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NATO Enlargement in the Western Balkans: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Master's Thesis

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Declaration:

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
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In Prague on

Christopher A. Hoang

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Abstract

The Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, which effectively ended the war in Bosnia and established a decentralized state. This divisive nature of this framework encourages the political elite and decision makers to place a greater importance upon preserving political power, rather than making meaningful institutional changes. They consistently instrumentalize interethnic fears as a means to gain popular support at the expense of the country's development. The inability to cooperate has led to political stalemate and contributed to low level of progress in many sectors. Nonetheless, the possibility of accession to NATO remains open if the criteria for membership are satisfied. The international community bears the responsibility of integrating Bosnia and Herzegovina because of its strategic importance and the potential threats that can develop if political tensions escalate into an armed conflict. The recent accession of Montenegro and North Macedonia to NATO proves the doors remains open for aspiring countries that show the political will to deepen their relationship with the Alliance. Bosnia has made remarkable transformations in its security and defense sector, though it must resolve the current issues that impeded its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFBiH	Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina
AfC	Alliance for Change
ANP	Annual National Action Program
ARBiH	Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
BSA	Bosnian Serb Army
CE	Council of Europe
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
DRC	Defense Reform Commission
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force
EUPM	European Union Police Mission
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IFOR	Implementation force
IMP	Immovable military property
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
IPTF	International Police Task Force
IRC	Intelligence Reform Commission
IRIS	Intelligence Reform Implementation Section
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MoD	Ministry of Defence

MoFTER	Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAF	Operation Allied Force
ODF	Operation Deliberate Force
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OJE	Operation Joint Endeavor
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARP	Planning and Review Process
PfP	Partnership for Peace program
PPBES	Planning, Programming, and Budgeting Execution System
PSOTC	Peace Support Operations Training Center
RS	Republika Srpska
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
SDR	Strategic Defense Review
SFOR	Stabilization force
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
WB	Western Balkans

Introduction

After the fall of Yugoslavia, various conflicts erupted across the Western Balkans (WB), including the violent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from 1991 to 1995. The situation in the region deteriorated, becoming a legitimate security concern for the Euro-Atlantic community. In response to the atrocities committed against the Bosniaks during the war, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched an airstrike campaign across the Bosnian Serb held territories that ultimately led to a ceasefire between the warring parties. The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed on December 14, 1995 as an outline for peace in BiH. The DPA, specifically Annex 4¹, contributes to the contemporary political and ethnic tensions in the country. Though inherently flawed, the DPA delivered a sense of peace since its implementation. BiH's main foreign policy objective is integrating into Euro-Atlantic structures like NATO and the European Union (EU). BiH has worked closely with the international community to develop its institutions in order to transform the country into a functioning liberal democracy. In July 2000¹, the Presidency of BiH declared its intentions to integrate into NATO and started making the necessary reforms to receive a NATO bid. Joining NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 2006 was the first step towards NATO integration, confirming its alignment to the West. Since joining PfP, BiH made remarkable reforms, but a lack of unity plagues BiH's path forward.

NATO is the world's prominent military alliance, existing for 70 years and experienced many transformations since its outset. Its involvement in the WB resulted in the gradual Europeanization of the region and changed the identity of the Alliance as a whole. More specifically, the intervention in BiH triggered the beginning of NATO's identity as an active international security provider. The the interventions in the WBs had a positive impact on the political, economic, and social institutions that were left hindered after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Consequently, NATO commenced a new

¹ Annex 4 of the DPA outlines BiH's constitutional framework.

round enlargement of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries that changed the composition of the international system. As it pertains to BiH, the process of enlargement in the region is an ongoing endeavor that sheds light on NATO's strategy pushing ahead. The WB is within NATO's sphere of influence and its strategic importance ensures that the Alliance remains a key player in order to contain potential threats to the Alliance. NATO integrated a number of countries in the region, leaving only BiH, Kosovo, and Serbia and the remaining countries.

This thesis offers an analysis on the relationship between BiH and NATO, primarily looking at the Alliance's requirements for membership and how it affects the country. A consideration of BiH's integration process -- security and defense reforms, official documents submitted, initiatives undertaken, and the challenges to integration -- will determine to what extent integration has progressed. This will help estimate how the accession process impacts BiH's domestic and foreign policies and institutions. The paper will then delve into stability projection in a region plagued with violent conflicts and explain NATO's involvement in BiH. Although it seems precarious to invite fragile states like BiH, the benefits of assimilating such states can outweigh the risks, if properly carried out. Accession benefits NATO and BiH as it prevents foreign actors from gaining influence in the WB. That is, BiH will inevitably develop its institutions to meet NATO standards, serving as an impediment to foreign actors attempting to capitalize on its vulnerable political architecture. In order to assist BiH, the international community, primarily the EU and the United States, has established a firm presence in the form of state-building mechanisms, yet there are limitations as they preoccupied with their own set of challenges. Therefore, NATO is critical in this regard because the integration process transcends streamlining military capabilities; NATO membership encourages potential members to bolster their political institutions and economic infrastructure as well.

External actors engage in soft power politics within various segments of BiH. The presence of these actors in BiH challenges liberal values and places a strain on the development of a functional state. Consequently, discussing Russia's influence in the

semi-autonomous Republika Srpska (RS) is imperative because the entity is the driving force behind BiH's stalled path to NATO. Current debates call into question NATO's existence in a post-Cold War international system. Should NATO shift its focus towards more contemporary security threats or is neo-containment the top priority? Both are valid questions because emerging security threats must be addressed while advancing liberal values is the cornerstone of NATO's mission. Cooperation and integration are strategic mechanisms NATO must leverage in order to overcome these challenges. Accession to NATO enhances security and integrity, weakens secessionism, and discourages nationalist movements.

Data was collected using electronic resources including, online journals, reports, academic papers, official government documents, and news websites. The online news source BalkanInsight is a non-governmental news organization which publishes a myriad of investigative reports and provides up to date news on Balkans related matters. The majority of online journals were found using trusted academics portals. The difficulty was finding contemporary journal articles that addressed BiH accession to NATO. Because the integration process is ongoing, this was expected. Many news updates come from online news websites that produce small pieces to address current events. The existing literature on BiH chronicles the Bosnian war and NATO's transformation during this period. It centers mostly on NATO's role as this was the first combat mission outside its territory. The consensus amongst most of the literature is that BiH's integration process will be complicated due to the nature of the country's political structure. Additionally, the recurring theme in the literature posits that BiH's future is hazy, but maintains that joining the Euro-Atlantic community is inevitable. Natasa Filipovic, Ian Hope, and Hamza Preljevic offer insightful assessments about policy changes that have transpired and the efforts made by past administrations to join the Alliance. They refer to history as being the root cause for the current issues that BiH faces. The question is whether the international community and policymakers in BiH possess the will to integrate BiH into NATO.

An extensive amount of literature exists on the topic of NATO enlargement and the literature on the WB is extensive. It highlights the relationship between NATO and the various countries in the region as it relates to fostering cooperation through institutional reform. There are limited texts that discuss the Bosnian experience with NATO integration. A majority of work on the Bosnian experience comes from new websites that detail the current political shortcomings, but lack a descriptive argument on the fundamental problems in BiH. There is no substance pertaining to solutions that must be addressed if NATO is to be part of BiH's future. The government of BiH and international partners have produced a number of official documents that measure progress and offer recommendations for additional reforms. In the case of security and defense reform, there is extensive and complete academic literature that highlights the successes and deficiencies of BiH's reforms. Generally, the prescription is either empowering BiH to take ownership of its internal affairs or calls for the international community to increase its presence.

The broad research question is the following: How has the integration process changed the dynamics of BiH's domestic and foreign policies and its institutions? Moreover, the following specific questions can help answer this broader question: To what extent has Security Sector Reform progressed in BiH since declaring its intent to join the Alliance? Does the international community's presence hinder or help BiH's development? What changes are necessary in order for BiH to meet its foreign policy goal of joining NATO?

Theory and Methodology

The Cold War concluded and the collapse of communism was imminent. Consequently, the Western community promoted liberal democracy through international organizations, designed to foster cooperation with former communist dictatorships. International organizations like the NATO were regarded as legitimate institutions, which CEE states were encouraged to join (Schimmelfennig 2000). Through a dynamic

accession process, NATO was understood to establish positive relations and encourage structural reforms. The motivating factor for NATO enlargement was premised on achieving regional stability by the virtue of democracy promotion, "... the most fundamental contribution to the security of the North Atlantic area is the spread of democracies.." (Schimmelfennig 2007).

NATO teaches states how to interact with the community at the same time promoting a collective identity. The goal is for individual states to embrace liberal norms and establish a positive relationship with NATO. This conforms with the constructivist assumption that actors are subject to social change through their interactions and social structures (Schimmelfennig 2000). In this regard, one can conceptualize NATO as an extension of Euro-Atlantic values in the form of a community organization.

Constructivism

The idea that material forces are given to actors for pursuing structural reforms is alluring, however, BiH's motifs for joining the community exceed such rewards. If rewards are not a key factor for BiH's accession to NATO, then what are the underlying notions of this relationship? This thesis will apply a constructivist approach to define BiH's dynamic transformation. Implementing a constructivist framework helps interpret BiH's NATO membership aspirations and shed light on NATO's role in the WB.

Constructivism, a relatively new approach within the study of international relations, differs from the dominant ontologies based on materialist rationale, (i.e., realism and liberalism). This approach focuses on the structures of human association, which are determined by shared ideas and that the identities and interests of actors are shaped by these shared ideas (Wendt 2003). These characteristics formalize the international system and individual community environments. Additionally, various contributions have been made to the study of institutions within the constructivist approach. Sociological institutionalism or constructivist institutionalism is the study of institutions and agents within a social structure. A fundamental component of this theory rejects egoism and instrumentalism, proposing that international actors are committed

to their values and norms and choose the appropriate instead of the efficient behavioral option (Schimmelfennig 2007). These behaviors define the nature of the community.

The assumption is that actors make decisions according to their identities and interests, not on material considerations. According to the “logic of appropriateness”, actors internalize these norms, which they conform, because they understand these behaviors to be good, desirable, and appropriate (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Within a given social environment, the individual decision-making process is resolutely correlated to the identity of the community. Because individual needs and desires do not influence behaviors, they inherently focus on the functionality of the community through identity preservation. Strong social identities can only exist when individual interests are subordinated to the collective and when individuals show a willingness to ensure their well-being (Webber 2009). That is, norms is what legitimizes institutions, therefore it is imperative to preserve the social cohesion and identity of the community through cooperation. Ontologically speaking, it is important to recognize the social structure as being shaped by changing identities, interests, and preferences. How do external states internalize these norms and values? According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) norms experience a “norm life cycle”, which consists of three stages -- “norm emergence”, “norm cascade”, and “internalization”. These theoretical stages apply to NATO enlargement. “Norm emergence” refers to NATO promoting its norms as the standard at the international level; “Norm Cascades” is the process in which NATO socializes external states to conform; “internalization” is the final step in which its norms have been accepted and become part of the actor’s identity (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

International institutions utilize a variety of mechanisms aimed at transforming potential members. They shape actors to behave in a manner deemed socially acceptable and in congruence with community norms. Actors learn how to interact within a given structure through the process of enlargement. NATO’s stages of enlargement (e.g., PfP and MAP) is a process of international socialization which, “... can be defined as the process of embedding the constitutive beliefs and practices of an international community in the domestic decision-making processes” (Schimmelfennig

2007). In other words, it is necessary to conceptualize NATO as a community organization that socializes external states to abide by specific set of international norms. Eventually, NATO hopes they adopt these norms in their national policies. Actors undergo this process to learn adequate behaviors and internalize community norms within a social environment.

BiH is undergoing NATO's socialization process because it values international recognition and legitimacy, therefore welcoming the material costs of the accession process. It has demonstrated a willingness to embody the constitutive community values and norms, for it sees NATO membership as a symbol of success. Full membership will be granted when NATO believes its norms and practices have become an integral part of BiH's identity (Schimmelfennig 2007). BiH has consciously engaged with NATO as the "student" to learn how to follow NATO norms and has developed its preferences accordingly. NATO's role in the WB is purely defensive. It is defensive not in the theoretical sense, rather, NATO's mission in this region is cultivating stability through the diffusion of democratic norms. Because the WB is in Europe's backyard, NATO must integrate its neighbors as a way to guarantee peace and stability. The objective is, "... to defend the community against competing values and norms and to expand the community by disseminating its principles and precepts." (Schimmelfennig 2007).

A Complimentary Theoretical Approach?

BiH's aspirations to join NATO are embedded in constructivist logic, still, it is also viable to implement a rationalist argument in defining BiH's accession process. An individualist ontology assumes BiH calculates the material and social benefits of norm compliance. As an external state, recognition as a NATO member would grant BiH with various benefits. Unfortunately, because BiH is not yet a member, I contend that it

cannot fully embrace NATO's collective identity and as a result, the relationship is solely based upon membership conditionality².

An institution offers membership and support and in return, the actor must conform to the community norms and values (Schimmelfennig 2005). BiH understands that its best option to accept these terms and conditions in order to further cement domestic stability. It has seen its neighbors, Croatia and Montenegro, successfully participate in the Europeanization of its institutions³. Norm compliance has propelled Croatia into the EU and established Montenegro as a NATO member; evidently, the rewards are greater than the costs.

Before a state subordinates its individual interest, it calculates and seeks maximization by following the norms established by the international institution. According to Jeffrey Checkel (2005), international institutions rely on three socialization mechanisms -- strategic calculation, role-playing, and normative suasion -- that link institutions to socializing outcomes. The strategic calculation method is applicable in this case because it argues that incentives and rewards play a role in the socialization process. This mechanism has deep roots in rationalist social theory, which states that agents are viewed as instrumentally rational (Checkel 2005). As an external state, BiH has no option other than behaving in a manner that conforms to NATO's values. Based on this argument, actors internalize norms after membership is granted. Simply put, would be members strategically abide by NATO rules in order to access the social and material benefits and later internalized attitudes follow. At current, BiH is undergoing this process, meaning BiH cannot, "actively and reflectively internalize a new understanding of appropriateness" (Checkel 2005). As an external actor, BiH understands socialization is a necessary process to give it the support of the community. As a fragile state that lacks material resources, it is incentivized to accept these conditions. David Chandler (2013) asserts that, "...international state-building as a framework of democracy promotion is largely established on the basis that changes in states institutions can

² The process in which aspiring members comply with specific international norms. Institutions create goals for states that aspire to join the community (Aybet 2010).

³ Europeanization is the transfer of EU norms and rules to an aspiring member under a particular set of conditions (Cirtautas and Schimmelfennig 2010).

enable the mediation of the domestic and the international so that dysfunctional states can gain from the global liberal norms and international institutions... ". BiH's foreign policy objective is gaining international recognition and legitimacy as a European state. Until NATO membership unfolds, BiH's identity will be shaped by the idea of membership, not by an understanding of collective identity; it is an outsider looking in. The logic of collective identity will only be applicable after BiH joins NATO. Thus, one can apply a rational argument to BiH's integration process. Once BiH "passes", BiH can, therefore, put the community before its individual interests.

Before an external actor internalizes norms, it will employ a strategic calculation approach on the benefits of accession. That is, because BiH is geographically positioned in the heart of Europe and surrounded by NATO members, BiH accepted NATO's conditions. It consciously chooses to participate in the socialization process. This is a strategic choice, in line with rationalist assumptions. The incentives are placed before the political elites and decision-makers so that they can make the necessary structural reforms that bring it closer to NATO.

Finally, a rationalist logic applies to my argument that NATO should increase its efforts to fast track BiH's membership because of BiH's strategic importance and to the stability of the region and Europe. When it comes to enlargement, we should expect prospective members to experience an identical accession process to ensure quality control and fair entry. In the case of BiH, NATO should loosen the requirements for membership due to the country's current political shortcomings. BiH is a problematic case because it presents many challenges concerning the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of decisions for domestic institutional change, though its commitment to the socialization process persists. I am not in any way attempting to develop a synthetic approach in the way Chekel does. Nor am I trying to settle this debate, rather I have attempted to demonstrate that rationalist and constructivist assumptions are applicable in this specific analysis and can complement each other, "... processes of social construction and strategic bargaining are deeply intertwined..." (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

A Historical Summary of BiH and NATO

BiH and NATO maintain a relationship that dates back to the early 1990s. After the end of the war, BiH became an independent state and NATO transitioned into a security guarantor. The war in Bosnia was an influential event that changed the landscape of the region and the outcome changed the direction of NATO's mission.

The Land Where East Meets West: Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH is located in the WB and is one of the six countries that made the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). It is geographically positioned in the heart of Europe and although its landmass is relatively big, its population is only about 3.5 million. BiH can trace its origins back to the early Slavs who settled the area and later formed the Kingdom of Bosnia that was later controlled by the Ottoman Empire from the 15th century and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018). It is in Sarajevo, during the Austro-Hungarian period, where the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand took place.

Remnants of Ottoman Empire remain visible in modern BiH, primarily throughout its political and social culture (Mujadizevic 2017). These commonalities have contributed to friendly Turko-Bosnian relations and explains Turkey's growing presence in BiH. This special bond has motivated Turkish President Erdogan to ramp up activity in the region. Because Turkey believes BiH is within its sphere of influence, the Turkish government made it clear of its intentions to actively engage in Bosnian affairs⁴. As a predominantly Muslim country, BiH has become vulnerable to a few Gulf States looking to extend its influence into Europe⁵. Within the last decade, some Gulf States have

⁴ Turkey has provided economic aid, opened universities and mosques, encouraged Turkish investment, and led infrastructure projects:

<https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-western-balkans-comeback-european-union-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>

⁵ Saudi Arabia and Qatar were amongst the first to have invested in the constitution of mosques, shopping centers, and cultural community centers, etc:

<http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/bosnia-herzegovina-influence-gulf-states-economics-politics/>

carried out soft power strategies in and around Sarajevo, which some translate as an imposition of Arab norms upon a vulnerable population. The influx of Arab tourists coupled with investments worry some Bosnians, but as the economic benefits persist, so will this trend. BiH's identity has been partly shaped by the Orient, but many Bosnians consider themselves European. The Euro-Atlantic community is heavily present in BiH -- the United States is its most important international partner. The United States is arguably BiH's strongest diplomatic partner that aids BiH during its post-conflict transition phase. Apart from economic aid, the US contributes valuable security-related resources through numerous bilateral relations in areas of defense, counter-terrorism, and crime prevention⁶. Since the early 1990s, both countries have worked together to enhance stability, albeit thin, and implement much needed structural reforms.

What makes BiH unique country, is its constitution and political architecture. It is a heterogeneous country that is composed of two entities and the Brcko District⁷ -- The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and RS. The executive branch is a rotating tripartite presidency that represents the following groups: Bosniaks (50.1%), Bosnian-Serbs (30.8%), and Bosnian-Croats (15.4%)⁸. BiH is one of the few Muslim majority countries in Europe and as of 2013 census, the three major religions are Islam (51%), Orthodox Christianity (31%), and Roman Catholicism (15%)⁹. These demographics are important when considering NATO enlargement since BiH's ethno religious composition plays a role in the deep-rooted political rivalries that complicates the integration process. Ethnic tensions in BiH, during Yugoslavia, were kept in check under Authoritarian leader Josip Broz Tito, however, a struggling economy and the death of Tito would send Yugoslavia into chaos (Anderson 1995).

In the early 1990s, nationalism was weaponized under President Slobodan Milosevic in order to gain mass support from Serbs across SFRY. The suppression,

⁶ For more on Bilateral relations refer to:

<http://www.bhembassy.org/documents/bihandus.pdf>

⁷ The Brcko District is a, small, self-governing body located in the north-eastern part of BiH.

⁸ Statistics found on the official Bosnian government website: <http://www.statistika.ba/?lang=en>

⁹ Statistics found on the official Bosnian government website: <http://www.statistika.ba/?lang=en>

imprisonment, and killings of Albanians in Kosovo and the subsequent curtailment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 exposed Milosevic's intentions (Anderson 1995). Serbia's growing nationalism and the actions in Kosovo became a threat to the other republics. One could make the argument that the independence referendums in Slovenia and Croatia were a direct response of Milosevic's lust for power. The fall of SFRY was made inevitable when Slovenia and Croatia successfully gained their independence in 1991. Soon after, BiH also held its own independence referendum in March 1992.

Generally, most Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats favored independence, except the Bosnian Serbs. They rejected such a proposal and the result of the referendum further exacerbated ethnic tensions (Filipovic 2016). In response, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA), with the support of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and Serbian paramilitary groups, overseen by Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) leader Radovan Karadzic, began to carry out systemic ethnic cleansing campaigns in BiH¹⁰. The referendum result was securitized as a means to launch these operations. Some speculate the Karadorevo meeting in March 1991 between Croatian President Franjo Tudman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic pertained to the redistribution of BiH (Preljevic 2017). Although speculative, this meeting exemplifies the hostile attitudes towards the Bosniaks. Nevertheless, Serbian leaders fueled nationalist sentiments in order to gain support for the operations that led to many human rights violations during the conflict.

NATO Before the Bosnian War

Spearheaded by the United States, NATO served as the vanguard of liberal democratic norms during the Cold War, functioning to contain the Soviet Union (USSR). The collapse of communism triggered the debate regarding NATO's contemporary security architecture. Early on, NATO expansion received its fair share of skepticism and mixed analyses, for example, the Scandinavian states worked together to find an

¹⁰ For more on the SDS and BSA involvement in Bosnia refer to the CIA handout: https://fas.org/irp/cia/product/bosnia_handout.html

alternative to NATO; they sought to create a Scandinavian based system with limited military ties to the United States (Lundestad 2005). Early rounds of enlargement were critical because it ensured the survival of Western democratic institutions and regional security. Greece, Turkey, Spain, and West Germany joined the community and set the stage for future rounds of enlargement. Indeed NATO's strength was dependent on its military capabilities, yet its greatest asset was the political influence that fostered regional cooperation.

NATO's main objective during the Cold war was to protect Europe from competing ideologies. Through integration, NATO countered the USSR from gaining influence in states left weakened after World War II. The integration of Greece and Turkey are early examples of stability projection in Europe. NATO invited Greece and Turkey to become members and began mediating their longstanding international disputes (Lindley-French and MacFarlane 2007). The Alliance demonstrated a capacity to resolve disputes, which would ultimately translated into regional stability. This meant the USSR could no longer exploit existing division for its own geopolitical gains. In response to NATO's first round of enlargement, the USSR introduced the Warsaw Pact in 1955. Security concerns were a reality, but these moves were political rather than militarily oriented; NATO and the USSR were involved in a game of geopolitical chess. The Warsaw Pact bolstered communism in Europe, creating a larger Eastern bloc in Europe that legitimizes communist norms.

The debate regarding NATO's relevance surfaced when the USSR fell. If NATO's function was Soviet containment, then what was its objective in post-Cold war system? The community was struggling to justify its existence as defending Europe from communism no longer seemed viable. There were suggestions to dissolve NATO or transferring power to the United Nations (UN) or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Rice 2017). For most of the early 1990s, NATO was in a unsettling predicament. The Alliance was adapting to the changing international climate, meanwhile, its identity remained unclear. The most consequential event that

tested NATO was the war in BiH. The Bosnian War led to the fall SFRY, but most importantly, it succinctly tested NATO's security resolve in a new world order.

A New Security Challenge: NATO During the Bosnian War

The early 1990s were characterized by uncertainty as the collapse of communism and the disintegration of SFRY ushered in unexpected challenges. NATO was not properly organized to effectively manage the unfolding crisis in BiH. After rejecting BiH's independence referendum results, the BSA commenced operations to annex territory and engaged in ethnic cleansing in the eastern part of the country and by April 1992, widespread fighting broke out throughout the country. The Bosnian Serbs surrounded Sarajevo, leading to mass civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands. The Ratko Mladic¹¹ led BSA, weaken the Bosnian government and fought to form a Bosnian Serb state. The inferior Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) was left alone to defend the city for more than three years¹².

Foreign actors were present as international observers for the majority of the conflict. The United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) and NATO were sidelined while the BSA brutally massacred the Bosniaks. The absence of political consensus from the international community is to blame for the prolonged fighting and prevented NATO from intervening from the beginning. Initially, the US was not involved, "... at the request of France and Britain, who had sought a 'European' solution to this regional crisis."(Crawford 2000). The French and British were hesitant to involve NATO, instead opting for a UNPROFOR strategy; the major powers wanted to take a cautious approach. Understandably so, NATO intervention was unthinkable because the Alliance was not considered to be an interventionist organization. The failed Vance-Owen Plan highlighted the international community's ineffective negotiations efforts. The plan sought to divide BiH into ten geographic units and relied on the UNPROFOR as its

¹¹ Often referred to as the "Butcher of Bosnia", Ratko Mladic is a convicted war criminal who led the BSA.

¹² For more on the dynamics of the ARBiH refer to:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/06/world/stalemate-like-a-victory-for-sarajevo.html>

enforcement mechanism (Crawford 2000). Lingering Cold War attitudes prevented its implementation as the US and Russia were unable to cooperate on the framework. Political divisions ran deep during the conflict as there was no agreed view on what interests were at stake in SFRY and how to achieve them (Sperling and Webber 2009). As mentioned earlier, NATO was unable to take swift action in BiH because there simply was no doctrine for such cases and its military structure could not adapt to the current challenges (Sperling and Webber 2009).

In February 1994, NATO gained credibility with the downing of four Bosnian Serb planes over Banja Luka in response to violating a flight ban (Crawford 2000). This marked an important benchmark in NATO's history and gave it a significant role in the conflict until the launch of Operation Deliberate Force (ODF). ODF was a direct result of the Srebrenica massacre in which the Bosnian Serbs seized the helpless village of Srebrenica. The UN declared Srebrenica a safe zone where over 60,000 Muslim refugees were under protection. The European powers took a passive role, choosing traditional UN peacekeeping measures, therefore the BSA was able to exploit this safe area (MacMahon 2000). The BSA realized that UNPROFOR was unable to engage in combative actions because its policy of neutrality. Facing no resistance from UNPROFOR, they entered in July 1995 and commenced the worst genocide on European soil since World War II. The BSA gathered and killed more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys and the systemically raped women and girls.¹³ In response to this massive failure by the international peacekeeping forces, NATO was given authority to commence ODF.

On August 30, 1995, NATO airstrikes targeted BSA infrastructure. Of the many individuals responsible for this operation, the leadership of NATO Secretary General Willy Claes proved consequential. Claes is important because his commitment and determination led to a successful campaign (Hendrickson 2004). He acted as a capable leader, for example, he supported General Joulwan's request to use Tomahawk

¹³ For more on the Srebrenica Massacre refer to:
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/decision-to-intervene-how-the-war-in-bosnia-ended/>

missiles against the BSA in Banja Luka, which is now considered to be significant in showing NATO's resolve (Hendrickson 2005). The Secretary-General made decisions that may not have been widely accepted, nonetheless, his decisions determined the outcome of the Bosnian War. Claes is often given credit as the individual responsible for moving the Alliance towards the use-of-force approach (Hendrickson 2004). On September 20, 1995, ODF successfully concluded its campaign when the BSA could no longer hold on to territory after weeks of NATO bombings. Coupled with the inability to continue fighting on the ground against Bosniak and Bosnian Croatian forces, they entered peace negotiations. From a strategic standpoint, the Bosnian Serbs accepted negotiations as they could no longer sustain massive losses (Hendrickson 2005). ODF is the reason the international community met in Dayton, Ohio where peace negotiations commenced. After years of infighting, the leaders of BiH, Croatia, and Serbia officially agreed to end the war when they signed the DPA in December 1995.

NATO After the Bosnian War: From a Passive Cold War Military Alliance to an Active Security Provider

After four years of fighting, the road to peace and stability was paved with the signing of the DPA. Although the DPA received criticism for failing to produce self-sustaining peace, it ended one of the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II. Following the historic agreement, NATO launched Operation Joint Endeavor (OJE) in December 1995, an implementation force (IFOR), marking its first peacekeeping mission. IFOR was a peace enforcing operation that ensured violence did not erupt between the newly formed entities but most importantly oversaw the implementation of the DPA's military mandates (Hope 2017). Beyond the implementation of the DPA, the Bosnian war is partly responsible for the evolution of NATO's strategy. NATO adopted MC400/1 in 1996, outlining a formal commitment to peace-support and enforcement operations beyond its territory (Sperling and Webber 2009). ODF set the stage for NATO's post-Cold War structural reforms and future rounds of enlargement. The

alliance shifted towards crisis management and conflict prevention, "... and with it changes to force structures (away from forward defense), command structure (the abolition of Allied Command Channel) and a presumption in favor of cooperating with other international organizations." (Sperling and Webber 2009).

The conflict in BiH unquestionably reshaped NATO's identity. It gave the Alliance a renewed sense of purpose and ODF demonstrated that NATO was capable of leading a large-scale multinational military operation and using force to produce non-Article 5 objectives (Hendrickson 2005). The successful campaign lifted the siege of Sarajevo and NATO emerged as the supreme international peace enforcing institution. NATO moved beyond its traditional role, becoming a security provider, and adapted its military structure to fit missions beyond Article 5 (Cotter 2009). The intervention in BiH was the first time the alliance had operated outside of its territory and remained in BiH through IFOR.

The DPA's military details were carried out by 60,000 IFOR troops, which oversaw the transfer of territory, cantonment of weaponry, and demobilization until it was gradually replaced in 1996 by a stabilization force (SFOR)¹⁴. Like IFOR, the NATO-led SFOR deterred hostilities and guaranteed stability -- its main function was providing a secure environment in which local and national authorities and international organizations could work to rebuild the country¹⁵. For instance, SFOR worked with the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to arrest individuals responsible for war crimes during the conflict (Harland 2018). That is, SFOR created an environment where domestic and international institutions could work towards the reconstruction of BiH. The country's defense structures remained divided into three ethnic groups, still, SFOR supported the significant military reforms that would unify and modernizes BiH's armed forces within the framework of the Defense Reform Commission (DRC) (Defense Reform Commission 2005). SFOR and DRC helped BiH develop a unified command

¹⁴ For more on IFOR refer to NATO:
https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52122.htm

¹⁵ For more on SFOR refer to NATO:
<https://www.nato.int/SFOR/docu/d981116a.htm>

and control structure and develop a joint doctrine and standards for training and equipment that were compatible with NATO (NATO 2017). Progress was made in BiH under SFOR supervision, therefore the EU later replaced SFOR with the European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea in 2004 (Blease 2010).

As BiH was on the road to peace, NATO turned its attention to another conflict in the Western Balkans. In Kosovo, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic stripped the region of its autonomy and resorted to violent measures in order to stymie the growing Kosovar Albanian political movement. Under these circumstances, the Kosovar Albanians formed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to fight against Serbian oppression. The fighting took a drastic turn in 1999 when Serbian forces massacred 45 Kosovar Albanian civilians in the small village of Racak. Milosevic defied the Euro-Atlantic community believing the alliance would not strike, however, those calculations were wrong as NATO launched Operation Allied Force (OAF) in 1999 as punishment for the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians (Cotter 2009). After days of intense airstrikes on Serb targets in Kosovo and Serbia, Milosevic agreed to NATO demands in which refugees would return and allow NATO forces to operate in Kosovo. Two days later, led by General Mike Jackson, Kosovo Force (KFOR) marched into Kosovo to provide security for the province (Hickman 2017). OAF became NATO's second successful combat operation that validated NATO as a crisis management and conflict resolution apparatus. Tarnished by the legacy of its failure in BiH, the key reason for its success in Kosovo stems from NATO's unity and resolve. Lessons learned from BiH enabled the alliance to be operationally effective in managing the conflict in Kosovo.

The negative experience in BiH is the reason why NATO made internal reforms that created PfP and was intended to establish security links between external countries and NATO, facilitating, “.. transparency in national defense planning and budgeting and develop co-operative military relations with NATO, developing forces better able to cooperate with those of the alliance.” (Crawford 2000). The significance of PfP must not be overlooked, because it is general framework for aspiring members to follow and led the subsequent rounds of enlargement. Additionally, Eunika Katarzyna Frydrych (2008)

points out, that CEE countries were seeking to deepen their relationships with the alliance, leading NATO to published the *Study on NATO Enlargement* in September 1995. This literature offered a detailed guide for aspiring members to develop closer ties to NATO and how to gain recognition as a candidate (Frydrych 2008) . The central aim was not the immediate integration of CEE countries. The goal was disseminating literature that would facilitate the necessary institutional changes for serious membership consideration. These early transformations in NATO's doctrine paved the way for various Western Balkans countries to join the alliance.

Relations between NATO and WB countries are healthy. BiH has made significant reforms to its security and defense sectors in order to meet NATO standards. The relationship between NATO and BiH is robust due their historic ties and the influence NATO maintains in BiH. NATO has shown a commitment to the region since the 1990s as a peacekeeping institution. As so, it fostered regional military cooperation and encouraged security and defense sector reform in many countries. NATO's strategic aim is consolidating stability and to facilitate the integration of all these countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures (Frydrych 2008).

Contemporary NATO Relations

This section will look at NATO's ongoing relationship with BiH, tracing back to the initial steps BiH made to become a member. The impact of NATO's intervention during the Bosnian war influenced the dynamics of the relationship, but most importantly, it has allowed for BiH to develop its institutions and engage in state-building endeavors. NATO's willingness to socialize BiH shows a commitment to the WB while containing Russia. The presence of Russia threatens the integrity liberal democratic values in a region still recovering from the perils of communism. In response to Russian meddling, the Alliance shifted its attention back to the region.

The Current Dynamics of NATO's Relationship with BiH

The Bosnian Presidency first expressed BiH's readiness to join the Euro-Atlantic community in 2001 and backed it with several reforms (MoD of BiH 2015). The alliance serves multiple functions, but most importantly embeds stability through active assistance and advice regarding BiH's military and security and defense sectors. Although EUFOR has taken over tactical missions, NATO remains committed, which fundamentally advanced the country's national security strategy and defense organizations (MoD of BiH 2013). Its office in Sarajevo allows NATO to ensure PfP related commitments materialize. Consistent cooperation mechanisms created conditions that enabled the merging of the once divided Bosnian Ministry of Defence (MoD) (Seroka 2008). In this context, NATO's "rhetorical action" is socializing BiH through the logic of appropriateness. NATO directs its constitutive beliefs and practices, anticipating BiH will internalize these norms into its own cognitions and behaviors (Schimmelfennig 2000).

BiH made advancements in the integration process, but also experienced some low points when coordinating with NATO officials because of the seemingly endless NATO requirements. Naturally, some friction will transpire between cooperating partners. In fact, the MoD claimed that in addition to prolonged process, NATO attitudes of superiority in Sarajevo affected the relationship between MoD staff and NATO staff (Katica 2008). Generally, attitudes remain fine, but NATO officials should find ways to strengthen these relationships and prevent low-level quarrels that only serve to stagnate progress.

In 2007, BiH's key instrument of military and defense cooperation with NATO was the Planning and Review Process (PARP). PARP gives alliance members an opportunity to provide invaluable feedback to BiH representatives, which in turn allows BiH to formally address its current shortcomings¹⁶. Under PARP, BiH has made the

¹⁶ For more on PARP refer to:
https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_68277.htm

necessary adjustments towards building interoperable units capable of working alongside NATO forces (NATO 2018). The relationship between NATO and BiH deepened in 2008 with the adoption of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). IPAP is uniquely tailored for each participating country, identifying specific objectives and priorities for the partner country.¹⁷ It functions to isolate particular deficiencies and encourages cooperation between other IPAP partners, through various means of support and contributions (NATO 2017). Partners countries are encouraged to make the adjustments to create an environment necessary for the defense reforms and internal stability to unfold (NATO 2017).

Through consolidating PARP and IPAP documents, NATO evaluates BiH's priorities and military objectives by establishing specific measures of effectiveness to gauge the level of progress made (MoD of BiH 2015). As so, BiH selects special events from a NATO menu, and if approved, receives financial support to participate in those NATO sanctioned events. According to the BiH MoD (2105), in 2014, the NATO Cooperation Program consisted of 24 areas of cooperation, 103 activities and 133 events, of which 30 were assigned to the MoD, 102 to the ARBiH, and 1 to the ministry of defense. Such activities are socialization mechanisms that internalize NATO norms and values within BiH defense and security institutions.

It is evident that BiH is on the path to becoming a security provider, participating in NATO activities, like the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. BiH contributed a variety of officers to the Danish and German ISAF units and currently provides assistance to NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM)¹⁸. These operations and missions are imperative for the development of BiH's armed forces and decision makers because it provides invaluable real-world experience. It is granted access to exclusive NATO decisions making centers and improves relations with the

¹⁷ For more on IPAP refer to:

https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_49290.htm

¹⁸ For more on ISAF in Afghanistan refer to:

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm

allies (MoD of BiH 2013). In addition to the socialization process, involvement in such activities signals to BiH that NATO's open door policy remains intact.

NATO made a consequential decision during the Tallinn Summit in April 2010 that intensified dialogue in the accession process. NATO Foreign ministers authorized the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to invite BiH to join MAP, with the condition that the central government registered all immovable military property (IMP) under the jurisdiction of the MoD and AFBiH (Preljevic 2017). Undeniably so, BiH progressed in various areas, but conditions were not met due to the complications stemming from the divisions between the two Bosnian entities. Nonetheless, the invitation to join MAP signifies NATO's willingness to integrate BiH and its reshifting strategy back towards European affairs. At current, this particular issue remains as an impediment to the accession process, but the MoD along with NATO headquarters in Sarajevo should remain resilient and continue to make efforts that will make NATO membership a reality in the near future.

The Doors Remain Open: The Commitment to Regional Integration

After the accession of various CEE countries, NATO's natural path of enlargement was towards WB but the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States shifted the Alliance's focus towards the Middle East. Attitudes have shifted yet again and NATO's will to integrate WB stems from the emerging threats. Over the last few decades, the region, considered to be Europe's backyard, has sustained a drastic, "... transformation of geopolitical, security and defense circumstances, ranging from NATO intervention against the former Yugoslavia (1995, 1999), and continuing with, the treaty of Ohrid (2001), independence of Montenegro (2006) and Kosovo (2008), Albania and Croatia's NATO membership (2009), and Croatia's EU membership." (Terziev and Koleci 2018). In effect, these changes impacted the general composition of the region, specifically in the area of NATO-led security reforms. With the exception of Serbia, most

WB countries willingly accepted NATO conditions that transformed their security and defense sectors (Zornaczuk 2012). NATO's involvement in WB is critical because it allows the Alliance to subdue security threats before they snowball into greater challenges. A firm presence enables NATO to work with individual countries to discourage conflict and prevents the fragmentation of WB. With the assistance of other international institutions, NATO continues to navigate the region towards greater Euro-Atlantic normalization. The direct consequence of such reforms is visible with the emergence of democratically elected governments, enhancing the stability of relationships between neighbor countries in WB (Kirchner 2013).

The implementation of higher standards could be seen as a barrier to entry for BiH. Standards are higher than they were for the CEE states because of the distinctions in economies, societies, and militaries (Seroka 2008). Even if it may seem contradictory, higher standards to the accession process show a real commitment to the reformation of the various sectors that will enable the WB to tackle non-defense related issues like organized crime and corruption. Curtailing corruption at the highest levels ensures the reduction of foreign influence in regional governments, "... it is now more essential than ever that NATO member states individually commence pressure upon these corrupt elites for the simple fact that international players dedicated to weakening NATO are now forming strong relationships with them..." (Hope 2017). In doing so, NATO integration prevents circumstances wherein competing norms enter the WB theater and potentially reignites a conflict.

NATO's *Strategic Concept*¹⁹ finds it imperative to bring WB back to Europe. With that said, the prospects for regional integration of WB in the near future is promising, evident when looking at the progress made in Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Slovenia. NATO'S regional approach for integration is paying dividends as the enlargement and integration processes of the WB states solidifies the development of a regional community that adheres to NATO norms. Success can be

¹⁹ For more on NATO's Strategic Concept refer to:
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm

seen in the three categories of states that exist in the region. These include countries that are ensconced in both the EU and NATO; those states that are members of NATO and candidates for EU accession; and those states that do not belong to either institution (Bugajski 2010). All previous enlargements of NATO had a positive impact with the actors involved and the encouraged reforms that led to the growth of the market, economic growth, financial strength and stability (Maksuti and Sela 2015). Overall, these are the motivating factors that drives NATO operate in the WB.

Before the Euro-Atlantic community can formally accept aspirant countries, the WB countries must demonstrate a willingness to overcome their differences with their neighbors and maintain regional cooperation. That is, NATO's values extend beyond security and defense, ergo, an important set of politico-strategic criteria -- included in the NATO MAP prospectus -- must be fulfilled, particularly through establishing a functioning law-governed democracy and market economy, a peaceful settlement of border disputes, and commitment of minority rights (Greenwood 2005). A majority of WB countries have successfully internalized these norms.

Finally, the recent migration crisis that took place in the region is one area in which the Euro-Atlantic community failed to manage. It was a missed opportunity to effectively work with partner countries to resolve this security threats. The region was left to operate with almost no guidance from the Euro-Atlantic community, resulting in hampered efforts towards regional stability (Lakic 2018). In addition to humanitarian challenges, organized crime and corruption will likely emerge as the greatest challenges. These vulnerabilities can inflame tensions and provide opportunities for nationalist groups to enter the mainstream political arena. If not properly addressed, foreign countries, especially Russia, will exploit these deficiencies.

The Russian Conundrum

One might ask why an international institution goes through such great lengths to integrate a rather small set of countries that cannot make significant material contributions? Despite presenting a constructivist approach for NATO enlargement, the

integration of the WB can also be explained through an alternative geostrategic lens. The region is important to NATO because of its geographical position and the looming Russian threat. In other words, from a rationalist assumption, NATO is invested in the WB to deter Russia from undermining the Alliance's territorial integrity. For that reason, the integration of the WB obviates instability and anti-western attitudes (Lang 2018). The Kremlin sees the WB as a battlefield, where a geopolitical war with the West is under way. Its sole objective is to prevent integration and stymie future ambitions of joining the EU and NATO.

The Kremlin's revamped foreign policy interests are a direct result of NATO's latest rounds of enlargement combined with the installment of its new *Strategic Concept*. Contrary to its 1993 *Foreign Policy Concept*, Russia's 2000 *Foreign Policy Concept* highlighted its grievance stating that there have been attempts, "...to create a structure of international relations based on the domination of developed Western countries, under US leadership, providing for unilateral solutions of major issues in world politics, above all with the use of military force, in violations of fundamental standards of international law." (Cross 2002). NATO's open door policy and the subsequent addition of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in March 1999 was the catalyst for Russia's precarious post-Cold war relationship with the West. NATO's cooperation instruments are viewed as attempts, specifically by the US, to bring its former republics within the Western sphere of influence (Crawford 2002). Russia's outdated mindset translates the self-determination of the states on its periphery as acts of aggression orchestrated by the West to undermine its sovereignty. The Kremlin responded to NATO's policy of eastward expansion namely through the use of force against former Soviet republics and interference in their elections, using energy as a strategic asset, implementing modern military strategic initiatives, and providing vulnerable regimes with economic aid in return for military loyalty (Fatic 2010).

After Russia's military withdrawal from Kosovo in 2003, Vladimir Putin vowed to return to the region under another guise (Bugajski 2010). The hostile actions in Georgia and Ukraine were designed to increase its sphere of influence and more recently,

Russia continues to practice opportunistic retaliation as a means to diminish NATO's progress in the WB. Russia was accused of conspiring to stage a coup in Montenegro in 2016 in order to thwart its bid into NATO²⁰. According to reports, on election day, 20 Montenegrin and Serbian citizens were arrested in connection to Russian nationals responsible for the coup and assassination plot to kill the Prime Minister (Corpadean 2018). The objective was to develop internal uncertainty that would keep it beyond the reach of NATO membership; the Alliance does not admit countries with unresolved internal conflicts. Russia believes the region is part of its special zone of interest and it will pursue a geopolitical strategy that capitalizes on lingering ethnic tensions. Given the ramifications of the Kremlin's destabilizing endeavors, it is essential to modernize NATO defenses against a possible replication of the Kremlin's hybrid warfare strategy (Kiesewetter and Zielke 2016). In doing so, Russian aggression towards these states will not cease to exist but will consolidate threat perceptions under a common framework in which the alliance and its partners can effectively deter Russian momentum. A reflection of operational deterrence can be seen via the enactment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) that is active across the Alliance's eastern flanks.²¹

Russian President Vladimir Putin is increasingly more assertive and determined to promote Serbian nationalism as a means to dismantle NATO's efforts in the region (Hope 2017). For example, in Kosovo, Russia has sponsored cultural centers, orthodox churches, business investments, and the dissemination of anti-Albanian sentiments through its media outlet Sputnik (Hope 2017). This is not unique to Kosovo; this theme is replicated across various countries. Russia's aims to instill fear and anger upon a particular sect of peoples that will fuel nationalism and sow internal divisions. Simply put, the Kremlin propagates misinformation or "fake news" to "divide and conquer". It

²⁰ Trials are ongoing and investigations conclude that over 50 Russian GRU military intelligence officers crossed the border to assist the participants in the foiled plot:

<https://warsawinstitute.org/information-montenegro-coup-trial-revealed/>

²¹ For on on VJTF refer to:

<https://shape.nato.int/nato-response-force--very-high-readiness-joint-task-force>

exploits the Serb's natural affinity towards Russia, which interprets NATO intervention in Yugoslavia as a fight the entire Slavic and orthodox world (Erlanger 2018). These are the exact attitudes that benefit Russia, particularly in the RS.

BiH's growing ethnic tensions makes it a prime target to be victimized. The RS in BiH naturally aligns itself with Russia due to their commonalities and the feelings of marginalization resulting from its experience with NATO during the Bosnian War. The RS supports the Kremlin and maintains a cooperation framework with Russian security forces. In 2016, a Russian delegation to RS agreed to deepen their links through establishing a partnership on matters related to intelligence collection, counterterrorism, and combating cybercrime (Mironova and Zawadewicz 2018). Although the entity is not permitted to possess an army, it is effectively militarizing its police units. This relationship is worrisome because indicates that Russia is actively engaged in the entity's security infrastructure through legal means. According to a recent TASS report (2018), the entity's support for Russia was magnified when the president of RS Milorad Dodik publicly called for the recognition of Crimea as part of Russian territory. The implications of these statements are significant because of the current political climate in the WB regarding. Dodik compared Crimea to Kosovo, claiming Crimea underwent a democratic process (TASS 2018). In addition to supporting nationalist politicians in the RS, the Kremlin has financial ties to Bosnian Croats. An official security report published by Zurnal found evidence of Croatian entrepreneur and former intelligence office Josip Jurcevic working with Russian citizens Igor Krizaev and Mikhail Zazhigin to lock Russia's economic influence in BiH through the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina²² (HDZBiH) (De Leon and Salvo 2018). Such relationships are detrimental to the development of BiH. Ethnic parties are not working together to develop meaningful solutions for BiH.

Finally, if NATO wants to avoid frozen conflict, it must work with the Euro-Atlantic community to repair the fragile structures and work towards the Europeanization of the WB. Otherwise, the region may become a theater for a NATO-Russia clash. Therefore,

²² HDZBiH is the largest political party of the Bosnian Croats

NATO has no option but to contain Russia and continue regional integration. Much will depend on the capacity of NATO to continue institutionalizing functional ties between West and East while waiting for the next generation of leaders to assume the responsibility of continuing the traditions that have instilled years of peace and prosperity (Anglitoiu 2018).

Learning from Its Neighbors: A Brief Examination of Croatia and Montenegro

This section will briefly examine the Croatian and Montenegrin accession processes. The objective is not to present a full analysis of each individual country, rather the goal is to identify individual successes that BiH can apply to its own journey. Reviewing the effects of NATO membership and the integration processes in both Croatia and Montenegro can provide insight into BiH's current path to NATO and potentially forecast the direction of BiH. Although each WB country is unique, they are inextricably bound by historical, ethnic, political, and economic ties. If BiH wants to share a collective identity, it should follow in the footsteps of its neighbors Croatia and Montenegro.

Croatia

Under President Franjo Tudjman, Croatia's military functioned on the basis of territorial defense. The new army transitioned from a state-building entity into a praetorian guard that would become a privileged caste in society and highly embedded within the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)²³ (Greenwood 2005). The Croatian MoD consisted of thousands of officers with virtually no civilian oversight. In particular, this regime isolated itself and believed the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was unjustified in its call for indicting those who it believed was

²³ The HDZ is a center-right political party founded by Franjo Tudjman in 1989

Croatia's national heroes who fought in a defensive war to liberate the country (Greenwood 2005). After the death of Franjo Tudjman, relations between the Euro-Atlantic community and Croatia progressed immensely. With the assistance of Prime Minister Racan and Minister of Defense Rados, President Mesic would take steps towards reforming Croatia's military and national defense strategy (Subotic 2011). The objective was NATO accession, therefore it was imperative for the newly elected administration to gain the support of several important stakeholders. This fostered internal cooperation and insured and smooth transition (Hopp 2018). The inclusion of various political stakeholders created a stable political environment necessary to implement the political, economic, and security reforms, necessary of satisfying its major foreign policy goals -- joining NATO and the EU. Croatia stands out from the rest of the WB countries because of its security and defense achievements. It is the only country in the WB that possesses military aviation and serious aircraft and ground forces due to its military spending budget (Terziev and Koleci 2018).

Initially, public attitudes regarding NATO accession was Croatia's biggest challenge. Public opinion polls in early 2008 identified that only about 50% of Croatians supported NATO, with a slight increase to over 60% after a mob of Serbians attacked the Croatian Embassy in Belgrade in response to Kosovo's declaration of independence (Terziev and Koleci 2018). Coupled with the frustration stemming from the relationship with the ICTY, the average Croatian was wary of NATO. Croatians were improperly informed about the advantages of joining the alliance. The public saw how NATO membership could have been useful during the 1990s to deter the Serbs but was not convinced that NATO was relevant because of a lack of understanding of contemporary threats (Greenwood 2005). Cognizant of such a lack of public support, NATO enacted a strategic ploy that would change public perceptions. In 2007, NATO held its annual military exercise in Croatia – the first time such an honor was bestowed upon a nonmember-- aimed towards capturing the support of the Croatian people and to demonstrate positive relations (Morelli 2009).

Croatia's cooperation with the ICTY further indicated its commitment to seek international credibility and legitimacy. For instance, the indictment of two high ranking Croatian generals, Rahmi Ademi and Ante Gotovina, who led Operation Storm in 1995, caused dissatisfaction within Croatian political circles and the general public. The Croatian government was therefore put in a precarious situation. On the one hand to criminalize these actions was to criminalize the Croatian State and on the other hand, ignoring the ICTY indictments would ultimately freeze international cooperation and end Croatia's European dreams (Subotic 2011). Prime minister Racan and President Stjepan Mesic developed a strategy that securitized this dilemma. In this context, the leading party argued that Croatia's future and European aspirations depended on cooperating with ICTY and isolated political opponents that otherwise argued against ICTY cooperation. Interestingly enough the Croatian public supported the decision to cooperate with ICTY because it was framed as an issue of Europeanization. The strategy of *Identity Convergence*²⁴ was successful because, "... even though different segments of the Croatian society and elite held very different views on the appropriateness and legitimacy of some Europeanization requirements, they all shared a grand strategy of Europeanization." (Subotic 2011). In this process, the ruling government employed a strategy of shaping public opinion to support the rule of law and framing cooperation with the ICTY as a matter of national development. In a NATO special review, Zvonimir Mahecic (2003) said, "... opinion-formers in all institutions have to renew efforts to explain the importance of war-crimes trials to reconstruction, reconciliation and the embedding of clear moral and ethical principles and the rule of law in our society."

Croatia officially commenced its path towards integration after it amended its constitution and with the subsequent signing of PfP in May 2000. A significant leap forward was taken in 2002 when the government passed the Defense Act and the Security Services Act -- including five other defense-related statutes -- that reorganized the MoD (Hopp 2018). The passing of these laws and the reorganization of the MoD

²⁴ The process by which political actors strategically emphasis shared norms and values and disregard contradictory ones in pursuit of particular political goals (Subotic 2011)

would allow for greater democratic and civilian oversight. Initially, shortcomings would come about, however, the arrival of these strategic documents added coherence and efficiency to Croatia's military and defense structures (Mahecic 2003). The adoption of a new defense strategy highlighted Croatia's internalization of NATO's norms and was later granted MAP Status. The principal focus was on downsizing the military to 16,000, improving the transparency of military budgeting, depoliticizing the MoD, eliminating conscription, reducing presidential powers over the military, and cutting the military budget to meet the means of the state (Hopp 2018). Such reforms were also meant to increase public support and attitudes regarding policy making within the country.

Croatia's military transformation was quite significant and should serve as an example for aspiring members. During the Yugoslav wars, regional militaries were structured on the basis of territorial defense. In order for its military to be interoperable with NATO forces, Croatia scaled back into a smaller, professionalized, army capable of rapid deployment to satisfy NATO peacekeeping and enforcement activities (Morelli 2009). Additionally, cooperation with the faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb led to new officers and civil servants developing skills in the field of military science. Individuals received military training and institutionalized as, "The purpose is to familiarize officials with the specific military subjects, the organization of the MoD and its management; and, at the advanced level, to give middle- rank personnel the opportunity to learn directly from senior civil servants and officers in the ministry who have a degree and at least five years experience..." (Greenwood 2005).

Regionally, Croatia no longer has any major conflict with its neighbors and in 2007 resolved its maritime boundary dispute with Slovenia. In BiH, Croatian officials continue to encourage ethnic Croats to work together within the Bosnia political system rather than seek Croatian intervention (Morelli 2009). Croatia has come a long way since gaining independence, which can be seen through its successful implementation of political, economic, and security reforms, ultimately enabling Croatia to become an equal partner within the NATO framework and an EU member. Most importantly, Croatia's accession to NATO was the first step towards the Alliance's implementation of

its Strategic Concept and established the conditions for WB states to join the community.

Montenegro

Montenegro is a small and young nation, nevertheless, its accession into NATO is a symbolic victory for the region and the Alliance. After gaining independence in 2006, Montenegro displayed a will to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic sphere when it commenced the process to join PfP, making it clear its foreign policy leaned towards NATO (Djurovic 2009). Its path to NATO was successful and different in comparison to countries that previously joined the EU or NATO. It is the first country that experienced deadly force from NATO, to seek membership and had the quintessential characteristics of states that lag in membership -- a contested identity, unstable relations with larger neighbors, lacking a full democracy, and a transition from its prior financial arrangements (O'brien 2010). In this regard, it is evident that the Montenegrin government had long engaged with the Euro-Atlantic community, becoming one of the first WB countries to commence the integration process. For instance, the MAP process generally takes several years to complete in order for NATO to determine if the partner country is ready for membership. Montenegro was granted MAP status in 2010, and finally joined in June 2017 (Hope 2018). These milestones proves the Montenegrin government was willing to make significant efforts towards integration into NATO and the EU. It can be argued that Montenegro's early efforts to join the EU and NATO initiated the trend, in regards to WB countries, towards alignment to the Euro-Atlantic community. Montenegro took further action to secure a slot as a member of the Alliance. The Montenegrin government streamlined its military capabilities and technology, pledged troops to the ISAF, adopted IPAP in 2008, and joined the Adriatic Chapter (Banovic 2016).

Montenegro's internal political dynamics were heavily influenced by its communist legacy. Thus, the new regime was responsible for enacting new strategic

documents, laws, and regulatory documents that would provide Montenegro with a feasible legal and regulatory framework that would permit the country to move forward (Djurovic 2009). A revamped legal framework was therefore constructed by the Montenegrin government that would effectively accomplish its goal of Euro-Atlantic membership. Montenegro's successful security and defense sector reforms is the key reason why the country joined NATO. Montenegro's MoD was essentially a brand new institution built from the ground up in 2007. The fundamental issue of the MoD was its organizational framework. The MoD was an inefficient institution due to its centralized nature with a complex structure and overlapping responsibilities (MoD of Montenegro 2013). In order to combat this internal weakness, the MoD was decentralized. In addition to the Secretary of State, the MoD established separate directorates -- the Directorate for Defense Policy, the Directorate for Human Resources, and the Directorate for Material Resources -- which were to be managed individually (MoD of Montenegro 2013). A major focus of its military reforms was the interoperability between Montenegrin forces and NATO forces. Montenegro elevated its military through decreasing its size and continuous training that increased the proficiency level of military personnel, participating in joint exercises with NATO, and contributing to peacekeeping missions abroad (Djurovic 2009). Through these activities paired with PARP, Montenegro was able to gauge its efficiency and apply plausible solutions to its shortcomings. To facilitate good governance in this sector, Montenegro remains a participant in NATO's Building Integrity Program. The aim of this program is to "...raise awareness, promote good practice and provide practical tools to help countries enhance the integrity and reduce risks of corruption in the security sector by strengthening transparency and accountability." (NATO 2017).

International support was quite high for Montenegro's accession to NATO. The integration process received plenty of support from, "...the United States, but also from other more or less prominent members of the Alliance, such as Germany, Romania, and Turkey, as well as two ex-Yugoslav nations, Croatia and Slovenia." (Corpadean 2018). In terms of domestic support, not all Montenegrins supported joining the Alliance. In

particular, public support was low because of NATO's air-strikes that killed Montenegrin citizens during the Kosovo conflict (Blaine and Benson 2017). Although the casualties were lower in comparison to Serbia, many still remained wary. Also, the Russian influence in Montenegro prior to its accession substantially influenced local politics. The Kremlin directly influenced Montenegro through having active Russian security services present, pro-Russian media, pro-Russian political parties, NGOs, cultural centers, and the Orthodox Church (Cingel 2017). These forces combined created an environment that caused an outbreak of anti-NATO demonstrations as Montenegro was in the process of finalizing its accession to NATO (Cingel). As the political climate was beginning to look worse, matters took a drastic turn with the attempted coup in 2016. It is alleged that Russian intelligence was responsible for the failed coup aimed at installing a pro-Russian government and assassination plot to kill the Prime Minister (Atlantic Council 2018). Though the plot failed, it demonstrated Russia's capacity to foster instability as a means deter NATO enlargement in the WB.

Today Montenegro NATO member and is in the process of joining the EU²⁵. Montenegro is evidence that if serious steps are initiated by leaders, then the NATO will be required to react according to its open door policy. Persistence and consistency are key components that determine an aspiring member's future within the Euro-Atlantic community. Montenegro continues to deploy troops to the mission in Afghanistan and is expected to increase its defense budget to 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024 (BalkanInsight 2018).

Integrating an Aspiring Member: BiH

BiH's NATO integration experience is burdened by many complexities, making the process a strenuous endeavor. This section will carefully examine the institutional reforms that BiH has undergone in order to become a serious NATO candidate, particularly in security and defense reform. Furthermore, it will address the challenges

²⁵ For more on Montenegro's accession to the EU refer to:
https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/montenegro_en

that BiH has overcome during the process and the challenges that may prevent BiH from joining the Alliance in the near future.

BiH's Security and Defense Sector Reform

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is crucial during the peacebuilding and reconstruction phase because security is a prerequisite for sustainable peace, development, and the protection of human rights (Gordon 2014). SSR is a complex process for emerging countries, particularly for a former Yugoslav country attempting to develop its political institutions. BiH inherited a system that was deeply politicized in its command structures, with no civilian control, low levels of communication between Defense Ministries, a lack of transparency, and weak parliamentary oversight (Locher III and Donley 2004). The political environment after the end of the war was distinguished by an absence of trust and rampant political divisions. Both entities were in charge of their own political systems and rarely communicated with each other, hence, institutional reforms were orchestrated externally by the international community. Despite facing these obstacles, BiH reformed the MoD, Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH), Police, and its intelligence services.

The issue of state control over weapons was exacerbated in 2002 when reports determined that the RS was illegally dealing arms. According to intelligence reports, the ORAO company²⁶ -- under the authority of RS General Staff and RS MoD -- was involved in illegal arms deals with the government of Iraq (BBC 2002). The RS was in clear violation of the UN embargo, consequently, the High Representative demanded BiH take action to establish state control over arms exports²⁷. The Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER), in cooperation with OSCE, SFOR, and OHR, was tasked with formulating a state law regulating arms exports as a state responsibility (Vetschera and Matthieu 2006). This set the precedent for defense and security-related affairs to be strictly supervised by the central government. Legally and symbolically, the

²⁶ ORAO is an aircraft company in the RS.

²⁷ The Bosnian company was conducting trade with Iraq prior to the invasion of Iraq, which led to the overhaul of the defense sector (Short 2018).

RS was weakened as it granted the state additional authority over its security and defense-related matters.

Because the newly formed BiH government lacked experience in security and defense, the international community consolidated the necessary means to enact feasible reforms. In May 2003, the High Representative advanced BiH's defense system with the establishment of the Defense Reform Commission (DRC). The main challenge was fostering a general consensus amongst the actors involved in the reconstruction of BiH. The DRC consisted of 12 members, including the chairman and four observers whom were, "... the Secretary-General of the SCMM and his two Deputies; two civilian representatives, one appointed by the President of RS and the President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina each: the two Entity Ministers of Defense; one member designated by the High Representative in his capacity as European Union Special Representative and one delegate each from NATO, SFOR, and the OSCE. The United States, the Presidency of the European Union, Turkey (as representative of the Organization of Islamic States) and the Russian Federation were invited to appoint a permanent observer to the Commission." (Vetschera and Matthieu 2006). The DRC created a legal framework -- the Defense Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina -- creating a state high command in which the presidency would collectively execute command and control of the armed forces and each MoD would focus on operational and logistical military structures (Hadzovic 2009). It solidified a common defense framework and developed a single armed forces in BiH. In 2005, international institutions persuaded both entities to pass laws and made the necessary constitutional amendments that would abolish the two entity defense ministries, leading to the establishment of a single MoD (Kapidzic and Turcalo 2014). The implementation of single, centralized MoD, in 2006 institutionalized civilians oversight rooted on democratic assumptions. The MoD was to be under the auspices of a Minister with two deputies, a Deputy Minister for Policy and Plans, and the Deputy Minister of Defense for Resource Management.²⁸

²⁸ For more on the BiH MoD refer to the structure on:
http://www.mod.gov.ba/Default.aspx?template_id=143&pageIndex=1

Defense planning and budgeting are key functions of the MoD that establishes a relationship between military strategies, methods to implement those strategies, and the means to obtain the necessary resources (MoD of BiH 2006). The principle of transparency must be applied in order for elected officials of BiH to understand the current strategic outlook of BiH and make decisions accordingly. BiH adopted the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting Execution System (PPBES) as a way to provide a greater degree of transparency on matters pertaining to defense management. The PPBES is a management system designed to connect strategies, operations, and resources within the defense sector (Katica 2008). It addresses BiH's security concerns by analyzing the most effective manner of using its limited resources. This system identifies a cost-effective solution for security threats deemed the most critical to BiH (Katica 2008).

BiH's defense institutions were amalgamated when the MoD implemented new measures responsible for promoting ethical practices and efficiency. These measures included the creation of a system for equipping, supplying and maintaining the assets and the infrastructure of the armed forces, intensifying training, empowering the armed forces to perform meaningful tasks, and education (Iliev, Petreski and Stojovski 2018). The MoD repurposed the AFBiH to meet the needs of the country's contemporary threats. They broke away from outdated territorial defense-minded strategies to one based on relevant issues. The adoption of these defense measures attributed to the resolution of issues such as the surplus of weapons, ammunition, and landmines²⁹. BiH's security and defense transformation was spearheaded by international institutions that focused primarily on consolidating the remaining armed forces. The process turned from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of servicemen, towards the development of measures of trust and promotion of democratic beliefs within the BiH's defense sector (Hadzovic 2009). Internalized NATO values and beliefs allowed the entities to work together and set the stage for a unified Bosnian military.

²⁹ Landmines are an important humanitarian issue for BiH. The AFBiH implemented the Strategy of Demining in BiH for the period of 2009-2019 in order to become mine-free by 2019 (MoD of BiH 2015).

Prior to joining PfP, as was the case with former Yugoslav republics, BiH's armed forces were inadequate to perform at the highest level. These armies were erected on the basis of territorial defense during an era in which all of BiH's neighbors were potential threats. Immediately after the conflict, the number of soldiers across the three armies totaled 419,000 and became a strain on financial resources (Kapidzic and Turcalo 2014). Having two standing armies, with different command structures, threatened stability because of the lingering tensions. Maintaining separate military capabilities stagnated the prospect of peace, thus, BiH restructured its armed forces in accordance with provisions of the Law on Defense of BiH and established a single Armed Forces of BiH in January 2006, as a professional military under the command of by the federal government of BiH (MoD of BiH 2006). The army was significantly transformed to include all ethnicities and reduced the size of the AFBiH to represent the economic realities of the country. According to this new mandate, the number of active soldiers would be limited to 12,000 and the reservist strength was set to 60,000 (Perdan 2006). This reduction made the transition to a professional army easier and allocated more resources for military personnel. A DRC report estimated that BiH's defense spending was bigger than that of other European countries of similar size (Katica 2008). With its relatively limited economy, reducing the size of the military improved BiH's defense sector.

The integration process for an aspiring NATO member commences with PfP membership, which holds a symbolic value and the starting point towards Europeanization. During a visit to BiH in 2001, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson outlined a myriad of recommendations for BiH to address before pursuing PfP candidacy. Lord Robertson's recommendations outlined the adoption of a State Defense law, State command over the armed forces, civilian oversight of the armed forces, the formation of the BiH MoD, transparent military budgets, standardization of military training, strengthening State level institutions, and full cooperation with the ICTY (Staples 2004). Although BiH was not invited to join PfP during the Istanbul Summit in 2004, it was later invited to join the program in 2006 during the Riga Summit (NATO

2006). As common knowledge would dictate, joining PfP does not guarantee accession to NATO, although its symbolism creates a dynamic relationship between NATO and partner countries.

Soon after SFOR's mission concluded and the EU assumed responsibility for BiH's general security, a NATO headquarters was established in Sarajevo. The headquarters remains active in BiH's ongoing efforts and serves as an advisory partner, pertaining to security and defense and PfP related matters. This enables senior NATO representatives to communicate expectations and facilitate progress, along with a multidisciplinary advisory group that provides constant advice and assistance in conceptualization, planning, coordination and fulfillment of security and defense-related matters (Maxwell and Olsen 2013). This model is effective, especially in the case of a developing state, because it gives BiH the autonomy to make decisions with well-defined objectives and standards to follow.

There are a wide array of educational programs that educate and train military personnel in various aspects. BiH created an education structure organized in a manner that would produce highly skilled and trained individuals capable of operating in the same language as NATO member states (Katica 2008). In order to develop and professionalize its armed forces, BiH sought cooperation with international academic institutions. To name a few, BiH has partnered with the Baltic Defense College, the George C. Marshall Center for Studies, the NATO school in Oberammergau, the Geneva Center for Security policy, and the NATO Staff College in Rome (MoD of BiH 2005). The Peace Support Operations Training Center (PSOTC) provides training and education to AFBiH and non-defense personnel on matters regarding peace missions. The MoD (2015) stated that the goal of the PSOTC is, "...achievement of NATO and UN compatible standards by MoD and AFBiH personnel and provision of support to the AFBiH in the overall efforts of BiH to contribute to international peace and security". The PSOTC remains committed to the professional development of AFBiH.

Police reform was a department that received much consideration during the initial stages of BiH's SSR. As a part of the DPA, the International Police Task Force

(IPTF) was assigned to monitor local police across BiH. From the start, the IPTF was mandated to merely observe and monitor local officers, but later given more authority to investigate human rights abuses by local police officers (Aitchison 2007). Giving the IPTF more authority allowed it to successfully make contributions to BiH's overall police reform. It reduced the number of police officers, vetted individuals, professionalized the police, and promoted human rights (Aitchison 2007). The IPTF removed officers who committed human rights abuses, involved in criminal networks, or war carried out crimes (Marijan 2016). These were enormous achievements towards justice and normality because about 70 percent of human rights abuses perpetrated during the Bosnian war were linked to the police (Ivkovic and Shelley 2005). The IPTF would later be replaced with the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) in 2003. The emergence of the EUPM Europeanized the police and in 2012 closed down as it deemed the mission a success (Marijan 2016). Overall, the IPTF and EUPM contributed to the professionalization and development of BiH's police, making it an institution the average citizen could trust.

Though not much of an emphasis was placed on intelligence, the need to reform this sector was imperative. These services were highly politicized agencies that were controlled by political parties and believed to have spied not only on other entities, but on various international actors like peacekeeping troops, observers, researchers, and the ICTY (Perdan 2006). In 2002, the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat agencies merged to become the Federal Intelligence and Security Services, but the RS remained independent. The High Representative commenced BiH's intelligence reformation process in May 2003 with the introduction of the Intelligence Reform Commission (IRC), tasked with drafting and amending legislation concerning intelligence, and chaired by former Hungarian Intelligence chief Kalman Kocsis (Krzalic and Hadzovic 2014). This process was relatively smooth in comparison to other sectors. Additional support was granted in the form of the OSCE's Intelligence Reform Implementation Section (IRIS). The IRIS was led by Slovenian security expert Dragos Fer, who generated rule books designed to guide the intelligence service vis-a-vis internal control and operational

methods (Marijan 2016). In 2004, the Law on Intelligence and Security Agency of BiH was adopted, giving way to a single state managed intelligence agency. The success of the Intelligence- Security Intelligence Agency (OSA) is largely due to the near-consensus attitude on the importance of counterterrorism efforts (Luras 2014). In other words, political elites, regardless of ethnicity, came together to support the OSA which concerned BiH's citizens best interest; ethnic differences were set aside. One major flaw of the OSA, however, is its overall composition. The OSA is a small organization with about 700 employees, which is not much when considering the size of BiH and its contemporary threats (Krzalic and Hadzovic 2014). It is a surprise the agency does not hire more human capital considering the it is responsible for intelligence gathering regarding threats to national security.

As noted before, BiH made significant reforms necessary to receive an invitation to MAP. Unfortunately, NATO could not accept BiH's Annual National Action Program (ANP) because the central government was unable to register all IMP structures located across both entities. This lack of cooperation can be explained by the implementation of the DPA, which established an inherently flawed political system.

The Challenges to BiH's Integration

Democracy-building in BiH is a recent endeavor only made possible after the conclusion of the Bosnian War. The process of reconstruction, centered on the adoption of liberal democratic values and the reformation of internal institutions, has proven to be a convoluted task due to BiH's flawed constitution. As Fionnuala Ni Aolain (1998) argues, "The constitution is a document binding 'entities,' politically estranged territories forced into a marriage of convenience by the international community. It is not the product of political consensus between leaders and people." The DPA's general framework was intended to cultivate stability in BiH, instead the underlying assumptions within the DPA created a highly decentralized government built upon ethnic lines. The agreement was predicated on the expectation that the Bosniaks, Bosnian-Croats, and Bosnian-Serbs would agree to a joint state. The international community was unable to

guarantee BiH would become functioning state with a common identity. The DPA's legacy is deeply embedded within Bosnian politics, which established a culture of political dependency. Though this may be the case, international interventions set the stage for a liberal democracy, opened space for dialog and compromise between ethnic parties, led to pluralization of the party system and political life, established core state functions, and propped up economic reconstruction and fiscal stability (Stiftung 2018).

Political stalemate remains a key feature of the Bosnian government, but the 2000 elections provided a glimmer of hope towards changing the political landscape. The Social Democratic Party (SDS) formed the Alliance for Change (AfC), on the basis of a majority, established the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the council of Ministers in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pejanovic 2014). Although the AfC only remained in power for two years, the alliance developed three projects critical for the political development of BiH -- accession of BiH to the Council of Europe (CE), creating a the State Border Service, and ethnic discrimination was abolished with the adoption of the constitutional amendment on constitutiveness of the nation the entities (Pejanovic 2018).

The DPA was indeed the catalyst for ushering in stability, but the byproduct -- the creation of separate entities -- resulted in a political system predicated on nationalism. Both entities maintain a neutral relationship and generally work together on particular issues, but when it comes to issues concerning statehood the RS is obstinate. For instance, Vetschera and Matthieu (2009) stated that time after time, "The Serbian side proved relatively flexible in substance, but became uncooperative when terms such as 'state-level Ministry of Defense' were introduced, or when it appeared that the Dayton Constitution would be challenged with respect to the distribution of competencies between the state and entities". This in turn led to distrust between both entities, preventing BiH as a whole to proceed towards NATO integration. The RS is wary of the persistent calls for the transfer of authority and the current attempts to strengthen the central government because it fears losing autonomy and the potential disappearance of the entities (Dudley 2016).

The RS rejects NATO enlargement partly because the NATO airstrikes remain fresh in the minds of the Bosnian Serbs. Many in the entity staunchly oppose NATO integration because ethnic identity prevails over an artificially created national identity. Bosnian Serbs, who are ethnically and culturally tied to Serbia, usually align themselves with Russia because NATO is believed to be the principal military tool of the West, which rekindles long standing political alliances and psychological allegiances (Roberts, Halilovic, Becirevic, and Hever 2015). That is, the Bosnian Serbs are bonded by ethn-religious beliefs that view the RS as their homeland and perceive the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats as a threat to this ideology. The idea of controlling territory is empowering because an opportunity is created for the symbolic structuring of identity and the conflicts concerning territory give rise to a new meaning to national identity (Kostovicova 2004). The Bosnian Serbs hold on to this idea of a homeland because they feel threatened by Euro-Atlantic values. In the case of MAP, disagreements between political elites in the FBiH and RS regarding IMP is the principal barrier to entry. As of 2012, the Constitutional Court of BiH identified 40 properties to be declared while 23 have been allocated as State property (Filipovic 2016). The RS possesses defense property that once belonged to the former Yugoslavia and is unwilling to relinquish these properties as the possession of IMP gives the entity leverage over the central government. The precondition for MAP stipulates that all IMP be registered to the state, for the use of the MoD of BiH (Juncos 2018).

Serbia seeks EU membership, yet many Serbians view NATO in a negative manner. The RS maintains a friendly relationship with Serbia, therefore its foreign policy influences the behavior of policy makers in RS (Plenta and Preljevic 2016). Milorad Dodik, a supporter of Serbia and Russia and leader of the Bosnian Serbs, openly defies Euro-Atlantic integration. His remarks on military neutrality creates a rift within the political system in BiH. The RS National Assembly adopted a resolution on military neutrality on October 18, 2017 stating it would remain outside any military alliance and would coordinate its policy with Serbia (Council of Europe 2017). In regards to the OHR, Dodik does not recognize his authority. He refuses to abide by DPA regulations, wants

the office shut down, has announced plans to hold a referendum regarding NATO accession, and threatened to succeed from BiH (Council of Europe 2017). Such opposition to integration translates into public opinion and misinformation about the benefits of joining the Alliance. Currently, 90% of citizens in the FBiH support NATO integration, meanwhile only 33% in the RS support such moves (Association for International Affairs 2017). Bosnian Serbs argue freedom is linked to ethnic segregation. They believe that stability can only be achieved through ethnic divisions, which will inevitably empower each constituent group to establish their own set of rules and regulations (Babuna 2014). The general principle is that each group has its own entity and place within BiH. In the past, Milorad Dodik supported the idea of establishing a third entity in BiH for the Bosnian Croats (Babuna 2014). Ironically, Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats live harmoniously in the FBiH. These beliefs are deeply ingrained into the RS public, for example, school textbooks reinforce such political ideologies, describing the inter-entity line as a positive feature and bridge of cooperation between the two entities that contributes to political stability (Kostovicova 2004). Children in RS are taught to segregation as key characteristic of the development of BiH.

The opposition to NATO in the RS is directly linked to the multiple interventions Yugoslavia, however, it is also plausible to assume NATO membership is contested because of the challenges it presents to the status quo. In this context, Bosnian Serb political elites stand to lose political capital and influence. Complying with the conditions set for MAP -- state control of IMP-- becomes problematic for those in power in the RS. The resolution on military neutrality serves the self interests of local politicians because, "It reiterates and raises awareness of opposition to NATO membership, it serves to undermine members of the Serbian political establishment in the country more inclined towards state-level politics; and it serves to underline ties with Serbia, a country itself strongly opposed to NATO membership"(EWB 2017). Overall, opposition is tied to history, but also linked to the self interest of the political elites in RS that perpetuate unfavorable assumptions about NATO integration. Politicians in the RS have consistently resisted reforms because they fear it challenges their visions for the

state. In the case of the security sector, having control over IMP guarantees the RS' independence. A more dramatic approach has been discussed, when Milorad Dodik argued for a complete demilitarization of BiH because Serbia and Croatia, its potential adversaries, signed the DPA and were committed to maintaining regional stability (Marijan 2016). Though RS politicians insist on taking a hard stance on reforms relating to integration, some believe separatist rhetoric is merely a tool to garner public support. There has been suggestions that both the SDS representative, Dragan Cavic, the leader of the RS from 2002 to 2006, and Dodik were supportive of the defence reforms in private with international actors but did not voice their support publicly (Marijan 2016).

The political system forces citizens of BiH to value ethnic identity over national identity. This obstructs the growth of a national identity because each group is jockeying for political dominance, superseding all other issues. It seems like the war continues but, through other means. Indeed, BiH's multi-party system is more dynamic and new parties continue to emerge, yet the ethno-political party orientation plays a crucial role in the country (Plenta and Preljevic 2016). The main challenge to NATO integration will be BiH's internal divisions that creates an environment where politicians are focused on securing the interests of their constituents peoples, as opposed to implementing policies and reforms that enable BiH to move forward,

The Implications of NATO Membership

BiH's accession to NATO is critical to the security of a region that has experienced a lack of robust political, economic, and social stability for the last century. First of all, BiH and Kosovo are the final aspiring WB states to remain outside the Euro-Atlantic community and are the keys to future stability. A major push towards Euro-Atlanticism should occur sooner than later if the region is to return Europe³⁰. As of now BiH and Kosovo stands as the region's main obstacles towards an imminent transition towards Europeanization, therefore it is imperative that NATO and the EU remain committed to the region in order to prevent the structural problems in both BiH

³⁰ NATO and EU officials have stated on many occasions that the region is part of the European family.

and Kosovo to cause future headaches. As Mark Galeotti (2018) says, both institutions should proactively seek, not merely support partnerships, and pay attention to issues such as institution-building and anti-corruption measures. Accession of BiH to NATO would have an immense impact on the country's foreign policy as it would be the most profound achievement since gaining independence. NATO membership signals to the international community, in particular countries that are vying for influence in BiH, that the country is committed to Euro-Atlantic values. It incentivizes BiH to continue making security related reforms that could make EU membership a reality. The current tensions in BiH exist because decision makers feel insecure about the future of the state and their status within it (Arbour and Clark 2010). A detailed path forward enables institutional reforms to proceed as the representative of all three constituent peoples would have a clear understanding of BiH's short term goals.

As discussed earlier, Serbia's foreign policy influences the RS. Serbia is an important consideration because if BiH joins the Alliance, Serbia would be in a cumbersome position. What can Serbia do in such predicament? When considered closely, Serbia's may be inclined to change its foreign policy to align with the Euro-Atlantic community. The question at hand for Serbia is the issue of Kosovo. Serbian President Vucic remains serious about the EU but does not fully align itself to EU foreign policy and has deemphasized holding onto Kosovo, although not promising bilateral recognition (Serwer 2019). Serbia intends to remain neutral in regards to military alliances and although this may be the case, Serbia does in fact cooperate with NATO's Adriatic chapter and maintains a open relationship with NATO as a PfP member (Ejdus 2014). The road to strengthening ties with Serbia starts with the integration of BiH. This would bring about a new chapter in the WB that could see the growth of liberal democratic values coupled with an economic boom in the region. If a pro-Western attitude prevails in Serbia and foreign policy shift occur, it would not be out of the question to assume Serbia opts to join the Alliance (Joseph 2009).

BiH's Accession to NATO secures NATO's territory in the WB. This development can contribute to the security of the WB because it now means BiH is a legitimate

NATO actors working alongside the Adriatic chapter to uphold Alliance's mission. BiH is strategically placed in between Croatia and Montenegro, therefore, the addition of BiH allows for easier communication and smoother operations. Because cross border crime is prevalent, the inclusion of BiH provides added support to tackle contemporary threats such as organized crime and corruption, human trafficking, and terrorism (Seroka 2008). These are the new realities the WB faces, so regional actors must take ownership and work together in order to combat these modern threats. A newfound unity and reinforced borders signals to Russia that NATO is the absolute peace and security guarantor of the region. A strong presence makes it less susceptible hybrid attacks that undermine BiH's political system and sow internal divisions.

From NATO's geostrategic lens, the addition of BiH into NATO would increase its territory and would curtail Russian influence. The region does not have much economic or strategic value. What it does offer is a strategic position within the EU neighborhood and NATO territories, meaning the WB is valuable to Russia (Galeotti 2018). Because the Kremlin supports the RS, one could expect an increased Russian presence in BiH if NATO fails to integrate BiH. In terms of territorial integrity, BiH may become a new battle ground as separatist Milorad Dodik continues to press for an independence referendum (Erlanger 2018). If RS were to hold a successful independence referendum, the country could potentially see another bloody conflict that would spread across the region.

Membership goes beyond security benefits and collective defense. The integration of BiH into NATO transform BiH into a legitimate state in the international system. It is commonly regarded as one of the most dysfunctional countries in the region because of its divided ethno-religious composition that was established with the implementation of the DPA (Harland 2017). In fact, it can be argued that the war continues through other means. A political system premised on the three constituent peoples created a toxic environment in which progress has stymied. If BiH joined the Alliance, it would be the greatest success story of the region and would benefit from the

various advantages that come with NATO membership. Accession to NATO could be the biggest success story in the Alliance's history.

Conclusion

Making the necessary institutional reforms are the first critical steps that bring an aspiring member closer towards NATO and indeed, BiH has made various reforms since the signing of the DPA. Given that the country was at war two decades ago, it is exceptional how much progress has been made in the field of security and defense. Like in many post communist countries, security and defense reform usually entails a complex process. BiH was not different and the legacy of the DPA made the task more convoluted as these matters were largely left in the hands of the two entities. The reform process was undertaken by two defense ministries and two standing armies with conflicting political agendas. Undeterred by these challenges, BiH met NATO's expectations through making rigorous reforms that ultimately allowed it to join PfP in 2006, marking its first momentous initiative and confirmed its path to NATO. With the guidance of the DRC, BiH made important constitutional changes that enabled civilians to control the military and established a state-level MoD. With that said, BiH still faces a major obstacle in the integration process. BiH made progress in the technical and military aspects of NATO integration, which garnered an invitation to MAP in 2010. Nonetheless, a lack of vision and cooperation between both entities impedes progress. Although BiH could not meet the criteria for MAP due to issue of IMP, the country is ready to take the next step to join NATO, once the issue is resolved. It is imperative that BiH overcomes its domestic quarrels concerning IMP, otherwise the country will remain gridlocked for years to come. There is no quick-fix to the the current state of affairs in BiH, there are only ways to move forward, for example, through cooperation mechanisms that empower both entities to closely work together on NATO matters.

Through the course of BiH's integration process, NATO has maintained a presence in Sarajevo, mainly providing support in the field of defense reform. Recently

NATO has faced a series of threats from Russia in places like Ukraine, the Baltics states, and Syria. The shift away from BiH does not necessarily mean a shift away from the WB. The Alliance is stronger than ever and capable of countering external threats. The recent accession of Macedonia and Montenegro demonstrates NATO's commitment to the region and the trend is likely to continue with BiH and Kosovo, albeit at a much slower pace. Countries like Croatia and Montenegro have rapidly ascended their political, social, economic institutions with the help of NATO. The current struggle between Serbia and Kosovo and the internal division within BiH are the final hurdles that regional integration will help resolve. As history has shown, NATO fosters cooperation and mediates quarrels between countries, for example, Macedonia recently opted to change its name to North Macedonia in order to appease the Greeks and now is NATO's newest member. NATO's future in the region is secure.

Analyzing BiH's Future Prospects

The international community has applied a myriad of state-building approaches and strategies that produced a dysfunctional political environment. This in turn incentivizes political elites to exploit this instability as a means to pursue specific agendas and remain in power. The irresponsibility or unwillingness of decision makers-- a byproduct of the iDPA -- prevents BiH from making progress towards achieving sustainable peace in the country. It is unlikely that BiH will make progress towards NATO unless the EU and NATO enact cosequential solutions in BiH.

The main concern for BiH regarding NATO membership is state-level control of IMP, however, it is also fair to place the blame on the complacent politicians in FBiH and the international community. Many argue that the international community must allow BiH to take local ownership of the integration process. As mentioned earlier, BiH is an outlier because of its flawed constitution. NATO and the EU should be the driving force towards integration because stalemates have become a key feature of BiH's political system. Politicians are not serving the interest of the citizens or the well-being of the nation, instead, they are acting parsimoniously. Without international community,

the reforms in BiH would not have come to fruition, which leaves room for some critical analysis. One might then contend that BiH is an international protectorate, rather than a functioning state. BiH is in fact a functioning state with some defects and requires the assistance of the EU and NATO because the local circumstances need to be strengthened through civil society and direct government involvement. The DPA legitimized an ethnic based political system that now frustrates the objectives of BiH and the international community. Accordingly, strengthening the central government institutions should be prioritized, regardless if the entities object. This will remedy the imbalances caused by the DPA.

The international community's role in BiH seems to be equivocal which attributes to the sluggish integration process. The EU and NATO are driven by regional security implications, but another considerable reason for a lack of progress may stem from pushing reforms that do not align with the a particular segment of the country. That is, the Bosnian Serbs, time after time express their immediate dissatisfaction with NATO reforms that attempt to unify BiH. NATO and the central government need to do more in order to educate this segment of the Bosnian population on the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration. Firstly, NATO must bring both entities to the table to find a middle ground that can satisfy both parties. Starting at the entity level is practical since it moves away from greater centralization and allows the RS to cooperate in a more comfortable environment. The international community should make a more concerted effort to monitor local governments and apply pressure, through incentives, to push for progressive reforms. Also, another area of concern in the ethnic structure of the AFBiH. Currently, battalions are segregated on the basis of ethnicity. Though the AFBiH merged all three armed forces in BiH through the constitutional amendments, the armed forces needs replace this outdated organizational system interoperable armed forces.

In conclusion, NATO remains open for BiH. The success will depend on the international community's action or inaction and how the country's internal divisions are managed. BiH has a real chance to integrate in the foreseeable future, provided it can fulfill the agreed obligations. The implementation of DPA ended the war, but Annex 4

which is basically the BiH's constitution, was flawed from the start. As suggested by various scholars, in order for BiH to make progress, the EU and NATO must initiate a DPA II, in order to meet the contemporary realities of BiH. Until aggressive measures are taken to resolve the issue of IMP, BiH will remain on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic community.

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