

# Bosnia's security sector

*A case study according to the  
HCSS framework to assess security sectors*



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May 2021



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## List of Abbreviations

AFBiH	Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
HCSS	The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RS	Republika Srpska
SIPA	State Intelligence and Protection Agency
SSAF	Security Sector Assessment Framework
SSR	Security Sector Reform

## Authors' Note

This study is written by reserve officers S. Agterhuis, P.G. Cabo, R.M. Kersten, T.C. Kievit, P.A. Neelissen and R. Wellen of Network Civil Administration, 1 Civil Military Interaction Command, Royal Netherlands Army. The study aims to present a concise and methodical assessment of Bosnia's security sector, according to the HCSS framework (see below). As such, this study does not purport to offer an exhaustive picture of the present Bosnian security sector, nor of its sociohistorical background. Whereas this study follows the HCSS methodology closely, the analysis and views expressed are those of the authors alone, and do not reflect views of HCSS, nor of any agency of the Dutch government. The authors would like to express their gratitude towards the reviewers of the manuscript.

## Executive Summary

This study is a concise assessment of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth Bosnia). It is based directly on the report "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly" by the *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies* (HCSS, 2020). The HCSS report presents a framework to assess the potential contribution of a state's security sector to stability, with stability defined as the combination of state and human security. In its report, HCSS elaborates three case studies that show the methodology and framework in practice. The present study follows the HCSS methodology and applies the framework to a fourth case: Bosnia. The HCSS framework states that the potential of a security sector to contribute to stability depends on three characteristics: the *ability*, the *motivation* and the *legitimacy* of a security sector to provide security. A quantitative analysis of the defined indicators pertaining to *ability*, *motivation* and *legitimacy* results in categorisation of Bosnia as having a security sector of the *criminal* type, as per the HCSS classification. This study employs a literature review to further analyse and illustrate the three characteristics of the Bosnian security sector. Ultimately, this case study points to the crux lying in the lacking *motivation* of the three rival Bosnian elites (Bosniak, Croat and Serb) to build up a nationwide security sector with both the *ability* and *legitimacy* to serve the security needs of all Bosnian citizens to a high professional standard. As a final observation, this case study identifies as an interesting area for further research, an exploration of two competing lenses with which to look at the Bosnian security sector: a *criminal* lens versus a *transitioning* lens.



Figure 1: Bosnia and Herzegovina: state, entities and constituent peoples (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018)

# Bosnia: A Criminal Security Sector

## 1. Introduction

This study is a concise assessment of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth Bosnia). It is based directly on the report “The Good, The Bad and the Ugly” by the *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies* (HCSS, 2020). The HCSS report presents a framework to assess the potential contribution of a state’s security sector to stability, with stability defined as the combination of state and human security. In its report, HCSS elaborates three case studies that show the methodology and framework are shown in practice. The present study follows the HCSS methodology and applies the framework to a fourth case: Bosnia.

The Security Sector Assessment Framework (SSAF) developed by HCSS states that the potential of a security sector to contribute to stability depends on three characteristics: the *ability*, the *motivation* and the *legitimacy* of a security sector to provide security. As shown in the figure below, provided in the HCSS report, these three characteristics in turn rest upon six principles of good governance: *effectiveness*, *inclusiveness*, *rule of law*, *accountability*, *transparency* and *responsiveness*.

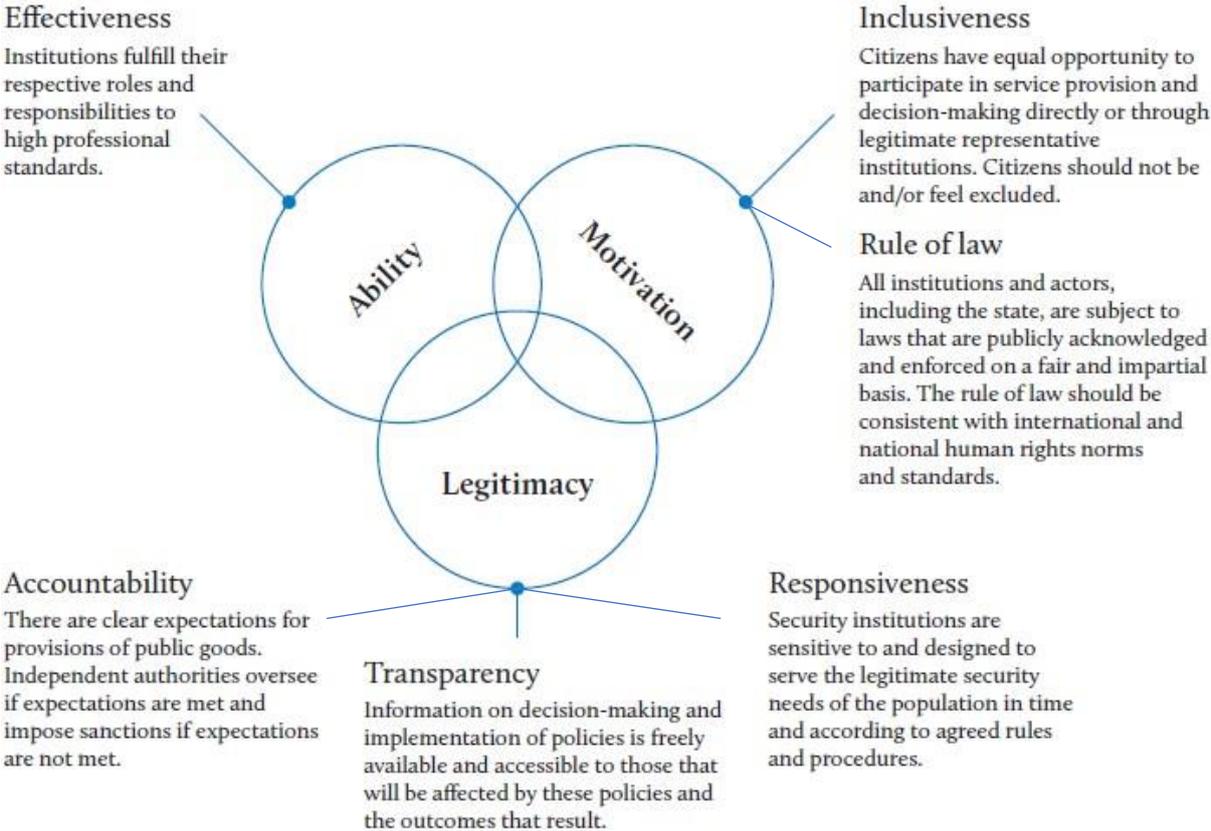


Figure 2: Three characteristics and six principles (HCSS, 2020, p. 76)

The SSAF is operationalised further by identifying quantitative proxy indicators per principle, as shown in the table below.

Characteristic	Principle	Proxy Indicator
Ability	Effectiveness	Number of Policemen per 100,000 Inhabitants. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Crime Trends Survey, Interpol, National Security Reports )
		Monopoly on the Use of Force. (Bertelsmann Transformation Index )
Motivation	Inclusiveness	Political Rights and Civil Liberties Ranking averaged. (Freedom House )
		Equal protection index. (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Dataset 2020 )
	Rule of law	Rule of law index. (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Dataset 2020 )
Legitimacy	Accountability	Accountability index. (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Dataset 2019 )
	Transparency	State Legitimacy Scale. (Fragile States Index )
	Responsiveness	Security Apparatus Scale. (Fragile States Index )

Table 1: Proxy indicators to measure three characteristics, six principles (HCSS, 2020, p. 39)

Applying the SSAF methodology and manual to Bosnia yields the score *medium* for *ability*, *motivation* as well as *legitimacy*.<sup>1</sup>

Country	Ability	Motivation	Legitimacy
Bosnia	Medium	Medium	Medium

Table 2: Scores of Bosnia's security sector

The next and final step in the SSAF methodology and manual is identifying the specific security sector type. The SSAF identifies six distinct types. With a score of *medium* on all three characteristics, the SSAF categorises Bosnia as having a security sector of the *criminal* type.<sup>2</sup>

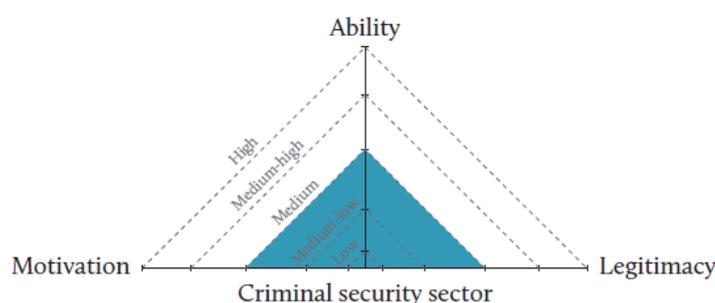


Figure 3: The criminal security sector (HCSS 2020, p. 43)

<sup>1</sup> On a five-point ordinal scale ranging from low, medium-low, medium, medium-high to high.

<sup>2</sup> The six distinct types are the *criminal*, the *repressive*, the *oppressive*, the *fragmented*, the *transitioning* and the *stable* security sector. See also the table in Annex A to this study. Other countries of the *criminal* type include Ukraine, Liberia, Brazil and Mexico. The term *criminal* in this study refers expressly to its usage in the HCSS categorisation.

The SSAF typifies the *criminal* security sector as follows: “The criminal security sector faces systemic challenge from organised criminal groups that have direct or indirect ties to the security sector. This dynamic is deeply imbedded into the structure and functioning of the security sector. This dynamic overshadows efforts to promote stability despite the fact that criminal security sectors typically do possess some resources. As a result, criminal security sectors score medium on the three characteristics ability, motivation and legitimacy” (HCSS, 2020, p. 43). Additional features illustrative of the criminal security sector type are that it suffers from institutional inertia, is challenged by the activity of parallel (criminal) networks and the existence of elites with a strong preference for a fragmented security environment (HCSS, 2020).

The paragraphs below assess the three characteristics (ability, motivation and legitimacy) of Bosnia’s security sector, based upon the proxy indicators as listed in Table 1 and a review of the literature. The case study ends with a succinct conclusion as to Bosnia’s security sector.

## 2. Assessment of Bosnia’s Security Sector

### 2.1 Ability

Bosnia’s security sector scores medium on ability.<sup>3</sup> Ability derives partly from possessing sufficient financial, human and material resources and intelligence capacity (potential ability) and partly from having the capability to convert these available resources into security provision proficiency (actual ability).

In terms of *financial resources*, Bosnia has made progress toward a more sustainable security sector. For years after the Dayton Agreement (1995),<sup>4</sup> the high costs of maintaining parallel security structures following ethnic lines were effectively bankrupting the Bosnian state. Subsequent reforms have brought expenditures more in line with other countries in the region. However, the weak state of the economy and persistent reliance on international funds continue to put pressure on the security sector. In addition, the relatively low salaries in the sector contribute to high levels of corruption (Caparini, 2004; Marijan, 2016).

The above cost reduction was realised mainly by significantly downsizing the number of personnel in the security sector. The security sector personnel was vetted after the war, to strip the sector of those who committed war crimes and human rights abuses (Marijan, 2016). In order to improve the quality of the *human resources* in the sector, the international community has supported various training programmes and has sent many experts, but with mixed results (Marijan, 2016; Kudlenko, 2017). Recently, the Border Police showed to be too understaffed to effectively respond to the influx of refugees and migrants in 2018 and 2019 (European Commission, 2020).

The Bosnian security sector is, moreover, lacking in *material resources*, such as infrastructure and equipment. This is shown for example in the under-resourced investigative and prosecutorial agencies (Dziedzic, 2020) and Border Police (European Commission, 2020), as well as in the overcrowded prison system (Marijan, 2016). As Rosga noted (2010), contrary to internationally held beliefs, a lack of

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<sup>3</sup> Bosnia scores 2.38 on the proxy indicator “number of policemen” (UNODC Crime Trends Survey) and 4.1 on the proxy indicator “monopoly on the use of force” (Bertelsmann Transformation Index). Bosnia’s final ability score is 6.49, putting Bosnia in the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile.

<sup>4</sup> The *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina* was reached at an air force base near Dayton (USA) at the end of 1995. It ended the three-and-a-half-year-long Bosnian War and created a single sovereign state *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, composed of two parts: the largely Serb-populated *Republika Srpska* and the mainly Bosniak-Croat-populated *Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

equipment and resources is regarded by some within the Bosnian police as a more urgent problem than inter-ethnic tensions.

With regard to *intelligence capacities*, Bosnia's ability was for a long time undermined by the existence of separate security services under the control of the respective political parties. A qualified success was the introduction in 2004 (essentially pushed through by the High Representative)<sup>5</sup> of a statewide Law on Intelligence and Security Agency and the creation of a single Intelligence and Security Agency. However, this central body is not yet very effective (Kudlenko, 2017). Also, the sharing and exchange of intelligence throughout the Bosnian state is still very limited (European Commission, 2020).

Furthermore, it is noted here that – as an overall challenge for Bosnia regarding the above four types of resources – the multiple levels of government make for a very costly and *inefficient* use of the already limited resources available (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020). This hinders the translation of potential ability into actual ability.

Regarding then the *actual ability* or effectiveness of the Bosnian security sector, the state's monopoly on the use of force throughout its territory is in principle established. The security situation in Bosnia is relatively stable and has in important respects normalised. That in itself is a significant achievement after the bloody war in the early nineties. But the continued complexity of horizontally and vertically divided competences and persistent politicisation keep hindering the ability of Bosnia to effectively govern and provide security for all its citizens (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020; Marijan, 2016). In this respect, it can also be noted that the main reform effort by the international community in Bosnia has been conventionally state-centric, as opposed to venturing from a broader understanding of human security (Marijan, 2016). In the view of the Bosnian public, especially organised crime, corruption and high-profile (political) incidents are the main factors underlying continued feelings of insecurity. These moreover vary across regions and cantons (Freedom House, 2020; Marijan, 2016). Lastly, recent developments as to the actual ability of the Bosnian security sector show a downward trend. The Fragile States Index notes an "elevated warning" for Bosnia in its 2020 report (Fund for Peace, 2020).

## 2.2 Motivation

Following the Dayton Agreement and subsequent agreements, the international community tried to build up a multi-ethnic and inclusive security sector in Bosnia, motivated to protect all its citizens on an equal basis (Mayer-Rieckh, 2013). However, Bosnia's security sector scores medium on motivation, raising doubts to what extent the abovementioned goal has been met.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the police, it proved first of all that it was not feasible to have a unified law enforcement agency, calling into question the *institutional motivation* to protect the whole population. Bosnia has several police agencies with divergent jurisdictions and responsibilities (Kudlenko, 2017). The absence of a nationwide law enforcement agency appears to erode the good governance principle of *inclusiveness*. A notable exception since its inception in 2004 is the State and Intelligence Protection Agency (SIPA), with a mandate across Bosnian territory, but its mandate is limited to serious crimes such as terrorism and war crimes. That being said, it could play the role of a precursor to an eventual overall nationwide law enforcement agency.

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<sup>5</sup> The position of *High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina* was created in the Dayton Agreement to oversee its implementation, under pressure from the international community. The High Representative holds vast (veto) powers over Bosnian politics.

<sup>6</sup> Bosnia scores 2.71 on the proxy indicator "Political Rights and Civil Liberties Ranking averaged" (Freedom House), 3.64 on the proxy indicator "Equal Protection index" and 3.13 on the proxy indicator "Rule of Law index". Bosnia's final motivation score is 9.53, putting Bosnia in the 57<sup>th</sup> percentile.

In addition to the abovementioned institutional challenges, the international community failed to fully assess the impact that Bosnia's parallel power structures (based on nationalism and along ethnic lines) would have on the stabilisation of Bosnia (Dziedzic, 2020). For example, the appointment of senior security sector officials in Bosnia is often politically motivated, with appointees guided by the interests of their patrons rather than the security interests of the population (Azinović, 2015). At the lower ranks, police officers were meant to be deployed in areas with another ethnic composition as their own. However, many police officers decided to stay in their original homes, sometimes citing security reasons and often commuting considerable distances (Mayer-Rieckh, 2013). The fact that police officers are not living in the community whose security they are supposed to protect, further jeopardises the goal of a multi-ethnic police force and raises questions on their *individual motivation* to protect all different ethnic groups (Rosga, 2010).

The security sector must be *inclusive* and offer equal opportunities to participate in the provision of security, for all its citizens (HCSS, 2020). At first sight, the ethnic breakdown of the members of the since 2005 unified Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFBiH) indicates that all ethnic groups have an equal opportunity to participate.<sup>7</sup> However, most of the units are not ethnically mixed, with for example Bosniak soldiers enlisted in a Bosniak battalion in an area with an ethnically Bosniak population. This means that the effect or impact that a multi-ethnic character of the AFBiH could have is watered down by the deployment structure.

Bosnia has made significant progress in promoting the inclusion of women in the security sector, partly because of a mandated quota of 10% female police personnel (Rosga, 2010). However, in 2010 the percentage of policewomen at the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska (RS) was 6.71% and 8.20% in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) Ministry of Interior.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, remarkable progress has been made with regard to the inclusion of women in the AFBiH. There has been a gradual increase starting with 4.7% in 2007 going up to 7.61% in 2020, with women represented at all levels of leadership and command, as well as in the range of ranks from private to colonel. However, these gains made in terms of inclusion of women might be put at risk in case of a shift in political winds (High Representative, 2020).

Regarding the *rule of law*, the goal of the Bosnian police system to be fully capable of upholding rule of law standards remains distant, mainly because of the earlier mentioned patchy institutional structure (European Commission, 2020). Moreover, this fragmented structure entails a lack of coordination among the different levels of government and relevant judicial institutions (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020). The legal framework has not been harmonised on the different levels (state, entities, Brčko District), resulting in a lack of transparency and the failure to uphold equality before the law (DCAF, 2017). Criminal and corrupt officials regularly exploit Bosnia's piecemeal police system, resulting in impunity, simply by going to another jurisdiction (Ahic, 2007).

The above-mentioned flaws are reflected in public perception, with more than half of Bosnia's citizens stating that corruption is on the rise (UNODC, 2011). On the individual level, the presence of corruption among police officers in Bosnia (UNODC, 2011)<sup>9</sup> as well as violations of human rights should be noted (United States Department of State, 2019). Sometimes corruption within the police is linked to

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<sup>7</sup> Ethnic representation within the AFBiH is set at 45.90 percent Bosniak, 33.60 percent Serb, 19.80 percent Croat and 0.70 percent other (2011 figures provided by the BiH Ministry of Defense and quoted by Marijan, 2016, p. 28).

<sup>8</sup> Figures provided by both Ministries in 2010, via source known by the authors.

<sup>9</sup> Not infrequently, bribes (to avoid paying a fine) are accepted by policemen, or are paid to secure a job within the police.

organised crime (Freedom House, 2020). In contrast to the views on the police, military institutions are seen as trustworthy (Marijan, 2016).

The above noted characteristics of the security sector in Bosnia indicate that the ethnic dimension trumps over inclusiveness and rule of law standards.

### 2.3 Legitimacy

When analysing the legitimacy of the security sector according to the HCSS SSAF, Bosnia scores medium.<sup>10</sup> The main elements of legitimacy are defined by HCSS as *accountability* towards independent oversight institutions, *transparency* in the decision-making procedures and *responsiveness* towards the security concerns of the population.

To assess these three principles, the recent literature on Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Bosnia was analysed. There have recently been a number of evaluations of SSR in Bosnia (OSCE, 2020; Dziedzic, 2020; Juncos, 2018; Kudlenko, 2017; DCAF, 2017; Marijan, 2016) and from these evaluations the conclusion can be drawn that SSR has not been a great success in Bosnia. The main problem in Bosnia that arises out of these evaluations is the existence of parallel power structures alongside the official structures, as described clearly by Dziedzic (2020). This dynamic affects all parts of Bosnia's security sector and impacts the good governance principles of *accountability* and *transparency* immediately and severely. Several Croatian, Bosniak and Serbian power groups are able to influence formal decision-making, while being neither accountable nor transparent about their (covert) activities in the security sector. The lack of cooperation between institutions and the active obstruction and counteracting of internationally demanded SSR activities also hinders accountability and transparency. Parallel security institutions for each ethnic community, lack of trust, hidden agendas, lack of local ownership of internationally enforced reforms and nepotism are major problems in this respect. Transparency International (2020) points out that Bosnia suffers repeatedly from instances of state capture, where networks of oligarchs, politicians and law enforcement conspire to use their formal powers to protect and further their private economic and criminal interests.

A case in point regarding accountability and transparency is the reform of the *judiciary*. The reform of the judiciary started slow and also here the FBiH and the RS set out to develop separate institutions. The reform process focused on creating state level judiciary institutions (i.e., courts, laws and prisons), but the RS has sought to prevent much of this centralisation of the judiciary. In 2019, an EU-commissioned report on the judiciary (European Commission, 2019) assessed it to be fundamentally flawed. The report noted that reforms that were enacted to address issues have actually become part of the problem themselves. New institutions that were meant to enhance oversight over the sector, such as the office of the Ombudsman and the High Level Prosecutorial Council, are deeply politicised and lack independence.

In addition, the European Commission (2020) indicates that the political deadlock resulting from the struggle between the different power structures, undermines the functional operation (or even formation) of the Parliamentary joint committees on defence and security and on the security and intelligence agency. This influences accountability and transparency directly, as the Parliamentary Assembly and its committees evidently have a crucial role in the civilian oversight of the Bosnian security sector.

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<sup>10</sup> Bosnia scores 4.1 on accountability (approximated by the V-DEM Varieties of Democracy accountability index), 2.57 on transparency (approximated by the State Legitimacy scale of the Failed State Index) and 2.96 on responsiveness (approximated by the State apparatus scale of the Failed State Index). Bosnia's final legitimacy score is 9.71, which puts Bosnia in the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The problematic accountability and transparency of the Bosnian security sector naturally has an effect on its *responsiveness*: it hardly seems possible that a government which lacks sufficient accountability and transparency will show a high responsiveness towards the security concerns of the (entire) population, made up of three competing ethnic groups.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, 2020), which leads an SSR mission in Bosnia, states that the security and justice reforms in Bosnia have been highly politicised and framed primarily as a *State building instrument*, instead of a practical and technical reform agenda. In addition, the OSCE finds that the inclusion of civil society, women and youth in this respect is lacking. This undermines the responsiveness of the security sector, as the legitimate security needs of the population are not being served adequately.

The same dynamic affects the judiciary, to return shortly to this case: the judiciary consistently fails to address the security needs of the general population and instead functions as the shield of political patronage networks. Lastly, the questionable responsiveness of the Bosnian security sector is also clearly reflected in the public perception, as noted above.

Taken together, the inadequate accountability, transparency and responsiveness of the official Bosnian security sector strongly impact its legitimacy.

### 3. Conclusion

This case study applied the HCSS Security Sector Assessment Framework (SSAF) to Bosnia. A quantitative analysis of the indicators pertaining to *ability*, *motivation* and *legitimacy* resulted in *medium* scores for all three characteristics and the subsequent categorisation of Bosnia as having a security sector of the *criminal* type. The study employed a literature review to further analyse and illustrate the three characteristics of the Bosnian security sector.

In terms of *ability*, Bosnia was shown to have made some positive steps in providing adequate resources for its security sector since the Dayton Agreement, but still lacking in important respects and hindered by inefficiency. Whereas Bosnia has developed a relatively stable security environment since the war in the early nineties, the situation is still fragile, with a worrisome recent downward trend.

Regarding *motivation*, it was demonstrated that the goal of creating an inclusive security sector has still not been met. Positive developments have been made in promoting equal opportunities for women in the security sector, but continued resistance by the three ethnic power structures to centralisation and harmonisation means that the security sector still suffers greatly from fragmentation in its operation, most notably in the police department.

The existence of parallel power structures was pointed out as the main problem affecting the *legitimacy* of the Bosnian security sector. Politicisation, high levels of corruption and deadlock between the three rival ethnic structures were shown to burden all parts of the security sector. The accountability, transparency and responsiveness of the Bosnian security sector leave a lot to be desired.

As noted in the SSAF, the interaction between the three characteristics *ability*, *motivation* and *legitimacy* is crucial to understand Bosnia's security sector. It appears that the crux lies in the lacking *motivation* of the three rival Bosnian elites to build up a nationwide security sector with both the *ability* and *legitimacy* to serve the security needs of all Bosnian citizens to a high standard. This same dynamic

of competing parallel power structures makes for human security taking a backseat to state security, as highlighted by the lacklustre performance of especially the police department, which ultimately is the first line to provide security to Bosnian citizens.

As a final observation, it is remarkable that the application of the SSAF lens identifies Bosnia as having a security sector of the *criminal* type. This contrasts with the common view and treatment of Bosnia by the EU and the broader international community as having a *transitioning* security sector. An exploration of this paradox may prove an interesting area for future research.

Annex A: security sector types (HCSS, 2020, p. 88)

Security Sector Type	Description	Ability	Motivation	Legitimacy
<b>Criminal</b> 	Systematically challenged by non-state actors and criminal networks that are directly or indirectly tied to security actors. Corruption is deeply imbedded in the security sector.	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Repressive</b> 	Structured, commanded, staffed and equipped exclusively to protect the regime. The security sector is not a guardian of public security and rules by coercion to clamp down on internal and external opposition.	Medium	Medium-low	Medium-low
<b>Oppressive</b> 	Exercises authority brutally to protect the regime. It does not have the resources, intelligence capacity and capability to function in a cohesive and effective way according to the law.	Low/ Medium-low	Low/ Medium-low	Low/ Medium-low
<b>Fragmented</b> 	Lacks effective, centralized and well-coordinated security institutions. The provision of security is decentralized due to direct and indirect ties to informal local security actors.	Low	Medium	Medium-low / Medium
<b>Transitioning</b> 	Does not adequately protect the population due to old regime structures that prevail and influence contemporary structures and decision-making and/or regional instability.	Medium/ Medium-high	Medium-high/High	Medium/ Medium-high/High
<b>Stable</b> 	The ideal structure that positively contributes to stability. It is founded on the principles of good governance and accordingly has a high degree of ability, motivation and legitimacy.	High	High	High

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### Cover picture

Conversation NL Liaison and Observation Team Mrkonjić Grad with local police, April 2009. Courtesy OF4 C.J. van Doorn, EUFOR 9.