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Joan Davison

Rollins College, jdavison@rollins.edu

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Joan Davison

What Matters to Social Democratic Party Voters? Liberal and Economic Interests trump Ethnoreligious Identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹

Abstract

Bosnia and Herzegovina possesses both a history marked by ethnic differences and a tradition of tolerance and coexistence among religious groups. The millet system of Ottoman times depended upon the authority of confessional communities. With the rise of nationalism in the 1800's, religious identity and organization became complicated by ethnicity. Later, the authoritarianism of Tito enabled the state to accommodate this multi-national, multi-religious character, uniting people as socialist Yugoslavs. Thus, the collapse of the socialist, Yugoslavian ideals and structures created new and sometimes polarizing choices for the population. Previously authoritarian government mediated religious and ethnic relations, but now coexistence depended upon elected leaders and a democratic polity.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has struggled (indeed fought) through the first two decades of its independence. This research contends, however, that tolerance and cosmopolitanism can reemerge. The paper focuses upon the perception of voters of the Social Democratic Party as an example of a secular, new left party, and an alternative to parties which operate based upon ethnoreligious identities. The research uses the European Value Study to examine popular views of political parties, and assess the issues and interests of their members, concluding that changing demographics might dictate a further move from ethnoreligious affiliations and toward secular parties.

Keywords: ethnoreligious, secular, new left, cosmopolitanism, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The author is Professor of Political Science at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, USA, where she is a member of the Cornell Distinguished Faculty Fellowship. A grant from the Cornell Fellowship funded this research. (e-mail: jdavison@rollins.edu)

¹ Šta je važno biračima Socijaldemokratske partije u Bosni i Hercegovini? Liberalno opredjeljenje i ekonomski interesi ispred etnoreligijskog identiteta

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) possesses a deep tradition of tolerance and coexistence among religious groups, but also a history marked by ethnic differences. The millet system of Ottoman times fostered the authority of religious leaders. With the rise of nationalism in the 1800's, ethnic identity both complicated and reinforced religious affiliation and organization. World War II witnessed horrific inter-ethnic violence in the region. Later, the authoritarianism of Tito enabled the state to accommodate the multi-national, multi-religious character, fundamentally uniting people as socialists within the Yugoslavian Federation. Thus, the collapse of the socialist, federal, Yugoslav system offered new, and sometimes polarizing, choices to the population. As notions of freedom and self-determination swept from Eastern Europe into Bosnia and Herzegovina, alternative organizing concepts of liberalism and nationalism confronted the people. In the past, imperial and authoritarian governments mediated religious and ethnic relations, but now tolerance and coexistence depended upon democratic leaders and polities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has struggled (and even fought) through the first two decades of its independence. Many reasons exist for pessimism regarding B&H's future. The current power sharing system fails to promote cooperation or good governance so that tensions persist among ethno-religious groups and between elites and citizens. This paper contends, however, that B&H's historic tolerance and cosmopolitanism can reemerge and bolster democratization and good governance. First, the people accept liberal democracy as a precondition to European Union (EU) accession and the economic benefits of membership. Second, group differentiated rights, a practice consistent both with the traditional millet system and B&H's current system of power sharing, offers a method to adapt liberal democracy to multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies. Finally, this research suggests the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP) serves as a current example of a political party which attracts some voters because they associate with its secular and liberal character.

Granted, elitism and factional differences sometimes characterize the SDP's leadership. Certainly, Željko Komšić election and re-election to the Croatian seat of the tri-partite presidency is controversial. Komšić rejects ethno-religious classification and claims to identify as a Bosnian, that is, a citizen of B&H without reference to religion or ethnicity. Yet, some voters and leaders challenge Komšić's credibility, disputing his legitimate representation of the Croatian people (Sarajlić, 2012). In fact, they assert his election highlights an inequity and deficiency in the current system to the extent that the Croats, as a constituent people, lack a representative in the presidency due to Bosniac cross-over voting for Komšić (Parish 2011; Sahadžić 2009). This concern seems warranted given that only 12% of Croats feel represented by a party, compared to 42% of Serbs and 31% of Bosniacs (*Gallup Balkan Monitor*, 2012).

Other analysts conclude, however, that many of Komšić's supporters are non-nationalists; this view contends his electoral support relates to his ability to appeal to the disenfranchised electorate, form a multi-ethnic, supra-national coalition, and mobilize independent voters (Alic, 2010; *The Economist*, 2010; *National Democratic Institute*, 2010). They emphasize Komšić's ability to win 60% of the vote, far ahead of the second place challenger who finished with 19% of the vote. They also point to the strong showing of the SDP in parliamentary elections.

This analysis employs results from the *European Values Study* to compare SDP supporters across a number of variables with supporters of other parties. The fundamental question is whether the SDP attracts a distinctive type of voter, perhaps a supra-nationalist or multicultural voter, rather than an ethno-religious voter. Note the purpose is not to argue whether Komšić is a legitimate presidential representative of the Croatian constituency, or that the SDP leadership is more responsive or accountable than other parties.

Rather, this paper focuses upon the Social Democratic Party as a potential practical alternative to ethno-religious parties, and an alternative which some citizens seek. The research examines the character and interests of the party's members, and concludes the SDP offers appealing platforms to voters often neglected in identity politics. In fact voters from various cultural backgrounds set aside religious considerations for the political, economic, and post-materialist policies of the SDP. Additionally, analysis suggests that demographics in B&H indicate a possible future movement away from ethno-religious affiliations with generational change. To the extent such developments lead to the de-emphasis of political religions and romantic nationalisms, an opening might evolve for B&H to embrace the cooperation necessary for political and economic progress.

1. Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics

The fact the origins, character, and durability of religious and ethnic identity in B&H is contested complicates discussion of the nature of politics and parties. Authors such as Greble (2011) and Donia and Fine (1994) carefully describe the organizational authority of early religious communities of the region, noting the general weakness of ethnic identities until the surge of nationalism beginning in the late 1800s and peaking during WWII. Judt (2005) contends Yugoslavia returned to its traditional cosmopolitanism in the post-war era. Andjelic (2003) argues that in 1990, B&H still lacked the type of ethnic movements associated with the modern theories of nationalism. Donia and Fine estimate 30% - 40% of the marriages in 1990 in B&H were between individuals of different religious groups (1994: 9). Henkel (2009) shows 29% of the population considered itself atheist or nonreligious in 1987. Thus, while B&H possessed a multi-ethnic, multi-religious character, the political salience of these qualities was limited.

Moreover, beginning within the environment of self-managed socialism of the late 1970's, various cross-cultural groups developed which emphasized shared interests of citizens in industry, health care, and tourism (Bartlett, 1985; Uvalić, 1988). Later in the 1980's, broad based environmental, economic, religious, and academic associations organized to voice their particular concerns (Kabala, 1988; Ramet, 1992). Finally in the 1990's, social mass uprisings and movements followed the trend throughout the dissolving Soviet bloc, and sought democratization. Civic municipal movements invigorated a bottom-up consciousness consistent with democratic transition based upon a consensus against dictatorship rooted in 'insight' and imagination (Wydra, 2007). Their outreach built on cosmopolitan civic traditions. The Committee for the Protection of Rights and Liberties of Individuals and Groups and the Green Movement included citizens irrespective of ethnic identity (Andjelic, 2003). The movements attracted a wide range of B&H individuals: Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish and others.

Yet, xenophobic, exclusive nationalisms also emerged in response to the system's collapse and reacted against these movements (Crnobrnja, 1996). According to former President of Yugoslavia Dizdarevic some communist leaders adopted ethnoreligious identities to counter democratization (Tesan, 2007). Authoritarian elites then manipulated ethnic and religious histories and tensions to protect their status (Belloni and Deane, 2005; Crocker, 2007; Fischer, 2006; Enyedi, 2005). Consequently, nationalist parties contested the 1990 elections, and 75% of the vote supported their candidates. In late 1991 the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) declared the Serbian Republic of B&H to be followed by the Croatian Democratic Union's (HDZ) declaration of a separate Croatian Community. Finally, the war emphasized the critical nature of religious and ethnic identities.

Debate continues about the specific origin and character of the war in B&H. Puhovski identifies this phenomenon of the 'war after the war... the battle for the interpretation of the past-as a verbal extension of the war-the key moment for postwar self-understanding of communities...' (*Novi list*, 29 May 2004).² Stokes, Lampe, Rusinow and Mostow (1996) extensively review the debate. Woodward (1995) highlights the complex nature of the dissolution including the influence of economic and international forces. Torsten (2008) examines the changing nature of the conflict as it proceeded. Other authors focus upon whether the conflict fits the category of war of secession or independence (Krech, 1997; Malcolm, 1996; Sudetic, 1998). Hoare identifies secession as a consequence of dissolution but also describes '...Serbia's assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina [as] the next stage in Belgrade's plan of expansionism' (2010: 123). Indeed, other analyses focus on an interstate war, emphasizing the aggression of one party (Dizdarevic, 2006; Lampe, 2000; Crnobrnja, 1996). Bennett (1995) specifically highlights

² www.ex-upress.com/novi/novolist29.html.

the behavior of Milosevic. By contrast, other accounts maintain a civil war between ethnic groups occurred (Bose 2002, 2007; Burg and Shoup, 1999).

Facts associated with the B&H conflict establish that the war followed independence wars in Slovenia and Croatia. The Yugoslav Army transferred quantities of arms and equipment to B&H from Slovenia and Croatia prior to the outbreak of fighting. War began in April 1992, lasted to autumn of 1995, and became characterized as the most catastrophic and painful conflict in Europe since the Second World War (Bieber, 2010; Crnobrnja, 1996). As Puhovski (2004) concludes, the conflict possibly included elements and periods of aggression and civil war. Furthermore, the conflict continued as elites tried to benefit from their political offices, and all sides maneuvered to defend their truths.

B&H now struggles with questions of identity and sovereignty, and current efforts from below to reinvigorate cosmopolitanism (Kaldor, 2006). Many authors assert the war destroyed the historic strength of civic identities (Belloni, 2004; Crocker, 2007; Mujkić and Husley, 2010; Sahadžić 2009). Of contending significance is that more than half the population desires to move beyond the memories of the war, and the overwhelming percentage of the population expresses a willingness to embrace an identity as a citizen of B&H (UNDP, 2009).

Beyond the ideational impediments of ethnic and religious identity, however, stand the structural impediments of the current constitution. As a consociational system the structure tends to privilege elected elites, emphasize the absence of shared loyalties, and segment the population into its relevant identities (Horowitz, 1993; Snyder, 2000). Tsebelis' work (1990) with nested games and veto players explains consociational systems as impediments to institutional reform because they reward elites who engage in conflictual behavior. Elites avoid compromise because they believe their counterparts under pressure will concede, thus giving the intransigent elite the best outcome (Ibid). This explanation seems consistent with Fischer's notion of B&H politicians as conflict entrepreneurs who perpetuate the system because of the benefits associated with patronage (2006). Indeed, Norris (2008) identifies B&H as a case in which power-sharing arrangements intensify ethnic extremism and threaten democratization. The consociational structure with its tri-partite presidency, ethnic vetoes, and powerful entity governments institutionalizes ethnicity and often impedes state-building, decision-making, economic rationality, and reconciliation (Tsebelis, 1995; Bose, 2002; Norris, 2008). Elected elites lack incentives to change the structure which gives them political power. In fact, some leaders tend to stir and manipulate ethnic feelings in order to maintain their constituencies (Belloni and Deane, 2005; Crocker, 2007; Norris, 2008; Tsebelis, 1990). Even voters who prefer a more cooperative and effective government, might lack sufficient trust in the system to cast a ballot for non-nationalist candidates (Mujkić and Hulseley, 2010).

Thus the Dayton Peace Accords reinforce the construction of ethnic identities and the validity of political parties based upon separate, unique Croatian, Serbian and Bosniac identities. The currently dominant Serbian party, Milorad Dodik's Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) consistently pursues a secessionist strategy. The disillusionment of the major Croatian party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), regarding Komšić's presidential election led it to join the SNSD in demanding a new constitutional arrangement with heightened ethnic autonomy. Indeed, the HDZ and the SNSD are ethno-nationalist parties which favor decentralization, cultural autonomy, and potential secession. The HDZ formally affiliates as a Christian Democratic party, and holds religious and ethnic positions consistent with the right wing. The SNSD avowedly shares with the SDP a commitment to socialist democracy, however, currently the SNSD's membership in the Socialist International is suspended due to the party's extreme nationalist tendencies.

The Bosniac Party of Democratic Action (SDA) prefers to focus on the economic issues of its constituents, presenting a detailed economic platform with goals for GDP, employment, balance of trade and budgets (Avdić and Međedović, 2006). In this sense the SDA potentially shares an objective of the SDP, that is, to address salient economic challenges, yet while the SDP explicitly appeals for a multi-ethnic approach, the SDA tends to accept but deemphasize ethnic considerations. The SDA highlights its economic policy, but maintains its Bosniac ethnic identity coupled with a claim of openness to cultural autonomy.

It is important to note that, despite their electoral success, these major nationalist parties and the governments they form do not serve as reservoirs of social capital or trust. Rather, people perceive parties as invested in corruption and patron-client systems (Divjak and Pugh, 2008: 375-378). *Transparency International's* 2010/11 Global Corruption Barometer shows that the public rates parties as the most corrupt institutions in the country (with a 4.1/5 where 5 is extremely corrupt). Furthermore, 59% of the public views corruption as worsening, and 70% believe government efforts to counter corruption are ineffective. Accordingly, many analysts contend that political party leaders win re-election, not based upon effective policies, but through the manipulation of nationalist politics (Belloni and Deane, 2005; Crocker, 2007; Divjak and Pugh, 2008). Mujkić and Hulse (2010) assert that rational voters continue to re-elect failed nationalist politicians, despite their acknowledged disappointment in and distrust of these officials, because voters are trapped in a classic prisoners' dilemma. The majority of the electorate from all ethnic backgrounds believes the current extreme nationalism of leaders does not serve people well (*National Democratic Institute*, 2010; *UNDP*, 2009). Mujkić and Hulse (ibid) explain if all citizens voted for ethnic moderates or non-nationalists then B&H's political stalemate could dissolve. The dilemma for the electorate

is that if one ethnic group elects a moderate, while another group elects an extremist, then the moderate voters become worse off because the extremists will not compromise (Ibid: 144-145). The typical rational voter caught in the prisoner's dilemma casts a vote for a nationalist politician.

While such analyses provide a convincing rationale for aspects of the current situation, the research also recognizes that a non-nationalist outcome is preferred. Mujkić and Hulseley suggest that in an atmosphere of trust, rational voters might elect moderates (Ibid: 151-153). A variety of opinion polls which highlights public disdain for government and political parties supports this view. These polls reveal the popular preference is for the leadership to shift its focus from ethnic politics to economic issues (*National Democratic Institute*, 2010; *UNDP*, 2009).

Additionally, research on politics and religion highlights that secular voters typically prefer secular parties to religious parties, and perceive religious parties (as compared to other secular parties) as their primary opposition (Brezna et al., 2011). Research also suggests that the decision to vote for a religious party often is prompted by perceived corruption among secular elites. Yet, in the case of B&H, in which the leaders of parties identified with religion perpetuate corruption, it seems voters might turn to their secular competition. Indeed, Kurzman and Naqui's 2010 comparative analysis shows that most Muslim voters participating in free, democratic elections are not attracted to religious parties. Therefore, electoral space for the SDP as a non-religious party to operate seems to exist. At least some of the public appears sufficiently dismayed with the current intransigent character of politics that they might look beyond identity politics and direct their political involvement based upon practical concerns.

2. The Social Democratic Party: New Left

The Social Democrats explicitly oppose the demands of the nationalist parties and continue to press for a multi-ethnic B&H with a strong central state. The SDP primarily operates in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) where Serbs only constitute approximately 2% of the population, but does hold some seats in the Republika Srpska (RS) where Bosniacs, Croats and Others probably also constitute less than 2% of the population. The SDP's platform and policies emphasize a multi-ethnic B&H. The party website calls for solidarity and targets workers and 'all those in need'. The organization strives to attract followers with appeals to counter corruption, and provide accountability and transparency. A critical aspect of its character is its strong identification with Europe – it believes membership in Europe will facilitate economic and political democracy. The SDP also distinguishes itself from its competitors because it favors constitutional changes to guarantee the rights of citizens irrespective of ethnicity. While parties sometimes deviate from avowed platforms, the

SDP's emphasis on democracy, development and inclusiveness provides citizens with an alternative to identity politics.

After disappointing election results in 2002, the SDP refused to compromise with nationalist parties and instead sought to reemphasize its focus on the economy, education, and social reconstruction based upon B&H's multi-ethnic tolerance. The SDP now differentiates itself from the Bosniac SDA on two substantive grounds. First, the SDP embraces strength from diversity and argues for tolerance, while the SDA asserts a desire to set aside the national question by providing cultural autonomy to all groups. Second, the SDP favors centralization of state activity, while the SDA prefers decentralization. In this regard, the SDP distinguishes itself from ethnoreligious parties because it favors ending the ethnic preferences which exist within the current constitutional system.

The SDP is a member of the Socialist International and holds associate membership with the EU's European Socialists. Indeed, the SDP presents a clear economic platform which seems consistent with its social democratic affiliations. The SDP links its identity to its origin in the fight against fascism and on behalf of workers in the early 1900s. Typical of contemporary European social democrats, the SDP accepts the advantages of capitalism and right to private property, but balances these principles with a commitment to solidarity and an extended welfare state. The party emphasizes the need for government policies which provide all citizens with rights to education, health care and employment. It currently highlights its commitment to protect the interests of all progressive groups as B&H moves out of recession and toward EU accession. It specifically promotes social assistance for individuals in need, particularly citizens disabled and displaced in the war.

Finally, the SDP seems to seek to enlarge its appeal through spanning its traditional emphasis on rights to education and health care, to a contemporary leftist appeal to inclusion of all groups. Thus, the SDP integrates elements of historic social democracy, in its planks for economic justice, with post-modern claims for individual liberty and quality of life issues. The SDP advocates the equality of all individuals and stands as an explicitly anti-nationalist party.

Indeed, analysis of the 2008 *European Values Study* results for Bosnia and Herzegovina indicates that the SDP is the only major party with a multi-ethnic base. Examination of the variables on party preference by religions suggests an entirely Muslim following supports the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SB&H) and the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). Likewise, the Croatian Democratic Union and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats are exclusively Roman Catholic and Orthodox, respectively. By contrast, the supporters (that is the population which claims it would vote for the party) of the SDP are 67% Muslim, 27% Catholic, and 5% Orthodox. Given that the SDP primarily operates in the Federation and not the

Republika Srpska, the ethnic diversity of support mirrors well the diversity of the population. Although no official post-war census has occurred, the UNHCR's 1996 census estimates an approximate breakdown of 46% Bosniac, 37% Serb, and 15% Croat. Within the FB&H estimates are 73% Bosniac, 22% Croat, 2% Serb and 2% other. When individuals in the *European Values Study* are asked which party appeals to you most, 100% of HDZ supporters are Croats, 100% of SNSD supports are Orthodox, and 100% of SDA supporters are Muslim. By contrast, 70% of the SDP base is Muslim, 18% is Catholic and 12% is Orthodox. Thus, the SDP attracts wide support relative to (and consistent with) the demographics of the FB&H.

With regard to other demographic variables, the SDP appears in some instances to resemble the HDZ and SNSD, but clearly is markedly different than the SDA; that is, the SDP and SDA seem to appeal to different Muslim constituencies. Most notable is the breakdown of age of supporters for the SDP and SDA. Older Muslims seem far more inclined to support the SDA. Only 13% of SDP voters are older than 46, while 41% of SDA voters are older than 46. Conversely, only 32% of SDA supporters are under the age of 30, while 63% of SDP voters are under the age of 30 (*Table 1*). Possibly older voters feel and remember the ethnic cleansing during the war, while young voters 18-30 are less inclined to be influenced by a war which began 20 years ago. If an accurate interpretation, then SDP supporters possibly vote in a rational, long term prospective time frame different than the SDA's retrospective time frame. This also might suggest that as generational change proceeds, parties like the SDP might draw increasing strength.

Table 1. Age Distribution of Supporters (Percentage)

	SDP	SDA	HDZ	SNSD
18-30	63.33	31.82	66.67	57.14
31-46	23.33	27.77	22.22	25.71
47-62	6.67	36.36	5.56	17.14
> 62	6.67	4.55	5.56	0.00

Source: European Values Study, B&H

Additionally, and partially as an effect of the age distribution of supporters, the SDP's voters tend to be better educated than the SDA's electorate, and more comparable to the voters of the HDZ and SNSD. Eighty percent of SDP voters have high school or university educations, while only 56% of SDA's voters possess such a background (*Table 2*). The SDP's positioning as a party of tolerance, focused upon a future in Europe, might attract better educated, younger voters who perceive their economic status, civil liberties and political freedom best secured through the EU.

Table 2. Educational Level of Supporters (Percentage)

	SDP	SDA	HDZ	SNSD
Primary (or none)	20.00	43.50	18.80	19.88
Secondary	62.00	55.29	62.32	68.29
University	18.00	1.18	18.84	12.80

Source: *Ibid*

Analysis of other variables by party within the European Values Study suggests the SDP tends to attract a base with a higher annual income than the SDA or SNSD attracts. The HDZ's supporters have the highest income, but this probably relates to a generally more developed economy in Herzegovina from which it draws its electorate. Most noticeable is that 69% of SDA supporters have annual incomes below 3,600 euros, while only 32% of SDP supporters possess incomes at this low level. Forty-eight percent of SDP voters are employed, while only 30% of SDA voters hold jobs. Moreover, the appeal of the SDP starkly contrasts with the SDA in higher income categories where the SDA draws negligible support. The SDP splits the base of the wealthiest segment of the population, earners above 18,000 euros annually, with the HDZ. These statistics suggest the broad nature of the SDP's socio-economic attraction. The party's appeals for solidarity and commitment to individuals with great need coupled with its focus on the economy and membership in Europe enable it to attract supporters from across the socio-economic spectrum. Additionally, the SDP's ability to gain votes from Muslims and Catholics who wish to move beyond ethnic politics probably explains the party's appeal to individuals with a broader range of income given that Catholics tend to be the highest earning and Muslims the lowest earning segments of the population.

3. A Deeper Examination of the SDP's Appeal

Given that the SDP appeals to diverse economic and ethnic groups in B&H, the challenge then is to identify why the party attracts such support. The first avenue of explanation is that SDP supporters are more tolerant of diversity and/or less religious, and therefore more likely to favor a secular party than are supporters of other B&H parties. Indeed, as a proxy measure, responses to questions on the *European Values Study* show 39% of SDP voters claim inter-religious marriage is not a problem. This contrasts with 14% of SDA voters, 16% of HDZ voters and 30% of SNSD voters. Additionally, SDP voters are far less likely than other voters to believe religion should influence politicians. Approximately 21% of the SDP's electorate concurs, while 51% disagrees. In marked contrast, 56% of

the SDA's electorate believes religion should matter for politicians, and only 19% disagrees. Thus, it seems more secular Muslims would be more inclined to support the SDP than the SDA. Consistent with this is the fact that 54% of SDA supporters report regularly attending religious services while only 13% of SDP supporters regularly attend. Finally, 55% of HDZ supporters view religious beliefs as important for politicians while 28% disagree, and 75% report regular service attendance. Again, it might be the case that more tolerant and/or secular Croats tend to consider supporting the SDP (Table 3). Indeed, SDP voters comprise 57% of all voters who disagree with the notion that religion should influence politicians. The comparable percentage for the SDA is 12%, and for the HDZ is 20%. Likewise, SDP's electorate constitutes only 12% of the total electorate that agrees that politicians should permit religion and beliefs to influence decision-making.

Table 3. Religiosity and Parties' Electorate (Percentage)

Politicians rely upon God	SDP	SDA	HDZ	SNSD
Agree Strongly	3.06	10.84	10.14	18.13
Agree	18.37	45.78	43.48	23.75
Neither	27.55	24.10	17.39	27.50
Disagree	32.65	18.07	21.74	22.50
Disagree Strongly	18.37	1.20	7.25	8.13

Source: *Ibid*

Percentages for the SDA, HDZ and SNSD are 28%, 22%, and 32% respectively, with the remainder supporting smaller B&H parties. These results indicate that SDP supporters perhaps are attracted to the party because of its explicitly non-denominational and secular character.

In this regard, it is important to note that Muslims in B&H seem to be less precise about their Muslim identity than Muslims in other states. Perhaps this suggests a relative de-emphasis of the identity and/or lower level of religiosity which might dampen the compulsion to vote for a party identified with religion, particularly the further in time B&H moves from the defining events of 1992-1995. A majority of Muslims in B&H identify as 'just Muslim' with the remainder identifying as Sunni. This is comparable to the response in Kosova and Albania, but differentiates the population from Muslims in other countries, particularly in the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Pew, 2012: 128). Likewise only 30% of B&H Muslims attend the mosque at least weekly, while more than 60% attend seldom or never. This compares to weekly attendance rates of about 60-80% throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In these regions, the non-attendance rate tends to range from 30%-45% (*Ibid*: 130).

In fact, only 36% of B&H Muslims agree that their religion is important to them. Of 39 Muslim populations surveyed, only three countries have a lower percentage agreeing their religion is important: Albania, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Ibid: 8). This weaker affiliation with Islam as well as the high level of infrequent mosque attendance, then potentially suggests a lower likelihood that they will vote only Muslim. An important consideration is that Muslims who rarely attend mosque are unlikely to hear politics interpreted from an Islamic perspective; nor will they benefit from the shared consciousness of the frequent attendees. The organizational basis often associated with membership in religiously affiliated parties therefore is absent (Olson, 2011).

Another source of attraction of the SDP for Bosniac and Croatian voters seems to be its identity as a contemporary party of the New Left. Twenty percent of voters who self-classify as left contend they will vote for the SDP, while only 12% intend to vote for the SDA and 2% plan to vote for the HDZ. The SNSD also attracts 20% of the left vote, but it is less apparent that the SDP competes for voters with the SNSD particularly in the RS. Furthermore, a much smaller percentage of the SDP's membership classifies itself as ideologically right when compared to the memberships of the SDA, HDZ and SNSD. The results of the *European Value Study* shows only 25% of the SDP considers itself as right wing while approximately 46% of the SDA, 74% of the HDZ and 50% of the SNSD claim to be right wing (Table 4). The data suggests that the HDZ is considered a right wing party based upon its nationalist identity. The SNSD is less clearly right wing; while it formally claims to be socialist, its nationalist politics pulls it to the right in a one-dimensional ideological spectrum. Perhaps the SDA's identity is most interesting given the claim of the HDZ leadership that the SDP simply serves as another vehicle for Bosniac voters. Not only is the SDP's Muslim and Croatian electorate noticeably more secular than the SDA's supporters, but the SDA members tend to perceive themselves on the center-right while the SDP supporters tend to shift toward the center- left.

Table 4. Ideological Identification among Party Electorates

Party	Left	Center	Right
SDP	32.89%	42.11%	25.00%
SDA	23.08%	30.77%	46.15%
HDZ	5.66%	20.75%	73.58%
SNSD	17.86%	32.14%	50.00%

Source: *Ibid*

Yet, the identification of the SDP as center-left compared to other B&H parties exists with some ambiguity. When B&H party supporters are asked to respond to specific policies associated with a left-right spectrum in the country, the distinctiveness of the SDP as the party of the left is lost. For example, in response to a question whether industry should be government owned or privately owned (scaled with 10 as government and 1 as private ownership) the mean responses for party supporters were: SDP 6.3, SNSD 7.2, SDA 6.7, SBiH 5.3 and HDZ 5.2. When people are asked whether meeting economic and social needs falls primarily to the state (10) or individuals (1), responses ranged among the various parties from 6 to 7 with SDP members averaging 6.47. When party supporters were asked whether emphasis should exist on equal incomes (10) or individual incentives (1), the SDP, SDA and HDZ all had means of approximately 5. Such results suggest two tentative conclusions: first that society still is transitioning in a post-communist era, and the population is caught between capitalist and socialist paradigms, and second, the characterization of the SDA and HDZ as center-right compared to the center-left SDP might rely heavily upon the supporters' association of nationalist and religious appeals with the right wing. When the SDA and HDZ are considered solely on an economic spectrum, these parties' appeals appear comparable to that of the SDP.

Consequently, the perception of the SDP as center-left could arise precisely because it has disassociated from any ethno-religious appeal. The SDP won 5 of 42 parliamentary seats in 2006 and 7 of 42 seats in 2010. Additionally, Komšić as the SDP presidential candidate won the Croatian seat in both elections. Although the party suffers from factionalism and elitism common in B&H, it seems to attract a base which is less defined by ethno-religious identity than the base of the other dominant parties. The SDP probably does attract "new left" voters who emphasize issues of accountability, governability and quality of life rather than nationality. Such citizens risk supporting a non-nationalist party which favors structural changes to decrease the influence of ethnicity in government and eliminate the counterproductive incentives of power sharing.

Conclusions

The deadlock which surrounded B&H politics since the 2010 elections began to thaw in late 2011. The anticipated independence for Republika Srpska and possibly Herzegovina failed to materialize. At the end of the year, a new government formed with six major parties cooperating to share power in order to position B&H for EU and IMF assistance. Yet, uncompromising, ethno-religious politics based on exclusive identities continues to loom as a potential quagmire for B&H. The SDP stands as an alternative for rational voters frustrated with the prisoner's dilemma of ethno-religious politics.

Indeed, B&H's history suggests the possibility of alternative cultural traditions beyond the current polarization and segmentation of ethnoreligious groups. Howard discusses civic cooperation and contends that 'organized groups committing violence...hardened ethnic identities' (2012: 167). Olson (2011) examines the important cultural effect of religion on politics, and the tendency to dichotomize identities, but also mentions the potential for shared values among religious traditions. Greble (2011) details the long history of multiculturalism. Thus, the SDP might serve as a vehicle to begin to reclaim B&H's multi-religious, tolerant culture.

Moreover, the effect of communism on culture should be considered. As noted, the SDP, as well as all B&H's current major parties, tends to favor a mixed economy with a safety net. The B&H citizen operates within a post-communist context. Inglehart and Welzel demonstrate that post-communist polities tend to be less religious than comparable societies outside the former communist experience. Breznau et al. (2011) also suggest that voters in post-Communist systems are more likely to support non-religious parties than voters in other states. While the conflict in B&H creates unique complications, the SDP offers a choice for citizens frustrated with ethnoreligious politics. The party positions itself as a party of the center-left, and it could expand its membership as generational change occurs and younger secular and less religious voters increase in proportion. The option is one which emphasizes the relevance of the new center-left in transitioning states for citizens who seek inclusion, accountability, a social safety net, and individual rights (Cronin et al., 2011: 3). In B&H, society still must negotiate the precise type of balance between capitalism and socialist democracy which elsewhere in Europe already exists and evolves, but the SDP alone emphasizes the salience of such issues beyond the question of ethnicity.

The SDP represents both the left of the 1900`s with representation from workers and veterans, but also the intellectual, post-material quality of life and libertarian left of the new century. The party's commitment to structural and constitutional changes to support high quality democracy separates it from the ethnoreligious parties which favor the current consociational system. Howard suggests that structures must change in B&H for the political system to break from 'the ethnocracy trap' (2012: 155). The SDP currently challenges the status quo of power-sharing among elites and promotes structures for reform. As such, the SDP offers an alternative to identity politics and an opportunity for individual and national freedom and progress within B&H.

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