



first publication

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1 Cf. e.g. O'Leary, Brendan: The Limits to Coercive Consociationalism in Northern Ireland. In: *Political Studies* 18/4 (1989), pp. 695-714; Pappalardo, Adriano: The Conditions for Consociational Democracy: A Logical and Empirical Critique. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 9/4 (1981), pp. 365-390; Mitchell, Paul: Competition in an Ethnic Dual Party System. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18/4 (1995), pp. 773-796, here p. 779.

2 Sisk, Timothy: Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts. Washington/D.C.: United States Inst. of Peace 1996, p. 16.

3 Horowitz, Donald: *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley/CA: Univ. of California Pr. 1985.

4 Gagnon, V.P.: Ethnic Conflict as an Intra-Group Phenomenon: A Preliminary Framework. In: *Revija za sociologiju* 26/1-2 (1995), pp. 81-90, here p. 88.

Divisions and competition within national groups in situations of national or ethnic conflicts remain an under-analysed aspect in conflict theory. In this paper, I will seek to rectify this on a smaller scale by analysing the competition and divisions between the *Serb Democratic Party* (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, SDS) and other Serb parties. This competition challenged SDS's claim to being the sole representative of the Serbs in Bosnia and it also at times significantly affected political dynamics. However, in the immediate pre-war period, the SDS was only challenged by one other Serb party, the *Serb Renewal Movement*, and this party even failed to distinguish itself from the SDS and furthermore lacked political significance. Moreover, the non-ethnic parties which should have proven the main rivals to the SDS failed to counter its growing strength. Intra-Serb political opposition emerged during the war in the form of Milorad Dodik's *Club of Independent Deputies*, the *Socialist Party* and the *Serbian Radical Party*. In addition to these parties, the *Liberal Party* sought to present a non-ethnic alternative, but was harshly suppressed by the authorities. After the war, a definite split emerged in the SDS and the party leadership was therefore not only faced with significant opposition from the outside, but also from the inside. Furthermore, the holding of elections allowed the opposition to gain parliamentary representation and it could therefore function as necessary alliance partners to Biljana Plavšić in her conflict with the rest of the SDS. By analysing these developments, the paper seeks to answer the following questions: What were the dynamics of intra-Serb political competition? What factors affected the form and direction it took? How did the ethnification of politics affect these dynamics? How did the SDS seek to counter the opposition? What was the effect on the policies of the SDS?

In the theoretical literature, the existence of intra-ethnic party competition is usually held to have a radicalising effect. The proponents of this view contend that the most effective political strategy will be to »play the ethnic card«, to take extreme positions that play into mass antagonisms. Elites who may be willing to moderate will face outbidding by more extreme parties and therefore not have the necessary leeway.¹ However, sometimes other consequences of intra-ethnic competition are acknowledged. Sisk argues that strong intra-ethnic splits can actually facilitate inter-ethnic accommodation since it fosters incentives for cross-ethnic alliances.² On a similar note, Horowitz asserts that intra-ethnic competition in addition to fostering centrifugal dynamics may assist inter-ethnic accommodation since it moves attention away from the ethnic conflict.³

The argument for radicalisation is usually based on the mass population being the only audience to intra-ethnic elite competition: outbidding in this sense is about appealing to the mass population by taking a more radical stance. Part of the strategy for the political elites focuses on authenticity, a struggle over what defines a real Serb, a real Croat etc. And therefore by implication it involves who has the legitimate right to speak for the ethnic group, and who is discredited.⁴ This struggle will involve issues of representativeness, i.e. who has the support of the community, but it also involves a struggle over political positions: which interpretation is the »true« representation of the interests of the ethnic group. Hence not only appeals to voters matter in the competition. Moreover, in the competition between parties the general population may not even be the most important audience. Firstly, forces within the party can prove a significant constraint and secondly, a possible kin-state can be of great importance for the intra-ethnic competition. Finally, resources other than popular support are important in the competition, e.g. means may be available for leaders to repress challengers and in a situation of war the constraint posed by popular sentiments is expected to be significantly reduced. Thus, both the different audiences to which the leaders owe their power as well as the resources of importance in the competition must be included in an analysis.

Based on such reasoning, one can argue that intra-ethnic elite competition will not only follow the mass population and it will not necessarily lead to radicalisation. However, analyses of the dynamics of intra-ethnic elite competition and of the variables affecting these dynamics are decidedly lacking. The objective of this paper to seek to throw some light on these dynamics by analysing intra-Serb party competition in Bosnia in different phases: just before the outbreak of war, during the war and in the immediate post-war period.

Pre-War: Non-Nationalist Parties Decimated by Monolithic SDS

The imperative of unity would be expected to be strongest in the mobilisation phase when divisions could kill the nationalist project in its infancy. However, such an imperative will co-exist with the continued existence of non-ethnic, or non-national alternatives: ethnification is not complete and the ethnic or national cleavage is not the only politically salient cleavage, or even the dominant one. These were also the dynamics that characterised Bosnian politics in the immediate pre-war period: The SDS was not met with, significant, Serb competition; its main rivals were the non-ethnic parties and what was at stake was the nature of the political, which cleavage was to be dominant in the political competition?

Weakened Communists and Rivalling Non-Ethnic Parties

The main party to compete with the SDS were the reformed communists in the *Party for Democratic Changes (Savez Komunista BiH – Stranka Demokratskih Promjena, SKBiH-SDP)*. The SKBiH-SDP was apparently confident that they would win a comfortable majority in the elections, but this optimism was severely misguided given the party's weak position. The legitimacy of the *Communist Party* had been steadily declining since the 1987 *Agrokomerc* scandal. The reformed communists represented a system in collapse and even though the party had distanced itself from the Bosnian government, it was still blamed for all the wrongs of the system and it was not sufficient for the party to be the only party with an organised network throughout the republic.⁵ The significant weakening of the *Bosnian Communists* was one of the reasons for SDS's clear victory, but in the competition with the SKBiH-SDP, it also mattered that the highest-ranking Serbs in the party were not persons of great political favour among the Serbs.⁶ This made it more difficult for the party to counter the nationalist claim that a non-ethnic party could not protect Serb interests. Furthermore, the ethnification of politics in Bosnia had to a significant degree already taken place: the main cleavage in the elections was the ethnic cleavage. On the issue of the future of Yugoslavia, all major parties professed their support for its preservation, and with the exception of the HDZ, which supported a confederation, and the *Reformists*, who were vague on the issue, they all advocated a federal structure.⁷ It was therefore only the ethnic cleavage that gave a clear profile to the SDS.

Non-Ethnic Parties undermining Each Other

The SKBiH-SDP was, however not the only non-ethnic competitor to the SDS. Of other important non-ethnic parties should be mentioned the *Democratic Alliance of Socialists (Demokratski Socijalistički Savez, DSS)* and the *League of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia (Savez Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije, SRSJ)*. The DSS suffered from the same problems as the SKBiH-SDP; its roots were in the *Socialist Alliance of Working People* and it was too closely associated with the old regime. But the *Reformists*, formed by the then federal Prime Minister Ante Marković, were dangerous for the SDS: they could not be directly identified with the previous regime, Marković's economic programme was successful and he was very popular in Bosnia.⁸ But despite these factors of strength, the *Reformists* had problems organising themselves. Most importantly, the *Reformists* lacked political determination; the party covered an array of political opinions and failed to take a position on the future of Yugoslavia.⁹

If these factors did not weaken the non-ethnic parties sufficiently, their internal competition did, and the parties thereby failed to provide a viable alternative to the nationalist parties. Some of the leaders were aware of this problem and on October 25, 1990, the leaders of SKBiH-SDP and the *Reformists*, Nijaz Duraković and Nenad Kecmanović, signed a secret deal. However, when this became known to the *Reformists* the most anti-communist elements of the party rebelled and the deal was called off. The political differences between the two parties were small, but personal grievances and fear of being drawn into the Communists collapse proved decisive.¹⁰ The SKBiH-SDP and the DSS managed to form a pre-election coalition, but the then leader of the DSS, Mirko Pejanović, argues that the *Reformists* were ordered not to have anything to do with the two other parties.¹¹

In the competition with the non-ethnic parties, the SDS in Bosnia was also assisted by a well-organised party. The SDS had a wide range of local branches and by September 1990, the party unrealistically claimed to have as many as 350,000 members.¹² Furthermore, the SDS

⁵ Andjelić, Neven: *Bosnia-Herzegovina: the end of a legacy*. London: Frank Cass 2003, p. 159, p. 174.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷ Election programmes in Prstojević, Miroslav (Ed.): *BiH Izbori '90*. Sarajevo: Oslobođenje public 1990. The *Reformists* never took a clear position, but their programme could only be realised in a federal context. Cf. also Andjelić 2003, p. 161f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161f.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180f.; Pejanović, Mirko: *Through Bosnian Eyes: The political memories of a Bosnian Serb*. Sarajevo: TKD Šahinpašić 2002, p. 30.

¹¹ Pejanović 2002, p. 30.

¹² Veliki Skup SDS. In: Borba, 01.09.1990, p. 12.

13 Andjelić 2003, p. 178.

14 Ibid., p. 161.

15 Pejanović 2000, p. 37.

16 ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia): Transcripts Brdjanin and Talić (IT-99-36). Transcripts from Robert Donia's testimony 2002, p. 1164.

17 Interview Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, Sarajevo, 02.07.2004. [All interviews quoted in this article are interviews by N.C.]

18 Pejanović 2000, p. 50.

19 Andjelić 2003, p. 213.

already before the elections established a *Serb National Council*: in Banja Luka on October 13, 1990 in front of 30,000 people, and shortly afterwards also in Tuzla and Trebinje.¹³ In its campaign against the non-ethnic parties, the SDS continuously sought to undermine the credibility of its rivals in the eyes of the Serb electorate. Karadžić accused the *Reformists* of wanting to take Serb votes,¹⁴ which may seem like a curious accusation coming from a declared Serb party. But it served to undermine the credibility of the *Reformists*; the SDS argued that they wanted to weaken the voice of the Serb voters. Outside of the official campaign, the tone was even harsher. In Banja Luka, material was distributed announcing: »We will not betray you – the *League of Communists* and the leftists will betray you! The Ustasha knife awaits you again«¹⁵ The language of »traitors« to the Serb nation also became part of official discourse after the elections. The SDS in Krajina publicly renounced the legitimacy of Nenad Kecmanović, leader of the *Reformists* and Mirko Pejanović, leader of the DSS, to represent the Serb people in any capacity: »The Serb people is proud of its heroes to the same extent that it detests traitors and degenerates such as the two mentioned.«¹⁶

After being decimated in the November elections, the non-ethnic parties focused their efforts on speaking out against nationalist policies: they tried to counter the nationalist attempts to homogenise the three nations and their claims to represent all members of their nations. But the three nationalist parties had made sure to exclude all other parties from influence and the position of the opposition was too weak to have any impact. The SDS furthermore sought to persuade Serb representatives from the non-ethnic parties to join their ranks.¹⁷ In late February 1992, when the *Constitution of the Serb Republic* was proclaimed, a significant number of Serb representatives from non-ethnic parties were present at the session, and communication was discontinued with those who refused.¹⁸ Many of the representatives present at the February session, chose to close ranks with the SDS after war broke out.

The failure of the non-ethnic parties owed much to their internal squabbles and the erosion of faith in the *Communist Party* that predated the first elections by three years. But the main obstacle for the non-ethnic parties was that the elections were fought on ethnic issues; the SDS, HDZ and SDA managed to ethnify politics before the elections by competing between themselves.¹⁹ Of course, the nationalist parties were furthermore strongly supported in their endeavour by the progressively tense atmosphere in the Yugoslavia federation. After the elections, the non-ethnic parties were marginalised, especially once fighting started in Croatia. Politics had therefore become ethnicised prior to the elections, but this was reinforced and augmented by the weakening of the non-ethnic options.

SDS Indistinguishable from Nationalist Rival

The main rivals for the SDS in the pre-war period were the non-ethnic parties. Nevertheless, the party was also faced with competition from another Serb party: the *Serb Renewal Movement* (*Srpski Pokret Obnove*, SPO) led in Serbia by the charismatic but unpredictable Vuk Drašković. This party was, however, never a serious rival to the SDS, since it only won one seat in parliament and never really entered political life in Bosnia.²⁰ It was anyway difficult to notice any significant difference between the parties before the elections;²¹ if anything, the SPO adopted a more extreme position than the SDS,²² but this changed in late 1991 when the SPO in Belgrade began criticising the war in Croatia and accused the nationalist parties in Bosnia for not trying hard enough to prevent war from also breaking out in Bosnia.²³ Such critique did, however, not find resonance with the SPO deputy in Bosnia who had all along acted like a member of the SDS and finally chose to join the party. SPO was therefore left without influence in Bosnia.²⁴

Only immediately before the outbreak of war did the SDS therefore face a more moderate national party, but this party was without influence and even lacked control over its own deputy. If a moderate Serb party had been formed before the elections it could conceivably have been a rival to the SDS, although the SDS at the time of elections was still being rather vague about its position, which may have discouraged more moderate rivals. The lack of organisation of such a party by some well-known public figures of course reflects the still limited divisions at the time and the reluctance of intellectuals competing with the SDS to take on an explicitly ethnic identity and their continued support for a civic solution. But some intellectuals also chose to keep their options open: for a long time it was still not clear if the *Communist Party* would allow multiparty elections and to be associated with a national party could therefore

20 Andjelić 2003, p. 167. The support for SPO was concentrated in the municipality of Nevesinje. Cf. Tomić, Zoran/Herceg, Nevenko: 1998. Izbori u Bosni i Hercegovini. Sveučilište u Mostaru. Mostar: Centar za studije novinarstva 1998, p. 8ff.

21 Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19.11.2003.

22 Cf. SPO's election programme in Prstojević 1990, p. 118ff.

23 Milošević, Milan: Serbia in a broken mirror: See you in the next war. In: Vreme News Digest 10, 02.12.1991.

24 Interview Slobodan Nagradić, Sarajevo, 19.11.2003.

25 Andjelić 2003, p. 150.

be potentially destructive for future careers. The nationalist parties consequently suffered from a lack of respected intellectuals in their ranks,²⁵ but it may also have contributed to the lack of a more moderate Serb alternative to the SDS.

Conclusion on Pre-War Dynamics

At the time of elections, the ethnification of politics in Bosnia was considerable and with this issue being dominant, the non-ethnic parties found it very hard to compete with the SDS over the Serb voters. The SDS could in its propaganda target the alleged inability of the non-ethnic parties to protect Serb interests. The ability of the SDS to attract Serb voters was furthermore augmented by the weakness of the non-ethnic parties and their internal squabbles. The fragmentation of the rivals therefore mattered in the outcome of the competition and the resulting weakness of the non-ethnic option added to the ethnification of politics. Furthermore, SDS managed in the short time from its foundation to the elections to establish a well-functioning party structure and could thereby effectively compete with the non-ethnic rivals. The only nationalist party that competed with the SDS was the SPO, but only briefly before the war did this party become distinguishable from the SDS and this led the party's only deputy to abandon the SPO and join the SDS. The dominant Serb force in Bosnia was therefore not met with more moderate, ethnically defined alternatives. The urban intellectuals were highly hesitant to define themselves ethnically and one can therefore argue that the limited ethnic divisions and the fluid identities prior to the outbreak of conflict actually made it easier for the radicals to marginalise the moderates. Moreover, the initially rather vague position of the SDS helped the party avoid the creation of more moderate competitors. Given the ethnification of politics, rivals to the party and its leadership therefore had to come from within, but this gradually changed after the outbreak of war.

During the War: Serb Opposition emerges in the RS

After a period of unrivalled rule in the first year of the war, the SDS became increasingly challenged by opposition parties. Moreover, internal divisions in the SDS were deepening and relations between the civilian and military leaders became progressively more strenuous. Finally, relations between the Pale leadership and Belgrade became increasingly conflictual and finally reached a breakpoint over the *Contact Group Plan* in the summer of 1994. These factors were not unrelated and when the different opposition forces began coalescing, the political dynamics in the RS underwent a change. Serb elites were also found outside the RS but while they enjoyed at least formal positions of influence in the Bosnian authorities, their influence in the RS was limited at best.

26 ICTY [Transcripts] 2002, p. 1171.

Non-Parliamentary Multipartism

In spite of the eventual significance of the opposition, competition to the SDS was in the beginning of the war even more limited than in the pre-war period, since Serb representatives closed ranks behind the party. Almost all Serb representatives from non-ethnic parties joined the SDS after the outbreak of war; there were only seven exceptions in the RS parliament. Thus, deputies who had been elected for the SDP, the *Reformists* or the DSS on a non-ethnic platform now chose to join the explicitly Serb party. The non-ethnic parties ceased to operate in the territory under the control of the RS and the only alternative to joining the SDS in this part of Bosnia was therefore to become independent. One of the prime examples of this conversion is Dragan Kalinić, a former Communist leader, elected for the *Reformists*, who became very powerful in the SDS. And if anyone in the party doubted Kalinić's nationalist credentials, his speech in the RS parliament in May 1992 proved them wrong:

Among all the issues this assembly should decide on, the most important one is this: have we chosen the option of war or the option of negotiations? I do not hesitate in selecting the first option, the option of war.²⁶

Despite this homogenisation of Serb political representation, divisions soon began to emerge and alternative political initiatives came under way. When the war started, the work of political parties had been frozen by the RS government, but in March 1993, following concerns that

27 Interview Slobodan Nagradić,
Sarajevo, 19.11.2003.

28 Interview Miodrag Živanović,
Banja Luka, 22.10.2003.

29 In effect, president of the regional government.

30 ICTY: Transcripts Dusko Tadic (IT-94-I-T). Transcript from testimony of anonymous witness 1996, p. 1807f.

31 Interview Nikola Poplašen,
Banja Luka, 03.12.2003.

32 Interview Dragutin Ilić,
Banja Luka, 23.10.2003.

33 Interview Miodrag Živanović,
Banja Luka, 22.10.2003.

34 Interview Dragutin Ilić,
Banja Luka, 23.10.2003.

35 Interview Ognjen Tadić,
Banja Luka, 07.09.2003.

36 Interview Miodrag Živanović,
Banja Luka, 22.10.2003.

37 Interview Nikola Poplašen, Banja
Luka, 03.10.2003; Interview Ognjen
Tadić, Banja Luka, 07.09.2003.

38 Interview Miodrag Živanović,
Banja Luka, 22.10.2003.

39 Interview Igor Radojičić,
Banja Luka, 01.12.2003.

40 Vučinić, Perica/Rovac, Pajo:
Milosevic and Bosnian Serbs: Playing
on the Reformists Ticket. In: Vreme
News Digest 175, 06.02.1995.

the *Serb Radicals* were becoming too strong, the work of the SDS was reactivated and the ban on political parties was consequently also lifted.²⁷ The first party to be formed in the RS after the war began was the *Liberal Party (Liberalna Stranka)*, which was founded in April 1992 before the work of parties was frozen. The party consisted of Banja Luka intellectuals, it was not a nationalist party and it supported negotiations and an end to the war.²⁸ The party illustrated the continued existence of non-ethnic, moderate voices in the RS, but its influence was marginal. A party of much greater concern to the SDS was the *Serb Radical Party (Sprska Radikalna Stranka, SRS)*, which just before the war and during the war increased its popularity significantly and provided an even more extreme opposition to the SDS. Apparently some members of the SDS were simultaneously members of the SRS thereby giving the leadership reasons to fear splits in the party: In 1992, Radoslav Brdjanin, who was then President of the *SAO Krajina Crisis Staff*,²⁹ reportedly said on a radio show that he had a membership card of the SRS signed by Vojislav Šešelj personally.³⁰ The SRS started working in 1992, but was formally founded in Bosnia in March 1993 by university professor Nikola Poplašen. Poplašen lists two reasons for founding the party: Firstly, in order to pursue the goal of uniting all Serbs in one state, since the SRS felt that this goal was not sufficiently pursued by the SDS, and they argued that the party lacked autonomy in relation to Milošević, who was seen as an obstacle. Secondly, to break the SDS monopoly and fight against crime and authoritarianism associated with the party.³¹ Finally, there was the *Socialist Party of Republika Srpska*, which was founded in June 1993 in Banja Luka by Dragutin Ilić. Contrary to the SRS, the *Socialist Party* charged a more moderate course and supported the different peace plans rejected by the RS leaders. Consequently it was derided as a party of traitors in the RS media. The party established municipal organisations in most of the territory of RS,³² but its most important organisational links were with Belgrade and by the other opposition parties it was seen as little more than Milošević's mouthpiece in the increasingly tense conflict between Belgrade and Pale. Thus, Miodrag Živanović argues, »in reality the Socialist Party was just a branch of Milošević's party [...] they were under the control of the Belgrade Head Office.«³³ The founder of the party himself argues that while the party did receive assistance from Belgrade, the initiative to form the party was born in Bosnia.³⁴ One of the main issues of contention between the SDS and the opposition parties was therefore the relations between the RS leadership and Milošević, especially after the RS leadership rejected the *Contact Group Plan* in the summer of 1994. Furthermore, Belgrade tried to utilise the emergence of an opposition to weaken the Pale leadership and sow seeds of division. The fear that the opposition was acting as a Trojan horse for Milošević was a further reason for the SDS to suppress such dissent.

Consequently, by the second year of war, SDS was faced with competition from both more extreme and more moderate parties. The challenge to SDS's power was, nevertheless, of a limited nature since none of the parties were represented in parliament. They were formed after the first elections and no elections were held during the war. Despite this lack of an institutional base, the RS leaders still feared the possible impacts of increased competition and therefore chose to harshly repress the opposition. Tadić argues that the treatment of the opposition included »arrests, political liquidations, physical liquidations«³⁵ The opposition of the *Liberal Party* was similarly sought eliminated by sending most of its members to the first line of the front.³⁶ Due to their lack of representation in bodies of authority, the political channels open to the opposition were limited and opposition activities mostly consisted of public announcements, while the parties were sought institutionalised.³⁷ Živanović recalls that the *Liberal Party* had to function semi-legally:

I was on the front, and I came to Banja Luka to make press conferences, and then I went back to the front, to save my life – [...] it was safer there, because my life was threatened here [in Banja Luka].³⁸

In parliament, the only opposition to the SDS was made up by seven independent deputies, all of who were from the northern electoral communities. Following the rejection by the RS parliament of the *Contact Group Plan* and the resulting clash between Belgrade and Pale, they constituted themselves as a group, *Club of Independent Deputies*, under the leadership of Milorad Dodik, and began to act as an opposition to the SDS and Karadžić.³⁹ They issued a demand for a parliamentary session to achieve final peace and they blamed Karadžić and Krajišnik for the casualties in the period after the rejection of the *Contact Group Plan*.⁴⁰ Dodik coalesced with other opposition forces from Krajina and argued that the RS leadership's insi-

49 Chronology 1995: August 1 through August 31. In: Croatian International Relations Review XI/30-31 (2002), p. 54.

50 Gow, James: The Serbian project and its adversaries: a strategy of war crimes. London: Hurst & Company 2003, p. 192f.

51 Ninšić, Roksanda: B&H Presidency: A New Breed of Serbs. In: Vreme News Digest 37, 08.07.1992.

52 Pejanović 2000, Ch. IX.

53 Interview Miro Lazović, Sarajevo, 29 June 2004. Interview Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, Sarajevo, 02.07.2004.

54 Udojović, Radenko: The Serbs on ›this‹ side. In: AIM Press, Sarajevo, 26.11.1994.

55 Bougarel 1996, p. 111.

56 Udojović 1994.

57 Milošević, Milan et al.: Pale-Belgrade: Total Recall. In: Vreme News Digest 150, 08.08.1994.

58 Interview Miodrag Živanović Banja Luka, 22.10.2003

59 Švarn, Filip: Serb-Serbian Relations: Karadzic Vs. Everyone Else. In: Vreme News Digest 193, 13.06.1995.

generals.⁴⁹ If such an initiative had been underway, it was averted, but Karadžić had not yet won the battle with Mladić, since the next day Mladić's entire command signed a letter to the RS parliament rejecting Karadžić's announcement and declaring Mladić commander of the RS Army.⁵⁰ Finally, Karadžić backed down and on August 11, 1995 declared that the decision to remove Mladić had been annulled.

Karadžić feared being removed by forces urging negotiations not by more radical forces. And shortly after Karadžić had agreed to annul the decision to remove Mladić, he also backed down on the issue of negotiations and agreed to give Milošević the deciding vote in a joint Serb delegation. The emerging co-operation between the opposition parties, the army and SDS factions centred on Banja Luka fostered the creation of more centripetal dynamics. Through these alliances the opposition became of greater significance. The SDS leadership was aware of the potential dangers posed by competing parties and had therefore chosen to repress them with very harsh means, but towards the end of the war, the ruling party was gradually losing control.

Sarajevo Opposition

Despite the strategy of national homogenisation and the creation of an ethnic state undertaken by the SDS, Serb representatives were still found outside Republika Srpska. These were more moderate forces, which were not in direct competition with the RS leaders, but still challenged their claim to representing all Serbs in Bosnia.

Mirko Pejanović and Nenad Kecmanović, who were respectively leaders of the Democratic Socialist Alliance and the *Reformists*, replaced Biljana Plavšić and Nikola Koljević as Serb representatives in the Bosnian Presidency when the SDS deputies left the Bosnian institutions in April 1992. This caused fury in Pale where Karadžić exclaimed that Pejanović and Kecmanović were »the private Serbs of Alija Izetbegović.«⁵¹ Kecmanović quickly bowed under the pressure exerted on him from the RS and Belgrade and left Sarajevo in June 1992. He was replaced by Tanja Ljujić-Mijatović from the SDP, and Mirko Lazović, also from the SDP, was appointed Speaker of Parliament.⁵² The Serbs in the Bosnian governing structures took a radically different approach than the RS leaders: they stayed in Sarajevo and they spoke out against war and separation. Pejanović, Ljujić-Mijatović and Lazović did not represent a national party, they held their positions as ethnic Serbs, but not as representative of an ethnic party. These representatives still insist that they had actual influence on some important issues, but also acknowledge that their most important role was perhaps symbolic.⁵³ During the war, the non-ethnic option in Bosnia was however weakened as the non-Bosniak presence in the governing bodies was reduced and the main opposition party, the SDP, moved closer to the SDA. When the *Washington Agreement on the Federation* was negotiated, Lazović was present but despite his insistence, Serbs were not included in the Constitution of the Federation, which established it as an entity with two constituent peoples: Croats and Bosniaks. The Serb proposals were rejected with the explanation that the Serbs could not be a constituent people in both the Federation and the RS. This indicated that the leaders in Pale were given the authority to also decide for the Serbs outside the RS.⁵⁴ Ethnification was further increased when the *Serb Civic Council (Srpsko Gradjansko Vijeće, SGV)* was established with the support of the Bosnian state, and Pejanović was elected president. The name itself illustrates the schism: the SGV was to represent the Serbs who rejected the policies of the RS, but the term ›civic‹ sits uneasily with ethnic representation. However, the SGV gave the Bosnian authorities a basis for contesting the representativeness of the RS; a basis for challenging the conflation of Serb politics and RS politics.⁵⁵ Within the SGV, there were forces that urged the creation of an actual Serb party, which would be a counterpart to Karadžić and would undermine his claim to represent all Serbs.⁵⁶ This was, however, never realised.

The influence of the »Sarajevo Serbs« in Republika Srpska was however very limited. They had some links with the opposition,⁵⁷ but they remained marginal. The *Liberal Party* in the RS also attempted to develop contacts with other non-nationalist parties in Sarajevo; with the SDP, the *Bosnia-Herzegovina Social Democrats Union* and with some smaller Croat parties.⁵⁸ Dodik's *Club of Independents* similarly had secret contacts with the Bosnian opposition since its formation in late 1994. In May 1995, contacts between Dodik and Sejfudin Tokić were made public after they had met in Perugia, Italy where they declared that further relations should be based on the *Contact Group Plan*.⁵⁹ This meeting revealed a rift in the SDP when Mirko Lazović



60 Peranić, Dražena: Reactions to talks between Tokić and Dodik. In: AIM Press, Sarajevo, 14.06.1995.

61 Peranić, Dražena: Gathering of Democratic Alternative Forum from the whole of B&H. AIM Press, 02.10.1995.

and other leading figures reacted positively to the news, while the leader of the party, Nijaz Duraković, rejected the initiative and strongly criticised Tokić for taking part:

The SDP of B&H has never had the opportunity to hear that Tokić has dissociated himself from these Karadžić's servants and this exceeds the limits not just of political but any other tolerance.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, in September 1995, opposition parties from all of Bosnia again met in Perugia, formed the *Democratic Alternative Forum* and issued a Declaration in which they demanded an immediate stop to the war.⁶¹ These meetings are significant, firstly because engaging in co-operation across the ethnic divide was sure to give the RS opposition the label »traitors«; it was a very significant signal of moderation and attested to the emergence of new dynamics. Secondly, the presence of both Serb opposition representatives from RS as well as from Sarajevo strengthened the attempt to break SDS's monopoly on representation of the Serbs in Bosnia. Even so, the contribution of the »Sarajevo Serbs« to the changing dynamics in the RS was limited at best.

Dynamics During the War

As a change from the pre-war period, the war brought competition from other Serb parties. And it is an interesting point that in the mobilisation phase, in the pre-war phase, political pluralism within the Serb community was only provided by non-ethnic alternatives. This can only partly be explained by the greater control exerted by the leadership in this period. The competition from other parties that grew in significance during the war was affected by and in turn affected intra-party divisions: When the SDS was reactivated, it feared competition from the Radicals, but this move opened up for increasing competition from other parties and also helped foster divisions within the formerly so cohesive SDS. Competition between parties both affected and was affected by competition within parties, and the increased competition with other parties reduced the cohesiveness of the SDS by way of demonstration and due to possible alliances. Towards the end of the war, centripetal dynamics finally emerged, whereas earlier the most serious challenge to the RS leaders had come from more extreme challengers. At the time when these more moderate forces became of significance, the SDS had adopted a position almost indistinguishable from its more extreme rivals and any viable opposition would therefore have to take a more moderate position and/or focus on other issues. The more extreme challengers had enjoyed the support of paramilitary forces, while the more moderate forces lacked this kind of resources until the army sided with the opposition and the Banja Luka faction of the SDS. Both non-political resources as well as possible alliances were therefore of great importance for the direction of elite competition. The resources of importance in elite competition were often far removed from »conventional« democratic resources: links with Belgrade, support from (para)military forces as well as willingness to use non-democratic means in treatment of rival forces.

The »Sarajevo Serbs« were by the RS leaders derided as traitors and as illegitimate representatives of the Serb nation. In this case, legitimacy referred to their political position. These representatives found themselves in an uneasy position between trying to mediate in the conflict and being used to serve legitimisation purposes by the SDA. Furthermore, there existed a schism between providing a Serb alternative and still holding on to a non-ethnic option. Their impact on the political dynamics in the Serb statelet was however limited.

Compared with the pre-war period, the competition during the war showed some specific characteristics: non-political and especially military resources became even more effective and more available, competition with non-ethnic options practically ceased, competition with other ethnic parties was on the increase and partly supplanted intra-party competition as the greatest threat to the leaders, and divisions other than those based on the national issue became of importance.

Post-War: Opposition gains Power with the Help of Internationals

With the end of the war, the new issue of political contention within the RS was the implementation of the *Dayton Agreement*: to what extent should the RS authorities be willing to cooperate with the international implementation agencies and with the Bosniak and Croat par-



70 Pomfret, John: Bosnia's Serb's Leader Stages Show of Defiance. In: Washington Post, 10.02.1996, p. 1.

71 Interview Igor Radojičić, Banja Luka, 01.12.2003.

72 Vučinić, Perica: Elections in the Republic of Srpska: Conflicting forces. In: Vreme News Digest 254, 17.08.1996.

73 Stavljanin, Dragan: Elections in the Bosnian Serb Republic: Belgrade or Pale. In: Vreme News Digest 227, 12.02.1996.

74 Stefanović, 06.07.1996.

75 Vučinić, Perica: Elections in the Republic of Srpska: Conflicting forces. In: Vreme News Digest 254, 17.08.1996.

76 Tomić/Herceg 1998.

77 Interview Igor Radojičić, Banja Luka, 01.12.2003.

78 Topić, Tanja: Which way is Republika Srpska going? The generals' flour. In: Vreme News Digest 301, 12.07.1997.

79 Novaković, Dejan: Serb National Union – Party of Biljana Plavšić: Party against ›position‹ and opposition. In: AIM Press, Banja Luka, 30.10.1997.

80 Tomić/Herceg 1998.

81 Perić, Branko: The Socialists in Republika Srpska: Hostages of Belgrade and Pale. In: AIM Press, Banja Luka, 23.12.1997.

82 Interview Igor Radojičić, Banja Luka, 01.12.2003.

and thereby alter the balance of power between Pale and Banja Luka. In the 1996 elections, the SDS was, in addition to the above-mentioned coalition of SDS splinter-parties, faced with the left opposition united in the *Union for Freedom and Peace – Union for Peace and Progress*. This coalition was made up of the *Socialist Party*, the *Liberal Party*, the *Yugoslav United Left (JUL)* as well as the newly formed *Serb Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)*, which was created on the basis of Dodik's war-time *Club of Independent Deputies*. Importantly, the coalition had the support of Belgrade and was even nicknamed »Union for Slobodan [Milošević] and Mira [Marković].« Karadžić therefore had reason to fear that it might prove a significant rival in the elections, and already in February 1996, he had stated, »The new enemies are people with left-wing ideas that are alien to the Serbian people.«⁷⁰ The two opposition coalitions had tried to unite to present a stronger front against the SDS, but they failed due to political and personal differences.⁷¹ In addition to these two coalitions, a number of smaller parties formed by individuals formerly associated with the SDS or the SRS also contested the elections. Finally, the SDS was faced with the *Serb Radicals*, which ran with a programme almost indistinguishable from SDS's,⁷² but which must nevertheless still be considered a more extreme rival. Thus, the SDS was again met with opposition from both more extreme and more moderate options. The moderate position of the allegedly more moderate forces should however be taken with a pinch of salt: Apart from the only civic party, the *Liberal Party*, most parties maintained that unification with Serbia was a priority although the imagined time frame for this unification differed significantly between the parties.⁷³ The best organised of the opposition parties were the *Radicals* and the *Socialists*, which were the only parties apart from the SDS that had organised municipal committees in all municipalities of the RS.⁷⁴ The remaining parties mainly had to rely on their coalition partners or on well-known individuals for their electoral success although the *Liberal Party* could attempt to take advantage of its longer existence as well as its representation in the Banja Luka local council.

The SDS could however make full use of the resources it had as the incumbent party and especially made sure that the opposition would lack media access.⁷⁵ In addition to this control of important resources, the SDS was also inadvertently aided by the international community: the removal of Karadžić and the arrest of two generals from the RS army strengthened the SDS and made the national issue the dominant electoral issue. Thus, while the opposition made significant inroads into the support of the SDS, they failed to wrest power from the party that had dominated Republika Srpska since its creation: With 52% of the votes, the SDS secured 45 seats and an absolute majority in parliament, the *Union for Peace and Progress* won 10 seats, SRS six seats, the *Democratic Patriotic Bloc* two seats, while other Serb parties won two seats in total. In addition, however, non-Serbs parties won 18 seats and the Bosniak SDA became the second largest party with 14 seats.⁷⁶

The opposition coalitions more or less ceased to exist after the formation of the RS parliament,⁷⁷ but the elections had still resulted in a significant non-SDS presence in parliament, which could affect the internal conflict in the SDS. Initially, the opposition was, however, indecisive, and in the summer of 1997 when the conflict between Plavšić and Pale was at its most intense, the RS opposition organised a big rally in support of Plavšić's ideas, but not in support of her personally.⁷⁸ The parties had been created in opposition to the SDS and Plavšić was still far too closely associated with the party's history. But except for the *Serb Radicals* and the *Liberal Party*, the opposition parties eventually chose to support Plavšić as RS President. The common goal of all of them was to defeat the SDS, but apart from that their political position differed. When Plavšić formed her own party, the position of the opposition parties once again became more vague, since she was now a rival to them in the upcoming extraordinary elections.⁷⁹ In the election campaign, Plavšić received substantial support from the international community, and the SDS, while still the largest party, was weakened significantly with only 24 mandates and did not even have a majority together with the *Serb Radicals*.⁸⁰ The SDS and the *Radicals* therefore tried to woo the *Socialist Party* and this almost led to a split in the party when the founder of the party, Dragutin Ilić and the party's leader Živko Radičić, took opposite sides. One party officially expressed what was to prove the dominant view in the party: »[...] if we go along with them, in the next election not even members of our families would vote for us.«⁸¹ Plavšić's supporters did however not have a majority either and in order to form a government the new Prime Minister also needed support from Bosniak and Croat MPs. This proved difficult to swallow for the *Socialists* as well as for leaders from other parties.⁸² Plavšić the-



83 Chandler, David: *Faking Democracy after Dayton*. London: Pluto 2000, p. 127.

84 Interview Miodrag Živanović, Banja Luka, 22.10.2003.

re face a narrow choice of options and in the end pointed to Dodik, leader of the SNSD, who accepted the nomination. Dodik's government was finally elected at a dramatic session of parliament after the SDS and SRS MPs had adjourned for the night.⁸³ Thereby, intra-ethnic elite competition actually helped foster moderation, although also the opposition parties were constrained. Given the pressure from the international authorities, moderation was one way of gaining an advantage in the competition: the international authorities had been very eager for a split in the SDS to emerge and were highly instrumental in the events.

The moderation entailed by the SDS losing power should however not be exaggerated. Plavšić's coalition also included parties that were anything but moderate, including the *Serb Party of Krajina*, which was banned in 1999 for »violating the Dayton Agreement and subverting attempts at reconciliation.« Some opposition politicians therefore question the significance of the split and the changes in Plavšić's position. Živanović argues, »It was a constructed conflict [...], [the SNS] was a clone of the SDS. So there was no conflict in ideology, it was just a game.« The *Liberal Party* chose not to take part in the coalition due to the persistence of nationalist policies and Živanović argues that the opposition was actually destroyed by the realignment.⁸⁴ The SDS was anyway far from defeated and made a strong comeback in 2000, albeit in a slightly more moderate version. Nevertheless, events in 1996-1997 clearly show that radicalisation is not the only possible outcome from intra-ethnic elite competition. The possibility for alliances were decisive in producing these dynamics: the break in the dominant party was necessary for the opposition to gain power, but the break in the SDS would not have been of the same significance without the opposition being willing to be alliance partners. The development also demonstrated the importance of a new audience in the intra-ethnic elite competition: the international administrators. In addition, various wartime resources and strategies had become of less importance, which aided the opposition parties in their competition with the SDS.

Conclusion: SDS and Serb Opposition

The analysis of the Serb opposition to the SDS did generally not point to the radicalising effect of intra-ethnic competition that is described in the theoretical literature. Radicalisation was more the effect of internal divisions in the SDS than of external competition. In the pre-war period, radicalisation was unsuitable in the competition with the non-ethnic parties. During the war the SDS could scarcely radicalise further and the party largely co-operated with its more extreme rival. Moreover, the SDS chose to deal with the opposition by other means. Finally, in the post-war period, the international presence prevented radicalisation from being a winning strategy

Forms of Divisions

In the competition between the SDS and the Serb opposition, personal ambitions and personality clashes certainly played a role, but so did disagreements over the conflict and war as well as more ideological differences. Moreover, something closer to valence issues were of great importance in the disputes over corruption and war profiteering. Finally, the issue of legitimacy played a significant role, but crucially in the rhetoric of the rivaling elites, this was primarily linked with the political position of the elites rather than their popular mandate or popular support. The issues underlying intra-ethnic elite divisions are important for the effect of competition on elite positions in conflicts: It affects possible alliances and winning strategies for the parties and furthermore affects the extent to which changes in the conflict situation will be mirrored in the position of the parties.

Ethnification of Politics

Prior to the outbreak of war, the ethnification of politics was an important influence on the intra-ethnic elite competition – to the extent that this term can be used when competition with non-ethnic parties are concerned. Horowitz's thesis that the creation of ethnic parties will put pressure on non-ethnic parties also to declare their ethnic loyalties⁸⁵ was to some extent borne out by the pressure on members of non-ethnic parties. Competition with non-ethnic parties is however not only about the pressure for them to declare themselves in ethnic

85 Horowitz 1985, p. 349f.



terms: the existence of these parties questions the claim of the nationalist parties to represent a homogeneous community, and nationalist parties will therefore seek to reinforce an ethnic cleavage by accusing the parties of either being an ethnic party in disguise, representing the other side, or of being bad representatives of their own community. The latter option dominated in Bosnia. Furthermore, the existence of non-ethnic alternatives means that a vague position is instrumental: the competition is not only about mobilising the faithful, since the faithful may actually still be the minority. Moreover, these non-ethnic parties can provide alternative negotiating partners; hence the nationalist forces risk marginalisation if they abandon their vague position too soon. Radicalisation would therefore be a risky strategy in the party competition. Interestingly, in the mobilisation phase ethnic alternatives were slow to emerge. This had to do with the vagueness, the almost catch-all position that the SDS initially adopted, but the pre-war moderate ethnic divisions may also paradoxically have made it easier for radical forces to become dominant, since they were not faced with more moderate Serb alternatives.

Resources in the Competition

For actual moderating dynamics to emerge from the competition, the more moderate forces have to either be strong enough on their own or be able to find alliance partners. This relates to both the audiences of importance for the competition and the resources which are decisive: which resources are effective and how available are they to the competing parties? Competition between parties should at least in principle be focused on the general population. However, as the analysis has shown, other resources and hence audiences are also of importance and even decisive. In the pre-war phase, elections were held, but given the vague position of the SDS at the time, one cannot claim the existence of a popular mandate for the future direction of its policies. During the war, the only way for the population in the RS to express its opinion was in referenda on peace agreements. However, due to the lack of access to independent information, the extensive possibilities for the authorities to rig the vote and the prevailing situation of war, it is highly unlikely that the results represented a true expression of popular sentiments. In the post-war phase, electoral concerns, and hence popular opinion, became much more important in the fight for positions of power and it also became a source of inner-party conflicts. Even so, other resources were in the whole period more effective in the party competition. Non-political and extra-legal means played an increasing role as the conflict intensified and this mostly favoured the radical forces that had links with paramilitaries or with the RS army. Only with the rapprochement between the RS army and the Banja Luka opposition did the more moderate forces gain access to these non-political resources and they started exerting greater influence on the position of the RS leaders. The form of resources that are decisive in intra-ethnic elite competition seems to be strongly affected by the phase of the conflict. In a violent conflict, non-political resources would seem to be of greater importance which generally reduces the likelihood of moderation resulting from intra-ethnic elite competition. However, even in the post-war phase non-political resources were crucial: The international presence provided the necessary alliance partner for more moderate factions and even helped bend the rules to favour the more moderate forces. While appeals to the mass population and »playing the ethnic card« can in some instances be decisive for the form and direction of intra-ethnic elite competition, other audiences and other resources can prove as important. Whether or not radicalisation results from opposition to nationalist parties is therefore dependent on a number of different variables and should not be assumed *a priori*.

Nina Caspersen, PhD Candidate in Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Research interests include: political elites, political parties in transitional countries, national and ethnic conflicts, the former Yugoslavia. Articles published in the *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* and *Southeast European Politics*.