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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AT 26: PROBING THE COUNTRY'S "STABILITOCRACY" THROUGH THE CASE OF DAVID DRAGIČEVIĆ¹

Michaela Ulbrichtová*

ABSTRACT

The more than a quarter century-long engagement of the International Community (IC) and European Union (EU) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has contributed to the rise of "stabilitocracy", that is, weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who govern through informal, patronage networks and claim to provide pro-Western stability" (Belloni, 2020, p. 236, BiEPAG, 2017, Bieber, 2018, Bieber 2020, Börzel and Grimm, 2018, Cvijic, 2020, Pavlović, 2017) in the Western Balkan region in general and BiH in particular. This article aims to further examine the stabilitocratic argument and its potentially destabilizing implications in terms of the EU/IC's practices in BiH while focusing on their reaction to the recent still under-researched 2018 civic protests and bottom-up mobilization triggered by the violent death of young student **David Dragičević**. As such, this study sheds the light on the ongoing dynamics of the interplay between the EU/IC and the BiH's ethnonationalist political leaders, as well as analyses the implications of this relationship on the daily reality of BiH citizens in reference to the 2018 mass public protests and investigation of **David Dragičević's** case. Additionally, the insights presented in this article are based on analysis of the primary data obtained from the three rounds of thirty-seven semi-structured interviews that took place in various cities in BiH in the period between September 2020 and August 2021, and also on an examination of the secondary sources associated with the EU/IC's peacebuilding activities in BiH. Overall, on the basis of the findings presented in the article, the continuation of the stabilitocratic path by the EU/IC could not only lead to additional loss of credibility for external actors' activities in BiH, but could also negatively influence the demanded stability within this country.

Key words: Peacebuilding, Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Union,

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“Stabilitocracy”, International Community, Civil Society, Public Protests,
Dayton Peace Agreement

*“In this state there is no order, it is a black hole,” told Davor Dragičević
for AFP.*

(France24, 2018)

In what kind of country, we live in, if law is not the same for everyone.²

(Respondent 6, 2020)

Introduction

The year 2020 marked not only the twenty-fifth anniversary since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) that ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), but also a quarter century of ongoing peacebuilding activities of the international community (IC) in this state. Although initially the peacebuilding mission in the Western Balkans seemed promising, by the time it evolved into “cynical calculations about stability by international actors” (Belloni, 2020, p.2), the constant promotion of the status quo by local political elites and increasing disillusionment of the local population had escalated into a series of public protests in 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2018 (Milan, 2020).

The case of **David Dragičević’s** murder that triggered the 2018 protests, unseen in BiH since 2014, were unprecedented in their size, length, and intensity of violent suppression of the protesters by local authorities in the post-war history of the city of Banja Luka and the whole Republika Srpska (RS) (Alternative Report, 2019). The protests have become the symbol of the civic protest movement against injustice and corruption pointing to the overall dysfunctionality of the state institutions, to the lack of the rule of law, and also to the incapability of peacebuilding actors to adequately respond to serious violations of fundamental human rights principles as well as their paralysis in opposing the unlawful behaviour of the local political authoritarian elites towards their citizens.

During 2018, the two grieving fathers **Davor Dragičević** and **Muriz Memić** who lost their sons, together with **David’s** closest friends, formed the movement Justice for David, and managed to mobilize public support that went beyond the

² Interview with Respondent 6, an employee of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly in Banja Luka, 15 September 2020.

ethnic and entity divisions in BiH. This was undesired by the leading ethno-nationalist politicians who, in the case of RS, responded with violent suppression (Sasso, 2018, Reuters, 2018) and caught the European Union (EU) and IC actors unprepared vis-à-vis its stabilitocratic strategy. Additionally, the increasing support of the opposition parties in both RS and the Federation of BiH (FBiH) in the 2020 municipal elections (Office of the High Representative (OHR, 2021) further envisages BiH citizens' capacity to mobilize and/or resist the "dilemma of ethno-political prisoner"³ (Mujkić and Hulseley, 2010), to break out the logic of patron-client relations, and to actively use their agency to oppose the disillusionment with the overall economic, political, institutional, and social situation in BiH. In general, it demonstrates the local citizens' capacity to actively express their dissatisfaction with the status quo and their demands for systemic change.

According to **Belloni** and other authors, "*the EU approach contributed to the rise of regional 'stabilitocracy', that is, weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who govern through informal, patronage networks and claim to provide pro-Western stability*" (Belloni, 2020, p. 236, BiEPAG, 2017, Bieber, 2018, Bieber, 2020, Börzel and Grimm, 2018, Cvijic, 2020, Pavlović, 2017). The author of this article agrees with **Belloni's** statement that the primary focus on stability has turned into the dominant aspect of the EU peacebuilding presence in BiH, since the EU, in the name of preserving stability, has in recent years become willing to overlook various practices of local political elites that directly violate the rule of law and human rights. Specifically, in reference to the case of **David Dragičević**, these included violation of the freedom of assembly, the freedom of speech, and inappropriate usage of power by the local authorities against the peaceful protesters and their unlawful prosecution. Moreover, these practices—combined with general endemic level of corruption, nepotism, and alarming lack of independence between the investigative, prosecuting and political authorities—have undermined a sense of security and the overall rule of law in the country.

As a result, this article aims to further elaborate on the stabilitocratic argument and its potentially destabilizing implications in terms of the EU/IC's peacebuilding practices in BiH vis-à-vis their reaction to the 2018 protests and

³ Referring to the behaviour of the citizens who, despite the recognition of the complexities associated with their economic and political realities, still vote for their respective nationalist leadership, since they assume that the representatives of the other group will vote for the most extreme option for them.

bottom-up mobilization triggered by the murder of **David Dragičević**.

As of October 2021, BiH experienced the most serious political crisis since the end of the war in 1995, associated with a direct threat to the country's integrity when **Milorad Dodik**, a Bosnian Serb member of BiH's tripartite presidency, announced that RS will leave the key state institutions in order to achieve full autonomy within the state which, if realized, would represent a direct violation of one of the main provisions defined in the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) (Reuters, 2021). **Dodik's** statement provoked various reactions among US and EU politicians, revealing the inconsistency of the viewpoints of EU member states towards the situation in BiH and the tendencies of other actors (namely Russia and Serbia) to further destabilize the already fragile state system in BiH (RFE/RF's Balkan Service, 2021).

In addition, taking into account the turbulent development in Afghanistan after the announced withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in August 2021 (NATO, 2021) and the fact that the originally more ambitious peacebuilding mission of IC in Afghanistan ended as a complete fiasco, a closer analysis of the effects of the peacebuilding activities of the EU and IC in BiH in line with the 2018 protests and related events is vital.

The first section of the article presents the analysis of the concept of peacebuilding with special focus on the peacebuilding activities and the civil society building attempts of the EU and IC in BiH in line with the arguments of **Chandler, Richmond, Belloni, Pugh, Kappler, Juncos**, and other respected scholars, enriched with unique primary data and informal materials acquired during the interviews. As the 2008, 2012, 2013, and 2014 protests have already been analysed in detail by other academics and scholars, e.g. **Belloni** (2020) and **Milan** (2020), the next section of this article will, with **Murtagh**, who examined the 2014 protests in BiH (Murtagh, 2016), focus on a detailed analysis of the murder of **David Dragičević** and the subsequent 2018 protests and their vital implications for the inter-ethnic and inter-entity mobilization of the otherwise mostly segregated ethnic communities in BiH. The final section of this article will concentrate on the analysis of the reactions of the EU and IC in reference to the case of **David Dragičević** and the 2018 protests vis-à-vis their peacebuilding role in BiH containing stabilitocratic elements.

1. A Note on the Method

The research presented in this article contains empirical evidence from qualitative data collected in the aforementioned interviews by using the snowball sampling method. As the focus of the study is a sensitive and nuanced matter (Handcock and Gile, 2011) the gathering of information required access to specific groups of people often with insider knowledge (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Besides the interviews conducted in BiH, several online interviews were conducted with members of BiH's diaspora living in the United States, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. The anonymity and confidentiality of the data has been guaranteed by the researcher and the primary data presented in the article has been carefully selected, in order to envisage the essence of the respondents' perceptions on the discussed theme, as well as to represent the viewpoints of particular respondents from the various environments not associated with one another.

This article offers insights taken from three rounds of thirty-seven semi-structured interviews that were conducted in various cities in BiH (Sarajevo, Brčko, Srebrenica, Banja Luka, Jajce, Mostar, and Trebinje) in September 2020, July 2021 and August 2021 during author's research stays in BiH, since the primary focus of her doctoral research is associated with the main theme presented in the article. The interviews included former Yugoslav and current political, academic, cultural, and media representatives, as well as civil society activists, 2018 protest participants, NGO members represented by Transparency International BiH and Helsinki Citizens Assembly from Banja Luka, and regular BiH citizens. The questions asked during the interviews were related to the development of the role of the EU, IC and local civil society actors in BiH, since the end of the war in BiH in 1995 until the present day, as well as to the activities of these actors during the previous public protests in the country, with the specific focus on the 2018 protests and the case of **David Dragičević**. The outcomes of these interviews provide insights referring to the local perception of the peacebuilding strategy of the EU and IC in BiH, to the overall BiH post-war systemic functioning and unique insights related to the 2018 public protests and associated events.

2. Theoretical Considerations: Reflecting on Twenty-six Years of Peacebuilding in BiH

The more than a quarter-century long peacebuilding mission of the IC in BiH evolved in several phases. The first phase was influenced by the assumption about the possibility of spreading liberal norms and institutions to literally any state through identification of the correct sequencing of liberalization policies and timeliness. Next was the less optimistic perception referring to the peacebuilding actors' potential to influence the overall political, economic, and social structures of the Western Balkan states in general and BiH in particular (Richmond, 2014). This moved the traditionally oriented stability focus of the peacebuilding mission, accompanied by institution and civil society building agendas, to become the dominant aspect of their peacebuilding activities. The result was the rise of the above-mentioned "stabilitocracy" within the Western Balkan region (Belloni, 2020, Bieber, 2018).

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews demonstrate the involvement of the peacebuilding concepts discussed above, highlighting the complexities associated with the lived realities in post-conflict BiH. In particular, via analysing the responses of the IC and EU and reactions of the local political elites in reference to the case of **David Dragičević** and the 2018 civic protests combined with the examination of primary data obtained during the three rounds of interviews, the author aims to demonstrate the presence of stabilitocratic interplay between the IC and the local political elites, thus contributing to further critique of the peacebuilding involvement of the external actors in BiH.

In terms of BiH, the onset of the current complex situation and destabilization can be found in the provisions defined in the DPA. It was primarily successful in its attempt to end conflict, rather than building a viable state since it not only envisaged the political priorities of the ethno-nationalist elites, who were the only actors present during the initial negotiations, and it also did not concentrate on the functionality of the post-war institutions and overall implementation process of the accords (Ramović and Belloni, 2020).

For instance, Respondent 13 acknowledged the importance of the DPA in respect to its significance in ending the conflict. However, at the same time, they pointed to the complexities associated with the functionality of the system it managed to establish:

Dayton brought us peace, which is important, and this fact should not be diminished, but at the same time it established a sick country unable to

*heal itself under the current context. A country that is dependent on external medicine that will not always work and the pressure of external doctors to take it.*⁴

(Respondent 13, 2020)

In line with **Pugh**, the Dayton provisions soon developed into an elite social contract characterized by a set of unwritten rules. These were associated with the political leaders' maintenance of power via the institutionalization of ethnicity, preservation of their control over respective constituencies through "patron-client" relations, nepotism, skyrocketing corruption, and exploitation of neoliberal economic policies often in collaboration with criminal actors who profited from the war context and subsequently appeared as politically connected entrepreneurs in the post-war environment (Pugh, 2017). Respondent 30, a Bosnian Croat living in Sarajevo who is a writer, publisher, and active promoter of antifascist Yugoslav culture, stated his personal experience with some of the above-mentioned complexities:

*I was persuaded, even though I was not in their political party, to become chairman of the state supervisory board in the area of transportation. Mainly, they wanted me to direct the money from the EU that came for modernization to three specific banks, but I understood this later. When I fired the two directors, who were already overserving, I was removed from office.*⁵

(Respondent 30, 2021)

After the signing of the DPA, international peacebuilders soon became aware of the limitations associated with the implementation of the provisions. However, like similarly established institutions being "hijacked" by local political elites in terms of the adoption and implementation of the vital reforms that could possibly endanger their power base, the international community became "hijacked" by the Dayton framework itself and the unsatisfactory reality primarily favouring the local political elites that it managed to establish and preserve. As a result, mostly due to the double hijacking, the activities of the international peacebuilders in BiH during all phases of their missions managed to deal only with the troublesome effects of the established order, but were not capable of efficiently responding to

⁴ Interview with Respondent 13, alumnus of the Faculty of Political Science of the Sarajevo University. 18 September 2020, Sarajevo.

⁵ Interview with Respondent 30, Bosnian Serb living in Sarajevo who is a writer, publisher, and active promoter of antifascist Yugoslav culture. 16 August 2021, Sarajevo.

the real causes of the complexities (Chandler, 2017).

In terms of the position of the High Representative who is responsible for overseeing the civilian implementation of the DPA, the enormous activity of the first post-war High Representatives enabled through the excessively applied Bonn Powers, in order to push for the adoption of the necessary reforms and laws, was often subject to significant criticism from academics and policy experts for envisaging neo-colonial practices. This resulted in BiH being often defined as a protectorate, or trusteeship, where dependency was promoted and the principle of self-determination neglected (Chandler, 2017, Chandler, 2010). While interviewing various BiH citizens coming from both BiH entities in September 2020, their perceptions of the role of the former High Representative **Valentin Inzko** were surprisingly consistent among ninety per cent out of twenty-seven respondents. They either questioned his activities and their efficiency, stressed his invisibility, or pointed to his presented “concerns” being his frequent response to various issues, as expressed by Respondent 12:

*If something happens, Inzko is just concerned. Here everything is about politics. Nepotism – family ties – rules the land in every sector. The corruption is a problem. The sad story is everywhere. Different sad stories about the same thing. Those who profit from it will never create change.*⁶

(Respondent 12, 2020)

Respondent 11 from western Mostar, a writer and member of the Croatian Cultural Society in Mostar, was highly critical in respect to the performance of the former High Representative, stating that:

*Inzko is only concerned, definitely not impartial, and on the top of it a Bosniak chauvinist.*⁷

(Respondent 11, 2020)

The remaining ten per cent of respondents did not want to provide their comments on the question of the role of the High Representative in BiH.

Due to the previously mentioned academic criticism and also thanks to the decreasing engagement of various international community peacebuilding actors in BiH in favour of greater engagement of the EU, the “hands on” approach of the

⁶ Interview with Respondent 12, writer and former post-war UN employee in BiH, active in the cultural environment, from eastern Mostar. 16 September 2020, Mostar.

⁷ Interview with Respondent 11, writer and member of Croatian Cultural Society in Mostar. 15 September 2020, Mostar.

High Representatives that was dominant in the first post-war phase of peacebuilding was replaced by the “hands off” approach justified by the preference of local ownership over international decision making in line with the policy of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board (Richmond, 2014). However, the overall official confusion referring to the form of the peacebuilding strategy of the IC in BiH could be perceived in one of **Inzko**’s regular reports to the Peace Implementation Council: *“In the past International Community tried a robust interventionism and hands off local ownership approach ... Give us a reality on the ground, perhaps, it is time, now, to rethink our current approach. The current approach is local ownership hands off approach”* (UN, 2020). However, the details referring to the character of the possible new approach were not further specified.

When the EU became the leading peacebuilding actor in BiH in the early 2000s, the liberalism by imposition (which was characteristic of the first peacebuilding phase) turned into liberalism by restraint under the newly promoted logic of local ownership of the adoption of the externally defined reform processes. This was as part of the officially declared EU enlargement strategy towards the Western Balkan countries, under the essence of unequal partnership between the EU and various Western Balkan states aspiring to become future members of the EU. However, despite the new rhetoric of local ownership, the initial peacebuilding goals associated with marketization and democratization were preserved and framed under the provisions established by the EU enlargement process.

Additionally, it has to be stressed that although the EU’s peacebuilding engagement, together with significant external financial aid, brought several positive developments within the Western Balkan region in general and BiH in particular, the EU peacebuilding approach in BiH did not influence the domestic political leaders’ position towards the democratization process.⁸ Since the reforms were adopted as prerequisites to EU membership, the achieved outcomes did not influence the overall structures of the domestic political powerbase (Belloni, 2020, Bieber 2018).

A former high ranking Yugoslav politician, Respondent 31 perceives the current limited progress of BiH’s integration in the EU as being caused mainly by the position of the current local politicians who officially express their interest in

⁸ These positive developments included the establishment of the new security structures, regional links, and infrastructure projects.

BiH's EU membership but practically oppose it via overall passivity in reference to the discussion and adoption of the necessary reforms. Additionally, he stressed the importance of external pressure in terms of the adoption process:

*BiH is ruled by a regime that keeps saying that EU integration is the goal but is doing everything against it. There are fourteen points that are the conditions of the accession to the EU. But none of the politicians talk about these issues. These topics are not discussed at governmental meetings. For us, there is no alternative but the EU. But real steps are missing. What could help? Domestic factors will not move things forward without pressure from outside.*⁹

(Respondent 31, 2021)

Additionally, a member of one of the oppositional political parties in BiH and current member of BiH parliament, Respondent 1, defined the frequent dynamic of the political culture in BiH in terms of an absurd power game:

*Many of the leading politicians know that they are wrong, but they will keep saying these things because otherwise they will lose control.*¹⁰

(Respondent 1, 2020)

The dynamic of the relations between the EU and the Western Balkan states (BiH in particular) experienced various obstacles associated with two factors. The first is internal developments within the EU (e.g., Brexit, the rise of support for populist parties among EU member states, the disrespect of various EU governments towards EU law and principles, etc.) together with the inconsistency among EU member states in terms of further EU enlargement. The second is the increasing disillusionment of BiH citizens associated with the never-ending transition and rising scepticism in reference to EU membership (Sasso, 2020). This worrisome development of EU-BiH relations was dramatically depicted by Respondent 32 from Tesanj, who described the BiH membership in the EU situation in following terms:

*By the time we (BiH) qualify for EU membership, the EU will cease to exist.*¹¹

(Respondent 32, 2021)

⁹ Interview with Respondent 31, former high ranking Yugoslav politician. 18 August 2021, Sarajevo.

¹⁰ Interview with Respondent 1, member of the opposition political party in Federation BiH (FBiH) and member of FBiH parliament. 9 September 2020, Sarajevo.

¹¹ Interview with Respondent 32, writer and member of an association promoting inter-religious/inter-ethnic cooperation via artistic methods from Tesanj. 19 August 2021 conducted online.

Not only has the EU peacebuilding approach not managed to involve local citizens efficiently and meaningfully, but the peacebuilding actors have started to become paralysed when witnessing the undemocratic practices of the local semi-authoritarian political elites towards any form of dissent in the name of maintaining stability. The emergence of the 2021 political crises in BiH thus confirms the earlier analytical assumption that overlooking the authoritarian practices of the local political elites has led to the rise of the “stabilitocracy” (Cvijić, 2020), which has in turn caused greater regional instability. This in turn could significantly deteriorate the overall context in BiH, further decrease the EU’s credibility in the eyes of local citizens, and also strengthen the more significant involvement of other actors (mainly Russia, China) in this area.

As a result of the complexities associated with the post-Dayton political, economic, and patron-client realities, a significant part of the BiH population (approximately fifty per cent) decided not to exercise their voting rights during the parliamentary or municipal elections (with the exception of several post-war elections with significantly higher turnout). The local citizens who regularly participate in the election process could be divided into three following categories: First, pragmatic loyal voters from the extensive political party patronage networks who vote for their particular party in order to protect their occupational position or other benefits. Second, those who are being subjected to the so called “dilemma of ethno-political prisoner” described previously (Mujkić and Hulseley, 2010). And third, nationalists consistently supporting their own political party. The re-election of the main ethno-nationalist political parties is thus primarily due to the regular participation of these three groups of the voters during the initial elections (Belloni, 2020). However, international peacebuilders did not manage to associate the behaviour of BiH citizens at the polls with the post-Dayton contextual complexities, but rather explained it via their assumption of stubbornness, apathy, and apolitical behaviour (Jukic, 2012) of the local population influenced by the war experience and years of communist leadership, resulting in their incapability to form an active civil society. As a result, peacebuilders launched a massive campaign to build civil society in BiH via the establishment of various NGOs (Chandler, 2017), which will be examined in greater detail in following section.

2.1 Discussing the International Community’s Attempts to Build Civil Society in BiH

The attempts of the IC to create civil society via strengthening its establishment following the bottom-up process imposed from the top down did

not provide the expected space for the creation of the social contract within BiH society, since the process was guided upon the technocratic governance agenda of the EU and external donors through the establishment of various NGOs (Milan, 2020). Although the EU favoured a peacebuilding approach focused more on local ownership, its vision of civil society primarily concentrating on the creation of various NGOs contradicts its officially declared strategy referring to local ownership, inclusion, and participation (Chandler, 2017). However, such a narrow analysis of the EU's approach towards the creation of civil society in BiH would be too simplistic and incomplete. The significance of the creation of civil society was already addressed by the IC during the first years after the termination of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution that were often mistakenly perceived as the outcome of the ethnic segmentation envisaging the insufficient civil society causing the failures in the transition to democracy (Chandler, 1996). Additionally, the early IC post-war attempts to construct civil society via NGOs were often criticized for their exporting, benevolently colonial character leading to the creation of local clones of their external western counterparts that often applied foreign agendas to local community actors (Sampson, 2002).

As **Belloni** argues, the civil society building programmes designed by international organizations created and strengthened the division of the local society between “two Bosnias” which differ in their relation to liberal/neoliberal norms and civic values. Educated professionals living in urban areas and speaking foreign languages comprised what **Belloni** calls the “first Bosnia” and were the main recipients of the major share of international funding. Representatives of the so called “second Bosnia” were often largely overlooked by the Western aid system due to their lack of support for liberal peace agendas (Belloni, 2020). Such was the case of recently established, smaller organizations and associations, including sports, cultural or religious groups, labour organizations, and veteran groups, the values of some of which were connected to Tito's era (Kappler and Richmond, 2011).

Respondent 28, founder of a small association with an inter-ethnic/inter-religious agenda headquartered in Sarajevo, pointed to the existence of a so-called NGO mafia, which could have a further divisive impact on BiH society:

During the last years, something like an NGO mafia emerged here in BiH. Various, often bigger, NGOs from FBiH and RS are competing over the external donors' resources, which are not always being used for the projects they are entitled to. At the same time, smaller NGOs or

*associations with honest intentions and meaningful programmes suffer from the lack of financial support.*¹²

(Respondent 28, 2021)

Moreover, some of the “second Bosnia” groups did not become recipients of IC funds due to either their ideological orientation or incapability to apply for specific types of funding. Many of those excluded groups received significant financial support from the dominant ethno-nationalist parties (often around fifty per cent of their budget, as was the case of several sports groups and veteran associations) and thus became another piece in the puzzle of the patron-client relationship.

It should be noted that many of the representatives belonging not only to the “second Bosnia” camp, but also coming from various spheres of BiH society, were dissatisfied with the alarming social, political, and economic conditions that have been constantly deteriorating since 2008. They started to publicly express their criticism with the state of affairs in their country, while stressing the costs of the indefinite peacebuilding transition (Murtagh, 2016).

The public protests of 2008 in Sarajevo, 2012 in Banja Luka, 2013 in Sarajevo, 2014 in Tuzla, and 2018 in Banja Luka eventually spread from these areas to other cities within the same entity and even into different entities. BiH citizens demanded greater security, functionality of state institutions, protection of the commons (the natural and cultural resources equally belonging to all members of the society), and significant improvement of socio-economic conditions (Milan, 2020).

The protests demonstrated the citizens’ capacity to find their way out of the vicious cycle created by a political system unwilling to and/or incapable of responding to their demands and satisfying their needs. Moreover, the fact that protest participants were often from various ethnic groups envisages not only the non-ethnic causes behind these protests, but also the citizens’ awareness of their equal share of the complexity of their everyday life and similar concerns. Protesters identified not only the representatives of the different ethnic groups, but also the unsuitable and inefficient policies of the IC and the predatory ethno-political elites as the main causes of the complexity of their situation and collective misery (Richmond and Pogodda, 2017). The necessity for the bottom-up initiative of systemic change and the explanation of the significance and causes of the

¹² Interview with Respondent 28, founder of a smaller association with an inter-ethnic/inter-religious agenda. 13 August 2021, Sarajevo.

2014 protests that started in Tuzla and the 2018 protests that began in Banja Luka was described by Respondent 13:

*The change should come from the people. Systemic change is needed here. We had the opportunity in 2014 [referring to the socio-economic protests that started in Tuzla]. People protested across the FBiH and even organized themselves but then it all calmed down, partially also due to the floods. Similarly, mass protests against injustice and corruption took place two years ago in Banja Luka and also here in Sarajevo. Why? People simply can't stand this anymore.*¹³

(Respondent 13, 2020)

Since the 2008, 2012, 2013, and 2014 protests were already examined by various respected academics and scholars (e.g., **Belloni, Ramović, Kappler, Murtagh**), the following section, in line with the main goal of this article, will present an overview and detailed analysis of the murder of **David Dragičević** that triggered the 2018 protests and associated events vis-à-vis the peacebuilding policies of the EU/IC in BiH, since it has so far received only limited attention from academic circles.

3. Overview of the Case of the Murder of David Dragičević and the 2018 Protests

From March 2018 until December 2018, Banja Luka experienced the largest protests in the post-war history of the city, unseen in the whole of BiH since 2014, triggered by the behaviour of the local authorities towards the death, later classified as murder, of the young student **David Dragičević**. The reactions of the RS government towards the protesters constituted serious human rights violations that significantly escalated in the pre-election period in October 2018 and later in December 2018. These evolved into open repression, subsequent arrests of the protesters together with members of the opposition parties, members of the Justice for David movement (Alternative Report, 2019), and threats to **David's** father, **Davor Dragičević**, that significantly influenced his decision to leave BiH and resettle in Austria. In the meantime, in March 2019, **David's** parents decided to move his body and rebury him in Vienna with the attendance of **David's** friends, the members of the Justice for David movement,

¹³ Interview with Respondent 13, alumnus of the Faculty of Political Science of Sarajevo University. 18 September 2020, Sarajevo.

and former High Representative **Valentin Inzko** (Balkan Insight, 2019).

The excessive force and the scope and the intensity of the violent and non-violent repression from the local RS authorities towards the protesters, unexperienced in this entity since the end of the war in 1995, was rhetorically condemned by the representatives of the IC and EU in BiH. Despite this, the repression towards the main figures of the protests and the prohibition of freedom of assembly of the members of the Justice for David movement continued throughout 2019 (Alternative Report, 2019). This influenced the movement's decision to form a political party named Movement of Justice and to run in the 2020 local elections in Banja Luka (OHR, 2020).

In reference to the recent developments in David's case, in February 2021 the BiH prosecutor's office demanded the transfer of the case from the Banja Luka prosecutor's office that had not issued any indictments. The transfer of the case was, according to the former High Representative **Inzko**, "*possibly result of the increased profile of the protests*" (OHR, 2021). In July 2021 the Constitutional Court of BiH confirmed that the Banja Luka Prosecution "*made a mistake when failing to open an investigation into David Dragičević's death for three months*", confirming the initial claims of the David's family and members of the Justice for David movement. The real perpetrators still have not been identified at present day (Balkan Insight, 2021). Instead, several charges have been issued against **David's** father and leading figures of the Justice for David group such as **Ozren Perduv** and **Sofia Grmusa** for "*jeopardizing the security of Interior Minister Dragan Lukać*" (Balkan Insight, 2021).

3.1 Insights From the 2018 Protests

On 24 March 2018, the dead body of **David Dragičević**, a 21-year-old student from Banja Luka, was found near the river Crkvena, close to the Banja Luka city centre. The mishandling of the case by local authorities responsible for the investigation led **David's** father, **Davor Dragičević**, together with **David's** closest friends, who later formed the Justice for David movement, to start publicly protesting at the main square (Trg Krajine, later renamed to David's Square) in Banja Luka. Their demands were for the truth and justice in reference to **David's** death (Reuters, 2018). In addition, the protesters also accused local police and other investigative and prosecutorial authorities of an alleged cover up and concealing the real perpetrators, a claim openly rejected by the police stating that **David's** death was accidental and in the early stages of the investigation (Alternative Report, 2019). The number of protesters soon increased from a few

dozen on 24 March to ten thousand on 21 April (Saso, 2018) and forty thousand in October 2018, prior to the governmental elections (Lazarević, 2019). The participants of the protest who formed the above-mentioned movement represented citizens from all walks of life: students, the unemployed, the elderly, mothers, youths, and working citizens (Alternative Report, 2019).

Not long after the start of the protests, **David's** father, a Bosnian Serb, together with the members of the Justice for David movement, formed an alliance with **Muriz Memić**, a Bosnian Muslim, who claims that his son **Dženan** was murdered in 2016 in Sarajevo in a case concealed by the justice and police system. As a result, supportive protests attended by thousands of individuals from FBiH took place in Sarajevo and also in Banja Luka, with the presence of both fathers holding the placards "Justice for David" and "Justice for Dženan" (Balkan Insight, 2018). This clearly demonstrated the non-ethnic character of the 2018 protests and the capacity of citizens from various ethnic groups and both BiH entities to mobilize not only in the name of solidarity and justice, but also to stress the alarming state of the rule of law, endemic level of corruption, dysfunctionality of state institutions, and the alleged connection of state apparatus with organized crime groups. The statements of **David's** father such as: *"I am a Serb, Orthodox Christian. The murderers of my son are Serbs. These criminals and murderers have neither religion, nor nationality, just their own interests and the mutual slogan of both fathers we will not forgive you for our children"* (TrtWorld, 2018) further demonstrate the non-ethnic dimension of the protests. The formation of the fathers' alliance, supportive protests in both entities, and the fathers' statements contain the message of the irrelevance of the ethnic divisions, since most members of BiH society are subjected to the same reality and concerns.

As a result, the non-ethnic cause, as with the protests from the previous years, shifted the dominant narrative promoted by the leading ethno-nationalist parties. According to the protesters, it was not the representatives of the other ethnic groups but the corrupted state structures that represented a direct threat to their security and socioeconomic well-being (Richmond and Pogodda, 2017). The inter-entity spillover of the 2018 protests should be also stressed since it has never been present in such intensity during the protests that took place in the previous years.

Additionally, according to the 2019 Alternative Report of the Application of BiH for European Union Membership, the members of the Justice for David movement and the supporters of the protests were publicly accused by various executive governmental officials of being *"secret service agents"*, *"foreign*

mercenaries”, and “*Soros supporters*” who wanted to destabilize RS and cause public unrest. Moreover, the public institutions employees participating in the protests experienced various forms of pressure that significantly complicated their working activities, such as unexpected transfers to institutions outside of the RS capital. After the installation of cameras at the main square in July 2018, there were concerns that this move was partially motivated by the desire to identify protesters. In terms of the local media, public news agencies and radio and television service played a significant role in the defamation of the protesters, while cases of the real violence against the protesters were censored or misinterpreted (Alternative Report, 2019). In addition, it should be mentioned that the propaganda not only targeted members of the Justice for David group, civil society organizations, the members of the opposition parties, and other citizens who attended the protests, but also specifically persons whose ethnic identity was misused by the public media in RS in order to depict them as a security threat from the FBiH, in line with the general dominant security narrative promoted by the leading ethno-nationalist parties. Specifically, this strategy was applied against **Muriz Memić**, father of **Dženan Memić**, and the participants of the protests coming from the FBiH, as stated by Respondent 7, a journalist and activist from Banja Luka.

*Of course, the local politicians were afraid and nervous. The inter-ethnic solidarity and cooperation goes against their interests. Politicians try to keep us three yards apart and convince us that the others are our enemies, so we do not mix.*¹⁴

(Respondent 4, 2020)

In contrast to the propaganda, social media played a crucial role in mobilizing citizens and in publishing the findings of **David's** family in **David's** case and their criticism of the police investigation (Alternative Report, 2019).

Considering the above-mentioned facts regarding the behaviour of local RS authorities in the investigation of **David Dragičević's** murder and against the citizens present during the 2018 protests, it could be assumed that the judicial structures, media, and security institutions in RS and potentially in all of BiH do not function independently and are subject to the full control of the governing party. These findings indicate the establishment of governmental control that envisages patterns of authoritarian regimes are willing to openly use anti-

¹⁴ Interview with Respondent 4, civic activist and journalist from Banja Luka. 14 September 2020, Banja Luka.

democratic practices to resist its opponents and critics. The summary of the findings present in the 2019 Alternative Report of the Application of BiH for European Union Membership is worth noting in its entirety:

From inadequate processing of the murder, which caused reasonable suspicions about the motives of the investigative bodies, through persecution of the family and friends of the killed young men, carried out by representatives of the government, media, “intellectuals” close to the regime and different public institutions, to abuse of investigative and judicial bodies and open police repression, all development around the “Justice for David” protests point to the climate of general legal uncertainty and deep problems in functioning of democratic institutions and mechanisms in this Entity.

(Alternative Report, 2019)

Overall, the significance of the 2018 protests, compared to previous cases of civic mobilization in BiH, could thus not only be perceived in its length, but also in the increasing intensity of popular support by citizens in RS and also in FBiH. The unprecedented level of violent and non-violent repression used against the protesters by local authorities, the persecution of the David's family, friends, and the members of the Justice for David movement, and their inability to exercise their freedom of assembly and freedom of speech all influenced the movement's decision to form the Movement of Justice political party at the end of 2019 and to become one of the candidates in the local elections of October 2020. Though they did not receive the necessary support to enter the municipal assembly, several interviewed analysts and civic society activists suggested that the unprecedented brutality against the movement members and their supporters could have had a direct impact on decreasing support for the leading ethno-nationalist party, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), in RS. SNSD lost the two biggest cities, Banja Luka and Bijelina, versus the opposition parties PDP (Party of Democratic Progress) and SDS (Serb Democratic Party), leading to **Draško Stanivuković's** election as Banja Luka's first non-SNSD mayor in the entity's history. His campaign promoted anti-corruption practices and protection of civic freedoms, allowing the members of the Justice for David movement to exercise their freedom of assembly, despite the refusal of the RS Ministry of Interior to grant permits to the protestors (OHR, 2021). It should be stressed that the presence of the opposition politicians during the protests was used by leading ethno-nationalist politicians to shift the main essence behind the protests from

the protesters' demands to the opposition quest for power.

In addition, there was increasing support of the opposition civic oriented parties in FBiH: Our Party (NS), People and Justice (NiP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Independent BiH List, forming the coalition named The Four. The results of the 2020 municipal election in FBiH resulted in the significant loss of mandates of one of the leading ethnonationalist parties in FBiH. Party of Democratic Action (SDA) lost four mayoral races and municipal councils out of nine contested cantons in Sarajevo to the oppositional parties. Although it has to be stressed that the leading ethno-nationalist parties (SDA, SNSD, and The Croat Democratic Union BiH (HDZ) still remain the most powerful parties in BiH and that the former High Representative stated the victories of the opposition parties “*posed no immediate threat to the dominance of the SDA, SNSD and HDZ*” (OHR, 2021), it is still too early to analyse the success of the newly formed coalition of The Four. The activities of the PDP and SDS parties in RS in terms of their capability to improve the complex situation in line with their party programmes and the support they received from the general public suggests several tendencies. Firstly, the capacity of significant numbers of BiH citizens to mobilize and/or resist the “dilemma of ethno-political prisoner” (Mujkić and Hulseley, 2010) or the logic of patron-client relations, which most of them are subjected to. Secondly, their capacity to actively use their agency to oppose the general disillusionment with the overall economic, political, institutional, and social situation in BiH, not only during the public protests but also at the election polls. Thirdly, as will be examined in the following section, the “paralysis” of the international community in terms of their reaction to public demands and dissatisfaction with the whole system, violation of human rights, and unlawful practices by the leading political elites as demonstrated during the 2018 protests.

4. International Community and European Union Reactions to the 2018 Protests

The public protests and the reaction of local authorities towards **David's** family and the members of the Justice for David movement experienced various responses from the international community. The IC has traditionally accused BiH citizens of inertness and apathy in terms of their (externally perceived) missed opportunities to bring change to the local political context during the elections (Jukic, 2012). At the same time, the IC ignores the characteristics of the systemic context (described earlier) which resulted from not only the conditions associated

with the Dayton provisions that they (IC) enabled but also their approach towards the behaviour of the leading ethno-nationalist political elites which continues to permanently recreate a “stabilitocracy” (Belloni, 2020). The EU/IC stabilitocratic approach towards the Western Balkan region in general and BiH in particular should be understood in line with their prioritization of ethnic security in the post-war context which has led to decreasing importance of the other values and concerns associated with the rule of law, functionality of the state institutions, socio-economic needs, and promotion of moderate voices in the political arena and among grass roots and other local civil society actors. The reasons behind this EU/IC prioritization are strongly associated with the wars experienced in the region as a result of the Yugoslavia’s violent dissolution (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016). The stabilitocratic approach of the international community, although perceived as logical by some of its promoters, also supports and strengthens the position of the local ethno-nationalist leaders. These leaders only politically profit from the preservation of the ethnic divisions and the stalemate that defines the state of affairs in BiH since 2006, but also present themselves as the solution to the complex situation that they contribute to (Chandler, 2017). As a result, the stabilitocratic approach of the IC and the “statuization” strategy of the local political elites do not favour the adoption and implementation of the demanded reforms contained in the fourteen priorities by the EU, leading to hijacking of state institutions by ethno-nationalist political interests. Moreover, the stabilitocratic approach of external actors has often led to overlooking un-democratic practices of the local political elites towards various members of BiH society, as demonstrated earlier in the case of 2018 protests. According to various analysts, the paralysis of the IC, exemplified by the above-mentioned stabilitocratic stance, could lead to the establishment of various semi-authoritarian regimes and thus cause greater instability in the Western Balkan region (Pavlovic, 2017). The following EU press statements issued as reactions to the brutal suppression of the protesters by RS police in December 2018 demonstrate this stabilitocratic logic: *“Today’s turn of the events in Banja Luka sends a negative and alarming signal about the state of the rule of law in BiH. We will continue to follow the events very closely and urge all to stay calm”*. Adding, *“we have asked the RS Ministry of Interior for an immediate explanation of the ongoing arrests of different persons associated with the ‘Justice for David’ movement, including Davor Dragičević, as well as opposition politicians”* (N1, 2018). In terms of the first statement, the aggressive suppression and subsequent treatment of the protesters only envisages the *“negative and alarming signal about the state of the*

rule of law in BiH”, but also the disrespect of local authorities towards human rights and fundamental freedoms and their willingness to misuse their power and violently suppress any form of dissent. The continuation of the statement “*urge all to stay calm*” put protesting citizens and the local authorities suppressing them in the same camp under the stabilitocratic logic, while the following statement “*demanding the explanation of the ongoing arrests*” (N1, 2018) depicts the unwillingness and/or incapability of EU/IC actors to protect local citizens from the obvious violations of the human rights and other democratic principles by the local elites, and the termination of aggressive behaviour at the moment when it is initially taking place was mentioned by former High Representative **Valentin Inzko**: “*I continued to refrain from using my executive powers, in accordance with the policy of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, which emphasizes ‘local ownership’ over international decision making*” (OHR, 2019).

Paradoxically, two weeks before the brutal suppression of the protesters by RS local authorities in December 2018, the conference where twenty-one EU ambassadors expressed their support to **Davor Dragičević** and **Muriz Memić**, the fathers of murdered young men, took place. The meeting was organized as a commemoration of 10 December being Human Rights Day. After the conference, the EU mission in BiH published following statement: “*All civil society actors have the EU’s full support in demanding accountability from the authorities in upholding the rule of law*”. Further adding: “*Like all citizens in BiH, Mr. Memić and Mr. Dragičević have the right to expect thorough and professional investigations into all serious crimes by the relevant law enforcement agencies and judiciary*” (N1, 2018). Although this statement contains the essence of the EU’s normative approach in term of the solutions associated with the complex situation, at the same time it could be assumed that it lacks awareness of the functionality of the state institutions and the state of affairs in the judicial and police sector regarding their independence from the strategies of the dominant political actors and agents behind them. As was stated several times by respondents during the semi-structured interviews, without external pressure, the adoption of the necessary reforms by the local ethno-nationalist political elites is less probable, since they profit from the stalemate and the demanded reforms would significantly endanger their political positions and various activities associated with their power status. According to Respondent 6, more efficient approaches of the EU towards the local ethno-nationalist politicians should possess following characteristics:

The EU should have a tougher stance towards troublesome politicians,

*like the US. Carefully targeted sanctions against local politicians (like travel bans or freezing their accounts) could work.*¹⁵

(Respondent 6, 2020)

The mild approach by the international community towards indispensable reform adoption, as well as the serious violations of the human rights and the rule of law by the predatory political elites, has in turn led to the decrease of not only EU credibility and reputation among the local population, but also questions of the efficiency of the overall peacebuilding mission of the IC in BiH.

According to the analysis in the High Representative reports to the Peace Implementation Council, it has been found that not only did repetitive sentences appear in various reports, but also the characterization of the dynamics of protests and the identity of the protesters has been reduced to vague terms such as *“grass roots civic protests”* as stated in the 54th report that mentioned the 2018 protest for the first time (OHR, 2018), or *“public disappointment with the criminal justice system”* stated in the 55th and 56th OHR reports (OHR, 2019).

However, the most significant neglect of the international community towards the robustness of the civic mobilization could be perceived in the fact that neither of these High Representative's reports refer to **Davor Dragičević's** importance in the formation of this movement. This is hardly surprising, taking into account the High Representative's main role associated with overlooking the implementation of the civilian aspect of the Dayton Peace Accord. Contrary to the reports, an EU press statement claims that *“it is striking that two fathers in search of justice for their dead sons have mobilized more outcry against lack of the rule of law and impunity in BiH than any political party has managed to do”* (N1, 2018). Based on this comparison, it could be assumed that there exist differences in the perception of the situation between the former High Representative and the EU mission in BiH. Simultaneously, the former High Representative justified his unwillingness to impose his executive powers by emphasizing local ownership over international decision-making. At the same time, it could be assumed that the EU approach, in reference to the violation of human rights by local authorities, possesses aspects of the previously mentioned state of “paralysis”, symptomatic of their stabilitocratic policy towards BiH ethno-nationalist political elites under the logic of unequal partnership and the pseudo-locally owned peacebuilding process.

¹⁵ Interview with Respondent 6, employee of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Banja Luka. 15 September 2020, Banja Luka.

Conclusion

Despite the main objective of this paper being the critique of the peacebuilding strategies of the EU/IC in BiH, while stressing the incapability of peacebuilding actors to act in line with its declared values, it should be noted that the EU is currently facing one of its deepest crises of fundamental values and respect to the rule of law in its history. The inconsistency of the EU member states regarding their approach towards the enlargement of the Western Balkans in EU structures is automatically mirrored in its peacebuilding strategy towards the Western Balkan region in general and BiH in particular (Cvijic, 2020), as is evident in the EU/IC reaction towards the 2018 civic protests.

As this article is based on a very specific case of “mysterious” violent deaths of two young men in BiH David Dragičević and Muriz Memić, in which—according to the parents and their supporters—police and influential political figures in Banja Luka and Sarajevo might have been implicated, this article has several limitations in terms of claiming a widespread trend of solidarity across the two political entities (RS and FBiH) in the country. However, while avoiding generalizations, the main aim of this paper has been to show that personal tragedies and equally shared complexities associated with the state system established in BiH can mobilize people across the ethnic lines in their search for justice. At the same time, the paper has examined the response of the IC to the local political elites’ reaction in reference to the 2018 civic protests, demonstrating the presence of stabilitocratic interplay between the IC and local political actors in BiH.

The strong support of the ethno-nationalist parties in the parliamentary elections, often cited by external actors, thus does not reflect the “deviation” (referring to local citizens’ voting preference) but rather the structural fallacies of the post-Dayton reality in BiH directly influencing their voting behaviour. As a result, the interplay between the local ethno-nationalist elites and EU/IC envisages not only the logic of the “*stabilitocracy*”, that is, *weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who govern through informal, patronage networks and claim to provide pro-Western stability*” (Belloni, 2020, p. 236, BiEPAG, 2017, Bieber, 2018, Bieber 2020, Börzel and Grimm, 2018, Cvijic, 2020, Pavlović, 2017), but in case of BiH also the so-called “double pretending game”: the EU pretending their previously declared interests for the membership of the BiH into their structures and local ethno-national political elites officially stating their desire to become EU members, however in reality presenting their limited interest

regarding the adoption and implementation of the demanded reforms inherent in the fourteen points that were given to BiH, as the prerequisite for further step in the EU accession process.

While this “stabilitocratic/statuization game” is being played still during the time of the writing of this text, local citizens either take part in public protests or leave the country, as can be perceived in the enormous level of brain drain that has been constantly increasing during the recent years (Sasso, 2018). The inconsistency and lack of common agreement among the EU member states in reference to Western Balkan enlargement complicates the matter further. As stated by Respondent 9, a journalist from Banja Luka, in reference to the current state of the EU BiH accession process:

*The stick still exists but the carrot is getting invisible.*¹⁶

(Respondent 9, 2020)

The essence of this sentence could be viewed as the decreasing enthusiasm and credibility of the EU among the local population in BiH, which is in line with the arguments frequently presented during the previously mentioned semi-structured interviews. The window of opportunity for the greater integration of BiH into EU structures has thus been slowly but constantly closing since the 2010. The internal difficulties experienced by the EU and its overall incapability to present itself as a credible and strong actor faithful to its officially declared values and principles complicates its peacebuilding/future EU member state building mission and presence in the region further. The current political crises in BiH that started at the beginning of October 2021 is perceived by many analysts and commentators as the greatest political crisis since the end of war in the 1995. The IC/EU thus have two possibilities: firstly, to take this crises as an opportunity and radically reset its peacebuilding approach towards BiH in terms of reconsidering its relations with dominant leaders of ethnonationalist political parties and its approach towards the fight against organized crime; or secondly, to take the more convenient strategy and continue to promote its stabilitocratic policy, which could be further justified and strengthened by the recent threats from the statements of RS president **Milorad Dodik**. However, by following the stabilitocratic path, the EU/IC risks further loss of its credibility which could cause negative effects in the long-term to its enlargement mission in the Western Balkans in general and in terms of BiH in particular. Whether BiH is an example of a trusteeship,

¹⁶ Interview with Respondent 9, journalist from Banja Luka. 25 September 2020, conducted online.

protectorate, (Chandler, 2017) another Western Balkan state suffering from the never-ending transition process or possessing the attributes of a failed state has been already debated and will possibly remain the subject of future academic debates. As a result, asking the question *Quo Vadis BiH?* is more than accurate. The IC, due to its active role not only in terms of ending the conflict in BiH, but also in other phases of the post-war peacebuilding process together with the EU, have their indisputable role in the current state of affairs in BiH. The shifting of responsibility to local actors for the success or failure of the reform processes officially dictated from Brussels and branding it under the logic of local ownership did not diminish their responsibility and impact of their previous involvement. “*My child was killed by a system created after the war*”, stated **Davor Dragičević**. “*Criminals have no religion, nor nationality, just their own interests*” (Zuvela, 2018).

Although the 2018 civic protests in BiH were not the first civic protests taking place in the country during the recent years, they were unique from several reasons, especially as they acted as catalysers for civic mobilization, challenging the existing ethno-nationalist narrative in BiH. The primary aim of the author was not to prove how these protests posed a threat to the established order in BiH, but to demonstrate the response of the IC in BiH in reference not only to the 2018 protests, but also towards the undemocratic/unlawful practices adopted by the BiH local political elites against the protesters and their supporters.

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Primary data: Interviews

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- Respondent 4, civic activist journalist from Banja Luka. 13 September 2020, Banja Luka.
- Respondent 6, employee of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Banja Luka. 15 September 2020, Banja Luka.

- Respondent 11, writer and member of Croatian Cultural Society in Mostar. 15 September 2020, Mostar.
- Respondent 12, former post-war UN employee in BiH, writer, and active in cultural environment. 16 September 2020, Mostar.
- Respondent 13, alumnus of the Faculty of Political Science of Sarajevo University.
18 September 2020, Sarajevo.
- Respondent 20, journalist from Banja Luka. 25 September 2020, conducted online.
- Respondent 28, founder of small inter-ethnic/inter-religious association. 13 July 2021, Sarajevo.
- Respondent 30, writer, publisher, and active promoter of antifascist Yugoslav culture. 16 August 2021, Sarajevo.
- Respondent 31, former high ranking Yugoslav politician. 18 August 2021, Sarajevo.
- Respondent 32, writer and member of association promoting inter-religious/inter-ethnic cooperation via artistic methods from Tesanj. 19 August 2021, conducted online