



Försvarshögskolan

**Who is Bosnian?:
Ethnic Division in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its
Implications for a National Identity**

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The formula of one country, two entities and three constituent peoples was not a solution to the Bosnian Question. It was simply what could be agreed on [in 1995].

– Christopher Bennett

Abstract

This study deals with ethnic division in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its implications for a Bosnian collective national identity, in contrast to the ethnic identity of Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. The 1995 Dayton Agreement paves the way for a Bosnian state where a collective national identity is based on the state's structure and institutions. However, almost 25 years after the war, there are many challenges facing the creation of such an identity, and Bosnians are struggling to unite. The study investigates the formal and non-formal ways ethnic division is upheld, and how the division makes it difficult to agree on a collective identity. After examining the content of the Dayton Agreement, the study uses Abdelal et al.'s framework to explore examples of ethnic divisions in everyday life. The findings show that the Dayton Agreement formally institutionalizes ethnic divisions that are further enforced by politicians who use their autonomy to promote ethnic identities for their respective groups, which stand in conflict with a collective identity for all Bosnians.

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1. Introduction

A collective national identity is one of the basic building blocks of state unity. It is usually manifested by a flag, national anthem, currency, passport, etc., though also often through factors like common goals and worldviews. This can be compared with ethnic identity, which is based on belonging to a particular ethnic group and often also its religion, traditions and language. Some argue that national and ethnic identity are closely related, while others believe national identity should be based on common values and political institutions instead. Such a view on national identity is a *civic* one (Verdugo & Milne, 2016, pp. 4-5). Proponents of civic national identity believe unity is possible even in multiethnic states. While this has succeeded relatively well in countries such as the United States and Switzerland, there are countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where division has prevailed.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The 1992-1995 Bosnian War

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of several wars in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Being a multi-ethnic community with three major ethnic groups – Catholic Croats, Muslim Bosniaks and Orthodox Serbs¹ – the rise of nationalism in Croatia and Serbia had an impact on Bosnian society as well (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). This eventually led to war which began in early 1992 and, at its most intense stage, included fighting between the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (dominated by Bosniaks), the Croatian Defense Council (dominated by Croats), and the Army of Republika Srpska (dominated by Serbs) (Baker, 2015, pp. 62-63). In total, around 100,000 people died as a result of the conflict and 2 million were displaced (Lampe, 2019).

1.1.2 The Dayton Agreement in perspective

Ethnic conflicts in Europe have previously ended in post-conflict division. Two prominent examples are the conflict on Cyprus and in Northern Ireland. To this day on Cyprus, there is a division between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. In 2004, the UN-mediated Annan Plan was put to a referendum which did not pass on the Greek side, and today the island is divided, with separate political systems on the two sides (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2018). In Northern Ireland, as a result of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, new institutions based on power-sharing between unionists and nationalists, were created (Northern Ireland Assembly, n.d.). However, divisions still remain, and the census of 2011

¹ The term “Bosnian” is used in this essay to denote any citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of ethnicity. The terms “Bosniak”, “Croat”, and “Serb” denote Bosnians belonging to one of those ethnic groups.

shows that residents are still torn about the question of identity (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2016).

The Bosnian War ended in a similar way, with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement, in 1995 (Kostić, 2009, pp. 31-32). The Dayton Agreement was (and remains) the basis of the



Figure 1. Breakdown of the political structures within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2018).

Bosnian political system of one state – two entities – three constituent peoples. It facilitated the creation of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Republika Srpska, plus the shared but autonomous Brčko district (Kostić, 2009, p. 32). This system, referred to by some as the most complicated in the world, was originally meant to be a temporary solution to stop the fighting but remains in force today (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019; Maglajlija, 2015). It revolves around the three main ethnic groups: the presidency is shared between three members, one from each ethnic group; the national parliament, also divided between the ethnic groups, is complemented by parliaments on entity level, and, within the Federation, by assemblies also on cantonal level (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). The national government is responsible for questions such as foreign and monetary policy, but the entities have significant powers. Another political institution which is unique for Bosnia and Herzegovina is the High Representative, whose mandate is also decided by the Dayton Agreement. The High Representative’s tasks include monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement and making sure that the state institutions function effectively, but he/she also has the power to remove public officials from office if they are considered to be acting inappropriately, and impose laws that are seen as necessary if the Bosnian institutions themselves do not manage to do so (Office of the High Representative, 2015).

1.2 Literature review

The importance of a common identity after conflict has been advocated by several political scientists and can be seen as an important building block of reconciliation, which is well defined as “when previous, conflict-era identities no longer operate as the primary cleavages in politics, and thus citizens acquire new identities that cut across those earlier fault lines” (Verdeja, 2012, p. 166). There are many political theorists who promote a civic view of national identity. For

example, Charles Taylor introduces the concept *politics of recognition*, which has historically consisted of two components, the politics of dignity and of difference. *Politics of difference*, which is more recent, is a principle by which multicultural states should recognize groups' identities and their distinctness from others (Taylor, 1994, p. 38). There is thus no attempt to create a homogenous culture where all citizens have the same practices or norms. The *constitutional patriotism* of Jürgen Habermas and Jan-Werner Müller among others is another theory which argues for a dedication to political institutions rather than a certain "people", albeit with slightly different preconditions (Müller, 2007). Bhikhu Parekh, who has specifically studied multicultural states, has also written extensively about the subject.

1.2.1 Previous research about identity in multicultural societies

Bhikhu Parekh is one of the most well-known and prominent theorists in the area of multiculturalism around the world and has a liberal view on the subject. He offers several thoughts about how the political structure of multicultural societies and how they can remain stable, and wants to "reconstitute" the modern state. He claims that plural systems of authority, different laws within different entities, and other arrangements are possible, and in many cases necessary, but maintains that they cannot undermine the state's unity (Parekh, 2006, pp. 194-195). A multicultural state thus needs to combine political unity with a respect for diversity: the view of citizenship needs to be broadened, and he is against the idea of forced assimilation (Parekh, 2006, pp. 189, 198). Rather, he advocates an integration through acceptance of all constituent cultures: "'We' cannot integrate 'them' so long as 'we' remain 'we'" (Parekh, 2006, p. 204). However, this is not to say that the unity does not need to be strong: Parekh claims that the more multicultural a state is, the more united it needs to be, because weak states feel threatened by differences (Parekh, 2006, p. 196). The main component of a multicultural state is having a constitution that gives power to a central authority, which represents the whole society, while also having entities on lower levels that can promote intercultural relations (Parekh, 2006, pp. 207, 212). Furthermore, it needs to have an objective and equal justice system and collective rights for the different groups. This is well summarized by his definition of a political community as "a public institution shared by its members (...) in a way that we share streets, parks, the institutions of government, and so on. (...) The identity of a political community lies in what all its members share not individually but collectively, not privately but publicly, and has an inescapable institutional focus" (Parekh, 1994, pp. 501-502).

Parekh also in detail describes the characteristics of a *national identity* in multicultural states. He claims that national identity is an important factor of an individual's life, and that it provides

a sense of security, protection, and patriotism that largely affects the daily routine (Parekh, 2008, pp. 56-57). The national identity needs to exist for several reasons, of which the main is giving the communities a common sense of belonging (Parekh, 2006, p. 231). He acknowledges that national identities can be divisive, due to for example different interpretations of historical events or how life should be lived, and therefore presents four conditions that should be fulfilled for the national identity to be unifying (Parekh, 2006, pp. 231-234). It needs to:

1. Be rooted in the country's political system rather than the personalities of the individual members. This means that it should be based on common political institutions, values, and so on.
2. Not interfere with the identities of the sub-groups within the state. It therefore needs to be open and inclusive.
3. Be defined in such a way that it is possible for all individuals belong to the state to identify with it. It is not acceptable for a country to identify itself directly with a certain ethnic group.
4. In combination with the points above, accept all citizens as equal and give them equal opportunities.

What we can see from Parekh's work on multicultural states is that he also advocates a civic form of national identity, for which citizenship is the central pillar. Parekh says that "commitment to a political community", as he expresses it, is not about agreeing with all co-citizens about history, politics, or similar issues. Rather, it is about being committed to a continued existence of the political community ("political loyalty") (Parekh, 2006, pp. 341-342). This will not happen unless the political community is also dedicated to its citizens, as described above.

1.2.2 Connecting the research with Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Dayton Agreement paves the way for the creation of a civic national identity through its explicit recognition of the three constituent groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its focus on inclusive political institutions. By making a list of Parekh's central requirements for such an identity to develop, and examining whether the Dayton Agreement fulfills them, this can be shown:

1. Identity rooted in the political system: This is fulfilled by the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not attempt to assimilate all citizens into one shared culture; there is

no single religion, language, or even alphabet that has higher status than the other. However, there is one common flag, currency, presidency, and so on.

2. Identity not interfering with identities of sub-groups: This is fulfilled by the fact that each ethnic group's language (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) enjoys official status, that the ethnic groups are guaranteed equal representation in the political system, that each ethnic group is free to practice their own religion, and so on.
3. Identity defined in an inclusive way: This is fulfilled by stating that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country made of three constituent ethnic groups, together with other smaller groups.
4. Equal rights and opportunities for all citizens: This is fulfilled in the same way as points 1 and 2.

However, despite the fact that the requirements above have been met in theory, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains divided, and there is a long way to go to create a collective national identity. Parekh himself writes that "in Bosnia even a thin national identity is absent" (Parekh, 2008, p. 79). As earlier stated, the Dayton Agreement was meant to be a temporary solution. A resolution by the Council of Europe in 2004 asserts that the agreement "cannot secure the effective functioning of the state in the long term and should be reformed once national reconciliation is irreversible and confidence is fully restored" (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2004). This point has not been reached.

Previous research about identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina confirms this. The split is evidenced by the table below, showing the difference in importance between ethnic and national identity:

Which identity is more important to you: your ethnic identity or your identity as a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina?				
	Ethnicity			
	Bosniaks (N=766)	Croats (N=206)	Serbs (N=544)	Others (N=2)
My ethnic identity is more important (%)	20	55	67	46
My identity as a citizen of this country is more important (%)	30	10	11	-
They are both equally important (%)	47	31	17	41
Neither is important (%)	2	4	4	13
Don't know/refuse to answer (%)	2	1	1	-

Figure 2. Percentage of replies to the question above for each ethnicity (University of Oslo, 2011, p. 82).

We can see that there is no ethnic group that is more proud of their national identity than of their ethnic one: a plurality of Bosniaks prioritize the identities equally highly, while a majority of Croats and Serbs prioritize their ethnic identity. Another study shows that this also applies to young people:

Table 6.1 To what extent are the following forms of attachments important for you?

	Attachment to my people	Attachment to my religion	Attachment to the entity I live in	Attachment to the state of B&H	Attachment to Europe
Bosniaks	3.35	3.36	2.53	3.29	2.65
Croats	3.35	3.53	2.68	2.05	2.41
Serba	3.45	3.48	2.86	2.07	2.46
B&H	2.73	2.32	1.78	2.97	2.47
<i>F</i>	32.810	81.321	47.613	225.878	5.334
<i>p</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001

Figure 3. Mean values given by the respondents to the question above, on a scale from 1 (unimportant) to 4 (very important) (Majstorović & Turjačanin, 2013, p. 138).

The table is taken from a study of young people at universities around Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an average age of 19.5 during the year 2011, when the study was made. The results show that even young people, who grew up in the aftermath of the war, feel a stronger attachment with their ethnic group than with the state they have (essentially) lived in their entire lives.

In addition, Bosniaks are the only ethnic group to be “very proud” of their Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizenship:

Are you proud to be a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina?				
	Ethnicity			
	Bosniaks (N=766)	Croats (N=206)	Serbs (N=544)	Others (N=2)
Very proud (%)	65	19	8	21
Somewhat proud (%)	27	52	41	41
Not proud at all (%)	6	28	48	38
Don't know/refuse to answer (%)	2	1	3	-

Figure 4. Percentage of replies to the question above for each ethnicity (University of Oslo, 2011, p. 23).

A fourth study, done on behalf of USAID in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016, shows that mistrust still remains between the ethnic groups in the country. In general, less than half of Bosnian citizens feel that they can trust members of the two other ethnic groups (Čaršimanović Vukotić, et al., 2017, p. 41).

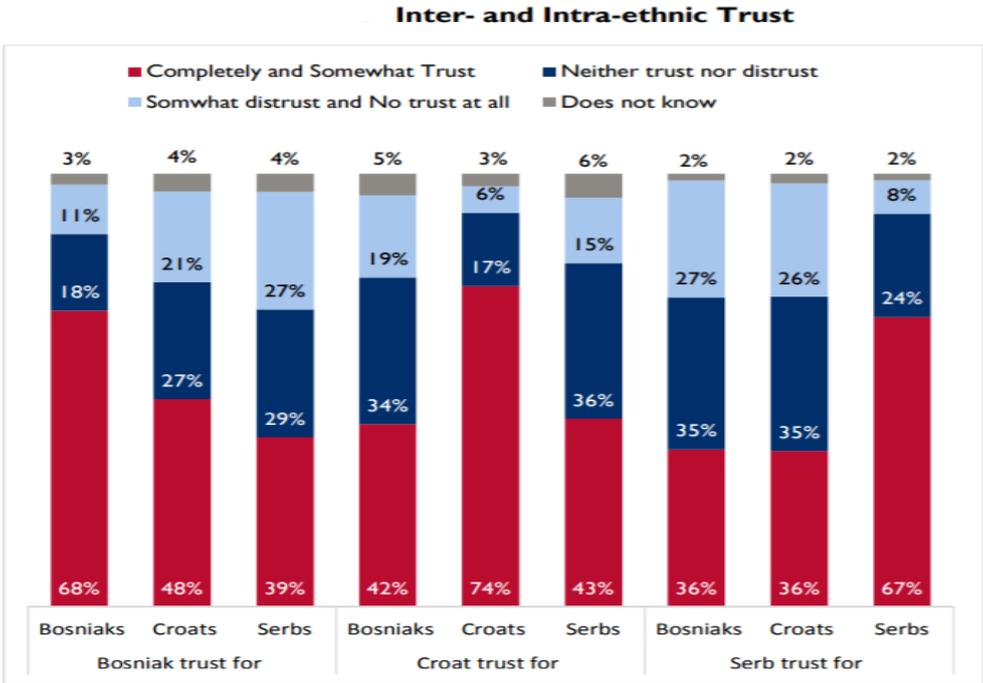


Figure 5. Inter- and intra-ethnic trust among ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Čaršimanović Vukotić, et al., 2017, p. 41).

What the combined results of the surveys above show is that the Dayton Agreement has not successfully created a collective national identity for all citizens within Bosnia and

Herzegovina. Divisions remain, and people feel a strong connection with their ethnic group while the connection with their fellow citizens is weak.

2. Purpose of the thesis

2.1 Statement of the problem

The earlier research shows that ethnic division is strong in Bosnia and Herzegovina, making it difficult to unite around a collective national identity based on civic principles. Rather than identifying with their fellow citizens, Bosnians identify with other members of their ethnic group. In this particular case, Parekh's four criteria for national identity in multicultural states are therefore not sufficient. Parekh himself admits that national identities are difficult to create in divided countries, but does not offer a solution to this problem (Parekh, 2008, p. 78). This study will therefore analyze the specific case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to determine how ethnic division within the country is maintained, and how those divisions impede the creation of a collective national identity. The study aims to provide a better understanding of the challenges a collective national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby complementing the theory discussed above to make it more applicable. The Balkan region has historically been marked by conflict, and in a multiethnic country like Bosnia and Herzegovina, conflict could very well break out again. It is therefore important to address the issue of national identity and unity to prevent further destabilization of the country, and by extension, the Balkans and the European continent. Another factor that makes the case worth studying is that the international community, including the European Union, the United States, and Russia, was involved in the peace negotiations and the Dayton Agreement is thus partly a result of their efforts (Hartwell, 2019, p. 457). In a broader sense, the results of this study can highlight important factors to be considered in post-conflict nation building, implicating how to approach reconciliation after ethnic conflict.

The thesis will *not* come up with a solution for how other areas of multicultural societies, such as education or the justice system, should be structured and it will also not take on a political standpoint. Its sole aim is to use theories of identity to understand the political divisions in the country.

2.2 Research question

Given the above purpose, the research question that the thesis will strive to answer is: *How are the ethnic divisions within Bosnia and Herzegovina maintained, and how does this impede the creation of a collective national identity?*

3. Theory

3.1 Politics in ethnically divided states

Donald J. Horowitz's book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985) gives a wide overview of the different characteristics that define ethnic conflict, which in divided societies "is at the center of politics" (Horowitz, 1985, p. 12). His works are well-known and well-quoted through the academic world and given that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a divided country in the aftermath of ethnic conflict, Horowitz's thoughts are highly relevant. In one chapter, he goes through policies that can foster interethnic cooperation in multicultural states. He discusses the perspective of "consociational democracy", advocated by for example Arend Lijphart, Eric A. Nordlinger, and Milton J. Esman. The theorists have slightly different approaches, but the main point of consociational democracy is that the first step to cooperation between ethnic groups is guaranteeing equal rights and representation in state institutions (Horowitz, 1985, p. 569). For Lijphart, this includes a mutual veto and ethnic autonomy, and the key is that politicians from different sides work together. Horowitz, however, claims that the theory oversimplifies the situation in divided states, and has a western perspective that is not applicable to areas of recent intense ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 571-572). He also criticizes the assumption that political leaders in such states are rational and that they will see it in their own interest to cooperate and mitigate tensions, and he claims that interethnic cooperation can also spur *intraethnic competition* which leads to more extreme views (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 574-575)

Another chapter deals specifically with party politics in ethnically divided states. Horowitz claims that divided societies make it difficult for inter-ethnic relations to develop and as a result, they are characterized by the existence of ethnically based parties (Horowitz, 1985, p. 293) Such parties' support stems primarily from a single ethnic group, and they claim to be acting in the interest of that group (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 291, 299). The parties within the country thus often contradict each other and have different aims for the future of the country (Horowitz, 1985, p. 9). In ethnically divided societies, it is therefore not surprising that people are drawn to such parties, often giving them a stable support base (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 294-295). Ethnic parties act like interest groups, equating the interests of their ethnic group with the common

interest, and often argue that demands of other ethnic groups are incompatible (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 297-298). As a consequence of this, it is difficult for ethnic parties to develop into multiethnic ones, since giving in to demands of other ethnic groups will lead to a loss of the party's core support base (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 292-293). Ethnic parties strive to obtain power and if the social situation in the country, or its political system, is set up in a way that favors the creation of ethnic parties, they will naturally form (Horowitz, 1985, p. 294).

Horowitz claims that ethnic party systems in many cases foster further ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 1985, p. 346). He writes that ethnic parties define themselves in a way that makes it seem unpatriotic or against the group interest to vote for another party (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 298, 324). Visually, he shows the connection between ethnic parties and conflict through the diagram below, in which two ethnic parties are being pulled by a centrifugal force (away from the center), contrary to two nonethnic ones which are pulled by a centripetal force (towards the center) (Horowitz, 1985, p. 347). What this essentially means is that ethnic parties do not compete with each other for the same votes; they are only interested in the votes from their own ethnic group and want to show that they "care" the most about their group. Thus, in order to present themselves as exclusive for their ethnic group and to convince the public of their purpose, they are often pulled further away from other ethnic parties, and by extension, conflict can ensue.

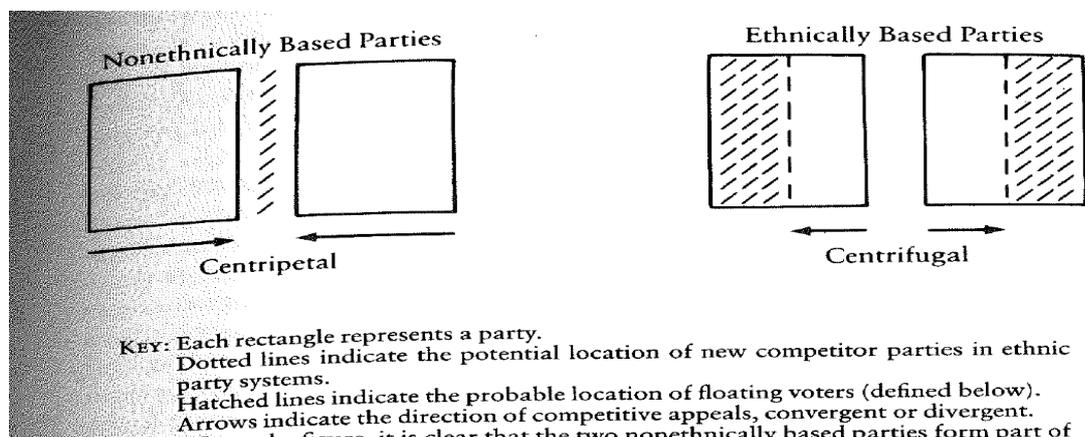


Figure 6. The direction of competition in nonethnic and ethnic two-party systems (Horowitz, 1985, p. 347)

3.2 Collective identities and conducting research about them

Much research exists about collective identities, but is often limited in scope. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott introduce a new method for measuring identity, which is broad and universally applicable, and therefore useful when studying a case such as Bosnia and Herzegovina where there are many factors at play. The authors acknowledge that identity is increasingly important as an analytical tool within political science and claim that their way of

studying identity makes sure that its potential does not go wasted. In order to bridge the divide between different ways of defining and analyzing identity (more specifically, collective identity), they develop the framework discussed below, which according to the authors makes it possible to compare different types of identities and coordinate across them, and eases operationalization of the subject (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 696). They divide the concept of collective identity among two dimensions: content and contestation. By content, they mean the meaning of a collective identity, while contestation is how much in agreement a group is about the identity's content. They divide content into four types which are discussed below. The last type will be developed further.

1. *Constitutive norms*. These are “the practices that define [the] identity and lead other actors to recognize it” (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 697). The practices can be explicit or implicit but what is important is that they set the group apart from others. Constitutive norms do not just define how a member of the community should act, but also the other way around: by acting according to a constitutive norm, the agent can be identified as belonging to that particular community. *Norms* are central for the analysis, and the authors maintain that constitutive norms can influence action by unconsciously, semi-consciously, or consciously determining which courses of action are appropriate and which are not.
2. A common *social purpose* means that members of the community have one or several goals that they collectively want to achieve (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 698). The goals might be territorial, moral, economic, or otherwise. An example of this might be the Kurdish longing for an independent state. Agents are thus encouraged to act in a way that furthers the possibility of reaching the common goals.
3. *Relational comparisons* have to do with comparisons with other groups, for example defining an identity as the opposite of another one, and show that identities are “fundamentally social and relational (Barnett quoted in Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 698). The authors go on to talk about the different characteristics that relational comparisons can have; these include exclusivity, comparison with other identities, and hostile relations with other identities. They also take up social identity theory, according to which collective behavior is determined by differentiation with other groups rather than the characteristics of those *within* the own group (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 699). Relational comparisons are essentially about “us vs. them”.

4. *Cognitive models*, which the authors summarize as a worldview, determine how group members perceive the world around them, how they interpret the meaning of events, and how they view other groups (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 699). Abdelal et al. specifically mention how cognitive models can affect views of historical events and emphasize the importance of this for the creation of cultural identities. However, cognitive models are not just associated with views of the outside world, but also of the group itself. They may influence political opinion, what is perceived as a threat, and values. Material and territorial claims may also be influenced by cognitive models (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 700).

Contestation, then, is the debate within a group that determines what its identity's content will be (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 700). Abdelal et al. argue that the content of a collective identity is not fixed. Contestation is therefore an important process to study in order to get a grasp of why identities are characterized in a certain way. The authors also acknowledge that outside influence can affect this identity, and point out that political communities in many cases look for recognition of their identity by actors around them (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 701). Contestation can also be affected by party politics, media reports, and debates. The central point that the authors make is that content, divided into the four types described above, is the outcome of a process of contestation, and thus that process can be applied separately to each type of content (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 701). One can therefore study the degree of contestation about each type of content alone, and then combine the results in order to get an overall view of the degree of contestation that exists for a certain collective identity.

3.2.1 Collective trauma

The fourth component in Abdelal et al.'s theory, cognitive models, is a complicated topic and it is therefore necessary to complement it with another theory to make it narrower. Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked by its recent war which plays a large role in the cognitive models that its citizens have. Emma Hutchison writes extensively about how narratives and discourses – that is, the way that events are presented – can cause collective emotions. She gives special attention to traumatic events and claims that the impression one has of such events can last for a long time forward, causing a “collective imprint” that gives the event meaning and ascribes emotions to it (Hutchison, 2016, p. 33). Emotions, according to Hutchison, in many ways affect an individual's identity and how the individual sees him/herself in relation to others: they act as a stabilizing “glue” and can thus form collectivities (Hutchison, 2016, pp. 36, 102). Hutchison coins the term “affective communities” to describe the common emotional ground

that forms the basis for most nation-states. By this she means that the origins of most states can be traced back to some sort of common emotional perception of an event or another sociocultural factor, which gives them legitimacy and also affects power relations (Hutchison, 2016, pp. 104-105; 110). She also mentions that this can apply to “ethnic forms of nationalism”.

For Hutchison, the *representation* of a traumatic event determines how it is interpreted, and is thus a political move. It transforms individual feelings into something collective and creates a perceived reality (Hutchison, 2016, pp. 111, 130). In order for collective meaning-making to take place after a traumatic event, there needs to be a common narrative, which the affected public accepts and treats as their own, and it is central that the narrative invokes some sort of emotion (Hutchison, 2016, pp. 117-118; 139). Hutchison cites research showing that politicians use traumatic events to promote their own view of the situation and appeal to the public’s emotions in order to make that view the dominant one. Political moves can thus become legitimized, and alternative views silenced (Hutchison, 2016, p. 141).

Grief and critical reflection about what has happened is also important, according to Hutchison. If a group does not work through its collective trauma, it is bound to feel victimized and thus have to “assert itself” to compensate (Hutchison, 2016, p. 229). She claims that if a community is founded on collective trauma that it has not worked through, it is more likely to once again be dragged into conflict and the political culture in the country will be marked by it (Hutchison, 2016, pp. 237-238). Successful mourning is thus important for a return to a state of normality after a traumatic event.

4. Methodology

The purpose of the study is to determine how the ethnic divisions within Bosnia and Herzegovina are upheld, using the theories of Horowitz and Abdelal et al. as its basis. For the first part of the analysis, the text in the Dayton Agreement will be explained and clarified. This will be done through a content analysis of a qualitative nature, to show how the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is structured. The given structure will then be analyzed in relation to Horowitz’s theory of ethnic party politics, in order to show its connection with ethnic division. This part of the analysis will be complemented by statistics and other relevant material.

The second part of the analysis will be based on the framework developed by Abdelal et al. They propose several ways of conducting identity research, including surveys and experiments (Abdelal, et al., 2006, pp. 703-704). For this study, however, the most relevant methodological

tool is a *discourse analysis*, investigating how ethnic division and national identity are presented, applied to the material described below. Abdelal et al. describe discourse analyses as qualitative studies in which the researcher uses interpretive skills to determine the meaning of the analyzed material (Abdelal, et al., 2006, p. 702). For the purpose of this study, I will use a broader definition. Like Bergström, Boréus, and Ekström, I consider discourse to be consisting of both linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena (Bergström, et al., 2017, p. 209). The assumption is that discourse is intertwined with social practices, giving an indication of power relations, identity formation, and the way events are interpreted (Bergström, et al., 2017, pp. 210-211). Furthermore, like Hall, I am interested in how discourses are created and maintained (Hall, 2003, p. 115). This means that a discourse analysis consists of two steps: first, analyzing actors' language (/behavior), and second, seeing how that language affects practices (Hall, 2003, pp. 122, 127). Claiming that only an analysis of discourse will be made, however, is not enough. Media reports and political speeches will be examined, but the study will also look at concrete practices that are performed and their effect on collective identity.

The study is specifically aimed at researching ethnic divisions and their impact on the creation of a national collective identity. In order to operationalize this, I will use Abdelal et al.'s definition of collective identities as dependent on content and contestation. Each component of content will be applied, separately, to the case that is Bosnia and Herzegovina. This will allow for the study to be systematic and with clearly defined boundaries. By analyzing the components in relation to a Bosnian national identity, the results will provide a good understanding of the degree of contestation that exists around such an identity, and thereby how the divisions are being upheld. Using all four components also shows the scope of the ethnic division. While they are all interconnected, solving one problem does not solve all others; it is thus necessary to approach each one separately for a full picture. For further clarity, a specific empirical example will be given for each component, which highlights the situation in the country. The specific examples have been chosen to concern topics that are widely reported on in the media or are highly visible in society (partly based on personal observations).

It is important that both parts of the analysis are included in the study. Abdelal et al.'s theory about collective identities is broadly applicable and a powerful tool for operationalization of the subject. Their theory, however, concerns *all* studies of collective identity, which can range from nationality to teenage cliques. However, society in a post-conflict country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina is subject to circumstances that set it apart from other collectivities. Incorporating the Dayton Agreement's text and Horowitz's theory, which specifically concerns

ethnic division, allows us to understand what those circumstances are and puts the Bosnian case in context. Establishing the formal rules of the game makes it easier to understand the way those rules are informally applied. If an answer to the research question is to be obtained, both the formal and informal aspects of the ethnic division need to be addressed.

Validity (actually answering the research question) of the study is high: in the first step, looking at the official document that contains the constitution of the country, the ethnic divisions are explicitly stated in it and cannot be questioned. Therefore, reliability (that the results cannot be contested) is high as well. For the second part, the study has used a well-established theory (of Abdelal et al.) to define collective identities. The authors also provide an effective method for investigating the topic, leading to high validity since the method is specifically aimed at studying collective identities. The theory has allowed for the aim of the study (determining how divisions are upheld) to be reached by providing a systematic approach to the topic of national identity and the case that is Bosnia and Herzegovina, and providing clear definitions of the different components, contributing to high reliability.

4.1 Material

In order to execute the method described above, appropriate material needs to be chosen. For the first part of the analysis, the material to be used is the Dayton Agreement itself, especially Annex IV, which is the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Annex, the political system as well as the voting system are determined. As Horowitz's theory about ethnically divided states is specifically concerned with the formal aspects of the political system, this material will allow for the application of his theory on the Bosnian case. In addition to the Dayton Agreement, complementing statistics and other material relating to the political structure of the country will be used to broaden the analysis.

The second part will take on a more eclectic approach for which the material will vary depending on which component of Abdelal et al.'s theory is being scrutinized. This part of the analysis is less about formally defined rules, and more about how divisions between the ethnic groups are being upheld in practice. Therefore, the material will consist of political speeches, media reports, and earlier research projects about Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additional focus will be given to the last component (cognitive models), because it is defined broadly by Abdelal et al and at the same time plays a central role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are many other researchers that have offered theories concerning cognitive models and I have chosen to use one specifically about societies post-trauma. In the analysis, it will be combined with Abdelal et al. in order for the study to gain depth.

5. Analysis

5.1 The institutionalization of ethnic division

Note: All information in the following section is taken from Annex 4 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995) unless otherwise stated.

The Dayton Agreement's fourth annex is the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and defines its political system. It begins by designating Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country of three constituent ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, along with "others". It then describes the partition of the country into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. All governmental functions which are not regulated in the Dayton Agreement are the responsibilities of the entities, and in addition to being a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Bosnian is also a citizen of an entity. It then describes the legislative branch of the country. The main characteristics of it are:

- The parliament has two chambers: the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives. Legislation needs approval from both chambers.
- The House of Peoples consists of 15 delegates; 5 from each constituent ethnic group. They are elected by their respective members of the House of Representatives. For a decision to become law, 9 delegates need to support it and there needs to be at least three delegates from each ethnic group present.
- The House of Representatives consists of 42 delegates, of which two thirds come from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one third from Republika Srpska (Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, p. 51). A simple majority is needed for a decision to become law.
- Each chamber has one chair and two deputy chairs; they rotate, and each member represents one of the three constituent ethnic groups.
- A majority of delegates from one of the constituent ethnic groups may declare a parliamentary decision to be "destructive of a vital interest". This can be overruled only by a majority of delegates of the House of Peoples *and* a majority of delegates from each constituent ethnic group.

The general characteristic of Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislative branch is that all three ethnic groups need to be represented equally. All decisions generally require approval from two, if not all three, of the constituent ethnic groups and all leadership positions, both on parliamentary level and in for example commissions, need to consist of equal representation from each ethnic group. The same applies to the executive branch of the government:

- The presidency consists of three members, one from each constituent ethnic group, which rotate holding the chair every 8 months.
- The Bosniak and Croat members are voted on by residents of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; they may choose whether they want to vote on who should fill the Bosniak seat or the Croat seat, but not both. The Serb member is voted on by residents of Republika Srpska.
- When forming the government, maximum two thirds of the ministers may come from the Federation. Each minister needs to have a deputy which may not belong to the same constituent ethnic group.

The judicial branch (the Constitutional Court) consists of nine members of which four are from the Federation, two are from Republika Srpska, and three foreigners which are nominated by the President of the European Court of Human Rights (together with the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina). *It should be noted that each respective entity has its own constitution and assemblies, also with guaranteed representation of each ethnic group.* Furthermore, Annex 10 of the Dayton Agreement provides for the creation of the role of High Representative. His/her function is to monitor the implementation of the peace settlement and “facilitate (...) the resolution of any difficulties arising in connection with civilian implementation” (General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1995, Annex 10).

It is clear that the political system revolves around equal representation between the three constituent ethnic groups and constitutes a good example of consociational democracy as advocated by Lijphart and others (Guelke, 2012, p. 123). This setup was meant to guarantee that no ethnic group gets dominated by another. However, it means that in many cases, failure to identify with a certain group may lead to difficulties. In the very beginning of the constitution, it is stated that Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs are constituent peoples, and there is no mention anywhere in the document of a “Bosnian people”. The institutionalization of ethnicity is especially evident in the presidential elections, where each member of the presidency *needs* to represent an ethnic group; it is therefore not possible for candidates to claim to represent the entire population. Without identifying with an ethnic group, there is no position for which they can compete, and candidates do not appeal to the same population of voters (as in figure 6). It should, however, be noted that since the residents of the Federation can choose freely whether to vote for the Bosniak or the Croat member of the presidency, one ethnic group can, in practice, affect the election of the candidate of another ethnic group. This is what critics say happened during the elections in 2006, 2010, and 2018 of Željko Komšić as the Croat member of the

presidency – causing further ethnic tension (Pehar, 2019, pp. 130-131). The same principle applies for any leadership position within the parliament. Furthermore, all legislation must pass through both the lower and upper chambers of parliament. While the House of Representatives can have a relatively ethnically mixed ethnic makeup, the House of Peoples has a guaranteed 1:1 ratio between the three constituent ethnic groups. The fact that they can declare a proposal to be “destructive of a vital interest” of their respective ethnic group with relative ease allows for successful blocking, or at least delay, of legislation that is to be applicable to the country as a whole. According to Horowitz’s theory, the ethnic division that is inscribed in the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina should thus contribute to the furthering of ethnic divisions within the country. In fact, Horowitz has himself given opinions about the electoral law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and says that the approach he advocates is one in which politicians from one ethnic group *need the support of voters from other ethnicities*, which would imply a voting system with multiple votes (Bose, 2002, p. 218).

The fact that divisions still remain within Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that Horowitz’s criticism against consociational democracy is justified. A majority of the population living within the country today experienced the war of the 1990s (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013). Looking at the graphs in section 1.2.2, it cannot be said that the divisions are “moderate” – rather, they are quite strong. Despite this, the political system of the country is, according to Horowitz, one that is only useful in countries where interethnic relations are better. Instead of having contributed to interethnic cooperation, the political system has made it easier for ethnic conflict to arise, which is also argued by Bennett (2016, p. 180).

The ethnic dimension of the political system can also be seen when looking at the results of the latest (October 2018) general elections to the House of Representatives, and comparing them with demographics. The table below presents the election in six cities. They have been chosen in order to include a mix of ethnically homogeneous cities (Banja Luka – Serbs, Široki Brijeg – Croats, and Zenica – Bosniaks) as well as heterogeneous ones (Mostar, Sarajevo centar). For the election results, the votes for the five biggest parties in each constituency have been recorded (provided they have at least 1% of the vote), and the parties have been divided into those that are ethnically defined (by themselves) as Bosniak/Croat/Serb, and those that are neutral.

		% of population	Share of the vote (%)			
			Croat parties	Bosniak parties	Serb parties	Neutral parties
Banja Luka	Croats	2.8	-	-	89.27	5.7
	Bosniaks	4.2				
	Serbs	89.6				
Mostar	Croats	48.4	45.87	23.92	-	17.26
	Bosniaks	44.2				
	Serbs	4.2				
Sarajevo centar	Croats	6	-	30.83	-	46.71
	Bosniaks	75.6				
	Serbs	4				
Široki brijeg	Croats	99.6	98.92	-	-	-
	Bosniaks	0				
	Serbs	0.2				
Zenica	Croats	7.5	-	71.62	-	15.53
	Bosniaks	84				
	Serbs	2.2				
Serb parties (with partners) = SNSD, PDP, SDS, DNS; Bosniak parties = SDA, NB, SBB; Croat parties (with partners) = HDZ BiH, HDZ 1990; neutral parties = SDP BiH, DF, NS						

Figure 7. Results of the population census of 2013 together with the results of the general election of 2018 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018; Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013).

The election results show that there is a domination of ethnically based parties, particularly in regions that are more ethnically homogenous. Horowitz claims that when a political system is set up in a way that favors ethnically based parties, they will naturally form. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has happened: since the political system is based on equal representation between the three constituent ethnic groups, political parties in many cases *de facto* have to identify with one of those groups. Additionally, Bennett claims that politicians once seen as moderate have become more extreme as a result of the election system, further confirming Horowitz's theory about multi-ethnic party politics. He writes that in 2006 "‘moderates' had transformed themselves into 'extremists' by behaving according to the logic of the electoral and political system to get elected" (Bennett, 2016, pp. 178, 183). For example, Milorad Dodik, who is now the Serb member of the presidency, was originally seen as moderate but is now considered highly Serb-nationalistic (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). We can thus see that the political and electoral systems of the country contribute to an institutionalization of ethnic divide.

5.2. The upholding of ethnic division

We have established that the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina lays the ground for a cementing of ethnic division on a formal level. We must now look at how the divisions are being upheld also at a societal level, in order to understand why it is so difficult for Bosnians

to unite around a collective national identity. This will be done with the help of Abdelal et al.'s four components of collective identity content.

5.2.1 Constitutive norms

A constitutive norm, according to Abdelal et al., sets apart the collective group from others. It can be a practice that is explicit or implicit, but what is central is that it leads others to believe that the subject belongs to a certain group. Is this even possible in multicultural states? There are several examples, such as Switzerland, where over 90% of citizens (in 2003) of all language groups feel “close” or “very close” to Switzerland, and are committed to “unity in plurality” (Eugster & Strijbis, 2011, p. 397, 404, 411). Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, with its recent history of war, evidently is a different society in which the plurality is not unifying. One might think that for example celebrating the Independence Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina (on which independence was declared in 1992) is a practice that shows “who is a Bosnian”. In fact, the independence day is only a public holiday in the Federation, while Republika Srpska instead celebrates its Republic Day, even though it has been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). Similarly, while there is a national anthem that is common for the country, a large majority of Croats and Serbs do not value it (University of Oslo, 2011, p. 25). Perhaps this is because there are no lyrics; political leaders from the different constituent ethnic groups have not been able to agree on any (Džankić, 2015, pp. 104-105). Another example is that Republika Srpska's government institutions do not use the national “.ba” Internet domain (rather, they use .net) and have only flags of their entity on the website. In order to find constitutive norms of all Bosnians, one needs to find norms that unite all three constituent ethnic groups, and also sets them apart from the rest of the countries in the region.

Case in point: The use of the Cyrillic alphabet in Republika Srpska

While it is difficult to find constitutive norms that make Bosnians unique, it is easier to find constitutive norms that set apart the people who make up the Bosnian population. Looking at Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated entity, one can see that there are many practices by which one can tell that someone comes from the entity in question. One of the most visible ones is the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, which is considered to be of high importance for Serbs and invokes strong feelings: Mladenov Jovanović writes that “the Cyrillic alphabet is (...) equated with the state of being a Serb” (Mladenov Jovanović, 2018, p. 618). As Serbian is one of the official languages of the country, the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet is also official on its whole



Figure 8. A sign welcoming travelers to Republika Srpska, in Serbian Cyrillic and English - but not in Bosnian/Croatian Latin script (Bubalo, 2013).

territory. In practice, however, it is much more widely used in Republika Srpska. The Constitution of Republika Srpska stated until 2002 that “the Serbian language (...) and the Cyrillic alphabet shall be in official use in the Republic, while the Latin alphabet shall be used as specified by the law” but this was changed to make the scripts (and languages of the constituent peoples) equal, as per decree by the High

Representative (Office of the High Representative, 1996; 2002). The remaining dominance of the script can, however, be observed without looking into formal texts. For example, Cyrillic is always written first on road signs and banknotes. The entity’s main newspaper, the Voice of Srpska, is printed in Cyrillic, as are texts presented on the entity’s TV broadcaster, the Radio Television of Republika Srpska. Schoolbooks used by students who follow the curriculum in Serbian are also mainly in Cyrillic (Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, proMENTE Social Research, 2017, p. 26). In 2018, the Republika Srpska government declared that it had started working on a new law that would officially declare the Cyrillic script to be preferred in the entity, and make it obligatory to use in official correspondence, though this was claimed to be unconstitutional by the other ethnic groups (Kovačević, 2018). In March 2019, the minister of culture of Republika Srpska Natalija Trivić said that “it is our duty and responsibility to protect our identity, to promote Cyrillic with full capacity and present that which makes us recognizable” (News Agency of Republika Srpska, 2019). She further claimed that “Cyrillic and the Serbian language are central to our cultural and national identity and their protection is necessary for our culturological survival”.

The discourse of Serb politicians regarding the usage of the Cyrillic script, together with the *de facto* promotion of the script over the Latin one, shows that it can be considered to be a constitutive norm of Bosnian Serbs according to Abdelal et al. It is presented as a vital component of the Bosnian Serb identity and other ethnic groups perceive it as such. Road signs outside Republika Srpska where Cyrillic names of cities have been crossed out are rather common (see figure 9). We can see how the institutionalization of ethnic divide as discussed in section 5.1 has impeded the creation of constitutive norms on a national level. While failing to incite



Figure 9. Road sign in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with city names in Cyrillic script crossed out (Partensky, 2009).

constitutive norms that could unite all Bosnians – for example by making mention of a “Bosnian people” in the constitution – there are several predispositions that permit for constitutive norms on ethnic level to gain ground. In the case of Republika Srpska and its Cyrillic script, these norms, and thereby divisions with other ethnic groups, are upheld through arrangements which – in most cases – are perfectly legal. This includes providing entity-level state-sponsored media in Cyrillic script, prioritizing Cyrillic in public institutions as well as in public places, as well as in the education system. At the same time, there is no media or educational system that can complement the Serb identity with a national Bosnian one. The indirect imposition of the script may lead to a decrease in the degree of contestation around a Bosnian Serb identity, but at the same time increases the degree of contestation around a Bosnian collective identity as it sets Serbs apart from the other groups and can lead to animosity.

5.2.2 Social purposes

Examples of social purposes, or collective goals, can often be clearly seen within countries. In Sweden, such a purpose may be equality or a good welfare state, and in Germany perhaps it is a striving for an equal economic situation between former east and west. In the Balkan wars of the 1990s, Croats, Bosniaks, and Serbs also had radically different goals that they wanted to achieve (Baker, 2015, p. 60). Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina is in many ways stuck in that 1990s mentality. As Christopher Bennett writes: “Although Bosnian political leaders may (...) agree to declarations on their country’s EU orientation or (...) satisfy the five objectives set for OHR closure, their outlook and aspirations are so fundamentally different that the country will remain mired in zero-sum politics” (Bennett, 2016, p. 241). He further concludes that the political split paralyzes the peace process. The lack of common social purposes becomes evident when looking at factors that normally have no political value, such as the population census that was made in 2013 (and also referred to in section 5.1). Despite almost 20 years having passed since the end of the war, no earlier population census had been made, partly because of disagreements between the political leaders of the ethnic groups. Serbs were positive to it, while Croats were afraid of having become a smaller proportion of the population, and Bosniaks feared that a census would make evident the results of ethnic cleansing during the war (Cooley, 2019, p. 1069). Cooley discusses the Bosniak ethno-nationalist campaign during the census, which discouraged Bosniaks from identifying as “Bosnian” or “Muslim” and rather wanted them to identify with their ethnic group. As discussed in section 5.1, the political system of the country is set up around the ethnic groups; this encourages those groups to gather as large a share of the population as possible to maximize influence. There was a civic campaign, but it

was largely unsuccessful (96.3% identified with a constituent ethnic group) as it lacked support of politicians, had less funding, and organization (Cooley, 2019, p. 1081). The publication of the census' results was also delayed by almost three years due to disputes between the statistical agencies of the entities about the data collection methods (Ahmetašević, 2016). Failure to agree on something as objective as statistics, for fear that it will affect the common goals within the ethnic groups, shows the complicated state that Bosnia and Herzegovina is in. The lack of common social purposes can be seen in many other situations, such as foreign politics where the ethnic groups disagree about who are allies and who are enemies, and whether NATO accession is good or bad (Center for Insights in Survey Research, 2018, pp. 27, 38).

Case in point: Croat effort for more self-rule

Interestingly, Bosnia and Herzegovina's main political parties all want to change the country's political system. However, while one might think that this is a social purpose on which they agree, they have radically different ideas on which changes need to be made. In September 2019, SDA, the biggest Bosniak political party, declared that their main goal is the creation of a "Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" across the country's whole territory (Party of Democratic Action, 2019, p. 5). Milorad Dodik, current Serb member of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and previously President of Republika Srpska, has many times threatened to organize a secession referendum in his entity, for example in a declaration made by his political party, the SNSD, in 2015 (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, 2015, p. 7). Another social purpose which has been widely discussed is the longing of Croats for more self-rule, or even their own entity. A Croat entity, or at least higher autonomy has since the end of the war been argued for by leading Croat politicians. Croats are the smallest constituent ethnic group of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and while the Federation is technically split between them and Bosniaks, they often feel dominated by Bosniaks (Zdeb, 2016, p. 551). During the Bosnian War, Croats declared the "Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia" (later it became the Croatian *Republic* of Herzeg-Bosnia), which had strong ties to Croatia such as using the Croatian currency and having Croatian as its official language (Christia, 2012, p. 182). The legacy of Herzeg-Bosnia as a region of Croat self-determination lives on today. Croat politicians often look back at its existence as a positive experience for their people and flags of the former proto-state can often be seen on its former territory. Throughout Bosnian Croat society, there is a general discourse about taking measures to ensure Croats' equality with the other constituent ethnic groups in the country. The leading Croat politician Dragan Čović (previously the Croat member of the Presidency) said in March 2019 that Croats are equal today

only in the former areas of Herzeg-Bosnia and that current Croat institutions in the country need to be strengthened (Sućec, 2019). Similarly, Božo Ljubić, president of the Supreme Council of the Croatian National Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has stated that Herzeg-Bosnia should be used as a model when finding a solution to the “Bosnian constitutional and institutional crisis” in which Croats are disadvantaged (N1 BiH, 2019). Croatia, the “mother country” of the Bosnian Croats, has also gotten involved in the issue, and its political leaders have made statements promising Croatian support for Bosnian Croats to ensure they have equal rights and power as the other ethnic groups (N1 Zagreb, 2018; Hina, 2019). The repeated election of Željko Komšić as Croat member of the presidency by a Bosniak majority vote, as has also been briefly mentioned earlier, and the subsequent declaration of him as “persona non grata” in certain Croat-majority cantons (Pehar, 2019, pp. 131, 143), also shows that Croats want to increase their autonomy and separate themselves from the Bosniaks. Demands for a change of the election law have been rejected by Bosniak leadership and they have said that demands for a Croat entity can lead to war (Fena, 2018).



Figure 10. A sign put up at the Croatian-Bosnian border reading "If there was freedom and democracy, there would be Herzeg-Bosnia and not the Federation" (N1 BiH, 2017)

What we see is that Croats have a social purpose of increased autonomy that sets them apart from the other ethnic groups in the country, especially Bosniaks with whom they share the Federation. It is difficult to form an identity for the whole country when there is no consensus on how its future should look, and the strong bonds of Croats to Croatia further disrupts the formation of a collective Bosnian identity. As with constitutive norms, the way the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina are organized leads Croats to feel a strong connection with their ethnic group and they consider themselves to have the right to a higher degree of self-determination. More Croat autonomy would increase a sense of belonging among Croats, but would set them apart more from the rest of the Bosnian population.

5.2.3 Relational comparisons

We have already determined that Bosnians disagree on many subjects, ranging from lyrics of the national anthem to the way the country should be run. It is thus not surprising that Bosnians – as one people – also do not collectively place themselves in relation to an “other”. Rather, it is each ethnic group that compares itself with the other ones. Croats and Serbs fear domination

by the Bosniaks, which are in majority, claiming they are under threat of extinction (Hina, 2019). Bosniaks, on the other hand, fear “dictatorship of the minority” (the other ethnic groups). “Victimization” in the light of an “other” as described by for example Wilhelmsen (2017) is thus common, being continually reinforced through a general discourse within each ethnic group. The victimization – and in many cases pointing out unitarization as an existential threat – spurs ethnic sentiment and makes it seem almost necessary. This is especially true for Croats and Serbs, since they comprise a minority of the population (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013). Therefore, they fear a loss of influence in a unitary state and feel a need to distinguish themselves from the Bosniaks. Ethnic self-determination is seen as (and was originally meant to be) a way for ethnic groups to be guaranteed the survival of their cultures, traditions, and language – but when the divisions are motivated by hostility towards the other groups, the right of self-determination is done at the expense of national unity.

Case in point: Segregated schools in the Federation

It may not be all too surprising that people who have lived through a violent war have animosities against their former enemies. The relational comparisons between the ethnic groups, however, are also passed on to children born after the war, both by parents and through the educational system. Stabback argues that Bosnian politicians after the war “saw education as a means of sustaining ideology and promoting politico-cultural identity, and (...) focused far more vigorously on differences than on similarities” (Stabback, 2007, p. 453). As such, the system is heavily politicized, and there is no single ministry responsible for education in the country (OSCE, 2018, p. 20). Furthermore, there are certain “national subjects”, the content of which depend on the student’s ethnic belonging: they include history, mother tongue, and geography, and the concept was introduced by the Office of the High Representative (Božić, 2006, p. 329). While the national curricula were designed to avoid discrimination against children of a certain ethnic group, the decentralization has resulted in a situation where children of different ethnicities in the Federation (which, unlike Republika Srpska, is “shared” between two ethnic groups) go to school in the same building, but are segregated. This has been ruled unconstitutional, but the practice is still ongoing (Džidić, 2014; Toè, 2016; OSCE, 2018). The most famous example of such “two schools under one roof” is the Old Gymnasium in Mostar, which is a city divided between Croats on the west side of the Neretva river and Bosniaks on the east side. After the war, the school was run by Croats, who did not want to share the building with Bosniaks, for fear that “integration would marginalize and eventually diminish the Croat

language and culture” (Björkdahl, 2015, p. 67). The Croats thus wanted to make it clear that



Figure 11. "Two schools under one roof" in Travnik - the yellow part is the Bosniak school, the blue part is the Croat school. Until July 2019 they were physically separated by a fence (Front Slobode, 2019).

they were not the same as Bosniaks. Some even processes of integration as “cultural genocide (...) against the Croat people” (Wimmen in Hromadžić, 2008, p. 552). Today, Bosniaks are welcome in the building and the administration is shared, but each ethnic group follows its own curriculum and they have separate classes. It should be noted that there is also an international section that is mixed; it is also open to international students and classes are in English. This is unique for Mostar. Another example of segregated schooling is Travnik, where two separate schools operate side-by-side in one building; they were also physically separated by a fence until July 2019.

Abdelal et al. say that identities are often defined by what they are *not*. By segregating students based on ethnicity in school, and teaching them different versions of subjects such as history and geography, the divide between Bosniaks and Croats becomes a fact of life even for those that grew up after the end of the war. The prevention of students from interacting with each other, according to the former Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Thomas Hammarberg, reinforces prejudice and intolerance and contribute to ethnic isolation (Hammarberg, 2011, p. 9). As Pašalić Kreso argues, the segregation reinforces a feeling of “them and us” which will affect inter-ethnic relations when the students grow up as well (Pašalić Kreso, 2008, p. 368). Bosniaks start identifying as Bosniak and Croats start identifying as Croat. The logical conclusion to draw from this is that if ethnic divisions are reinforced by contrasting groups with each other from an early age – as is possible according to the political system of the country today – there will be no incentive to create a common identity for all Bosnians. Bosnians will therefore not have a common identity to put in relation to citizens of other countries. Many students themselves have protested the segregation; however, politicians are firmly sticking to the divisions (Delauney, 2019).

5.2.4 Cognitive models

The analysis so far points to one thing: there is an absence of a common worldview – or cognitive model – which makes it impossible for Bosnians to agree on the nature of their

country and how it should be governed. The upholding of divisions that we have so far discussed all have their root in the same factor: the 1992-1995 Bosnian War. It is clear that the ethnic groups' worldviews are different and that this makes it so difficult to agree on issues that can in any way be perceived as disadvantaging an ethnic group. Many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina today lived through the war themselves and several people involved in Bosnian politics now also have connections to war-time politics. The ways that political issues are presented and interpreted are often connected with the legacy of the war and Bosnians have not managed to unite on how the war should be viewed; they have different conceptions of trauma.

Case in point: Different collective traumas

A recent and vivid example of the different cognitive models that the ethnic groups have is the awarding of the Nobel Prize in literature, for the year 2019, to Peter Handke. Being a member of the Republika Srpska Academy of Sciences and Arts and considered to be supporting the Serb cause, his Nobel prize was presented as something positive and well-deserved by Serb media. Associations of Serbs traveled to Stockholm to show their support for him, and he is due to visit Republika Srpska which he claims he has a positive view of (Radio Television of Republika Srpska, 2019; The Srpska Times, 2019). At the same time, protests were organized outside the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo due to Handke's reception of the prize, as non-Serbs consider him to "openly have supported war criminals and war crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Nyhetsbyrå TT, 2019). Furthermore, protests were organized in Stockholm in which for example the association "Mothers of Srebrenica" and the Bosnian and Croatian (as well as several other countries') ambassadors boycotted the award ceremony (Farran-Lee & Löfvenberg, 2019; Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019).

Another painting example of disagreement about the war is reactions to verdicts by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In November 2017, Ratko Mladić, former Bosnian Serb army commander, was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity by the tribunal (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). Bosnian Serb politicians criticized the verdict, saying it shows the tribunal's subjectivity and lack of compassion for Serb victims (Radio Television of Republika Srpska, 2017). At the same time, Bosniak and Croat politicians reacted positively to the verdict (N1 BiH, 2017; Hrvatski Medijski Servis, 2017). Exactly one week later, a former Bosnian Croat general, Slobodan Praljak, had his sentence of, among other things, crimes against humanity upheld by the

tribunal. In defiance of this, he took his life in the courtroom by drinking poison (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2019). The response to this was the opposite: the Croat political leadership hailed Praljak as a hero, and, like the Serbs regarding the Mladić case, said that the verdict shows that the tribunal is political (N1 BiH, 2017).



Figure 12. Former Bosnian Croat general Slobodan Praljak takes his life in the courtroom in the Hague, rejecting the verdict of the ICTY (BBC News, 2017). This photo also became a worldwide “Internet meme”.

The above examples are just the tip of the iceberg of all the examples of a lack of common experience of trauma after the war; each ethnic group sees the events from a different perspective. Analyzing the cognitive models of the three ethnic groups using Hutchison’s theory about affective communities and collective traumas, it becomes evident that there is a lack of collective trauma on the national level, while the collective view on trauma is strong within each ethnic group. As the examples above show, this is clearly seen when looking at emotions about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war is presented by each group as a defensive one, in which an aggression towards the group took place and the group thus had a legitimate need to defend itself (Džidić, 2014). In 2010, 81% of Bosniaks, 70% of Croats, and 54.7% of Serbs “totally agreed” with that their respective ethnic group had fought “only defensive wars” (Kostić, 2012, p. 655). Almost everyone else “somewhat agreed”. Furthermore, a large majority of Bosniaks (96.6%) and a substantial majority of Croats (69.6%) saw the war as the result of an aggression while a large majority of Serbs (87.3%) saw it as a civil war (Kostić, 2012, p. 656). The trend continues when other questions are posed, such as about which military force was an invader and which was a defender. These statistics not only show that there is disagreement about views of the war *between* the groups; they also show that there is strong *agreement within* the groups. Each ethnic group separately is thus an example of an “affective community” as defined by Hutchison, in which bonds are created based on common experiences, and perceptions, of trauma.

The people and politicians of Bosnia and Herzegovina have also, clearly, not *worked through* the trauma that they have been subjected to. Hutchison claims that a failure to do so makes a collectivity more prone to conflict, which is what has happened in this case. The closest thing Bosnia and Herzegovina has to a Truth and Reconciliation Commission like the one in South Africa is the ICTY, which has been shown to be divisive rather than unifying, and has failed to provide a common ground for grief for all Bosnians. While the court has indicted war criminals from all three sides, Croats and Serbs feel unfairly treated and the tribunal has rather solidified

the divisions than weakened them. The Bosnian political culture is marked by a feeling of victimhood from all three sides, and those emotions provide the basis for political behavior that aims to increase the separation between ethnic groups rather than decrease it. Emotions form the basis for the communities within the ethnic group but simultaneously form the basis for inter-group animosity. The political system does not stimulate a change in this behavior, but rather provides conditions for a maintaining of the status quo.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to determine how ethnic division within Bosnia and Herzegovina is upheld, and its consequences for a collective Bosnian identity. The short answer is that ethnic division is upheld through formal and informal arrangements, encouraging identification with ethnic groups and thus making a collective national identity difficult to achieve.

From the first part of the analysis, we can see that the formal aspects of the country's constitution play a large role. Though it was meant to be temporary, the Dayton Agreement lays out the foundations of the Bosnian state, and institutionalizes ethnic division. The way the country is run is based entirely on the three constituent ethnic groups, and ethnically based representation is a factor that constantly comes into play whenever any political decision is to be made. This study has only analyzed the political system on state level, however on entity as well as local level, politics is also set up in a way that discourages attachment to the Bosnian state, especially for Serbs and Croats. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a case of an ethnically divided state that confirms Horowitz's theory: the consociational form of rule that the Dayton Agreement strived to implement has not been successful, and the conditions that politics operate within encourage ethnic division and increase ethno-centric views, rather than discouraging them. Ethnically affiliated parties remain the biggest actors, and within the executive, ethnic affiliation is a precondition in order to run for office at all.

Having looked at the country's political system and the way it encourages ethnic division, the second part of the analysis investigates how those formal rules are applied in practice. An analysis of Bosnian society has been made according to the four components of content that Abdelal et al. have introduced, and to be able to make conclusions, one needs to look at the other factor that affects collective identity, which is *contestation*. The results of the analysis show that there is a "clash of identities" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by which ethnic identities are placed in contrast to a common national identity for all Bosnians. In functioning multiethnic

states, ethnic identities and national identities complement rather than contradict each other. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, through the consequences that the political system has put into practice, ethnic identities are constructed in a way that makes them incompatible with a Bosnian identity in which all ethnic groups are united. This means that the degree of contestation about the content of *ethnic* identities is low, but about the *national* identity it is very high. There is almost no deliberation about a common identity in everyday life: there is no state media outlet, schools teach different versions of the “national subjects”, different holidays are observed, and there is even “entity citizenship” in addition to national citizenship. When situations of deliberation do occur, everything is put in relation to the ethnic identities and claims are often made that calls for unity threaten the standing of the ethnic groups. In fact, it is difficult to even study Bosnians as one collectivity, which in itself is an indicator of the high degree of contestation. A lack of common constitutive norms, social purposes, and cognitive models, as well as the inability to place a Bosnian identity in relation to something else, shows that ethnic division is upheld in all aspects of life.

What does this mean for advocates of a civic identity, such as Bhikhu Parekh and his theory about national identity in multicultural states? Clearly, it is not enough to give equal rights to all citizens on paper. While equality is certainly of extreme importance, it can backfire if the “equality” consists of separating the citizens of the state, focusing solely on their differences and not looking at similarities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has happened due to a clash between ethnic and national identity. The arrangements in place for the ethnic groups thus do undermine the state’s unity. Parekh argues that commitment to a political community is a condition for national identity to form and that it is acceptable to have different views on history and politics as long as the state’s unity is not under threat. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one can see that the differences between the groups are so severe that they, together, barely compromise a political community at all and that the political community that most people identify with is their ethnic group. To complement Bhikhu Parekh’s theory, one must therefore establish that if there are several political communities that citizens can identify with, they must not rule each other out. Bosnia and Herzegovina, is, a country with a specific history, the legacy of which cannot be ignored. If one is to construct a national identity based on Parekh’s theory, local conditions must therefore also be taken into consideration. Regarding the earlier research about identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the results explain why attachment is stronger to ethnic than national identity, and which factors affect that sentiment.

7. Discussion

Horowitz's theory has proven to be valuable and relevant today, despite that it was written in 1985, before the breakup of Yugoslavia had begun. It provides an accurate and generally applicable theory about ethnically divided states and is a good basis for political science-related studies of countries under such conditions. Abdelal et al. have also provided a good framework for studying collective identities that, though broad, can be complemented to fit a wide range of identity studies. Combining the two theories has successfully allowed for an analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina in which both formal and non-formal aspects of ethnic division have been presented and studied. However, the topic of collective identities can be narrowed down even further by analyzing each component of Abdelal et al.'s theory separately, as I did with cognitive models. There are countless theories about relational comparisons, and certainly about social purposes and constitutive norms as well, that could be added to the analysis.

The Bosnian war occurred as recently as the 1990's and it is not surprising that it has had a large impact on the people within the country. As this was a case study, the results are not generalizable across all post-conflict areas, but they give valuable insight about post-conflict nation-building, and show that there is a myriad of factors that need to be taken into consideration. The results can be a useful indication for which approaches to take when drafting future peace agreements after ethnic conflict, aiding with reconciliation. This is not to say that there is nothing left to explore. To gain even more knowledge about the topic, future studies about Bosnia and Herzegovina could take up subjects such as the role of the High Representative in the decision-making process, foreign influence (both from neighboring countries Croatia and Serbia as well as from e.g. Turkey and the Gulf states), EU involvement, and the role of foreign aid. This would help further in determining which factors should be considered after ethnic conflict, and how they can be dealt with. A comparative study with states such as Cyprus or Northern Ireland could also be valuable. Another topic which this study has not touched upon at all is the identities of those who do *not* identify with one of the constituent ethnic groups – such as those coming from mixed marriages, or other minorities like the Roma, or simply refusing ethnic affiliation. The political system essentially excludes them from political power and they may have different views on the Bosnian war. The Croat-Serb relationship within Bosnia and Herzegovina would also be interesting to study further, as well as attitudes among old vs. young Bosnians.

It can be argued that Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a conflict area, but with a lack of violence. As has been shown, there are many unresolved issues beneath the surface. It is therefore

important that the country is not forgotten or ignored, and that it is continued to be studied so that we do not need to witness a return to violent conflict. I return to the statement made by the Council of Europe in 2004: The Dayton Agreement “cannot secure the effective functioning of the state in the long term and should be reformed once national reconciliation is irreversible and confidence is fully restored”. Perhaps it is the agreement itself that lies in the way for that reconciliation.

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