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2. PARTY SYSTEM

Introduction

Political parties occupy a central place in contemporary representative democracies. Interrelatedness of political parties and a political system of a country is best described through study of a party system. The roles of political parties in democratic systems are multiple, while a central role is to coordinate between elected leaders and citizens. Political party establishment and conduct of free elections are often seen as the start of democratic governance. At the same time, a multi-party system is considered as one of the key foundations of a democratic system, which calls for continuous social support to various political parties. For the purpose of this working study, it is necessary to review a political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in its form during the first half of 2015.

Social divisions that differ between countries provide main bedrocks of the establishment of political parties. In this way, political parties gather themselves around certain social divisions and identity characteristics that may be founded on economic, religious, national or other basis. Since the mid-1970s, greater focus has been placed on the establishment of competitive political systems and more permanent forms of political parties (Lipset, 2000). It is difficult to offer a comprehensive definition of a party system. The most acceptable definition was offered by Sartori, who calls it “the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition” (Sartori, 2005: 39). The party system of democratic states is based on rules and behavioral patterns, which arise through a tangle of competitive relations and interactions among political parties, and make party competition forms more predictable and mutually dependent within social framework of power struggles. Hence, a party system is much more than simply the sum of the parties. In case of persistence of competitive relations among the same political parties, what is particularly characteristic of the countries of Western Europe, we may talk about institutionalization of the party system, even though other authors use expressions such as “structuring” or “systemness through closure” (Kitschelt, 2007: 525).

Through review of the BiH party system, an attempt will be made to give a broad overview of the current situation, and assess the stability of the party system in this country. Section one provides a historical overview of the development of political pluralism in the last quarter century, as well as overview of the basic social divisions essential for the establishment of political parties. Section two introduces legal basis for establishment and financing of political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Section three and four provide a statistical overview of the party system based on results of the BiH Parliamentary Elections, 1996-2014, with particular focus on relevant parties. Section five concludes a working study and gives assessment of stability of the party system.

2.1 Introduction of a multi-party system and development of political pluralism since 1990

Contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina is a non-consolidated democracy with a multi-party system. Current political and party system is based on the 1995 Dayton Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, a multi-party system was introduced a few years earlier. The process of contemporary development of the party system in Bosnia and Herzegovina began within the framework of democratic transition that included Central and Eastern Europe between 1988 and 1990. First elections held in November 1990 presented a turning point towards democratic transition. After over four decades of single-party rule, 1990 elections introduced a multi-party system.

Faced with a loss of legitimacy and permanent social and economic crisis, and surrounded by democratic transition all across Central and Eastern Europe and other South Slavic republics, the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1990 decided to allow multi-party organization and conduct of democratic free elections. First free elections were set in the same year, modelled on elections that have already been conducted in Slovenia and Croatia. In July 1990, Amendments LIX-LXXX to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina were adopted. These Amendments radically changed political system of the contemporary socialist republic. BiH was defined as a democratic and sovereign state of three equal peoples (Muslims, Serbs and Croats), citizens and other minorities that reside in BiH. All of the citizens, as power tenants, were guaranteed possibility to elect their representatives to the government institutions through multi-party, secret, open and free elections. Freedom of association and political activity was

introduced, thus opening the door to establishment and / or revival of political parties. In an effort to eschew particularization and ethnization of the party system, prohibition of establishing political parties on ethnic grounds was introduced. This move was before long judged as unconstitutional, thus enabling the establishment of ethnic parties and ethno-political mobilization (Arnautović, 2009: 179-180).

Convening of first free elections followed particular transitional logic, illustrated by O'Donnell and Schmitter a few years before political turmoil in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The mere act of announcing free elections, followed by specific actions such as constitutional amendments and adoption of new electoral laws, initiated accelerated process of change in relations between the authoritarian power holders and opposition forces and fractions. Solid prospects of the conduct of free elections place political parties in the center of political events, give them their "moment of glory" and differentiate them as holders of democratic and political decisions (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986: 57). In the ethnically pluralistic societies, this accelerated process takes on additional dimension of competition among ethnic representatives. Unless there is a lack of trust in the impartiality of public institutions and there is a conviction that the government policy will exclusively and disproportionately benefit the ethnic group that won the elections, "conquest" of these institutions becomes a burning issue (Horowitz, 1985: 194).

Establishment of new political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina began in the first half of 1990s. The place formerly occupied by the Communist Party, as the only party that was permitted political activism, was filled overnight with a multi-party system founded on social divisions that had been suppressed during a single-party rule. Three ethnically oriented parties were primarily established, gathering Croatian, Serb or Bosniak members and interests. Ethnic parties emerged as interest groups and national movements of particular ethnic groups who gathered around great diversity of ethnical interests, at the same time holding on to the political heritage of national and cultural organizations and parties from the early 20th century. These parties are as follows: Party of Democratic Action (hereinafter referred to as: SDA, established in May and representing Bosniaks – Muslims), Serbian Democratic Party (hereinafter referred to as: SDS; established in July and representing Serbs), and Croatian Democratic Union BiH (hereinafter referred to as: HDZBiH; established in August and representing Croats). The League of Communists of Yugoslavia changed its name and its party activities' program before the elections, and joined the elections for the first time as the League of Communists – Party of Democratic Changes (Bosnian: Savez Komunističke Stranke demokratskih promjena). After losing the elections, the party will once more change its name, into 'Social Democratic Party' (Bosnian: Socijaldemokratska partija). Other opposition parties were established through transformation of various socialist organizations or through

a split within ethnic blocs. “First multi-party elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina served as a platform for formation of a multi-party system that was brought out dominantly on the basis of ethnicity” (Pejanović, 2006). First multi-party elections held in 1990 ended with a victory for the parties that represent particular ethnic interests, what will have far-reaching effects on the wartime events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and post-war party system alike.

The political system that was founded on the basis of Dayton Peace Agreement placed emphasis on institutionalization of ethnic divisions through consociational model of democracy, and use of a “nationalkey” in distributing political offices. In such a way, it was possible to minimize post-war interethnic competition and conflict. Such ethnicized politics was well accepted by local and international actors (Chandler, 2000: 111). However, politization of the entities took place at the same time, where political parties that exclusively represent the interests of their own ethnic group gained the biggest election success. As a result, during the first post-war elections held in 1996, three pre-war ethnic political parties consolidated their dominant position in the government. The political system established on the principles of consociational democracy emphasized competition between the parties of the same ethnic affiliation, while inter-ethnic electoral competition was minimized. Political effects of the first post-war elections and full domination of ethnic divisions within the electorate affirmed a polarized party system that was more evident and spread than during the pre-war elections (Kasapović, 1997).

The dominance of ethnicity as the foundation of the party system did not correspond with a goal set by international actors, to rebuild post-war BiH and strengthen a multiethnic element. Organization for European Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and Office of the High Representative (OHR) had vast powers to regulate the electoral process and bring about press freedom during several post-war elections. With changes to the electoral rules, removal of uncooperative politicians and open support to non-ethnic or multiethnic parties, an attempt was made to create conditions for electoral success of moderate and civic parties (Chandler, 2000: 114, 119). In principle, international actors tried to make BiH parties more democratic by using non-democratic means (Manning, 2004), in which process such strategy was partially successful. Nowadays, almost two decades after the war, we can still talk of continuous and complete domination of ethnic parties.

2.2 Structure of social divisions in BiH

Politically relevant social divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are nowadays clearly defined by ethnic affiliation of its population. Moreover, domination of ethnic elements in the political life may also be observed in other ethnically heterogeneous ex-Yugoslavia's republics (Goati, 2007: 275). According to Kitschelt, social cleavages are characterized by division within the population along social, political, economic or cultural lines. Due to significant obstacles for individuals who want to change their socio-demographic affiliation, together with awards, obligations and restrictions that come with the membership, individuals organize themselves within their own groups in order to protect and increase their privileges (Kitschelt, 2007). For a long time, confessional affiliation stood as the only politically relevant factor in BiH. In the absence of unifying, supra-religious national movement, particular national awakening movements led to the emergence of three main ethno-political groups, actually illustrating religious divide of the population. In the early stage of ethno-national awakening, the emerging groups additionally established themselves through political and party institutionalization that was grounded in religious differences. The system gave impetus to the establishment of political parties on the basis of ethno-religious criteria, thus setting up institutional subjectivity of ethnically defined religious groups (Bieber, 2006: 7; Wolff, 2006: 28). Through consociational democracy of the post-Dayton BiH, these groups have firmly institutionalized to become separate social "pillars". In view of this, Deschouwer notes that the goals of consociational democracy are to govern social cleavages in a non-conflict way and to secure the persistence of political cleavages through political and communicational practice within consociational democracies. Party elites, that compete to win the highest possible number of achievable votes, encourage these practices, which go along with social cleavages (Deschouwer, 2001: 210; Boix, 2007). Through consociational democracy, Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, which is divided along the ethnic lines, effectuated a form of political competition free from inter-ethnic conflicts. However, this was realized at the cost of societal division and division of the electoral body along the ethnic lines. Political parties are particularly responsible for generation of these divisions.

In order to define BiH party system, it is crucial to comprehend the impact of social cleavages on political competition. In other words, political competition in Bosnia and Herzegovina takes place within ethnic groups (or so-called pillars, according to the terminology used for describing similar phenomena in the Netherlands and Belgium), thus giving rise to ethnically bounded party systems with a high degree of independence. This statement can be empirically verifiable by means of statistical analysis of voting based on ethnicity in BiH, which identifies strong correlation

between ethnic composition of municipalities and electoral outcomes for the ethnic parties¹⁵ (Kapidžić, 2015). Using Sartori's terminology, in Bosnia and Herzegovina we may talk about complex party system with three ethnically dominated party sub-systems; the same phenomenon is also evident in other multi-ethnic regions of Europe (Haughton & Deegan-Krause, 2015: 69; Manning, 2004: 72), where parties compete for votes in a segmented political arena.

2.3 The Legal Basis for Establishment and Financing of Political Parties

Establishment and work of political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina is regulated by legislation adopted at different administrative levels. All legal acts share similar structure, and it may be claimed that BiH parties operate under mostly identical legal framework. Establishment of political parties is regulated by laws adopted at the level of the two Entities, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), as well as Brčko District (BD), while political party financing is regulated by a single state-level law and various state and entity-level by-laws. Political party activities at electoral times are also regulated at the state-level. BiH Constitution does not directly mention political parties, while FBiH and RS Constitutions mention political parties in the context of political freedoms and human rights, that is, through the freedom of political association. The only legal act that defines the concept of political party is state-level Law on Political Party Financing.¹⁶ The Law states that “political parties, for the purpose of the Law, shall be considered organizations into which citizens are freely and voluntarily organized in order to participate at the elections, and which are registered according to the law with the relevant court in either entity, for purpose of implementing political activities and pursuing political aims” (BiH, 2012). Other documents simply refer to the organizations of free political association and civic engagement. The form of legal regulation of political parties may exert considerable influence over features of a political party, as well as over form of a party system. Casal Bertoa and Taleski distinguish four ways in which party regulation may stabilize a party system, as follows: 1) increase

15 It was reported that in the 1990 elections for the Citizens' Council of the BiH Parliament, 74,6 % of Bosniaks voted for Bosniak Parties (SDA and MBO), 83,8% of Serbs voted for the Serbian Party (SDS) and even 92,6% of Croats voted for the Croatian Party (HDZ). Non-ethnic parties (SK-SDP, SRJS, DSS and SSO-DS) received two-thirds of their votes from members of one of three main ethnic groups, primarily Bosniaks.

16 The same provision was set out in the Law on Political Organizations for the BD (2002)

in level of party regulation, 2) higher monetary deposit or higher number of signatures/members required for party registration, 3) higher criteria for allocation of state funds, and 4) greater restrictions on donations to a political party. The authors point out that regulation of political party registration has the greatest impact, while the impact of party funding regulation on party system development is disputable, taking into account the scope of party financing outside the legislative framework, as evident in the countries of the South East Europe (Casal Bertoa & Taleski, 2015: 3-4). Following the methodology of the two authors, particular attention shall be paid to analyzing these four elements of the party regulation.

2.3.1 Establishment and registration of political parties

Establishment and registration of political parties is done with a competent legal authority in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District. Establishment of political parties is regulated by 1991 Law on Political Organizations of the FBiH (BiH, 1991; amended by 2002 OHR Decision), 1996 Law on Political Organization of the Republika Srpska (RS, 1996; amended by 2002 OHR Decision) and 2002 Law on Political Organizations in the Brčko District (BD) (DB, 2002; amended by the following amendments: BD, 2007 and BD, 2008). All three laws follow the same structure and contain significant number of identical articles. The laws contains 1) General provisions, 2) Establishment, 3) Registration, 4) Cease of political parties, 5) Financing, 6) Supervision and 7) Penalty and other provisions.

Procedures for establishing a political party are very similarly regulated, and they differ in a number of members necessary for establishment of a political party. For FBiH this number is 50 citizens, for Brčko District 300 citizens and 500 citizens for the RS. The members have to be BiH citizens, while in the RS party members also have to be RS residents. All three laws stipulate that the political party shall be established on founders' assembly, where a decision on establishment, program and statute shall be adopted, with obligatory parts of these elements included in the aforementioned acts.

The process of registration is identically regulated in the FBiH and the RS. Hence, text of the two laws is mostly identical. Political party registration is done at a court, depending on the headquarters of a political organization and is entered in the register of political parties. Political parties are obliged, within 30 days from the day of the foundation, to submit a request for inscribing in the Court Register. Laws order the court to examine the procedure of election of persons authorized for representation and to inspect whether these persons are banned from political

activities. These laws do not lay down additional conditions or deposit for registration of political parties. BD Law slightly differs from the other two laws in the sense that application for entry in the register of political parties is 15 days' period, and that the Law sets out additional provisions on registration of companies and entrepreneurs in the Brčko District. All three laws regulate that political organizations shall be dissolved by deleting from the court register, either when the political party submits a request for deletion (upon decision of the party body or due to insufficient number of members, that is, less than 50) or public prosecutor (in case then when the political party stops its activities or is forbidden to act), what decision is made by the court register.

All three laws on political organizations aim to facilitate the process of registration of new political parties. The laws lay down very low conditions for establishment and registration of a political party, in which process Republika Srpska Law is slightly more restrictive in terms of citizenship of party members. Considering conditions under which these laws were adopted, and their goal to maximize political activities, it made sense to abandon more restrictive provisions. Nowadays, however, all these laws are largely incomplete and their plainness instigates further fragmentation of the BiH party system.

2.3.2 Financing of political parties

Financing of political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina is regulated by Law on Political Party Financing (BiH, 2012), adopted in order to replace previous law under the same name, adopted in the year 2000. Even though all entity-level laws on political organizations include a section on financing, all of them also invoke clauses from other pieces of legislation. Laws on Political Organizations in the FBiH and in the RS emphasize that political parties' financing is public, and that it is subject to financial inspection. It is worth noting that these laws had been adopted before adoption of the first BiH Law on Political Party Financing in 2000. The following section will only focus on analyzing actual state-level Law on Political Party Financing (BiH, 2012).

The Law on Political Party Financing cites in much detail the sources of funding, prohibited contributions, financial control of political parties and business obligations of the political parties. Political parties may obtain funds from membership fee, volunteer contributions, incomes generated from publishing activities and organizing party events, incomes generated by property owned by political party (in the field of culture and publishing), loans from the banks and allocations from the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina, entities' budgets, cantonal budgets, the budget of Brčko District of BiH

and budget of other units of local government and self-government. Collected funds may be used exclusively by a political party to actualize the aims set by its program and statute. The Law emphasizes limitations in respect to most of the funding sources, ranging from income to voluntary donations. The most important limitation refers to appropriations from the state budget, that cannot exceed the amount of 0,2% of the BiH budget in the calendar year (entities, BD, cantons and other government levels have their own legal acts that regulate allocation of funds from the public budget to political parties). Furthermore, the Law regulates distribution of the budget, taking into account a number of mandates won, as well as gender equality. Political party financing is prohibited to public administration bodies at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, public institutions and public companies, humanitarian organizations, anonymous donors, religious communities, non-profit organizations financed by public funds, legal entities in which public capital has been invested in the amount of minimum of 25% and beyond, other states and foreign legal entities, as well as private enterprises that closed the contract on public procurement with any of the government levels in BiH, if the value of the contract exceeds the amount of 10,000.00 KM. Exceptionally, financing prohibition does not refer to the use of business premises of public administration bodies by political parties, for political party activities. Financial supervision and audit of political parties is also regulated by this law (BiH, 2012). Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina plays an important role in financial control of political activities. It establishes an office for audit of political parties' financial reports (hereinafter: the Audit Office). The Audit Office is responsible to conduct examination and control of financial reports submitted by the political parties, as well as conduct audit of political parties' financing. In this process, political parties are obliged to keep a record of their incomes and expenditures and to submit an annual financial report, which the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall subsequently publicize. A political party is to submit a special financial report for the period of the election campaign in the manner set by the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Concurrently, the BiH Central Election Commission is authorized to study and implement only state-level law on the financing of political parties. So, it is not authorized to implement entity, canton or other local-level regulations, for which parliaments and councils at other levels of government are in charge. In case of violation of the rules and obligations that ensue from the Law on Financing of Political Parties, financial penalties are imposed. These penalties range between 500 and 5,000 KM for less serious violations, up to triple the amount for serious violations. Maximum financial penalty amounts to 15,000 KM. Apart from financial penalties, the Law does not impose any other type of penalty for political parties.

Finally, we may state that financing of political parties is regulated through more than one law, whereby full control, i.e. supervision and interpretation, is provided

only for political party financing through the state-level (and for financing of electoral campaigns). Party financing through other government levels takes place in accordance with regulations that may substantively mutually differ, and for which there is no uniform mode of control and sanctions. This leaves plenty of room for financial manipulation that takes place through lower government levels. Furthermore, legal sanctions for violation of the law are very low and they are not commensurate with much larger budgets of relevant political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Absence of non-financial penalties, such as for instance a temporary ban on public funding, greatly reduces the efficacy of this law. The normative framework of political party financing is well established. However, its efficacy is reduced by lack of unitary supervision and interpretation of multi-level legislation, as well as by lack of non-financial penalties for violation of the law. On these grounds, the effect of the Law on Political Party Financing is reduced, its implementation partial and consistency of the actors in legal compliance insufficient.

It is worth mentioning that Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina has other roles in regulating the activity of political parties, which primarily relate to conduct of elections and implementation of the Election Law. Application and appointment procedure of political parties before the

Elections established control of the regularity of pre-election process and certification of nominated candidates, as well as established a mechanism of supervision over the party system, with the aim of improving transparency in party competition and budget utilization. Without going into more detailed analysis of the work of the Central Election Commission and provisions of the Election Law of BiH it may be asserted that the present Law is a set of well-established normative solutions whose full implementation calls for more serious sanctions and greater consistency in the work of all involved actors.

2.4 Political parties at BiH Parliamentary Elections, 1996-2014

2.4.1 Statistical overview of parties that participated in the BiH Parliamentary Elections

Elections for the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliament were held seven times in the period 1996 – 2014. These elections are held simultaneously with the elections for the BiH Presidency, the Entity Parliaments, the RS President and the FBiH Cantonal Assemblies. Election results and election campaigns are addressed

elsewhere in this study. So, the focus of this section will lie on the parties that appeared in these elections.¹⁷

114 political subjects participated in seven electoral cycles for the BiH Parliament. 93 out of 114 are political parties, while the rest went to a pre-electoral coalition. It is worth noting that all coalitions registered for single elections only, i.e., they did not run for any of the subsequent elections, although the same parties joined various coalitions. The number of parties and coalitions at an election ranged from 17 to 35, while an average number of parties registered was 28,3 (Table 1). Over the last few years, this number has been relatively stable. Yet, a large discrepancy was experienced in the first three post-war elections (when the elections were conducted by OSCE under the supervision of the international community).

Table 1: Number of parties and coalitions that participated in the elections and number of parties which have won mandates in the BiH Parliament

Year of elections	Participated in elections	Won mandates
1996	21	6
1998	35	10
2000	17	13
2002	33	14
2006	32	12
2010	32	12
2014	28	12
Average	28,3	11,3

The majority of parties did not run independently in a large number of election cycles, while only few parties run independently (not in a coalition) in five or more elections of the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is: five parties run independently in five election cycles, four parties run in four elections, while only two parties independently run in all seven elections. Parties competing in the elections may be divided into major camps, that is: on the one hand, ethnically-defined national parties and multi-ethnic parties based on the ethnic category of a society whose interests they advocate, and, on the other hand, pre-war and post-war parties based on the timeline of establishment and activity. Representation of ethnic interests goes together with social cleavages and establishment of political parties in BiH, whereas the time of establishment (and existence) is an indication

¹⁷ Data on the parties and election results were taken from the web site of the Central Election Commission.

of consistency and relevance of a party. In respect to criteria according to which to classify ethnic parties, I quote Chandra who defines an ethnic party as a party that stands for particular interests of one ethnic category or a set of categories, whereby these categories can change over time (Chandra, 2011: 115). Accordingly, representation of ethnic interests is a central feature of ethnic parties, with especially pronounced aspect of ‘particularity’ indicating that an ethnic party implicitly or explicitly excludes particular group. There is no single or universally applicable indicator for classifying ethnic particularity; rather, there is a set of indicators that may be adapted to each particular context. Out of eight indicators used by Chandra, I will use five in order to classify ethnic parties as (non)ethnic for the purpose of this study: ethnicity included in a party name or implicit in official party labels, categories which a party explicitly identifies during a pre-election campaign, implicit message of the election campaign and composition of the party leadership as ex-ante determinants (see Chandra 2011: 155-157), and distribution of political party support during elections as the most relevant ex-post determinant, since ethnic groups will mutually recognize each other and largely support a party that serves their interests (Horowitz, 1985; Chandra, 2011).

In order to define pre-war and post-war parties I will use a simple indicator of the date of establishment, secession or transformation of a political party. Parties can be classified by the two criteria, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Classification of relevant parties*

	Ethnic	Non-ethnic
Pre-war	CDC BH PDA SDP	SDP
Post-war	CDC 1990 PDP SBH SBB AISD	DF

Note: The table presents only relevant parties in acronyms and based on the criteria cited in the following section of the study.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina we may discuss about pronounced multi-party system with no dominant parties at the entire party system level. Nevertheless, acknowledging ethnic social cleavages, dominant parties within each ethnic (and non-ethnic) “pillar” may be identified.

2.4.2 Elective parties and number of elective parties

While the number of elective parties competing in the elections is relatively high, the number of parties that won mandates in the BiH Parliament is much lower. After all post-war elections, a total of 24 parties and 12 coalitions won seats, that is, 36 political subjects in total (see Table 1). Vast majority of these parties and coalitions, more precisely 58%, won seats only in one election, while three-quarters of parties and coalitions won seats in maximum two elections. Only one-quarter of parties that win seats in the Parliament have good prospects of repeating their success, which indicates high volatility in party representation. In order to provide more detailed account of the effective number of parties, inverted fractionalization index is used to measure a party system, that is, “a number of hypothetical equal-sized parties, that would have the same total effect on fractionalization of the system as have the actual parties of unequal size” (Laakso and Taagapera, 1979: 4, in Goati, 2007: 279). This measure requires that parties are observed as coherent and individual actors, as may not always be the case in real-life. Number of effective parties may be counted based on the percentage of votes and number of seats that a particular political party wins (Kitschelt, 2007: 530). In principle, these two amounts should be the approximate; yet, in Bosnia and Herzegovina they vary considerably due to low number of seats in the BiH Parliament. Results presented in Table 3 show that there has been a continuous increase in the number of effective parties, which is identified based on percentage of votes taken. Furthermore, the highest number of effective parties was recorded in the 2010 elections, which indicates a rise in fragmentation of the electorate. The same results, established by the number of seats won, point to relative continuity since 2000 onwards, indicating that fragmentation of the electorate did not impact fragmentation of the BiH Parliament composition. Hence, the results indirectly speak in favor of the existing electoral system and a mechanism of division of mandates. Through the last three election cycles, average number of effective parties has been stable at 9,4 (based on % of votes) or 7,4 (based on seats won).

Table 3: *Number of effective parties (elections for the BiH Parliament)*

	According to the percentage of votes	According to the number of seats won
1996	4,3	3,4
1998	6,0	4,6
2000	7,7	7,3
2002	8,8	7,9
2006	8,9	7,2
2010	9,9	7,7
2014	9,4	7,6
Average	7,9	6,5

The index of volatility is an additional measure that takes into account temporal dimension of change in electoral support to the parties from election to election. Electoral volatility may indicate party system stability and steadiness of support to the same parties. Higher volatility indicates non-consolidated party system marked by substantive changes from election to election (Kitschelt, 2007: 530). This measure demonstrates appearance of certain changes in a party system. Yet, it may be distorted and artificially enlarged by inclusion of certain factors, such as shifting pre-election coalitions and splitting of parties, as the phenomena that are certainly present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, this measure conceals and fails to show volatility among party sub-systems or volatility within particular socio-political “pillars”. The following table will demonstrate only overall measure of volatility¹⁸ of the party system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, calculated according to percentage of votes and seats won, and emphasize that there is not much difference between the two values. Both index values are very high, tentatively suggesting extremely unstable party system.

18 Volatility is calculated by adding all percentages of lost / won votes for all parties in two elections, and division of the sum by two.

Table 4: *The index of volatility (elections for the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina)*

	According to the percentage of votes	According to the number of seats won
1998	74,2	76,2
2000	66,9	66,7
2002	28,0	33,3
2006	35,0	35,7
2010	30,2	26,2
2014	41,2	42,9
Average	45,9	46,8

2.4.3 Party coalitions

After all elections had been completed, it was necessary to set up post-election commissions in order to establish a governing majority. This was to be done in the frame of forming a new government, which, at the state level includes confirming composition of the Council of Ministers to the BiH Parliament. Following the logic of the political system that operates on consociational basis, all post-election coalitions either were multi-ethnic or they included parties from different ethnic (or non-ethnic) groups, including Bosniak, Croatian or Serb parties. Referring to these coalitions, we may talk about need-based coalitions rather than coalitions based on orientation. Ruling coalitions largely differ from pre-election coalitions. As mentioned before in this study, a total of 21 coalitions run in elections for the BiH Parliament in the period 1996-2014. What we are talking about here is pre-election, i.e. program coalitions that won an average of 6 (out of 42) mandates.¹⁹ Pre-election coalitions always gather parties of the same ethnic group, with coalitions of Croatian parties coming into prominence (nine), followed by Serb coalitions (five) and Bosniak (one). The only exception is a coalition of opposition parties gathered around SDP in 1996, which included non-ethnic, Croatian and Bosniak parties. It can be observed that the size of ethnically-defined electorate (or number of voters in a party sub-system) is inversely proportional to the number of ethnic pre-election coalitions running in elections that use election system of proportional representation (as is the case with the BiH Parliament). On the basis of party composition, we may distinguish two types of pre-election coalitions,

¹⁹ This number significantly increases by a coalition gathered around SDA in the 1998 election. With the exception of this coalition, average number of seats won would drop to 3,5.

including coalitions with one dominant party and coalitions composed of smaller parties. In this matter, approximately one third of pre-election coalitions may be characterized as single-party dominant coalitions, established for the purpose of avoiding “attrition” of votes. Other two thirds are small parties’ coalitions set up for purpose of collecting enough votes to pass the electoral threshold or in some other way win seats.

2.5 Relevant parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The following section will briefly describe relevant state-level political parties in the period 1996-2015 (elections for the BiH Parliament), with special emphasis on the last two election cycles in 2010 and 2014. Following criteria were taken into consideration for the selection of relevant parties:

1. Independent appearance in over one half of elections in a given period;
2. Continuous presence in the Parliament in a given period (a mandate won, independently or in a coalition);
3. Participation in government, at least once in a given period;
4. Election result above the 5% in the last two rounds of elections.

Taking into consideration results of the election for the BiH Parliament, five political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina meet all four criteria. They will be presented briefly in an alphabetic order.

2.5.1 The Croatian Democratic Union BiH (HDZ BiH)

The Croatian Democratic Union (Bosnian: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, hereinafter: HDZ BiH) was established on 18 August 1990, before the first free elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to gather and represent Croatian interests in the newly-established multi-party system. The party places emphasis upon Croatian and Christian heritage, and states in its statute that HDZ BiH is “a people’s party that gathers all strata of Croatian society and other citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose party program is based on the principles of democracy and Christian civilization, and other traditional values of the Croatian people” (HSD BiH, Statute, 2015). During the war in BiH, the party played an important role in political and civil military leadership of Croats in BiH. Two key post-war moments for HDZ are as follows: the establishment of the Croatian People’s As-

sembly in 2000 (and its reactivation in 2011), in which HDZ BiH had a dominant role and through which it was able to direct the actions of other Croatian parties; internal split of HDZ BiH in 2006, and establishment of HDZ 1990 as a separate party. HDZ BiH is an active participator in 64 Municipalities across the whole BiH territory, and establishes cantonal, regional and city / town organizations. Dragan Čović has been the leader of the HDZ BiH since 2005. At the Convention of HDZ BiH, he was elected president of HDZ BiH four times in a row. The party was one of the parties that won the first elections in 1990. It gained a majority of seats in all post-war elections in BiH Municipalities with majority of the Croatian population. The party is considered dominant within Croatian party sub-system in Bosnia and Herzegovina and it is difficult to form a government without its participation. This party has been successful in independently forming a government in certain cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. HDZ BiH occasionally enters into pre-election coalition with smaller parties with a Croatian background, while it regularly joins post-election coalitions at all government levels.

2.5.2 Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)

The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Bosnian: Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata, hereinafter: SNSD) was established on 10 March 1996, on the eve of first post-war elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats. It placed itself as the ruling opposition party in the RS. By merging in 2002, the party adopted its current name and course of action. In their party documents, the SNSD presented itself as a social-democratic party without ethnic background, with the political party program aimed at protecting and strengthening the RS as a part of BiH (SNSD, Statute, 2011). Through the practice, the party has firmly and convincingly represented the interests of Serbian voters, and it almost never makes concessions on what it considers as Serbian national interest. Moreover, it actively contributes to the exacerbation of inter-ethnic political rhetoric. SNSD, as the party following normative non-ethnic and social-democratic principles, may still be empirically characterized as the nationalist party with a Serbian background.

SNSD is active in both entities and on the whole BiH territory through 97 Municipal Committees grouped into regional committees. Milorad Dodik has been the party president since its establishment. At 2015 Party Convention, he was elected the party president five times in a row. In 2006, the party scored great electoral success by winning with majority of votes in the RS and among the parties with a Serbian background. The same success is attested in the following elections. The party has been in power since 2006, while it joined state-level government in the period 2006-2014. Radical reforms cannot be carried out in BiH without involving the SNSD.

2.5.3 Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP)

The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian: Socijaldemokratska partija BiH, hereinafter: SDP) was formed in 27 December 1992 as the successor of the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after 1990 election defeat in the first free elections. SDP is the only relevant party with long-standing continuity of action, either through party, revolutionary or workers' organizations, which dates back to the establishment of the first parties in BiH in 1909. The party documents emphasize its multi-ethnic character and social-democratic goals. Its political activity largely bears out this commitment. SDP may be considered as the only relevant non-ethnic party in BiH. The party has repeatedly experienced splits within the party. First split occurred in 2002 when SDP became detached and established Social Democratic Union of BiH, and the second split took place in 2013 with establishment of the Democratic Front. The party also faced splits through merging of the parties. The party currently goes through a phase of restructuring, redefining and merging, after suffering mayor election defeat in 2014 as well as after leaving of a long standing president Zlatko Lagumdžija. SDP is active in the whole territory of BiH and it operates through 70 municipal and city / town organizations, further grouped into cantonal or regional committees. Its current president is Nermin Nikšić, elected for the first time at an extraordinary congress in 2014. The party scored two electoral victories in 2000 and 2010, when it won more votes than the other parties and formed a coalition government. However, the party also faced two major electoral defeats in 2002 and 2014, when it was totally marginalized. SDP election result is in direct correlation with the election result of the Bosniak parties and other non-ethnic social-democratic parties. Hence, it may be argued that a party subsystem that brings together non-ethnic parties partially corresponds with Bosniak party subsystem.

2.5.4 Serbian Democratic Party (SDS)

The Serbian Democratic Party (Bosnian: Srpska demokratska stranka, hereinafter: SDS) was established on 29 June 1990, prior to the first free elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the purpose of representing Serbs and protecting their political interests. The party overtly emphasizes its national commitment, noting its statute preservation of the Serb tradition, Orthodox religion and national culture (SDS, Statute, 2015). During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the party played a key role in the political and military leadership of Serbs and the Army of Republika Srpska. Many of the senior military and political leaders of the Army were convicted of war crimes. Only a decade after the war, the party launched a process of reforms

that led to its transformation into Democratic People's Alliance. The party operates only on the territory of the RS through 62 municipal committees, further grouped into city and regional committees. The party has been led by Marko Bosić since 2006, and he was re-elected to the same post in 2015. As long as 2006, SDS has been the dominant party among the parties with a Serbian background, as well as major Serbian party in power. The party was heavily defeated in 2006 election and in the elections that ensued thereafter. However, in the last elections held in 2014 SDS reaffirmed its position as the relevant actor, and it joined BiH-level state government. SDS's electoral rivals are exclusively other parties from the Serbian party subsystem.

2.5.5 Party of Democratic Action (SDA)

The Party of Democratic Action (Bosnian: Stranka demokratske akcije, hereinafter: SDA) was founded on 25 May 1990 as the first newly-established party on the eve of elections held in that year. The purpose of its establishment was to gather and represent the Muslim population in BiH, as well as to establish political grounds for maturation of a Bosniak national identity. Apart from dedication to Islamic values and Bosniak values, the party at the same time emphasizes its civic commitment, and proves it by parallel urging for civic and national aims, even when these are contrary to one another. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the SDA was the main player in political and military organization of Bosniaks. Still, it did not play this to the extent that it was done by HDZ and particularly SDS. The party is active on the territory of the whole BiH through municipal committees which are further grouped into cantonal or regional boards. The party is led by Bakir Izetbegović, first elected to this post in 2015. The party achieved significant results in all elections and it took part in majority of the post-war governments at all government levels. SDA has been continuously dominant party in power in the majority of municipalities and cantons in the FBiH. It may be considered as the most relevant and permanent among the parties with a Bosniak background, although it does not dominate over this ethnic "pillar". The SDA electorate partially coincides with the voters of non-ethnic parties, and the party electoral rivals are Bosniak and non-ethnic parties. Important decisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be made without involving the SDA.

2.5.6 Other relevant parties

Aside from the abovementioned five parties, there are other political parties which fulfill most, but not all the criteria for selection of the relevant parties. They will be briefly identified below.

The Democratic Front (Bosnian: Demokratska fronta, hereinafter: DF) is a party of non-ethnic and social-democratic orientation. It was founded in 2013, following a split within the SDP. Željko Komšić is the founder and the president of the party. The party achieved significant electoral success in 2014, developing into the strongest social-democratic and non-ethnic party in Bosnia and Herzegovina. DF took part in the Government for some time. As a recently established political party, DF lacks organizational support in large parts of the country.

The Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (Bosnian: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, hereinafter: HDZ 1990) is a party that forms a part of the Croatian party subsystem. It was founded in 2006, as a result of a split in HDZ BiH. Since 2013 it has been led by Martin Raguž, who initiated a process of HDZ 1990 transformation into center oriented Croatian party. HDZ 1990 wins majority seats at the sub-state level in predominantly Croatian communities. Since its establishment, the party has continuously won mandates in the BiH Parliament.

The Party of Democratic Progress (Bosnian: Partija demokratskog progressa, hereinafter: PDP) is a center-right party with a Serbian background established in 1999. The party was established by Mladen Ivanić, who remains its leader till the present day. It often appears as a coalition party, primarily in coalition with SDS. Since its establishment, the party has been winning seats in the BiH Parliament, as well as in the entity and other bodies. The party operates exclusively on the territory of the RS.

Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian: Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina, hereinafter: SBiH) is a Bosniak party established in 1996 as a results of the split within the SDA. Amer Jerlagić has been the party president since 2014. Led by its founder Haris Silajdžić, the party had a big impact on BiH politics in the post-war period. At one time, it was an indispensable factor of Bosniak politics, by joining majority government as a coalition partner. Recently the party has started to lose much support, while in the last election for the BiH Parliament, for the first time it did not win any seats.

Union for Better Future of BiH (Bosnian: Savez za bolju budućnost, hereinafter: SBB) was founded in 2009 as a party with a Bosniak background. Fahrudin Radončić is the founder and party leader. The SBB skillfully uses mass media owned by the party leader's family in order to continuously carry out one's own promotion and negative propaganda of the SBB opponents, irrespective of electoral cycles. The party has achieved substantial success since its establishment and it partially participated in the government as a coalition partner.

Conclusion: Stability of the party system in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Taking into account Sartori's classification method for party systems (2005), in Bosnia and Herzegovina we may talk about segmented multi-party system with three or four²⁰ party subsystems based on ethno-political social cleavages, with a variety of political sub-cultures and negligible political distance among the parties of the same subsystem. In fact, basic distinction among the parties is their affiliation to certain subsystem (i.e. classification as Serbian, Croatian, Bosniak or non-ethnic), and characteristics of a party president or a party leader. In the empirical practice, there are only insignificant political distinctions among the parties that belong to the same subsystem. Hence, all relevant parties may be characterized as sharing conservative political affiliation. Consequently, patterns of inter-party competition are focused on winning over votes from one's own ethnic group, and party competition takes places within ethnically homogenous electorates. There is virtually no inter-ethnic competition for votes.

There is position and opposition within each political subsystem. So, the subsystems come across as relatively stable categories. In effect, it is questionable whether the change is at all possible at the subsystem level or it may only be possible through exogenous shock, economic stagnation before all or loss of regional competitiveness of a state, or one of its parts (Kitschelt, 2015: 89).

Changes currently take place only within the subsystem, and frequently so, which makes them volatile and relatively unstable. Apart from playing a crucial role in the process of differentiation of political choices, party leaders are the key to party survival. Only few parties managed to successfully overcome change of a party leader and fully institutionalize their party structure. The fate of smaller and newly-established political parties is closely tied to the personality of the party leader. High volatility of a party system may be linked to a rise in insufficient party institutionalization and reliance on one person. The issue of volatility, along with examination and adaptation of the measurement methods, is of great significance for reason that a stable party system encourages higher quality and more effective forms of representation of the citizens' interests. At the same time, higher volatility and changeability means more uncertainty for the parties, alongside inconsistent monitoring of proper party programs and higher party opportunism. Better and

²⁰ Depending on whether we connect the subsystem of non-ethnic parties with the subsystem of Bosniak parties, given significant overlap of the electorate.

more detailed comprehension of the party system in BiH calls for further exploration of the issue of volatility among party subsystems, as well as volatility within these systems, in order to have a clearer picture of the system stability.

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POLITICAL PLURALISM AND INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY

National Study for
Bosnia and Herzegovina



**BALKAN COMPARATIVE
ELECTORAL STUDY:**
IMPACT OF PERSONAL VOTE
ON INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY

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