History restates? Nationalism prevails in BiH

Vasilis KILIARIS

Abstract
Nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina had prevailed in the last decade of the 20th century. Notwithstanding that nationalism is a political principle, a sentimental assumption or an ideology, Nationalism is considered as a global phenomenon as well. In contradiction with the rest five republics of Yugoslavia, Bosna i Hercegovina (BiH) had, approximately, in terms of power, three equally self-defined ethnic groups. The term Balkanization is today invoked to explain the disintegration of some multiethnic states and their devolution into dictatorship, ethnic cleansing, and civil war. The theory of Consociationalism was developed on the basis of achieving reconciliation in societal fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines. Reconciliation itself is sine qua non for accomplishing a long lasting peace, security and stability in these cases, towards a final Conflict Resolution. The international imposition of a Consociational democracy in BiH and the support given to the multi-ethnic parties and/or coalitions, alongside a strong discouragement against ethno-nationalist parties, caused the contrary. Conversely, back to the state electoral level, an evinced three-multi-ethnic party, including candidates with Bosniak, Serbian and Croat origins, is expected to restrain nationalism in tolerable levels.

Keywords
Nationalism, BiH, Balkanization, Consociationalism, ethnic groups, Conflict Resolution

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Nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) had prevailed in the last decade of the 20th century—the words Nacionalizam and Bosna i Hercegovina have one and the same meaning in the commonly spoken language (Serbo-Croatian)\(^2\), written in both alphabets (Cyrillic for Serbian & Roman for Croat), used by the three national entities, the ethnic groups of Bosniaks, Serbians and Croatians, currently leaving in the territory of BiH.\(^3\)

In the words of Ernest Gellner, Nationalism “is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”, arguing that nationalism became a sociological necessity of the modern states' effort to harmonize polity (political entity) with culture (ethnic group) (Gellner 1983). On an alternative approach, Eric Hobsbawm defined that using the vocabulary of Nationalism based on the “initial working assumption, (that) any sufficient large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a ‘nation’ will be treated as such”, is misleading and oversimplified because of its sentimental nuance (Hobsbawm 1990). In addition Nationalism defined “as the idea that the world is divided into nations which provide the overriding focus of political identity and loyalty which in turn demands national self-determination” is dialectically challenged because the term nation itself is more difficult to get a general scientifically agreed definition (Breuilly 1993).

Notwithstanding this triple consideration, being a political principle, a sentimental assumption or an ideology, Nationalism is a phenomenon; a global phenomenon that has had arose since the era of the French revolution and the transformation of the medieval state into today's modern state, based on the social contract theories formed in the 18th century. Hence, modern states are the political mechanisms, distinguished from both the rulers and the ruled over, bearing the supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territory, whereas their claim for monopolizing the coercive force co-exists with a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens (Giddens 1985, In Hall S. & Gieben B. 2002: 137).

Focusing in Southeastern Europe, such modern states are considered those having a solid ethnic state or a self-determination ethnic majority with the power and willingness to rule and govern; a condition that exist since the mid-nineteenth century nationalistic movements in the Hapsburg s' Austrian Empire and the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 or the latest in the aftermath of the Balkan wars and the First World War (WWI). This typology of the modern state, combined with the aforementioned notions of nationalism, creates the aspect of civic nationalism, a commitment to a state and its values, like it was in the cases of the prior-federal

\(^2\) Serbo-Croat |ˌsərbəˈkrō, āt, ˈkrōt(əlso Serbo-Croatian |krōˈəSHən|) noun: a term for the South Slavic language spoken in Serbia, Croatia, and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Serbo-Croat comprises two closely similar forms: Serbian, written in the Cyrillic alphabet, and Croat, written in the Roman alphabet. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia the names of the individual languages have generally been preferred. New Oxford American Dictionary.

\(^3\) This prologue is deliberately ambiguous aiming to emphasize the contentious issue of voting along ethnic lines, such as was the case in the recent parliamentary and presidential elections in BiH on October 3, 2010.
states of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. In this regard, ethnic nationalism, a commitment to an ethnic group based on common descent, language and religion beliefs, was suppressed by the civic nationalism and the communist regimes ante and post-World War Two (WWII) respectively.

Former Yugoslavia was such a modern state, with the Serbian ethnic group in the led, especially during the 80’s. The reason for placing this argument as such was that although Tito (1892-1980), its founder, hero and leader, with Croat origins, succeeded a state-strengthening position, evidenced by his splitting with Stalin and from the fact that Yugoslavia was leading the Non-Aligned Movement, following his death, the revival of ethnic nationalism was not averted.

One of Yugoslavia’s six component-socialist republics was BiH, having itself the characteristics of the aforementioned type of modern state, at least till the collapse of the Communist polar of the international system towards the end of the 80’s. In contradiction with the five rest republics of Yugoslavia, BiH had, approximately, in terms of power, three equally self-defined ethnic groups.

Subsequently, in the 90’s, Nationalism prevailed in ex-Yugoslavia, failing to recall decades of a socialist-type path of cooperation and co-existence between its components, its six socialist republics and its eight nations, i.e. Serbians, Croats, Bosniaks, Slovenians, Montenegrins, “Slavo-Macedonians”,ii Albanians and Hungarians.

Religious and Ethnic oriented nationalist movements, even during the Cold War, were 'gradually burning like a candle', establishing ethnically-based independent states when the momentum turned on their site. The collapse of the Soviet Empire and the subsequent fall of the Iron Curtain were for the Western Balkans an unfortunate turn of events. BiH was the main theatre of battles in a senseless series of wars. The replication of the Balkanization in BiH itself had had just begun.

The aftermath of the intra-state war in BiH could be summarized as follows:

• 100,000 persons, both military and civilian, were reported as killed or missing;

• 2,5 million people internally displaced among the former republics; and

• many refugees, counting from all nationalities, are still displaced today.

4 Why there was no transition period, like the one in Czechoslovakia’s case of partition? Both ex-communist states had a type of Socialist Federal Republic political system. From 1990 to 1992 a federal democratic republic consisting of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic was founded till its final peaceful division into two states.

5 In former Yugoslavia were living many more self-defined ethnicities. Nevertheless, it has been commonly accepted that eight at least self-defined ethnic groups were the subdivisions of its peoples.

6 The neologism “Iron Curtain” was firstly introduced by Winston Churchill in 1946 in his famous speech “Sinews of Peace” on March 5, 1946, where he was referring to the destruction of the sovereignty of the countries of Eastern Europe that were under the influence of the USSR. (Churchill 1946). http://www.hpol.org/churchill/ [19 May 2012].
Regarding the term **Balkanization**, originally, was embodied in the Balkan Wars and WWI describing the ethnic and political fragmentation that followed the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The term was duplicated in the Yugoslav wars, dividing the multinational state of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into smaller ethnically homogeneous entities (i.e. Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia [not considering its autonomous regions in the South (Kosovo) and North (Voivodina)] or territorial units having one ethnic majority group [i.e. Serbia (including Kosovo and Voivodina), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)], with the exception of BiH (neither composed by an ethnically homogeneous entity nor having an ethnic majority group). The term is also used in account to ethnic conflict within multiethnic states such as the BiH. “The term Balkanization is today invoked to explain the disintegration of some multiethnic states and their devolution into dictatorship, ethnic cleansing, and civil war” (Pringle 2011). This last contemporary approach of the definition, in relation with a multiethnic state, explains substantially the causes of establishing a separate-level model of voting in BiH as it has had been realized in every electoral procedure since the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995; in the last elections in 2010, as well.

This type of governance is broadly accepted as a pretext of power-sharing intending to guarantee a just ethnic group representation in multi-ethnic societies. It has become known as the **consociation**, “the prescribed method of conflict regulation of the ‘international community’”7 (or international society). Most recent examples are the cases in Afghanistan, FYROM, N. Ireland and BiH which have been broadly studied in comparative academic literature, while Sri Lanka and Cyprus are “in prospective power-sharing agreements” of consociation (O'Leary 2003:22). Thus Con and Societional terms aim to describe the promotion of the integration of segregated societies of a state, by founding the “technical political-science term ‘Consociational’ democracy” (Ljiphart 2004:97). Hence, the theory of **Consociationalism** was developed on the basis of achieving reconciliation in societal fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines. Reconciliation itself (from a teleological view) is sine qua non for accomplishing a long lasting peace, security and stability in these cases, towards a final Conflict Resolution. And to do so, a “combination of the policies and the institutions of autonomy and power-sharing”, in this kind of type of fragmented societies, is implemented (Gurr 1993: 292, In Ljiphart 2004:97).

Indeed, the electoral politics in BiH are influenced extensively by the constitutional arrangements imposed by the international factors in 1995, such as the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the NATO. This international intervention in BiH politics intended to reach concurrently “the creation of a politically united Bosnia and the promotion of non-nationalist parties” (Hulsey

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7 The **international community** is consideret as such when the United States have the simultaneous support of the European Union [EU], or at least of its major powers, and the United Nations [UN] Security Council tacit consent.
Nevertheless, the outcome of the recent elections failed to meet these ambitious goals simultaneously.

Specifically, this model distinguishes BiH electoral procedure between state and entity levels. BiH constitutionally is governed by a three-presidency board, a central-state parliament, one assembly for each of its constituent entities and a separate presidency for the Republika Srpska (RS) entity. The two assemblies-entities are referred to the Assembly of the Federation of BiH’s (FBiH) ten cantons elected by their Croats and Bosniaks residents and the RS National Assembly elected by its Serbian inhabitants. Consequently, “the Bosnian party system is best viewed as three separate party systems, one for each ethnicity” (Hulsey 2010:1135).

The results from the 2010 general elections according to the aforementioned model were officially confirmed by the Central Election Commission one month after the ballot procedure of the peoples of BiH. Firstly, the citizens of BiH voted according to their ethnic group -feeling of belonging- for one incumbent in a tripartite presidency.

The outcome was as follows (in parenthesis the percentage of the votes received by each elected member in comparison with his opponents within each ethnic group):

• Bosniak Bakir Izetbegovic (34.86%), Party of Democratic Action (SDA) list.
• Serbian Nebojsa Radmanovic (48.92%), Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) list.
• Croat Zeljko Komsic (60.61%), Social Democratic Party (SDP) list.

Secondly, on entities level, within the RS, Milorad Dodik won the presidential election with 50.52% of the votes. He is the leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) which also dominated the RS National Assembly with a 45% (37 out of 83 seats). As far as the FBiH, the multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Bosnian Party of Democratic Action (SDA) secured together 52% in the Federated Assembly (51 out of 98 seats).

Lastly, on the state level, on a 42-seat parliamentary assembly, SDP and SNSD with eight seats each and SDA with seventh control the house of representatives of BiH with a combined 55%. Nevertheless, the last two parties having a concrete mono-ethnic list of parliamentarians along with the rest smaller nationalist parties, e.g. the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) won four seats and the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH) three, potentially, could stalemate the BiH parliamentary decisions, i.e. altogether hold 22 seats, namely 52%. On the contrary, having only-one significant multi-ethnic party mostly represented in FBiH by a combined

Indeed, following the last elections, the parliamentary sessions in BiH were stalemated for a long period. Only recently the BiH Parliament came to a consensus and succeeded to constitute the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: “Appointment of the Government of the Federation BiH confirmed on March 17, 2011 at the Session of the House of the Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation BiH”. http://www.fbihvlada.gov.ba/english [19 June 2012].
Croats-Bosniaks list (i.e. SDP), with only 19% power, minimizes any sincere efforts of strategically oriented homogenous policies with a focal point on the entire territory of BiH.

The international imposition of a **Consociational democracy** in BiH and the support given to the multi-ethnic parties and/or coalitions, alongside a strong discouragement against ethno-nationalist parties, caused the contrary. The intervention enhanced “parties that appealed to only one of the three nationalities but that presented themselves as more moderate alternatives” (Hulsey 2010:11356). Such case is the SNSD that dominated RS politics in the last elections. The nationalism phenomenon is going to persist, revive and even lead to more extremism as long as the consociational party system and the foreign involvement continues. In multiethnic constituencies-entities, such as the FBiH, nationalistic sentiments are likely to increase like is the case with the SDA. In mono-ethnic constituencies-entities, such as the RS, nationalism as a political principle may be moderated (SNSD), nonetheless in the state level (BiH) its embraces one more extreme rhetoric than the one in the intra-entity political arena (RS). Lastly, nationalism, from the ideology or dogma point of view, is more or less in the same levels comparing to the one exists in the EU member states' extreme right or left parties.

Conversely, back to the state-electoral level, an evinced three-multi-ethnic party, including candidates with Bosniak, Serbian and Croat origins, is expected to restrain nationalism in tolerable levels. Potentially, this party could be the SDP, the only party having his nominee, elected in the BiH presidency, receiving the absolute majority of more than 60%. Should this path manages to embrace more non-nationalist politicians from the other two ethnic groups as well, BiH road map towards the EU is going to become narrower.
Lack of a transition period in ex-Yugoslavia

In former Yugoslavia, the nations living under the communist regime founded by Tito in 1945, a regime that in 1963 was officially declared as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), achieved to restrain their nationalistic zeal during the majority of the period of its existence. Whereas in Western Balkans during the post-cold war era the same pro-independence movements raised up again, in the rest of the Central-Eastern European countries, the nationalist movements were aware of their ethnic interest, hence they stayed on the European perspective path. Even though Czechoslovakia was an exception, its peaceful division into two sovereign states, Slovakia and Czech Republic in 1993, keeping their former internal borders in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic founded in 1960, had as a result the implicit “reunification” of both countries today through the EU.

Why there was no transition period, like the one in Czechoslovakia’s case of partition? Both ex-communist states had a type of Socialist Federal Republic political system. From 1990 to 1992 a federal democratic republic consisting of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic was founded till its final peaceful division into two states. On the other hand the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was constituted by six Socialist Republics, a Socialist Autonomous Province, and a Socialist Autonomous District that were part of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

These Republics and provinces were (in alphabetical order):

1. Socialist republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the capital in Sarajevo.
2. Socialist republic of Croatia, with the capital in Zagreb.
3. Socialist republic of Macedonia, with the capital in Skopje.
4. Socialist republic of Montenegro, with the capital in Titograd (now Podgorica).
5. Socialist republic of Serbia, with the capital in Belgrade, which also contained:
   5a. Socialist autonomous district of Kosovo and Metohija, with the capital in Priština.
   5b. Socialist autonomous province of Vojvodina, with the capital in Novi Sad.
6. Socialist republic of Slovenia, with the capital in Ljubljana.

The state-subverting ethno-nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has two dimensions. At first, it has origins on Religion, separating people living there into Christian Orthodox’s, Christian Catholics and Muslims. Moreover the nationalistic pro-independence movements are based on the internal Slavic Ethnic partition.

Hence, before the civil war break out in Yugoslavia, in spite of the efforts made by Tito’s regime to uniform Yugoslavia by mixing its component nations, the majority of the Christian Orthodox Serbs lived in Serbia, in Crajina of Croatia, in Montenegro and in Bosnia & Herzegovina; the majority of the Catholic Croats lived in Croatia and in Bosnia & Herzegovina; the Muslim Bosnians lived in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the Christian Orthodox Montenegrians lived in Montenegro, the Muslim Albanians mostly lived in the Kosovo district and in today’s Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Christian Orthodox Slavo-Macedonians of the Former Socialist Republic of Macedonia lived in today’s FYROM, the Christian Catholic (and Protestants) Hungarians lived in the Vojvodina province and the Christian Catholic Slovenians lived in Slovenia.

In addition to the aforesaid Ethnic-Religion partition, the end of the Yugoslavia Wars resulted thousands of displaced people, e.g. the Serbs refugees from Crajina and the displacement of many people from the three ethnic identities in Bosnia & Herzegovina and more recently the Serbs and Albanians refugees in Kosovo are the most evident examples.

Noel Malcolm writes that “most scholars believe that both Serbs and Croats were Slavic tribes with Iranian ruling castes and that by the time that they moved into the region and became its dominant inhabitants in the seventh century, they joined an already large Slav population”. Shifting political fortunes and allegiances, and gradual processes of religious adoption or conversion (to Roman Catholicism, Islam or Orthodoxy) were responsible for developing cultural variations among communities, not blood ties.
The so called Slavo-Macedonians are the Slavic-origins people living in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). They are self-defined as Macedonians, nevertheless, due to its ambitious contradiction with Ancient Macedonia and Ancient Greek civilization and culture, historic event and Great Alexander's heritage to modern Greece (Hellenic Republic), only a few countries recognize FYROM as Macedonia. Macedonia is a region in north Greece, registered in NUTS III as such, i.e. the Central Macedonia region of the European Union. People living in the capital and major city of this region, in Thessaloniki, define themselves as Greeks and Macedonians. However, the vast majority of the population currently residing in Macedonia has a Minor-Asia Greek descendant (Mazower 2005). Their ancestors, only a few generations (2-3) before, were the unfortunates forced to leave their homeland, following the agreement of ex-change of population between Greece and Turkey, on the aftermath of the 1922 Greco-Turkish war (Greeks recall this war with a break-heart sentimental reference as “Minor-Asia Catastrophe” in contradiction with Turks that recall the war with the victorious name “War of Liberation”) (Glogg 2003). Back to the analysis of FYROM, we could introduce the neologism North Macedonia, with reference to the two major nations living in FYROM, the ones with Slavic origins (though linguistically are consider they are more closely speaking Bulgarian than Serbian) and the ones with Albanian origins (from either Kosovo or Albania), recalling Professor Emeritus at the University of Athens Couloumbis (2009) words:

"The name issue, currently poisoning the relations between Athens and Skopje, is in dire need of a friendly resolution based on the formula of a hyphenated name (with a geographic or other prefix) for each of the three political components (Greece, Bulgaria and FYROM) of the geographic region of Macedonia."

The term "international society system of states " refers to the words "state system» (Wight, 1966:35, Butterfield, 1965 ref. in Watson, 2006:24-25) and "international society» (Bull, 1977:11 ) with the same significance, content and meaning. Additionally, in his introductory note to the Anarchic Society, Professor Panayiotis Iestos (2003) states that "[T]he 'state system' by Hedley Bull, is developed in an 'anarchic international society of (sovereign) states’", see Bull, H. (2001). ref. p. 17. In addition, according to Hedley Bull:

"A Society of States - International Society – exists, when a group of states being conscious of specific common interests and shared values shape a society in the sense that they perceive themselves to be linked to a common set of rules binding their relations and to participate in the functioning of common institutions."

Bull, H. (2001). ibid p. 51. Furthermore, Professor Stanley Hoffman refers, fore wording The Anarchical Society as the most representative work of the English school of international relations theory, that "the originality of this approach is that it considers international relations as a complex set of relationships between states that constitute an international society and not only a system of states”.

### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FbiH</td>
<td>Federation of BiH</td>
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<td>FYROM</td>
<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
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<td>HDZ BiH</td>
<td>Croatian Democratic Union of BiH</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Party of Democratic Action (Bosniaks)</td>
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<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (Croats-Bosniaks)</td>
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<td>SDS</td>
<td>Serbian Democratic Party</td>
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<td>SNSD</td>
<td>Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Serbians)</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WWI</td>
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Nationalism is a political system that places your country above every other in the scale of the world. Learn more about the system and how it compares from the rest of history and with other political systems. Anne Sraders. Jul 5, 2018 6:23 PM EDT. Historically, nationalism has been used to define and explain everything from radical political and militaristic movements like Nazism to strong protectionist policies controlling modern foreign policy and economy. While patriotism (an easily confused term with nationalism) is perhaps harmless (like that exuded on the 4th of July), nationalism is more sinister in nature. Nationalism centers on a country's culture, language, and often race. It may also include shared literature, sports, or the arts, but is primarily driven by cultural associations.