manning 2004) indeed comes from the fact that as the former Yugoslavia disintegrated, the nationalist SDA, SDS and HDZ hastened the onset of the war, in which they consolidated their organizational strength between 1992 and 1995. During this time they acted as the most important organizational apparatuses of the three-sided war as well as the principal actors in peace negotiations. The exception of course is the SNSD, though it is important to remember that they have navigated, inherited and dominated the political space built by the SDS.

This wartime position gave these three forces several distinct advantages in political resources. First, as actors during the war they effectively had a monopoly on ethnic security political capital coming out of it (Manning 2007). This means that they have always had the most legitimate claim as the defenders of their respective ethnicity, giving them an edge over other nationalists. Second, their organizational strength benefited from being forged in conflict—a common characteristic in post-conflict societies (Hulseley 2010; Manning 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010). Third, they began the post-Dayton era as incumbents; they enjoyed more media coverage, access to state resources and the opportunity to oversee the post-communist privatization

process, a lucrative position in many post-communist countries (Birch 1997; Manning 2007; McFaul 2005; Moller and Skaaning 2010). Finally, during the war strong connections were developed with both industry and elite criminal organizations, who provided arms and the delivery of goods in wartime. This allowed the parties to secure access to extralegal resources denied to other parties after the conflict (Andreas 2004).

In the beginning, two outcomes were possible under these circumstances. Renewed conflict was one. This was the principal concern when crafting the General Framework Agreement (“Dayton Peace Agreement”, or DPA) in 1995. The result is highly decentralized, consociational state institutions meant to minimize political competition between ethnic groups. Implementation of the provisions of the DPA would be overseen by the OHR, who would wield executive authority to enact legislation and punish officials who actively blocked the process. The peace plan thus prevented this first outcome by blunting the effect of group antagonism, but they ensured the second possibility: the dominance of wartime incumbents as a result of their resource advantages and strong organization (Manning 2007). This outcome was cemented with the international community's decision, under considerable pressure by the United States, to carry out elections in 1996, so soon after the end of the conflict and before opposition groups could organize resources behind their platforms (Manning 2004).

Since 1995 the wartime nationalist parties have capitalized on their advantages: hostile rhetoric and scare tactics without the real threat of war; visibility; control over important media outlets; control of the privatization process and access to other sources of patronage, and; control over veto points and other channels of strangling the reform process. The time spent in all levels of government has given

them much more exposure than other parties. Control over the media ensures favorable coverage within their respective ethnic constituencies (Divjak and Pugh 2008; UNHCR 2010). Because of their control over political institutions, wartime nationalists have been able to finance costly political campaigns with state- and party-owned firms, and develop patronage networks to secure the cooperation of public officials and community leaders with impunity. Consequently, incumbent nationalist elites have been unwilling to make reforms that threaten these arrangements, from which corrupt elites have benefited so much.

It is not enough, however, to know that the wartime nationalists have benefited in terms of resources by their positions of power since 1995. Their access is not only an incentive to acquire and maintain control of state institutions but also the means by which incumbents maintain power in illiberal regimes. I have discussed how they can be deployed in a variety of ways, ranging from more or less coercive. A number of power maintenance strategies in illiberal regimes have been identified, some being more or less cost effective, depending on the level of accountability and consolidation in different regimes. As I argue that Bosnia falls in the range of competitive authoritarian regimes, I now show that electoral accountability is more or less present but institutional and legal oversight are often limited.

Bosnia, authoritarian?

On the surface, Bosnia does not seem to fit the competitive authoritarian mold. In spite of the theoretical preoccupation with a more appropriate categorization for regimes that are neither purely authoritarian nor democratic, Bosnia still seems to be an exception. In fact, Levitsky and Way (2010) do not even include it in their study. There are a few reasons for this. First, the unusually wide range of executive power

held by the international community in the OHR (known as the “Bonn Powers”) both limits the executive power of local political elites and indicates that the state itself still does not function without assistance. It is therefore questionable as to whether Bosnia and Herzegovina can fully be considered a sovereign state in the classical sense (see: Zaum 2003).

Second, Bosnian electoral politics are not dominated by one faction, but three. They are often mutually antagonistic and compete horizontally for state resources, as opposed to the coalitions of factions that often support other competitive authoritarian regimes. The executive is weak and very limited. Such antagonism is almost more reminiscent of pluralism than elite coordination and cooperation.

Third, the elections are quite free, with very few incidences of ballot stuffing or voter fraud (OSCE). Finally, party turnover has not been completely absent, as we can see in the ascension of the SNSD over the SDS in the RS and the recent success of the SDP.

That Bosnia was not included in Levitsky and Way's study is itself no reason to conclude that the country's political dynamics do not fit the model. As a result of its extraordinarily complicated consociational constitution and post-conflict legacy, researchers tend to exclude Bosnia from cross-country empirical studies quite regularly. The lack of a census and uniformity of practices and institutions across administrative units also tend to render the use of data in the country problematic.

Upon a second look, however, it becomes quite clear that the electoral dynamics in Bosnia fall quite neatly into the regime type. Despite the high level of international involvement in the country's administration, elites still compete for control of the state's many administrative institutions. The highly decentralized administrative system means that local officials are ultimately responsible for policy

and its implementation. While in the RS administration is considerably more centralized at the entity level, the municipalities are still highly instrumental in the implementation of policy, raising taxes and the provision of services. In the Federation, each canton determines the structure of service delivery mechanism and most of the revenue policies (“Local Governance and Service Delivery in Bosnia and Herzegovina” 2009). The municipalities, again, are instrumental in policy implementation where they are not already so in the formation of the local policy. Like in other cases where machine politics in particular have developed, the general electoral advantage enjoyed by incumbents, rent-seeking opportunities, the power to award government contracts and the chance to take advantage of other discretionary or corrupt practices all provide elites at all levels and incentive to compete meaningfully for official positions, legitimately or not (Divjak and Pugh 2008; also see: Della Porta and Vannucci 2006; Kitschelt 2007; Nichter 2008; Scott 1969).

In large part thanks to the international community, electoral competition for those positions is also highly regulated and largely takes place without fraud (OSCE 2010). Among the various missions with monitoring, advisory and at time executive mandates in Bosnia, such as the OHR and the EU Police Mission (EUPM), election monitors—the most important of which being the OSCE—have both ensured and reported minimum tampering at the polls and places of registration (OSCE 2008, 2010). Given the lack of consolidation of the state's administrative institutions in general, it is not necessarily clear that this would be the case without the presence of the international community. Nonetheless, a relatively undistorted mechanism for realizing electoral competition, i.e. free elections, Bosnia does have, fulfilling one of the principal requirements for the competitive authoritarian regime type: an avenue for competition. What makes it authoritarian is the level of fairness.

Quite simply, the elections are free but not fair (Caspersen 2006; Hulseley 2010; OSCE 2010). Scholars, analysts and international officials alike attest to the opaqueness of the world of Bosnia's elites. Political parties, state- and party-owned firms and media outlets regularly fail to fulfill adequate auditing requirements (World Bank 2007; Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission Report 2007). Unfinished economic privatization since the collapse of Yugoslav communism continues to blur the lines between public and private (Andreas 2004; Divjak and Pugh 2008; Donais 2002). As of 2008, a large number of firms still needed to be privatized—490 in the Federation and over a thousand in the RS—giving public officials large control over economic resources. Mostar Aluminum or the Gačko thermoelectric power plant, for example, are large firms that provide important services and act as political cashcows for the HDZ and the SNSD respectively, having strong ties to their leadership (Divjak and Pugh 2008: 377; “New Corruption Charges Against Former Croatian Prime Minister” 24 January 2012).

As previously discussed, the history of the SDS, SDA and HDZ as war and political entrepreneurs has ensured the survival of elite connections to the illegal shadow economy and organized crime (Andreas 2004; Divjak and Pugh 2008; Donais 2003; Manning 2007; Pugh 2004). Such connections provided incumbents with access to the large illicit economy and its extralegal resources, including methods of coercion not available for outsiders. Several reports point to the involvement of organized crime in cases of harassment of political opposition groups (Business Week 2009; Donais 2003; UNHCR 2010). Despite Bosnia's “advanced legal regime” protecting the freedom of expression and prohibiting libel, “ethnic divisions are [still] reflected in the public broadcasting structure (OSCE 2007: 1; also see: NDI Assessment Report 2010). Violent coercion and legal harassment for political ends are not uncommon

still, particularly with respect to journalists leading up to elections (UNHCR 2010). According to the OSCE report on the State of Media Freedom in the country, media outlets in the RS have increasingly shown signs of politically motivated self-censorship. In early 2007, the RS government “boycotted” the state-level public broadcaster, BHT1, after it published critical reports on RS public officials by blocking reporters' entrance to a public meeting, eventually prompting the OSCE report. Whistle-blowing organizations can also be targeted. In 2008, Transparency International closed its office in Banja Luka for fear of harassment because of their involvement in reporting on corrupt networks that led to Milorad Dodik, president of the Republika Srpska (Business Week: 17 March 2009).

Furthermore, while enjoying a modicum of freedom and independence, the major broadcast media outlets are still tightly tied to state and local control and subject to pressure by political elites. Leading up to the closing of the Banja Luka office, Transparency International became the subject of criticism in the government-controlled media, who accused the organization of libel and politically motivated reporting (Business Week 2009). According to the 2010 UNHCR report, Bosnia's 142 broadcast media outlets far exceed the country's market capacity, suggesting that, considering the highly ethno-centric nature of most of the local coverage, the outlets operate on extralegal funding from political party apparatuses, both in the RS and the Federation (OSCE 2007; UNHCR 2010).

Though not necessarily affecting directly the ability to compete of other parties, the capacity to coerce specific individuals and control the diffusion of information among the electorate are undeniably enormous advantages, and highly distort the slope of the so-called “playing field”. Following the model, the very opportunities to create such distortions are one of the many very important incentives

for competing for control of official institutions.

There remains one aspect unique to Bosnia, which makes it at least superficially distinct from other competitive authoritarian regimes. Even given the clear advantages enjoyed by incumbents, at any given time there are still three or four major parties who win seats at nearly all levels of government, in both local and general elections. This, I argue, has very little to do with programmatic pluralism, as state-builders would hope. The Hooghe and Marks's political party index places parties on an ideological field with two axes, cultural-political and economic-political. The economic-political dimension measures parties' placement on the classic left-right economic continuum, while the cultural-political dimension measures characteristics previously assumed to be subsumed by economic ideological preferences. The continuum runs between Green/Alternative/Libertarian (“Gal”) values to Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist (“Tan”) ones (Hooghe and Marks 2005). With the exception of the SDP, the major parties all fall within the same region of the field. They can do this because they do not compete against each other.

That the most important secondary parties are the products not of programmatic or ideological competition but intra-elite rivalries is too made clear by the fact that their ideological profiles closely mirror their co-ethnic rivals (Figure 4.1). The Chapel Hill Expert Survey data on the ideological positioning of political parties, used to create Hooghe and Marks's index, is instructive here. The only party representing a real threat to the *status quo* is the only party presenting a real programmatic and identity alternative.

[FIGURE 4.1 HERE]

The gap in cultural-political scores between the SDS and SNSD has almost certainly closed since this survey was taken in 2007. Increased calls by Milorad Dodik

for a referendum on RS independence can be seen as evidence of this. The ethnified electoral system in the RS provides incentives for “ethnic-outbidding”, especially once in power (and resources from Western actors, who originally favored Dodik, are no longer necessary to compete against a strong incumbent) (Caspersen 2006; Toal and Maskić 2011). The SDP, on the other hand, actually occupies a political space very different from the others, similar to many moderate Social Democratic parties across Europe. They thereby present a real ideological alternative to voters. Despite their growing popularity across Bosnia, however, their success is largely confined to the Bosniak bloc. The results of this multiple linear regression show that success by either the SNSD or the HDZ has a clear negative relationship with success of the SDP (Table 4.1). That its relationship with the SDA is positive indicates that its success is tied and limited to the same political space as the SDA, though the strength of the relationship is limited by the zero-sum nature of elections.

[TABLE 4.1 HERE]

Nonetheless, in spite of its recent success, when compared to the other blocs the SDP appears to be nothing more than an opposition party, and the outcomes seem to closely reflect the electoral dynamics. Their success has been limited compared to the *Tan* parties, even given its programmatic alternatives (Figure 4.2).

[FIGURE 4.2 HERE]

Other than the SDP, the system is dominated by a single party type with the majority of the economic-political variation coming between blocs than within them. It is worth questioning whether the SDP would adopt Bosniak nationalism were it to come to power. Even assuming it would behave illiberally, it seems unlikely given that there are other ways to take advantage of *Left-Tan* political space (such as anti-capitalist populism, given their history as a reformed Communist party). Nonetheless

it is something worth watching for. At the moment, they present the only real programmatic alternative among the major parties. Apart from the SDP, the only choice is between ethnic interests. Data from the 2008 local elections reinforces the fact that this is effectively no choice at all (Table 4.2).

[TABLE 4.2 HERE)

Like the example of the SDP above, the results of these multiple linear regressions demonstrate the near mutual exclusion of the success of each party with respect to the others at the local level. The success of each party has nearly a directly inverse relationship with the success of others, and the results are highly significant being at the 0.01 confidence level.

To clarify, any party can present a candidate anywhere in the country. At the state and, in the Federation, entity level, any party can present a candidate for the ethnically defined positions, determined by equal representation quotas for each of the constituent peoples. At the municipal level, public officials are not elected on any basis of ethnic quotas, though positions in public administration are allocated in this way, at least in principal. This means that the parties can, at the local level, compete against each other anywhere in the country. This is not happening. The three most powerful political organizations in the country are not then trying to steal votes from each other. This is not competition. This is demarcation.

This reflects the effects of the ethnic cleansing that took place in the war. Many municipalities that ended the war with a mixed ethnic population were considered on the “front lines” and were split by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) and made into two new ones (Hulsey 2010), de facto defining the local administrative units ethnically. Therefore, there is not even real ethnic pluralism in the electoral arena; however, since there are multiple parties represented in state

institutions at various levels there is real incentive to compete for state resources. This arrangement complicates the analysis of political space in the country considerably because at the state level a kind of trench-warfare political stagnation is the most visible result.

But competition happens at several levels. At the top, ethnic interests compete horizontally for state and, in the Federation, entity and canton resources. Meanwhile, within blocs, both ethnically defined and nominally non-ethnic parties compete vertically for preeminence there. Though they are effectively limited to their ethnic bloc they do compete in a meaningful way. In the RS, the SNSD has overtaken the SDS, and likely for the foreseeable future. Among Bosniaks, the SDP has begun to tentatively threaten the hegemony of the SDA.

So why has the EU been incapable of encouraging more liberalization? After all, even the SDP is mostly known for its multi-ethnic, anti-nationalist stance, and the differences between the politico-economic positions of the major parties are quite narrow. Below I discuss how the fact that vertical competition is limited to blocs substantially limits the ability of the EU to liberalize outcomes (on “liberalizing electoral outcomes”, see: Howard 2006).

Figures

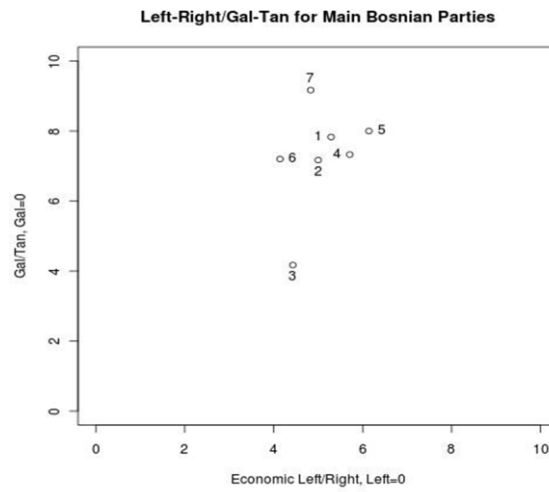


Figure 4.1: 1 = SDA; 2 = S BiH; 3 = SDP; 4 = HDZ (BiH); 5 = HDZ 1990; 6 = SNSD; 7 = SDS. Data from the Chapel Hill Dataset on Party Positioning (http://www.unc.edu/~hooghe/data_pp.php)

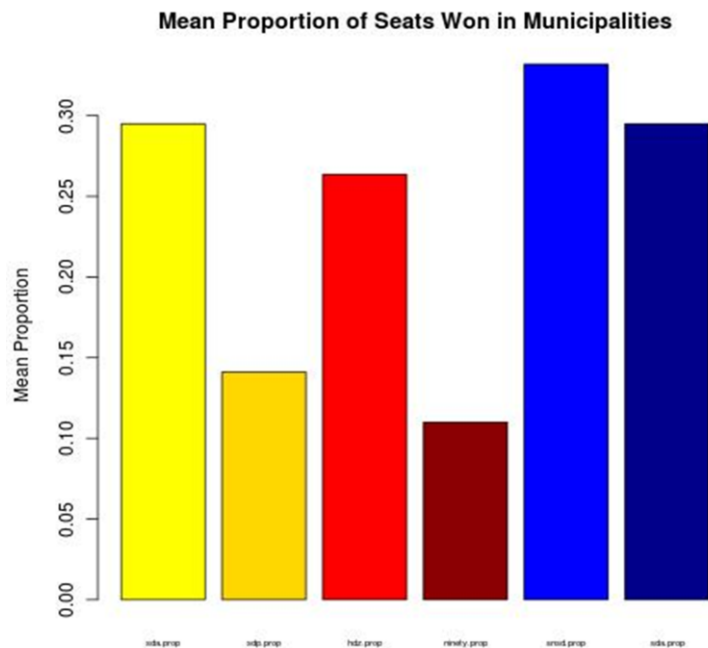


Figure 4.2 . Mean proportion of seats won in local governments in 2008 municipal elections. Dataset is compiled by the author, using data from the Bosnian state Ministry of Elections and the state Ministry of Statistics. Data can be found at <http://www.izbori.ba/Mandati27102008/index.asp>. Demographic data can be found at <http://mojomjesto.ba/en>.

Tables

SDP	Coefficients:			
		Estimate	Std. Error	t value Pr(> t)
	(Intercept)	0.12513	0.02890	4.330 2.85e-05 ***
	sda.prop	0.17094	0.07363	2.322 0.021724 *
	hdz.prop	-0.24956	0.06934	-3.599 0.000444 ***
snsd.prop	-0.23611	0.07675	-3.076 0.002529 **	

Table 4.1. Result of Multiple Linear Regression. The coefficients show the effect of the number of seats won in municipal governments by each of the dominant parties on the number of seats won by the SDP. Dataset is compiled by the author, using data from the Bosnian state Ministry of Elections and the state Ministry of Statistics. Data can be found at <http://www.izbori.ba/Mandati27102008/index.asp>. Demographic data can be found at <http://mojemjesto.ba/en>.

SDA	Coefficients:			
		Estimate	Std. Error	t value Pr(> t)
	(Intercept)	0.32913	0.01813	18.150 < 2e-16 ***
	snsd.prop	-0.74355	0.06197	-11.999 < 2e-16 ***
	hdz.prop	-0.38223	0.07300	-5.236 5.93e-07 ***

HDZ	Coefficients:			
		Estimate	Std. Error	t value Pr(> t)
	(Intercept)	0.26271	0.02744	9.574 < 2e-16 ***
	sda.prop	-0.43101	0.08232	-5.236 5.93e-07 ***
	snsd.prop	-0.58165	0.07988	-7.281 2.23e-11 ***

SNSD	Coefficients:			
		Estimate	Std. Error	t value Pr(> t)
	(Intercept)	0.32650	0.01590	20.530 < 2e-16 ***
	sda.prop	-0.68430	0.05703	-11.999 < 2e-16 ***
	hdz.prop	-0.47472	0.06519	-7.281 2.23e-11 ***

Figure 4.2. Results of Multiple Linear Regressions, where "success"(proportion of seats won in local governments) of each party is used as the dependent variable, and tested against the success of its nationalist counterparts. Dataset is compiled by the author, using data from the Bosnian state Ministry of Elections and the state Ministry of Statistics. Data can be found at <http://www.izbori.ba/Mandati27102008/index.asp>. Demographic data can be found at <http://mojemjesto.ba/en>.

IV. The International Dimension: Competitive Authoritarianism and Europeanization

Our External Actor: The European Union

While incumbents in any system are unlikely to make changes that threaten their position, the EU through its enlargement policy has effectively provided incentives for illiberal elites to moderate, either by empowering democratic oppositions or providing material incentives to liberalize (Vachudova 2008: for discussions on enlargement and Europeanization in general, see: Pop-Eleches 2010; Sedelmeier 2011). In fact, conditionality to EU accession, the process by which membership is offered to countries on the basis that the EU's *aquis communautaire* is progressively implemented, has perhaps been the most successful democratization tool in history (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004). As hinted to above, both countries that began liberal and illiberal trajectories have consolidated liberal democratic regimes while fulfilling EU requirements (Vachudova 2005). The leverage employed by the EU comes from both the general popularity of EU membership, elite desire for international prestige and, ultimately, material incentives. Bosnia's extremely destructive and bloody civil war certainly makes it a unique case in post-communist Europe, but not its low level of democratic development in its first decade after communism. Yet it has arguably made the least progress toward a coherent, liberal democratic state for whom EU accession is a feasible outcome.

This is particularly puzzling for two reasons. First, the presence of the EU in Bosnia has been considerable and increasing. The EU Police and rule of law missions

sent European experts to monitor and advise. The OHR has effectively been fused with the office of the EU Special Representative. The EU is even funding very visible construction and renovation projects like the Sarajevo town hall. Movement toward the EU is quite popular among polling respondents, thus both contact and popularity are present. Its effect, nonetheless, still seems quite limited in comparison to other states. The case of Bosnia shows that this effect depends on both linkage and leverage, and different doses of each will produce different results. The difference, I argue, is that while linkage between the EU and Bosnia is high, EU leverage is actually quite low.

This is not to say that the Europe is not an important actor there. Quite the contrary, it is one of the most important actors. Accession to the EU itself provides one of the most important questions in Bosnian politics. Its positions can build opportunity structures for actors in the country. The EU's clear preference for Milorad Dodik over the SDS was crucial for Dodik's ascendance to power in 2006 (Caspersen 2006). But as Dodik and the SNSD increasingly took over the ultra-nationalist political space in the RS it became clear that its ability to effect change in the short run was limited.

To understand why this is I turn back to the argument proposed by Levitsky and Way (2010). Understanding the international aspect of the theory of competitive authoritarianism is critical for explaining the durability of Bosnia's major nationalist parties. As a theory it provides a clear framework for understanding electoral competition in an illiberal environment, but just as importantly, how that environment is affected by international actors.

Competitive Authoritarianism, Democratization and the International Dimension

Democratization is not necessarily the object of this study. The durability of dominant ethno-nationalist parties in Bosnia can nonetheless be considered a symptom of indication of the country's democratic trajectory. The political dominance by nationalist parties in their respective ethnic communities has fragmented Bosnian society and carved out three distinct single-party regimes. As a result, domestic liberalizing pressure is correspondingly fragmented electorally and therefore quite weak. EU pressure to rationalize administrative institutions and increase transparency aims to have the dual effect of improving governance while also opening competition to opposition groups by leveling the playing field. The mechanisms behind the EU's limited success can be explained in terms of linkage and leverage, while being reinforced by findings on Europeanization in Central and Eastern Europe.

Linkage, Leverage, Organizational Strength and Europeanization. Though the two ideas overlap in practice, Levitsky and Way's theoretical distinction between leverage and linkage is important. Their definition of leverage is relatively intuitive and refers to “governments' vulnerability to external democratizing pressure” (2010: 71). This may mean dependency on aid, access to markets or the extent to which Western actors need their cooperation. The variable is operationalized according to factors such as gross domestic product (GDP), abundance of natural resources or access to sophisticated weaponry that generally indicate how insulated a country is against Western institutional leverage. I illustrated above how such an operationalization in fact makes Bosnia a problematic case. While the operationalized factors would not make it a case of low leverage, other domestic institutional factors, namely those associated with consociationalism and the threat of a failed state in Europe, also render leverage less effective. The most important characteristic of

leverage is that it is a short-term process, meant to produce specific results, and can therefore be mitigated by institutional choke points as easily as by economic or military power.

Linkage, on the other hand, refers to the agglomerated economic, social and political relationships between a country and, in the case of Levitsky and Way's study, Western states and institutions. Specifically, they define linkage as “the density of ties... and cross-border flows...” (2010: 74). It is operationalized by scoring relative levels of economic flows, social contact and migration, the prevalence of Western training among professionals and the presence of Western civil society actors. Proximity is taken as a variable that affects each of these linkages, but ultimately does not explain the variation in trajectories directly. The effect of linkage is long-term, as the phenomenon less reflects specific policy goals of actors than how strongly they influence each other on a regular basis.

The distinction between the effects is of utmost importance. While leverage can raise the costs of repressive and authoritarian behavior in the international sphere, high levels of linkage actually raises domestic costs by altering popular and elite preferences. High linkage with the West will make it more likely that elites will defect if democratic norms are grossly violated because they do not wish to ruin personal, external relationships or legitimacy (Levitsky and Way 2010: 76). Leverage, however, tends to raise the costs in the short run and in the absence of high linkage or low organizational strength even strong leverage can be weathered (2010). In essence, while leverage will determine whether or not a certain reform is passed and implemented, linkage will ultimately decide to what extent the content of that reform is consistent with larger goals of Western actors, presumably liberal democratic development. Their effects together, along with organizational strength of incumbents,

determine to what extent external forces can liberalize competition in Bosnia.

The final intervening factor of regime trajectories of competitive authoritarian regimes is the organizational capacity of it. The strength of a regime's organizational apparatus determines two, interrelated things. First, it clearly determines how effectively regime leaders can monitor elites and voters and allocate resources. Second, it determines whether a regime can withstand periods of strong pressure from Western actors and, in high-linkage cases, whether a regime's leadership will survive a democratic transition and continue to be a competitive actor. The organizational capacity can either be reflected by the strength, responsiveness and cohesion of state institutions, or, as in the case of Bosnia, of a party apparatus. Strong party organization, as mentioned previously, allows political leadership to monitor and control elites by patronage or intra-party surveillance (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010; Scott 1969). It also allows resources to be allocated effectively (Nichter 2009). This is particularly true where, like Bosnia, elections are relatively competitive.

Consistent with the linkage assertion, Vachudova (2008) demonstrates how the EU can have a moderating effect on parties in EU candidate states. As the principal actors in elections and policy development, the effect of international actors on party stance is essential to understanding how countries make the transition towards fulfilling EU conditionality (861). Particularly pertinent for this study is the analysis of Central and Eastern European countries who began illiberal trajectories after 1990. In Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia EU conditionality only began to affect policy outcomes after international pressure and on illiberal incumbents and support for opposition parties, in the form of expertise and information, began to change the electoral field (Levitsky and Way 2010; Vachudova 2008).

Kelley (2008) comes to, at face value, contradictory conclusions when examining the influence of European institutions on the adoption of ethnic policy in four post-communist countries. Socialization strategies, such as persuasion and normative pressure, have only moderate effects on policy outcomes, and then only when there is little domestic opposition in the countries. European Union membership conditionality, which relies on rational cost-benefit analyses by domestic actors, was much more effective. These outcomes, however, are not mutually exclusive (Sedelmeier 2011). Kelley also demonstrates that many of the Europe-favored policy outcomes were “guided” by “socialization-based efforts” that “often shaped the substance of the solutions” (426). A further examination of Sedelmeier's (2011) review of Europeanization literature reveals that the competitive authoritarianism model, particularly regarding regime trajectories, is consistent with the general conclusions drawn by experts in the past decade: that both socialization—a product of linkage—and conditionality—the European Union's leveraging tool—are both important mechanisms for international influence on domestic politics, policy outcomes and regime trajectories. Likewise, Vachudova (2009) with Hooghe demonstrates how leverage by EU constitutionality was an important and direct cause of political party alignment in Central and Eastern Europe leading up to EU accession.

Ultimately, linkage and leverage have different effects across different fields of policy (Sedelmeier 2011). Regarding regime trajectory, Levitsky and Way (2010) assert that different combinations of these factors produce predictable outcomes. Below I have reproduced their effects chart on the next page.

Linkage - Leverage³

	<i>High Linkage</i>	<i>Low Linkage</i>
High Leverage	<i>Consistent and intense democratizing pressure.</i>	<i>Often strong, but intermittent and “electoralist” pressure.</i>
Low Leverage	<i>Consistent but diffuse and indirect democratizing pressure.</i>	<i>Weak external pressure.</i>

Table 3.1

Below I illustrate how Bosnia fits into the high-linkage, low-leverage box, and that the results are consistent with the predictions of the theoretical foundations of competitive authoritarianism.

That findings on competitive authoritarianism and Europeanization are consistent is important because it is the EU institutions that are primarily the ones at work in Bosnia. It has also provided this study with an even wider pool of expertise from which to draw insight. I have shown how Bosnia fits the categorization of a competitive authoritarian regime. It does so, however, indirectly, as its autocratic elites have effectively split the country into three separate electoral systems, each with its own dynamics. This results in a variation in electoral dominance. Together the agglomerated effects determine Bosnia's democratic development. The distinction between linkage and leverage is critical. The presence of the EU as a normative power, as well as a source of advisors and monitors, is playing an important role in the overall development of the electoral arena. As we will see, it helps to explain the excruciatingly slow yet steady opening of the political space to multi-ethnic parties and other types of opposition.

3 (Levitsky and Way 2010: 84)

High Linkage, Low Leverage

It would be difficult to ascertain the differences in linkage in leverage between the blocs, especially with respect to linkage. The purpose of mentioning the power dynamics within the blocs is to demonstrate that they are, in fact, electorally separate and have developed accordingly. This has important consequences for Bosnia as a whole, as I discuss below in the final section of this analysis. Speculation on leverage is certainly possible though. It could easily be said that the security dilemma provides the leaders of the Serb and Croat blocs much more insulation from leverage except in periods of internal fighting, when uncertainty is high (Manning 2004). On the other hand, because of the Bosniak leadership's emphasis on centralization (as prescribed by the EU) explicit support of international actors is perhaps somewhat more critical. Unfortunately it would be very difficult to empirically account for the variation between the blocs. Were it even possible, I demonstrate below how the limitations on leverage posed by Bosnia's institutions would certainly continue to mitigate their effects.

The difference in linkage and leverage within Bosnia is probably less than between Bosnia and other competitive authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe since 1990, however. This is because the efforts of the international community have largely targeted the country as whole. While this does not mean there have not been favorites, it does mean that the leverage and, especially, the linkage have developed somewhat uniformly.

There is little doubt that Bosnia is a case of extraordinarily high linkage with Western actors. After the outbreak of the civil war in 1992 Western diplomats and representatives negotiated with belligerent parties. The country's constitution itself is an annex in the US sponsored peace accord signed in Dayton, Ohio in 1995. The

intrusion and influence of the OHR in Bosnia's politics is very high, as well as the presence of Western international NGOs. This is, of course, to say nothing of the high levels of linkage developing in the region as the states of the former Yugoslavia prepare for EU accession.

Counter-intuitively perhaps, Western leverage is quite low. To demonstrate this I refer to both the factors used by Levitsky and Way to operationalize leverage as well as the factors outlined in the literature on Europeanization, which I demonstrated before to be quite compatible. Both international and domestic factors contributed to the effectiveness of EU conditionality on candidate states leading up to 2004 and 2007. Scholars have pointed to monitoring capacity of international institutions as contributing to effective implementation of the *aquis communautaire*, but perhaps the most widely cited factor is the credibility of the reward upon which the conditions are placed (see: Sedelmeier 2011). Logically, if such rewards, like membership or aid, seem too distant or unattainable domestic actors will be equally unlikely to have the political will to undertake the costly reforms associated with them. Several studies have confirmed this hypothesis, showing that as states get closer to EU accession reforms and their implementation to become more comprehensive (Dimitrova and Pridham 2004; Vachudova 2008).

In Bosnia the monitoring capabilities are relatively high in terms of resources, yet highly decentralized, fractured and unstandardized implementation severely limits compliance (Noutcheva 2009). Most importantly, however, the credibility of achieving membership in the near to medium term is quite low. In spite of already cited high levels of popular support, the intransigence and stated goals of the country's dominant parties threaten to block efforts at critical administrative and economic reforms, especially those that threaten the interests of elites (Bieber 2010; Divjak and

Pugh 2008; Pugh 2004). Much higher levels of economic growth and development are also necessary. This allows elites to dismiss Europeanization as the least of Bosnia's problems and avoid costly reforms that might create uncertainty. Thus, while engagement and support are high, the reward still seems too distant to be substantial.

Domestically, there are several more factors that scholars of Europeanization have determined to be critical. As mentioned, the political costs of adopting conditioned reforms cannot be prohibitively high. Like all policies, reforms are likely to create winners and losers (as in nearly all policy fields—see: Kingdon 2011). There must be enough winners for elites to avoid electoral punishment in terms of either resources or votes. As in other post-communist countries, this is quite unlikely because transitions tend to be very costly in the short run, which means support for reforms must be sufficiently strong to weather periods of political uncertainty. Support for EU accession showed itself to be quite resilient leading up to 2004 in the Czech Republic, Poland and other post-communist counterparts (Kelley 2004; Sedelmeier 2011). If, however, elites are not punished for reliably implementing those reforms they are also unlikely to risk the potential costs of adjustment. Bosnian ethno-nationalists have certainly acknowledged EU accession as an important goal, but they have hardly been punished for dragging their feet. As in other pre-accession countries, the political spectrum has developed around two poles: demarcation and inclusion (Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). Except in Bosnia inclusion refers to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not the European Union. The three-bloc electoral system provides ethno-nationalist elites with the ability to blame elites of the other ethnicities for any lack of progress, thereby insulating themselves from this sort of punishment.

More empirically, administrative capacity, “supportive” formal institutions and societal mobilization in favor of reforms play an important role. As discussed,

administrative capacity in Bosnia is at a medium to low level. It is highly decentralized, poorly standardized and characterized by the duplication of functions—both as a result of consociational arrangements and because offices are an important source of patronage (NDI 2010; Pugh 2004). Such duplication, lack of standardization and plentiful veto points enshrined in the Dayton constitution render formal institutions hostile to reform. Societal mobilization also faces two important obstacles. First, consociational political arrangements formally fragment the Bosnian electorate, while nationalist rhetoric reinforces the trend. This makes mobilization around one movement unlikely. Second, high unemployment and poor coverage of social safety nets marginalizes large portions of the population (World Bank 2009), effectively reducing mobilization to major political parties. As such, societal mobilization is quite low.

I have already established that the organizational capacity of Bosnia's incumbents is quite high. It clearly affects the level of leverage wielded by Western actors, and it is indeed difficult to discuss leverage without it. There are also some important, contingent characteristics unique to Bosnia that keep international leverage quite low. Despite the high dependence on international aid, as the first post-Cold War state-building project Western international actors cannot afford for Bosnia to fail (Caplan 2002; Bieber 2010). This has become clearer recently with the spike in aggressive nationalist rhetoric and separatist threats by the SNSD and HDZ (Toal and Maksić 2011). Just the risk of renewed conflict in Europe has tied policymakers' hands since 1995, and further partition means the failure of European state-building and the final legitimization of ethnic cleansing. These fears are further compounded by the fact that a failed state in the European neighborhood poses a threat to legitimacy and security (Juncos 2005; Osland 2004; Toal and Maksić 2011). Furthermore, that

HDZ, SDA and SNSD elite can perpetually place blame on their ethnic counterparts severely reduces the leverage of Western actors by forcing them to choose who to punish. Punishment of representatives of all three ethnic groups only allows for nationalists to the ethnic others for the suffering of everyone. As such, the consociational formal institutions and near ethnic homogeneity at the municipal level resulting from the war insulates the parties dominating their respective blocs from Western leverage.

The result then, is a case of high linkage and low leverage. Bosnia, in accordance with the theoretical foundations cited in this thesis, experiences constant, low-intensity democratizing (and moderating) pressure. The evidence is quite clear. In almost two decades since the end of the war, there have been no radical changes made to the system outlined at Dayton, but important police and military reform was passed, thanks in no small part to pressure from international actors (Bieber 2010). There also seems to be little the EU can do about incomplete or “fake” compliance to EU conditionality (Noutcheva 2009); the police reform, for example, has left much to be desired (Chandler 2005, citing Collantes Celador 2005; Chandler 2006). The same groups of elites have been in or close to positions of power since the war, and their parties continue to dominate the electoral field, whether in their original parties or their splinters. Nevertheless political competition, if unfair, is still a reality. Turnover by electoral means is possible and the main nationalist parties are, in fact, being pressured to compete for votes, even if that means doing so by exploiting ethnic theme, sources of patronage, manipulating media outlets and far outspending opponents. Observers often comment on the stagnation that characterizes the political field, but parties within the blocs proposed here do compete. Furthermore, ethnic conflict has not returned to the country.

But the effectiveness of even high level linkage with Western actors is still tempered by the consociational institutions established in 1995. The constitutional arrangement, with features like the “vital national interest” veto, has simultaneously legitimized ethnic identity as a political issue and reduced possible leverage by providing a highly defensible policy choke point. The result is that important reforms cannot be forced through in the short-run without controversy over sovereignty. To have the desired influence the organizational strength of incumbents must be addressed with policies that encourage debate on economic issues and EU accession during campaigns, for example. The most important development in terms of electoral politics will have to be brought about by encouraging programmatic electoral competition in each of the blocs, not necessarily Bosnia as a whole.

V. Discussion: Can the EU make a difference?

So is there political space for the EU's foreign policy tools to effect constructive change in Bosnian politics? I argue that European socialization is already taking place, and will continue to be an important force in the country in the future. Although they have remained in power, for example, the dominant nationalist parties have responded at least rhetorically to international and popular pressure and adopted EU membership as long-term objective. Europe has without a doubt become part of the discourse, and the content of most reforms reflect the fact that EU membership and ethnic interests are the most influential forces (Bieber 2010; Hulsey 2010).

Nonetheless, formal institutions and the three electoral bloc arrangement they created will limit the influence of the EU to primarily socialization in the short- to medium-term. Even though there is constant democratizing pressure (undeniable), the same conditions that brought liberal forces to power in other post-communist countries are not present. Most notably, liberal parties cannot create a unified opposition, which is a key factor in cases of democratizing competitive authoritarian regimes (Howard 2006; McFaul 2005; Way 2005). In order to do so, liberal forces would have to splinter the elites from three parties, each one in its own system, instead of just one. Marc M. Howard (2006) points to the importance of incumbent turnover—that is, the resignation, death or otherwise of charismatic individuals in power—in “liberalizing electoral outcomes”. This is because turnover more clearly creates uncertainty “among the regime's rank-and-file that they have secure future”, while also “raising the opposition's expectations that victory is possible” (Howard

2006: 372). First, Bosnian elites are led by much less clearly defined personalities than, for example, Leonid Kuchma or Slobodan Milosevic. Second, regime cycles within the blocs are not likely to follow the same rhythm, making mobilization around opportunity structures more complicated. Even if liberal oppositions were to slowly begin controlling public institutions, they would still be taking over consociational, ethnically defined positions. This would take time to overcome because of the cleavages created by ethnic definition and representation because they create natural disincentives to cooperate, even if liberal oppositions represented the interests of more than one ethnic group. Thus, the obstacles to a unified position in Bosnia are much more formidable than in other democratizing competitive authoritarian regimes (Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary), who all experienced elite desertion of the regime in the face of a credible unified opposition (Hale 2005; Levitsky and Way 2010; Vachudova 2008).

Despite favorable conditions like high linkage, aid dependency, free elections and popular support for the EU, the political dynamics that have developed within Bosnia's institutions have severely reduced short run leverage. Sweeping changes to these institutions would undoubtedly make a difference, one way or the other, but even they would be unlikely to have the desired effect immediately. Though the state's decentralized, consociational institutions have in many ways shaped the behavior of political elites since 1995, the political dynamics themselves—i.e. loyalties, expectations, access to resources and the like—have themselves developed as well. It will be these informal institutions and expectations that will take the longest to alter. In the end, the EU's most effective tool is likely to be exposure, contact and socialization through linkage.

VI. Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the causes of the electoral success of Bosnia's dominant ethno-nationalist parties in spite of general dissatisfaction in Bosnian society. I have proposed that explanations that point to the appeal of these parties to important groups in Bosnian society are incomplete, and that a closer look at the electoral field is crucial. Bosnia contains not one electoral system but three. Each bloc is ethnically defined, dominated by single party and exhibits electoral dynamics very similar to other single-party dominant, competitive authoritarian states that emerged after the Cold War. The main characteristics of these regimes are the presence of liberal democratic forms, including elections, but highly distorted, unfair political playing fields.

The result is an illiberal, authoritarian regime where electoral competition is regular and meaningful, whose regime endurance depends on three factors: linkage with Western actors; organizational strength of incumbents, and; leverage of Western actors. Bosnia's three electoral blocs exhibit these characteristics, and their cumulated effect on the state render Bosnia itself a case of competitive authoritarianism that experiences: high linkage with Western actors; whose incumbents have a high organizational capacity; and low leverage of those same Western actors, paying special attention to the European Union. The leverage is kept low by the fact that the principal political actors in the country who dominate access to political resources benefit from the current arrangement (as they are in power), do not compete against

each other for votes but do for state resources, and are thereby likely to obstruct reforms that create uncertainty relative to their co-ethnic or cross-ethnic rivals.

That the EU has little leverage in Bosnia means that its ability to effect domestic change is considerably limited in the short- to medium-term. This includes its ability to pressure elites to pass important liberalizing reforms as well as to apply general liberalizing pressure on elites by supporting liberal parties. In short, Bosnia's wartime parties (and later the SNSD) have counted on asymmetric access to political resources since the war for its success, and the low leverage of Western actors on them has been unable to stop it.

Nevertheless, as in other competitive authoritarian regimes, real opportunities to challenge incumbents create the possibilities for turnover. Though the SDA, SNSD and the HDZ all control their respective electoral blocs quite firmly, vertical competition within them is both real and dynamic.

Future research on Bosnia's electoral dynamics would benefit then from a better understanding of the success of political oppositions within each of the three blocs proposed in this thesis, with respect to both liberal as well as smaller nationalist parties, such as Hulsey (2010). Controlling for resource asymmetries, to what extent are Bosnians voting nationalist? Under what circumstances are liberal parties more likely to be supported? Understanding these questions could lead to important developments in international engagement in ethnically divided and post-conflict societies, of which there will certainly be no shortage in the near future.

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