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Explaining the Success of Nationalist Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Summary

One of the key questions of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political community, raised afresh after every multiparty election since 1990, could be stated as follows: "How come a majority of the electorate keeps voting for the political parties that use a markedly nationalist rhetoric?" The experience with "national" parties, or more accurately the ethnopolitical experience of the past two decades, which in its most radical form has proved to be so destructive for Bosnia and Herzegovina's political community, be it through the atrocities and ravages of war or through more or less subtle forms of discriminatory practice, justifies us in rephrasing the question thus: "How come a majority of the electorate keeps choosing the worst political option?" The fact is that from 1990 to 2006, despite their open and often widely expressed contempt for the ethnopolitical elites and, which is particularly interesting, "their own" ethnopolitical elites at that, once in the privacy of the voting booths on election day, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina still diligently put a cross beside the name of "their" national leaders. Why is this? We will be so bold as to claim that if there is a consensus about anything at all in this country, there is a general consensus that we all know there will be absolutely no change at all. And yet, at the very next elections the same voters will hasten to the polling station to give their votes to "their" people. The authors inquire into the possible answer to this question following the model of the Prisoner's Dilemma, or the Dilemma of Ethnopolitical Prisoner.

Keywords: nationalist parties, ethnopolitical elites, Prisoner's Dilemma, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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One of the persistent questions that have puzzled observers of politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the continued electoral support of nationalist parties which both led Bosnia and Herzegovina into war and have presided over more than a decade of political stagnation and economic disaster. Despite their poor performance in government and their failure to bring prosperity for more than a decade since the end of the war, hopes that early and frequent elections would result in the removal of nationalist parties and politicians from positions of power have proven unfounded, as the strongest parties in Bosnian elections continue to be those that espouse to represent only one of the three “constituent peoples” of Bosnia and base their legitimacy on the ability to protect the collective rights of one group in an ongoing political competition with the “other” groups.

By any measure, the performance of nationalist parties in government in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be judged as poor. Unemployment in Bosnia has consistently exceeded 40%. State-wide and sub-state governments have been incredibly slow to pass legislation aimed at improving the overall economic situation and encouraging foreign investment, domestic economic growth and development aid. Political corruption is widespread and largely out in the open. Furthermore, public opinion polls show that voters in Bosnia are abundantly aware of the poor performance, and have expressed their displeasure in every way but at the ballot box, where nationalist parties continue to remain strong.

Attempts by international organizations engaged in Bosnia to promote multi-ethnic parties have been met with only limited and sporadic success, leading to consternation that Bosnian voters still prefer politicians and parties who have proven unable or unwilling to pursue the voters’ best interests as understood by those international organizations. In this paper we present an argument for the mechanism whereby nationalist parties have succeeded in maintaining power despite their poor performance. We argue that Bosnian voters are not somehow incognizant of their own best interests and that instead the details of Bosnia’s electoral system and the broader political context create a dilemma for Bosnian voters that leads them to choose the nationalist status quo despite the fact that they would prefer a different path in Bosnian politics. We present a model of individual vote-decision making within the Bosnian context as well as a survey and electoral evidence in support of this pattern of voting.

Since the first democratic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991, politics has been characterized by ethnopolitics rather than interest-based politics. The result is that political competition for voters has been warped, with the role of voters reduced to a kind of ethnic census. While the specific leaders and parties do change from election to election, the content of the rhetoric employed by victorious politicians has not changed. Active efforts to promote less nationalist parties and to

hinder more nationalist parties have indeed caused the appearance of political competition, but this has not produced truly moderate or multi-ethnic parties or politics. The persistence of ethnopolitics in Bosnia despite the passing of most of the generation of politicians who were in place during and immediately after the war leads us to conclude that the problem lies more directly with the connection between voters and elected politicians. The role of voters in holding politicians accountable is being thwarted by the persistence of ethnopolitics at the expense of interest-based politics. In the following section we present a model that aims to explain the persistent electoral success of ethnopolitical leaders.

Modelling Bosnian Voting

The dilemma facing Bosnian voters can be represented using a simple game in which voters face a simple choice between a candidate from one of the nationalist parties and a non-nationalist candidate. The benefit or payoff that the voter receives from playing the game of voting depends on his or her vote as well as the actions taken by voters from other national groups. Therefore, the individual voter can only control his or her vote, but the value of the outcome depends on the actions of voters from “other” groups.

We seek to strike a balance between presenting a simple model of vote choice and recognizing the complexity of vote choice in any context, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, it is not our intention to treat voters from national groups as having homogenous preferences. It is not the case that all voters within a particular group want the same political outcome. However, we argue that there exists a large group of voters who would prefer a non-nationalist outcome in Bosnia, but who face a dilemma when voting: should they choose their ‘true’ first preference or vote strategically for a second or third option.

Our game-theoretic model assumes two players: player A, representing the voters of one national group, and player BC, who represents the voters from the other two national groups participating in the election. Each player chooses between voting for a nationalist candidate and voting for a non-nationalist candidate. There are four possible outcomes, which are represented in Figure 1 (on the next page).

Given these four possible outcomes, the next step is to define which outcomes are preferred by each player. Each player’s perception of the value of the four outcomes shapes the logic of the interaction between the two players and defines which “type” of game is being played. We posit that there are two competing “logics” of inter-group interaction prevalent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emerging from divergent conceptions of the possibility for cooperation and compatibility of interests between national groups in Bosnia. The first is an ethno-nationalist conception of Bosnia that portrays politics as a zero-sum game in which the best outcome for each

Figure 1. Four Possible Vote Choice Outcomes

	Player BC chooses non-nationalist	Player BC chooses nationalist
Player A chooses non-nationalist	Both players choose non-nationalist	A chooses non-nationalist/ BC chooses nationalist
Player A chooses nationalist	A chooses nationalist / BC chooses non-nationalist	Both players choose nationalist

group can only occur at the expense of other groups. This conception follows the logic of the Prisoner's Dilemma game. The second conception focuses on the similarities of interests between members of each national group and rests on the assumption that the best outcome for each group can be reached through coordination with the other groups in order to achieve the best outcome for each group. This second conception follows the logic of the Assurance game. The ideal choices for voters depend on their conception of the nature of politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the next section, we present rankings of preferences based on each conception.

Ethno-Nationalist Conception (Prisoner's Dilemma Game)

The ethno-nationalist conception of politics is dominated by the idea that the most important political issues are "zero-sum" propositions, meaning that any gain made by one side must come at the expense of others. There is no perception that working together might bring about greater benefits for all, because the political conception of "nation" is reduced to that of the ethnic group and the citizenry, the group of individuals corresponding to the residents of the territory judged to be under the control of the state, and has little meaning other than a blanket term for the three ethnic groups, plus some largely-ignored "national minorities". According to the ethno-nationalist conception, ethnic communities are viewed as essentialist, absolutist, or perennial entities. Society as a whole is understood as a mosaic of "individually homogenous", self-enclosed mono-cultures, timeless atomic particles that exist parallel to one another. In such a conception, the only hope for the establishment of a stable society is the emergence of an equilibrium between the three pre-supposed, self-enclosed, homogeneous groups that protects the interests between the three groups.

This perception prefers collective conceptions of political rights at the expense of individual rights, which is a logical result of the idea that the interests of individuals within a group are homogenous for the most salient political issues. The result of this conception in an electoral context is that that the Bosnian citizen is valu-

able only as a member of his or her ethnic group, and their only political purpose is to vote for the representative from his or her ethnic group, thereby maintaining the strength of that group against the other national groups in the struggle to protect and expand the group's collective rights.

The following is a ranking of the four possible outcomes from the perspective of player A. This ordering as well as the symmetrical ordering for player BC is shown in Figure 2 (on the next page).

Highest Payoff for Player A: Player A votes nationalist while player BC votes non-nationalist. (The lower left cell in Figure 2.) Nationalists continue to rule A, plus A gets the added benefit of feeling that those in the "wrong" acknowledge their guilt by voting against the folks who "started it". BC is weakened because of group fragmentation. Therefore A is able to pursue its goals at the expense of BC. This is the worst outcome for player BC.

Second Highest Payoff for Player A: Player A votes for a non-nationalist party and player BC also votes for a non-nationalist party. Both players benefit from turning away from the violent and unproductive nationalist past, removing the leaders who have governed ineffectively for the past decade, and achieving better relations with donor countries. However, each of the players must forego the greater benefits to be taken at the expense of the other player, even though each player believes that such benefits are owed to them. If we consider the interests of both player A and player BC, then this is the best joint outcome that can result from the ethno-nationalist conception; however, we assume that each player is pursuing his or her own personal interests.

Third Highest Payoff for Player A: Player A votes for a nationalist party and player BC also votes for a nationalist party. The status quo continues. Both sides continue to blame the other for political failures. Neither side is seen to admit responsibility for those failures. Both sides benefit from a sense of "negative justice" resulting from the fact that neither side's situation improves. This outcome is the third best option for both players.

Worst Payoff for Player A. A votes non-nationalist while BC votes nationalist. Player A is seen to admit responsibility by throwing out his leaders while BC sticks with the nationalist status quo. A is weakened because of group fragmentation, while BC is strengthened, and this allows BC to gain benefits at the expense of A. This is the best outcome for BC.

This ordering of preferences is represented in Figure 2. The numbers assigned to each player represent payoffs; thus, 4 is better than 3, and 2 is better than 1. Player A prefers most the bottom left outcome, while player BC prefers most the outcome in the top right cell.

Figure 2. Prisoner's Dilemma Game of Vote Choice
with Payoffs for Each Player

	Player BC chooses non-nationalist	Player BC chooses nationalist
Player A chooses non-nationalist	A=3, BC=3	A=1, BC=4
Player A chooses nationalist	A=4, BC=1	A=2, BC=2

Given these choices, how should player A and player BC vote? These types of games are solved by looking for a dominant strategy. Player A does not know what BC will do, so player A evaluates which choice benefits him or her most for each of the choices that BC can make. If player BC chooses non-nationalist, then player A should choose nationalist, in order to take advantage of BC's weakness and get the best possible outcome (4). If player BC chooses nationalist, player A should play nationalist in order to avoid the worst outcome (1). This means that player A's dominant strategy is to vote nationalist regardless of what BC does. BC faces the same choice and has the same dominant strategy. Therefore we would expect both players to choose nationalist, and thus receive each player's third-best choice.

The Prisoner's Dilemma draws so much interest because it includes an illustration of a situation in which players playing their dominant strategies end up with a less than optimal outcome. The best joint outcome is to cooperate and receive each player's second-best outcome. However, each player faces the temptation to cheat and get the best outcome, and faces the risk that the other player will do the same. The result is that the players play it safe and each receives a poor outcome.

In the ethno-nationalist conception of politics, voters risk the interests of their entire ethnic group when they choose to vote for multi-ethnic parties, because it weakens the overall strength of their group as opposed to the other groups. Voting behavior is driven by fear of finding one's self on the wrong side of a zero-sum game and living under the domination of other national groups.

Civic Conception (Assurance Game)

The alternative to the ethno-national conception of Bosnian politics is the conception which eschews collectivist modes of thought for individualist, liberal ideas. The key point is that the most salient political issues do not lend themselves to ethnic groups as a vehicle for political representation, because the voters' interests are not homogenous within ethnic groups. In fact, voters within a group may very well have interests more similar to some members of another ethnic group with the same position in society, or who reside in the same geographic location, than individuals

within his or her own group. This conception does not deny the importance of ethnic group identity in Bosnian politics, but portrays issues directly linked to ethnicity as a small portion of a larger set of important political issues.

The logic that is the basis for civic or multi-ethnic parties takes a different shape than that of ethno-politics. Instead of the Prisoner's Dilemma, it more closely resembles the Assurance game, which is a coordination game instead of a cooperation game (like the Prisoner's Dilemma). The crucial difference is that both individuals' best outcome can be reached jointly. The payoffs are described in the next section and represented in Figure 3 (on the next page).

Highest Payoff: Player A votes for a non-nationalist party and player BC also votes for a non-nationalist party. Both players benefit from turning away from the violent nationalist past, removing the leaders who have governed ineffectively for the past decade, and achieving better relations with donor countries. According to the civic conception, this is the best outcome for both player A and player BC.

Second Highest Payoff: Player A votes for a nationalist party and player BC also votes for a nationalist party. The status quo continues. Both sides continue to blame the other for political failures. Neither side is seen to admit responsibility for those failures. Both sides benefit from a sense of "negative justice" resulting from the fact that neither side's situation improves.

Third Highest Payoff for Player A: Player A votes nationalist while player BC votes non-nationalist. Nationalists continue to rule A, plus A gets the added benefit of feeling that those in the "wrong" acknowledge their guilt by voting against the folks who "started it". BC is weakened because of group fragmentation.

Worst Payoff for Player A: Player A votes non-nationalist, while BC votes nationalist. Player A is seen to admit responsibility by throwing out his leaders, while BC sticks with the nationalist status quo. A is weakened because of group fragmentation.

BC's Payoffs Are Symmetric to Those of A. The resulting game can be represented as a simple assurance game. Here, we have assigned values to each of the outcomes, with 4 being the best outcome for each player and 1 being the worst outcome for each player.

What should each player do when faced with these choices? From player A's perspective, the best choice when player BC chooses non-nationalist is to also vote non-nationalist. The best choice when player BC votes nationalist is to also vote nationalist. The result is a so-called mixed strategy. Player A's choice depends on what he or she expects player BC to do. There is no dominant strategy (meaning

Figure 3. Assurance Game of Vote Choice
with Payoffs for Each Player

	Player BC chooses non-nationalist	Player BC chooses nationalist
Player A chooses non-nationalist	A=4, BC=4	A=1, BC=2
Player A chooses nationalist	A=2, BC=1	A=3, BC=3

that the same choice is most beneficial no matter what the other player does) as in the Prisoner's Dilemma game.

The best outcome for both players is to choose non-nationalist parties while the other player also chooses non-nationalist parties. The worst outcome for each player is to choose non-nationalist parties while the other side chooses nationalist. Therefore for each player, voting non-nationalist is a very risky choice to make. It can result in the best outcome, but it can also result in the worst outcome. Additionally, the difference between the worst outcome and the best outcome is beyond the players' control, because the outcome depends not only on his or her choice but on the action taken by the other player.

For each player, choosing nationalist is less risky, because it removes the possibility that they will end up with the worst option. If player A chooses nationalist, then the worst that can happen is that he gets the second worst option and the best that can happen is that he gets the second best outcome, which is the current status quo.

So, voters who see voting from the civic perspective in Bosnian elections face a choice between a risky vote for non-nationalist parties and a less risky vote for nationalist parties. Given this choice, the crucial factor becomes each player's belief about what the other player will do. Since they vote at the same time, it is impossible to know for sure for whom the other player will vote, so the voter must act on his or her belief about the likelihood that the other player will choose nationalist or non-nationalist.

In the simplified example in Figure 3, player A values the best option four times more than the worst option (4:1) and twice as much as the second worst option (4:2). Given the value of these outcomes, player A should choose to vote non-nationalist if he or she believes that there is a greater than 50% chance that the other player will also vote non-nationalist. Conversely, it is in player A's best interests to vote nationalist when he or she believes that there is a less than 50% chance of player BC voting non-nationalist. The critical percentage above which a player should choose non-nationalist depends not only on how he or she ranks the four

possible outcomes, but also on the relative value that he or she places on them. So, a player A who valued the best outcome eight times more than the second best outcome (instead of only thirty-three percent as presented above), should choose non-nationalist parties even when he or she believes that the other side will vote non-nationalist less than 50% of the time.

Based on the civic model, we see that it is possible for Bosnian voters to prefer a change from the current context and desire to remove ineffective politicians but still find it in their best interest to vote for incumbent nationalists because of their belief that the other side will vote nationalist. So, persistent success on the part of nationalist political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not necessarily mean that Bosnian voters all subscribe to the ethno-nationalist view of Bosnian politics and certainly not that the ethno-nationalist viewpoint is correct. Instead, models based on the two conceptions of Bosnian politics produce similar or even identical electoral results, depending on the other assumptions we make about the beliefs held by voters.

Two Kinds of Beliefs

When choosing whether to vote for a nationalist or a non-nationalist candidate, voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina must make two assessments of the political sphere. First, they must decide for themselves whether political competition is truly a zero-sum game as the ethnopolitics conception says, or the greatest benefits for their group will result from cooperation. Second, if they believe that the greatest benefits accrue from cooperation, they must then discern whether the “other” groups have also been won over to the civic identity, as the payoffs depend not only on their own actions, but also on the actions of the other players.

So, where do these beliefs about the broader political situation and the actions of other voters come from? The expectations that citizens have about the other players are a result of a broader process of interactions between groups in society during the period between and leading up to elections. The beliefs that voters hold are influenced by what they see in the media and in their everyday lives. The media in Bosnia are still largely fragmented along ethnic lines, in which the ethnopolitical elite of each constituent group retains control over newspapers and television stations.

The model of voting listed above takes political parties as options for voters rather than as strategic actors themselves. However, political parties play a strong role in shaping voters’ beliefs about the state of the political system and the intentions of other actors. This shaping takes place in the following ways: parties go about interacting with one another when in office and they seek to mobilize voters to give their support during election campaigns. If politicians treat the political sphere as an ethnic, zero-sum game, then voters will be more likely to do so as well.

Our theoretical approach shows that nationalist parties benefit from the political climate that they create, insofar as it leads voters to believe that political life in Bosnia is and should be dominated by ethnic division and not based on interest politics. Because of their incumbent status and influence over media outlets, the parties of the ethnopolitical elite have both the incentive and the means to shape the political climate in Bosnia according to their needs.

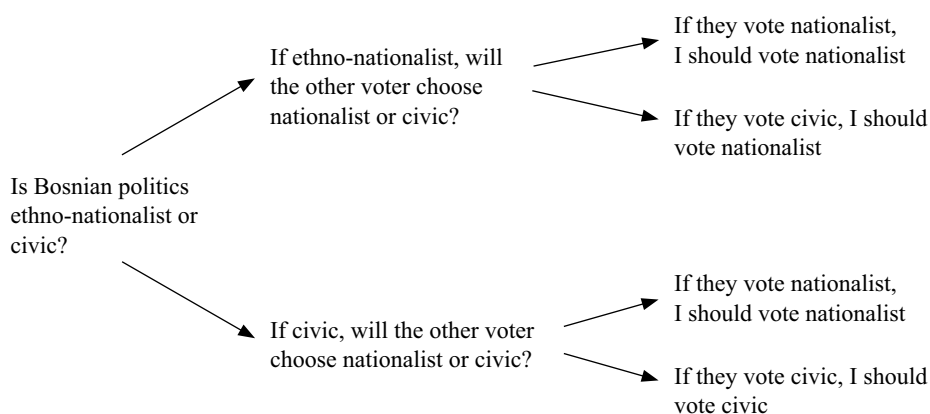
Candidates from nationalist parties are able to shape the voters' beliefs about the electoral system in their characterization of other national groups as well as in their choice of electoral issues. Nationalist politics is characterized by references to events in the past where there was tension and violence between national groups, and by relating those past events to current politics. Nationalist politicians are most successful when they choose issues that appear to be "zero-sum" in nature. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, these zero-sum issues most frequently take the form of calls for fundamental changes to the territorial division of the country or constitutional changes that effect the impact of that territorial division. When a Croat politician calls for a "third entity", a Serb politician calls for the secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina, or even when a Bosniak politician calls for the abolition of the entity system, they are each drawing attention to zero-sum issues which follow the logic of the Prisoner's Dilemma. Essentially, nationalist parties thrive on permanent government crisis, or at least the threat of crisis around election time, as the basis of their legitimacy.

In the scenario described above, it is possible that the political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina is out of line with the preferences of the electorate, yet continues to receive election results that reaffirm their ethnopolitical regime. Despite this disconnection, nationalist parties manage to remain in power through skillfully conducted election campaigns in a broader context of hate speech and exclusivity that spread distrust and emphasize that survival itself is at risk. In doing so, nationalist politicians convince voters of the ethnopolitical conception of politics, thereby ensuring their own political survival. The task facing non-nationalist parties is made much more difficult by the fact that they must not only convince voters that politics is not a zero-sum game, but also that the other groups as well accept the civic conception. A truly daunting task, given the rhetoric of nationalist parties.

If the nationalists' success at convincing voters that politics is essentially ethnic can explain their electoral wins, why do we bother presenting the civic, assurance model at all? Firstly, we do so because there is evidence that such a civic identity did and does exist for many Bosnian voters, and such an identity appears to be the best hope for overthrowing the ethnopolitical elite and bringing about true political competition in Bosnia. Secondly, our explanation of the civic, assurance model demonstrates how difficult it will be for even one of the national groups to

choose non-nationalist politicians. This difficulty emerges from the logic of the assurance model, in which it is in the voters' best interests to choose non-nationalist parties only when they expect that the other groups will also choose non-nationalist. Since, under the nationalist, Prisoner's Dilemma conception of politics, voters have a dominant strategy to vote nationalist, for voter A to vote nationalist, he or she must not only adopt the civic, assurance conception but must believe that voter BC has also adopted the civic conception. This sequence of choices is summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Beliefs and Vote Choice



A corollary to the conclusions reached using the assurance models is that nationalist politicians are most likely to remain in office when voters believe that voters from other groups will also vote nationalist. Therefore, it is in the interest of nationalist politicians to continue to foster an environment of mistrust and animosity. In fact, evidence suggests that nationalist parties who attempt to moderate run the risk of being ousted from office by other parties who take advantage and themselves “out-national” the nationalists.

Empirical Section

The voting model presented in the previous section helps to explain some of the most important electoral outcomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the advent of competitive elections including the first round of competitive elections in 1990, the formation of the Alliance for Change following the elections in 2000, and the pattern of electoral support for non-nationalist parties since the collapse of the Alliance for Change in 2002.

Defining Non-Nationalist Parties

First, it is necessary to define non-nationalist parties in the Bosnian context. In general, there are two types of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina: multi-ethnic parties that have attempted to win votes from more than one national group and non-nationalist parties that have not attempted to gain voters from multiple national groups but whose rhetoric and behavior is more consistent with cooperation and compromise as opposed to division.

Multi-ethnic parties face a difficult task in Bosnia's fragmented electoral system in which the majority of elections take place either in constituencies that have only one national group or are intended to fill political mandates that are explicitly assigned to one national group. SDP-BiH is one of only a few political parties that has succeeded in attracting voters from more than one national group in Bosnia, although the support for SDP outside of Bosniak voters has been very limited.¹ SDP was championed by international organizations working in Bosnia as the party most consistent with the aims of the international community in Bosnia, but overt international support for SDP has receded since its participation in the *Alliance for Change* government.

While SDP is the strongest multi-ethnic party, it is not the only party that attempts to garner support from more than one ethnic group. A variety of smaller parties also have multi-ethnic agendas and membership, but few have significant support. Two parties, *Radom za Boljitak* (Work for Improvement) and LDS (Liberal Democratic Party) have shown improvement over the last two election cycles but do not yet have broad support.

For this paper, we choose to focus on the choice to vote for truly multi-ethnic parties as opposed to mono-ethnic parties with a more moderate rhetoric. This choice is largely practical, as mono-ethnic parties have not been consistent in their commitment to moderation, as evidenced by the political course chosen by SNSD and SBiH.

Bosnia's First Elections

One key part of the collapse of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as well as the subsequent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the emergence of nationalist parties as the dominant electoral force in Bosnian politics. As in the other former Yu-

¹ The most obvious exception is the election of SDP candidate Zeljko Komsic as the Croat member of the BiH Presidency. Komsic's election was made possible largely by a split in the Croat Nationalist Party, HDZ. There is also widespread speculation that large numbers of non-nationalist Bosniak voters supported Komsic because he had a much better chance of winning than the SDP candidate running for the Bosniak seat of presidency. The BiH Constitution allows residents of the Federation entity to vote for either the Bosniak or Croat member of BiH Presidency.

goslav republics, nationalist parties won an overwhelming victory in Bosnia and Herzegovina; however, there is reason to believe that such an outcome was not inevitable.

For each of the other republics, there was a so-called titular nation based on some sort of ethnic identity. Slovenes constitute the overwhelming majority in Slovenia just as Croats form the majority in Croatia. There was little conflict between concepts of ethnic and civic identity, as they were largely coterminous (obviously the large Serb enclaves in Croatia are a significant exception). Given the nature of political competition between republics during the final decade of Yugoslavia, it is hardly surprising that the first competitive elections in Slovenia and Croatia took the form of competition between nationalist parties claiming to represent the interests of the titular nation of each republic and parties that favored maintaining the Yugoslav federation. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have a titular nation with a clear majority of voters. For Bosnia, the election did not have to be cast as a choice between Yugoslavia and nationalism. There was the third option of an independent Bosnia with a civic nation that included Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks as well as other groups in society that did not fit well into the three categories (most obviously individuals resulting from the widespread "mixed" marriages in Bosnia's urban centers).

There is evidence that this third, civic option had some chance of becoming reality. Surveys carried out one year prior to the elections in 1990 showed widespread support for non-nationalist parties. What changed during the intervening year? Our analysis argues for two primary factors: the campaign itself and the outcomes of elections in other republics.

One must remember that the key factors in the vote choice we present concern beliefs about the nature of inter-group political competition and beliefs about the likely voting actions of other groups. Given the exclusion of religion and ethnic identity from public life under communism, it is hardly surprising that the leaders of nationalist parties would be particularly radical. The din of competing nationalist claims cast into doubt the pre-election consensus that interethnic relations in Bosnia were based on consensus and cooperation rather than conflict. This effect would have been magnified with rural voters from mono-ethnic areas who could have no intense personal contact with individuals of other groups, which would have served to counter the notion that inter-group relations constituted a zero-sum conflict over resources and power. The success of nationalist parties in Slovenia and Croatia as well as the violence that followed the two republics' secession attempts only strengthened the notion that nationalist politics was in ascension. Even the voters in Bosnia who held a civic worldview would have felt pressure to vote for nationalist parties because of the expectation that members of the other groups would adopt the nationalist conception of politics.

The Alliance for Change

The most significant victory for non-nationalist parties came in the November 2000 elections, or rather in the coalition-forming process following the elections. Following modest gains for multiethnic and moderate nationalist parties in the elections, international organizations put immense pressure on Bosnian political leaders to form governments at the Federation and State levels that excluded the strongest war-time nationalist parties. The limited gains during the 2000 elections marked the first time that parties other than the war-time parties had enough of a presence in legislatures to make that possible. However, there was not enough support for multi-ethnic parties to form a coalition without including moderate nationalist parties, most significantly SNSD and SBiH which, while more moderate, had strong ties to the war-time nationalist parties.

It is important to note that non-nationalist parties were only successful among Bosniak voters, and made almost no headway among Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. The success of SDP was limited even among Bosniak voters. The Alliance for Change only emerged because of the electoral gains of relatively moderate nationalist parties like SNSD and SBiH and pressure from the international community in Bosnia that encouraged those moderate nationalist parties to form coalitions with multi-ethnic parties rather than with hard-line nationalist parties. The actions of the international community in the period leading up to and after the election influenced the voters' choices by altering the payoffs expected from non-nationalist voting as well as the expectations they held about the actions of the other national groups. The international community restricted the funding sources of hard-line nationalist parties, actively campaigned for more moderate and non-nationalist parties, and promised benefits should their preferred parties be elected. After the election, international officials put pressure on elected politicians to form coalitions of moderate nationalist and non-nationalist parties.

Among Bosniak voters, the actions of the international community succeeded in convincing some voters both of the civic conception and that the potential benefits of non-nationalist voting outweighed the risk that the other two national groups would not also choose non-nationalist parties. In fact, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs did not choose non-nationalist parties, and in the succeeding elections support for SDP among Bosniaks declined, perhaps indicating a drop in confidence on the part of Bosniak voters that the other groups would also choose non-nationalist.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Is there any hope that the cycle of nationalist voting can be broken? The outlook is grim, because with each passing election the problem gets worse instead of better. Given that the problem is driven by the context in which voters perceive themselves to be, continued dominance by nationalist parties only reinforces the belief in the ethno-nationalist conception as well as the belief that the other groups will continue to vote for nationalist parties. As parties in power, the nationalist parties themselves are in the best position to make the changes necessary to break the cycle, but they benefit from the status quo.

Since the outcomes in the games depicted above are dependent on the players' cooperation and coordination with one another, most solutions involve issues of communication and trust between players. In both the Prisoner's Dilemma and Assurance games, players can achieve an outcome working together that is preferable to the outcome when both choose not to cooperate. Unfortunately, communication and trust are difficult enough between individuals and infinitely more problematic between groups of individuals during an election campaign in a country less than 15 years removed from a civil war.

The most direct way to challenge nationalist parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be to make changes in the electoral system, most likely a preferential voting scheme, which would strengthen parties who appeal to voters from multiple national groups while punishing nationalist parties that could only appeal to their group of voters. Such a scheme would strengthen both multi-national parties and more moderate nationalist parties. The current electoral system is openly hostile to multi-ethnic parties, as a large number of positions up for election, either by design or by the ethnic composition of the electoral constituency, involve candidates and voters from only one ethnic group. Preferential voting gives voters both a say in "their" group's election but also in the election of other groups' candidates. Such a system makes nationalist rhetoric less politically desirable and expands the constituency to which politicians must appeal, while also de-emphasizing the collectivist aspects of the constitution.

This paper offers some hope that the nationalism that has dominated Bosnian politics since the first free elections does not circumscribe Bosnia's political future. While the power of ethno-nationalism in Bosnia's recent past and present cannot be denied, the electoral success of nationalist parties does not necessarily mean that there is no possibility for a resurgence of non-nationalist, multi-ethnic politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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OBJAŠNJENJE USPJEHA NACIONALISTIČKIH STRANAKA
U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

Sažetak

Jedno od ključnih pitanja u pogledu bosanskohercegovačke političke zajednice koje se postavlja nakon svakih višestranačkih izbora od 1990. moglo bi se ovako formulirati: “Kako to da većina izbornog tijela uvijek glasa za političke stranke koje se služe izrazito nacionalističkom retorikom?” Oboružani dvadesetogodišnjim iskustvom s “nacionalnim” strankama ili, točnije, etnopolitičkim iskustvom koje se, u svome najradikalnijem obliku, pokazalo vrlo destruktivnim za političku zajednicu Bosne i Hercegovine – bilo ratnim strahotama i pustošenjem bilo više ili manje suptilnim oblicima diskriminacije – možemo ga i preformulirati: “Kako to da većina izbornog tijela uvijek izabire najgoru političku opciju?” Činjenica je da građani Bosne i Hercegovine od 1990. do 2006, čim se na dan izbora nađu na glasačkome mjestu, unatoč otvorenu i često jasno izraženu preziru prema etnopolitičkim elitama (osobito je zanimljivo da u to uključuju i “vlastite”) ipak predano stavljaju križić uz ime “svojih” nacionalnih lidera. Koji je razlog tome? Usudit ćemo se ustvrditi da u ovoj zemlji, ako uopće i o čemu postoji konsenzus, ponajprije postoji konsenzus o tome da svi znamo kako se baš ništa neće promijeniti. A ipak, već na idućim izborima isti ti glasači požurit će da daju glas “svome” narodu. Autori istražuju moguće odgovore na to pitanje prema modelu Zarobljenikove dileme ili Dileme etnopolitičkoga zarobljenika.

Keywords: nacionalističke stranke, etnopolitičke elite, Zarobljenikova dilema, Bosna i Hercegovina

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