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Soft Power in the EU candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina

The State of Women's Human Rights in a Post- Conflict Country during a
Pandemic



Alexandra Kosovac

Master of Arts in European Studies

Centre for Languages and Literature

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Supervisor: Sanimir Resić

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Abstract

This thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the situation for women in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the pandemic of Covid- 19. Respecting human rights is a conditionality for EU- membership, which Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for in 2015. By drawing on an extensive historical background, conducting an analysis of two documents for directing aid from Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) as well as conducting three interviews with aid distributors and recipient, the aim of this thesis was to find out how successful Bosnia and Herzegovina is in protecting the human rights of women in order to ultimately become a member state of the EU. The results show that domestic violence is widespread and has increased, although statistics are insufficient. Due to the latest war, normalisation of violence and traditional gender roles have taken hold.

The findings show that Sida is exercising soft power, as a third party to the EU, as well as in terms of achieving gender equality. Although victims of domestic violence have to rely on the international community for help and support, it is only providing a short- term solution. With the political elite showing no real intent to make democratic reforms such as the protection of women, they are seemingly more interested in remaining in power by using nationalism and fear mongering. The ethnic groups also seem to have opposite wills in regards to EU- accession. The findings of this thesis show that this is not being taken into consideration when distributing the aid from Sida. One conclusion drawn from this study is that the fragmented political system, with its many operational levels, is dangerous to women.

Another finding is that the Swedish aid might be phased out in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the nearer future, which might well be an implication of what the EU's commitment to the country in general is. At the same time, the population is losing their hope of any change. I think that the EU and aid contributors should take into account that their criteria for joining the EU must be superseded by putting more pressure on unifying a country where war criminals have been awarded with the power to hold its citizens hostage.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Post- conflict, Nationalism, EU- accession, Soft Power, Europeization, Human rights, Women's movement, Gender Equality, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Violence.

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1. Definitions

BiH – Bosna i Hercegovina

The Bosnian short term for Bosnia and Herzegovina. A former republic of Yugoslavia. An independent country since 1992.¹

Bosniak(s) – Bosnian Muslim(s)

The term comes from the time of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, when the Ottomans referred to the Slavic Muslims as Bosniaks, to distinguish them from other Muslims in the Ottoman society. The term Bosniak reappeared during the war, in 1993, to describe a Bosnian Muslim without having to explain which religious denomination the person is. The term is still used today, many refer to others and themselves as Bosniaks. Nowadays to differentiate them from Bosnian citizens of other faiths, such as Catholic and Orthodox Christians. However, being Catholic or Orthodox in BiH has become synonymous with being Croat respectively Serb.²

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

The UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework defines CSO's as "non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the State and the market. CSO's represent a wide range of interests and ties."³ CSO's are, according to the EU, fundamental to democratic principles such as free speech and in holding states accountable when it comes to protecting human rights.⁴

DV – Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) as 'all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.'⁵

¹ Resić 2018: 83

² Resić 2018: 66- 67

³ The UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework: [CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS \(CSOS\) : UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework \(ungpreporting.org\)](https://ungpreporting.org/)

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: [Civil society space: views of organisations | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/)

⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017: [Glossary of definitions of rape, femicide and intimate partner violence | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](https://eige.europa.eu/)

FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

One of the entities in BiH, which makes up 51 % of the country and where the capital Sarajevo is situated. Predominantly inhabited and governed by Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats.⁶

GBV – Gender Based Violence

Gender Based Violence is defined in the Istanbul Convention and described by EIGE as following:

“The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), ss the benchmark for international legislation on tackling gender-based violence, frames gender-based violence and violence against women as a gendered act which is ‘a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women’. Under the Istanbul Convention acts of gender-based violence are emphasised as resulting in ‘physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.’”⁷

Thus, GBV include all forms of violence towards women, regardless of whether the perpetrator is known to the woman or not. One type of violence against women is DV, which is defined above.

GE – Gender Equality

GE is defined by EIGE as “equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.”⁸

RS- Republika Srpska

The Serbian Republic is one of two entities in BiH, which make up 49 % of the country. Predominantly inhabited by and governed by Bosnian Serbs.⁹

⁶ Resić 2018: 116

⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (b): [What is gender-based violence? | EIGE \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eige.europa.eu/what-is-gender-based-violence)

⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality (a): [gender equality | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eige.europa.eu/gender-equality)

⁹ Resić 2018: 116

WB- Western Balkans

The term, Western Balkans, is often loosely defined depending on who and what is being depicted. The EU includes Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, BiH and Kosovo in this term.¹⁰

In this thesis the Western Balkans include BiH, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – since these are the countries included in the SIDA strategy on the Western Balkans, all of which are non- EU countries.

¹⁰ De Munter, European Parliament, 2020: [The Western Balkans | Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

1. Introduction

2.1.Purpose and aim

When I thought about what to write about for my master's thesis throughout my education, I knew that I wanted to write about BiH. I have a genuine interest of the country and know the language to a high extent. When I did my internship at a women's shelter in Malmö, Sweden last year (fall 2020) I realised that I should write on the topic of gender equality, which I believe is one of the most important questions of our time – and certainly during the pandemic of Covid- 19. Hence, I have combined these two areas of interest with the intent to tell the story of women in BiH. The Master of Arts in European studies programme at Lund University is interdisciplinary and includes several humanist perspectives¹¹, as will this thesis.

This thesis concerns anyone who is working to achieve gender equality and democratisation in traditional and/ or post- conflict areas, although specifically addressed to EU- officials and aid contributors.

2.2.Research questions

For this study I have chosen two comprehensive research questions with subordinate questions.

1. Can funding from Sida and its strategy on the Western Balkans be seen as exercising “soft power”?
 - 1.1.How is the aid distributed between the entities in BiH?
 - 1.2.Has the aid from Sida met the needs of the recipient country during Covid- 19?
2. How does aid recipient Sarajevo Open Center work to change gender norms and how is this connected to ending DV in BiH?
 - 2.1.What support can victims of DV in BiH expect?
 - 2.2.In what ways has Covid- 19 challenged the possibility for victims of DV to seek shelter in BiH?
 - 2.3.Does Sarajevo Open Center believe that international funding is a long-term solution in preventing GBV in BiH?

¹¹ Lund University: [European Studies - Master of Arts | Lund University](#)

I believe that these questions may contribute to or partially answer the question of how concerned BiH is about preventing GBV, its challenges and ultimately, this case may shed some light on obstacles that prevents BiH from becoming an EU- country.

3. Methods

The method of this master thesis is a macro- level, qualitative case study,¹² where I will look into a particular case – that of EU- accession and DV in BiH during a pandemic. What I intend to contribute to previous research is the specific narrative of aid contributor soft power, as well as the aspect of what has happened in the area since the outbreak of the pandemic. Case studies generally are not used for generalisation, but they can tell something about the existing reality, which can be made more trustworthy in combination with ontological and epistemological reflections in form of theory.¹³

My hope is that this thesis will contribute to previous knowledge in how far BiH are in their goal to achieve GE and, in the long run, to become a member of the EU. Although I realise that accomplishing GE and EU- integration is something which is very much connected to other areas of society, and that it's not substantial to just look into this one area - I am hopeful that it will say something about the country's society, challenges and progress.

3.1.Sources and limitations

To answer my research questions, I first and foremost had to understand and explain the context of which DV takes place. This means drawing on a historical outline and sociological explanations with a gender perspective which is suitable for hermeneutical interpretation.¹⁴

This study is based to a high degree on a theoretical framework¹⁵ and a certain understanding for societies construction, nationhood and social structures. The thesis is both descriptive and explorative, and the latter is described by behavioural scientists Runa Patel and Bo Davidson as an examination of an area where there is already some knowledge and where one “limits oneself to exploring some of the aspects of the phenomena one is interested in”¹⁶. Before conducting my research, I already had some theories in mind which I wanted to apply, but during the work I discovered several others. This is a common methodological approach in sociological research: you have some knowledge in the area and conclude with a broader

¹² Patel & Davidson, 56–57

¹³ Patel & Davidson, 105

¹⁴ Patel & Davidson, 28

¹⁵ Patel & Davidson, 10

¹⁶ Patel & Davidson, 13

understanding and further building upon theory. Relating theory to reality is the researchers most important task, according to Patel and Davidson. To relate the empirical findings in this thesis with theory, previous research was evaluated to a high extent, which is defined as deductive work. This is characterised by general principles and existing theories.¹⁷ In this case, why DV is so prevalent in BiH and what is being done to prevent it – and by who. Previous research was a good starting point. Minimising the subjective view on a topic is a real advantage with this approach, but at the same time there is a risk in that the study can be affected by the researchers previous existing knowledge, and that it is driven in a certain direction¹⁸. To counter this, the selection of sources was important.

The empirical sources in this thesis are analysis of documents and qualitative interviews.

Following documents will be analysed:

- Result strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014- 2020 (continually referred to as: SSWB1).¹⁹
- Sida Supporting document for new strategy on development cooperation in Western Balkans and Turkey 2021- 2027 (continually referred to as: SSWB2).²⁰

Following sources will be interviewed:

- Ulrika Holmström, Senior Advisor on Gender Equality, Peace and Security in the Department for Europe and Latin America at Sida.
- Lisa Curman, Second Secretary at the Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo, responsible for questions concerning Gender Equality.
- Emina Bošnjak, executive director at CSO Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar.

The purpose of a qualitative interview is to discover and identify the nature and qualities of something, e.g., perceptions on a certain phenomenon.²¹ Qualitative interviews can consist of varying characteristics, but often contain questions with a low degree of structure which enables the person who is interviewed to respond, using their own words²². This has also been my approach, to permit as broad of a space to respond as possible, within the frames for this

¹⁷ Patel & Davidson, 23

¹⁸ Patel & Davidson, 23

¹⁹ The Swedish Government: [results-strategy-for-swedens-reform-cooperation-with-eastern-europe-the-western-balkans-and-turkey-2014-2020 \(regeringen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2014/09/14-11111)

²⁰A Sida proposal for next result strategy which is an unpublished document not decided on by the Swedish government yet. I received it from Sida in November, 2020. Access by request.

²¹ Patel & Davidson, 82

²² Patel & Davidson, 81

thesis²³. All interviews required preparation and formulating questions, and are attached as appendixes to this thesis. In interviews, reflexive construction is common, meaning that both the interviewer and the “subject” have their own ideas, and that the interaction in itself is interpretive. The phrasing of the questions aimed to not be leading, but with the purpose of being answered with some kind of individual freedom. Furthermore, the so called “funnel-method” was used, meaning that one starts off with broader, open questions to then continue with more specific questions²⁴.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded with an iPhone and transcribed with the help of transcription tool sites [amberscript.com](https://www.amberscript.com) and otter.ai. Although a digital interview can be challenging, it also reduces “small-talk”. Recording allowed me to be present during the interview and the use of a transcription tool was beneficial as it did not take too long to transcribe, which otherwise can be very time consuming.

This study will focus on the state of women’s human rights during the pandemic of Covid- 19 and EU- conditionality, through the lens of aid contributor Sida and aid recipient NGO Sarajevo Open Center. The thesis will not examine GBV aimed at children, boys, men or persons from the LGBTQ- community, but are mentioned.

4. Contextual background

4.1. Contemporary history and facts about Bosnia and Hercegovina

BiH is situated in the peninsula called the Balkans.²⁵ It is no easy task to, in a short and comprehensive manner, explain historical events leading up to the war in BiH in the 1990’s.²⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, I will not do an in-depth recount of historical developments prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia, since this will be too exhaustive. For the sake of the readers understanding, it is substantial to make historical accounts which will help explain the ethnic tensions in BiH, which is highly politicised in its society today and in turn affects the possibility to become a member of the EU and the situation for women.

BiH is a sovereign state since 1992, which indefinitely declared the start of the war in BiH.²⁷ The small country measures 51 209 km² and borders the neighbouring countries Serbia,

²³ Patel & Davidson, 76

²⁴ Patel & Davidson, 78

²⁵ Pickering, Britannica, 2021: [Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps | Britannica](#)

²⁶ Resić, 2018: 16

²⁷ Resić, 2018: 71

Croatia and Montenegro.²⁸ These countries were all part of former Yugoslavia, as well as Slovenia, Macedonia and Kosovo.²⁹ The region has had many foreign influences throughout history³⁰, including the Ottoman Empire for 400 years³¹, and different Western coalitions, including the Habsburg (and later Austrian- Hungarian) Monarchy.³² These influences left withstanding marks on the WB. Depending on your ethnicity and religion, your loyalty or reluctance towards the foreign rulers made up many different allegiances. In BiH many converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule³³, and therefore had positions of power and were more privileged in every sense. Converting also meant that you could own land and carry weapons. There was a very credible inclination of benefits to convert during their rule, and so many did. This was, of course, despised by the Christian population in the republic of BiH, who were marginalised and more often poor since they didn't own land and had to pay a special tax to the Ottomans.³⁴

Later, during the rule of the Habsburg Empire (later Austrian- Hungarian empire), Serbs felt that they were still the ones who benefitted the least and longed for more national independency and power. Croats, who shared the same religion and history as their rulers, had more loyal feelings towards them. The assassination of the Austrian- Hungarian accessor Franz Ferdinand in 1914, by Gavrilo Princip was a profound Serbian nationalist act on the day of St Vitus Day. The date is of importance, since it is the Serb Remembrance Day for the battle at Kosovo Polje, which marks the day of the beginning of the Ottoman rule. The Serbs were fed up with foreign rule and sought to create their own nation. The shots in Sarajevo marked the beginning of the First World War.³⁵ During the First and Second world wars, allegiances amongst the people in BiH shifted depending on ethnicity and religion. Many fascist Croats, called Ustaša, who had been loyal to the Habsburg Empire, fought for independence influenced by the Nazi model of nation- building, under the command of Ante Pavelić.³⁶

After World War Two there was deeper feelings of hatred towards “the enemies within”, who had been loyal to the other side during the war. There were a lot of crimes committed by the

²⁸ Pickering, Britannica, 2021: [Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps | Britannica](#)

²⁹ Allcock, Britannica, 2020: [Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts | Britannica](#)

³⁰ Resić, 2018: 19

³¹ Resić, 2006: 35

³² Resić, 2006: 96

³³ Resić, 2006: 57

³⁴ Resić, 2006: 78–79

³⁵ Resić, 2006: 177

³⁶ Resić, 2006: 214

fascist Ustaša against Serbs during the war, where they were massacred in concentration camps, forcibly converted to Catholicism etc.³⁷ Bosniaks had started identifying themselves as Croatian Muslims to a high extent during the World Wars, when Serbian fascists (Četniks) had begun killing them in an attempt to create a “Greater Serbia”. Bosniaks found themselves trying to balance their existence between the hatred between the two fascist groups.³⁸

Along with the Ustaša and the Četniks, the partisan, communist movement in the Balkans, influenced by the Soviet Union (USSR), as a resistance towards the Nazi ideology became increasingly stronger. After the devastating World Wars, the Balkans surely seemed to need a ruler who could stifle these hostile sentiments the inhabitants had towards each other. This would surely not be an easy task, to consolidate all the different ethnicities and religions in one country. To many, the man Josip Broz Tito managed to do what seemed impossible. He united Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenes, Macedonians, Albanians and minorities under Communist rule in Yugoslavia.³⁹ The parole “bratstvo i jedinstvo”⁴⁰ was the “slogan” of the dictatorship that was Yugoslavia. As in all Communist countries, citizenship and loyalty towards the state was the norm rather than ethnic divide and loyalty towards a God. Tito was concerned with forming an atheist society which everyone could share regardless of their background. The rule of Tito in Yugoslavia became cult- like, and he even cut the bond with USSR to become an autonomous, communist country, which upset the USSR leader at the time, Stalin. This created a “common enemy” amongst the people in Yugoslavia. As it seemed as though Tito was the only cohesive link in the country, debates on what would happen when he dies took place early on. Tito reprimanded all ethnical divisive expressions within his country and the regime reluctantly acknowledged Bosniaks as an ethnical group, but not as a nation. In the former Yugoslav republic of BiH there were three constitutional people: Serbs, Croats and Muslims. According to Tito, all religions were backwards, but he regarded Muslim culture as particularly primitive and abolished several religious symbols and expressions, such as the veil for women etc. During the 1980’s, most of the peoples in Yugoslavia were secular and few were practicing any religion. In BiH, only 17 % (of all denominations) stated that they were religious.⁴¹

³⁷ Resić, 2006: 215–216

³⁸ Resić, 2006: 220–221

³⁹ Resić, 2006: 217

⁴⁰ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “brotherhood and unity”

⁴¹ Resić, 2006: 229–234

Yugoslavia was a comparably rich and powerful state, and life was pretty good for most citizens.⁴² Therefore, peace was maintained. As we know now, the national and religious identities never disappeared and hostile feelings had been simmering under the surface for decades. When Tito passed away, these feelings could be expressed again. After having been a one-party state, an overwhelming list of political parties and candidates were introduced after his passing away. Many of those were based on ethnicity rather than ideology.⁴³ Since BiH was, and still is, the most multicultural country of what was former Yugoslavia, the division seemed to be greatest there. Ethnic groups in Yugoslavia looked at Europe and its nation states as the model. Building nation states in the former republics in Yugoslavia came to be a deadly journey. The turbulence in Kosovo became the catalyst of the Yugoslav wars in 1990's. The majority of the inhabitants in Kosovo were ethnic Albanians who were fed up with the oppression and started to object to discriminatory, Serbian policies. For the Serbs, Kosovo was of great religious significance and the place where they "stopped" the Ottomans, the Muslims, long ago. The battle was seen as a moral victory, and some Serbian history refer to this battle as them saving Christian Europe from Islam, although the Ottoman expansion continued. Thus, by many Serbs, Kosovo is seen as their cultural cradle. There was a fear that Kosovo might seek to become autonomous.⁴⁴

The Serbs initially wanted to maintain Yugoslavia, but for Serbs to have more influence and power. There was an idea, that all south Slavs in the region were Serbs, who had converted some time during history and foreign rule. When the republics started discussing sovereignty, they quickly realised that some of them had larger minorities of Serbs living within their borders. When Slovenia first announced their independence, they were attacked. The Serbs quickly retreated, since the losses couldn't be excused. There were not a lot of Serbs living in Slovenia. Therefore, it was harder when Croatia had announced that they were also seeking to become independent. They had a larger Serb minority living within their borders and there was resentment, with historical connotations, against the Croats. The following phrase was commonly used to authorise aggression on Croatia. "Gde su sprski grobovi, tu su srpske zemlje" translating: Where there is Serbian graves, that is Serbian land"⁴⁵. The war was not very lengthy, but yet a fatal one. Croatia gained independence and approval from the international community, which the Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović pleaded them not to,

⁴² Resić, 2006: 252

⁴³ Resić, 2006: 264

⁴⁴ Resić, 2018: 27

⁴⁵ Resić, 2018: 28- 44

since he thought that it would initiate aggression on BiH as well. The Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman never forgave Izetbegović for that.⁴⁶ In BiH, the situation was very strained among the ethnic groups. The Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadžić expressed threats to the Bosnian President and politicians during a session (which he was not invited to) on a vote for independence from Yugoslavia. He took to the podium where he ragefully stated: “Do not believe that you will not lead Bosnia and Herzegovina to hell. And do not believe that the Muslim people can escape annihilation. The Muslims cannot defend themselves if war comes. How will you prevent that everyone is killed in Bosnia and Hercegovina?” The Bosnian President was clearly shocked by this threat, and held a speech afterwards where he stated that Yugoslavia is the home to many different people, and that Karadžić message and rhetoric had made it clear that BiH can no longer remain as a Yugoslavian republic.⁴⁷

Serbia was determined to create “a Greater Serbia”, looking at historical, national lines and wherever Serbs had lived. This included larger parts of BiH. There were also a lot of Croatian “enemies” in Bosnia. Serbs had not forgotten how, a few decades earlier, they had been killed by the Croats and how the Bosniaks had been privileged by the Ottomans for over 400 years. Serbs and Croats also claimed that the Bosniaks were trying to create a fundamentalist, Islamic state in the middle of Europe. Even though being secular, Bosniak had become synonymous with being Muslim, no matter how modern or secular they were. The Bosniaks suddenly found themselves in the middle of several hostilities. Even neighbours who had been good friends, turned their backs on each other. No one seemed to know who to trust anymore. Loyalties lied in very different, previous, influences. Croats oriented themselves as Western-European because of their historical alignment with Germany, Austria and Catholicism. Serbs on the other hand, had an Orthodox brother in Russia, Romania, Greece etc. Bosniaks seemed profoundly confused in their orientation. They had viewed themselves, to many contradictory, as Muslim Europeans. When they gained support from Muslim countries, especially Turkey – whom they had a close, historical relationship with, their identity as Muslims seemed to be strengthened. On the other hand, many Western countries, important persons and celebrities also cried out for help to BiH. It was a tug of wars in alliances, where Bosniaks were looking for help regardless of where it came from. Between 1992 and 1995, the capital Sarajevo was

⁴⁶ Resić, 2018: 66

⁴⁷ Bosnia Hercegovina Audiobook, Youtube, 2017: [Radovan Karadžić vs Alija Izetbegović Govor u skupštini 1991! English subtitles - YouTube](#)

under siege by Bosnian Serbs. There were massacres on civilians committed throughout the country, with the most brutal ones in Srebrenica and Prijedor.⁴⁸

The majority of Bosniaks lived in the cities and were highly educated, while a majority of the Bosnian Serbs were farmers and living in villages. The Bosnian Serbs saw this as an injustice committed by the Ottomans, or Turks – that Bosniaks had been favoured during this time period and cemented the socio- economic differences between Muslims and Christians. Thus, they thought of their aggression as retaliation.⁴⁹ The UN had sent in a few peace- keeping troops, who in reality had no power to intervene. The international community were late to understand what was happening and why. In the beginning, the understanding was that the war was something that happened in the Balkans every now and then because of their “primitive nature”. That they had always hated each other intensely. Hence, the narrative was that every side was equally guilty and that the warring parts were somehow equal in power and control. This was not the case.⁵⁰

The Serb- led Yugoslav army had a near monopoly of the heavy weaponry. To say that this was a conflict was to be wrong. It was an unprovoked attack and genocide committed by Serbs – where the large majority of victims were civilians. Their intent was to eradicate Bosnian Muslims, killing mostly men, but also women and children.⁵¹ During the war, there was a lot of Serbian propaganda spread through media. They controlled almost every media, even within BiH. Bosniaks were depicted as the enemy, who killed Serbs and raped their women. Killings and rapes were even televised, where the victim often had been forced to act as if they were in fact Serb being killed or raped by a Bosniak or a Croat.⁵² Of course, there were war crimes committed by Bosnians on Serbs or Croats, as well as Croat war crimes on Bosniaks and Serbs – but it is a fact that the Serbs were the aggressors and committed a majority of the war crimes.⁵³

Even though men were the main targets of killings, women were targeted in other ways. It is estimated that between 20- 60 thousands of women were raped in their homes, in detention centres or so called “rape camps”. Shortly after the war in BiH, rape was acknowledged as a

⁴⁸ Resić, 2018: 74- 108

⁴⁹ Resić, 2018: 91

⁵⁰ Resić, 2018: 89-103

⁵¹ Stiglmeier, foreword

⁵² MacKinnon, 75

⁵³ United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: [Cases | International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia \(icty.org\)](https://www.icty.org)

war crime.⁵⁴ Rape was legitimised and encouraged by Serb local commanders such as the police and political bosses. Even though, rape was carried out by all sides, the Serbian aggressors stood for the vast majority. In contrast to the Serbian aggressors, Bosniaks never authorised rape as a tool of government policy.⁵⁵

Peace finally came with the Dayton- agreement in 1995, but it was a bittersweet one. BiH had been chopped up and divided along ethnic lines. 51 % of the country, the central part, with a majority of Muslims and Croats was named FBiH. Another half, with a majority of Serbs, was named RS.⁵⁶ When counting the war losses, the last estimation (2010) by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) states that 104,732 individuals had been killed, a majority being Bosniaks – with many still missing.⁵⁷ Another 250,000 had been wounded or hurt. About 2,5 million people had been driven from their homes and at least 500,000 people had left the country and become refugees in Western countries. Among the Bosniak death toll, a large majority were civilians and not members of the army. As historian Sanimir Resić writes, Bosnia had survived the war, but “consequences of terror, displacement, ethnic cleansing and genocide could not be repaired”. The British reporter Ed Vulliamy concluded that a genocide in European history had never been awarded so amply at the negotiating table⁵⁸, meaning that the peace agreement had given the aggressors right to what they “conquered” in battle. The agreement also meant that BiH would have three presidents, one of every ethnic group: A Bosniak, a Bosnian Serb and a Bosnian Croat.⁵⁹ There is also the role of the High representative, a foreigner that upholds the Dayton-agreement and makes sure that no one trespasses it. As of 2004, this representant is appointed by the EU.⁶⁰

The population of BiH was estimated to approximately 3,408,000 inhabitants last year (2020). BiH is, by far, the most multicultural country of what was former Yugoslavia. Today, the majority of the Bosnian population consist of Bosnian Muslims (51 %), but has two large minority groups: Bosnian Serb (34 %) and Bosnian Croat (15 %).⁶¹ After the war, cities and villages in respective entities became increasingly more ethnically homogenous. The

⁵⁴ Seifert, 55

⁵⁵ Stiglmyer, 85- 88

⁵⁶ Resić, 2018: 151- 152

⁵⁷ UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2011: [New War Demographics Feature on the ICTY website | International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#)

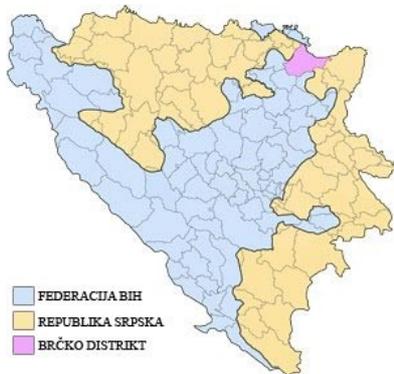
⁵⁸ Resić, 2018: 153

⁵⁹ Pickering, Britannica, 2021: [Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps | Britannica](#)

⁶⁰ Resić, 2018: 154

⁶¹ Pickering, Britannica, 2021: [Bosnia and Herzegovina - People | Britannica](#)

population of RS was estimated to 1,228,423 in 2013, of which approximately 90% are of Serb ethnic origin and the remaining 10% are mainly Croats and Muslims.⁶²



In 1999, Brčko distrikt, became a third, autonomous part of BiH. Due to the city's ethnic diversity, it came into agreement that it wouldn't belong neither to FBiH or RS. It is seen as the only part of BiH that is not held back because of ethnic tensions and segregation.⁶³

Since 1999, there are three autonomous regions in BiH; FBiH, RS and Brčko distrikt. However, FBiH is decentralised and is divided into ten cantons, which in turn are divided into dozens of municipalities. RS is relatively centralised, but administratively divided into dozens of municipalities.⁶⁴

Many of the inhabitants in BiH today has a sense of “Jugonostalgija”, which can be explained as having a romantic view of the past, of when times “were better”.⁶⁵ Even the younger generation has inherited this mentality, since they long for better circumstances. An ideal of BiH before nationalism, without financial hardships and the developing geopolitics. Younger people are reinventing the idea of Yugoslavia, its concepts, culture, music and so on.⁶⁶ Some of the former Yugoslav successor states seem to be more Yugo- nostalgic than others, depending on how their country has managed in its nation- building and welfare. Serbia and BiH are according to research most Yugo- nostalgic, which seems to be a reflection of contemporary issues. In BiH, the most pressing issues is unemployment and the so called “brain- drain”, where the young and educated seek better opportunities elsewhere.⁶⁷

⁶² Statistika.ba: [Popis 2013 u BiH \(statistika.ba\)](http://Popis 2013 u BiH (statistika.ba))

⁶³ Geoghegan, The Guardian, 2014: Welcome to Brčko, Europe's only free city and a law unto itself | Cities | The Guardian

⁶⁴ Pickering, Britannica, 2020: Bosnia and Herzegovina - Government and society | Britannica

⁶⁵ Resić, 2018: 73

⁶⁶ Balunović, Balkan Insight, 2020: Živeti Jugoslaviju: Identitet iz prošlosti postaje politički stav u sadašnjosti | Balkan Insight

⁶⁷ Milekić, Balkan Insight, 2017: Rise of Yugo-Nostalgia 'Reflects Contemporary Problems' | Balkan Insight

The war started only three decades ago, meaning that it is still a “fresh wound” for Bosnians in BiH and for the diaspora around the world. Many of them have experienced the war in some way, with family losses, displacement etc. Since the peace agreement cemented the ethnic division, it is still causing division amongst the peoples in BiH as well as political disputes – which is also an obstacle when it comes to joining the EU.

4.2.EU enlargement and accession status



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“Bosnia was totally unprepared to defend itself when it declared independence at the recommendation of the European Community and was recognised by European States and the United States.”⁶⁹

Since the latest war in BiH, the EU has had a central agency in the country and BiH is one of the candidate countries to become a member of the EU, but the last decade, Europe has suffered major challenges; the economic crisis, migration crisis and security crisis with threats of terrorism. These challenges have created a democratic deficit in regards to the EU, as many perceive that the EU has handled these challenges poorly. As EU legitimacy is strongly based on its “output” – what the EU does and delivers – many are questioning the EU as an institution. Moreover, the transfer of power from the nations to the EU adds to the democratic deficit as the ‘demos’ do not consider themselves as having any influence at an EU- level.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “Monument of the international community – grateful citizens of Sarajevo”. The monument displays, using irony, citizens disappointment in the international community.

⁶⁹ Stiglmyer, foreword x

⁷⁰ Smismans, 137

The crises and perceived EU failure has been futile for populist movements and political parties across Europe, who are expressing deep Euroscepticism.⁷¹

The accession of new member states had for a long time been considered a great success of the EU enlargement project, but since the end of the Cold war, this process has become more complicated. The integration of new democracies, the former Communist countries in Eastern Europe, has challenged the Union by the economic diversity of member states. The latest enlargement, of the WB, begun with Croatia in 2013. This round of enlargement is even more complicated because of the unstable region where democratic governance is challenged after years of ethnic conflict, political polarisation, corruption and organised crime. Because of the enlargement ‘fatigue’ since the Eastern enlargement, the EU has become more hesitant in accepting new member states. Enlargement is no longer a priority and has become politicised. The Commission is more focused on monitoring pre- accession countries compliance of EU policies. Enlargement largely lies in the hands of member states and a high percentage of the inhabitants in EU countries are against accepting new members. This is fuelled by the populist movements and parties across Europe. Thus, the politization of enlargement sends the “wrong message” to candidate countries, that the process is not transparent and leads to even more democratic deficit. Even support of EU- membership is decreasing in candidate countries because of disappointment in the lack of progress which are made difficult, in the WB, because of democratic back- sliding, the legacies of conflict and standing bilateral issues. Politicians in these candidate countries benefit from a weak legal and regulatory framework and become corrupted as well as often being involved in organised crime. The EU has been criticised for favouring stability over democratic reforms in the candidate countries, which has to do with consideration for geopolitical competition and security challenges. Political, economic and social reforms are being held hostage by nationalist politicians in the WB.⁷²

BiH submitted their application to become a member state on the 15th of February in 2016. Other candidate countries are FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and Turkey⁷³. Meaning foremost other Yugoslav successor states. In May, 2019, the Commission of the EU adopted the Opinion on BiH membership application with an analytical report which entails 14 key priorities. This is seen by many as a milestone for BiH, “confirming that the EU is

⁷¹ Smismans, 138

⁷² Juncos & Pérez- Solórzano Borragán, 267–277

⁷³ Juncos & Pérez- Solórzano Borragán, 272

committed to guide and support the country in undertaking the necessary reforms on its path towards European Integration”.⁷⁴

To become a member of the EU, a country must achieve the Copenhagen criteria (formulated in 1993). These state that a candidate country must have:

1. Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities.
2. The existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union
3. The ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union⁷⁵.

This thesis is concerned with the area GE and DV, which are a part of obeying human rights. If a country doesn't have political intent to protect these rights, one can understand that the country may not become a member. Failing to protect democracy and human rights in BiH is a legacy from the war and the relatively new country is still struggling with achieving equal rights for everyone because of the ethnic divisions. Although, compliance to the Copenhagen criteria has recently been questioned and challenged since several EU member countries are failing to protect democratic principles and human rights. Poland and Hungary are two such countries, where we have seen a regression in regards to protect human rights – especially those of women. Nationalism and conservative values of family have risen and are challenging e.g. the right to abortion.⁷⁶

4.3.DV and Covid- 19

Protecting human rights include women's rights and is one of the criteria to join the EU. This was especially challenged during the war in BiH, where even civilians were targeted and women were systematically raped. Human rights also include protecting women against DV – which is the focus area of this thesis.

BiH has domestic laws against domestic violence at an entity level: Criminal Code in FBiH, Article 222 (Domestic Violence). Criminal Code in RS, Article 79 (“No-contact” Restraining Order), 80 (Mandatory psychosocial treatment), 81(Removal from joint household).⁷⁷ In

⁷⁴ European Commission, 2019: [Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/eip-opinion-on-bosnia-and-herzegovina)

⁷⁵ Juncos & Pérez- Solórzano Borragán, 271

⁷⁶ Abramowitz, Freedom House, 2020: [Poland and Hungary Must Not Be Ignored | Freedom House](https://www.freedomhouse.org/country/poland)

⁷⁷ Hasabegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](https://www.soc.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Microsoft-Word-Orange-report-2016-2019-ENG-final.doc), 84

addition, BiH (state level) ratified the EU's Istanbul Convention at a state level in 2013. The Istanbul convention aims at giving states strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and DV. The treaty opened for signatures in 2011, and BiH was among the first countries to sign it.⁷⁸ BiH has one Gender Equality Agency at a state level, as well as two Gender Centres at an entity level. Their mission includes monitoring and analysing the state of GE, protect that the laws are enforced and suggest strategies for achieving GE, also in accordance to adopted conventions (like the Istanbul Convention).⁷⁹

According to UN Women, every second woman in BiH has experienced some form of abuse including DV, stalking or sexual harassment since the age of 15. Their assessment is that the situation has worsened since the pandemic and they have supported the eight existing safehouses (or shelters) that are in operation across BiH. All of which are run by NGO's. They have identified especially vulnerable groups of society in BiH, which includes persons with war trauma and marginalised groups; the Roma, persons with disabilities, elderly and those living in rural areas.⁸⁰

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, there has been worldwide reports on increasing domestic violence, as a consequence of lockdowns and isolation. For the victims of violence, it means being isolated with the perpetrator, who gains more control over their partner - which makes it harder to reach out for help. The circumstances, e.g., working from home and lockdowns, also means that the violence is harder for the surroundings to detect.⁸¹

In BiH, there has been both lockdowns and local curfews due to Covid- 19. The initial lockdown targeted elderly over the age of 65 and minors under the age of 18 specifically, and was eventually ruled as discriminatory.⁸² Today (12th of March), there is a curfew for everyone from 11 pm at night until 5 am.⁸³ Other than trying contain the virus by curfews, the country is struggling with containing the virus, since they have not yet begun to vaccinate at a high rate. According to COVAX (Vaccines Global Access), BiH has not met the requirements to receive vaccines from their programme since they have not arranged for appropriate (cold)

⁷⁸ Council of Europe, [Full list \(coe.int\)](#)

⁷⁹ Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice Bosne I Hercegovine, Agencija za ravnopravnost polova: [O Agenciji | ARS BIH](#)

⁸⁰ UN Women, 2020: [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on functioning of safe houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina | UN Women – Europe and Central Asia](#)

⁸¹ European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020: [Covid-19 and gender-based violence: Has the pandemic taught us anything? \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁸² Sadiković & Synovitz, 2020: [Coronavirus In Court: Bosnia's Age-Based Lockdowns Are Ruled Discriminatory \(rferl.org\)](#)

⁸³ Interview with Emina Bošnjak

storage for the vaccines. BiH has looked into buying from the distributor instead, but it has been a slow process which has been delayed by the complicated, political and administrative system.⁸⁴

4.4. Sida

The agency responsible for managing the development cooperation (and aid) is Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). Funds for the development cooperation comes from Swedish taxpayers and make up 1 % of Swedish GDP.⁸⁵

Sida has two different types of financial support, humanitarian aid and development cooperation. Since the war in BiH in the 1990's, Sida has contributed to peacekeeping efforts in the region. The development cooperation with BiH is still overall meant to maintain peace, but also aims at bringing BiH closer to the EU. Sida contributed with 211,25 million SEK (Swedish Crowns) to BiH in 2020.⁸⁶ According to Sida, GE is prioritised within all efforts they support since it is “a means to achieve a sustainable world and eradicate poverty.”⁸⁷

The aid from Sida is distributed locally by embassies abroad and the regulatory documents – result strategies (SSWB1) - for the aid directs the aid in certain areas decided upon by the Swedish government. There is a full delegation of Sida staff stationed at the embassy in Sarajevo who are in charge of distributing the aid.⁸⁸ Some of the Swedish (Sida) aid, distributed by the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo, went to the CSO Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar (Sarajevo Open Center).

4.5. Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar – Sarajevo Open Center (SOC)

SOC is an independent, feminist CSO that works to promote women's and LGBTQ rights in BiH through community empowerment and activism. Their vision is described as following on their website: “Bosnia and Herzegovina is a society based on equal rights and opportunities for everyone. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a state built by active and engaged citizens and accountable authorities.” They advocate on national, European and international level to improve legislation and policies in BiH as well as furthering the project of European

⁸⁴ Kovačević, Balkan Insight, 2021: [COVAX Blames Bosnia for Hold-up Over COVID-19 Vaccines | Balkan Insight](#)

⁸⁵ Sida, (c): [Så fungerar biståndet | Sida](#)

⁸⁶ Sida, (a): [Sida, Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbetes bistånd till Bosnien-Hercegovina via alla samarbetspartner inom alla sektorkategorier år 2020 | Openaid](#)

⁸⁷ Sida, (b): [Jämställdhet | Sida](#)

⁸⁸ Interview with Lisa Curman

integration in lobbying for human rights and strengthening the civil society. This includes monitoring, researching and raising public awareness.⁸⁹ Sida is one of SOC's partners and is one out of two organisations that provide with institutional support. This concludes that Swedish aid from Sida contributes largely to SOC, as well as research conducted by them (see below, 6.3.).⁹⁰ SOC also receives project support from a range of different, international donators.

5. Theoretical framework

The following theories have been chosen to explain ongoing processes in society which help explain the circumstances around and prevalence of DV in BiH as well directed, foreign influence in the area.

5.1. Religious Nationalism, Othering and Conflict

To explain the hatred that seemed to prevail in Yugoslavia during the war, theories of nationalism must be considered. It explains how "Othering" dehumanises and excuses deadly violence on other ethnic groups as well as why women were targets of systematic rapes in BiH. This extreme, nationalist movement engaging in an "orgy of crime"⁹¹, does not spring out of nowhere. In the 19th century, national movements throughout Europe were awakening the national consciousness of the South Slavic people who themselves were looking for political self-determination.⁹² This would not be an easy task in multi-ethnic societies, where there had been several foreign influences, described in the background chapter of this thesis.

Historian Sanimir Resić writes that the ethnonationalist divisions in the Yugoslav successor states have been dressed in religious garment, which has created a society where one defines oneself by their religious denomination and has created a "religious renaissance", after years of communism.⁹³ In BiH, religious denomination seems to determine your ethnicity as oppose to where you are born, live and have citizenship. Hence, your religious background, not taking into account if you are a believer of God, decides your ethnicity. While many may have understood the war in BiH as religious conflict, I would say that it would be to oversimplify. How one defines religion, and whether the conflict was being "conducted" by devote believers is of importance here.

⁸⁹ Sarajevo Open Center, (a): [About us – Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar \(soc.ba\)](#)

⁹⁰ Sarajevo Open Center, (b): [Partners – Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar \(soc.ba\)](#)

⁹¹ Stiglmeier, foreword xii

⁹² Stiglmeier, 5

⁹³ Resić, 2018: 376

According to Meredith B. McGuire, a professor in sociology and anthropology, “religion is a significant aspect of social life, and the social dimension is an important part of religion”.⁹⁴

Regarding religion as a product of humans, and not as a transcending omnipotence, many sociologists will argue that religion could not exist without socialisation. Functional definitions of religion are often used when explaining the phenomena of nationalism.⁹⁵ One such comes from anthropologist Clifford Geertz in which religion is “a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long- lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”.⁹⁶

Professor in history of religions, Bruce Lincoln, provides some theories that explains how and why religion becomes violent. According to him, nationalism becomes even stronger in combination with religion and that religious discourse can be very powerful in conflicts and mobilises groups. He has identified the triggering circumstances to be “the extent to which one feels victimised”, meaning that if a community feel disadvantaged because of another community (country/ countries, the government, other religious groups etc.) it is more likely to turn into a religious conflict. When the feeling of being victimised becomes unbearable, it is more likely that conflicts turn “sacred”. Lincoln points out that religion is never the sole factor of any conflict, but that it is attractive because it positions itself with the “weak”. Lincoln argues that conflicts with religious connotations also seem to be the most prolonged, since people feel like they are in “divine favour” against “the Others”.⁹⁷

5.2. Gender Roles, Masculinity and Violence

To understand the violence against women in BiH today, the sociocultural and gendered context must be explained, which has also inevitably been affected by the war (theories of cause explained above).

From WHO’s “Violence prevention – the evidence” one can read: *“There are social expectations that define appropriate behaviour for women and men (e.g. in some societies, being male is associated with taking risks, being tough and aggressive and having multiple sexual partners). Differences in gender roles and behaviours often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered to the disadvantage of the other. Thus, in many*

⁹⁴ McGuire, 8

⁹⁵ McGuire, 12

⁹⁶ McGuire, 11

⁹⁷ Lincoln, 93- 95

societies, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status, allowing men control over, and greater decision-making power than, women.”⁹⁸

It has, for a long time, been the understanding that men are violent in their nature. By looking at different contexts across the world, there is a large variety amongst the prevalence of violence – especially towards women. According to sociologist Robert W. Connell, gender roles are a social construction – an idea that rose in the wake of liberal- feminist discussions that boys and girls are socialised into their sex based on norms and expectations. This challenged biological determinism and sent a message of optimism, that a more equal world can be achieved by changing our cultural environment, such as behaviour, language and symbolism. Masculinity is understood in a structure of gender relations, in relation to femininity. Traditional masculine traits are power, strength, aggression, which are qualities needed for a warrior and/ or provider.⁹⁹

With existing gender norms and normalisation of male aggression, the most extreme form of violence – war - has always been very masculine. According to sociologists Ingeborg Breines, Robert W. Connell and Ingrid Eide, women and girls are particularly affected due to their low status in society. Even sexual aggression is considered ‘normal’ during warfare, because of the pre-existing condition that women are men’s property and the traditional view of the male warrior and male sexuality. They are therefore, more or less, given impunity because rape is seen as an act that is inevitable in conflict.¹⁰⁰

When speaking of war, we hear and read about how many men fought and died, but to a lesser extent about what women were doing, how they were living and surviving. Women in war stories for the most part have no agency. There are stories, live testimonies, grave stones, memorials and days of remembrance for the men who fought and died.¹⁰¹ But what did the women have to endure while their husbands, fathers and brothers were forcefully removed? Since the war in BiH, war rape has become officially recognised as a tool of genocide. It is estimated that between 20- 60.000 women have been raped during the war (1992- 5) in BiH. The statistics show that it is hard to estimate just how many women were victims of sexual

⁹⁸ World Health Organization, 2010: [WHO | Violence prevention: the evidence](#), 79

⁹⁹ Connell, 22- 28

¹⁰⁰ Breines, Connell & Eide, 13- 14

¹⁰¹ Lamb, 5

violence, because a lot of them never came forward, because of guilt and shame – and the risk of stigmatisation.¹⁰²

If war is the most extreme form of violence, genocide could be regarded as the most extreme form of warfare since the legal definition (of genocide) is “the attempt to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”. According to journalist and senior analyst at European Stability Initiative (ESI), Alexandra Stiglmayer, the humiliation of women during the war was central to the conquest and not a “by- product”, but one of the main aims of the genocidal campaign. The primary targets of rape were fertile women.¹⁰³ In traditional societies, the women remain virgins until marriage. Sociologist Azra Zalihić- Kaurin writes that even though Bosniaks are secular to a high extent, they are still adherent to religious, traditional norms; “Bosnian Muslim women may wear miniskirts and have boyfriends, may study or work, but they still respect the commandment of virginity”. Rape, therefore, is an effective tool in genocide as it keeps women from marrying and having children. It serves to stop the procreation of the “enemy”.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, forcible impregnation worked to “change” the Muslim women’s identity. In most patriarchal societies, the child inherits the father’s ethnicity and religion. Impregnation by rape meant that Muslim women would give birth to “Serbian” (preferably) sons. As testified from a rape camp in Doboj (BiH): “Women who got pregnant, they had to stay there for seven or eight months so they could give birth to a Serbian kid... Only when a woman’s in her seventh month, when she can’t do anything about it anymore, then she’s released. Then they usually take these women to Serbia”.¹⁰⁵

In many cases rape on a mass scale was “successful” in driving whole villages away, never to return. The shame inflicted in the women led to many never getting married. It also stigmatised the victims to the extent that in many cases, not even their husbands would want them back. Rape is therefore a very powerful tool in destroying a community - in genocide.¹⁰⁶

Telling of the present- day expectations of masculinity in the Balkans, Croatian psychologist Vladimir Gruden argued in an article, that the Balkan “model of rape” is different from the American (or Western):

¹⁰² Stiglmayer, 83- 85

¹⁰³ Stiglmayer, 115

¹⁰⁴ Zalihić- Kaurin, 170- 173

¹⁰⁵ Stiglmayer, 118-119

¹⁰⁶ MacKinnon, 187- 191

“Po američkom modelu, silovanje počinje nakon ženinog 'NE' i dalje se ne smije inzistirati, ali ako se preselimo k nama na Balkan, sam čin osvajanja je dio onog 'hoćeš-neću', odnosno ako bi muškarac odmah udustao na ženinom prvom 'NE', on ne bi bio muškarac”.¹⁰⁷

Although this is a generalisation, Gruden is suggesting that there are differences in male or masculine attributes, such as sexual aggression, depending on sociocultural contexts.¹⁰⁸ The sociocultural context in this case has been explained above, with theories of gender in combination with normalisation of violence during the war.

5.3.Soft power, Europeization and Resistance

Foreign influence attempting to achieve political and social reforms in BiH as well as obstacles in doing so are explained by the following theories.

According to political scientist Joseph Nye, the end of the Cold war marked the start of the decrease in direct, military conflict between states and the growth of economic interdependence. Hard power was replaced with exercising soft power. Nye portrays the spectrum of power as following:

Hard

Soft

Command > Coerce Threat Pay Sanction Frame Persuade Attract <Co-opt

Soft power thus means foremost to attract and persuade others by influencing them in different aspects. It can also mean to sanction or make subtle threats about what will happen, or not happen, in case agents (such as other nations) don't adjust to the powerholder's agenda. Resources in soft power usually includes ideas, values, culture, and perceived legitimacy of policies.¹⁰⁹

Top- down Europeization is a process of how the EU shapes institutions, processes and political outcomes in both member states and third countries, such as candidate countries to the EU. 'Downloading' is a term that describes how EU policies are being “downloaded” in the recipient countries, creating domestic change and adaptations. However, there is often a

¹⁰⁷ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “According to the American model, rape begins after a woman's 'NO' and must not be insisted upon, but if we move to us in the Balkans, the very act of conquest is part of that 'do you want-I won't', and if a man immediately gave up on the woman's first 'NO', he would not be a man”.

¹⁰⁸ Panjkota, 2019: ['Balkanski model' silovanja: 'Ako bi muškarac odmah odustao na ženinom prvom 'NE', on ne bi bio muškarac' - RTL VIJESTI](#):

¹⁰⁹ Marklund, 291–296

conflict between the EU and domestic norms and values in how to best achieve social reforms. The widening of EU policies has meant that states are giving up more of their sovereignty which is disempowering national parliaments, even those of third members – especially those aspiring to become a member of the EU. The Copenhagen criteria are stipulating the conditions for a country to join the Union. The conditionality is an incentive for domestic change, and adapting to “Europe”. Domestic actors can also use the EU for their own ends, where there is a lack of EU policy implementation e.g., for gay rights or¹¹⁰ women’s rights. Thus, candidate countries are subject to influence both from the outside and within.

The European Union is, according to Chris Shore, an experiment whose result are of universal significance. After the complete devastation of WWII, it was of importance that Europe sustain peace. As professor in political science, Fontaine, puts it; the EU is “an attempt to establish between the States the same rules and codes of behaviour that enabled primitive societies to become peaceful and civilised”. Even according to the EU Commission, the EU’s first priority is to “build peace” by becoming financially dependent on each other¹¹¹. Shore argues that the EU is trying to instil a sense of a shared, European heritage, history and identity in Europe’s fragmented polity, and therefore conform values and norms within the Union.¹¹² EU policy is increasingly becoming cultural politics. Political scientist and sociologist, Anthony Smith, suggests that there is indeed a pattern of European culture, which lies in traditions like Roman law, Greek philosophy and science, Hebraic ethics, Christian theology as well as Renaissance and Enlightenment successors.¹¹³ However, Smith concludes that the EU is unlikely to succeed the attempt at creating a supranational community in Europe, on the social and cultural levels because of the variety of languages, historical memories as well as myths of ethnic decent.¹¹⁴ Shore agrees with this, but argues that the civil servants of the EU have been “Europeanized” and have a European identity because of their job and international, work environment – that ghettoization is taking place in Brussels and that its elite is perceived as remote to the citizens of Europe.¹¹⁵

According to Shore, history is central to imagining a community and how people experience the past is vital to how they perceive the present. It is also providing them with an identity, as

¹¹⁰ Börzel & Panke, 116- 118

¹¹¹ Shore, 15

¹¹² Shore, 40

¹¹³ Shore, 16

¹¹⁴ Shore, 17

¹¹⁵ Shore, 162–167

members of a particular group. As historian Hobsbawm puts it; “historians are to nationalism what poppy- growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market. Nations without a past are contradictions in terms. What makes a nation is the past, what justifies one nation against others is the past, and historians are the people who produce it.”¹¹⁶

Historical consciousness is very strong and have sentimental and romantic connotations among the peoples in the WB, according to historian Sanimir Resić.¹¹⁷ Although, as explained in the background, their view of history differs immensely, and all sides consider themselves being victims at the hands of their neighbours.

6. Previous research

6.1. “The facts on Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, 2006

Before 2005, not much has been researched in regards to DV in BiH, although addressed in several surveys by local and international NGO’s. Focus had, naturally, been on researching rape as a weapon of war.¹¹⁸

The author of the scientific article, Irma Deljkić, is a professor in Criminal Justice and has conducted research on the prevalence, structure and specific characteristics of DV in BiH. She has analysed police reports, court files and conducted a survey as well as in- depth interviews. Initially, she describes that DV has been a thing of the private sphere, in all countries, and not a criminal matter. In the 1960’s, this perception slowly started to change with the women’s movement. Deljkić describes Bosnian society as a patriarchal society which supports the sentiments that DV is a private matter between husband and wife as well as DV being the result of a woman’s failure to live up to the expectations of her husband. Therefore, victims most often stay silent about their ordeal. Deljkić also explains that DV increased during the war and afterwards. Although BiH has laws against and ratified conventions on DV, victims are hesitant to speak up and/ or report the perpetrator. Often, women consider DV as a problem that is “part of life”. The findings of the study reveal that DV is widespread in BiH, and 25 % of women answered that they had been exposed to DV. 51 % of the participants in a survey stated that one should not interfere in married couple’s private business, not even the state. Reasons to why the women often return to their perpetrator are

¹¹⁶ Shore, 41

¹¹⁷ Resić, 2018: 12- 15

¹¹⁸ Deljkić, 2006: [\(PDF\) The Facts on Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(researchgate.net\)](#), 269-270

usually unemployment and that they have no possibility to find their own accommodation. The findings showed that more than half of the women who reported their perpetrator retracted their original statement and all charges were dropped. Even though, laws convey that charging someone for DV is not solely based on the victim's participation.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Deljkić concludes that although there are comprehensive laws against DV, implementation is restricted due to lack of knowledge and understanding for the victim's situation. The women's movement and CSO's are described as the sole providers of help for victims and has a prominent role in this area, although limited. Whereas the state fails both to indict the perpetrator as well as provide shelter and accommodate the needs of the victim. Djelkić concludes that raising awareness and attention to this topic is crucial as well as knowledge, action and cooperation between different sectors.¹²⁰

6.2. "Orange Report 5: Report on the State of the Human Rights of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina", 2016- 2019

The research publication is a product of Sarajevo Open Center (SOC) and financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The report includes the following areas:

- Legal and institutional framework for gender equality
- Education and participation in the labour market
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Political life and decision- making
- Gender based violence against women and domestic violence
- Conflict- related sexual violence
- Sport

All of the chapters are given a background, with legal and normative framework, institutional framework and activities, as well as guidelines for action supposed to achieve change. The data is collected from previous research and CSO's.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Deljkić, 2006: [\(PDF\) The Facts on Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(researchgate.net\)](#), 268-271

¹²⁰ Deljkić, 2006: [\(PDF\) The Facts on Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(researchgate.net\)](#), 272

¹²¹ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 7

According to the report, the political and institutional system is making it very difficult to harmonise international conventions such as the Istanbul Convention in BiH¹²²:

“The network of institutional mechanisms of the parliaments in BiH comprises the Gender Equality Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, the Gender Equality Commissions of the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH, the Equal Opportunities Committee of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, and the Commission for Gender Issues of the Assembly of Brčko District. At the cantonal level, gender equality commissions have been also established, and at the local level, respective commissions operate within municipal councils”.¹²³

Because BiH has not yet harmonised all of its criminal laws with the Istanbul convention, it means that victims of any type do not enjoy the same rights throughout the country, since access to protection etc. are regulated on entity level and Brčko district level. The authors conclude that a victims access to rights depend on their place of residence. An example is that of victims of torture and civilian victims of war, who are treated very differently depending on their ethnicity and where they live. Also, the report states that, in the official CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) report for BiH, female victims of war rape in both entities are treated very differently than war- disabled men and receive significantly lower compensations. SOC prescribe an independent body to make these judgements.¹²⁴

When it comes to protection of victims of DV, the state is obliged to include GE efforts in their budget (at an entity level), but it is a fact that all shelters (run by NGO’s) and the Gender Equality Agency rely almost solely on funding from the international community.¹²⁵

One major conclusion from the report is that, even though the legislation seems to secure comprehensive protection of women’s rights, there is an overall poor implementation. The

¹²² Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 11

¹²³ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 18

¹²⁴ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 85- 102

¹²⁵ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 24

authors prescribe this to the many different, operational levels of the political and institutional system: state, entity, cantonal, city and municipal.¹²⁶

There are 9 “safe houses” or shelters in BiH, that make up 173 spaces. Six of them are situated in FBiH, and three of them in RS.¹²⁷ SOC received data from five out of nine safehouses about how many victims they had accommodated during the period 2016- 2019. The total number was 839 persons (many of them children) during the three-year period. Some of the shelters stated that they only receive about a fifth (funding) of what they need in order to operate at a full capacity.¹²⁸

Although the entities are obliged, by their respective Criminal codes, to fund the safe houses, this is not the case. The different political, operational levels also provide insufficient statistics on DV, e.g., social welfare centres don’t have access to this and how the statistics is registered varies depending on entity. It is not organised in a systematic way, why measuring the prevalence of DV or interventions is problematic.¹²⁹

Several factors are pointed out in the report, which make women more vulnerable to DV in BiH. It includes financial dependency to their husbands. Women are more often unemployed and 70 % of women do all of the unpaid work at home (including agricultural work).¹³⁰ Furthermore, balancing a career and family life is described as hard in BiH. Only 6- 13 % of families have access to daily childcare centres and it is expensive for the average family.¹³¹ This is pointed out as a real obstacle for women to work, as it most often is them who have to stay at home to take care of the children. Due to the financial dependency to their husband, it is hard to leave their homes.

SOC proposes that laws should be harmonised in BiH, both of the Criminal codes according to the Istanbul Convention. They also propose that statistics should be available to all safe houses and social welfare centres. SOC is adamant that the entities should finance the safe

¹²⁶ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 16

¹²⁷ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 86

¹²⁸ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 87

¹²⁹ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 84 -88

¹³⁰ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 41

¹³¹ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 118

houses, as they are obliged to. Furthermore, they consider it to be very important to work on prevention by raising awareness, especially in media and educating the public, in schools etc. For SOC, is important to challenge existing gender norms to further GE and to prevent GBV and DV.¹³²

The report also points out that GE is a fundamental value of the EU and that it is a driver for economic growth. Therefore, according to SOC, GE should be a top priority in BiH if it seeks EU- membership.¹³³

6.3.Public Opinion on BiH and EU- membership

To become a member of the EU, the country must have a wish to be one and intent to improve in areas the EU has decided on. In BiH, the wish to become integrated in the EU, more often than not, depend on whether you live in FBiH or in RS. RS, with closer ties to Russia, are to a larger extent anti- EU. It's president, Milorad Dodik, recently expressed the words: "Goodbye BiH, welcome RSExit".¹³⁴ Referring to Brexit, he wants to break out of BiH and make RS a sovereign state, which do not have any interest in becoming a member of the EU – at least not as part of BiH.

Research from 2015 reveals that the public opinion on current problems in BiH, sentiments on war, reconciliation and role of the international community differ depending on your ethnicity and which entity you live in. Prism research conducted a survey under commission and in consultation with the office of the UN Resident Coordinator.¹³⁵ The questionnaire was answered by 1500 respondents. The respondent's ethnicity reflects the demographic composition in the country.¹³⁶ Some of the answers in the survey are relevant for this thesis, such as what citizens regard as the biggest societal issue in BiH, why the war happened and public opinion on EU and other influences.

The three ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) seem to agree only with the fact that no reconciliation since the war has been achieved and in the matter of what constitutes the major

¹³² Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 92

¹³³ Hasanbegović, Dizdar & Agić, Sarajevo Open Center, 2019: [Microsoft Word - Orange report 2016-2019 ENG final.doc \(soc.ba\)](#), 75

¹³⁴ Dragojlović, 2020: [Dodik: "Goodbye BiH, welcome RSExit" \(balkan.eu.com\)](#)

¹³⁵ Prism Research 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 4

¹³⁶ Prism Research 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 5-8

societal issues in BiH. Statistics show that they share the opinion that corruption, economy and politicians are the major problems in BiH. To the question of which factor is the most important to get a job, the most frequent answers were personal connections, membership in political parties and bribery. Education and personal experience were the factors that, according to respondents, were least important. To the question of how respondents would assess the social protection system in BiH, all ethnicities responded in a similar way, that it is not socially just and do not serve citizens.¹³⁷

Regarding the war, peace and the future, the ethnic groups differ largely in their answers and opinions. When it comes to the who was responsible for the war, a majority of Bosniaks and Croats answer that Serbia is accountable for the war, while none of the Serbian respondents think that Serbia is accountable. Rather, 74,8 % of Serbs blame the international community for the war. Croats stated that they feel significantly more threatened in BiH than Serbs and Bosniaks, because they do not have their own entity. Bosniaks and Croats find the Dayton Agreement severely more problematic than Serbs, reflecting their hopes for the future of the country. According to the survey, Bosniaks want BiH to become a unified country, while Croats would like their own entity and Serbs want RS to become an independent country.¹³⁸

Most of the respondents do not think that there has been reconciliation since the war, while many also answered “partially”. When asked what is needed for reconciliation a majority of Bosniaks and Serbs stated that the truth must be revealed. Croats are more prone to state that people should forget about past events as well as that apologizing for past events is necessary. Furthermore, Serbs stated more often that reconciliation will never be achieved.¹³⁹

Respondents were asked which of following were more important to the respondents: being a BiH citizen, none of this is important to me, being a citizen of my canton, belonging to my ethnic group, being a citizen of my entity. The majority of Bosniaks (82 %) and Croats (60,8 %) stated that being a citizen of BiH is the most important, while the vast majority of Serbs (64,9 %) considered “belonging to my ethnic group” or “being a citizen of my entity” (13,3 %) was the most important. Croats were also three times more likely than Bosniaks to respond

¹³⁷ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 14- 18

¹³⁸ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 34- 38

¹³⁹ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 40- 42

that it is important to belong to their ethnic group. The issue of identity and belonging is thus very complex in the society of BiH.¹⁴⁰

When asked whether the state of BiH could break up peacefully, Serbs and Croats are more likely to agree than Bosniaks. Serbs state that they would not engage to ensure the integrity of BiH, while Bosniaks state that they would engage in non-violent protests to prevent BiH from disintegrating. Although few respondents answered that they would participate in violent demonstrations and take to arms, Bosniaks were more prone to answer that they would do that to prevent secession of territory. Bosniaks and Croats answered that they would not engage to ensure the integrity of RS. When asked about the future, a majority of respondents (regardless of ethnicity or gender) stated that things will remain the same. However, 31 % of Bosniaks stated that they believe that there will be a unified state and that entities and cantons will be abolished as 81,7 % of Bosniaks want to live in a BiH without cantons or entities.¹⁴¹

When it comes to the EU, Croats and Serbs find the conditions for joining the union as problematic to a higher extent than Bosniaks¹⁴² probably because it can only become a member state as a unified country. Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats all agree that authorities and politicians are mostly responsible for all of the major problems in BiH, but with some variation when it comes to the international community and the EU. Serbs are more prone to blame the international community and the EU for problems in BiH. When asked in whom the citizens have most confidence in, most respondents answered entity governments, political party they voted for, police and religious leaders.¹⁴³ When posed the question of which country or organization provides the majority of financial aid for BiH, a majority of Bosniaks (70,5 %) answered Turkey, with EU at a second place. A majority of Croats and Serbs thought the EU to be the biggest contributor of aid. Serbs also believe that Serbia and Russia are bigger contributors, than Bosniaks and Croats.¹⁴⁴

One can draw many conclusions from this survey, by looking at the differences in opinion between the ethnic groups. Although the majority of all respondents agree that it is more important to improve the constitutional agreement (Dayton) than becoming a member of the

¹⁴⁰ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 45- 46

¹⁴¹ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 50- 59

¹⁴² Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 15

¹⁴³ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 27

¹⁴⁴ Prism Research, 2015: [Prism Research for UN RCO Report.pdf](#), 70

EU- BiH's will to become a member of the EU, seems to rest to a high extent on the Bosniaks. They are seemingly looking for the international community to reverse the Dayton-agreement in what could be considered the "un- doing" of war criminals conquests.

Women were overall more prone towards forgiveness and reconciliation as well as being more positive towards the EU than men, although the survey shows that they are reluctant to participate in political activities to bring forth societal change.

6.4. Swedish aid as a biopolitical instrument, 2012

In a Master thesis in Peace and Conflict studies, the Swedish student Ljubomir Love Fredenman analysed ten strategy reports on African countries from Sida to confirm Mark Duffield's (Professor in Development studies) theory that the aid is a biopolitical instrument "used by Western liberal nations in order to contain and control populations in the underdeveloped world." Fredenman argues that there is a discrepancy between Sida's implementation of democracy, human rights and equality and the perception of the aid-dependent, recipient country's non-willingness to adopt to values that are being dictated by others. This is positioning the recipient country as a subject to the Western world's "guardianship", in a new form of colonialism.

Fredenman uses Duffield's theory to explain how there has been a shift after the Cold war in managing "unstable" states, which has meant that intervention with warfare is no longer necessary. Instead, the Western liberal world has replaced warfare with aid to support social reconstruction. Something that Duffield calls "post-interventional terrain of international occupation".¹⁴⁵ Fredenman concludes that liberalism, under the banner of democracy, is the tool used by Western countries to control populations in the "underdeveloped world". Since they are dependent on the aid, which is conditioned, they are being influenced regardless of their own free will.¹⁴⁶ According to Fredenman, Sida is a discursive tool which secures the increasement of Western values and liberal ideas around the world.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Fredenman, 2012: [Svenskt bistånd som ett biopolitiskt verktyg \(diva-portal.org\)](http://diva-portal.org), 25

¹⁴⁶ Fredenman, 2012: [Svenskt bistånd som ett biopolitiskt verktyg \(diva-portal.org\)](http://diva-portal.org), 47–48

¹⁴⁷ Fredenman, 2012: [Svenskt bistånd som ett biopolitiskt verktyg \(diva-portal.org\)](http://diva-portal.org), 50

7. Results and analysis

Can funding from Sida and its strategy on the Western Balkans be seen as exercising “soft power”?

When analysing the sources of this thesis, I compared the content to Joseph Nye’s theory of soft power. Soft power includes three aspects; attraction/ persuasion (1), sanction/ subtle threats (2) and resources (3); which were all found present in the material (SSWB1, SSWB2 and interview transcripts).

1) Attraction/ persuasion:

In SSWB1, the main goal of the aid is to contribute to the countries EU- integration process, which is mentioned throughout – many times. The strategy encompasses 8 billion Swedish crowns (SEK) to Eastern Europe, WB and Turkey. The aid to the WB for this time period is estimated to 3,5 billion Swedish crowns. This did not constitute the total of the Swedish aid though, with other institutes providing for these developments in the WB. Furthermore, the Sida strategy period and aid coincides with the EU aid for European Neighbourhood Funds and EU- Pre-accession Funds. When asking Lisa Curman about how much of the total aid went to BiH specifically, she answered approximately 200 MSEK every year, and was later able to give me the specific numbers, 211,25 MSEK. It is a substantial amount of money, only coming from one country. Sweden was ranked as the fifth largest aid contributor in BiH 2019, after the EU, Germany, USA and Switzerland. Therefore, the aid must be viewed as a persuasive measure.

Described in both SSWB1 and SSWB2, EU- integration is the main driver for democratic reforms in BiH. Becoming an EU- country therefore is, in itself, persuasive. Although this thesis does not examine the specifics on why BiH wants (formally) to become an EU- member country.

2) Sanction/ subtle threats:

In both documents (SSWB1 and SSWB2), it is mentioned that EU- accession is the main driver for democracy in the region. Political willingness to EU- integration does not, at a first glance, seem to endanger the Sida development cooperation: “In the event of a lack of political willingness for reforms, it may be necessary to spread the risks through the choice of areas, initiatives or type of cooperation partner.” Although it might still be a risk, since the

government follows the EU's directives on directing the aid. SSWB1 also states that "The process of closer ties between the EU and the Western Balkans is being implemented within the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), which is the common EU policy framework for the Western Balkans. The aim of the SAP is to create the conditions for the countries of the Western Balkans to become members of the EU. This requires them, among other things, to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, which means extensive reforms in the partner countries." If BiH does not comply to the Copenhagen criteria and wants to make necessary reform, the aid would probably be phased out. In addition, if the country genuinely expressed political, non- willingness to become an EU- member, the EU nor Sida would probably not be taking extensive measures to promote this process.

When asking Ulrika Holmström about if Sida has any indicators for political willingness to the join the EU, she answered that it is a political question for the government or the Swedish Foreign Ministry, claiming that SIDA is acting on behalf of what the government decides on. Holmström also says that the agency's (Sida's) overall goal or purpose for the aid is to "improve living conditions for people who are living in poverty and oppression". While, also mentioning that which countries Sida is contributing with aid to, is a political decision and that EU- integration is a main factor for this decision. While improving living conditions and EU- integration might not be opposite wills, as many of the criteria for joining the EU is based on improving the living conditions for a country's inhabitants, the discrepancy became more evident when interviewing Lisa Curman: "In some way it is a little bit special with the aid to these countries, because they are basically middle-income countries..", concluding that it is the EU- project that is the main purpose for the aid. Reasoning that, if fighting poverty was the only goal of the development cooperation, other countries would have been selected. Curman also suggest that there is a geopolitical interest in deciding on aid to BiH: "What is the option? Then there is Russia and China there, and do we want these actors so close to the EU? It's in some way that kind of discussion". This may be the closest to an explanation of why the EU and Sweden have committed to the region as vastly as they have.

When asking Curman about how they would measure or monitor BiH's political willingness to the EU, she responded that although this is a political question for the government, BiH has submitted an application to join the EU, back in 2015, which shows formal, political intent. On the other hand, she mentions that there are daily, political disputes and that the country is not really showing any effort in committing to political reforms needed and that it is happening too slow. Curman thinks that it is reasonable to question their real intent, when

they are seemingly just fighting along ethnic lines. Ultimately, she says, this is a question for the Swedish government to determine. Curman also mentions that there are many other aid contributors that are requesting the same things, in accordance with the EU criteria. She states that far too little is being done, and that the EU is putting pressure on the country to initiate action, mentioning that especially judicial reforms are taking too long and therefore the EU has told BiH that they cannot get any more loans. This can be defined as a threat, in form of cutting resources where there is a lack of adaptation. While Sweden or Sida is not putting any pressure on BiH “themselves”, they are following the EU’s directives, as written in SSWB1: “The continuous reports by the EU on the partner countries developments.” Thus, I conclude that the Swedish government and Sida aid is merely a third party to the EU in exercising soft power. Sida and its civil servants, are merely the tool to do this, by political decisions. As Fredenman argued in his thesis; that Sida is a discursive tool which secures the increasement of Western values and liberal ideas around the world. Although I do not share his conclusion that the Sida aid to other countries may be seen as a form of colonialization, but more as a geopolitical “tug of war”, in this case. I genuinely believe that the civil servants at Sida are more interested in improving living conditions for the people in BiH, as opposed to EU-integration and international politics.

Whether if, or why, Sweden has its own national interest in contributing with aid to the region is unclear from reading the documents (SSWB1 and SSWB2). When asking Holmström about this, she says that it is a political question which she cannot answer. Curman gives her take on the question: “In some way, the aid is an act of solidarity, when at the same time you could say that... if others benefit, we benefit... Sweden is an actor that provides with a solid amount of aid, and therefore.. we have something to say about things and that is good for us.” She proceeds with explaining that the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo is there to promote Sweden, Swedish businesses and Swedish culture as well as looking into the possibility for Swedish companies to invest in BiH. Although, this is not something that the Sida delegation works with. Curman says that it is ultimately about lobbying for Swedish values like GE, democracy, human rights and the environment.

3) Resources:

According to Nye, resources used in soft power are ideas, values, culture and legitimacy of policies. The real power in this case is the financial aid, but it is conditioned by the willingness to oblige to certain values, that of the EU and more specifically in this case,

“Swedish values”. Concerning this thesis, the Copenhagen criteria, states that a country must succeed in achieving “strengthened democracy, increased respect for human rights and enhancement of the Rule of Law”. In SSWB1, it is mentioned that Swedish core values are; human rights, equality, democracy, LGBT- questions, and non- discrimination, and that the Swedish aid in these areas supposedly will increase the EU aid to the region.

There are three expected results in SSWB1 (which have been slightly altered in SSWB2), all of which somewhat corresponds with the Copenhagen criteria for EU- membership, one being the protection of human rights.

One of the expected results in the strategy, under the second paragraph, is to reduce GBV, hate crimes and human trafficking. Focusing on human rights, the strategy aims to contribute to a pluralistic civil society, claiming of democratic accountability, free and independent media, fulfilling of international commitments like the Istanbul convention, that women and men have the same right and power to shape society and their own lives as well as enhanced trust and reconciliation between the peoples in the countries.

Contextualising the goals, the strategy claims that; “Sweden is one of the strongest advocated for EU’s ongoing expansion. EU- integration is central to the countries strive towards democracy, rule of law, transparency and a sustainable, economic development.” Although stating that democracy is comparably weak in the WB, improvements with democratic reforms have been made. The EU- integration process is performed within the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP) and is intended to create conditions for the countries to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria. The Swedish aid is supposed to be implemented co-ordinately or complementary to the EU aid to the region, which “strengthens the opportunities for Sweden to influence the EU aids direction and implementation”. The strategy also claims that Sweden has many advantages in relation to the EU aid, because of added value in form of experience, knowledge, reliability and flexibility. According to the strategy, within areas that are Swedish “core values”, like human rights, GE, democracy and LGBT rights, the Swedish aid is supposedly conditioned to strengthen the EU aid.

Ideas, values, culture and legitimacy of policy, such as human rights, equality and democracy, are all prevalent in SSWB1 and SSWB2 and the process of top- down Europeization (described in 5.3) is in effect – trying to shape institutions, processes and political outcomes in BiH. The conditionality of the aid means that BiH has to adapt to these EU policies and values (shared by Sweden and Sida).

In SSWB1 and SSWB2 it is written that Sida should contribute to a strong, domestic ownership in the partner country. Domestic ownership was further explained by Curman. According to her, domestic initiatives and projects are the key to sustainable change – and should not be forced upon by “outsiders”. Although, recipients have to share the same values of human rights etc. When asking Curman why they have decided to direct aid towards SOC, she says: “It is an organisation that we think is great. It meets many of the requirements that we wish to contribute to”.

In the case of SOC, the aid recipients are actors who are pro- EU and lobby for the same values of human rights, and women’s rights, as Sweden and the EU. Therefore, I would suggest that both contributors and recipients of the aid are exercising soft power in the form of top- down Europeization in BiH.

In SSWB1 and SSWB2, the civil society is pointed out as a central agent for creating change. When asking Holmström about this, she emphasises the importance of the CSO’s by saying that it is a democratic goal in itself that CSO’s can operate freely in a country and make their voices heard. Holmström claims that research shows that the prevalence of a strong women’s movement in a country is crucial in achieving GE, by advocating for legal change, monitoring and demanding the powerholders to take responsibility.

How is the aid distributed between the entities in BiH?

“Det svenska biståndet ska i sin helhet utformas ut ett konfliktkänsligt perspektiv”¹⁴⁸ (SSWB1).

Neither SSWB1 or SSWB2 contain any information about this and does not mention the entities. Although, in SSWB1 reads that the region (WB) is sometimes characterised by conflict, whereby the initiatives should contribute to increase trust between the parts and reconciliation to counteract new conflicts. In SSWB2 there is more contextualising, although no mention of the entities. It states that one of the main issues in the countries of WB is fragmentation and polarisation. Since the result strategies are regional, there are not many specifics on the situation in BiH other than: “In BiH the development is hindered by the ethnic division that is written in the constitution”.

According to Curman, there are no indicators to show how the aid is distributed between the entities. Curman states that they proceed from the regional result strategy, but have autonomy

¹⁴⁸ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “The Swedish aid shall in its entirety be designed from a conflict sensitive perspective”.

in distributing the financial aid locally and that they strive to cooperate with partners in both entities. Explaining that they have many different types of partners, including CSO's, public institutions and multinational organisations, like the UN – who in turn work with public institutions. However, Curman recognises that one entity, RS, seems more “Eurosceptic” than the other, which is also shown by the research conducted by PRISM (6.3.).

There is a lot of support for the fact that FBiH are more positive towards the EU than RS, and such demographic compositions in BiH should be taken into account when distributing the aid – if it aims to work towards integrating BiH in the EU as a unified country. Working towards both reconciliation as well as working on liberal and democratisation efforts in RS. Curman mentions during the interview that they have been working with actors who are promoting reconciliation in BiH, like the Mostar School of Rock, where youths of different ethnicities meet and work together. She says that they have come to the conclusion that more efforts like this are needed, especially if one of the criteria for BiH to join the EU, is as a unified country.

Sida is working to promote cooperation across the entities, e.g. with authorities with aim to make them coordinate more of their work. Regarding aid towards GE contributions, Sida donates to the state level Gender Agency, who in turn distributed the money between the Gender Centres at entity level. Curman explains that they distribute more aid to public institutions or multinational organisations, mainly because they do not hand out “small sums” of money. It needs to have some expected result and the institutions or organisations have to be able to manage this over a longer term, being a professional organisation. Some of their larger aid recipients in the GE area is, apart from the public Gender Agency and entity centres, UN Women and the Swedish organisation Kvinna till Kvinna, working locally in BiH. It may be that the state level institution and the international organisations take into account the demographics of BiH when distributing aid.

When interviewing Bošnjak, she explains how the entities collect data differently, and that there is no real systematic statistics on DV, which is also stated in the Orange report (6.1). I imagine that the lack of systematic statistics further complicates directing aid because of uncertainty where the biggest “need” is.

Has the aid from SIDA met the needs of the recipient country during Covid- 19?

To answer this question, I compared the contents of SSWB1 and SSWB2 to see if any changes had been made due to Covid- 19, in the area of GE, GBV or DV. The respondents in the conducted interviews then gave more in- depth answers.

As shown by previous research, DV is a widespread problem in BiH, which is a statement also supported by Bošnjak. Since the outbreak of Covid- 19, there has been a worldwide increase in DV due to isolation. When asking Bošnjak at SOC for the statistics of cases of DV before and after Covid- 19, she explains how there is no systematic reporting or statistics on DV, but refers me to an article.¹⁴⁹ According to the article, there has been a 50 % increase in the occurrence of DV in BiH, which was stated by Jasmin Mujezinović (minister of human rights and refugees in BiH) at a meeting with USAID who are supporting safe houses financially. He bases the statistics on the increased number of calls to the SOS phone line for victims of DV.

As written in the background chapter, the situation of Covid- 19 is critical because BiH has not yet started vaccinating its population at a higher rate. Therefore, the situation with local curfews will probably remain for a longer period of time. Victims will remain isolated with their perpetrator and it is putting pressure on providing shelter for those in need, as written in the article (referred to above) that shelters have had to refuse women because of lack of room and funding.

In SSWB1 there is of course no mention of Covid- 19, but it states that the aid is flexible and can be redirected depending on the situational context in a country. As one of the most important tasks for the Swedish aid is to “contribute to empowerment of women and the possibilities for them to enjoy their rights”, I asked whether the Sida delegation at the Swedish embassy in Sarajevo has redirected some of the aid towards safeguarding women who are victims of DV. The answer from Curman was that they allocated (spring, 2020) more money to UN Women who in turn contribute to women’s shelters in BiH. She also mentioned that they have had to have had a dialogue and discussions with all of their partners about what their challenges are during the pandemic, how it has affected their activities and how they can adapt their work. Curman thinks that Sweden as a cooperation partner is perceived as a

¹⁴⁹ Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2020: [Podrška USAID-a radu sigurnih kuća u BiH u vrijeme pandemije \(slobodnaevropa.org\)](https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/)

partner that is flexible, and says that they get a lot of credit from the aid recipients in this aspect.

In SSWB2 the flexibility of the aid is emphasised: “Sida suggests a flexible approach in the implementation with a possibility to adapt the activities because of changed conditions”. Covid- 19 is mentioned as a risk factor throughout the analysis, also stating that “DV has increased and that murders in intimate partner relations happen frequently, but is not documented correctly”.

I asked Bošnjak how their organisation has worked during the pandemic. She describes that they have had to move to the online sphere which takes away a lot of possibilities for advocacy where you can meet in person and that it is really making their work hard since “advocacy is basically talking to people and convincing them“. On the positive side, their community work has had more outreach by being online. For example, they offer social and legal support to LGTQ- people, and have been more frequently contacted. Bošnjak thinks that it is easier for them to contact someone when they don't have to meet in person.

Bošnjak expresses disappointment and anger during our interview, when stating that the entities of BiH are obliged to finance women's shelters, but refrain from doing so. She tells me that they have a shared, institutional responsibility. In FBiH, the shelters are to be funded by 70 % from the entity budget and 30 % from the cantonal budget. In RS, it's 70 % from the entity and 30 % from the local community from which the safe house client is from. Reality is that the women's shelters are all run by CSO's and financed by the international community. She also demonstrates a distrust towards BiH's politicians when explaining how there has only been a few of them who have mentioned the increasement of DV during the pandemic: “They are just stating what we already know and not really saying what is going to be. What they would, kind of, undertake to address this issue. So it was, just like, political pressure, without any intent to make any significant changes”. Ultimately, it seems as though Bošnjak thinks that Sida has made an adequate assesion of the situation in BiH and that the aid has met the needs of the country: “If it wasn't for them.. Sida, and also USAID, I think the situation would be far, far worse”.

How does aid recipient Sarajevo Open Center work to change gender norms and how is this connected to ending DV in BiH?

SSWB1 states that an important task for the Swedish support is to “contribute to GE gaining political priority” and that initiatives should contribute to change gender stereotypes and unequal gender roles, which is the foundation of SOC’s work.

It seems as though Holmström, Curman and Bošnjak are in agreement of what stipulates the biggest obstacles in achieving GE in BiH. Holmström thinks that there are common “trends” in the region (WB) when it comes to GE, or the lack of GE. She says that legislation on DV and international conventions on GE looks good, but that implementation of it is poor and that the countries in the region don’t live up to their commitments. She says that the prevalence of GBV is high which is a safety concern for women. Holmström mentions several obstacles to achieve GE: the traditional gender roles, low political participation of women, women’s financial dependency and the lack of child care etc.

Bošnjak paints a similar picture to that of Holmström and previous research (6.1.), that gender roles are traditional in BiH. Although she stresses that there has been a serious regress into these traditional roles for both men and women during the last 25 years: “I think DV is related to the general situation... and I think it generally has to do with violence, the normalisation of violence”. She goes on explaining that the financial situation where many men who used to work in the industries lost their jobs, and then found themselves in war with no job or money afterwards which has created a lot of resentment and that it manifests in their families. Many of the former soldiers have war traumas which they have not gotten help nor sufficient compensation for, and they have a feeling of being left in “the ditch”. Therefore, Bošnjak says “a lot of DV is probably fuelled by PTSD.” Basically, there are many factors of society that explains the high prevalence of DV, all of which need measures to counter, such as the financial state of the country.

The theories of masculinity and violence in previous chapter, explaining that male traits are those of being a warrior and provider, is giving support to Bošnjak reasoning; Not being able to protect or provide for your family, in many cases combined with PTSD, is causing stress and frustration which explains (but not excuses) violence within the family. Considering the theory that gender roles are created in the opposites which positions them hierarchically, the low status of women manifests in exerting control by DV.

Answering what the biggest challenge to achieve GE in BiH, Bošnjak stresses “fighting those trends that we’re putting women back into the private sphere”. One of the biggest obstacles, according to her, is that the political elite are not considering any measures that would lead to GE, but rather promote conservative, traditional values and that they use a language that supports these values. Mentioning the country’s socialist past, Bošnjak explains that the majority of people have been used to the idea that those in power should take care of different social issues, but that it is not happening. Stressing that social and cultural change must be achieved, whereas DV will become socially unacceptable which would mean that the political representation can no longer ignore it. Bošnjak thinks that 90 % of the population would agree to that they have no trust in their politicians, which is partly supported by previous research (6.3). That is why this kind of “grass- root” change must be achieved.

There has been some change however, according to Bošnjak. The younger generation are challenging these norms, for example by fathers stepping up when it comes to parenting. The trends vary depending on locality. She mentions that rural areas as well as former industrial towns are more traditional. Again, stressing that without the women’s movement, change wouldn’t have been possible.

SOC works to challenge the traditional gender roles by advocacy, campaigns and by equipping “agents of change”, which means educating, for example public servants, about GE. Also, they are trying to create a narrative around human rights and equality in general which will “bring significant change to how the public perceives these issues”. Thinking about language, Bošnjak says they need to present the evidence to the public and be mindful of the language they use, so that it is understandable for everyone and that they are not perceived as “a bunch of feminists and activists that are just screaming, saying they want this and this”. They are having a discussion on how to best “bring people on board”.

What support can victims of DV in BiH expect?

According to previous research (6.1.) there is a lot of stigma surrounding DV and that not a lot of women are going to speak up about or report their perpetrator, as it would mean that the victim is to blame- that she is not a “good wife”. Bošnjak suggest that in BiH, there is a culture of shame and criticism rather than a culture of support within the wider family and the neighbourhood. Explaining how it’s part of the culture to keep issues in the family private, and that it is all about presenting a happy family, women are not prone to speak out about being subjected to violence.

More than DV being taboo or even “socially acceptable” as part of life, Bošnjak explains that authorities definitely have a lack of understanding from the point of somebody who survived violence: “What are her needs, how can we make it sustainable for her to be in an environment that is non- threatening”. The women who do reach out for help and support, are not likely to receive an appropriate support system needed, such as accommodation or help to a new job – which are all factors mentioned (6.1 and 6.2.) to be able to leave the perpetrator.

Although BiH has both domestic laws against DV and adopted international conventions obliging them to live up to prevent violence and support victims of DV, Bošnjak criticizes the powerholders in BiH: “Decision makers are aware that, you know, signing such conventions, and then doing nothing about it – it has no consequences. So, it’s a win- win situation for them, they can say that they signed the convention, but nobody’s going to hold them accountable for not doing anything at all – except for the women’s movement”.

Since the aid to women’s shelters are financed by the international community, although BiH are obliged to finance them, one can draw the conclusion that victims have non- sufficient political and institutional support. Since all of the safe houses in BiH are run by CSOs, there are no public institutions providing safe houses. Therefore, the conclusion is that they receive short- term help of local CSO’s, who are depending on the international community for providing financial aid. However, once their stay at the safe house is over, they most often go back to their husband, according to Bošnjak. She states that society, in general, have low understanding of women leaving their husbands and that they do not understand what kind of support victims of DV need to be able to live an independent life, free from violence. Bošnjak exemplifies this with police officers who drive women back home to their husband. Often, they think it is solvable, withholding the idea that it was “just a conflict” between husband and wife. Or, they hold the opinion that the victims should just leave their husband, but have little understanding of the conditions for the women, who don’t have the necessary support to start a new life of their own. This includes support, getting a job, their own accommodation etc.

Bošnjak also mentions a political decision on financing to women’s shelters being blocked in FBiH, because the entity had asked for an opinion from every canton, but didn’t receive one from all of them. Therefore, the decision was stopped and she speculates about why they didn’t request or demand an opinion again. One can draw the conclusion that it wasn’t very important to them.

In what ways has Covid- 19 challenged the possibility for victims of DV to seek shelter in BiH?

As stated in the background (3.3.), the pandemic has challenged the possibility for victims of DV to reach out for help, as they are isolated with their perpetrator (working from home, curfews etc.). This also means that the perpetrator has more control over his victim, her not being able to call for help or leaving the house. It also means that the surroundings are not able to detect what is going on in the home environment.

The prevalence of DV was high even before Covid- 19, with one in every two women in BiH having been subjected to such violence. Although the statistics are unclear, it has been estimated to be a 50 % increase of DV during the pandemic. During 2019, statistics from five of the nine safe houses, suggest that over 800 women lived in one of their shelters. Being that statistics are insufficient, it will be hard to draw any conclusion other than reporting stories from the women's shelters who argue that there are not enough spaces to take in all the women who are in need. When asking Bošnjak about it, she refers me to an article that dates back to 2019. The article describes that there are nine shelters in BiH, with a total capacity of 190 persons, which is described as not nearly enough. Looking at this as well as the increasing prevalence of DV, you could imagine that shelters have to decline requests. No new numbers have been recorded since the outbreak of Covid- 19, but will be published in a new Orange Report (by SOC) later this year.

Furthermore, with the overall risk of containing the virus Covid- 19, it could be probable that shelters are challenged by not having enough staff because of sickness and also that social distancing would be hard.

The pandemic highlights an already existing problem which could have been an incentive for change, but hasn't been, according to Bošnjak. She says that she thinks a few (mostly female) politicians have mentioned the issue, but that it has mostly been a big topic for the women's movement. Bošnjak says that the politicians are stating what we already know, but are not undertaking any measures to do something about it: "political pressure without any intent to do anything about it".

Does Sarajevo Open Center believe that international funding is a long-term solution in preventing GBV in BiH?

Sida, working to achieve the results in the strategy (SSWB1), are looking for long term achievements and results, while more funding to women's shelters might not be preventing the violence from occurring. Therefore, both short- term and long-term efforts are needed and sought to. Long- term results include making the overall situation for women in BiH better, including all the factors mentioned by Holmström, Curman and Bošnjak, as well as found in the Orange report (6.2.) created by SOC (and funded by Sida). As SOC works with changing gender stereotypes, they are working to achieve long- term change. According to Curman, SOC has received aid in form of institutional support from Sida since 2014. SOC receives 2 million SEK annually, which comprises approximately 30 % of their total budget.

According to Curman, out of the total aid (211,25 MSEK) to BiH, 12 % has had GE as its main goal. Although, the Swedish approach is an integrated effort, where GE is included as a partial goal in many other areas, such as peace and democratisation. Holmström explains that Sweden and Sida are quite far along when it comes to GE integration, in comparison to many other countries. According to Holmström there are many factors in WB that affect GE, such as the countries' economies and gender stereotypes. She points out that, in the region, there is a high overall unemployment which is higher among women, who also suffer challenges in balancing work and private life, and there is low participation of women in politics. Holmström suggest that all of these are factors are connected to one another, and therefore, an integrated effort when it comes to GE is necessary.

As argued under the first research question, downloading of EU policies and values is not taking place in a large scale, but is being held hostage by nationalist politicians in a complicated political system, which the international community helped "set up". Soft power by contributing aid does not seem to have any impact on the political structure or reconciliation which is affecting the population of BiH negatively, by complete stagnation.

The results find that the prevalence of DV in BiH is high and has increased during the pandemic, and that the ones in power are not doing anything about it, while being obliged to fund women's shelters and act to prevent GBV – they refrain from doing so. CSO's like SOC, work at a grass- root level to make a change, both politically and in the public. With means from the 'outside', they are trying to create incentives for change. One might question if these changes will ever be achieved if the state at large does not conform. BiH's intent to become a

member of the EU could also be questioned, as Bošnjak says that the current political system is beneficial to them. Nationalism may be their tool, but remaining in power might be their agenda. Since there are no consequences, for example signing the Istanbul convention but not implementing it, they can go on as they have been doing since the war. An example provided by Bošnjak is how women, such as war time rape victims, are often used in nationalistic propaganda, of every side, but no one is really doing anything to help them.

As Bošnjak stated that the situation would be “far, far worse” without international aid, I found out through analysing SSWB2, that the Swedish aid might be phased out while the countries in the region become closer to EU- integration. Regardless of whether the other candidate countries in the WB are getting closer to EU- membership, this is not probable to happen with BiH in the nearest future, because it is facing unique challenges of fragmentation as opposed to its neighbouring countries. When asking Curman about phasing out aid, she told me that it is a hard question to answer, but that they were given the assignment by the government to think about “withdrawing” the aid in the region. She reasons about BiH being a middle- income country, and that the main goal of the aid is to contribute to the EU- project, but that too little is happening (changing) which the EU has been pushing for. The conditionality for the aid must be proven – and as of now no improvements are showing.

Since the SSWB2 document covers a period from 2021 to 2027, which implies that phasing out will not happen in the next few years to come, but there is an uncertainty what will come for the next period after 2027. Since Sweden is following the EU’s directives for directing the aid to certain areas, it might also be that the EU at large are also thinking about phasing out.

Bošnjak says that it needs to be brought forth structural change in BiH, and that there needs to be “a break with whatever system we have right now”.

During my interviews with Holmström, Curman and Bošnjak, they all mentioned that the Me too- movement has just recently arrived to the WB, which is called “Nisi sama”¹⁵⁰ and “Nisam tražila.”¹⁵¹ According to Bošnjak, it raises a discussion on GBV, sexual harassment and women’s rights. She argues that it would not have been possible without the women’s movements hard work, backed up by the international community. It may be that the environment for speaking out has become more supportive and that the social stigmatisation of victims is slowly changing. Although Bošnjak is regretful of the state of BiH and the

¹⁵⁰ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “You are not alone”.

¹⁵¹ Translation by Kosovac, Alexandra: “I didn’t ask for it”.

overall state of human rights, she concludes that she would not keep doing what she does if she didn't think that change was possible.

8. Conclusion

Referring to the general situation in BiH, Emina Bošnjak at one point expresses: "We just keep living in a hell that gets worse by the day".

There is a high prevalence of DV in BiH, shown by previous research, which can be seen as a legacy from the war. Theories on gender and violence helped explain the normalisation of violence in the traditional society of BiH today. Since the outbreak of Covid- 19, there has been worldwide report on increasing DV. The results of this thesis show that the statistics on DV in BiH are insufficient and aren't structured in any systematic way, which is problematic in general. Therefore, no clear data is achievable, although estimations on the increase of DV in BiH during the pandemic ranges up to 50 %. Estimations are probably also made difficult because of the stigma of stepping forward. Because of the low trust in the public institutions in BiH, women are probably not counting on the authorities to help them. This seems to be an adequate assessment since both entities are refraining from financing the women's shelters. Instead, they are managed by local CSO's who are funded by the international community and bilateral aid, such as Sida. Since the virus is still spreading and vaccination in many countries, including BiH, has not been progressing in a fast rate, the current situation will remain for a considerable time ahead. Meaning putting a strain on the society at large, and that the situation for victims of DV will continue. This could have been an incentive for change, but politicians do not seem to prioritise preventing violence against women, not then and not now.

Although, CSO's, backed up by the international community, are working tirelessly to make a change and progress in BiH, change seems far away. Many successful steps can be signed by the women's movement in BiH, but it seems to have low impact at the political levels, with politicians not really complying to their commitments and implementation on laws and conventions are low. Overall, the welfare in BiH would need to improve to accommodate the needs of the victims. A stay at a women's shelter is only a short- term solution and should only be the first step to freedom. Whereas, in BiH most charges of DV are dropped and the victims return to their husbands. This should be seen, by the political elite in BiH, as a major failure.

The aid from Sida seems to have met the needs of the recipient country during the pandemic, by allocating more funding to UN Women, who in turn support women's shelters throughout

BiH. Regardless of the flexibility of the aid, it is, however, conditioned with the country's willingness to adapt to "European" or "Swedish values". This intent has been questioned and the sources (SSWB2 and Curman) of this thesis suggest that a "phasing out" could be threatening further cooperation in the future. This may be an indicator for the EU's directive, since Sweden follows it when directing aid. It could be insinuating that the EU's trust and commitment to BiH is depleting. As Bošnjak stated that the situation for women in BiH would be far worse without the support of actors like SIDA, it is not hard to imagine what would happen if these aid contributors would "pull out" of BiH and leave room for other influences to prevail – from Russia and Turkey.

During my interviews, I was curious to find out how the aid was distributed between the two entities, since one of them is more "Euro-sceptic" than the other, also shown in previous research (6.4.). I found out that there are no indicators to show how the aid is distributed between the two entities, but that a lot of the aid is donated to international organisations, who in turn might take this into consideration. I reckon that it is important to take the demographic composition into account when distributing the aid. Even if the aim is to unify BiH, the entities are autonomous parts of BiH with extensive rights of self-determination, and should be regarded as such, based on their respective intent towards EU-membership - since the aid is conditioned. If one part fails to show intent, everyone should not be "punished".

The situation and living conditions in BiH are critical. As suggested by Curman and Bošnjak, nationalist politicians are still fighting a low intense war, making democratic reforms hard to achieve. Although soft power with resources in form of aid and values are being exercised, "Europeization" is not happening to the extent desired. The reason for this is because "downloading" is simply not possible, or too slow, due to the fragmented, political system which is cemented in the Dayton Peace Agreement – which is a Gordian knot. An example is provided about the many political, operational levels in previous research (6.2.) as well as provided by Bošnjak about funding to women's shelters being stopped because FBiH was unsuccessful in receiving an answer from every canton. As stated by Bošnjak: "I think that there needs to be more structural change here. That includes, changing the constitution." She suggests that there needs to be a cleanse of political elites, especially those who are corrupted and benefit from the political system. She thinks that change is possible and that she wouldn't be continuing to do her job if she didn't think that it is, expressing some hope for future generations.

However, it seems like the people of BiH are losing their hope of ever becoming a member of EU. According to me, the EU should recommit to the candidate country and although the aim is to unite BiH, the EU should be adamant that they do not accept part of the country that was “stolen” during the war to hold the entire nation hostage. It would be turning their backs on BiH, again. Reconciliation is also in need for the parts to acknowledge genocide and war crimes committed during the war. Otherwise, unification is impossible. A “sorry” means nothing without acknowledgement of the horrific crimes committed against civilians.

8.1.Further research

Further research should be carried out in the aftermaths of Covid- 19. Independent research on number of victims of DV in BiH is crucial to appropriate right measures. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know more from the Swedish decision makers when it comes to the development cooperation aid and its conditionality. Also, taking into account the demographics in BiH, studies on the effectiveness of EU soft power in BiH should be examined.

On a final note...

As I am finishing this thesis, another crisis is facing BiH. The appearance of a ‘non-paper’ document, allegedly sent by the Slovenian PM, to the EU, suggest how the borders of BiH could be redrawn - violating the integrity of BiH. As a response, the Bosniak president Bakir Izetbegović, responded that he would rather die than let those who committed genocide to part BiH and that he is prepared to stand behind his ‘people’ if it means war. Following the threats of war, RS has sought to procure heavy weapons, which the high representative in BiH says must be explained and justified.¹⁵² This sabre-rattling and fearmongering are, according to writer Y.Z at Sarajevo times, a manoeuvre tactic to divert attention from real problems by manipulating feelings. As the politicians supply no answers to pressing issues, such as the state of the economics and health (Covid- 19) in BiH, political analysts in BiH think that the reason is to stop all reforms that BiH needs to fulfil on the way to the EU – because they benefit from the stagnation in the country.¹⁵³

This seem to be yet another example of how unstable and dysfunctional the situation in BiH is and how the Dayton Peace Agreement – giving life to ethnic division and nationalism - is hindering all forms of developments by fearmongering nationalists. They are using their populations war trauma for their own, personal benefit. Ultimately, it is the people of BiH who suffer from this political ‘game’. I must, again, draw the conclusion, in the words of Emina Bošnjak, that it is absolutely critical to make structural changes in BiH, and that the women in BiH should be given a large influence in those discussions - to amend the constitution of which they were no part of the last time. Since women seem more prone to reconciliation and social reforms rather than nationalism, I think letting their voices through would be beneficial to the progress of BiH – and EU- accession.

¹⁵² Y.Z. Sarajevo Times, 2021: [The RS Ministry of the Internal Affairs wants to procure heavy Weapons, the OHR says they must justify its Use - Sarajevo Times](#)

¹⁵³ Y.Z. Sarajevo Times, 2021: [Who benefits from Stories about the War and Redrawing Borders of Bosnia? - Sarajevo Times](#)

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Appendix 1

Information leaflet about the study

Dear xx,

I am a Masters student of European Studies at Lund University, Sweden. This term, I am writing my Master's Thesis, which will hopefully be submitted in May 2021. The thesis wants to examine the case of gender equality and preventing domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the pandemic of Covid- 19. For this purpose, some situational and contextual consideration has to be taken into account, e.g. how historical developments, social processes and political- economic implications affect the characteristics of domestic violence in BiH and which help is accessible to the victims. Since the outbreak of Covid- 19 there has been world-wide reports on increased violence against women (and children) because they have been isolated with their perpetrator. The pandemic seems to have also challenged their possibility in seeking help. Therefore, the study aims at looking into the how the pandemic has affected the work on preventing domestic violence and how NGO's work locally. Since I had previous knowledge about NGO's in BiH receiving funding from the international community, the EU and Sweden included, I wondered how the funding was affected by the pandemic and how the work of NGO's has changed. I came across the SIDA strategy on the Western Balkans – a document which explains that the strategy on and aid to the Balkans is to bring pre-accession countries closer to EU- membership. The document, during the time period of 2014- 2020 of course does not mention Covid- 19. Some of the funding from SIDA goes to independent civil society organisations who monitor and work to improve equality and fight gender- based discrimination and violence. One of them, is Sarajevo Open Center. Therefore, I have decided, apart from analysing documents and visiting previous research and theories, to interview representants from SIDA, the Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo and the local NGO Sarajevo Open Center.

The funding from the Sweden (SIDA), distributed by the Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo, can be seen in a broader context, that of the European Integration project. To become a member of the EU, a country has to protect human rights which of course includes women's rights. The over- all questions I would like to answer, is how far along BiH is in achieving gender equality, the role of the international community and NGO's and if the pandemic has stagnated this work and why.

I have developed a hypothesis about the situation on gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on previous knowledge of BiH being a post- conflict country which seems to uphold a fragile peace within a highly complicated, political system. I believe that Covid- 19 is further challenging the development of achieving gender equality in a, already struggling, country. The thesis aims to contribute to already existing knowledge and is addressed to both local politicians and NGO's as well as EU officials and aid contributors who work towards achieving equality in BiH.

The interviews will be conducted via Zoom and will take approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be recorded, saved and transcribed afterwards, with the consent of the participants. The interviews are for research purposes only and may not be transmitted in any way. By request, others may listen to them for the sole purpose of verification. Participants may remain anonymous if they wish and can withdraw their consent at any time. If the participants have any kind of complaints regarding the students conduct or behaviour, the participant may contact the supervisor: Sanimir Resic, sanimir.resic@slav.lu.se.

Kind regards,

Alexandra Kosovac, student.

I have read the information above and consent to being interviewed and recorded:

Date:

Name:

Signature:

Appendix 2

Interview questions with Ulrika Holmström from SIDA

1. Vad är din yrkesroll?
2. Vad syftar biståndet till WB/ BiH till?
3. Hur kommer ni fram till vilka insatser som behövs på WB?
4. Hur går beslutsprocessen till när ni beslutar om bistånd och insatser?
5. Hur räknar ni på kostnader?
6. Specifikt, hur mycket bistånd går till BiH?
7. Distribueras biståndet av den svenska ambassaden? Konsulteras de?
8. Hur mycket går sammanlagt till jämställdhetsarbete i BiH? Vilka slags insatser prioriteras?
9. Fördelas biståndet mellan de olika entiteterna? Spelar det någon roll?
10. I strategin pekars civilsamhället ut som en viktig agent. Vilken roll spelar civilsamhället i arbetet mot demokratisering och jämställdhet?
11. Hur är de olika insatserna beskrivna i strategin kopplade till jämställdhet? Faktorer som påverkar kvinnors situation.
12. Vilka utmaningarna finns på WB/ BiH när det kommer till jämställdhet? Vilket motstånd stöter arbetet på? Skillnader mellan entiteterna?
13. Vilken roll spelar konflikten (90- talet) avseende jämställdhet i BiH?
14. Hur mycket bistånd till SOC specifikt?
15. Är biståndet till BiH (eller länderna nämnda i strategin) jämförelsevis större än till andra länder/ regioner?
16. Tänker på alla rapporter om ökat våld mot kvinnor (och barn) och om svårigheter att söka hjälp/ skydd. Det står i strategin (s. 9) att biståndet skall evalueras under pågående tidsperiod – vad skedde i 2020 när pandemin kom? Mer pengar till jämställdhetsarbete? Skydd till våldsutsatta etc?
17. I strategin mellan 2014–2020 står såklart inget om Covid- 19, men i underlaget för nästkommande period står det med som en risk. Dessutom står det att biståndet är ”flexibelt” och att det kan omdistribueras/ omprioriteras beroende på situationen. Har mer pengar gått till jämställdhetsarbete och våldspreventiva insatser under pandemin? Hur mycket mer än tidigare? Vilka insatser har prioriterats? Förhållandet mellan staten BiH och bistånd?
18. I strategin pekars EU- integration ut flertalet gånger som det övergripande målet med strategin, men det finns också ett nationellt intresse i regionen, beskrivet på sid: 7: ”This increases Sweden’s chances of influencing the orientation and implementation of EU- support. Vad har Sverige för intressen på WB/ BiH?
19. Sid. 9 ”Swedish support should be directed at areas in which Sweden has comparative advantages over EU support. Vad betyder det och vad innefattar det? Den svenska modellen?
20. Vad bidrar Sverige med som inte EU gör? (i strategin står det att Sv. Bistånd skall vara kompletterande).
21. Är det viktigt eller har det fördelar att svenskt bistånd sammanfaller med EU:s bistånd?
22. Är biståndet till BiH (eller länderna nämnda i strategin) jämförelsevis större än till andra länder/ regioner?

23. I underlaget för nästa strategi står det att bistånd kan "betingas", d.v.s. ej ges om det ej finns politisk vilja till EU- närmande. Hur tänker ni kring det och hur uppfattas detta av mottagarlandet generellt? Motstånd?
24. Vilka kort- och långsiktiga effekter tror du att svenskt bistånd har i BiH?
25. Tror du att insatserna/ biståndet ökar den positiva inställningen gentemot EU i BiH? Eller finns det en stark "euro- skepticism"? Tänker också på att det finns en "historisk" besvikelse inför EU i BiH.
26. Finns det en skillnad mellan entiteterna avseende vilja gentemot EU?
27. Vad tror du/SIDA utgör de största skälen till att BiH inte i dagsläget kan bli en EU- medlem?
28. Tror du att EU- medlemskap i sig skulle kunna påverka utvecklingen i BiH positivt eller att man först måste uppnå samtliga mål (Köpenhamnskriterierna)?

Appendix 3

Interview with Lisa Curman at the Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo

1. Vad är svenska ambassadens främsta syfte och arbete i Sarajevo/ BiH?
2. Vad är din yrkesroll?
3. Vad syftar svenskt bistånd till BiH till?
4. Hur beslutar ni hur ni ska distribuera biståndet och hur ser beslutsprocessen ut?
5. Hur mycket av det totala (svenska) biståndet till BiH går till jämställdhetsarbete?
6. Vilka kriterier skall biståndstagare uppfylla för att få tillgång till bistånd?
7. I SIDAs strategi för bistånd till VB står det att landet skall ha en politisk vilja till EU, hur mäter ni det? Har allmänheten en vilja att bli en del av EU? Motstånd?
8. I strategin pekas EU- integration ut flertalet gånger som det övergripande målet med strategin, men finns det ett nationellt (svenskt) intresse i regionen? Vilka är det?
9. Finns det något som är unikt med svenskt bistånd I jämförelse med bistånd från andra länder/ organisationer?
10. Vad tror du är den främsta anledningen till att BiH i dagsläget inte kan bli en del av EU?
11. Skänker ni mer till statliga institutioner eller civilsamhälleliga aktörer?
12. Hur ser förhållandet ut mellan staten BiH och internationellt bistånd?
Kompletterande?
13. Hur tänker ni vid val av organisation (som ska mottaga bistånd)? Vilka slags insatser prioriteras?
14. Hur fördelas biståndet mellan F BiH och RS? Ambassaden i Sarajevo (som är huvudstad), men har det någon betydelse för entiteterna? Någon av de mer ”EU-vänliga”?
15. Vilka samhällsliga faktorer påverkar jämställdhetsarbete och bekämpning av våld i nära relationer? Utmaningar? Skillnad mellan entiteterna?
16. Vilken roll spelar konflikten (90-talet) avseende jämställdhet i BiH?
17. Vad tycker du är viktigast (mest akut) för att kunna uppnå jämställdhet (i BiH)?
18. Har pandemin påverkat distributionen av biståndet i BiH? Prioritering av insatser?
19. Varför har ni valt att skänka bistånd till SOC? Vad syftar det biståndet till? Hur mycket?

Appendix 4

Interview questions with director Emina Bošnjak at CSO Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar

1. What does your organisation work with and what is your role?
2. What is your perception of gender roles in BiH? Are there any variations across the country?
3. What do you consider to be the biggest challenge to achieve GE in BiH?
4. How is changing the public opinion of gender stereotypes related to achieving GE and preventing GBV?
5. Have you ever received threats because of your work?
6. Given that BiH is a relatively young, post conflict country, how has it affected the area of GE?
7. Is war rape in any way connected or related to domestic abuse in BiH today?
8. Hearing that BiH has become ethnically divided since the war. Do you think that CSOs have a role in reconciliation? Is it important that women have a role in rebuilding a country?
9. Mixed marriages were more common before the war. Is there any statistics on whether women from blended or same-ethnicity marriages are more subjected to violence?
10. Are there any laws to protect victims of domestic abuse? Are they enforced? Why are they not? Differences between FBiH/ RS?
11. Has the complicated, political system made change difficult to achieve? Also, concerning GE.
12. Are there any differences in how the question of GE and DV is addressed/handled in the two entities?
13. What is the statistics on women murdered by their partner?
14. How many women seek shelter every year? Are all of them accommodated? More since Covid- 19?
15. How are the women's shelters funded and has the pandemic affected the funding?
16. Are there any demands or criterions to be able to gain help or support as a victim of DV?
17. How prone are women to disclose or speak of what they have experienced? Has there been a change over time?
18. Is it common that victims of DV report their perpetrator to the police?
19. When reported, are perpetrators charged? What are the penalties for DV?
20. How are victims of domestic abuse perceived in BiH?
21. What is the victim's possibility of achieving an independent life after have they have sought shelter and don't intend to go back to the perpetrator?
22. Do you think that officials, social workers, police, health care workers have the proper knowledge and education when it comes to domestic violence?
23. What has the pandemic meant for victims of domestic violence? What impact has the authority's decisions had? Do you have any statistics? Has there been lockdowns? Closed women's shelters? Enough funding? Changes in society that affect the women's possibility to seek aid?
24. Have the authorities addressed domestic violence during the pandemic? How? Differences in FBiH and RS? Are they/ How are they normally addressing it?

25. How has your work changed since the pandemic? Have you received adequate support/aid to continue your work? SIDA (how much?)
26. What short term and long-term effects do you anticipate post- Covid-19, regarding DV/GE?
27. As lot of funding to this area (GE/DV) comes from the EU/ including Sweden (SIDA) – do you think that they have made an adequate assesion of the situation in BiH and the needs in the country? And met the needs of your organisation?
28. What other countries are trying to influence BiH? And what perception of GE do they give?
29. What is the public opinion on EU- membership? Differences throughout the country?
30. What do you think is the main reason that complicates the process of EU- integration?
31. What do you think of the future of BiH? What are your hopes?