

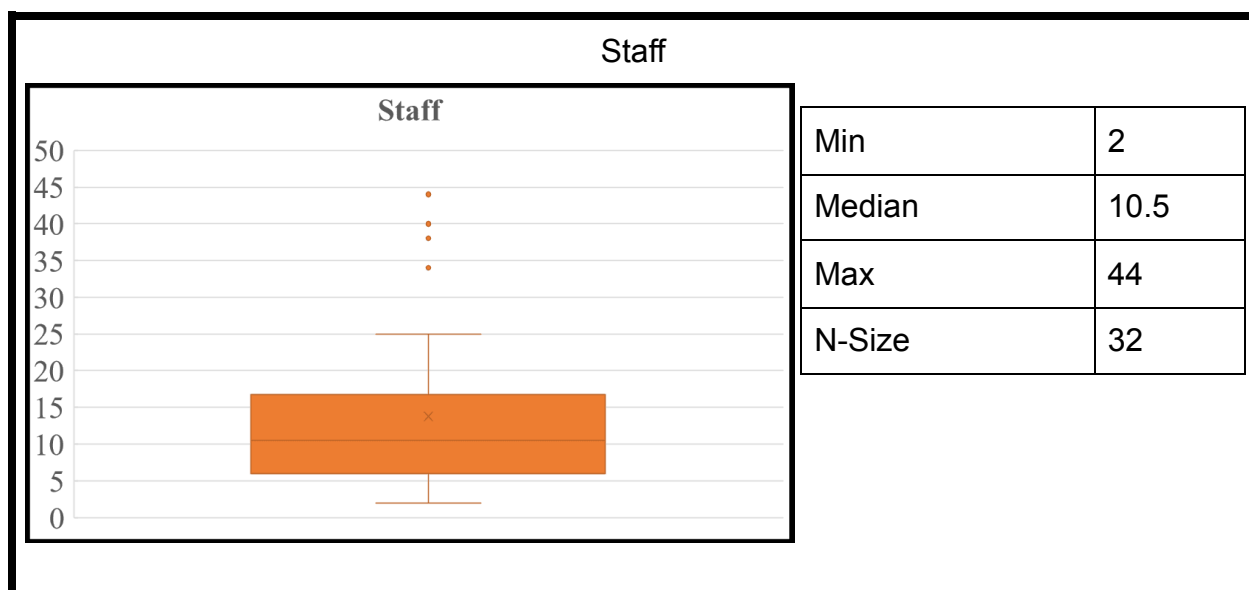
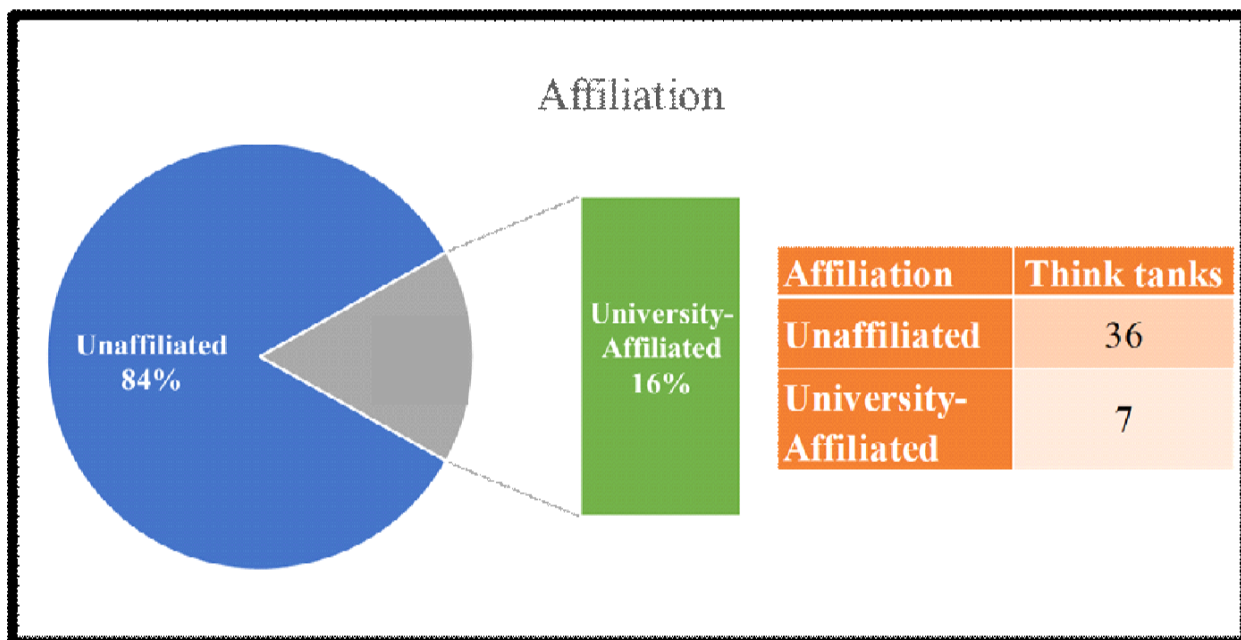
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Non-EU Member State

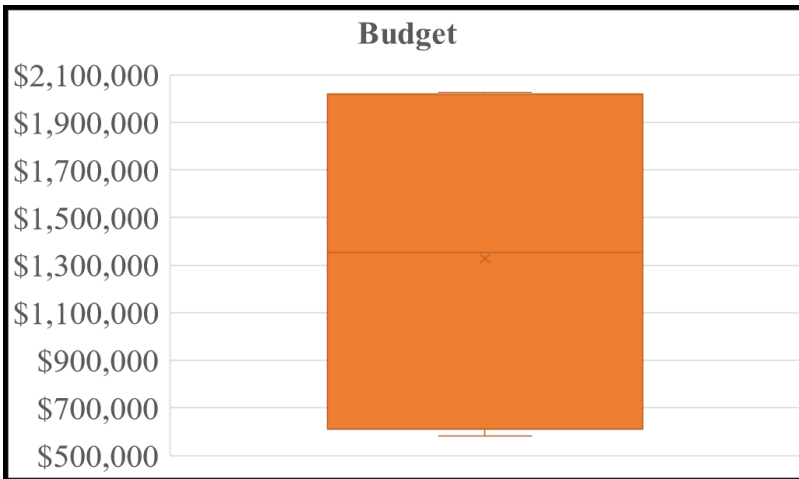


By Fabio Ashtar Telarico

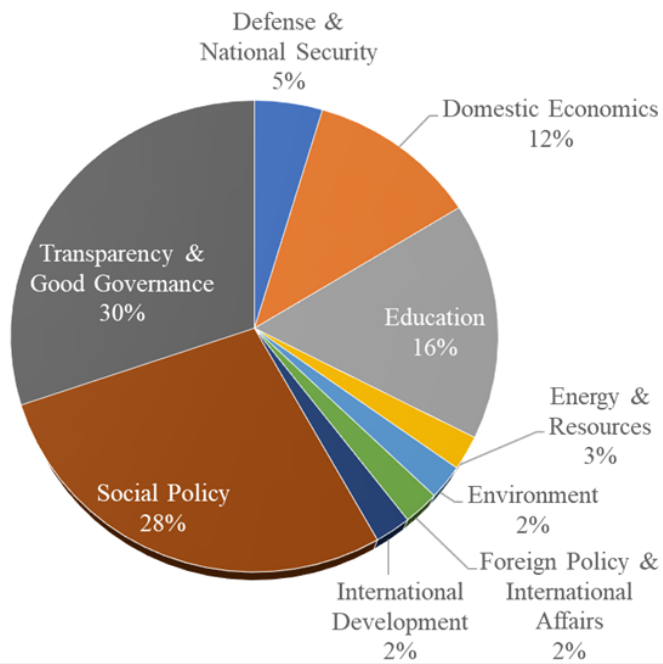
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Think Tanks in 2021



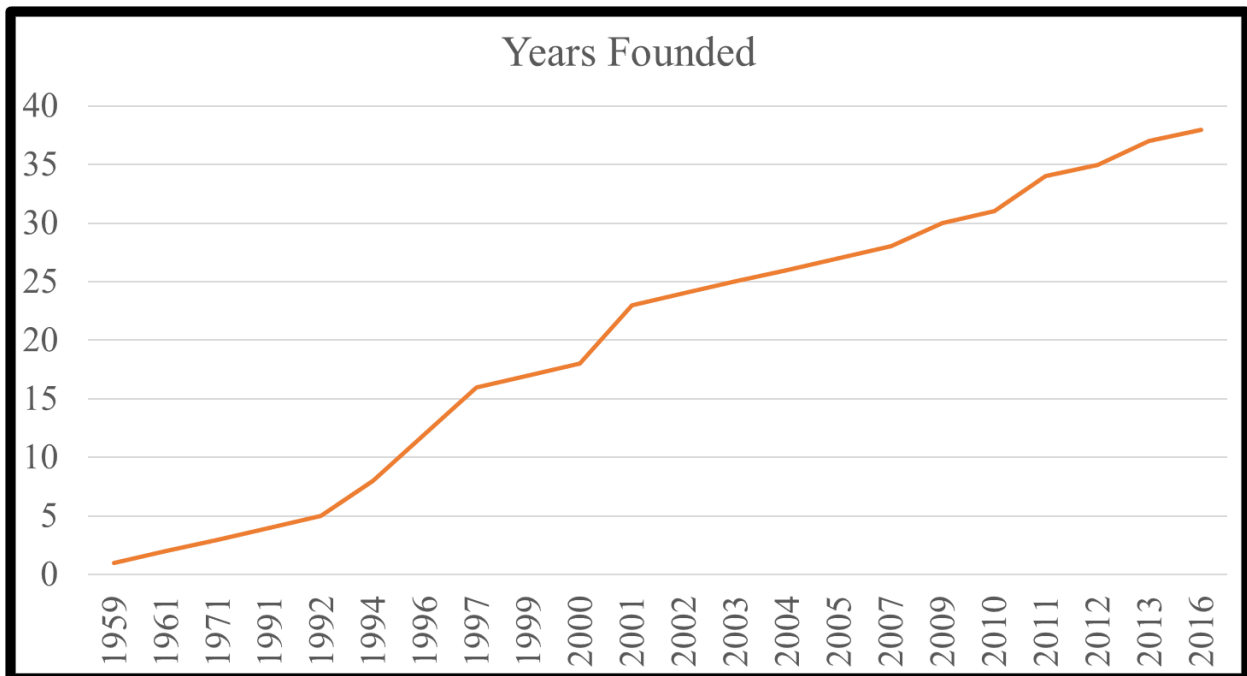
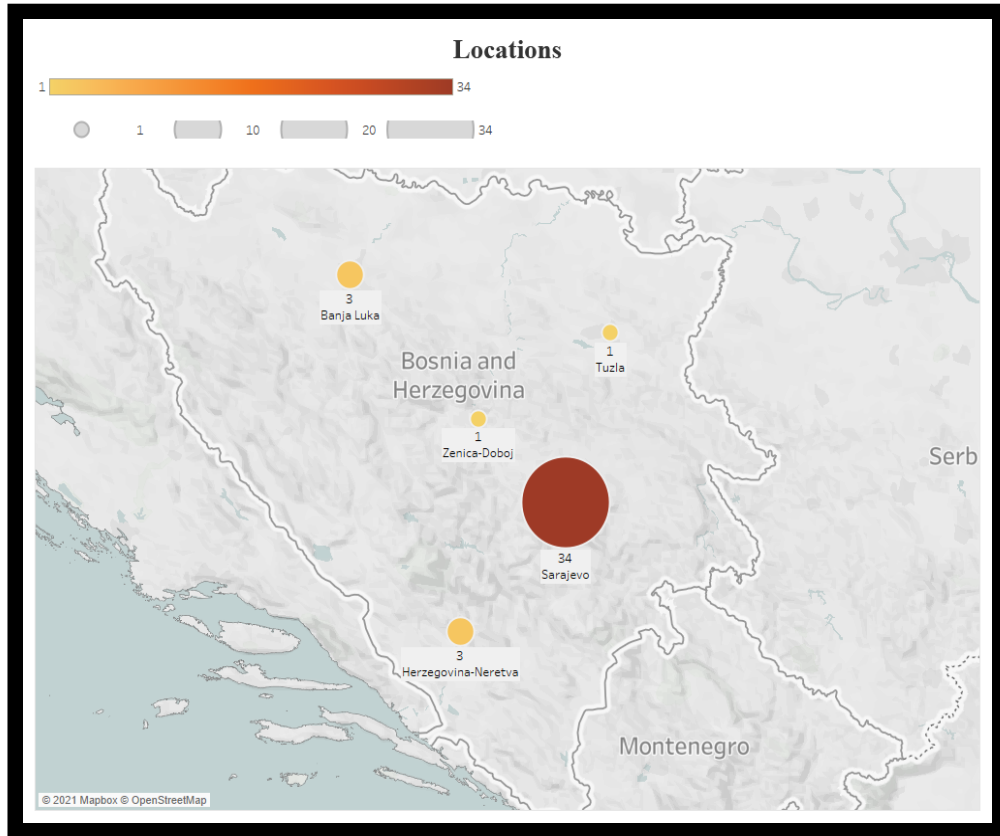
Budget

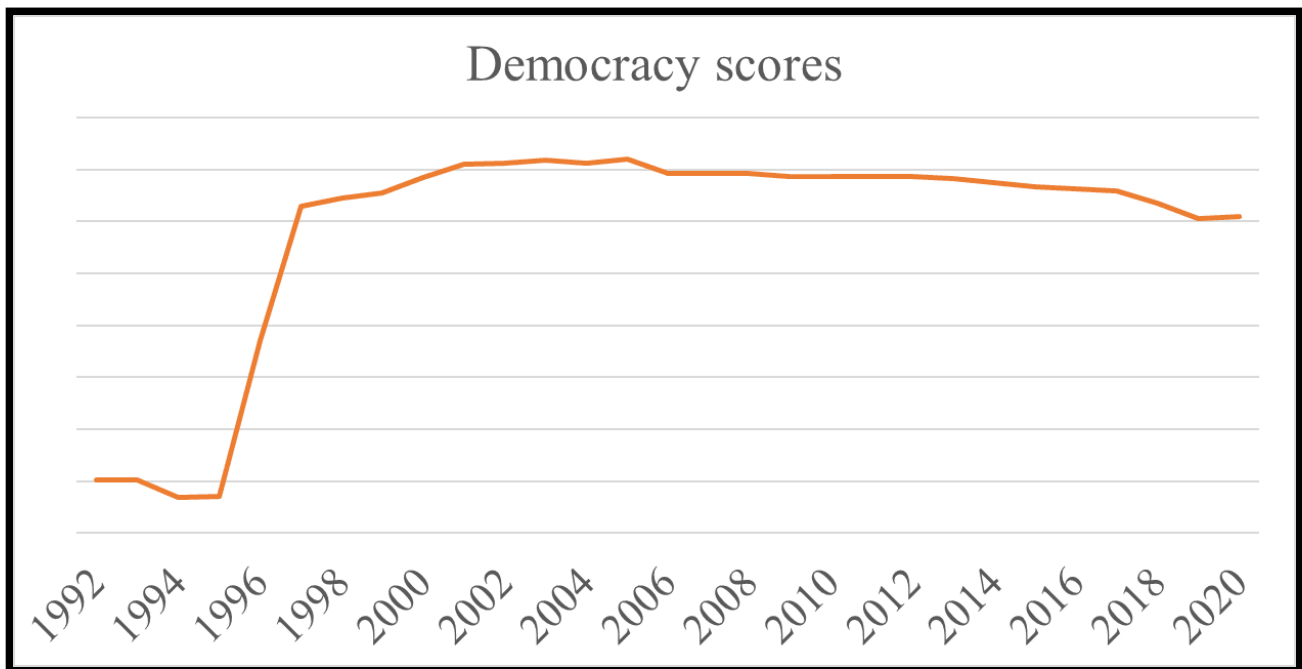
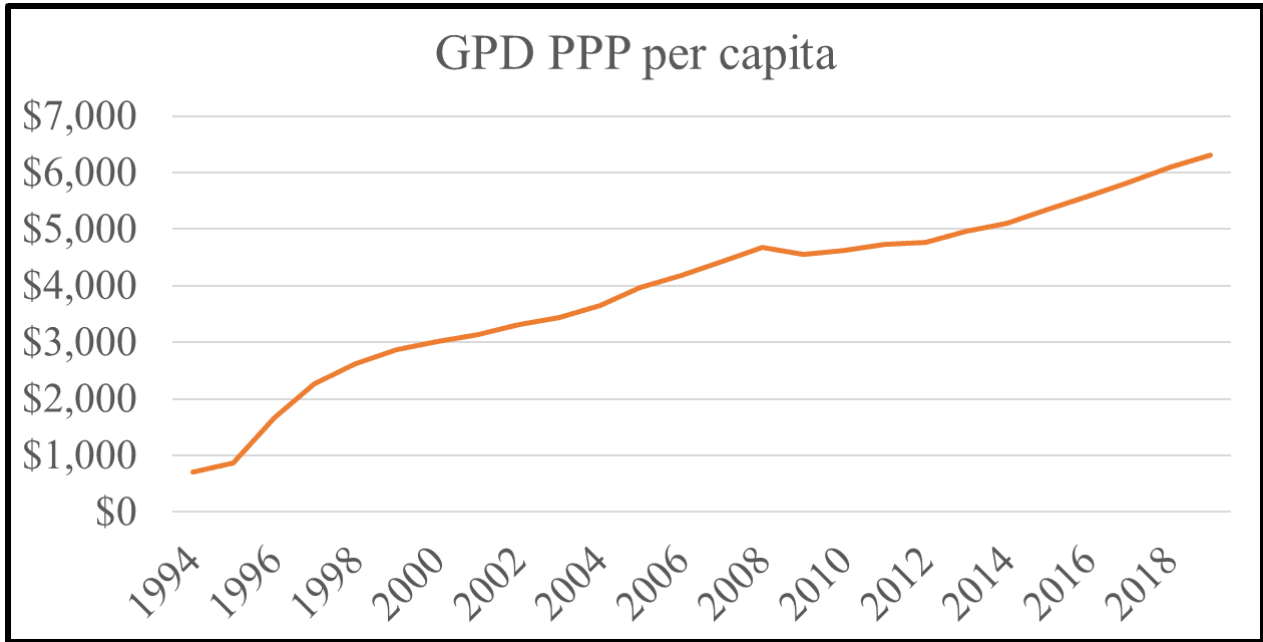


Min	\$582,311
Median	\$1,353,486
Max	\$2,024,288
N-Size	4



	Think tanks
Defense & National Security	2
Domestic Economics	5
Education	7
Energy & Resources	1
Environment	1
Foreign Policy & International Affairs	1
International Development	1
Social Policy	12
Transparency & Good Governance	13





Historical Background

'Bosnia and Herzegovina' (BiH) obtained independence in 1995. There had been no independent political entity in these territories ever since the early modern age. The Ottomans ruled that part of the Western Balkans from 1463 to the mid-19th century. In 1878, the Austria-Hungary Empire conquered the area and established a protectorate. Formal annexation followed suit in 1908. With the Central Empire's defeat in the Great War, the winning powers allowed the Kingdom of Serbia to get hold of the area. In 1918, Serbian, Croats, Bosniaks, Slovenes and other peoples residing in the Western Balkans found themselves being compatriots of the newly established Kingdom of Yugoslavia after a series of events. During the Second World War local partisans operated a national State Anti-fascist Council (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće*). However, the Council peacefully dissolved itself as an organ of the emerging Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1945.⁵⁵⁴

After President Josef Broz Tito's death and the weakening of the SFRY's federal structure, BiH celebrated its first multiparty elections in December 1990. The contest saw the affirmation of three new parties, divided along ethno-national lines. The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and its leader Alija Izetbegović advocated for the rights of a relative majority of the population, Muslim Bosniaks, and won the largest share of the votes. However, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won more or less as many seats as one could have foreseen given the proportion of Serbs and Croats in the total populace.⁵⁵⁵ Eventually, the three parties had to come to an agreement and join a tripartite coalition. Yet, rising tensions between the SFRY's constituent republics caused the SDS to withdraw its support. In fact, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia had virtually decided to quit the federation already in early 1991. On the other hand, the Serb leadership wanted to keep a simulacrum of union alive.

Politicians in BiH struggled to come up with a unitary position due to the absence of a clear ethnonational majority. But, on October 15, 1991, the Bosnian parliament declared independence unilaterally and called for a referendum on February 29 and March 1, 1992. Polls of the time and successive scholars agree: self-identified Serbs favoured staying in the federation overwhelmingly, whilst strong majorities of Bosniaks and Croats preferred a clean start.⁵⁵⁶ Almost all of those who went to the polls voted for

⁵⁵⁴ Reconstruction based on Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (Basingstoke; London: Pan Books, 2005).

⁵⁵⁵ Norman M Naimark and Holly Case, *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), <https://books.google.it/books?id=u5tUbUyXtToC>.

⁵⁵⁶ Admir Mulaosmanovic, 'On the Way to Independence: The Referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Historical Searches*, 1 January 2012, 203–32.

independence. However, the SDS asked Bosnian Serbs to boycott the referendum, which they did *en masse*. Turnout plunged to 64%, pushing the vote count in favour of independence under the required 66% threshold.⁵⁵⁷

As political divides aligned themselves closely to ethnonational cleavages, inter-community tensions kept rising.⁵⁵⁸ In a matter of months, all sides set up paramilitary militias which started clashing on March 7, 1992. The siege of Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, began on April 6, 1992 and lasted until February 29, 1996. Serb fighters established a quasi-State in the eastern part of BiH under Belgrade's tutelage and managed to conquer most of the country.⁵⁵⁹ In less than half a decade of war, the people of Bosnia witnessed mass expulsions, ethnic cleansing, and many other atrocities — including episodes of genocidal violence.⁵⁶⁰ Eventually, the US forced the three sides to agree on a deal to stop the bloodshed in 1995.

As of today, the country represents a unicum in the world and, possibly, in history. At least since the late-17th century, sovereignty has been the defining feature of effective political authorities.⁵⁶¹ Thence, or at least this is what most historians argue, the contemporary territorial State has begun its rise.⁵⁶² The Bosnian constitution affirms domestic institutions' power over the entire internationally-recognised territory of BiH. Namely, two entities and one deferral district make up BiH: the Serb-majority *Republika Srpska*, the mostly Croat/Bosniak *Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, and the district of Brčko. Yet, the fundamental law's genesis tells a different story.

It was not a legitimately elected assembly to write the Bosnian constitution's articles. Nor did a strikingly popular enlightened leader draft its paragraphs out of a gracious concession to the advance of democracy. Rather, its clauses make up the infamous 'Annex 5' to the Dayton peace treaty, which appeased the warring factions ravaging former Yugoslavia.⁵⁶³ As such, many consider BiH to be less of a State and

⁵⁵⁷ Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel, eds., *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, 2000, 110.

⁵⁵⁸ Mitja Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

⁵⁵⁹ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*. (New York University Press: 1994).

⁵⁶⁰ Bernard Bruneteau, *Un siècle de génocides - Des Hereros au Darfour [A century of genocides: From te Hereros to Darfur]* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2016).

⁵⁶¹ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990–1992* (Basil Blackwell, 1990).

⁵⁶² Stephen D. Krasner, 'Westphalia and All That', *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, 1993.

⁵⁶³ David Chandler, 'Bosnia: The Democracy Paradox', *Current History*, no. 100 (2001): 114–19.

more of an international protectorate⁵⁶⁴ – “albeit a dysfunctional one”⁵⁶⁵ – that the EU, Russia and the US manage through their High Representatives.⁵⁶⁶ In this framework, the tripartite Serb/Croat/Bosniak presidency’s decisions are worthless if the High Representative decides they are not in line with the matter and the spirit of the Dayton agreement.⁵⁶⁷

The war has extolled a high price on Bosnians. In the late 1990s, about half of the Federation’s workforce and about 70% of the Republika Srpska were out of work. True, the government has managed to contain unemployment rates to the low-30s in the early 2000s. But the double-dip recession between 2008 and 2020 has undone many of those gains. Its status as a protectorate hurts the European future of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, contributing to keeping the country out of the EU.⁵⁶⁸ It has been a “potential candidate country” for accession since a decision by the European Council in 2003. Nevertheless, the current agenda for EU enlargement does not foresee BiH joining any time soon.⁵⁶⁹

Think tank’s role

After the war, the US saw supporting domestic think tanks as a tool to promote inter-ethnic and inter-confessional dialogue. In this sense, many hoped the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established in 1997 in cooperation with the World Conference of Religions for Peace and enjoying international as well as presidential endorsements, would be an example for other institutions.⁵⁷⁰

But the Dayton agreement fostered the multiplication of subnational authorities constituted on ethno-national bases. Thus, ethnically-oriented think tanks have become a fixture of the think tank landscape in BiH. For instance, the Bosniak Institute – a foreign-funded think tank – engages primarily in scientific work on the cultural and

⁵⁶⁴ David Chandler, ‘The Bosnian Protectorate and the Implications for Kosovo’, *New Left Review*, 1999, 124–34.

⁵⁶⁵ James MB Lyon, ‘Will Bosnia Survive Dayton?’, *Current History* 99, no. 635 (2000): 110.

⁵⁶⁶ Alexander M. Rehs, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Protectorate of Brussels at the Gates of Europe?’, *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* VI, no. 02 (2005): 52–66.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Kristof Bender and Gerald Knaus, ‘The Worst in Class: How the International Protectorate Hurts the European Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina’, *Inside the Bosnian Crisis: Documents and Analysis. Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1, no. 1 (2007): 24–37.

⁵⁶⁹ Marko Kmezić, ‘The Western Balkans and EU Enlargement: Lessons Learned, Ways Forward and Prospects Ahead: In Depth Analysis.’, *In-Depth Analysis* (LU: Publications Office, 2015), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/483324>;

⁵⁷⁰ Ivica Bakota, “Bosnia-Herzegovina Social briefing: Think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *China-CEE Institute* 12, No. 3 (2018), 3.

political history of the Bosniak population.⁵⁷¹ Meanwhile, Croat and Serb communities also operate their own think tanks: e.g., Mostar's *Matica hrvatska* and Banja Luka's *Matica srpska*. All of them try to promote historical analyses examining regional and ethnic identities aimed at finding new ways of forging better coexistence patterns. In addition, there are also several educational think tanks (e.g., the Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society or CPCS)⁵⁷² seeking to promote ethnic cooperation amongst new generations through the integration of history and communication classes in school curriculums.

EU integration is another process informing Bosnian think tanks' activity. Whereas in the 1990s the US mainly supported local organisations, in the new millennium EU institutions began opening branches in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵⁷³ The main foreign think tank operating in BiH is the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German think tank that opened offices in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. Among its main activities are organising lectures, hosting public roundtables and conferences, providing scholarships, and conducting several projects covering EU integration, the rule of law, media freedom, interreligious dialogue, and more. The second-largest foreign think tank in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Its interest lies in the policy areas of transition issues and cooperative dialogue between policy makers and civil society. This think tank is one of the most influential in terms of its cooperation with academia and government institutions. Meanwhile, the Heinrich Boll Foundation's office in BiH focuses on migration crises, post-war reconciliation, and the rule of law. Finally, the Austrian Institute is a foreign-funded think tank branch focusing on EU integration and economic relations with Bosnia's regional neighbours.

Issue - Characteristics Derived from Data

Affiliation

As of June 2021, the overall number of think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 43, one of the largest landscapes in the region. Against such a complex political background, the fact that 84% of Bosnian think tanks are unaffiliated is notable. At the same time, the share of university-affiliated think tanks reaches as much as 16%. The massive presence of foreign think tanks' branches is a peculiar trend worth mentioning as well. The absence of many federal-level government-affiliated think tanks is easy to explain. In fact, the Bosnian political regime's reliance on multiple stakeholders to reach the required tripartite consensus. Thus, federal authorities do not display much interest

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 5-6.

⁵⁷² Raymond J. Struyk et al., *Policy Research in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role and Impact of Local Think Tanks* (Washington D.C.: Urban Institute, 2011), 52.

⁵⁷³ Bakota, *Bosnia-Herzegovina Social briefing*, 1-2.

in establishing their own think tanks because such a decision would also have to pass multiple rounds of bureaucratic negotiation prior to approval.

Staff and Budget

The median budget of Bosnian think tanks does not go beyond \$1,300,000, limiting staff size between in the range of 5–17 employees. Overall, think tanks based in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffer from difficulty in accessing the necessary resources. After 1992, when the country proclaimed its independence breaking away from Serb-Yugoslav rule, development was particularly vigorous.

The republic's government had to restructure itself to take on the autonomous function that the central government had previously carried out with no help from Belgrade or Zagreb. Meanwhile, a gradual economic liberalisation favoured the pouring of foreign money. Thus, think tanks benefited from the public sphere's urgent need to understand the fundamental changes that were shaping Bosnian society. Hence, these new institutions emerged to examine the complexity of the post-Yugoslav transformation while providing the republican government with practical, implementable solutions to BiH's problems. Later, as parts of the country's elite embraced post-war reconciliation, think tanks took the lead in proposing novel ways to engage the numerous ethnic groups in joint problem-solving endeavours.

Policy Areas

The country's tumultuous past serves as an imperative for Bosnian think tanks in terms of their policy area distribution. Thus, about 28% of all think tanks focus on social-policy matters. Indeed, for a country like BiH where ethnic-based and religion-based atrocities of war-ravaged society less than 30 years ago, post-conflict reconciliation and civil unity empowerment are the key priorities.

In addition, issues linked to transparency and good governance (23.8%) have long been of utmost importance for the Bosnian leadership as the country hopes to join the EU. Education (16%) is also perceived as one of the most significant means to foster corporate civil identity and promote such values as tolerance, mutual support, active participation in political and social life, and intercultural dialogue. By contrast, challenges of reinforcing defence and national security (about 1%) remain of little to no interest for the Bosnian think tanks.

GDP Growth

As far as Bosnia's economy is concerned, the country has shown strong resilience to major global crises starting from that of 2008. By 2019–2020, the GDP had reached about \$20 billion, the best economic performance in a decade. Parallely, GDP per capita peaked in 2018 at \$6,000.

This has had positive implications on the financial sustainability of Bosnian research organizations as the GDP-per-think-tank ratio has increased by about 20% in the last half a decade. Despite positive economic dynamics, Bosnia and Herzegovina's population has reduced over the past 12 years from over 3.7 million people in 2008 to no more than 3.2 million people in 2020. The EU's decision to enable visa-free travel for Bosnian citizens, which accelerated the ongoing brain drain.

Policy Recommendations

After the full-scale interethnic and interreligious conflict which Bosnia and Herzegovina faced in the 1990s, the country is still going through a process of shaping its own identity. This implies the need for more tailored civil engagement initiatives and more multicultural dialogue, which may be delivered by the Bosnian think tank network that has already accumulated the experience of dealing with reconciliation issues in the early 2000s. Another prospective policy area whose significance cannot be underestimated is EU integration. Although present day accession to the EU is foreign policy priority number one, truly little research effort has been channelled so far to evaluate the current situation hindering the accession process and to support national policymakers. Foreign policy and international affairs constitute as little as 8.3% out of the total policy area distribution.

Proceeding with the reforms required for EU accession, as BiH remains a hybrid regime, at best, and a 'stabilitocracy',⁵⁷⁴ at worst. Analysts of democracy consider electoral fairness, political pluralism and civil liberties BiH's strongest assets. However, the country's political culture is mostly illiberal and people perceive the government as ineffective. Thus, the extant multiparty system is still relatively immature and in need of cooperation with a proactive, well-educated civil society — especially youngsters. In addition, Dayton's arcane system of ethnonational checks and balances results in frequent breaches in the functioning of government so the underlying cause is more of a systemic nature and cannot be resolved via a superficial means. Taken together with EU integration, this development explains why a large swath of Bosnian think tanks

⁵⁷⁴ Kmezić and Bieber, 'The Crisis of Democracy in the Western Balkans. An Anatomy of Stabilitocracy and the Limits of EU Democracy Promotion'.

focus on transparency and good governance (30%). Their outputs often emphasise the government actors to find efficient solutions to break current barriers. Thus, think tanks, especially university-affiliated ones, could take a more proactive stance in producing recommendations for federal authorities. In addition, considering the exuberant presence of foreign think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, local research institutions should investigate building long-lasting partnerships with these branches to promote joint research projects.

Collaboration with international institutions who have successfully adopted EU values into their structures may help the Bosnian think tank community gain more experience in addressing the fields where they lack policy expertise and to secure additional funding sources contributing to staff enlargement and overall think tank landscape growth.