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*Fighting for the Centre: Civic Political  
Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and  
Northern Ireland in Comparative Perspective*

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**2017**

## **Abstract**

In deeply divided societies political parties that attempt to reach across that divide, by definition, form the exception. Indeed, in post-settlement contexts where institutions have been designed to accommodate communal identities, non-ethnic parties are broadly cast in the literature as marginal actors. Nevertheless, in a number of segmented societies, civic parties and movements have emerged and seized space in the political system. This thesis probes the puzzle of these actors' existence and endurance in power-sharing frameworks by comparatively analysing the experiences of civic parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. It explores the constraints and opportunities these parties encounter in such settings and how they navigate those structures. This thesis seeks to advance understanding of this critical topic, contributing comparative findings on which broader theoretical work can build. Standing at the juncture of the theories of consociational democracy and civic mobilisation in divided societies, this research examines this problem comparatively in the selected cases. Taking a qualitative, interpretive approach it draws primarily on evidence from elite interviews, as well as a limited number of focus groups with voters and analysis of party documents.

This thesis has found that civic parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, in varying ways, meet with severe barriers in the formal and informal structures of their consociational settings, but that they also find critical openings therein. These opportunities, however, can incentivise non-ethnic actors to assume roles and pursue strategies that conflict with their longer term goals and challenge their legitimacy as civic parties. In fighting for survival on the centre ground in divided polities, civic parties are faced with strategic dilemmas that they must carefully negotiate. These findings demonstrate the centrality of institutions for the type of politics and political actors that ensue following peace settlement and bear potential implications for institutional design and party strategy in such contexts.

## Lay Summary

This thesis is concerned with political parties in divided societies that organise on a civic basis and attempt to appeal to voters across communities. These ‘civic’ parties form the exception in such societies, where parties tend to organise on the basis of identity, and have therefore received limited attention in this field of scholarship. Nevertheless, in societies such as Northern Ireland and South Africa, these collectives have broken through to gain representation in the political system and gone on to make a significant impact in the politics of the region. This project seeks to shine a light on the role and experiences of non-ethnic, civic parties in divided societies. It is particularly interested in how these parties operate in societies where a form of ‘power-sharing’ has been imposed as a means of conflict resolution, in which the groups that were party to the conflict are granted a share of power in the political system through measures like reserved seats for each group in legislature, government and civil service, group vetoes for legislation and autonomy for groups over certain policy areas or territories. This research investigates how these parties survive and endure in such inhospitable settings. It examines what aspects of the political institutions support their progression and what aspects constrain them; and what strategies they use to advance in these environments. This project examines this topic through a comparison of civic parties in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, divided societies that host varying forms of power-sharing. It analyses evidence collected in both case studies through interviews with representatives of these parties and other relevant sectors, as well as a small number of focus groups with voters and analysis of party documents.

This research has found that civic parties in power-sharing settings encounter both barriers and openings in their institutional environments. The opportunities they access can, however, conflict with their principles and long-term goals as civic actors, and therefore present them with dilemmas in how they act within the power-sharing framework. It has also uncovered key differences between the cases of Northern Ireland and Bosnia, arising from the distinct forms of consociation in place in each context. These findings emphasise the importance of the design of political institutions for states emerging from conflict, for the type of politics and the type of political actors that can survive and thrive therein.

## Declaration

This research was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council 1+3 Studentship Award, number ES/J500136/1.

The thesis is based on my own work, with acknowledgement of additional sources. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Extracts of two of my own publications are also incorporated in this thesis. The references for these publications are as follows:

Murtagh, C. (2016) 'Civic Mobilization in Divided Societies and the Perils of Political Engagement: Bosnia and Herzegovina's Protest and Plenum Movement,' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 22(2), 149-171.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2016.1169060>

Murtagh, C. (2015) 'Reaching Across: Institutional Barriers to Cross-Ethnic Parties in Post-Conflict Societies and the Case of Northern Ireland,' *Nations and Nationalism*, 21(3), 544-565.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nana.12129/abstract>

Cera Murtagh

Edinburgh, 1 August 2017

*I dedicate this thesis to my parents for their constant support, encouragement and belief in me*

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Wilfried Swenden, Eve Hepburn and Liliana Riga for their invaluable support during the course of this research. They have each been outstanding mentors and a constant source of inspiration, guidance and support, both intellectual and moral, whenever I needed it and I cannot thank them enough. I would also like to say a special word of thanks to Fiona Mackay, who supervised my first piece of original research and publication, without whose advice and encouragement I would probably not have embarked on this thesis and on whose experience and wisdom I relied heavily during this project.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support that I received from the Economic and Social Research Council through a 1+3 PhD Studentship to carry out this research.

I am, furthermore, immensely thankful to each of the individuals and groups that participated in this research, for giving so generously of their time, knowledge and experience. I am likewise extremely grateful to all of those who provided me with practical support and advice during the fieldwork conducted for this project in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, particularly Zora Hesova, Brigid Loughran, Anes Makul, Asim Mujkić and Catherine O'Rourke. I would additionally like to thank Selma Gondžetović, Inga Kotlo, Elma Mahmutović-Hodžić, Sandra Pandurević Dobrijević and Kristina Varcaković for their translation and interpretation assistance.

I would like to express my further gratitude to Timofey Agarin, John Coakley, Sara Dorman, Adrian Guelke, Allison McCulloch, Joanne McEvoy, Nicola McEwen, Peter McLoughlin, Bettina Petersohn, Dejan Stjepanović, Heleen Touquet, and Robin Wilson for their advice on the design of this research and for reviewing and providing valuable feedback on earlier drafts of chapters, papers and proposals that contributed to this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Charlie and Eleanor and my sister Madeleine for their enormous moral and practical support throughout the past five years. I am also deeply grateful to the following people for their valuable help, encouragement and perspective during this time: Orla Carely, Louise Casserly, Laura Corcoran, Megan Curran, Andrew Dawson, Jenni Douglas, Nino Kemoklidze, Robert Liñeira, Callum McCaig, Fiadhait McDonnell, Nicola McDonnell, Anna Pultar, Charlotte Snelling, Judith Tubman and Jorge Valdizan.

## **List of Abbreviations**

APNI: Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

BiH: Bosne i Hercegovine (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

DF: Demokratska Fronta (Democratic Front)

DPA: Dayton Peace Agreement

DUP: Democratic Unionist Party

EU: European Union

FBiH: Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

GFA: Good Friday Agreement

HDZ 1990: Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica 1990 (Croat Democratic Union 1990)

HDZ BiH: Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine (Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OHR: Office of the High Representative

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PBPA: People Before Profit Alliance

RS: Republika Srpska (Serb Republic)

SAA: St Andrews Agreement

SBB: Savez za Bolju Budućnost Bosne i Hercegovine (Union for a Better Future of of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

SDA: Stranka Demokratske Akcije (Party for Democratic Action)

SDLP: Social Democratic and Labour Party

SDP BiH: Socijaldemokratske Partije Bosne i Hercegovine (Social Democratic Party of of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

SDS: Srpska Demokratska Stranka (Serb Democratic Party)

SNSD: Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UUP: Ulster Unionist Party

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## A Note on Published Papers

The research and analysis conducted as part of this thesis has formed the basis of two published papers. The full reference and URL for each of these papers is as follows:

1. Murtagh, C. (2015) 'Reaching Across: Institutional Barriers to Cross-Ethnic Parties in Post-Conflict Societies and the Case of Northern Ireland,' *Nations and Nationalism*, 21(3), 544–565.  
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2016.1169060>

Some elements and extracts of Publication 1 are reproduced in Chapter Four while elements and extracts of Publication 2 are reproduced in Chapter Six.

# **Part I**

## **Conceptual and Methodological Framework**

## Chapter One

### **Bridging the Divide: Power-Sharing and Civic Mobilisation**

Political parties in deeply divided places that organise on a civic basis and attempt to reach across society, by definition, form the exception. Naturally, they have not been central to political processes of conflict resolution, which tend to focus on the main parties to the conflict. Indeed, in consociational power-sharing frameworks in which the political institutions have been explicitly designed to accommodate ethno-national identities, space for such non-ethnic, civic actors is inevitably limited. Nevertheless, in fragmented polities from Northern Ireland to South Africa, these parties have emerged, seized space in the institutional framework and, moreover, exerted an influence on the political dynamic. Furthermore, many have managed to maintain that institutional foothold. Writing in 1985, Donald Horowitz assessed that “In a severely divided society, a multi-ethnic party or coalition is a fragile institution.” (1985: 396). Yet, against the odds, these parties have broken through in such polities and survived. What’s more, these parties arguably matter. If we accept the contention that ethnic mobilisation is intimately linked to democratic instability (Chandra, 2004: 1) and the rise and fall of conflict in society (Horowitz, 1985: 298), then it must be assumed that civic mobilisation is linked to democratic stability and a more ‘positive’ peace. As transitional societies move forward from the cessation of violence to a more shared society and fuller democracy, one might expect these parties to emerge as a stronger force in politics. Yet, with some notable exceptions, relatively little scholarship exists on civic parties and the space they occupy in divided societies. This research seeks to address that gap by comparatively analysing civic political actors in the consociational power-sharing systems of Northern Ireland and Bosnia. It investigates these parties’ experiences under these distinct forms of power-sharing, examining the nature of the opportunities and constraints they encounter and, furthermore, how they navigate those structures. This thesis finds that civic parties meet with intense barriers, in both the formal and informal structures of consociational politics in each setting, but that they also display critical agency to access openings within those institutional frameworks. Nevertheless, these opportunities can lie in tension with civic parties’ longer term goals and principles, thus raising strategic dilemmas for these actors and requiring them to carefully navigate the consociational

landscape. These effects vary in the different consociational frameworks studied, demonstrating the impact of institutional design for the nature of politics and type of political actors that ensue following conflict.

This research is situated at the theoretical intersection of consociational democracy and civic mobilisation in divided societies. Between these scholarly fields there lies something of a gulf. Fundamental contradictions exist between the respective theories' assumptions about the nature of identity, society and solutions to its democratic governance. Consociational theory prescribes the management of conflict in a divided society through the recognition of its main groups and their representation in the political system by elites. Theories of civic mobilisation, alternatively, advance the possibility of solidarity in politics amongst individuals across diverse identities and group affiliations and their potential transformation of the conflict in society from below. More specifically, civic political parties and movements occupy an ambiguous place in the literature on consociational democracy, accorded a vaguely defined role in the power-sharing frameworks. This chapter explores the space between these two bodies of literature and, in so doing, conceptualises the central research problem investigated in this thesis: civic parties in consociational power-sharing systems.

The chapter begins by presenting ideas of democracy in divided societies, firstly outlining the concept of a deeply divided society and the ways in which it has been interpreted in the literature and, secondly, setting out the various governance models designed to resolve, manage and transform conflict in such places, most notably consociational democracy. The chapter goes on to discuss theories of civic mobilisation in divided societies, outlining the general dynamics of politics and party competition within deeply divided societies and, thus, the forms of civic politics that can emerge amidst that space. It proceeds to focus in on the concept of the civic party, exploring its representation in the literature and conceptualising the construct and the different forms it can take. The chapter thus brings together the thinking on consociationalism and civic political mobilisation, exposing their theoretical disparities. Finally, it sets out the research questions and assumptions addressed in this thesis and the analytic approach adopted to do so, demonstrating the

way in which the theories and concepts presented here will be applied and tested. This section also provides an overview of this thesis, outlining its chapter structure.

## **1.1 Democracy in Divided Societies**

In the fiercely debated field of democracy in divided societies, the very concept of what constitutes a divided society lies contested. This section outlines the ways in which these ideas have been understood in the literature and how they will be employed in this thesis.

### *Defining Divided Societies*

Lijphart distinguishes between culturally homogenous and ‘plural’ societies, classifying the latter as a society shaped by “segmental cleavages” (1977: 71-74) and later portraying a system of distinct “subsocieties” (1984: 22; 1991: 64). Plural societies, he writes, are those: “...sharply divided along religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural, ethnic or racial lines into virtually separate subsocieties with their own political parties, interest groups and media of communication” (1984: 22). Steiner points to a fuzzy distinction in Lijphart’s work, however, between plural and non-plural societies, and a conflation of cultural diversity and political division (1981: 341). Choudhry uses this diversity/division distinction as the basis for his definition:

“As a category of political and constitutional analysis a divided society is not merely a society which is ethnically, linguistically, religiously or culturally diverse... Rather what marks a divided society is that these differences are politically salient – that is, they are persistent markers of political identity and bases for political mobilisation. Ethnocultural diversity translates into political fragmentation,” he argues (2008: 4-5).

By this thinking therefore, divided societies are not simply heterogeneous, but heterogeneous in a political way. Such deep divisions are most common, some contend, when based on ‘ethnic’ characteristics (e.g. Horowitz, 1985: 50) – a term wielded broadly in the literature to refer to ascriptive group traits, such as race, religion and language, rather than those based on choice (e.g. Horowitz, 1985; Varshney, 2002; McGarry & O’Leary, 1995). Notwithstanding the problematic

nature of the term, this thesis uses the concept of a divided society to denote one which is structured along communal lines – according to ethnicity, nationality, religion, language or other shared identity - and where these differences are politically salient. The term ethnic or ethno-national is employed broadly, in line with Horowitz's usage, to confer "attributes of common origin" or ascriptive traits, beyond ethnicity (Horowitz, 1985: 50; 54).

On a more fundamental level, however, when it comes to understanding the underlying causes of such division, a "meta-conflict" tends to ensue within the literature (e.g. the conflict in Northern Ireland about what the conflict is about; see McGarry & O'Leary, 1995: 1). A broad schism runs between more positivist and more constructivist approaches to ethnic conflict, a debate also characterised as primordialist vs modernist and essentialist vs non-essentialist. On the positivist side, scholars such as Lijphart, Horowitz and McGarry and O'Leary tend to treat ethnic conflict as arising between 'groups', 'segments' or 'communities' with distinct identities, which are relatively set and given. In realist fashion, they accept such features of the conflict as the facts on the ground and the point of departure for its analysis and resolution (Lijphart, 1969; 1977; 1984; Horowitz, 1985; McGarry & O'Leary, 1995; 2009). Horowitz thus refers relatively unreflexively to "ethnic groups" in conflict (1985). McGarry and O'Leary, meanwhile, accept that the ethnic and national identities that form the basis of division in such societies may well be constructed, but contend that they are nonetheless real, proving highly stable and durable over time (2006b: 271; 2009: 70).

Constructivists are more critical of such apparent realities. Ethnic groups for Brubaker are not given facts that can be taken for granted, but constructions that arise in a particular moment in time as a product of interaction and, often, active promotion by "ethno-political entrepreneurs" (2002: 166). He condemns the tendency amongst scholars and policymakers to reify and naturalise such groups as "groupism", and rather advocates "groupness": treating groups as contingent events rather than hard facts and focusing instead on practical categories (Brubaker, 2002: 167-168; 186). Malešević likewise defines ethnicity as an "interactive social

situation” which requires mobilisation to transform it into conscious political association (2011: 67-68). Wilson, furthermore, sets out a non-essentialist approach to conflict in society. Identity, he argues, is neither fixed nor singular in nature, but complex, multiple and overlapping (2010a: 13). Like Brubaker and Malešević, he posits that ethnic identity is not inevitable but contingent, only emerging as significant in a specific time and space (Wilson, 2010a: 15). In contrast to more positivist approaches, Wilson underlines the power of individual agency, rejecting the tendency to treat society as made up of distinct and definite communities, cultures or traditions as limiting and deterministic (2010a: 22). The following section explores the ways in which these theoretical positions inform democratic prescriptions for divided societies.

### *Democratic Designs*

Such philosophical differences in how conflict, division and identity in society can be understood logically transpose into disputes over how such conflicts can be addressed. Indeed, the numerous terms used for this practice - from ‘conflict management’ to ‘conflict resolution’ to ‘conflict transformation’; from ‘governance in divided societies’ to ‘democracy in divided societies’ - betray the diversity of perspectives and their normative assumptions of what is possible and desirable. This section reviews the key democratic approaches advanced for divided societies with a particular focus on the one most pertinent to this research: consociational democracy.

In the literature on approaches to dealing with divided societies, a broad theoretical distinction arises between *integration* and *accommodation*. Under this framework, solutions based on integrating society by overcoming divisions are placed in one camp, while those based on recognising and accommodating that division in the other (McGarry et al, 2008). Within the integrationist school lie bottom-up, participatory approaches to democracy, development of civil society and policies such as integrated education and housing, while consociational power-sharing is placed firmly within accommodationist thinking. Somewhere in the middle can be found centripetalism – an approach that advocates incentivising inter-ethnic

cooperation. The crudeness of this integration-accommodation dichotomy has been noted by a number of scholars, many of whom have underlined the need to combine accommodative and integrative mechanisms (Swenden, 2013; O’Flynn, 2009). In this sense, a more appropriate conceptual structure might be an integrative-accommodative spectrum, ranging from assimilation at one extreme to partition at the other.

### *Consociational democracy*

Consociational democracy is a model for governing diverse societies based on the principle of accommodating difference. It works by recognising the principal identities or groups that exist in society and using these identities as the building blocks for the political system, by including the elite representatives of each group in a ‘power-sharing’ government. Consociation was first theorised by Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart in 1969 (1969) and developed in his seminal work *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977) with reference to the historical Western European cases of Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria. In essence, the model derives from a recognition of group identity as real and durable, and respect for such groups’ perceived will to exercise autonomy in how they are governed.

Lijphart’s basic premise is that democracy and stability are indeed possible in fragmented societies, through the mechanism of *elite cooperation* (1977: 1). In such societies, where basic consensus is absent, democracy cannot assume the model of Westminster-style majoritarian rule, the latter inevitably producing permanent majorities and minorities (Lijphart, 1977: 28; Lijphart, 1984: 22). While the politics of ‘normal’ societies can take the form of a game in which the ‘winner takes all’, and a minimum winning coalition can govern with the expectation that government and opposition will alternate over time, the politics of divided societies is too “high stakes” for such logic (Lijphart, 1969: 30; Lijphart, 1977: 26-29). To avoid vastly undemocratic and unstable outcomes in divided societies therefore, minorities require special protection and expression within the political system. The model which can provide these guarantees, Lijphart terms “consociational democracy” (Lijphart, 1969; Lijphart, 1977).

Consociation is not a specific set of institutions, according to Lijphart, but rather a model that comprises four basic conditions: a *grand coalition* government comprising all significant groups; a *mutual veto* to protect groups' vital interests; *proportionality* in group representation in public office and resources; and, *segmental autonomy* (1977: 25). Of these conditions, Lijphart stipulates grand coalition as the most important and defining one, which can assume the form of a governing coalition comprising members of the chief parties representing each of the salient groups in society in a parliamentary system or mechanisms such as sharing top positions of president, prime minister and speaker in a presidential system (1977: 31; 35). The mutual veto provides an additional guarantee that minority rights will not be over-ridden by requiring a concurrent majority of each group on certain issues (Lijphart, 1977: 37). The proportionality principle, meanwhile, ensures that each salient group is not only represented in public administration and in terms of resource allocation, but represented proportionally (Lijphart, 1977: 38). This condition assumes, to an extent, the presence of communal political parties that aggregate and represent group interests (Reilly, 2006: 815). Finally, segmental autonomy allows for an element of self-rule for the group in areas of its own exclusive concern, which can take the form of federalism when segmental cleavages and regional cleavages coincide (Lijphart, 1977: 43). Lijphart furthermore sets out a number of conditions which are conducive to the success of consociation in a society, including a balance of power in which groups are roughly equal in size; a relatively small country; the existence of some cross-cutting cleavages between the separate segments; some "overarching loyalties" amongst elites; the presence of parties which represent the main groups; and a tradition of elite accommodation (Lijphart, 1977: 55; 75; 81; 83; 99; Guelke, 2012: Chapter 7; Wolff, 2003: 31).

The most prominent proponents of consociational democracy in contemporary political science are John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. Having long advocated the model as a political solution to the Northern Ireland conflict, prior to and following its adoption through the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (McGarry & O'Leary, 1990; 2006; 2009), the scholars have significantly advanced and

refined consociational theory. In recent years they have, furthermore, theorised on its application to other conflict zones, including Iraq and Sudan (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007; O’Leary, 2012). In a symposium on consociational theory in 2009, McGarry and O’Leary present a zealous case for the model’s efficacy for Northern Ireland, on the grounds of stability, fairness and democracy. (2009: 48-83). The scholars present themselves as “revisionist consociationalists”, putting forward a number of modifications to Lijphart’s model on the basis of the empirical evidence. These include: accounting for the role of external actors in consociational settlements; the complexity of settlements and need to include provisions beyond the core institutions, such as agreement on prisoner release and police reform; the merits of the preferential electoral system of Single Transferrable Vote (STV) proportional representation over the party list system as advocated by Lijphart; and, significantly, recognition of the fact that grand coalition is not an essential condition of consociation (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006a: 47; 58; 59; 61). Other scholars such as Joanne McEvoy, Adrian Guelke, Christine Bell and Stefan Wolff have further contributed to the development of consociational theory in light of the model’s real world application (McEvoy, 2015; Guelke, 2012; Bell, 2015; Wolff, 2003). In this sense, McEvoy and Bell underline the importance of international players in consociational settlements and in the operation of consociational systems (McEvoy, 2015; Bell, 2015). Guelke, meanwhile, notes that while in the past consociationalism was a model adopted internally by states to proactively keep themselves together, it has increasingly become a tool of external intervention imposed on conflict zones as a means of holding them together, in the hope that a spirit of accommodation will develop post hoc (2012).

#### *Criticisms of consociation and alternative approaches*

Consociation has become the model of choice in international post-conflict intervention in recent years (Bell, 2015), a predominance reflected in the scholarship. Nevertheless, criticisms are levelled at the model in a number of forms and from various quarters. The primary grounds for critique are firstly, democratic and, secondly, practical, pertaining to its stability and workability. Such

criticisms arise primarily from two schools of thought in the literature: centripetalist and integrationist.

If consociation is based on the inclusion of all sizeable groups in society – however extreme - within executive and legislative institutions, *centripetalism* requires something more from those representatives. Largely defined by the work of Donald Horowitz, centripetalism is founded upon a belief that ethnic politicians will respond to *incentives* to moderate their positions and cooperate with other ethnic elites (1991; 2001; 2002b; 2014). Such cooperation is likely to result in a voluntary coalition of the moderate middle, rather than an all-inclusive ‘grand coalition’. For Horowitz, consociation is fundamentally lacking in this incentive principle, and thus unstable. To engage elites in constructive cooperation the system must appeal to their self-interest (Horowitz, 2002b). A key mechanism through which to achieve this is the electoral system. Horowitz proposes rewarding parties that appeal across ethnic lines through ‘vote pooling’ – the exchange of votes by ethnic parties that, because of the electoral system, are somewhat reliant on votes from other groups to secure victory (1985; 2002b). The system he advocates to facilitate this exchange is the Alternative Vote (AV), through which parties must gain votes outside of their own ethnic constituency to win a majority (2002b). Horowitz acknowledges however that power-sharing arrangements, in both their consociational and centripetal forms, prove exceedingly difficult to adopt, with few successfully implemented cases in evidence throughout the world (2014: 7-8). Once in place, furthermore, centripetal power-sharing systems are highly vulnerable to break-down, he argues, while consociational systems, by contrast, are prone to immobilism or “stickiness”, making transition to a more flexible system a steep challenge (2014: 12).

Another prominent believer in the power of institutional intervention to engender moderation is Benjamin Reilly. Reilly highlights three strands to his centripetalist approach: introducing electoral incentives; creating arenas for bargaining where cross-ethnic socialisation can take place; and the development of centrist, aggregative and multi-ethnic parties (2001: 10). He advances preferential voting as the system most conducive to moderate outcomes, in allowing parties and

candidates to enter into negotiation on ‘vote pooling’, supporting these claims with analysis of this model’s operation in divided societies including Fiji and pre-independence Papua New Guinea (2001). Centripetalist influences can also be deciphered in the work of Wilford and Wilson, who advocate a “carrot and stick approach” to governing Northern Ireland, through institutional incentives to conciliation, including an ‘AV Plus Top-up’ electoral system (2006: 33). Likewise, Emerson calls for a “peaceful electoral system” for Bosnia that allows voters to express more than one electoral preference, while encouraging them to transfer across ethnic lines (2001). The consociational-centripetalist debate between Lijphart and Horowitz, which has characterised the field over the last twenty years, was most notably played out in the scholars’ divergent prescriptions for a democratic South Africa (Lijphart, 1985; 1994; Horowitz, 1991).

Integrationist approaches meanwhile, attempt to overcome divisions in society through integration at the level of civil society, and integrative institutions at the political level that support this goal. Within this school, individual rights are prized over group rights with identity viewed as fluid and multiple (Aitken, 2010: 233; Howard, 2012: 159; Wilson, 2010a: 13). Integrationists, according to McGarry, O’Leary and Simeon respect differences in the private sphere but oppose their institutional recognition (2008: 42) and can be categorised into three types: republicans (or civic nationalists), liberals and socialists (2008: 46). Farry exemplifies the liberal end of this ethos, in his vision for a “shared future for Northern Ireland”. Taking a relatively endogenous view of Northern Ireland’s divisions, he urges the building of a “shared and integrated society”, through unifying social policies and reform of the rules and procedures of the power-sharing institutions, which he sees as institutionalising division (2009). Taylor has appealed for a grassroots “social transformation” of Northern Irish society through social contact and integration (2001; 2009).

On democratic grounds, consociation has been accused of violating basic principles of democracy, not least individual liberty, equality and fairness. In recognising group identities and rights in political institutions, the argument goes, the model fails to

respect individual rights and essentially deprives the individual of free choice. This amounts to a form of “ethnocracy” according to Howard, a governance model that features many of the features of liberal democracy but where representation is based on the group rather than the individual (2012: 156). Such privileging of group rights over individual rights ultimately risks exclusion: of other smaller ethnic or national minorities, of alternative identity groupings such as women and sexual minorities (Finlay, 2010; Nagle, 2016) and, most fundamentally, of those who simply do not identify with any of the institutionally-recognised groups. Bell deems power-sharing bargains “unsettling” in empowering the elites at the heart of the conflict at the expense of wider social equality and justice, including women’s rights (2015: 6). A number of scholars have theorised the marginalisation of gender inclusion amidst the privileging of ethno-national identity and issues that occurs under consociational settings (Kennedy et al, 2016; Murtagh, 2008). The ‘mantra’ that power-sharing is, by definition, bad for women has been questioned in more recent feminist scholarship, however (Bell, 2015). Far from contradiction, some scholars have in fact pointed to an overlap between the thinking of power-sharing and gender equal representation, each concerned with the democratic accommodation of difference (Byrne & McCulloch, 2012: 566; Rebouche & Fearon, 2005: 163). Byrne and McCulloch thus argue that, in principle, there is no inherent tension between liberal power-sharing and the inclusion of women in post-conflict institutions (2012: 566; 577). In an extensive analysis of peace agreements from 1990-2015, Bell found little evidence that power-sharing exerts a detrimental impact on women and rather her findings suggest that power-sharing can in fact be compatible with measures for gender equal representation. The study shows that power-sharing arrangements are often coupled with provisions for women’s political rights, such as gender quotas for elections (Bell, 2015: 23-24).

In spite of these findings, qualitative studies of women’s experiences of power-sharing suggest reason for caution. In their comparative analysis of power-sharing in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Burundi, Byrne and McCulloch find that the potential for power-sharing to support women’s political participation has not often been realised in practice, pointing to a lack of implementation in the post-conflict

period and the failure of the formal measure of gender quotas to translate into improved substantive representation and transformation of unequal gender relations (2012: 576-577). Other scholars have drawn attention to discursive marginalisation of the feminist agenda within power-sharing frameworks where ethno-nationalism forms the hegemonic discourse and central cleavage of party competition. This dynamic can lead to a subordination of issues and policies of particular concern to women (Kennedy et al, 2016; Murtagh, 2008), but also a risk of co-optation of these issues by ethno-national actors. The latter can indirectly result in a depoliticisation of the feminist agenda in divided societies, as women's groups adopt an apolitical approach to avoid such risk, as observed in Bosnia and Northern Ireland (Helms, 2007). This co-optation effect has been witnessed in Northern Ireland where Nagle notes that nationalist parties have, to an extent, claimed ownership of the equality agenda, for example on the issue of marriage equality, with the consequence that such non-communal issues are drawn into the nexus of ethno-national politics (Nagle, 2016: 855). Some research has noted, furthermore, that spaces for women's participation that open up during peace processes can quickly close down in the post-agreement period as politics returns to its conflict dynamic and ethno-national party competition commences (Murtagh, 2008; Waylen, 2014). These trends speak to a distinction between the formal institutions of power-sharing and their promises for women's inclusion and the informal practices that ensue in the post-settlement phase of politics.

Consociation is further criticised for being top-down and elite-centric, closed to the civic participation fundamental to a healthy democracy and peaceful, integrated society (Wilford, 2010: 149) – a criticism rebutted by Lijphart (1977:49). In this way Wilson deems the Northern Ireland peace process elite-dominated, claiming that it has marginalised civil society organisations that could engender bottom-up civic association (2010a: 18). Indeed, an increase in societal segregation since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement has been observed by some, with more “peace walls” between Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods present twelve years on (Wilford, 2009: 194; Wilson, 2009: 229). Consociation is presented in this perspective as essentially conservative, in its assumption that such divisions will remain a relatively fixed feature of society (Dixon, 2011), and rigid, in its lack of capacity to accommodate shifts in identity and demographics over time (Aitken, 2010: 233). By

granting institutional expression to the identities that exist at the end of a conflict – a snapshot in time, when ethnonational sentiment is at its peak - consociation institutionalises division and freezes identity, frustrating its natural evolution (Aitken, 2010: 247). In this sense, Howard notes the increasing emergence of civic identities in post-conflict societies, including Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Lebanon, but their failure to translate into political expression given the lack of space within the consociational institutions (Howard, 2012: 167). Wilson furthermore claims that Northern Irish society became more polarised in the years following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement with heightened inter-communal tensions leading to the suspension of the power-sharing institutions on four occasions between 2000 and 2007, the last period lasting almost five years (Wilson, 2009: 229). Consociation's grand coalition also departs from one of the central principles of parliamentary democracy in entailing no opposition to government, a criticism acknowledged by Lijphart (Lijphart, 1977: 48; Nagle, 2011: 167).

In a practical sense, consociation has been condemned for its inability to provide for stable, functional and efficient governance. Coming from a centripetalist perspective, with reference to Northern Ireland's power-sharing institutions, Wilford finds a lack of policy cohesion and "joined-up government" in the nationalist-unionist governing coalition following the Good Friday Agreement (2009: 193). A number of scholars also point to the likelihood of "internal discord" between inter-ethnic power-sharing partners and hence risk of political deadlock and dysfunction (Howard, 2012: 161), not least with respect to the use of the mutual veto (McEvoy, 2013: 255).

Critics have also pointed to the self-reinforcing nature of consociational institutions and the incentives they provide to elites, firstly, to organise on the basis of the institutionally-recognised groups and, secondly, to maintain this system (Aitken, 2010: 233). In this sense, some express scepticism about the claim that power-sharing regimes can be biodegradable and evolve into more majoritarian-style systems as society moves on from conflict and divisions diminish (Howard, 2012: 162).

Faced with these critiques, consociationalists typically respond with blunt realism. Consociation may exhibit several of the democratic and practical deficiencies levelled at it, McGarry and O’Leary contend, but in the context of deeply divided and war-torn societies, it is often the only just and workable political solution (2006b: 276). The scholars mount a robust defence against centripetalist and integrationist claims, with reference to the empirical evidence (2009; 2006a; 2006b). They make a moral and pragmatic case for power-sharing, arguing that, “political prudence and morality require considering the special interests, needs, and fears of groups so that they regard the state as fit for them” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007: 671). The “revisionist consociationalists” accuse their critics of a failure to appreciate the contexts in which power-sharing has been implemented and a lack of alternative solutions that would ensure the same levels of peace and stability (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006a: 45). In this sense they urge the achievements of consociation to be viewed with perspective, as in Northern Ireland where power is now shared “after the deaths of thousands” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2009: 15). This sentiment echoes that of Lijphart, who wrote in 1977, in response to the charge that consociation produces ‘negative’ rather than ‘positive’ peace, “But peaceful coexistence should not be belittled” (1977: 49).

Beyond these basic principles, scholars of consociationalism also point to a crudeness in their critics’ arguments and failure to acknowledge the different forms consociation can take. In characterising these types, one core distinction is made, between pre-determined or *corporate consociation*, and self-determined or *liberal consociation* (Lijpart, 1991; McGarry & O’Leary 2006; 2009, 2007; McCrudden & O’Leary, 2013; McCulloch, 2014a; McCulloch, 2014b; Nagle, 2011; Wolff, 2010). The differentiation is based on whether the groups in society that will share political power are set in the constitution and, as such, *given*, as in corporate consociation, or decided through the political process, as in liberal consociation (McCulloch, 2014a: 501; McCulloch, 2014b: 18). In the more recent writings of consociational scholars a clear normative preference for the liberal form of power-sharing has emerged (McCulloch, 2014a: 501; Wolff, 2010: 7). In this

sense, Lijphart distinguishes between “pre-determined” power-sharing in which the groups among whom power is shared are pre-defined in the constitution or other agreement, and “self-determined” power-sharing, in which these groups are determined through the democratic process proportional representation elections (Lijphart, 1991: 67-69). In the latter system, “segments” are, “... allowed to, and even encouraged, to emerge spontaneously – and hence to define themselves instead of being pre-defined” (Lijphart, 1991: 68). Lijphart presents self-determined power-sharing as more democratic, in terms of inclusion and liberalism, as well as more flexible and dynamic, and hence durable. Primarily, the model is less likely to produce exclusion of groups and individuals not represented in the political system, and to marginalise smaller minorities (Lijphart, 1991: 71-72). Nor does it impose any identity on individuals, and grants equal opportunities to groups other than those represented in the power-sharing system, including those that explicitly reject segmental categorisation (Lijphart, 1991: 72-73). From a practical point of view, self-determined power-sharing is also more adaptable to demographic shifts over time (Lijphart, 1991: 73).

McGarry and O’Leary likewise fly the flag for self-determined power-sharing over its pre-determined alternative, coining the terms “liberal” and “corporate” respectively to describe these forms (2007). While corporate consociation accommodates groups based on ascriptive criteria and assumes these groups to be relatively internally homogenous with fixed external boundaries, liberal consociation recognises whatever identity emerges organically as salient in society, through free and fair elections. The scholars present the model as more liberally democratic, not forcing identities on individuals and hence striking a balance between group rights and individual rights (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007: 675). Unlike corporate power-sharing, in this sense, its liberal counterpart does not privilege those identities recognised in the political system over those that are not, nor over shared, inter or trans group identities (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007: 675). Liberal power-sharing is also more flexible in adapting to shifts in demographics and identity over time, making the regime more stable and robust (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007: 691). Nagle similarly argues that in excluding groups and individuals, corporate consociations are

more likely to sow the seeds of future conflict and instability (2011: 166-167). Tonge furthermore holds consociation up as a more viable route to conflict management than enforced integration for states emerging from war, but calls for revision to the model's "essentialist formulas" (2014: 194).

In practice, corporate power-sharing features mechanisms like separate electoral rolls for communities, seats reserved for group representatives prior to elections (Nagle, 2011: 166-167). Liberal power-sharing, on the other hand, leaves the question of who will share power in the hands of voters to a greater extent (McCulloch, 2014a: 503). It may include rules such as low thresholds for representatives to be eligible for cabinet positions, selecting cabinet members based on performance in elections and indirect veto rights (McCulloch, 2014a: 503; McCulloch, 2014b: 19). Human rights provisions, for both groups and individuals, also form a strong feature of liberal consociation (Wolff, 2010).

Whilst the preference for liberal over corporate forms of power-sharing appears overwhelming in the scholarship, an examination of such real world practice presents a different picture. The majority of power-sharing systems adopted as part of conflict settlements are corporate in nature – a fact McCulloch attributes to the context in which such deals are made, at the end of a conflict, when group insecurity is high and elites are more likely to seek maximal guarantees for their group (2014a: 510). By the above criteria, corporate power-sharing systems are in place in Bosnia, Belgium, Burundi, South Tyrol and Lebanon while the regimes in Iraq, Malaysia and Afghanistan have been classified as liberal. A number of cases still exhibit a "hybrid" form of power-sharing, combining corporate and liberal elements, including Macedonia, Kenya and Switzerland, as well as Northern Ireland (McCulloch, 2014a: 505), although the latter is generally classed as lying closer to the liberal end of the spectrum (McCulloch, 2014b: 19), as further explained in Chapter Three.

Having examined the concept of a divided society and the various approaches to designing democracy in such places, this chapter now turns to the phenomenon of civic politics in divided polities and the way it has been presented theoretically.

## **1.2 Civic Mobilisation in Divided Societies**

The politics of divided societies tends to be shaped by parties organised along ethnic lines competing for power to represent ‘their’ group. Amidst this polarisation however, political organisation on other lines of affiliation has emerged and managed to seize space. This section explores the phenomenon of civic politics in divided societies, firstly giving an account of the broader dynamics of politics in fragmented places. It then turns to the rarer, but nonetheless significant, occurrence therein of civic mobilisation, in both theory and practice.

### *The Dynamics of Politics in Divided Societies*

The politics of divided societies are characterised by the political mobilisation of communal differences. The politicisation of ethnic identity, noted above, can imbue politics with an inherent conflict and zero-sum dynamic, as groups vie for control of a contested state (Wimmer, 2013: 150; Sisk, 1995: 23-25).

The most obvious feature of such politics is the “ethnic” political party. The ethnic party has been defined in the literature as one that appeals to, attempts to represent, and draws support predominantly from, one particular group or community in society, to the exclusion of others (Horowitz, 1985: 291; Chandra, 2011: 155). In deeply divided societies, such parties constitute the norm of mobilisation and mainstay of political life, as parties approximate the divide in society, forming separate party ‘blocs’ which exist relatively independently and insulated from one another. This configuration (in a multi-party context) often resembles not one, but multiple, party systems operating within a single political entity - “one polity, different party systems”, as Bardi and Mair characterise it (2008: 155) – forming virtually exclusive spheres with little to no electoral competition between them. With few floating voters, elections in these settings take the form of ethnic censuses (Horowitz, 1985: 327) and electoral outcomes become highly stable and predictable.

This form of political organisation is explained in the literature as driven entirely by rational choice. For their part, elites face overwhelming incentives to mobilise ethnic

identity and capture these ‘ready-made’ constituencies to maximise their vote and secure power (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972; Horowitz, 1985: 295; 308; Reilly, 2001: 1). And once such ethnic alignment begins it tends to take on a momentum of its own as other parties follow suit in a chain reaction (Horowitz, 1985: 318). On the part of the voter, ethnic mobilisation - support for such ethnic parties - is also portrayed as fundamentally rational. In an insecure conflict environment in which rival ethnic elites compete for dominance, voters face a security dilemma (Manning, 2004: 66). In these circumstances they will naturally be drawn to the party purporting to stand up for the interest of ‘their’ group, over that of others. Indeed, in the expectation that others will support the ethnic party of their respective group, voters face a virtual prisoner’s dilemma, feeling compelled to support their own ethnic ‘champion’ to gain comparative advantage (Horowitz, 1985: 323; Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010: 143).

The dynamic of party competition in such an ‘ethnic party system’ takes a distinctive form. In Horowitz’s theory of ethnic party competition, it assumes a centrifugal character as parties diverge from the centre, rather than coalescing in the middle ground in a centripetal dynamic, as in non-ethnic party competition. Parties operating in a divided context compete primarily within their own ethnic bloc for votes and thus enter into a game of outbidding with their intra-ethnic rivals, in an attempt to be seen as the strongest advocate for their community. Those adopting centrist or moderate positions in this context lie susceptible to the ‘sell out’ charge from the ethnic flanks. The ultimate effect is a polarisation of positions and contraction of the middle ground (Horowitz, 1985: 347; 357-358). In this environment, the ethnic cleavage forms the dominant issue dimension on which parties compete, subordinating others such as socio-economic or liberal-conservative.

Other scholars however attribute the tendency for voters in divided societies to back ethnic parties, and often the more extreme variant thereof, to “ethnic tribune voting”. Under this dynamic, as theorised by McGarry, O’Leary, Evans and Mitchell, voters place their trust in the party they see as the strongest defender of their group’s interests – a tendency particularly evident in power-sharing settings (Mitchell & Evans, 2009: 152; Mitchell et al, 2009: 402; McGarry & O’Leary, 2009: 57). In this sense, Kedar explains the phenomenon in power-sharing contexts of moderate voters voting for

“extreme parties” by “compensational voting”. In anticipation of their preferred party having to share power with another party (or parties) of a different persuasion after the election, and thus having to water down their policies, they opt for a party more extreme than their own position (Kedar, 2005: 187). Indeed, scholars have also noted the moderation of formerly ‘extreme’ parties under power-sharing and the incentive in this direction that participating in coalition government can provide (McGarry & O’Leary, 2009: 55; Mitchell et al, 2009: 417).

### *Civic Mobilisation in Theory and Practice*

Even in the most divided and ethnicised of political contexts however, ‘civic’ political consciousness and mobilisation can exist and endure. Though receiving markedly less scholarly attention than the phenomenon of ethnic mobilisation in such places, efforts to organise politically on a non-ethnic basis form a feature of many fragmented societies, finding pockets of space within the broader ethnic landscape. I use the term ‘civic’ here, aware that the civic/ethnic distinction in the study of nationalism bears strong associations and contestations, not least the problematic civic/good, ethnic/bad assumption (Hall, 2003: 28). With this caveat, I employ the term here as an imperfect one to designate matters relating to citizens generally and broader society, as opposed to the ‘ethnic’ community.

This act of ‘unity in diversity’ – the coming together of individuals of distinct group identities in a divided society for a common purpose - has been theorised in a number of ways, including transversal politics, postethnicity, civil nationalism and interculturalism. Transversal politics was conceptualised by Nira Yuval Davis as a model of feminist politics that takes account of the heterogeneity of groups and the multiplicity of identity, but at the same time maintains collective action to be possible (1997). In this sense, it steers a middle course between universalism on the one hand and relativism on the other. Transversalism is essentially a form of coalition politics which recognises that individuals have multiple, complex and overlapping identities but that they can come together for a shared purpose without the need to relinquish those group identities in which they are rooted. Yuval Davis thus describes a process of “rooting and shifting” in which one remains rooted in their own

ethnic or national identity, while shifting to meet those of distinct identities and backgrounds and unite for a common goal (1997: 88). In this sense, transversalism is not about abandoning one's communal belongings, but respecting those ties while allowing for the possibility of solidarity across these positionings on shared values and purposes. A transversal coalition's binding force is not identity but its common cause, arising from a shared material reality (Cockburn, 1998: 211). In this sense it is bounded, as Yuval Davis puts it, not by "who we are but what we want to achieve" (1997: 126). Deliberation and dialogue lie fundamental to this form of politics, through which individuals acquire knowledge, move to appreciate the positionings of others (Roulston, 2000: 41) and may come to a negotiated stance, or an agreement of no agreement.

In similar vein, David Hollinger advocates the model of postethnicity for the United States (2000). Hollinger accepts that individuals hold strong group identities and bonds, but maintains that these bonds are many and that one holds the capacity to shift weight between them at different times, under different circumstances (Hollinger, 2000: 106). Moreover, the individual has the ability to *choose* in relation to her identities and belongings. And those group memberships based on choice are no less real or binding than those based on ascriptive traits "based on blood and history" (Hollinger, 2000: 116; 119). Indeed, he argues that ties based on voluntary choice warrant more respect, not less. Hollinger writes: "A postethnic perspective denies neither history nor biology – nor the need for affiliations – but it does deny that history and biology provide a clear set of orders for the affiliations we are to make." (Hollinger, 2000: 119).

These calls echo to an extent those made by John A. Hall in his endorsement of "civil nationalism". Unlike "ethnic nationalism" or "civic nationalism", both of which 'cage' identity, civil nationalism embraces diversity of identity, but this diversity is underpinned by a basic common consensus on values (2003: 28-29). Hall argues: "But that diversity is – needs to be, should be – limited by a consensus on shared values. Difference is acceptable only so long as group identities are voluntary; that is, insofar as identities can be changed according to individual desire." (2003: 28-

29). Whilst advocating this model as desirable however, he cautions that it remains difficult to achieve and the exception in the contemporary world (Hall, 2003: 30).

Meanwhile, Robin Wilson advances “interculturalism”, as an approach that recognises diversity of identity, brought together by the common bond of citizenship (2010a: 27). Interculturalism celebrates “cultural variety”, as distinct from multiculturalism’s promotion of “a variety of cultures” (Wilson, 2010a: 23). Indeed, underlying each of these perspectives is a rejection of multi-culturalism, pluralist approaches and identity politics, as essentialising and oppressive in depriving the individual of choice. In this sense, Hollinger argues that, “Postethnicity projects a more diverse basis for diversity than a multiplicity of ethnocentrism can provide.” (2000: 107).

The practice of such ‘transversal’ politics has been observed in a number of contexts, with collectives mobilising on a non-communal and cross-communal basis on issues of common concern, including women’s rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights and other equality and social justice issues that transcend communal boundaries. In his landmark study of Hindu-Muslim relations in India, Varshney demonstrates that the bonds forged between communities through civic engagement at the local level can act as a bulwark against ethnic polarisation and violence occurring on the national level (2002: Chapter 1). Distinguishing between “everyday” forms of engagement, such as family networks, and “associational” forms such as common membership of political parties and civil society organisations, he identifies the latter as a stronger assurance against conflict, generating inter-group communication, trust and understanding (Varshney, 2002: Chapter 1). As an example, he cites how the relations developed by an NGO in Uttar Pradesh that mobilised women from Muslim and Hindu communities on the issue of ration cards helped ward off violence when ethnic tensions escalated in 1990 (Varshney, 2002: Chapter 12). Such links between groups, in this sense, provide villages, towns and cities with “an immune system that can take exogenous shocks” (Varshney, 2002: Chapter 12).

Nagle has analysed non-sectarian social movements in the consociational setting of Northern Ireland, delineating four main types: “transformationists”, who seek to forge new social identities from the bottom up; “commonists”, who mobilise at a particular point in time on a specific issue of common concern, such as housing; “pluralists” who feel their other identities are not recognised in this political environment, such as women and LGBT communities; and “cosmopolitanists” who feel that global issues such as nuclear weapons and climate change are more important than that of national self-determination (2013: 79-80). He concludes that while such mobilisation does not convert directly into political change in this context, it does contribute to integration and peace from below, by creating networks that foster civic association, trust-building and civic thinking (Nagle, 2013: 81). More recently, Nagle has examined cross-communal LGBT activism in Northern Ireland and Lebanon and the opportunities and constraints these movements encounter under these more liberal and more corporate consociational frameworks, respectively. He finds the impact to be complex: whilst Northern Ireland’s more liberal consociation offers activists greater openings in the political system than Lebanon’s highly rigid system, in this way it can also leave them more susceptible to ethnicisation and co-optation by ethno-national political interests. Nagle demonstrates this effect in the case of the co-optation by nationalist parties of the equality and human rights agenda, including LGBT rights, and the resulting politicisation and ethnicisation of civic issues such as marriage equality, as further explored in Chapters Three and Four (2016: 863; 868). Cockburn meanwhile has explored women’s cross-community activism in the conflict and post-conflict settings of Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Israel-Palestine (1998). Touquet, furthermore, charts “postethnic” mobilisation in Bosnia (2011; 2012; 2015), including a citizens’ protest in Sarajevo in 2008, which followed the murder of a boy on a city tram (2015). Her work underlines the strategic dilemmas that the heavily ethnicised political context poses for civic mobilizations, not least in framing goals and forging alliances with political actors (2015: 403).

Yet, what impact – if any - does such civic mobilisation have on the formal politics of divided societies? Nagle finds that non-sectarian social movements do not directly affect institutional politics by mobilising electoral support, but that their significance

lies on the level of civil society, in changing modes of everyday life, consciousness and public space (2013: 81;90). Nevertheless, cases of transition from informal to formal politics have been documented. Varshney documents the transition of the lower-caste movement to a political party in southern India in the 1990s (2002: Chapter 12). Touquet, furthermore, illustrates the case of the “post-ethnic” political party in Bosnia Naša Stranka which formed out of a civic NGO-led movement for political accountability in 2008 (2011). My own previous work has explored the embodiment of transversal politics within the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, a cross-community political party formed out of the grassroots women’s movement in 1996 for the purpose of influencing the talks that preceded the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and proceeding to mobilise for ten years (Murtagh, 2008). It is to the phenomenon of the civic political party that the following section turns.

### **1.3 Civic Parties in Divided Societies**

Parties in a polarised polity that attempt to reach across the divide, by definition, constitute the exception to the norm of political mobilisation. As such, these actors have attracted significantly less scholarly attention than their more dominant, ethnically based counterparts. Nevertheless, in a number of fragmented contexts civic parties have emerged and sustained with some success, and their significance documented in the scholarly field. Such parties, which attempt to draw support from and represent all significant communities in a divided society, to the exclusion of none, are broadly referred to in this thesis as ‘civic parties’. This section explores the representations of these parties in the literature with regards to their significance and role and the challenges and opportunities they encounter. Finally, it considers the ways in which these parties have been conceptualised in the field and proposes a systematic framework for their classification.

#### ***Role and Positioning***

Civic parties, in their many forms, have been conceptualised and discussed by a number of scholars in the field of democracy in divided societies. Horowitz identifies “multiethnic” and “nonethnic” parties alongside ethnic parties in ethnic party systems

(1985: 298-299), while Mitchell explores the trajectories of “liberal parties in settler-native conflicts” and other scholars examine cross-community, cross-ethnic, post-ethnic, bridge and non-nationalist parties, amongst other labels (Keil & Hulseley, 2014; Touquet, 2011).

In warranting investigation, centripetalist scholars Horowitz and Reilly hold that parties *matter* in a divided society, inextricably linked to the rise and fall of conflict (Horowitz, 1985: 291; 298; 305; Reilly, 2006: 811). By this logic, while ethnic parties play a polarising role, raising inter-group tensions and exacerbating conflict in society, their non-ethnic and multi-ethnic alternatives perform the classical aggregative function of a political party, as theorised by Giovanni Sartori (1976: 21), channelling, aggregating and expressing the public’s political demands (Reilly, 2006: 811). In this way, Reilly argues that, appealing to a broader support base, multi-ethnic parties tend to exert a more “centrist impact”, aggregating diverse interests and “de-emphasising mono-ethnic demands” (2006: 811). Reilly thus depicts civic parties as a moderating, *integrating* force, central to the project of building a more peaceful, unified society (2006). Varshney likewise, notes that integration of Hindus and Muslims emerged as a by-product of the mobilisation of lower-caste political parties in southern India in the 1990s and links their presence to a decline in communal violence in the region, in spite of ensuing conflict on the national level (2002: Chapter 12). Thomas G. Mitchell, meanwhile, characterises the central role of liberal parties in conflict settings as that of *mediator*. Examining the parts played by such parties in the “native-settler conflicts” of Northern Ireland, South Africa and Rhodesia, he argues that they have played an integral role in the settlement in each context – the credit for which they have not received. In Northern Ireland and South Africa, he claims that the Alliance Party and Democratic Party respectively, played a key role in brokering agreement between the parties to the conflict – settler and native in his terminology. They perform this function, he contends, by bringing their knowledge of the settlement options to bear on the negotiation process, on the one hand, and by acting as “bridge-builder” between the parties of each side, on the other.

Mitchell writes:

“Liberal parties are a battleground between the interests of the two sides in a native settler conflict. They attempt to mediate between the two sides and allow the settlers to live peacefully in a situation in which they are either a minority or the natives are a significant minority involved in an ethnic conflict with the majority.” (Mitchell, 2002: 2)

When it comes to civic parties then, two broad roles emerge from the literature: *integration* and *accommodation*.

### ***Constraints and Opportunities***

In discussing the phenomenon of the civic party, scholars underline its vulnerability in polarised politics and the severe challenges therein to their emergence and survival. In this sense Horowitz notes that, “In a severely divided society, a multi-ethnic party or coalition is a fragile institution.” (1985: 396). The ethnic party system and its dynamic of party competition prove deeply inhospitable to inter-ethnic parties, rendering little space for these actors or their form of politics (1985: 340; 342). He describes how, once ethnic party alignment begins, all of the incentives nudge parties towards organising along ethnic lines and away from inter-ethnic moderation, triggering a chain reaction (1985: 318; 322-323). This centrifugal process leaves any actors organising on alternate bases, such as leftist parties, crowded out and extremely vulnerable to flanking, essentially facing the choice of “adapt or die” (1985: 338). Even in this highly inimical context however, Horowitz demonstrates that multi-ethnic parties have formed and sustained in divided societies, as in the case of the Punjab Congress Party in India (1985: 427). These actors nevertheless face severe pressures and remain extremely vulnerable to schism, he argues (1985: 427). Splits and gradual evolution into ethnically-based parties are common fates for these actors, Horowitz observes (1985: 309). Indeed, the latter tendency has been analysed by Peter McLoughlin in the case of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in Northern Ireland which launched in 1970 with the aim of attracting support across society, but having ultimately failed in this endeavour, by the late 1970s stood as a de facto nationalist party (2008). Horowitz thus identifies four key factors that undermine multi-ethnic parties: firstly, the incompatibility of different ethnic groups’ claims to

power and the difficulty of reconciling these within one party; secondly, the tendency for zero-sum demands, at the expense of other groups; thirdly, the “taint” associated with working with members of rival ethnic groups; and finally, the incentives that exist for parties to organise their “clienteles” along ethnic lines before another party does so (1985: 427).

Mitchell, likewise, notes the fine line liberal parties in conflict environments must tread. Firstly, they must work with members of the different political communities, but ensure they do not becoming identified with one or other (Mitchell, 2002: 4). Secondly, in terms of electoral strategy, such parties must find a niche other than the communal one, noting the heavy concentration of the Alliance Party’s support in Northern Ireland amongst urban and middle class voters, but, at the same time not get out “too far in front” of the electorate (Mitchell, 2002: 4; 138). Mitchell also underlines the importance for these parties of acting as bridge-builder between rival political sides within peace agreements. Nevertheless, despite playing an integral role in bringing actors to the table and brokering agreement, he warns of the tendency for such parties to be side-lined within the resultant settlements, as occurred in the case of the Alliance Party in the Good Friday Agreement on issues such as the dominant one of decommissioning of weapons and the Democratic Party in South Africa, which was left in disarray when the ruling National Party invaded its political space by moving towards ending apartheid in the early 1990s (Mitchell, 2002: 61; 129). In this sense, he notes the self-sacrificing nature of these parties, quoting Willem de Klerk, former President and National Party leader F.W. de Klerk’s brother, who said of the Democratic Party: “... theirs was a lonely and thankless task, performed with great dignity.” (quoted in Mitchell, 2002: 32). Furthermore, Mitchell observes the challenge civic parties face in garnering media attention in a polarised political environment in which the action – in the form of party competition -occurs within the ethnic blocs and moderation is perceived as dull or boring and ignored (2002: 42).

Despite the scale of these challenges, Reilly holds that multi-ethnic parties *are* viable in a divided society, with the help of intervention (2006: 823). He identifies four strategies which can be adopted to support civic parties in the name of conflict management. Firstly, civic actors can be bolstered by constraining ethnic parties

through regulations surrounding party formation, registration and actions (Reilly, 2006: 816). Secondly, this can be achieved through the electoral system and party system, such as requiring multi-ethnic party lists for elections and vote pooling electoral systems which encourage cross-ethnic voting amongst voters and moderation amongst parties (2006: 819-820). Thirdly, he cites top-down approaches to party building, like increasing party discipline in parliament, for example, restricting the ability of members to switch parties once elected, as implemented in states including Malaysia and Thailand (2006: 821). Finally, Reilly lists the option of external intervention to support civic parties, for example targeting resources and support at these actors through international donor agencies and NGOs like the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) or reforms to the electoral process to incentivise moderation by international bodies such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (2006: 822-823). Fellow centripetalist Horowitz likewise notes the need for intervention to sustain multi-ethnic parties and coalitions, highlighting electoral incentives as key to this endeavour (1985: 438).

### *Conceptualising Civic Parties*

The above section reviews the purpose, relevance and experience of civic parties, as depicted in the literature. Yet what exactly constitutes a civic party? The question of how a civic party can be defined is by no means straightforward. A number of potential criteria can be used, including the composition of its support, party goals, membership, leadership, electoral mobilisation and policies. Horowitz identifies three types of party in an ethnic party system: ethnic, multi-ethnic and non-ethnic parties (1985: 298-299). He stipulates a single core criterion for this classification: electoral support (1985: 292). In this sense, ethnic parties can be defined as those that obtain their support overwhelmingly from one ethnic group and where party boundaries approximate group boundaries (1985: 291; 298). Multi-ethnic parties, on the other hand, according to Horowitz, must include and draw support from all major ethnic groups in society (1985: 299). Multi-ethnic parties thus participate on a group basis, in a pluralistic fashion. Examples of such parties include the Guyanese People's Progressive Party of the 1950s, which brought together Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese communities in Guyana and the Malaysian Alliance National Front (later renamed the National Front)

in Malaysia, a permanent coalition of three parties representing Malay, Chinese and Indian communities (Horowitz, 1985: 428; 397). (Horowitz, 1985). Non-ethnic parties, meanwhile, mobilise on an altogether alternative basis to the ethnic dimension, attempting to introduce new cleavages and turn politics in a non-ethnic direction (Horowitz, 1985: 300). Ethnic, multi-ethnic and non-ethnic parties can exist alongside one another in an ethnic party system and, indeed, intersect within the one party: parties can be multi-ethnic or non-ethnic at the national level but ethnic at the local level, as in the case of the Congress Party in India (Horowitz, 1985: 301).

Horowitz's classification of ethnic parties is developed and refined by Kanchan Chandra. By Chandra's definition, an ethnic party is one that positions itself as a champion of the particular interests of one ethnic group or set of groups to the exclusion of others, and makes this positioning central to its mobilisation strategy (2004: 3; 2011: 155). A multi-ethnic party also appeals to voters on the basis of ethnicity, but champions the interests of all ethnic groups on an equal basis, to the exclusion of none (2004: 3; 2011: 155). Non-ethnic parties hence form a residual category, defined as those that do not advance the interest of any ethnic group, or that do so but where such demands are not central to its political platform (Chandra, 2004: 3; 2011: 155). She explains:

“A *multiethnic* party is defined here as a party that also makes an appeal related to ethnicity central to its mobilizing strategy but that assumes a position of neutrality or equidistance toward all relevant categories on the salient dimension(s) of ethnicity. A party that does not include and exclude categories mainly on the basis of ethnic identity, or that addresses ethnic demands but does not make such demands central to its political platform, is *nonethnic* by this definition.” (Chandra, 2004: 3).

The core distinction here is that of *particularity* versus *universality*: ethnic parties *exclude* one or more groups, while their multi-ethnic counterparts still represent ethnic groups but they do not do so on an exclusive basis (Chandra, 2011: 157). In this sense, a party may still be defined as ethnic even if it claims to represent more than one ethnic group, and indeed many attempt to unify a number of disparate groups under broad categories such as ‘Hispanic’ in the United States. Rather, what sets an ethnic party apart from its multi-ethnic counterparts is its move to exclude one or more other ethnic groups (Chandra, 2004: 4). Under this definition, Chandra classifies as multi-ethnic

the National Front in Malaysia which mobilised in 1995 to include parties from all salient ethnic categories, including Malays, Indians and Chinese. Likewise, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in 1994 could be classed as multi-ethnic, in as much as it did not exclude any salient ethnic category in its appeal to voters (Chandra, 2004: 5). By contrast, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BJP) in India can be defined in the period 1984-98 as an ethnic party in that, despite attempting to represent over 400 castes that make up India's "Scheduled Castes", it excluded the Hindu upper castes (Chandra, 2004: 15-16; 17).

The primary criteria for classifying parties as ethnic, multi-ethnic or non-ethnic for Chandra is the *message* it sends out to the electorate; the issues it advances and policies upon which it campaigns. This message may change over time, she notes (2004: 3-4). Here Chandra departs from Horowitz, for whom the "test of an ethnic party is simply the distribution of support" (Horowitz, 1985: 291-292). In identifying an ethnic party, thus, Chandra adds a number of indicators to Horowitz's core criterion of electoral support: party name; party platform; issues advanced; implicit campaign messages; the groups that support the party; the make-up of its vote; the composition of its leadership; and the electoral arenas in which it competes (2011: 157). Chandra singles out platform and party name as key indicators in this sense (Chandra, 2011: 162).

Coakley, meanwhile, puts forward a typology of parties in an ethnic system based on the form of competitive challenge they advance. By this measure he distinguishes three types of party: ethnic outbidders, ethnic underbidders and non-ethnic counter-bidders (2008: 766). While ethnic outbidders target one ethnic group and compete on the basis of offering the best defence of that group's interests, ethnic underbidders make "an explicit effort to undermine ethnic polarisation by mobilising the possibly unstable terrain between the two blocs", with societal unity its underlying aim. Non-ethnic counter-bidders, for their part, try to mobilise support around an alternative cleavage, such as class, typically bringing together voters from across the divide (Coakley, 2008: 769-770). Touquet, furthermore, develops the concept of a "postethnic party" with reference to Naša Stranka in Bosnia. In line with Hollinger's theory of postethnicity, she defines this as a party that mobilises across

ethnic boundaries, but allows for its members and voters to retain feelings of affiliation to their national group (2011: 461).

These accounts stress *message* on the one hand – how a party defines itself and appeals to voters – and the reality of *ethnic make-up*, on the other, be it in terms of support, membership or leadership. Yet, what if these criteria stand in contradiction to one another, rather than alignment? For example, how can a party be defined if it professes to be multi-ethnic, but draws its support primarily from one ethnic group? Or, on the contrary, if it labels itself as ethnic but receives votes from beyond the group to which it attaches itself? On this complexity, Horowitz argues that support must stand as the key determinant. Therefore, a party may be multi-ethnic in rhetoric, aspiration or appearance (fielding multi-ethnic candidates), but if it fails to attract the support of all significant groups in society, it remains an ethnic party (1985: 299; 320-321). Chandra, as outlined, also contends that a party can still be considered ethnic, even if it claims to speak for more than one group. However, she places the test on the party's goals and intentions rather than its support, arguing that such a party is ethnic as long as it embodies the defining particularistic principle of excluding one or more group (2011: 156).

Informed by Chandra's approach, this thesis uses the core criteria of *party goals* as deciphered through its *message* to classify parties in an ethnic party system as 'ethnic' or 'civic'. In this sense, an ethnic party can be defined as one that appeals to and attempts to attract support from and represent one (or more) ethnic group in society, to the exclusion of one or more others, and which defines itself in these terms. A civic party, then, is one that appeals to and attempts to attract support from all voters in society - either as citizens or as members of an ethnic group – without excluding any voters on the basis of ethnic group membership, and which defines itself explicitly in these terms. A number of additional, secondary indicators, as outlined by Chandra, can also be used to support the definition of parties as ethnic or civic, such as: composition of the party's electoral support; policy or issues advocated; campaign messages (explicit and implicit); leadership; party name; and arenas of electoral contestation.

Borrowing from Chandra's distinction between ethnic and multi-ethnic parties, the key difference between a civic party and an ethnic party under this definition lies in whether it moves to *exclude* voters on the basis of ethnic identity (Chandra, 2004: 4). While an ethnic party may seek support from more than one ethnic category, it always excludes at least one ethnic group, either implicitly or explicitly. A civic party, by contrast, may also appeal to voters on the basis of ethnic identity (and to multiple groups in this way), but does not exclude any group on the basis of such identity (Chandra, 2004: 4-5).

Within the category of civic party, this thesis distinguishes two broad subtypes, based on the way in which it represents its goals for society and orientates itself towards ethnic identity: *accommodationist* parties and *integrationist* parties. Under this typology, an *accommodationist party* fulfils the basic criteria for a civic party outlined above – it appeals to and attempts to mobilise support from all voters in society without excluding any voters on the basis of ethnic identity – and does so on both an individual and pluralistic group basis, in recognition of the ethnic cleavage and in an attempt to accommodate the ethnic groups that make up society. Parties within this category may be *multi-ethnic* in positioning, resembling an alliance or coalition of separate ethnic groups, or *cross-ethnic*, making an explicit virtue of their attempt to reach across the ethnic divide as part of a broader peace and reconciliation agenda. The goals of accommodationist parties include inter-ethnic mediation, bridge-building, peace and cross-ethnic democratic representation. They tend to take a cross-community approach and advance policies that celebrate diversity and multi-culturalism and recognise the distinct segments that make up society, including separate but equal schooling. Furthermore, they often support quotas for public office and administration, as well as internally within their own parties. Indeed, accommodationist parties tend to, if not support consociational power-sharing, have relatively little ideological opposition to its principles.

An *integrationist party*, on the other hand, appeals to and attempts to draw support from all voters in society, excluding no one on the basis of ethnic group membership, but does so on an individual basis with little or no reference to ethnic group identity. Integrationist parties tend to campaign on alternative issues and cleavages and attempt

to move beyond the ethnic cleavage and towards a more ‘normal’, issue-based politics. While recognising the distinct ethnic identities in society, integrationist parties tend to view these identities as fluid and overlapping and hold that solidarity on issues of common civic interest is possible. Parties in this category may position themselves as *non-ethnic* or *post-ethnic*. Their primary goals include societal integration, ‘normalisation’ of politics and progress on broader social and economic issues such as social justice and the environment. They tend to take a ‘one community’ approach and often place an emphasis on individual human rights and equality. In this sense they tend to oppose policies which recognise communal differences, such as communal housing and education and eschew policies such as ethnic quotas, either for elected office and public administration, or internally within their own parties. Furthermore, integrationist parties tend to oppose and take greater issue with consociational power-sharing, its accommodationist principles standing in contradiction to their own. This typology is represented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 below and set out in further detail in Appendix A.

**Table 1.1: Distinction between Ethnic and Civic Parties in an Ethnic Party System**

	<b>Ethnic Party</b>	<b>Civic Party</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Appeals to and attempts to attract support from one (or more) ethnic group in society, to the exclusion of one or more others, and defines itself in these terms	Appeals to and attempts to attract support from all voters in society - either as citizens or as members of an ethnic group – without excluding any voters on the basis of ethnic group membership, and defines itself in these terms
<b>Criteria</b>	Party message	Party message
<b>Subtypes</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accommodationist</li> <li>2. Integrationist</li> </ol>

**Table 1.2: Civic Party Typology**

<b>Party Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Party Subtype</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Common Characteristics</b>
<b>Civic</b>	Appeals to and attempts to attract support from all voters in society - either as citizens or as members of an ethnic group without excluding any voters on the basis of ethnic group membership, and defines itself in these terms	<i>Accommodationist</i>	Appeals to voters on both an individual and group basis in an attempt to accommodate the ethnic groups that make up society	<p>Cross-community approach</p> <p>Recognises distinct ethno-national identities and communities in society</p> <p>Advances pluralist, multi-cultural policies</p> <p>Emphasis on individual and group rights</p> <p>Peace and reconciliation often central to platform</p> <p>Positionings include multi-ethnic and cross-ethnic</p> <p>Pro-quotas (internally and externally)</p> <p>Less likely to oppose consociational power-sharing</p>
		<i>Integrationist</i>	Appeals to voters solely on an individual basis with little or no reference to ethnic group identity	<p>One-community approach</p> <p>Seeks to move beyond ethno-national division in society and politics</p> <p>Views identity as fluid, multiple and overlapping</p>

				<p>Advances integrationist policies</p> <p>Campaigns on alternative issues</p> <p>Places emphasis on individual human rights and equality</p> <p>Positionings include non-ethnic and post-ethnic</p> <p>Anti-quotas (internally and externally)</p> <p>More likely to oppose consociational power-sharing</p>
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#### 1.4 Civic Parties in a Consociational Framework

How do these parties - which attempt to straddle, transcend and move beyond the fissures in politics and society - fit within a system designed to recognise and accommodate those very fissures? It is to this question that this chapter now turns. Having explored, in turn, the theories of consociational power-sharing and civic mobilisation in divided societies, this section looks to the intersection of these theories and of their applications in practice.

##### *Theoretical Divergences: Consociation and Civic Mobilisation*

The theories of consociationalism and those of civic mobilisation in divided societies speak in different languages. Little overlap exists, either between their normative assumptions or their mechanics. On the normative level, consociational theory takes the group as the primary unit of analysis, assuming it to be a relatively stable feature of society, the site of political mobilisation and hence the appropriate building block

of the political system. Theories of civic mobilisation, such as transversalism, alternatively, take the individual as the starting point of analysis. Individuals, in this view, are sophisticated operators with multiple, complex, overlapping and shifting identities. Moreover, individuals hold the power to choose which of these identities and groups they wish to prioritise and affiliate at a particular point in time. Identity in this perspective is a malleable and complex construct. Consociationalists rather take identity to be, if not fixed, relatively hard and durable in nature. Furthermore, they assume a hierarchy between these identities in the political context of a divided polity, with those based on ethnic or national affiliation considered more binding and salient than those based on other belongings, such as gender, sexuality or environmental views. In this sense, consociationalism can be seen to arise from a realist perspective while civic mobilisation approaches come from a more constructivist standpoint. Consociational and civic mobilisation theories also diverge in their broader visions for democracy in divided societies and their assumptions of the possible. Whilst consociationalists hold management of conflict and accommodation of difference through politics as the primary goals, civic mobilisation advocates uphold the possibility of a more 'positive' form of peace and democracy in which conflict can be creatively transformed through inter-ethnic solidarity and unity can emerge amidst diversity.

The theories further contrast when it comes to their democratic methods and practices. Consociation constitutes a patently elite-centred approach, based on the representation of the people by their respective communal leaders and the cooperation of those leaders at the centre of power. In this sense, it assumes a relatively passive, demobilised civil society that can be led from above and, indeed, requires this leadership to negotiate the conflict in society. Transversalism and other civic mobilisation approaches conversely entail an active role for civil society, advocating participatory and deliberative forms of democracy. Thus, while consociationalism can be characterised as a relatively top-down approach, civic mobilisation constitutes a more bottom-up model.

### *Consociation and Civic Parties in Practice*

Classical consociational theory has little to say about civic parties and, to be sure, apports them no meaningful role. As a model based on the proportional representation of groups in the political system via their respective elites - who are organised in political parties - the ethnic party lies fundamental to the operation of consociation. Its presence is assumed and indeed necessary for the model to function. Earlier consociational accounts paid little attention to the idea of parties organised on other lines. Indeed, some have been somewhat dismissive of such groupings as an aside to the main plot. With reference to Northern Ireland for example, McGarry has contended that, as the ‘others’ (non-unionist and non-nationalist parties) have not been “at the heart of the conflict”, it is “not surprising that they are not at the heart of the resulting pacts” (2004: 272).

Critics of consociation have argued that civic parties are disadvantaged under consociational regimes in ideational, symbolic and practical terms (Horowitz, 2002; Wilson, 2005; Finlay, 2010). It is contended that consociation allows limited space for parties that attempt to reach across the divide. By recognising only ethnic identities, consociation imposes an either/or choice in politics, the argument goes, institutionalising ethnic representation and thus denying non-ethnic actors legitimacy and a meaningful role on a par with their ethnic counterparts (Horowitz, 2002: 195; Wilson, 2005; Finlay, 2010). From the centripetalist perspective, furthermore, consociation provides no incentives for civic parties to emerge and sustain and every reward for ethnic parties to continue to dominate (Horowitz, 1985; Reilly, 2001). A small number of studies which have investigated the phenomenon of civic parties and social movements in consociational systems, in Northern Ireland (Evans & Tonge, 2001; Evans & Tonge, 2003; Leonard, 1999; Mitchell, 2015; Murtagh, 2008; Nagle, 2016; Tonge, 2005), Bosnia (Keil & Hulsey, 2014; Touquet, 2011) and Lebanon (Nagle, 2016), have observed the clear barriers that such collectives face within these institutional frameworks.

To argue that consociation is categorically bad for civic parties however, would be to oversimplify the case and, indeed, deny the reality that power-sharing often constitutes the only viable democratic option for many post-conflict states. Such a stance would

furthermore be deterministic and fail to take account of the agency civic actors possess in these contexts. Indeed, more recent consociational offerings, particularly those of liberal and revisionist persuasions, have taken greater account of the presence of civic political parties. McGarry and O’Leary contend that under liberal consociation there is no reason why these parties should not be represented alongside their ethnic counterparts within the political institutions and, indeed, were they to become the largest political force, even assume joint premiership of power-sharing government (2009: 73) Research by scholars including Bell and Byrne and McCulloch meanwhile, as outlined, suggests that consociation is not incompatible in principle with the representation of identities other than ethno-national – in this case gender - nor with broader equality agendas (Bell, 2015; Byrne & McCulloch, 2012). Nagle’s research meanwhile, reveals that non-sectarian movements Northern Ireland and Lebanon have adopted effective strategies to negotiate their consociational contexts to pursue their goals (2011; 2016). In investigating the phenomenon of civic parties in consociational frameworks therefore, this study denies neither the necessity of consociational settlement in certain contexts, nor the capacity of civic actors to creatively navigate these political environments. Having identified the disjunctures between the theories of consociational democracy and civic mobilisation and the scholarly debates regarding the place of civic parties in the practice of power-sharing, the next section demonstrates how these theoretical understandings will be applied in this research.

### ***1.5 Theory Application and Chapter Overview***

Informed by these theoretical debates, this thesis explores the experiences of civic political parties within consociational settings. This section thus sets out the broad research questions and assumptions this research pursues, the analytical approach it uses and the structure of its chapters.

#### ***Research Questions and Assumptions***

In this respect, as elaborated further in Chapter Two, this research addresses the overarching research question: *How can we understand the relatively durable presence of civic parties in divided societies?* This thesis explores how theories of consociation and civic mobilisation, as outlined above, can help answer this question.

Furthermore, this thesis addresses two more specific research questions:

- 1) *What structural opportunities and barriers do civic parties encounter within consociational political systems?*
- 2) *How do civic parties navigate these structural opportunities and barriers?*

This study is thus concerned, firstly, with identifying the openings and constraints non-communal actors meet within the consociational framework – structure - and, secondly, with how they negotiate this institutional terrain and adapt to its structures - agency. The core focus is civic political parties in divided societies, but it will also consider civic political movements as an inextricably linked phenomenon.

I did not embark on this analysis with firm hypotheses, assuming a relatively inductive approach. Nevertheless, some provisional ‘hunches’ could be made at the outset, based on the secondary evidence presented in this chapter and my own limited prior research. Firstly, with reference to the first research question regarding structure, this thesis will take as given the fact that civic parties face certain fundamental institutional *obstacles* within consociational frameworks designed to accommodate communal identities – an uncontested claim represented across most of the literature. Nevertheless, it is interested in investigating the nature of these obstacles, the precise form they take under different settings. Furthermore, this thesis speculates that civic parties may find not only barriers but *opportunities* within power-sharing systems and likewise investigates the nature of these openings. A basic starting assumption of this study, therefore, is that civic parties encounter both constraints and opportunities in consociational settings; the goal is to decipher the nature of these blockages and openings under different forms of power-sharing practice. A second basic assumption is that this opportunity structure will vary under different models of consociation. In this sense it can be posited that civic parties will encounter more and greater openings and fewer and lesser constraints in more liberal consociational settings than in more corporate consociational frameworks.

Following this logic, further provisional assumptions can be made with reference to the second research question, regarding civic actors’ agency or strategy. This thesis thus speculates that civic parties may adopt different approaches and strategies under

more liberal and more corporate power-sharing systems. Furthermore, they may adapt in different ways to these distinct institutional settings, resulting in distinct civic party subtypes (accommodationist and integrationist) emerging in different consociational contexts and at different times in their evolution. For example, we might expect that a more integrative, liberal form of power-sharing framework incentivises civic parties to adopt a more integrationist stance, while a more rigid, corporate arrangement that necessitates a ‘bridge-building’ force might lead it to assume a more accommodationist approach. These tentative conjectures are further outlined in Chapter Two.

### *Analytical Approach*

In pursuing these research questions and assumptions, this thesis takes an institutionalist approach. The analysis thus shares the new institutionalist assumption that institutions and institutional design matter in explaining political outcomes; that political institutions are not only shaped by the dynamics of the society in which they are set, but that they in turn exert an effect on that society (March & Olsen, 1984: 738). Once in place, institutions take on a life of their own and influence the development of future institutions (March & Olsen, 1984: 740; Pierson, 2004: 131). This approach takes a bounded view of change. It assumes political developments to be *path dependent* – tending towards continuity on the path embarked upon as a result of increasing returns and costs of shift – with this equilibrium punctuated by *critical junctures* – windows of opportunity in which change of course becomes possible (Mackay et al, 2010: 577; Pierson, 2000: 251). Time and sequencing are critical in this perspective, in determining the actions followed by political actors.

The institutionalist approach adopted in this thesis is a broad one, borrowing from the insights of new, historical, sociological, discursive and feminist institutionalisms. In defining institutions, it is guided by Hall and Taylor’s characterisation: “the formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity of political economy” (1996: 938). It conceives of institutions therefore as encompassing not only *formal institutions*, such as official rules, regulations and procedures, but also *informal institutions*, such as conventions, practices, norms, values and ideas. Helmke and Levitsky define such informal

institutions as, "... socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (2004: 727). They encompass the ways in which politics is 'done' in practice, from informal parliamentary conventions and modes of behaviour deemed acceptable within a given institution – embedded in its "logic of appropriateness" (March & Olsen, 1989) - to creative interpretation and implementation of formal rules. Informal rules, though more elusive to analysis than their formal counterparts, can be equally determining (Mackay et al, 2010: 580). In line with feminist institutionalism, it perceives formal and informal institutions, not as separate constructs, but as two ends of the same spectrum. Indeed, it sees the interplay between formal and informal structures as central to explaining outcomes (Mackay et al, 2010: 576). In this sense, borrowing from sociological and constructivist institutionalisms, this thesis gives weight not only to the explicit institutional structures, but also to the social and cognitive features of institutions, not least shared understandings and *frames, ideas* and *discourse* (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 947; Mackay et al, 2010: 575).

Setting out with these understandings and assumptions, this thesis investigates the effects of the institutional rules, practices, norms and discourses of consociational regimes on civic parties. In charting the experiences of these parties over time and under different institutional settings, as well as the evolution of those institutional frameworks and party systems, it makes particular use of the concepts of *path dependency, critical juncture, formal and informal institutions* and *institutional discourse*.

Having sketched the theoretical underpinnings of this research, this section has demonstrated how these theories inform the design of this study and, in turn, the ways in which the theories will be applied to test their claims.

### ***Chapter Overview***

This thesis is structured in four parts. Part I forms the conceptual and methodological framework of the thesis. This first chapter has set out the core concepts and theory that underpins this research and the parameters of the inquiry. Chapter Two thus outlines how the study has been designed, specifying the methodological approach

taken and practical methods of data collection used. Parts II and III present empirical findings from the case studies of Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina respectively. Chapter Three establishes the historical and institutional context in which civic parties in Northern Ireland have formed and operated, while Chapter Four explores the evidence that emerges from the research conducted on civic parties in Northern Ireland's consociational framework. Chapter Five, in turn, provides the institutional and historical context surrounding the emergence and mobilisation of civic parties in Bosnia, while Chapter Six analyses the findings observed with respect to civic actors in Bosnia's contemporary power-sharing system. Part IV, finally concludes this thesis by comparatively analysing the findings from Northern Ireland and Bosnia and summarising the core contribution of this research.

## **Conclusion**

The tenets of cross-cutting mobilisation in divided societies and those of consociational democracy lie in considerable tension and their respective literatures converse in only limited ways. Non-ethnic political mobilisation in divided societies occupies an ambiguous place in consociational theory. Meanwhile, theories of civic mobilisation have not taken full account of the impact of consociational institutional frameworks on such groupings. The effects of power-sharing structures on civic actors are often assumed to be entirely negative and a relatively passive role assigned to these actors, but without systematic, comparative investigation of the specific openings and barriers they face and the strategies they use to move within these structures. This chapter has demonstrated the space between these approaches. Firstly, it has outlined the ways in which divided societies have been conceptualised in the literature and the democratic approaches that have been advanced to address their conflicts, most notably consociational democracy. It has in turn introduced the theories of civic mobilisation and outlined the representations of civic parties in divided societies in the literature, putting forward a conceptual framework for these parties. The chapter thus brought together the theories of consociationalism and those of civic mobilisation and political parties, exposing their inherent contradictions. Finally, it has sketched out the ways in which this theory will be applied and tested in this research.

Having established the conceptual framework of this thesis and signalled the direction of this research, the next chapter will systematically present the design of this study and outline how it will be implemented.

## Chapter Two

### Theory to Practice: Research Design

In order to move from theoretical questions to conducting empirical research, a solid research design is fundamental. This chapter thus outlines the design and methodology of this thesis, demonstrating its underlying rationale. The first section sets out what will be studied in this research: the central research questions, assumptions and conceptualisation. The second section demonstrates how it will be studied, justifying the methodological strategy followed, including the comparative design. The third section describes the corresponding methods of data collection and analysis used to achieve its objectives. Finally, the fourth section addresses the issues that have arisen during the course of this research that could potentially compromise its value and the ways in which I have sought to acknowledge these problems and limit their impact.

#### 2.1 Research Questions, Assumptions and Concepts

This section sets out the fundamentals of this research: the questions it addresses, the propositions it posits and the way it defines key variables entailed in the inquiry.

##### *Research Questions*

The research question forms the fundamental backbone of any research, determining subsequent design choices (Blaikie, 2000: 58). King et al stipulate that this question should both have significance for “the real world”, and make a specific contribution to a particular field (1994: 15), while Lewis advises that it should be: clear; focused; researchable; relevant and useful; connected to existing research or theory; feasible; and, finally, of interest to the researcher (2003: 48). With these standards in mind, as outlined in Chapter One, the following overarching and subsidiary research questions are addressed in this study:

*Overarching Question:* How can we understand the relatively durable presence of civic parties in divided societies?

*Research Question 1:* What institutional opportunities and barriers do civic parties encounter within consociational power-sharing systems?

*Research Question 2: How do civic parties navigate these institutional opportunities and barriers?*

Under Blaikie's typology of research questions, Question 1 falls within the 'what' category, while Question 2 lies within the 'how' type (2000: 61). It seeks, firstly, to describe the institutional space open to civic parties in divided societies and under varying forms of consociation; the opportunities and barriers that they face therein. Subsequently, it is concerned with how these parties navigate such institutional landscapes. As such, there are both descriptive and prescriptive dimensions to this research. It aims, on the one hand, to describe the institutional openings and constraints encountered by civic parties as well as the strategies they use to negotiate them; and on the other, to render comparative insights into how institutional design can better facilitate such parties and how these parties can more effectively navigate those institutional environments.

Underlying this research and its approach to addressing these questions is a broadly constructivist epistemology. This perspective lies in contrast to the objectivist approach, which holds that knowledge can exist apart from the operation of human consciousness (Crotty, 1998: 8). A constructivist view thus guides the design decisions taken throughout this research.

### *Assumptions*

Hypotheses function as predicted answers to research questions, based on theory (Punch, 1998: 41). However, it is not always necessary, appropriate or, indeed, possible to commence a research project with a hypothesis, as Blaikie points out, arguing that hypotheses are only suitable for 'why' questions and not for 'what' nor 'how' queries (2000: 69). As outlined in the previous chapter, therefore, this thesis did not set out with a firm hypothesis, but rather tentative propositions based on both theory and on my own previous research. The following provisional assumptions can thus be made:

*Relating to Research Question 1:*

Civic parties encounter institutional barriers but also opportunities within the formal and informal institutions of consociational power-sharing systems

Civic parties encounter differential institutional barriers and opportunities under distinct forms of consociational power-sharing.

Civic parties encounter more and greater opportunities and fewer and lesser constraints within liberal type power-sharing frameworks than within corporate power-sharing frameworks.

*Relating to Research Question 2:*

Civic parties adopt different approaches and strategies within liberal and corporate power-sharing frameworks.

As a result of adaptation to their institutional environment, different subtypes of civic parties emerge in liberal and corporate power-sharing frameworks, and within the same power-sharing framework over time.

***Conceptualisation***

Conceptual clarity is fundamental to scientific research. As Sartori cautions, the question of “what is” must precede that of “how much” (1970: 1038). This thesis thus comprises a number of core concepts that require specification. In keeping with the constructivist approach, these concepts are not “operationalised” as such, but rather “sensitised” (Blaikie, 2000).

First and foremost, the term ‘*divided society*’ will be used to signify a polity that is segmented, to a dysfunctional extent, along a particular cleavage, be it ethnic, national, religious or other. Borrowing Choudhry’s classification, as illustrated in Chapter One, the term is wielded to connote societies that are not merely diverse, but where, “these differences are politically salient” and a source of political mobilisation (2008: 5).

Hepburn underlines the “terminological confusion” in the relevant literature surrounding regionalist and nationalist parties (2009: 481), and this is no less so in the

case of non-ethnic parties in divided societies. This thesis has thus developed a typology of parties in an ethnic party system, with reference to the literature (Chandra, 2011; Coakley, 2008; Horowitz, 1985; Touquet, 2011), set out in Chapter One. In line with this typology, outlined systematically in Appendix A, the term *civic party* is applied to a party that: appeals to and attempts to attract support from all voters in society - either as citizens or as members of an ethnic group; does not exclude any voters on the basis of ethnic group membership; and that defines itself explicitly in these terms. The criterion of *party goal*, as obtained through its message, is used to classify parties in an ethnic party system as 'ethnic' or 'civic'. A number of additional, secondary indicators, as developed by Chandra, can also be used to support the classification of parties as ethnic or civic (2011: 157), including party support; party name; leadership; policy; and arenas of electoral competition. In line with Sartori's approach, the term 'civic party' is used at a high level of abstraction, to cover a broad range of party types that share this common characteristic, including multi-ethnic parties, non-aligned parties, non-ethnic parties, non-nationalist parties and liberal parties. In accordance with the classification scheme developed here, two civic party sub-types are differentiated, with respect to how they position themselves towards ethnic identity: accommodationist and integrationist.

*Consociational power-sharing* refers in this thesis to an institutional model of governance in divided societies in which elite representatives of each politically salient community share power in government and each community is granted various guarantees within the political system. In line with Lijphart's conceptualisation, as discussed in Chapter One, a consociational power-sharing framework must exhibit four features: grand coalition government, comprising all salient groups; proportional representation of these groups in public office; mutual group vetoes; and segmental autonomy (1977: 25). Two broad types of power-sharing are furthermore distinguished: corporate power-sharing and liberal power-sharing. A *corporate power-sharing framework*, in this understanding, is one in which the groups among whom power will be shared are pre-defined in the constitution. A *liberal power-sharing framework*, alternatively, is one in which these groups are not defined, but that provides for power to be shared among the representatives of whatever groups emerge as salient in society and gain sufficient electoral support (Lijphart, 1991; McGarry &

O’Leary 2006; 2009, 2007; McCrudden & O’Leary, 2013; McCulloch, 2014a; McCulloch, 2014b; Nagle, 2011; Wolff, 2010). This corporate-liberal distinction is viewed as a spectrum rather than a mutually exclusive categorisation, with some states exhibiting a combination of corporate and liberal features (McCulloch, 2014a: 505).

The terms *institutional* opportunities and constraints are used synonymously with *structural* opportunities and constraints in this thesis. As outlined in Chapter One, institutions are defined broadly to encompass both formal and informal features, thus including not only official rules, regulations and procedures, but also the way politics is ‘done’ in practice – conventions, practices, norms, discourse, values and ideas (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 938; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004: 727). *Institutional opportunities* thus refer here to openings in the formal and informal institutional environment that allow actors to progress their goals and achieve their objectives. Such party goals include: access to elected office; ability to advance their agenda; and capacity to see their policy implemented. *Institutional barriers*, in turn, refer to constraints within the formal and informal institutional landscape that limit actors in advancing their goals and realising their objectives.

In exploring how parties ‘navigate’ this structural environment, as set out in Research Question 2, this thesis is concerned with *party strategy*. The term ‘strategy’ is wielded to denote action on the part of these parties that is designed to achieve their objectives, including those outlined above, as well as to deal with structural barriers. The core components of party strategy of interest in this thesis are: policy and positioning and electoral strategy.

This section has presented the core questions this research addresses, the propositions it puts forward and the way in which it conceptualises each of the variables inherent in these propositions. The next section will outline how this research has been designed and executed in practice.

## **2.2 Methodological Approach**

This project assumes a qualitative methodology. This decision was driven by the nature of the knowledge sought - in-depth understanding, drawn from the first-hand

experience of actors – and the constructivist approach inherent in this inquiry. This section gives an account of the comparative approach taken in this research, the time frame adopted, and the methods of data collection and data analysis used.

### *Comparison*

A comparative case study design was chosen for this project. A case study, in this sense, can be understood as an “in-depth study of a single unit... where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena” (Gerring, 2004: 341). The rationale behind this comparative approach was to introduce an element of *control* (Sartori, 1994: 15-16), to test if generalisations hold across different contexts, and minimise assumptions of exceptionalism (Peters, 1998: 8; 4). In comparing the phenomenon of interest in more than one institutional context, therefore, this project aims to abstract up, above the specifics of each case, and endeavour to contribute to the generation of theory. In this sense it follows the ‘hypothesis-generating case studies’ approach, outlined by Lijphart (1971: 692). While some research exists on the individual parties and party systems in question, relatively little work has been done on the broader concept of civic parties. A cross-comparative study thus presents an opportunity for middle-range theory building and production of knowledge of wider applicability in this under-studied field.

### *Case Selection*

To achieve these objectives, a ‘focused comparisons’ technique has been followed, in the form of a small-N study that involves comparison of an element of politics in a few cases (Pennings et al., 2006: 21). In a bid to shed light upon the concept of civic parties in divided societies featuring consociational power-sharing, therefore, two case studies were selected: Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This study assumes a holistic, multiple-case design, where the party forms the unit of analysis. It follows a symmetrical, replication logic, with the same methods executed in both cases (Yin, 1994: 42; 45; King et al., 1994: 45). While examining a number of civic parties in these cases - current and historical - this comparison will give particular focus to the largest, most prominent groupings in each case: the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland

(APNI); and Socijaldemokratske Partije Bosne i Hercegovine (Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina; SDP BiH) and Naša Stranka (Our Party) in Bosnia.

The selection of the cases of Northern Ireland and Bosnia was based, in line with Peters' advice (1998: 31), on the core independent variable of this research: consociational power-sharing. In this sense, the project assumes a 'most similar design' (Peters, 1998: 38-40; Pennings et al., 2006: 34; Przeworski & Teune, 1970: 39). The cases of Bosnia and Northern Ireland evidently differ profoundly, geographically, historically, culturally, socially, economically and politically. The experience of conflict and the nature of that conflict and division in each country vary significantly, as discussed in greater detail in Parts II and III. The history of democracy in each state differs immensely. Northern Ireland bears a long history of democracy as part of Great Britain, albeit a major democratic deficit under unionist majority rule (Nagle, 2011: 165) from the foundation of the state in 1921 up to 1972, followed by direct rule from Westminster from 1972 to 1998. Bosnia, on the other hand constitutes a post-socialist state that embarked on a transition in 1995, not only from war to peace, but also, following the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from socialism to democracy and a free-market economic model. Levels of economic development also lie far apart in each state. Despite a history of economic inequality between Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland - an argument subject to contestation, as outlined in Chapter Three - as part of the UK and of the European Union (during the period of study), the state is relatively economically developed and has received substantial financial support from the UK state, as well as the EU by way of, mainly peace-related, structural funds. BiH, on the other hand, stands as one of the poorest states in Europe, outwith the EU, and is classified by the UK Government as a developing country in receipt of overseas development aid.

With relevance to this research topic, however, both cases constitute deeply divided post-conflict societies fractured upon ethno-national (specifically ethno-religious) lines. In the midst of their fundamental contextual differences, the cases bear one particularly important similarity, for the purposes of this research: each polity features the consociational power-sharing model, implemented in the 1990s following peace agreements negotiated to end the respective conflict in each region. In line with the

'most similar' design, this case selection entails one key point of variation in the independent variable: each case entails a distinct form of power-sharing. In this sense, while Northern Ireland displays a predominantly liberal or hybrid form of power-sharing, Bosnia hosts a rigidly corporate form (McCulloch, 2014b: 18-19). The cases have been deliberately selected to include this variation, in order to provide another level of comparison and contrast: to test whether civic parties face differential openings and constraints under different forms of power-sharing and, in turn, investigate if they adopt different types of strategies and assume different forms under these varying conditions.

From this qualitative, comparative approach follow particular techniques to collect and interpret data, to which the next section turns.

### **2.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

Having explicated the rationale behind this thesis' methodological approach, this chapter now describes the specific methods used to collect and analyse the data to execute this research.

#### ***Data Collection Methods***

To capture the data to answer the research questions outlined above within these case studies, this research has used *elite interviews, focus groups and document analysis* as methods of data collection. The research explored the problem from a variety of perspectives in this sense. Firstly, through interviews, it examined the perspectives of: civic parties (at the individual level); other ethnically based parties; independent observers and analysts; and, in the case of BiH, civic activists. Through focus groups, it probed the perceptions of voters. And finally through documents, it looked at the positions of civic parties at the organisational or official level. Given the constructivist style of this research, the purpose of this multi-perspective approach was not so much to provide verification or confirmation, but to uncover insights on the research problem from these different positions. In line with this approach, I sought to derive data from these methods in a primarily interpretive way, rather than a literal way (Mason, 2002: 76).

The bulk of research in Northern Ireland was carried out during a five-week intensive fieldwork trip in April-May 2013, with a small number of shorter trips, including one in April 2012 when six exploratory interviews were conducted, one in April 2015 and one in November 2015. The entirety of the fieldwork in BiH was carried out during one stay of six months from January to July 2014. The first three months of this trip were used primarily for language training in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, as well as networking, immersion and research preparation, while the latter three months were mainly used for data collection. The language training undertaken included an intensive two-week winter school course at A1 level near the beginning of my stay, followed by a four-month duration course of two lessons per week at A2 level. This training equipped me with sufficient language skills for the practicalities of travel and logistics during my research, basic reading and also allowed me, for those interviews conducted in the local language, to introduce myself, the topic of my research and the scope of the interview at the outset of the meeting. For the actual conduct of these interviews however, I employed an interpreter to translate questions and responses.

### *Interviews*

In-depth *elite interviews* served as the chief method of this research. In line with the constructivist approach taken, the choice of elite interviews arose from an interest in individual participants' perceptions of the research problem, as well as their use of discourse to describe it (Mason, 2002: 62-63). Interviews would evidently be more effective in generating this type of data than another method which did not involve personal contact, such as questionnaires. The method was also chosen for pragmatic reasons. Considering the sensitive nature of this issue - relating to participants' parties, politics and colleagues - I judged that a one-to-one approach would be more effective than focus groups for example in eliciting open responses. Furthermore, given the lack of research on this phenomenon - and hence other available sources - interviews stood as one of few available options.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three main groups: civic parties themselves; other [ethnically based] parties; and independent observers and analysts, including representatives of civil society organisations and NGOs, the media and academics. In BiH interviews were also carried out with the additional group of civic

activists. Representatives of civic parties formed the primary group. This included frontline politicians at different levels (local, regional and national), party organisers, senior officials and activists - both serving and former. Interviews were used to ascertain how representatives felt that they were facilitated and constrained in pursuing their distinctive form of politics by the institutional structures in their operating environment, plus the strategies they employed to navigate such openings and barriers. In order to obtain meaningful data, I aimed to achieve richness, depth and nuance in interviewees' accounts (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 129-134). Starting from the point that all knowledge is situational and contextual, I tried to design situational questions that probed participants' lived experiences, as opposed to abstract questions that called upon their views or opinions (Mason, 2002: 64). In this sense, I tried to ask more 'how' than 'why' questions. Interviews proceeded with open-ended questions that allowed for discussion, as well as example-specific questions, such as: "In what ways do you campaign at elections?"; "When you are on the doorsteps or on the streets speaking to voters, how do you express to them what your party stands for?"; "Can you tell me about a time in [Parliament/Assembly] when you felt you were being held back in pushing forward your agenda?"

A fewer number of interviews were conducted with representatives from ethnic parties. The purpose of these interviews was chiefly to explore how these collectives view, and compete with, their civic counterparts. Interviews with ethno-national representatives were also used to probe if and how these parties have attempted to attract support from voters from across the divide and what openings and barriers lay in the way of this pursuit. For an alternative perspective, a smaller number of interviews in each case were also carried out with figures beyond the directly political sphere, including journalists and civil society representatives and representatives of the international community in the Bosnia case. Participants were selected through a snowballing technique, particularly in the case of BiH where the referral or networking method was more culturally prevalent and viable than direct contact via individual or organisational email.

76 interviews were carried out in total as part of this thesis. 32 interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland (22 with representatives of civic parties; five with

representatives of ethnic parties; and five with others, including civil society representatives, journalists and relevant academics). 44 interviews were carried out in BiH (20 with representatives of civic parties; nine with representatives of ethnic parties; 11 with others including civil society representatives, representatives of the international community, journalists and relevant academics; and nine with representatives of a civic protest and citizens' assembly movement which formed during the fieldwork period). The higher number of interviews conducted in BiH is accounted for in part by the additional 'expert' interviews carried out with specialists for the purpose of obtaining more contextual knowledge on this case, with which I had less experience, and in part by the additional research conducted on the 2014 civic protest movement in BiH. The majority of interviews were recorded on a dictaphone, with the agreement of the participant, and notes were also made during and after the interview. At the outset of each interview, a verbal explanation of the research project was provided to the participant, as well as of the way in which the data from these interviews would be used in the thesis and, potentially, beyond. Participants' verbal consent was obtained at this stage for their participation and how the interview data would be used in my work. Individual agreements were negotiated with each participant, with some consenting to be quoted, some agreeing to be quoted after having approved the quote via email and others agreeing for their quotes to be anonymised appropriately.

### *Focus Groups*

The thesis probed the research problem from an additional perspective through *focus groups* with voters. This technique was intended to get at voters' views of civic parties, parties and politics in general, and the thinking underlying those views. While interviews provided the elite position on this phenomenon, focus groups permitted its examination from the *voter's perspective*. The rationale for the selection of focus groups for this purpose was several-fold. First and foremost, as Morgan and Krueger identify, focus groups allow the researcher to probe complex behaviours and motivations (1993: 17). By permitting participants to question each other's views, and stimulate thought in one another, they offer an insight into why people feel and act the way they do (Bryman, 2008: 475). Given the complexity of voting behaviour and

party preference, this stood to be particularly useful, not least in the case of societies where electoral results can tell a different story to opinion polls – a paradox evident to an extent in both societies, as discussed in Parts II and III. Furthermore, on a topic of which individuals are unlikely to be highly aware, or devote a great deal of thought in their everyday lives, focus groups are an effective means of drawing out their views through interaction with others. In this sense Kitzinger observes that focus groups, “reach the parts that other methods cannot reach” (1994). Focus Groups held additional appeal for this research in offering a perspective on how people’s opinions are formed in interaction with one another, and how they collectively make sense of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2008: 476), providing an opportunity to witness this process in action on the issue of civic parties. The purpose of the focus groups then was not to glean representative, generalisable findings in relation to voters’ views, but rather to gain insight into how voters’ views are formed.

Using network sampling (Blaikie, 2010: 205), I sought to access existing networks or ‘natural groups’ via civil society community organisations and contacts on the ground. Given the politically sensitive nature of the topic under scrutiny, natural, homogenous groups who are relatively comfortable sharing their views on such matters, appeared most appropriate (Lewis, 2003: 58). In line with guidance, focus groups followed a semi-structured format using a basic schedule with myself acting as moderator (Bryman, 2008; Krueger, 1998, Morgan, 1996). Questions were open-ended and not directive, including for example: ‘In what kind of ways – if any - do you usually take part in elections?’ ‘Have the parties ever come to speak to you, at home or at work?’ and ‘Which parties would you consider to be ‘cross-community’ (in Northern Ireland) or ‘multi-ethnic’ (in BiH)? ‘What do you think it is that makes them ‘cross-community’ or ‘multi-ethnic’?’ Participant information leaflets and consent forms were distributed to participants in advance of the groups, as well as short questionnaires, including basic questions about age, gender, organisation and national identity, which had been translated to the local language in the case of BiH (See Appendix B). The nature of the research and use of the data were also explained verbally before the group proceeded. Snacks were provided during the groups, in part to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere, and in part as a small mark of gratitude to the participants for giving up their time for this research.

I conducted five focus groups in Northern Ireland. In each case participants were drawn from civil society organisations engaged in cross-community activity, including two women's organisations, two community associations and one student association. Four groups were comprised of organisation staff members while one was made up of grassroots community members. Groups ranged in size from two to five members, with a total of 18 participants taking part. Each group was composed of mixed national identity, as disclosed in a participant questionnaire. Four groups were organised through 'gatekeepers' in the organisation with whom I secured contact. One was organised after a member responded to an advertisement I had placed in the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action weekly newsletter. Three groups took place in Belfast (two with women's organisations and one with a students' association), one in the town of Enniskillen in County Fermanagh in the south west of the region (a community organisation) and one in the city of Derry/Londonderry in the north west of the region (a community organisation).

In BiH I conducted three focus groups. One group was conducted with university students in the state capital Sarajevo; one was conducted with language school students and associates in Sarajevo; and one with university students in Republika Srpska capital Banja Luka. Groups ranged in size from four to nine members, with 20 participants in total taking part. Each group was composed of a single national identity (Bosniak in the case of the two Sarajevo-based groups and Serb in the case of the Banja Luka group). Each group was organised through a contact in the organisation in question.

### *Document Analysis*

To obtain the 'official' organisational perspective, *document analysis* was also carried out. Documents analysed included election manifestos and significant party publications, as well as politicians' speeches (particularly parliamentary and conference) and key media interviews. A constructivist approach was taken in this analysis, with documents treated as a topic as opposed to a resource (Gidley, 2012: 271). In the case of Northern Ireland, I carried out archival research at the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, as well as in the Alliance Party's own archive to which I was granted access by staff at the party's headquarters. I have furthermore accessed a number of

relevant documents online, including party manifestos and policy documents. In the case of BiH, I obtained a number of state and party documents online, as well as documents by request directly from the parties concerned.

#### *Other Methods*

A limited amount of media analysis was also carried out in each case, particularly as part of a ‘case within a case’ study of the 2015 UK General Election in Northern Ireland, as outlined in Chapter Four. Some ethnographic observation also supplemented the main methods. Observations included: speeches and public appearances by party representatives; political debates (for example during election ‘hustings’ or ‘town halls’ as part of election campaigns); protests; citizens’ assembly meetings; relevant public meetings; parliamentary and constituency party offices and headquarters. Furthermore, as part of the research, statistical surveys and electoral data were examined to assess trends in political attitudes, national identity and electoral results over time.

For a breakdown of the data collection conducted in this research see Table 2.1 below and Appendix C.

**Table 2.1: Data Collection Framework**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Participants/Items Selected</b>	<b>Selection Method</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Semi-structured elite interviews	Interest in elites' first-hand accounts and discourse  Lack of other available sources on topic	Civic parties  Ethno-national parties  Independent observers, experts and civil society representatives  Civic activists	Snowballing	76
Semi-structured focus groups	Exploration of voters' views of civic parties and politics	Natural groups (civil society organisations; community groups; student groups)	Network sampling	8
Document analysis	Examination of official party perspective	Election manifestos  Party publications  Speeches  Media interviews	Archival and online searches  Access to limited party archives and files	

*Time*

This research took a retrospective approach (Blaikie, 2010: 202). The period of study was post-peace agreement in each case (1998 in Northern Ireland; 1995 in Bosnia), and the focus was primarily on the parliamentary term at the time of research (2011-2016 in Northern Ireland; 2010-2014 in Bosnia). A broadly institutionalist approach was adopted with regards to the formation of these parties and their trajectories over time (Chapters 3 and 5), followed by an in-depth examination of a snapshot in time of the operation of these parties in the contemporary period (Chapters 4 and 6).

### *Data Analysis*

Following the collection of this data, interviews and focus groups were transcribed and the data was qualitatively analysed. Analysis was firstly carried out manually. At this stage open codes were developed, which consisted of broad themes, concepts and categories that emerged from the data with reference to my research questions and assumptions. The data was later analysed and coded in more depth, and secondary codes developed, using Nvivo software. The use of Nvivo allowed me to organise my data effectively and engage in more systematic analysis. After following this process for each case, individual case reports were compiled for each (Parts II and III), followed by analysis of their comparison, to produce cross-case conclusions (Part IV) (Yin, 1994: 49).

Having outlined the methodology followed in this project, from its comparative design to the methods selected and executed to collect the required data, the following section discusses the issues and challenges encountered in this process.

#### **2.4 Issues and Limitations**

As in any research project, in spite of planning and preparation, unforeseen challenges arose during the course of this thesis which had a bearing on its execution and results. Nevertheless, to minimise any such effects on the data, I tried to remain mindful of these issues and deal with them appropriately when they emerged. This section identifies the main limitations that were met in the thesis and the ways in which I responded to the situation in each case.

#### *Contextual Variation across Cases*

The variation in my level of knowledge and access in each of the cases selected in this research posed a challenge to the execution of a balanced, symmetrical comparative study. The most obvious issue in this respect was language. Given that I did not speak BiH's official languages of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian at the outset of the project, language presented a clear limitation in the comparative design of this research. This posed an automatic challenge to conducting in-depth qualitative research in the case, not only in relation to the primary methods of data collection, but also to gaining a

sufficient understanding the social and political context of the case through the media and everyday socialisation. Furthermore, language presented a potential barrier to carrying out an equally balanced comparative study in which the research methods are replicated in each case.

To minimise the impact of language on the data, as noted above, I undertook language training in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Given the limited availability of tuition in these languages in Scotland, it did not prove viable to undertake language training prior to travel to BiH. However, I undertook intensive language training once I arrived in the country, followed by a four-month course. Whilst this only equipped me with a basic conversational level, these skills proved extremely helpful in organising the practicalities of research and everyday life. Furthermore, I felt this learning also had symbolic importance, in allowing me to introduce myself and the topic of my research to research participants, thus demonstrating a measure of respect and creating a positive rapport at the outset. In my employment of an interpreter I was also careful to establish a good working relationship before conducting any interviews. By meeting with the interpreter and engaging in clear communication prior to commencing work, a solid mutual understanding of how the interviews would be conducted was created.

Resources and availability of information also varied between the cases, with more limited access to party documents – either in English or in local languages – in Bosnia than in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, I managed to obtain some key documents directly from the parties through personal contact, as well as online.

More broadly, there was a clear disparity in the depth of my knowledge and experience of Northern Ireland and BiH. Whilst not from Northern Ireland, as a national of the Republic of Ireland, I have had a lifelong exposure to the region. Furthermore, I had studied the case as part of my Masters dissertation. Meanwhile, I had no direct lived nor research experience of BiH. Moreover, my local knowledge of Northern Ireland and its working culture, enabled me to gain relatively easy access to research participants and materials via phone, email and networks. My lack of such knowledge and experience in BiH made for greater difficulty in access and a more prolonged, less straightforward process of research planning and organisation. This was a discrepancy

of which I was consistently aware in the course of my thesis. I tried to mitigate against it through familiarising myself as much as possible with the history, contemporary culture and politics of BiH in advance of my fieldwork. I also decided to spend a longer period in BiH – three months for language training and an additional three months for data collection - in order to allow for a relative immersion during this period and to give me sufficient time to build up some local knowledge and contacts. This strategy proved fruitful as the majority of my interviews and focus groups took place in the latter stages of my fieldwork period when I had established such links on the ground.

### ***Researching in Heavily Researched Environments***

Conducting research in environments that has been heavily researched and where actors have been extensively exposed to qualitative research techniques raised further challenges. This was a particular issue given the elite nature of the interviews conducted. As Ostrander notes, the practice of elite interviewing or ‘studying up’ (1995: 133), entails a number of potential issues, such as gaining access and negotiating power differentials. Engaging with politicians who are “skilled interviewees” (Ball, 1994: 96), also presents challenges. The conflicts and ‘post-conflict’ politics of both Bosnia and Northern Ireland have been subject to intensive investigation over the last two decades, and beyond in the case of the latter, and many of the politicians who participated in this research had been involved in a number of previous studies and were thus well versed in the practice. Given this context, I was particularly mindful to avoid eliciting standard party responses in interviews, or interviewees’ pre-rehearsed analyses of the research problem, which would leave me with flat data. In this sense, as noted above, I tried to compose more imaginative questions, of the ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ variety, that veered participants away from offering their pre-formed opinions and towards recounting their lived experience. This produced richer data that entailed a large number of personal accounts and anecdotes that proved revealing of the topic under investigation. I also tried to mitigate this potential issue in participant selection, by interviewing a broad range of party representatives, to include not only high profile senior public figures who were highly experienced interviewees for media and research, such as Members of Parliament and

government ministers, but also more junior and ‘behind the scenes’ individuals, such as local councillors, party general secretaries and organisers.

### *Reflecting on my Role as Researcher*

The qualitative approach taken in this research was a close and personal one. Heeding Mason’s advice that the researcher cannot remain detached in this type of inquiry, I tried to practice “active reflexivity”, reflecting as I went along on my role as a researcher and my impact on the data (2002: 7; 22). In the post-conflict contexts of Northern Ireland and Bosnia, I found this role to be at times contentious and felt the bearing of historical and political context on my relationships with research participants.

In Northern Ireland, my position as a researcher of Irish Catholic background placed me as something of both an ‘outsider’ and an ‘insider’. Although I am not from the region and have no first-hand experience of the conflict, my national identity and religion - displayed through the markers of my name and accent - created an assumption in some participants that my political affiliations may be aligned with the nationalist community rather than the unionist community. This is an assumption of which I was aware and the impact of which I was keen to limit, both in interviews with elites and in focus groups with voters from both national backgrounds and political affiliations, and none. In this sense I was mindful of my use of language, particularly when referring to terms contested between the two communities or more commonly used by one or other, for example ‘the Good Friday Agreement’ by the nationalist community and ‘the Belfast Agreement’ by the unionist community, or ‘Derry’ versus ‘Londonderry’. In these cases, I tried to use more neutral terms, or to use both terms where appropriate.

This issue arose most palpably when I was interviewing political elites from nationalist and unionist parties. In interviews with unionist politicians I was aware of the use of certain terms which, while not offensive, I was not used to hearing in my own cultural background, such as “Roman Catholic” (as opposed to simply “Catholic”). In these instances, I had to be careful not to react to in a way that might affect the rapport and thus the data obtained. On the other side, in some interviews with nationalist

politicians there appeared to be an assumption that I shared their national identity and political goals. This was something to which I had to remain equally alive, to ensure that this did not colour the data I obtained, nor my interpretation of it. My national identity and its potential impact on the data generated, the way in which I analysed it and the findings I produced were therefore issues on which I had to critically reflect.

In the case of Bosnia, whilst I was essentially an ‘outsider’ to Bosnian society, the role of international researcher came with its own issues. As further elaborated in Chapters Five and Six, the extensive international intervention in the Bosnian war, the Dayton Peace Agreement and in the country’s post-war reconstruction has created a relationship between local political elites (and indeed the local population) and the ‘international community’ that has at times been contentious. The country remains something of an international protectorate with an internationally appointed High Representative who exercises significant political power, and a large international presence of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Whilst I was not part of this community, Bosnia’s extensive experience over the last 25 years of international actors coming to ‘solve’ the country’s ills, often with limited effect, constitutes a frame within which international researchers operate and are perceived by local people. This was a context of which I was mindful. Though there was little I could do to alter it, I tried not to unconsciously replicate any patronising or ‘othering’ attitudes and practices sometimes associated with international actors in post-war Bosnia.

Furthermore, researching the civic social movement that emerged in BiH during my fieldwork, also required consideration of how I carried out my duties as researcher. When dealing with activists in the protests and citizens’ assemblies – a very different type of participant to the political elites - and attending various protests and meetings for ethnographic purposes (as detailed in Chapter Six), I was mindful of what my appropriate role should be in this context. In this sense, I tried not to allow my potential sympathies or the relationships I developed with these individuals during the period to compromise the data I obtained. I also attempted to make the nature of my role and my interest in these issues explicit to the participants throughout the process.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Conducting social scientific research in any environment requires careful consideration of ethical issues, but doing so in a post-conflict context necessitates even more attention. Whilst the topic of my research was not directly related to the conflict, personal accounts relating to the conflict inevitably arose during and after interviews and focus group discussions. I tried to carry out these methods in a consistently sensitive manner, giving thought to the questions asked and the way they were phrased, and taking the time to listen and show empathy where these situations arose.

I was also keenly aware of the generous contribution participants made of their time and energies to help me in my research. Whilst I could not ‘pay back’ this effort, I tried to express my gratitude in any way possible and offered to share with them the findings of my completed thesis, plus any reports or articles that may arise from it. I have followed through on this commitment in the case of the two publications that have come out of this thesis to date. Furthermore, in one case in Northern Ireland, on the request of the group involved, I forwarded the transcript of the focus group to the participants.

In addition, I made a concerted effort, through clear communication, as outlined above, to ensure participants understood the purpose of the research, their role within it, and its implications. I was also careful to respect participant confidentiality and, particularly in the case of civic activists, to protect their anonymity where appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

Meaningful and worthwhile research can only be built from sound foundations. In this thesis I sought to construct a coherent and logical design in order to produce findings that could potentially contribute to this field of study. This chapter has sketched out this framework. It started by setting out the research questions and assumptions composed and the concepts defined for this research. It thus explained the qualitative, comparative methodology followed and, subsequently, the specific methods used to collect and analyse the data to put this approach into practice. Finally, this chapter has

identified the complexities that arose during this research and the ways in which these issues were dealt with.

Having introduced the theory and design underlying this research in Part I, Parts II and III demonstrate the results of its execution, presenting the empirical findings, in turn, from the cases of Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

## **Part II**

### **Northern Ireland**

## Chapter Three

### **From Bridge Builders to Civic Liberals? The Evolution of Northern Ireland's Institutions and Civic Parties**

Northern Ireland is a society undergoing a long transition from conflict to 'post-conflict' and this is a journey along which its civic parties have formed and developed. This chapter analyses the formation and progression of civic parties in Northern Ireland and the historical and institutional context in which this has occurred. The chapter explores the key openings and constraints civic parties have encountered in each period since their emergence and the ways in which they have sought to navigate the space available to them. In this way, it begins to address the research questions outlined in Part I of this thesis in historical perspective, before proceeding to address these questions in contemporary perspective in Chapter Four, through analysis of empirical data.

This chapter begins with a short historical overview of Northern Ireland and the origins of its conflict and political divisions. The second section describes its journey towards peace, while the third section outlines the dynamics of its politics post peace agreement. The fourth section introduces the main civic parties in Northern Ireland and charts their emergence and progression through the peace process and into the post-settlement period, with a primary focus on the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI).

#### **3.1 Roots of Division**

The origins of the Northern Ireland conflict, and the divisions that continue to characterise the region, lie deep within its history. This section sketches a brief account of the emergence and trajectory of this conflict.

##### *The Emergence of Northern Ireland*

Northern Ireland constitutes a contested political entity and a living product of the historic colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland. The current political unit of 1.8 million people came into existence in 1921, following the partition of British-ruled Ireland into Northern and Southern subdivisions and retention of Northern Ireland within the British state following the secession of the southern territory. The new

entity, comprising six of Ireland's 32 counties, in the province of Ulster, commanded the support of the majority Protestant population in the region, for whom it was designed to accommodate, who held a British identity and sought to preserve Ulster's union with Britain: the so-called 'unionist community'. It lacked legitimacy however amongst a significant minority Catholic population who retained an Irish identity and sought unification with the newly independent Irish state; the 'nationalist community'. This absence of consent and consensus would lead to a protracted conflict in the region and shape its politics for decades to come.

With British colonial rule first loosely established in Ireland in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the Plantation of Ulster in 1609 by Scottish and English Protestants saw large-scale displacement of Irish residents from their land, creating a Protestant majority in the northern province and sowing the seeds of cultural and religious tension between the Protestant settlers and the indigenous Catholic population (Tonge, 1998: 1). Irish nationalist rebellions in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries were defeated by the colonial powers and it was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century that, with the rise of constitutional nationalism, Home Rule would be pushed onto the political agenda. The prospect of political autonomy for Ireland elicited an intense reaction amongst the majority Protestant population in Ulster, including rioting in Belfast following the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill to the British Parliament in 1886 (Tonge, 1998: 5). Legislation to establish a federal solution was defeated by Parliament in both 1886 and 1893 and passed only in 1914, after which it was not enacted due to the outbreak of the First World War (Tonge, 2005: 10). Opposition to Home Rule nevertheless fuelled political developments in the north of the country, giving rise to Ulster unionism. 1905 thus saw the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) – a coalition of primarily the Unionist Party and the Protestant religious organisation the Orange Order - and 1913 the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), as unionism's military wing (Bew et al, 1995: 24; Tonge, 1998: 7). In 1916, revolutionary Irish nationalists mounted an armed rebellion against British rule, which gave way to the Irish War of Independence, fought from 1919 to 1921 between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British Government auxiliary forces.

Against this tumultuous backdrop, the political entity of Northern Ireland came into being in 1920. In recognition of the strength of resistance to Home Rule in Ulster, the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, superseded the Home Rule provisions of 1914, dividing the country into two devolved political units, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, each of which would be granted its own parliament with limited autonomy over its respective jurisdiction (Wilson, 2010b: 32). This legislation was itself overtaken a year later, however, when a settlement was reached between the British Government and representatives of the Irish revolutionary forces that brought the war to an end and granted limited independence to the 26 counties making up Southern Ireland. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty created the Irish Free State which was granted dominion status under the British Empire, later to become a republic in 1949. The agreement ushered in a bloody beginning for the new state with a civil war between pro-Treaty nationalists and anti-Treaty republicans waged from 1922 to 1923. The Treaty nevertheless served to cement the partition of Ireland and the existence of the political unit of Northern Ireland (Cochrane, 1999: 3).

**Image 3.1: Map of Northern Ireland**



Source: <http://stcatherinescollege.net>

### *Conditions for the Outbreak of Violence*

In its first fifty years, the new entity was one of unionist majority rule from a devolved parliament at Stormont in Belfast with the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) maintaining power from Northern Ireland's foundation in 1921 up to 1969 (Rose, 1971: 237). Hope of fair and equal treatment of the Catholic minority remaining north of the border soon evaporated, with Proportional Representation abolished in 1929 (Cochrane, 1999: 16), with the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland James Craig declaring Stormont in 1934 to be "a Protestant parliament for Protestant people" (Bew et al, 1995: 14). The political culture of this period can be characterised on the unionist side by a sense of political insecurity, or 'siege mentality', met on the nationalist side by political alienation and disenfranchisement, in the context of weak political representation from a Nationalist Party unwilling to take its seats in the Stormont Parliament and assume an official opposition role until 1965 (Cochrane, 1999: 5; Eggins, 2015: 17; McAllister, 1977: 14; McGarry & O'Leary, 1995: 155). A chronology of the formation of the main political parties in Northern Ireland is presented in Table 3.1 below. Discrimination against Catholics during this period has been documented most notably in the areas of elections, employment and housing (Eggins, 2015: 18; Tonge, 1998), though the extent to which this discrimination was systematic has been subject to debate (Cochrane, 1999: 4).

Conditions of political and socio-economic inequality between Protestants and Catholics came to a head with the onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. After a modest reform package advanced by Northern Ireland Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill's Unionist government in 1968 failed to meet Catholic demands for equal rights, a campaign of civil disobedience and non-violent direct action ensued (McAllister, 1977: 21-22; Tonge, 1998: 36). The O'Neill reforms furthermore effected a split within the UUP, triggering an election in 1968, and fuelling the rise of a more extreme brand of unionism spear-headed by the Reverend Ian Paisley who would go on to found the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in 1971. The civil rights movement was met with a heavy handed response by the Northern Irish security forces, setting the stage for the outbreak of paramilitary violence by republican and loyalist forces. As the conflict escalated, the British Government reacted by deploying army troops to

the region in 1969, a move initially welcomed by the Catholic population but which would later sow hostility between the state and the minority community (Cochrane, 1999: 25; Tonge, 2005: 14). Spiralling conflict in the shape of sectarian killings, rioting, and forced evictions elicited a disproportionate response by the local security forces, including the introduction of internment for members of paramilitary organisations, primarily the IRA, in 1971 (Cochrane, 1999: 25). Meanwhile, recruitment to republican and loyalist paramilitaries, increased apace. Amidst the unionist government's wrong-headed response to the crisis, the British Government assumed responsibility for security and ultimately for governance as the Stormont Parliament was prorogued and Direct Rule imposed from London in 1972 (Tonge, 1998: 47). The Northern Ireland conflict, referred to locally as 'The Troubles' would endure for some three decades and claim over 3,500 lives.

**Table 3.1: Political Parties in Northern Ireland**

	<b>Party Name/Translation</b>	<b>Formed</b>	<b>Ideological Profile</b>	<b>Constitutional Position</b>
<b>UUP</b>	Ulster Unionist Party	1905	Moderate unionist; conservative; centre right	Maintained union with Great Britain
<b>DUP</b>	Democratic Unionist Party	1971	Hard-line unionist; conservative	Maintained union with Great Britain
<b>SDLP</b>	Social Democratic and Labour Party	1970	Moderate nationalist; social democratic	United Ireland with the consent of the people of Northern Ireland
<b>Sinn Féin</b>	'We Ourselves'	1970 (current form) 1905 (original form)	Hard-line nationalist/republican; democratic socialist	United Ireland
<b>APNI</b>	Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	1970	Civic; nationally non-aligned; liberal	No change to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland until a majority of people consent to such a change

### *Interpretations of the Conflict*

The Northern Ireland conflict has been interpreted in a myriad of ways, a scholarly dissensus dubbed “meta-conflict” in the literature (McGarry & O’Leary, 1995: 1). Characterised varyingly as a colonial, religious, cultural, economic and ethno-national in nature, the conflict undoubtedly bears elements of each of these dimensions (Ruane & Todd, 1998: 56). While acknowledging the multi-faceted causes of the conflict, however, McGarry and O’Leary discern the most important of these as national

political identity (1995: 170). Rejecting explanations that elevate factors such as economic interests, class and religion, the scholars maintain that the region's conflict can only be understood and addressed by accepting the existence of two distinct ethno-national identities and interests in the region and the salience of this cleavage above all others in its society and politics (1995). Indeed, the interpretation of the Northern Ireland conflict as primarily *ethno-national* in nature, between two competing nationalisms, is a common one across recent scholarship in this area. Religion is thus generally deemed significant to the extent that it forms a key marker of ethno-national identity or 'communal badge' (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995: 169), though some scholars accord it more explanatory weight (e.g. Evans & Tonge, 2013; Wilson, 2010b: 219).

A further line in the debate can be drawn between internal and external explanations of the conflict. McGarry and O'Leary argue that while accounts that highlight external structures and actors are advanced by nationalists, unionists and Marxists, internal accounts are more palatable to policymakers, the media and the general public in mainland Britain and the Republic of Ireland (1995: 6-7). The latter perspective is also common amongst political moderates in Northern Ireland, whose analysis tends to focus not on British colonialism nor Irish irredentism, but the alienation and mistrust between two identity groups within Northern Ireland (Mitchell, 2015: 25). McGarry and O'Leary's own interpretation rather relies on a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors, encompassing both relations within Northern Ireland and the wider British-Irish context (1995).

Such interpretations of Northern Ireland's conflict have clear implications for how that conflict may be overcome, a subject to which this chapter now turns.

### **3.2 Path to Peace Settlement**

Northern Ireland's journey from violence to peace, which began in the 1970s and culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement in 1998, was an evolutionary process. From its beginnings, attempts to broker peace in the region took account of the existence of two communities that held distinct ethno-national identities, that were locked in a security dilemma, and to whom relations with the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were inextricably linked (Mitchell,

2015). The deal that finally emerged was a product of both rational choice and path dependency: the conclusion of more than two decades of learning and institutionalisation of policies and ideas (Little, 2009), in a context of shifting perceptions on the part of the protagonists of their strategic interests (Mitchell, 2015: 25).

### *Failed Attempts and Intermittent Progress*

The first political initiatives towards peace settlement in Northern Ireland from 1972 to 1974 – the “first peace process” as Dixon has termed it (2001: 129) - were short-lived but formative. The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 witnessed the region’s first experiment in devolved power-sharing between unionist and nationalist communities. The deal followed from the Northern Ireland Assembly Bill passed in Westminster earlier that year, which in turn was based on a UK Government White Paper entitled *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals*. The agreement comprised three strands: a power-sharing assembly and executive made up of both unionist and nationalist representatives; the principle of executive collective responsibility; and an all-Ireland dimension in the shape of a consultative assembly and council of ministers comprising the Council of Ireland (Dixon, 2001: 143; McEvoy, 2015: 47-48; Tonge, 2005: 24). The 78 member assembly would be elected under the Single Transferrable Vote form of Proportional Representation (PR-STV) and powers over law and order would be reserved to Westminster ([cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk)). Whilst inclusion of nationalists as well as unionists lay at the heart of the agreement, this was restricted to parties of the moderate middle: the unionist UUP, the newly formed nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the cross-community APNI. While Sinn Féin was active in Northern Ireland from 1970 it maintained an abstentionist policy in elections until 1982.

Yet, the moderate coalition at Stormont was to endure for only five months, collapsing in May 1974 in the face of intense opposition from hard-line unionist forces external to the process (McEvoy, 2015: 49). The Council of Ireland was to prove particularly controversial amongst unionists with the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC), a coalition of anti-agreement loyalist parties led by the DUP, brandishing the slogan, “Dublin is just a Sunningdale away” (McLoughlin, 2009). In a General Election held in February 1974, which effectively served as a referendum on power-sharing, the

UUUC won 11 out of 12 seats in Northern Ireland ([cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk)). The staging of a strike by the Ulster Workers' Council in May of that year came as the final nail in the coffin of the administration, triggering the resignation of the UUP Chief Executive and his colleagues and ultimately bringing the institutions down (McEvoy, 2015: 49). Nevertheless, its basic elements – power-sharing and an Irish dimension – had been placed on the table where they would remain and form the basis of the 1990s peace negotiations (McEvoy, 2015: 59; Tonge, 2005: 23).

After a number of ill-fated initiatives to reach a political settlement during the 1970s and '80s, a significant step forward came in 1985 with the signing of the Anglo Irish Agreement by the British and Irish governments. The Agreement enshrined the principle of *intergovernmentalism*, granting the Republic of Ireland a consultative role in the governance of Northern Ireland and an advocacy role on behalf of Catholics in the region (Mitchell, 2015: 172). At the same time, it affirmed the principle of *consent*; that change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people in the region (Dixon, 2001: 196-197; McGarry & O'Leary, 2006a: 49; Tonge, 2005: 25-26). The deal also made provisions for a devolved power-sharing assembly “on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community” (Anglo-Irish Agreement, 1985). Critically, it formally recognised the existence in the region of two national identity groups with separate rights and interests and enshrined the principle of parallel consent between these two groups (Leonard, 1999: 36). The agreement, which by-passed the Northern Irish parties, was roundly rejected by unionist politicians.

### ***The 'Peace Process'***

The 1990s witnessed the onset of the officially recognised 'peace process', primarily involving the British and Irish governments and the key parties in the region. The early part of the decade saw progress towards settlement considerably accelerate. Critical talks between the leader of the SDLP John Hume and that of its more extreme republican counterpart, Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams, came to fruition. These talks paved the way for the signing of the Downing Street Declaration by the British and Irish governments in 1993, which outlined their approach to the cessation of conflict and enshrined the principles of co-determination for the people of Ireland and consent of

Northern Ireland's population for constitutional change ([cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk); Tonge, 1998: 141). The Declaration also introduced the possibility of Sinn Féin's inclusion in peace talks in return for a cessation of violence. Paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 thus opened up the space for negotiations to ensue. In 1995 the British and Irish governments published the Framework Documents to support these negotiations and the following year elections for all-party talks were announced, to include the 'extremes' of Sinn Féin and smaller loyalist parties. Elections to the 110-member Forum for Political Dialogue and Multi-Party Peace Talks, from which negotiators would be drawn to participate in all-party peace talks (Fearon, 1999: 6) were held in 1996. These talks were chaired by US Senator George Mitchell under rules dubbed the "Mitchell principles".

The multi-party talks culminated in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement by the two governments and eight of the major parties. The constitution, which set out the democratic institutions within Northern Ireland, as well as relations between the entity and the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, marked the beginning of an era of devolved power-sharing for the region. Inclusion and British-Irish cooperation were the defining features and most notable departures from the power-sharing experiment of the 1970s, leading then SDLP leader Seamus Mallon to dub it "Sunningdale for slow learners" (McLoughlin, 2012: 177). At the heart of the Agreement was a recognition of two competing ethno-national groups with divergent aspirations and mutual security concerns and an attempt to address these fears and accommodate these goals within new political configuration (Mitchell, 2015: 26; Tonge, 2005: 35). It thus put in place a Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive based on the principles of consociational power-sharing whereby unionist and nationalist communities would be recognised and each guaranteed proportional representation in legislature, government, as well as veto powers. Special voting procedures would be put in place to ensure cross-community consensus in the institutions for which members would be required to designate as 'Nationalist', 'Unionist' or 'Other'.

The deal that emerged extended well beyond internal power-sharing arrangements however, to comprise a complex package of mechanisms, including elements of self-

government, federalism and confederalism as well as external dimensions (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006a; McGarry & O’Leary 2009; McEvoy, 2015: 64; Wolff, 2009: 120). The Agreement contained three strands; the first dealing with matters internal to Northern Ireland, namely the establishment of a power-sharing Assembly and Executive; the second dealing with Northern Ireland’s relations with the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of the North–South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and the North–South Implementation Bodies; and the third covering relations with the British Government and the establishment of ‘East-West’ institutions the British–Irish Council and the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The Agreement also comprised extensive human rights and equality provisions, including the establishment of a Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and a commitment to incorporate the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into Northern Ireland law. Other critical issues in the talks included policing reform and decommissioning of weapons, each of which was delegated to an independent commission (Mitchell, 2015: 30).

The issue of sovereignty, fundamental to the conflict, was navigated by enshrining the principle of *consent*. The Agreement acknowledged that while a substantial minority preferred of people in Northern Ireland supported a united Ireland, the majority of people in Northern Ireland wished to remain within the United Kingdom. It thus committed that Northern Ireland would remain within the United Kingdom until a majority of the people in Northern Ireland wished otherwise (Belfast Agreement; McGarry & O’Leary, 2006a: 56;). Meanwhile, as part of the Agreement Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic of Ireland’s Constitution were amended, following a referendum, to remove the state’s territorial claim to Northern Ireland and express an aspiration for the peaceful unification of the island of Ireland only through the consent of the people north and south. The settlement furthermore adopted a creative, pluralistic approach to identity, according the people of Northern Ireland the right to identify as British or Irish or both and allowing for dual citizenship (Mitchell, 2015: 31). The Agreement was ratified in simultaneous referenda in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, supported by 71 per cent of voters in the former jurisdiction and 94 per cent in the latter ([www.ark.ac.uk\(e\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(e))).

**Table 3.2: Northern Ireland Peace Agreements up to and including the Good Friday Agreement**

	<b>Sunningdale Agreement</b>	<b>Anglo Irish Agreement</b>	<b>Downing Street Declaration</b>	<b>Framework Documents</b>	<b>Good Friday Agreement</b>
<b>Year</b>	1973	1985	1993	1995	1998
<b>Key Features</b>	<p>Devolved power-sharing Assembly and Executive of moderate parties</p> <p>‘Irish Dimension’ provided through Council of Ireland</p>	<p>Intergovernmentalism</p> <p>Republic of Ireland granted a consultative role in the governance of Northern Ireland</p> <p>Principle of consent; change in the constitutional status of NI would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people in the region</p> <p>Recognised existence of two national identity groups with separate rights and interests</p>	<p>Enshrined the principles of self-determination for the people of Ireland and consent of Northern Ireland’s population for constitutional change</p> <p>Introduced possibility of Sinn Féin’s inclusion in peace talks in return for a cessation of violence</p>	<p>Shared understanding between the Governments to assist pre-agreement party negotiations</p> <p>Provisions to support peace talks</p>	<p>Devolved power-sharing Assembly and Executive inclusive of all parties with sufficient electoral support (Strand 1)</p> <p>Provisions for relations with the Republic of Ireland including through the North-South Ministerial Council (Strand 2)</p> <p>Provisions for relations with the UK including through the British Irish Council (Strand 3)</p> <p>Human rights and equality provisions</p>
<b>Parties to Agreement</b>	UK Government and moderate parties (UUP, SDLP and APNI)	UK and Irish Governments	UK and Irish Governments	UK and Irish Governments	UK and Irish Governments plus 8 NI parties: UUP, SDLP, Sinn Féin, APNI, Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC), the Ulster Democratic Party & Labour.

### *Northern Ireland's Power-Sharing Framework*

The political system established through the GFA was firmly rooted in the principles of consociation as outlined by Lijphart (1977: 25–44) and discussed in Chapter One, featuring a ‘grand coalition’ government, proportional inclusion of parties in a power-sharing executive, group vetoes and cultural autonomy for each community in certain policy areas (Horowitz 2002: 194). Northern Ireland’s form of consociation can furthermore be classed as “liberal” as opposed to “corporate” in that it is designed to accommodate any collectives that emerge as salient in society, as determined by voters in elections, rather than a pre-determined demographic quota of one national group or other (McGarry & O’Leary, 2009: 36; McCulloch, 2014a: 503). Nevertheless, it can be seen to bear some corporate elements (McCulloch, 2014a: 506). Not least of these is the requirement – in order to facilitate some of the group protection mechanisms – for Members entering the Northern Ireland Assembly to designate as ‘Nationalist’, ‘Unionist’ or ‘Other’ (Standing Orders of NI Assembly, 2013).

In the inclusive Northern Ireland Executive, parties are allocated seats proportionally using the d’Hondt method, a formula based on party strengths in the Assembly, while the First and Deputy First Ministers are nominated by the largest and second largest parties, respectively, in the largest and second largest designations – a change introduced by the St Andrews Agreement (SAA), as further explained below, prior to which the co-premiers were elected in a cross-community Assembly vote (McEvoy 2015). The December 2014 Stormont House Agreement between the main Northern Ireland parties and the British and Irish governments furthermore provided for the formation of an official opposition, made up of those parties that would be entitled to ministerial positions but choose not to avail of them (The Stormont House Agreement 2014: 11). This Agreement also introduced a requirement that, after an election, representatives of the parties entitled and intending to take up ministries meet to agree a draft Programme of Government, which is passed to the Assembly for approval once the Executive is formed (The Stormont House Agreement 2014: 11).

The proportionality principle is met through d’Hondt and the Single Transferrable Vote (PR-STV) electoral system, which facilitates proportional representation of

communities through the respective communal parties, while facilitating the possibility of cross-ethnic transfers (Reilly, 2001: 131). The system, according to McGarry and O’Leary, is also conducive to party unity, thus better enabling parties to make and keep consociational deals (2004: 14).

In line with the mutual veto principle, the Assembly features concurrent majority voting rules to ensure cross-community consent on ‘key decisions’ (McEvoy 2013: 254). Such votes – including financial votes, the election of the Speaker and changes to the Standing Orders (Wilford 2010: 139) – require either ‘parallel consent’ – an overall majority including a majority of Unionists and Nationalists – or ‘weighted majority’ – the support of 60 per cent of Members including at least 40 per cent of both blocs. And in these decisions the votes of ‘Others’ evidently do not count on an equal basis to those of Unionists and Nationalists. The rule can also be triggered following a ‘Petition of Concern’ signed by at least 30 out of 108 Members (Standing Orders of NI Assembly, 2013). In the Executive, following the SAA, where a decision cannot be achieved by consensus, any three members of the Executive can require the subsequent vote to be taken on a cross-community basis (The St Andrews Agreement 2006: Annex A). The Stormont House Agreement furthermore included a provision for changes to the Petition of Concern through a protocol agreed between the parties (The Stormont House Agreement 2014: 11).

By way of group autonomy, each community enjoys policy independence in areas such as culture and education, with separate, proportionally funded primary and secondary school systems. Segmental autonomy is observed to be the least prominent of Lijphart’s four features of consociation in Northern Ireland’s power-sharing model, however (McEvoy 2015); indeed, Coakley refutes that it forms part of the framework (2009: 124).

### *Community Designation*

In scholarly debate, the community designation rule has been the source of much controversy, notably dividing consociationalists from integrationist and centripetalist critics. On the centripetalist side, Horowitz describes how the rule makes it more rewarding to be a member of one of the two ethno-national communities (2001: 90)

and claims it “violates” the interests of unaffiliated legislators “in pursuing politics . . . on terms of equality with other political actors” (Horowitz 2002: 195). Evans and Tonge have further noted that, “In effect unionist or nationalist votes and parties are more important within the Northern Ireland Assembly, a fact that may not be lost upon voters” (2001: 115). This disparity, according to Wilford, creates “two orders of Assembly members” in relation to key decisions: “those whose votes always ‘count’ and those whose votes never do so” – an arrangement he deems undemocratic, unnecessary and ironic (2010: 139). Indeed, Tonge points out that the designation requirements constitute something of a breach of the consociational principle of self-determination, as theorised by Lijphart (Lijphart, 1977; Tonge, 2005: 85), thus representing a departure from liberal consociation. A number of scholars have advocated reform to cross-community voting procedures, whereby designation would not be required and a simple weighted majority of 60 per cent, or upwards, of MLAs sufficient to demonstrate cross-community consent (O’Flynn, 2003; Wilford, 2010; Wolff, 2003). Indeed, this proposal was considered by a 2013 Assembly and Executive Committee established to review D’Hondt, Community Designation and Provisions for Opposition. No consensus was reached to replace designation with such a mechanism, however (Review of D’Hondt, Community Designation and Provisions for Opposition 2013).

In consociational quarters, nevertheless communal designation has been defended as a necessary requirement to avoid the dominance of one community over the other. Moreover, its adverse impact on cross-community parties has also been questioned. Schwartz accepts that the rule entails a degree of unfairness, but disputes claims that the votes of ‘others’ do not count: in a weighted majority vote, others’ votes count towards the “super majority”, and are simply less decisive than those of designated nationalists and unionists (Schwartz, 2011: 351). McGarry and O’Leary likewise deny that cross-community parties in Northern Ireland are held back by institutional rules inherent in the consociational system, but rather posit that their limited electoral support reflects a lack of demand for their offerings (2009: 67). The scholars acknowledge that communal designation rules “may create a minor incentive for people to vote nationalist or unionist, as their votes would count more” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2009: 34). Nevertheless, in their submission to the 2013 Assembly review,

McCrudden, McGarry, O’Leary and Schwartz make the point that under the liberal consociational arrangements in place, the cross-community voting procedures do not prevent parties that designate as ‘Other’ from holding the offices of First or Deputy First Minister – if they were to become the largest or second largest designation – and nor do these rules negatively impact their electoral prospects. They contend that “. . . there is no compelling evidence that these [communal designation] rules have so far functioned as disincentives for voters contemplating support for the ‘others,” noting that these parties’ overall support had even increased slightly since the 1998 Agreement (McCrudden et al., 2013: 235). In this sense, McCrudden and O’Leary maintain that mechanisms which privilege ethno-national parties are not essential under liberal consociation – in which groups are fluid and based on whatever identity emerges in society, in contrast to corporate consociation in which groups are ascriptive (2013: 484).

It is to the workings of these institutions in practice that this chapter now turns.

### **3.3 The Dynamics of Post-Agreement Politics**

#### *From Turbulent Beginnings to Stabilisation*

On the societal level, relative peace has been sustained since the signing of the GFA despite some continued dissident paramilitary activity and low level violence, particularly around the issue of Orange Order parading through Catholic areas and, more recently, the flag protests. Some nineteen years on from the agreement, Northern Irish society remains marked by sectarian division with the number of ‘peace walls’ at the interface of Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods increasing during that time (Byrne et al, 2012) and only around 7 per cent of children taught in integrated schools (northernireland.foundation). Analysis of census data from 2001 showed that 91 per cent of Northern Ireland Housing Executive estates in Belfast comprised more than 80 per cent of one religious community (Shuttleworth & Lloyd, 2007: 4), though, Nolan reports a “steep decline” in single identity housing wards in Northern Ireland as a whole between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, down from 55 per cent to 37 per cent (2014: 115).

Following the election of the first Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998, the early years of devolved power-sharing were marked by instability and crisis. The institutions were suspended on four occasions between 2000 and 2007, primarily over the recurring issue of progress on decommissioning, with the longest suspension lasting from 2002-2007. As tensions escalated and relations between the core power-sharing partners UUP and SDLP faltered, McEvoy observes that elite cooperation during this period was notably poor (2015: 78). Wilford thus notes that the first phase of uninterrupted devolution delivered “chopped-up government” with the power-sharing Executive beset by an absence of cohesion and collective responsibility (2009: 193).

After a five-year suspension of the power-sharing institutions, the signing of the St Andrews Agreement (SAA) in November 2006 by the main political parties and the British and Irish Governments, saw the Assembly restored with elections held in May 2007. The deal saw Sinn Féin agree to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland (which had replaced the former Royal Ulster Constabulary following the GFA), as well as the rule of law more broadly. It also set out plans for the devolution of justice powers to Northern Ireland within two years. The SAA also introduced a number of reforms to the operation of power-sharing in the region, most notably to decision-making procedures in the Executive and to the ways in which the First Minister and Deputy First Minister are appointed. Under the changes, enshrined in a legally binding Ministerial Code, were a provision for the First and Deputy First Ministers to determine that an issue should be dealt with by the Executive as a whole, as opposed to by an individual Minister. The deal also further extended veto procedures in the Assembly and Executive. It introduced a veto within the Executive, stipulating that where consensus on a decision is not reached and goes to a vote, three Ministers can request that vote to be taken on a cross-community basis. Furthermore, it brought in an Assembly Referral for Executive Review, whereby if 30 MLAs or more do not agree with a ministerial decision, they can refer it back to the Executive for review. The SAA also altered the procedures for appointing the First and Deputy First Ministers. Rather than being elected by the Assembly, as previously, under the new rules the largest party in the largest communal designation nominates the First Minister, while the largest party in the second largest designation nominates the Deputy First Minister. The Agreement additionally introduced the rule that Members

could no longer change their designation unless they changed their party affiliation, thus precluding party representatives from re-designating. It furthermore established the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to oversee the way the Assembly and Executive function, including the transfer of justice and policing powers to Stormont.

Power-sharing thus resumed with the unlikely partners of Sinn Féin and the DUP at its helm – the traditional ‘extremes’ of each bloc - having replaced the more moderate UUP and SDLP as the largest parties. This second phase of power-sharing has seen some significant progress. Most notably, the Hillsborough Agreement of 2010 saw justice powers transferred to the Northern Ireland Executive. Owing to the contentious nature of the post between unionists and nationalists, the Alliance Party was awarded the Justice ministry through a cross-community vote, outside of the normal d’Hondt procedures based on party strengths in the Assembly.

The period following the SAA witnessed considerable volatility and crisis however as the unresolved issues of national symbols and the legacy of the conflict reared their heads. The 2011-16 Assembly, led once again by the DUP and Sinn Féin, brought the institutions close to collapse on a number of occasions. Indeed 2012 witnessed the most serious challenge to the peace process in a decade with the onset of violent protests over a decision to discontinue the flying of the Union Flag over Belfast City Council on every day of the year (Nolan, 2013). Alliance found itself at the centre of this dispute, having held the balance of power in the council in the vote for the policy of flying the flags on designated days only, and a number of its representatives became the targets of loyalist attacks. Meanwhile against a backdrop of austerity the issue of UK welfare reform arose as a major sticking point between the parties of the Executive and with the UK Government, with Sinn Féin wielding its community veto through the petition of concern to block the implementation of the changes in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the use of the veto, became increasingly controversial during this period, triggered on a number of occasions on issues not overtly relating to community protection. The block has notably been wielded on five occasions by unionist MLAs to block moves towards the legalisation of same sex marriage. While on four of these occasions the Assembly as a whole voted against the motion (and the veto was

therefore not required to defeat it), the most recent Sinn Féin-SDLP motion on the issue in November 2015 won the support of a simple majority of MLAs, but was defeated by a DUP-triggered veto (McDonald, 2015).

Contentious symbolic issues relating to flags, parading and dealing with the past, as well as financial problems were addressed in a further round of talks in 2014 which led to the signing of the Stormont House Agreement by the British and Irish governments and most of the parties on the Executive (2014). This Agreement included a number of reforms to the power-sharing institutions, most notably provisions for an official opposition at Stormont for those parties that declined to take the seats to which they are entitled in the Executive through d'Hondt. It also introduced the requirement for parties of the Executive to agree on a programme for government following an election. Just a few months after the signing of this agreement however, the institutions were plunged into further crisis, following allegations of continued links between Sinn Féin and the IRA. Another series of negotiations ensued, culminating in the signing of another agreement entitled A Fresh Start (2015). The deal delivered a financial package of £500m for the region in return for a pledge by the parties to implement welfare reform, amongst other measures.

At the time of writing the future of the Stormont institutions appear distinctly uncertain, following the UK's vote to leave the EU in a referendum in June 2016 and a political scandal involving a flawed renewable heating scheme which triggered a dispute between Executive partners Sinn Féin and the DUP. Another Assembly election appears likely, followed by a period of potential Direct Rule from Westminster in the event of continued stalemate between the current two largest parties.

**Table 3.3: Post-Settlement Peace Agreements, Northern Ireland**

	<b>St Andrews Agreement</b>	<b>Hillsborough Castle Agreement</b>	<b>Stormont House Agreement</b>	<b>A Fresh Start</b>
<b>Year</b>	2006	2010	2014	2015
<b>Key Features</b>	<p>Sinn Féin support for the Police Service of Northern Ireland</p> <p>Restoration of the Assembly</p> <p>DUP commitment to share power with Sinn Féin in the Executive</p> <p>Change to the rules for electing First and Deputy First Ministers: nominated by largest party in largest designation and largest party in second largest designation</p> <p>Extension of veto procedures</p> <p>Change to community designation rule so that an Assembly Member could not change designation in the course of an Assembly term unless they changed party</p>	<p>Devolution of policing and justice powers to the Assembly</p>	<p>Provisions for an official opposition in the Assembly</p> <p>Changes to use of the petition of concern through a protocol agreed between the parties</p> <p>Reduction in the size of the Assembly from 108 to 90 members after 2016 Assembly election</p> <p>Reduction in the number of Executive departments from 12 to nine by 2016 Assembly election</p> <p>Requirement for Programme for Government to be published by Executive following election and passed by Assembly</p> <p>Provisions for issues of flags, parades and dealing with the past</p>	<p>Agreement on welfare reform including financial package</p> <p>Devolution of corporation tax powers</p> <p>Implementation of Stormont House Agreement</p>
<b>Parties to Agreement</b>	UK and Irish Governments plus main parties	UK and Irish Governments plus main parties	UK and Irish Governments plus main parties	UK and Irish Governments plus main parties

### *Parties and Party Competition*

The “dual party system” (Mitchell, 1999: 101) remains a firm fixture of the new Northern Irish politics. Parties compete almost exclusively within their own bloc for votes and ethno-national politicians continue to dominate. Party pluralism came to replace a two-party system in the 1970s (Coakley, 2008: 772), and the post-Agreement years have seen the traditional ‘extremes’ on each side rise to prominence and overcome the moderate actors and principal architects of the settlement. On the unionist side, the dominance of the UUP was broken in 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly election when the party was overtaken by its more hard-line rival the DUP. Likewise, on the nationalist side, the SDLP was surpassed by the republican Sinn Féin in terms of vote share in the 2001 UK General Election and seats in the 2003 Assembly election.

The ‘ethnic outbidding thesis’ – a polarising dynamic whereby parties, competing primarily within their own bloc for votes, attempt to outflank their intra-ethnic rivals by adopting increasingly extreme ethno-national positions, as discussed in Chapter One (Horowitz, 1985: 307) – has been observed in Northern Ireland (Mitchell 1999: 101; Mitchell, 2015: 41; Farry, 2009: 168). Indeed, McLoughlin uses Horowitz’s outbidding thesis to explain the SDLP’s failure in its initial aim of mobilising as a cross-community party, constrained by the latent presence of a hard-line threat from the republican side (2008). Mitchell observes that the “security dilemma” continued to shape party logic in the initial post-Agreement phase with mistrust of the ethnic ‘other’ a mark of the relationship between these actors (2015: 34).

Nevertheless, a number of scholars have dismissed the outbidding interpretation of the post-agreement rise of Sinn Féin and the DUP and squeezing of the ‘middle ground’. They attributing the trend instead to ‘ethnic tribune voting’: a phenomenon whereby voters, in anticipation of sharing power with the other community, place their trust in the party they see as ‘their group’s’ strongest advocate (Garry, 2014; Mitchell & Evans, 2009: 152; Mitchell et al, 2009: 402). Rather than polarisation, these scholars explain the electoral success of the traditional ‘extremes’ by the moderation of these actors under power-sharing, in which they are incentivised by power and positions to

work together, in combination with the ‘ethnic tribune’ dynamic (Mitchell et al. 2009: 404; Mitchell, 2015: 43; Nagle & Clancy, 2012: 93).

### *Public Opinion and Electoral Behaviour*

Post-Agreement trends in voting behaviour and public opinion tell an intriguing tale, as political ascriptions, attitudes and constitutional preferences among the people of Northern Ireland moderate and converge while ethnonational parties continue to dominate. In a 2015 survey, 40 per cent of respondents identified as neither unionist nor nationalist, with 33 per cent identifying as unionist and 25 per cent as nationalist. This proportion of non-aligned respondents has increased from 30 per cent in 1999 ([www.ark.ac.uk\(a\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(a))). Meanwhile, in the 2011 Census, 29 per cent of people identified as Northern Irish first and 21 per cent as Northern Irish only, compared with 40 per cent as British only and 25 per cent as Irish only (Census 2011, 2012).

Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary contradict claims of increased polarisation since devolution and rather point to attitudinal convergence between nationalist and unionist communities on moderate policy positions, with overwhelming support for peace, prosperity and power-sharing on both sides (2009: 410). Indeed, in a 2015 survey, 51 per cent of respondents supported the status quo of devolved power-sharing within the UK compared with only 19 per cent who supported a return to direct rule and 14 per cent who wished to see Northern Ireland reunify with the rest of Ireland. Interestingly, only 32 per cent of Catholics supported a united Ireland, while 41 per cent backed the current power-sharing arrangement and 32 per cent of Protestants favoured direct rule while 61 per cent supported power-sharing ([www.ark.ac.uk\(b\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(b))). In a 2014 survey, when asked to select the most important political issue with which the Assembly must deal, 52 per cent opted for ‘Making devolution work in a way that is fair to all’ (54 per cent among Catholics; 51 per cent amongst Protestants), with far smaller proportions prioritising issues like constitutional aspirations (18 per cent), parades (10 per cent) and flags (3 per cent) ([www.ark.ac.uk\(c\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(c))).

This apparent consensus and dealignment from unionism and nationalism is not producing a corresponding political shift, however. In 1998, 100 of those elected to the 108 Member Assembly were from nationalist or unionist parties; in 2003, the figure

was 101; in 2007, 100; and in 2011, 98 ([www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)). In a 2014 survey, the proportion of Catholics who claimed to be a DUP supporter was 1 per cent while that of Protestants who declared support for Sinn Féin was zero ([www.ark.ac.uk\(d\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(d))).

Having outlined Northern Ireland's long transition from political violence to settlement and the contours of post-Agreement politics, this chapter now turns to the place of civic parties in this story.

### **3.4 'The Others': Civic Parties in Northern Ireland**

Amidst this journey from conflict to peace, civic parties have emerged and new and existing civic parties have managed to claim space. The region's first significant and largest existing civic party, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI) was born into the tumultuous space of the Troubles, while a transient but notable cross-community party, in the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, would seize an opening provided by the talks process to come into being. The post-Agreement phase furthermore saw other civic actors emerge and gain representation in the institutions. This section traces the formation and development of these parties against the shifting context sketched above.

#### ***The Formation and Early Development of the Alliance Party***

The APNI emerged as a new cross-community party in 1970 not just into, but *out of*, the ongoing struggle over civil rights, political violence and democratic reform. In response to these developments the New Ulster Movement (NUM) was formed in 1969 as a non-sectarian, anti-violence and pro-reform political pressure group. The group, which grew primarily out of the small liberal unionist party the Ulster Liberal Party (ULP), was led by Oliver Napier, a Catholic and member of the ULP and Bob Cooper, a Protestant and former Unionist Party member (Eggins, 2015: 19; McMillan, 1984: 1; Mitchell, 2002: 35). The impetus for a new liberal, non-sectarian political party quickly became apparent, for which NUM served as an effective springboard (Eggins, 2015: 28). On 21 April 1970, with co-leaders Napier and Cooper at the helm, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland was formed (Eggins, 2015: 19).

The Alliance was not the first civic party to exist in Northern Ireland, nor the first attempt at such. The Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), a sister party of the British Labour Party, founded in 1924, succeeded, particularly in the 1950s, in garnering the support of working class voters of both communities (Eggins, 2015: 26; Sanders, 2009). The party held representation in the Stormont Parliament in the late 1950s when it formed the official opposition (Eggins, 2015: 26). Rose describes the NILP as more “inter-confessional” than “non-sectarian” in nature however and susceptible to religious pressures. He cites tensions within the party on community-sensitive issues, such as the dispute that arose within the party in 1964 when NILP representatives on Belfast City Council voted against opening playgrounds on Sundays – a move viewed by Catholic members as upholding Presbyterian beliefs (Rose, 1971:232; McAllister, 1977: 19). In this sense Mitchell notes that backing for the NILP became a “virtual barometer of communal tension” (1999: 95). The polarising effect of the Troubles thus saw the party’s support fall away (Mitchell, 2002: 11), precipitating its demise in 1987. In addition, the Ulster Liberal Party (ULP), held one seat in the Stormont Parliament from 1961-69, drawing support from a liberal unionist and largely middle class base (Eggins, 2015: 28; McMillan, 1984: 1). The polarised context of the Troubles also rendered the early SDLP’s quest to mobilise as a bi-confessional party untenable. Forming in 1970 on a platform of left of centre social democratic policies and the principle of Irish reunification only by the consent of the people of Ireland, north and south (McAllister, 1977: 32), it set out with the ambition of drawing support from across the communal divide (McLoughlin, 2008). Whilst McLoughlin assesses that these cross-community aspirations were genuine, by the early 1970s it was clear that the party had failed in their realisation – a fact that saw it retreat to its Catholic base (McLoughlin, 2008: 569). Thus, whilst other parties had previously organised on a non-communal basis and garnered some cross-community support, or endeavoured to do so, the Alliance represented the first overtly cross-community party to achieve a considerable degree of success.

### *Policies and Positioning*

In the Alliance’s founding statements the primary objectives advanced are those of *peace* and *political reform* (APNI, 1970a; 1970b). These documents stress the need

for a break with the past; for a new politics for Northern Ireland based on non-sectarianism and partnership – or *alliance* - between Catholics and Protestants, all critically underpinned by democratic reform (APNI, 1970a; 1970b). The party’s Declaration of Intent thus states:

“Citizens of Northern Ireland, Our province is languishing in despair... This general sickness is reflected and exacerbated by the political system we have created, for we have stifled our community with the politics of the past, democratic in form but not in spirit. The result is a shapeless community, riven by sectarian fear” (APNI, 1970a).

The source of the region’s problems, in the party’s view, was not the constitutional reality of partition, but the division between Protestants and Catholics within Northern Ireland (Cushnahan, 1979). The solution it proposed to this problem was a “dual compromise”, providing assurances to Catholics that they would not face discrimination or domination and to Protestants that they would not be coerced into a united Ireland (Cushnahan, 1979). While the party did not enforce rules to ensure cross-community representation in its internal structures, Protestant-Catholic alliance was key to its offering, with founders highlighting the party’s broad base, with membership drawn from across Northern Ireland and from different religious and income groups (APNI, 1970b; Cushnahan, 1979). Indeed, in its first two years the party attracted to its ranks four Stormont MPs and one Westminster MP, as well as a number of councillors, from both unionist and nationalist affiliations (Eggins, 2015: 35).

Another potent theme in the party’s founding message was condemnation of the existing parties for their failure to address the problems besetting the region. Damning unionist, nationalist and Labour and Liberal parties alike, the new force declared, “a plague on all your houses” (APNI, 1970a).

“The political parties which have brought us to this present state must now be repudiated. We repudiate not only the Unionist and Nationalist parties, for whom the clock stopped in 1920, but also the Labour and Liberal parties who have palpably failed to restart that clock” (APNI, 1970a).

Moderation and denunciation of extremism on both sides forms a core theme running through the party’s founding declarations (APNI, 1970b; 1970c; 1972a). While setting the new party up in contrast to all other parties, however, the founders draw a particular

line between itself and the UUP, highlighting the Unionists' lack of commitment to reform (APNI, 1970b). At the same time, however, to stress Alliance's commitment to democratic renewal, the party pledged willingness of work with the Unionist government to deliver a programme of reform (APNI, 1970b).

The new party presented itself in explicitly pragmatic terms, as a common sense solution to the urgent problems facing the region. In this sense, it set out the four core principles: a constitutional position based on support for Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom, but with devolved government; the healing of divisions in society caused by the conflict; no strict economic policy, but rather according priority to tackling sectarianism; and upholding the rule of law (APNI, 1970a; 1970b). Rather than a party of definitive political ideology and policy, it thus set itself up as a means to an end, a vehicle for reform, a necessary 'bridge builder' between the two political traditions in Northern Ireland (Leonard, 1999) and a moderate voice of reason between the "extremists" (APNI, 1972b). A party pamphlet published in 1972, prior to its first electoral outing in 1973, embodies these themes of moderation and pragmatism. The pamphlet appeals to voters that, "Contrary to popular belief there are a great many kind and reasonable people in Northern Ireland," and many Catholics and Protestants "able to live and work happily together", many of whom have joined the Alliance (APNI, 1972b). The party's policies in this initial phase reflected this partnership ethos, calling for increased focus and investment in community relations, integrated education by consent, equality and an end to religious discrimination, amongst more general economic and social policies (APNI, 1972a).

The polarised context in which Alliance was operating presented severe challenges to such cross-community policymaking however. The party faced its first major dilemma over the issue of internment in 1971, a policy broadly opposed by the Catholic community but viewed as necessary to maintain law and order in majority Protestant opinion (Eggins, 2015: 33). Following internal debate, the party decided to oppose the policy as contravening its principles of fair and equal enforcement of the rule of law (APNI, 1972a; Eggins, 2015: 33). In its first electoral test in the local elections of 1973, the Alliance enjoyed a convincing showing, winning 13.7 per cent of the vote, second only to the UUP (Eggins, 2015: 41).

In its formation period therefore, the objectives advanced by the Alliance were change from above and below: peace and integration on the societal level, coupled with reform on the political level. Its approach to these objectives was characterised by pragmatism while its self-positioning was that of a vehicle to deliver these goals, rather than an end in itself. Research on the early Alliance supports this self-image of the party as a cross-community party which occupies the centre ground between nationalism and unionism. A survey of Alliance candidates in the 1973 Assembly and District Council elections by McAllister and Wilson, furthermore, found that their religious denominations reflected the proportions in society as a whole. (1978: 211; 213). In terms of national identity, the authors found a high degree of dual identity and overlap between Protestant and Catholic candidates (1978: 219). Indeed, they observe that the party's constitutional stance of preserving the union with Britain did not appear to harm its prospects at the time among Catholic voters, seeing it draw support from Catholics who support the union (1978: 222-223). It also emerged from the survey that these members saw their party as occupying a central space between the extremes of republicans and unionists (1978: 220). McAllister and Wilson note the Alliance's strategy in this sense of forging a strong centre that overlapped with the more moderate nationalist and unionist parties involved in the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement, in a "self-defined balancing role" (1978: 223). Their findings led McAllister and Wilson to conclude that the Alliance was a genuinely biconfessional party in its orientation, self-consciously occupying the centre ground in the polarised politics of Northern Ireland. They deemed this 'bridge builder' role to be pivotal to the party's survival, guaranteeing it space within the political system as long as the communal division remained (1978: 221).

A historical analysis of the Alliance Party by Leonard shines a further light on the mediating part the party has played in Northern Ireland politics. Indeed, Leonard identifies two philosophies that have historically co-existed within the Alliance Party: that of "bridge builders" who see the party as a necessary facilitator in the accommodation of nationalism and unionism; and that of "civic liberals" who view Alliance as a liberal, non-sectarian party in its own right and reject ethnonationalisms, far from seeking to serve as a bridge between them (Leonard, 1999: 25-30). He argues

that, in the party's self-image these roles have lain in tension (1999). In this sense, the Alliance can be seen to embody both.

Thus, under the categorisation outlined in Chapter One and Appendix A, the Alliance could be observed in its early years to approximate an accommodationist civic party - in the sense that it made an explicit virtue of its attempt to represent all main ethnic groups in society, as part of a broader peace and reconciliation agenda. However, in line with Leonard's analysis it appears to represent both accommodationist and integrationist positions.

### *Constitutional Position*

The Alliance Party's constitutional position, established at its foundation, based on the principle of no change without the consent of the majority of the population - and therefore the status quo - has been interpreted in political discourse as unionism by default (Leonard, 1999; Mitchell, 2015). As part of their analysis of the first ever membership survey of the party, discussed below, Evans and Tonge reflect on the tensions that this stance evokes for an avowedly non-aligned political party (2001: 105; 2003: 48). The scholars describe Alliance's "innate unionism" as "incidental", but nevertheless argue that the position has somewhat compromised its goal of being a party that can reach across the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 106). In light of this perception of the party as moderate unionist, as well as its over-representation among middle class voters, further discussed below, its appeal for working class Catholic voters has been limited (2001: 106). Evans and Tonge furthermore point to a lack of coherence in this constitutional position, as the party laments Northern Ireland's sectarian division and seeks to overcome it and shows sympathy for Catholic deprivation, yet offers little explanation or acknowledgement of how such divisions and inequality arose historically (2001: 108-109). In this sense they portray the Alliance's constitutional stance as superficial and marked by avoidance, with a "don't mention the constitutional question" feel to some of its literature (2001: 109). In similar vein, Leonard depicts the Alliance's constitutional position as ambiguous and inadequate in the context of Northern Ireland where separate national identities and constitutional aspirations are a fact of political life (Leonard, 1999: 67). In its apparent belief that "effective history dates from the

foundation of Northern Ireland in 1920”, the party fails to in any way address nationalist grievances, Leonard argues. In this context it should come as little surprise that the party is viewed by some as moderate unionist, if not a Unionist party, he contends (1999: 26).

### ***Bridge Building***

#### *Sunningdale and Beyond*

The APNI played a significant role in Northern Ireland’s first experience of power-sharing and the negotiations that surrounded it. As advocates of devolved governance from its inception, the Alliance participated keenly in the talks that paved the way for the new institutions, including those at Sunningdale that comprised the UK and Irish prime ministers as well as the three local parties. Indeed, Leonard observes that the party held delivery of power-sharing as a higher priority than the survival of the party itself (1999: 33). Eggins claims the party exerted a significant influence on the thinking of then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland William Whitelaw, most notably around the adoption of STV for elections to the new assembly (2015: 34). Mitchell, furthermore, argues that the Alliance played a brokering role in these negotiations, proposing the idea of including non-voting ministers in the Executive to resolve an impasse between the UUP and SDLP over the number of ministries each party would hold, as the former had fewer Assembly members than the latter but represented a larger community (2002: 91). When it came to the issue of the Council of Ireland however, the party harboured misgivings, with Napier warning that the SDLP’s proposal was overly ambitious (Eggins, 2015: 54).

In the elections to the Assembly that took place in June 1973, APNI won 9.2 per cent of the vote, returning eight members. The party fought the election on a platform of unity between Protestants and Catholics and support for the White Paper proposals for power-sharing (APNI, 1972; APNI, 1973; Cushnahan, 1979). Indeed, in a symbolic feat, it succeeded in securing a seat for its leader Oliver Napier, a Catholic, in the largely Protestant constituency of East Belfast and one for his deputy Bob Cooper, a Protestant, in the largely Catholic West Belfast (Cushnahan, 1979). The Executive, which took office on 1 January 1974, comprised 11 Members with an additional four

non-executive office holders and UUP taking the position of Chief Executive and the SDLP that of Deputy ([cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk)). The APNI held two ministries: one full Executive member and one non-voting office holder (Cushnahan, 1979). Following the collapse of these institutions and the polarisation and impasse that ensued in the subsequent period, Alliance leader John Cushnahan remarked in 1979 that the party's survival up to this point had been a "miracle" (1979).

The 1980s arguably marked an even more challenging period for the Alliance, however. Firstly, a series of hunger strikes by republican prisoners and Margaret Thatcher's UK Government's hard-line response in 1981 saw Alliance's electoral fortunes dip with its vote falling sharply from 14.4 per cent in the 1977 local elections to 8.9 per cent in 1981 (Mitchell, 2015: 168). This fall was the product of an erosion in Catholic support, attributed partly to the climate of polarisation that surrounded the hunger strikes (Mitchell, 2015: 169; Eggins, 2015: 59), but more importantly to increased participation on the part of Catholic voters, many of whom had previously abstained, and on the part of nationalist parties, with Sinn Féin entering electoral politics in Northern Ireland for the first time in 1982 and both Sinn Féin and SDLP fielding candidates all over Northern Ireland including the east, formerly dominated by unionist parties (Eggins, 2015: 59). Leonard observes that Alliance lost much of its "soft nationalist" support during this period, backing that it failed to subsequently win back (1999: 33).

Constitutional developments during this period raised further dilemmas for the party. Alliance opted to participate in a new Northern Ireland Assembly in 1982 as part of an attempt by the British Government to restore devolution. The Assembly was boycotted by nationalist parties however, due to its lack of provision for any 'Irish dimension' and ultimately failed, collapsing in 1986 (Eggins, 2015: 63). Meanwhile, the party declined from participating in the New Ireland Forum, established by nationalist parties and the Irish Government, due to its domination by the issue of Irish unity (Leonard, 1999: 34).

The Anglo Irish Agreement presented the Alliance with an "ideological challenge" according to Leonard (1999: 37). To be sure, the agreement brought devolved power sharing, advocated by APNI, a step closer. Furthermore, by placing accommodation

between two communities central to any settlement, it effectively negated the need for an intermediary and, as Leonard observes, dealt a blow to Alliance's "consensual approach" to Northern Ireland's future (1999: 36). In this sense Leonard charts the centrality of the party from 1970 to 1985, followed by its peripherality from 1985 to 1994 (1999). From this point forward, a consociational deal based on parallel consent between two communities became decidedly more likely than the more liberal, integrative power-sharing model favoured by Alliance (Leonard, 1999: 37). After internal debate, the party nevertheless opted to support the Agreement (Eggins, 2015: 72). Whilst this stance risked the loss of its moderate unionist support, the party managed to increase its backing in the 1987 General Election, where it won 10 per cent of the vote, up from 8 per cent in 1983 (Leonard, 1999: 36; Eggins, 2015: 73). The Alliance's electoral performance during this period is set out in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 below.

#### *Power-Sharing Proposals*

In 1988 Alliance proceeded to produce its own proposals for the governance of Northern Ireland in a document entitled *Governing with Consent* based on an integrative – or liberal - form of power-sharing. These plans, which would form the basis of the party's constitutional position for the critical talks of the 1990s, proposed a devolved power-sharing assembly elected through PR-STV and a power-sharing Executive appointed by the Secretary of State but reflecting the balance of parties within the Assembly. Under the plans, this Executive would have to be acceptable to the community as a whole and therefore meet an acceptability test within the Assembly of commanding the support at least 70 per cent of members in a simple weighted majority vote that would not require members to designate as belonging to one or other community. The proposals also advocated protection of individual rights through a Bill of Rights and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Irish law, and minority group rights through a "Political Right of Appeal" that could be lodged over an Assembly decision by 30 per cent of members. Furthermore, they underlined the importance of Anglo-Irish relations and provided for a significant role for the UK and Irish Governments in the governance of Northern Ireland (APNI, 1988).

### *The Formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition*

The staging of the peace talks in the early 1990s provided the impetus for the formation of a second significant civic political party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). With participation in the talks forum only open to political parties, driven by the need to ensure inclusion of women's voices in the process, the new party formed in 1996 at extremely short notice for the sole purpose of influencing the peace agreement. The party thus arose out of a specific time and space in Northern Irish politics and for a very specific purpose. The alliance of women of both national affiliations and none, with its roots in the women's movement, seized the opportunity presented by the critical juncture of constitutional change to enter formal politics and shape the emerging political landscape (Dobrowolsky, 2003: 117). The diverse grouping united around three core principles - inclusion, human rights and equality – with a determination to bring these values to bear on the negotiations and the resulting deal (Fearon, 1999; Fearon & McWilliams, 2000: 121).

The Women's Coalition's philosophy was a distinctive one that can be characterised as *transversal* (Murtagh, 2008). Transversalism, as outlined in Chapter One, is a form of coalition politics, first conceptualised by feminist actors, in which individuals with a diverse range of identities come together for a shared purpose. Members remain 'rooted' in their own identity, while 'shifting' to empathise with those of other identities in order to find solutions (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 130). The approach eschews identity politics, prizing dialogue over fixed positions. In this sense, while respecting the distinct national identities that exist in society, the NIWC maintained that solidarity on other matters was possible. Thus, far from requiring members to abandon their national identities and sidestep issues relating to the conflict, Fearon and McWilliams describe how women in the Women's Coalition were encouraged to 'bring their baggage into the room' - both when engaging internally within the party and externally in the peace talks and other public fora (2000: 128). Rather than identifying as neither nationalist nor unionist, then the party positioned itself as nationalist, unionist *and* other.

The party's 1998 Assembly election manifesto stated:

“The NI Women's Coalition has already proved that it can work with other parties, because the Women's Coalition is itself truly cross-community in composition. Our members are women and men from diverse backgrounds and traditions: rural and urban; young and old; republican, loyalist, nationalist, unionist and other. We know, from our own experience, that if we take the time to listen to each other, we can build respect and trust over time.” (NIWC, 1998).

As one party member describes it, the Coalition was not a party of the centre, but a “party of the extremes” (Quoted in Meyer McAleese, 2009: 14). Given the diversity of positions held by its members, the NIWC therefore resisted taking a stance on the constitutional issue – a position Fearon and McWilliams believe proved an advantage in the peace talks, leaving it open to negotiation and accommodation (2000: 124).

The NIWC's policies reflected its defining principles, prioritising equality by supporting a Bill of Rights and a Department for Equality, as well as social democratic ‘bread and butter’ issues, such as increased spending on education, healthcare and community development (NIWC, 1998; 2003). Its programmes promoted a pluralist society, in which diversity is embraced and nationalist, unionist and other traditions can live together harmoniously - though it also called for greater investment in integrated education and the opportunity to for all to choose an integrated school (NIWC, 1998; 2003). Tonge thus contrasts the NIWC to the Alliance, as representing the “alternative centre ground” of the time (2005: 98). Instead of the Alliance's “one community approach”, the Women's Coalition adopted a “cross-community” approach, comprising nationalists, unionists and others, promoting reconciliation between Northern Ireland's national traditions as well as celebration of difference (Tonge, 2005: 98-99). In line with this approach, unlike the Alliance, the NIWC endorsed quotas for equal gender and religious representation in public office, most notably for the new Police Service of Northern Ireland, established as part of the GFA and following the 1999 Patten Report which recommended a 50-50 recruitment policy for Catholics and Protestants (Tonge, 2005: 99). In this sense, the NIWC could be classed under the definition of civic parties outlined in Chapter One and set out in Appendix A, as an accommodationist party, in contrast to the Alliance's integrationist positioning.

This section has thus outlined the emergence and early years of the Alliance and the role it played in the political and peace initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the formation of the Women's Coalition in the 1990s. The chapter now turns to these parties' adaptation to the transformation of the political landscape in the 1990s that came with the onset of the formal peace process and their contributions to those negotiations.

### *Contributions to Peace Negotiations and Agreement*

Though not extensively documented, civic parties played a notable role in these negotiations and exerted an influence on the final settlement. The process in turn had a significant impact on the trajectories of these parties, as this section explores.

Elections to the Forum used the d'Hondt system of party list 'plus top-up', where in addition to the five representatives elected from closed party lists in each of the constituencies, each of the ten parties with the most votes across the region elected another two representatives, allowing a number of smaller parties to break through. On this basis, amongst the ten parties elected, the two main cross-community parties of the time secured a place at the table, with the APNI winning seven seats (five plus two top-up seats), and the NIWC gaining two (solely from the top-up formula) ([www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)). Party performance in these and other pre-devolution elections is set out in Table 3.4 below.

**Table 3.4: Party Vote Share Northern Ireland Elections 1973-1997 (%)**

	<b>UUP</b>	<b>SDLP</b>	<b>DUP</b>	<b>Sinn Féin</b>	<b>APNI</b>	<b>NILP</b>	<b>NIWC</b>
<b>1973, Assembly (PR)</b>	25.3 (UUP pro-white paper)  10.5 (UUP anti-white paper)	22.1	10.8	----	9.2	2.6	
<b>1974, Westminster (Feb) (FPTP)</b>	32.3	22.4	8.2	----	3.2		
<b>1974, Westminster (Oct) (FPTP)</b>	36.5	22.4	8.5	----	6.4		
<b>1975, NI Constitutional Convention (PR-STV)</b>	25.4 (UUP-UUUC)	23.7	14.8 (DUP-UUUC)	----	9.8	1.4	
<b>1979, Westminster (FPTP)</b>	36.6	18.2	10.2		11.9		
<b>1982, Assembly (PR-STV)</b>	29.7	18.8	23.0	10.1	9.3		
<b>1983, Westminster (FPTP)</b>	34.0	17.9	20.0	13.4	8		
<b>1987, Westminster (FPTP)</b>	37.8	21.1	11.7	11.4	10		
<b>1992, Westminster (FPTP)</b>	34.5	23.5	13.1	10	8.7		
<b>1996, Forum (PR-D'Hondt)</b>	24.17	21.36	18.80	15.47	6.54		1.03
<b>1997, Westminster (FPTP)</b>	32.7	24.1	13.6	16.1	8.0		

Source: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa73.htm>

**Table 3.5: Alliance Party Electoral Performance 1973-1997**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Election</b>	<b>% vote</b>
1973	Council	13.7
1973	Assembly	9.2
1974	Westminster (Feb)	3.2
1974	Westminster (Oct)	6.3
1975	Convention	9.8
1977	Council	14.4
1979	Westminster	11.9
1979	European	6.8
1981	Council	8.9
1982	Assembly	9.3
1983	Westminster	8.0
1984	European	5.0
1985	Council	7.1
1987	Westminster	10.0
1989	Council	6.9
1989	European	5.2
1992	Westminster	8.7
1993	Council	7.6
1994	European	4.1
1996	Forum	6.5
1997	Westminster	4.7
1997	Council	4.7

Source: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/>

The two cross-community parties proceeded to play a constructive role in the talks and make significant contributions to the peace agreement to come (Fearon, 1999; Mitchell, 2002: 126). Ironically, however, elements of that Agreement would prove less than advantageous to these actors. Setting out its analysis of “the problem” during the talks, Alliance presented Northern Ireland, in contrast to British unionist or Irish nationalist interpretations, as a separate community with its own distinct history, and a diverse and plural one at that. Indeed, its explanation of the conflict posits competing nationalisms at the root of the problem, for creating a polarised society (APNI, 1997a). Its proposals for a political solution to this problem mirrored those set out in its 1988 plans, calling for an integrative form of power-sharing that would accommodate these distinct national identities while also allowing for the development of a more pluralistic, civic society (APNI, 1997b). They advanced the idea of a power-sharing assembly elected through PR-STV, from which the power-sharing executive would be drawn. Notably, this executive would be formed on a voluntary coalition basis: following inter-party talks, ministers would be appointed by the Secretary of State and confirmed by a simple, designation-free weighted majority vote of 67 per cent in the assembly. As in its 1988 proposals, the party proposed human rights mechanisms such as a Bill of Rights. It also accepted the need for a weighted majority vote in the assembly for certain other important decisions, such as budget votes, and for a ‘Political Right of Appeal’ for the minority group in the assembly that could be triggered by 30 per cent of members (APNI, 1997b). In recognition of the importance of relations with the Republic of Ireland, furthermore, the party advocated accountable structures for North-South cooperation (APNI, 1997c).

In terms of its distinctive contribution to the outcome, Leonard highlights two areas where it exerted influence: the electoral system adopted for the new institution and the recognition of ‘others’ in the assembly, alongside unionists and nationalists (1999). Whilst the NIWC proposed a regional top-up system, which stood to benefit small cross-community actors, the APNI successfully opposed this measure, motivated by the fact that it would also benefit its electoral rivals (Leonard, 1999).

The role played by the Alliance in the talks has been characterised by Leonard as a “policing” one, monitoring the enforcement of the “Mitchell principles” set for the

talks and censuring other parties, including DUP and Sinn Féin, for contravening these rules (Farry & Neeson, 1999: 1233; Leonard, 1999; Mitchell, 2002: 127). Furthermore, the party viewed itself as a “weathervane” in discussions, as to whether proposals would be acceptable to both communities (Leonard, 1999).

Notwithstanding its contributions, Leonard argues that, having played a central role in previous peace negotiations, the Alliance was notably side-lined in the process that led up to the Good Friday Agreement (Leonard, 1999). One factor in this marginalisation was the inclusion of the ‘extremes’, which undermined the argument that the Alliance was a pivotal core to discussions and shifted the debate away from an integrative, consensual solution. Another was the principle of “sufficient consensus” adopted for the talks (Leonard, 1999), meaning that any measure was required to have the support of sufficient parties to represent the majority of voters in the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The Alliance presented the GFA as a possible, if not ideal, means to a shared society (Tonge, 2005: 37). It viewed the deal as falling well short of its vision of a transformation of Northern Irish society through liberal democracy. The Agreement embodied a binary ‘two community’ approach to Northern Ireland’s future in contrast to its pluralistic approach. In an article following the signing of the Agreement senior party member Stephen Farry and then leader Sean Neeson thus describe the deal as a short-term “band-aid” solution based on conflict management, rather than a long-term answer geared towards conflict resolution (1999: 1241). In particular, Farry and Neeson take issue with the mechanisms agreed to ensure cross-community consensus in the Assembly, as well as the rules for executive formation, based on party strength in the Assembly as opposed to voluntary agreement between the parties. They object to these measures on the grounds that they would institutionalise divisions, leave the institutions prone to dysfunction and paralysis and, furthermore, disadvantage centre parties, as further discussed below (1999: 1236-1239). Ultimately, Leonard observes, the party failed to secure the mix of integrative and liberal consociational power-sharing that would have granted it a more integral role in the institutions (1999). Evans and Tonge furthermore observe the Agreement’s consociational form based on sufficiency of consensus between unionists and nationalists to be “at odds with the

integrative type of power-sharing favoured by the Alliance” (2001: 114-115). Tonge concludes that the “two communities approach” at the heart of the GFA ultimately undermined the value of Alliance representation in the Assembly (2005: 100). While the Alliance sounded a note of pessimism about the deal however, in characteristic pragmatic fashion, it accepted the Agreement as a potential route to the pluralistic liberal democracy it envisioned for Northern Ireland and committed to working within the framework to achieve this longer term goal (Farry & Neeson, 1999: 1249). The Agreement thus required the party to pragmatically compromise its integrationist principles in the name of peace and stability.

For its part, the Women’s Coalition has been observed to have wielded an influence beyond its size on the Agreement, not least in its advancement of a Civic Forum (which was established in 2000 but suspended with the Assembly in 2002 and never subsequently reinstated) and proposals in areas such as victims’ rights, integrated education and mixed housing (Fearon, 1999; Kilmurray & McWilliams, 2011). The party also actively played a mediating and facilitating role, meeting with both Sinn Féin and the loyalist Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) when they were excluded from the talks for breach of the Mitchell principles (Kilmurray & McWilliams, 2011). Indeed, Meyer McAleese holds that the party’s transversal ethos enabled it to perform this bridge-building role so effectively (2009).

Having outlined the role played by Northern Ireland’s civic parties during the negotiations leading up to the settlement, this section now turns to the place of these actors in the post-settlement political space.

### *Place in Post-Agreement Politics*

Amidst the bipolar terrain of post-Agreement politics sketched above lies a small central space occupied by civic parties. This section gives an account of that middle bloc and the openings and constraints that it faces in the new political landscape.

### *The Shape of the Centre Ground*

The nature of this central space in post-GFA politics has been interrogated by Evans and Tonge in their analysis of the first academic survey of Alliance Party members,

conducted in 2001 (2001; 2003). The scholars probe this “third tradition” in Northern Ireland by exploring three principal questions of: whether the Alliance Party’s goals as a non-aligned party are compromised by its constitutional position of unionism by default, as discussed above; whether significant attitudinal differences lie between the party’s Catholic and Protestant members and hence something of a sectarian divide within the party itself; and whether this third tradition is a discrete unitary space or a hybrid entity, in fact comprising two traditions (integration and accommodation) (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 104-105). The survey furnished a wealth of valuable data on member demographics, political attitudes, and indeed variation between Protestant and Catholic members. Notably, it revealed an over-representation in the party amongst Protestant, as well as middle class and highly educated voters, and a heavy concentration of membership in the east of the region, in Belfast and the surrounding areas (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 107; 111). An analysis of members by occupation and income shows a near total absence of working-class members (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 107). Meanwhile, 82 per cent of members lived in Belfast and the eastern counties of Antrim and Down (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 107). On the question of whether and where the Alliance lies on the nationalist-unionist spectrum, division emerged amongst members, but the figures indicate a party more in line with unionism than nationalism. 28 per cent of members agreed that the Alliance is a unionist party, compared to 49 per cent who disagree. By contrast, fewer than 3 per cent believed the Alliance was a nationalist party. Furthermore, only 16 per cent disagreed with the idea that the best solution for Northern Ireland was to remain in the UK (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 110). In ideological terms, interestingly, the survey suggests that the party is most similar to the nationalist SDLP than the unionist UUP, on all issues other than those relating to the constitution (Tonge, 2005: 97).

In terms of religion, only 19.7 per cent of Alliance members were Catholic, while 64 per cent were Protestant, compared to 44 per cent and 53 per cent in the population as a whole at that time (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 110). Furthermore, some differences emerged between Catholic and Protestant members in terms of identity and constitutional preference (2001: 110-111). Despite the party’s identity with Northern Ireland, only 23 per cent identified as Northern Irish while Catholics were more likely to identify as Irish and Protestants as British (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 112; 2003: 29).

Catholic and Protestant members also differed in their attitudes to quotas, with 51 per cent of Protestants backing their implementation for the Police Service of Northern Ireland compared to 78 per cent of Catholics (2001: 113) (Evans & Tonge, 2001: 113; Tonge, 2005: 85).

Reflecting on the survey findings, Evans and Tonge conclude that Alliance members appear to be broadly supportive of power-sharing, and to pragmatically accept the post-Agreement consociational arrangements rather than holding out for its vision of integrative power-sharing (2001: 117). Analysing the data from the membership survey, Tonge reflects, based on divisions among members on questions relating to identity and the constitution, that Alliance can be placed on the unionist-nationalist spectrum to an extent (2005: 96). Nevertheless, he concludes that a distinctive radical centre exists in Northern Ireland and the Alliance cannot be comfortably accommodated in either the nationalist or unionist blocs and is unlikely to shift in this direction (Tonge, 2005: 100). In a more recent voter survey following the 2015 UK General Election, Tonge reports that in terms of affinity with UK parties, Alliance voters feel closest to the Lib Dems (29 per cent), followed by Labour (21 per cent), with only 11 per cent aligning with the Conservatives (Tonge, 2015).

#### *Institutionalisation of Power-Sharing*

The political framework put in place by the Good Friday Agreement presented civic parties with a world of novel possibilities but also risks and pitfalls. Civic parties collectively garnered about 8 per cent of the vote following the Agreement in 1998, with Alliance winning six seats and NIWC securing two in the new 108 seat Assembly. In these early years, however, the power-sharing institutions hardly constituted a hospitable environment as they lurched from crisis to crisis as outlined. In this fractious climate, civic parties struggled to carve out a meaningful role and, at times, appeared caught in the cross-fire.

Indeed, in 2001 a particular set of circumstances prompted both the NIWC and Alliance to temporarily abandon their non-aligned stances in the Assembly. Following the return of the Assembly after a suspension as a result of a decommissioning row, a (cross-community) parallel consent vote was needed to re-elect the First and Deputy

First Ministers. A question lay over whether unionist votes would be sufficient to secure this election, however, given a lack of support amongst the then anti-GFA DUP and some UUP members (McEvoy 2013: 254). Thus, in order to reinstall the premiers and save Stormont from collapse, the NIWC negotiated a change to the Assembly rules allowing one of its two MLAs to re-designate from the 'Other' designation; one to 'Unionist' and one to 'Nationalist' (Mitchell, 2015: 178). This proved insufficient to secure the vote however, and pressure mounted on the Alliance to follow suit. Following much soul searching within the party, given its long-standing opposition to the practice of designation, three of its six MLAs ultimately agreed to re-designate to Unionist for seven days, in return for a commitment from the British Government to launch a review of the voting procedures (Mitchell, 2015: 179). The decision to re-designate was a source of division within the party with two of its MLAs refusing to re-designate, and survey evidence demonstrating that a majority of party members opposed the move (Evans & Tonge, 2003). Thus, the party found itself in the invidious position of having to compromise its principles and, to an extent, self-sacrifice for the greater good of political stability. As Tonge observes, the crisis compelled the Alliance to temporarily leave its principles to one side and bolster the unionist bloc – a contortion for which it received little reward, given the subsequent collapse of the institutions in any case and squeezing of the middle ground at the 2003 elections (2005: 100). The re-designation affair thus demonstrates the awkward position in which the Alliance often found itself in post-Agreement politics and indeed, the difficulty the party experienced in acting on its own terms and pursuing its distinctive integrationist politics in an environment which required mediation and accommodation.

Cross-community parties' share of the vote was effectively halved in 2003, in the fraught political climate that followed a number of suspensions of the institutions, leaving the Alliance with just 3.7 per cent and spelling the end for the NIWC, which lost both its seats and later disbanded in 2006. Tonge thus observes the paradox that, despite the Alliance promoting inter-community accommodation since the 1970s, the consociational political settlement enshrined in the GFA initially proved inimical to its electoral success (2005: 100). Similarly, for the Women's Coalition, Fearon observes that the party was awarded for its contribution to the Agreement by securing

two MLAs in the first Assembly (1999), yet, in 2003, when that system had been established for four years, the party lost both seats.

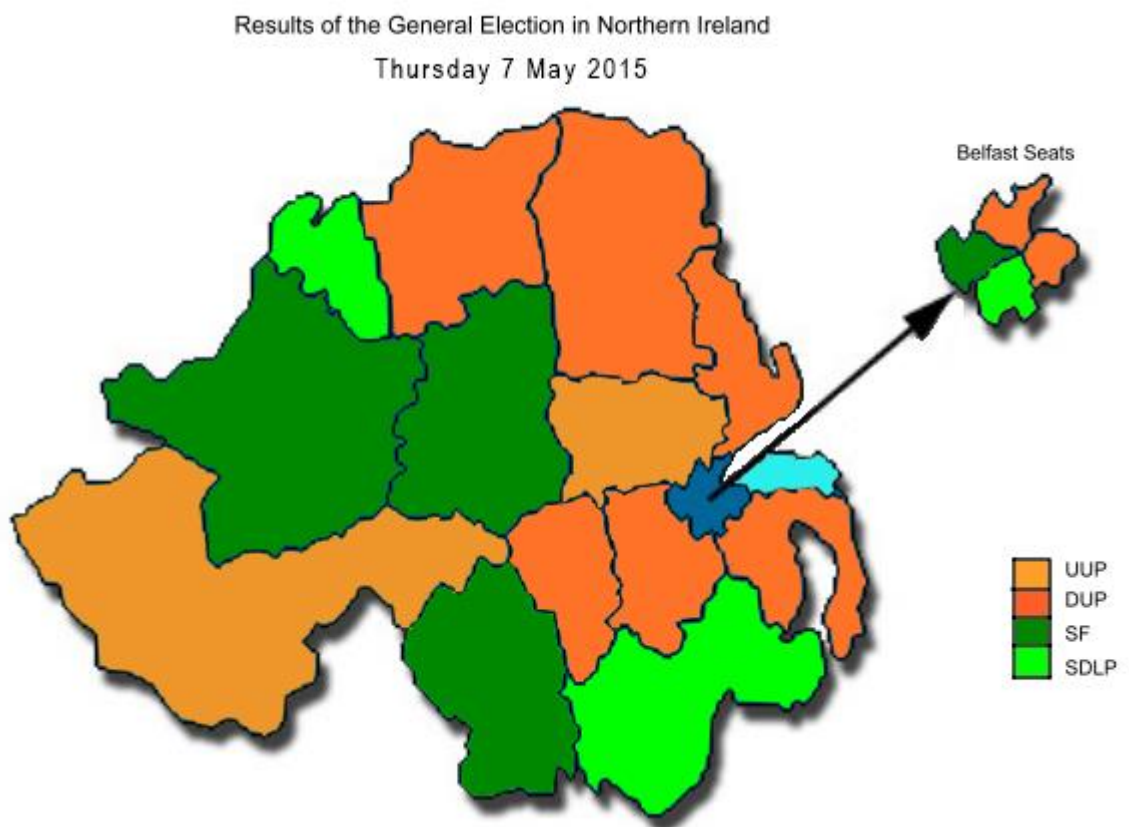
### *St Andrews and Beyond*

During the process that led up the St Andrews Agreement, Alliance has been observed to have played a limited role. Mitchell notes that in advancing its proposals for a voluntary coalition, the party was putting forward a route that would amount to a departure from the inclusive approach and effectively pushing ahead with power-sharing without Sinn Féin – an option that neither the British nor Irish government would seriously consider, rather continuing to pursue an accommodation between unionist and nationalist parties (Mitchell, 2015: 180-181). These negotiations thus focussed squarely on agreement between the two blocs, further marginalising the cross-community actor (Mitchell, 2015: 181). Furthermore, the Agreement gave the institutions a more corporate flavour and entrenched the practice of designation by changing the rules so that Members could not re-designate during an Assembly term (Mitchell, 2015: 179; The St Andrews Agreement 2006).

The post St Andrews landscape appears to have been more conducive to civic actors in electoral terms, however. In the subsequent elections in 2007 cross-community parties secured almost 7 per cent of the vote. The Alliance was thus joined in the Assembly by the cross-community Green Party in Northern Ireland – a regional branch of the Green Party in Ireland - which made an electoral breakthrough to gain one seat. In 2010 the Alliance entered the Executive, taking up the newly devolved and contested justice ministry, as illustrated, thus boosting the party's profile and influence. Indeed, in the same year the party gained its first seat at Westminster with the dramatic victory of Deputy Leader Naomi Long over then Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson in East Belfast. In the 2011 Assembly elections cross-community parties' share of the vote rose to 8.6 per cent with Alliance garnering eight seats and the Greens one in the 108 seat Assembly. The Alliance thus gained enough support to secure a ministry in the Executive through d'Hondt, in addition to the justice ministry which it assumed outside the regular allocation procedures for a second term. Indeed, during this term, an additional civic party named NI21 (Northern Ireland 21) was launched in 2013 by two former UUP Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs),

with a pledge to attempt to attract both Protestant and Catholic voters (Cromie, 2013). Following an acrimonious split during the 2014 local elections however, the fledgling party disbanded in 2016. Alliance furthermore received its best ever result in a European election in 2014, winning 7.1 per cent of the vote. In the 2015 General Election the party's one Westminster seat was returned to the DUP. However, this loss came in the context of a DUP-UUP pact to run a single unionist candidate in East Belfast and the Alliance in fact increasing its vote share from 37.2 per cent to 42.8 per cent in the constituency (www.ark.ac.uk/elections/). The results of this election are represented in the map in Image 3.2 below.

**Image 3.2: Map of 2015 General Election Results in Northern Ireland**



Source: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/2015west/rw2015.htm>

The 2016 Assembly elections saw Alliance hold its position of eight seats, sustaining a slight decrease in its vote share from 7.7 per cent to 7 per cent. The elections also proved favourable for other smaller civic parties, with the Greens increasing their representation from one to two seats and the non-aligned socialist People Before Profit

Alliance breaking through to gain two seats. In the wake of the 2016 election, following the reforms implemented by the Stormont House Agreement, the Alliance, together with the UUP and SDLP, opted to remain outside the Executive in opposition and not to put a candidate forward for the position of Justice Minister.

With eight seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly and 44 local councillors, the Alliance remains the largest cross-community party in the region. In terms of the communal balance of its electoral support, a survey conducted in the wake of the 2011 Assembly elections demonstrates that the party draws support from both Catholic and Protestant voters, but more heavily from the latter. 11.8 per cent of Protestants surveyed said they voted for the Alliance, while only 6.1 per cent of Catholics declared support for the party (Garry, 2011: 17). However, that support is concentrated in the east of the region, in urban and suburban areas of greater Belfast, Antrim and Down, which have traditionally been more heavily populated by Protestant communities and where unionist parties have tended to fare well in elections. It has also historically polled best in affluent constituencies, such as Belfast South and North Down, though recent years have seen it emerge as a force in more deprived and 'working class' areas, such as East Belfast. The performance of cross-community parties since the first Assembly elections in 1998 is set out in Table 3.6 and Figures 3.1 and 3.2, while the performance of the Alliance Party in elections at all levels since 1998 is represented in Table 3.7 below.

**Table 3.6: Party Vote Share Northern Ireland Assembly elections 1998-2016**

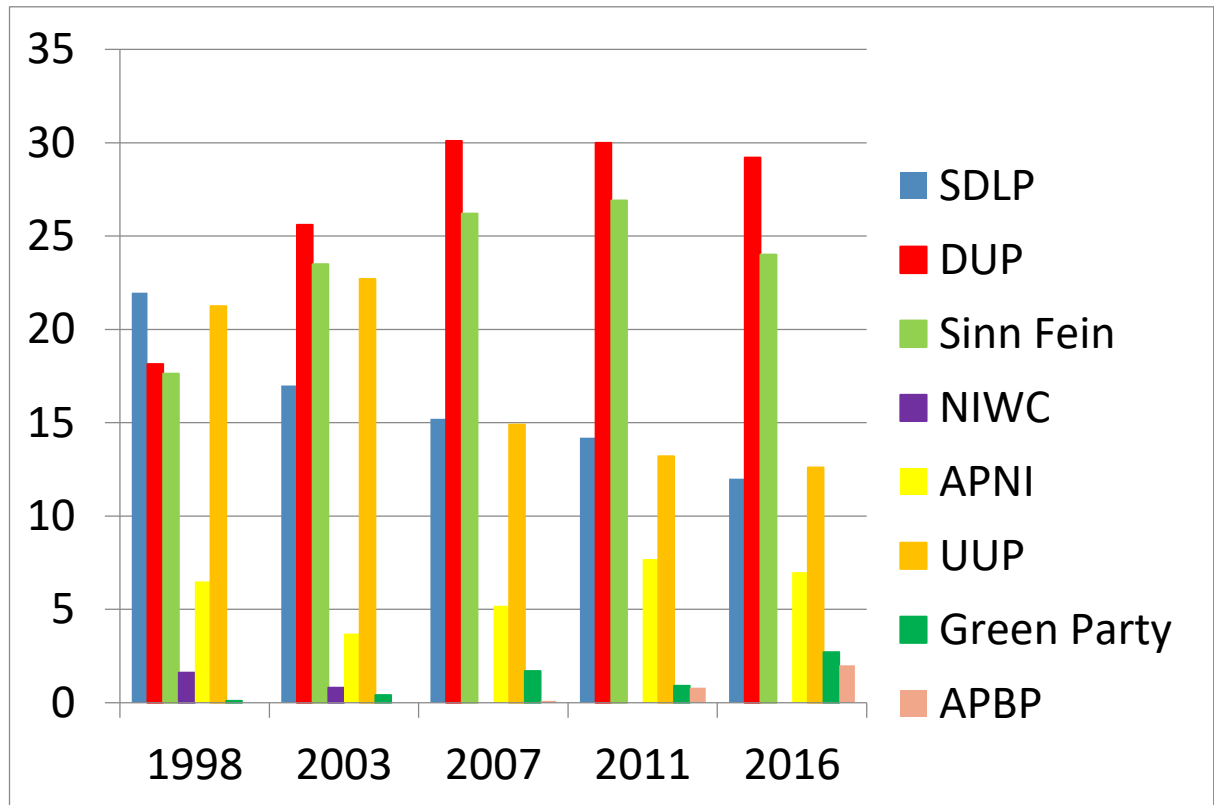
	1998		2003		2007		2011		2016	
	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat
<b>DUP</b>	18.1	20	25.6	30	30.1	36	30.0	38	29.2	38
<b>Sinn Féin</b>	17.6	18	23.5	24	26.2	28	26.9	29	24.0	28
<b>UUP</b>	21.3	28	22.7	27	14.9	18	13.2	16	12.6	16
<b>SDLP</b>	22.0	24	17.0	18	15.2	16	14.2	14	12.0	12
<b>APNI</b>	6.5	6	3.7	6	5.2	7	7.7	8	7.0	8
<b>NIWC</b>	1.6	2	0.8	0	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b>Green Party</b>	0.1	0	0.4	0	1.7	1	0.9	1	2.7	2
<b>PBPA</b> <sup>1</sup>	---	---	---	---	0.1	0	0.8	0	2.0	2

Source: [www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)

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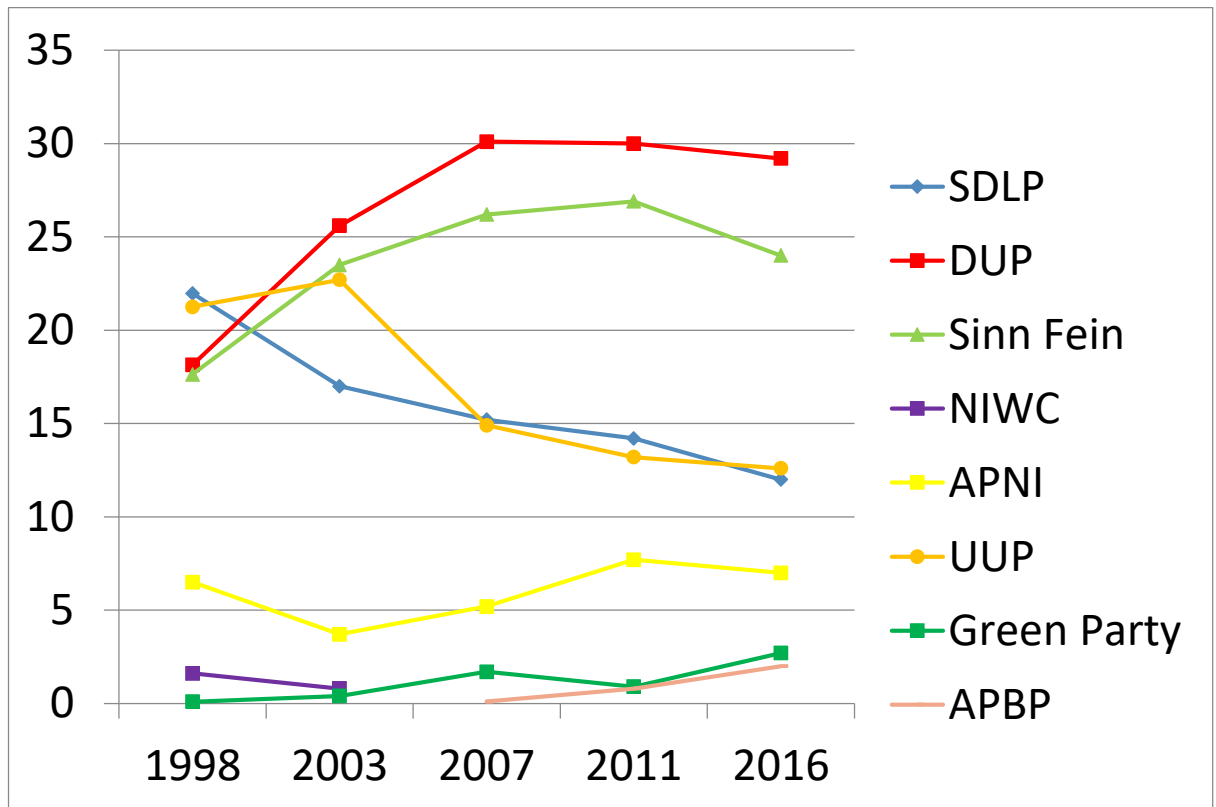
<sup>1</sup> PBPA: People Before Profit Alliance

Figure 3.1: Party Vote Share Northern Ireland Assembly Elections 1998-2016



Source: [www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)

**Figure 3.2: Trends in Party Vote Share Northern Ireland Assembly Elections 1998-2016**



Source: [www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)

**Table 3.7 Alliance Party Electoral Performance 1998-2016**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Election</b>	<b>%</b>
1998	Assembly	6.5
1999	European	2.1
2001	Westminster	3.6
2001	Council	5.0
2003	Assembly	3.7
2005	Westminster	3.9
2005	Council	5.0
2007	Assembly	5.2
2009	European	5.5
2010	Westminster	6.4
2011	Council	7.4
2011	Assembly	7.8
2014	Council	6.7
2014	European	7.1
2015	Westminster	8.6
2016	Assembly	7.0

Source: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/>

In the post-settlement framework cross-community parties found a new institutional space that offered the potential to play a significant role in the new Northern Irish politics. The optimism that accompanied the Good Friday Agreement and its possibilities for civic actors dissipated however, as instability and polarisation ensued and the old zero-sum politics resumed. The re-designation affair of 2001 illustrates the ambiguous place non-communal actors were assigned in the Stormont institutions, at times forcing them into a sacrificial role. The 2003 election proved particularly unfavourable for cross-community parties with the Alliance vote shrinking to less than

4 per cent and the NIWC wiped out entirely. The 2006 St Andrews Agreement restored stability but saw the institutions shift towards a more corporate consociational model, arguably further marginalising non-aligned actors. Developments post St Andrews have however seen these parties' electoral fortunes improve and also presented them with opportunities to play a more relevant role, not least through the Alliance's assumption of the justice ministry in 2010. Spaces have thus opened up and contracted for non-ethnic actors in the post-Agreement phase facing them with important strategic choices, a theme further explored in Chapter Four.

This section has thus presented the emergence of civic parties, their contribution to the peace process and Good Friday Agreement and their position within the post-Agreement framework, setting the context for the analysis of empirical findings.

### **Conclusion**

In the shifting landscape of Northern Ireland politics over the last 40 years the spaces in which civic parties can exist and survive have expanded and contracted, and the parties have adapted to these fluctuations in a number of ways. This chapter has demonstrated how the events of this period have presented civic actors with certain openings through critical junctures, not least processes of peace negotiation and political reform and opportunities to participate in the new political settlement. Northern Ireland's 'first peace process' in the 1970s saw the early Alliance Party seize the opportunity to participate in negotiations and the short-lived power-sharing experiment through its role as party of the moderate middle. The 1980s, furthermore, gave the party some platform in advancing proposals for peace. The peace negotiations of the 1990s thus opened up a window of opportunity for a new civic party to enter the fray. Both Alliance and the newly formed NIWC were included in the talks process and ultimately the formulation of the Good Friday Agreement. The post-Agreement political settlement also granted the Alliance a role in negotiations, in overcoming impasses, and indeed in the power-sharing government itself. Indeed, the post-settlement phase has also seen new cross-community actors enter the Assembly, most notably the Green Party of Northern Ireland and more recently the People Before Profit Alliance.

The chapter has also demonstrated the many barriers these parties have encountered in Northern Ireland's structural environment over this time. The adverse impact of societal and political polarisation has been a recurrent theme, at moments such as the Hunger Strikes of the 1980s, the Anglo Irish Agreement and following the instability of the early power-sharing institutions, when space that had been seized appeared to contract and civic parties suffered losses and threats to their survival. Indeed, the latter development saw the NIWC lose the representation it had gained in the peace talks and aftermath of the settlement and ultimately disband. Exclusion and marginalisation of civic parties in the peace process, agreement and political settlement could also be observed over these four decades. The peace process and agreement progressively moved to focus on inclusion of extremes and a deal between the two communities, thus limiting the role and influence of a moderate middle party. The institutions to which the Agreement gave rise accordingly offered cross-community actors a role that has been at times, limited and compromised.

This chapter has thus presented the historical development of Northern Ireland's political framework and its civic parties. From this contextual base, the next chapter will address the research questions through analysis of contemporary empirical data.

## Chapter Four

### **Navigating the Divide: Civic Parties in Northern Ireland's Post-Agreement Landscape<sup>2</sup>**

Non-ethnic parties form the minority in an ethnically divided society. And in a state less than two decades removed from violent conflict, where the transitional political system has been designed to accommodate the parties to that conflict, their marginality is no source of intrigue. In spite of this, in the post-settlement context of Northern Ireland, these parties exist and have maintained a relatively stable presence since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This chapter explores the space open to civic parties in post-Agreement Northern Ireland and how they have managed to sustain it.

The discursive and institutional ground available to civic actors in Northern Ireland politics is severely limited by the dominance of the ethno-national cleavage. In this context they find little space in which to make their voices heard, or advance their distinctive agendas and few allies to facilitate them in doing so. The informal dynamics of ethno-national party competition exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship with the formal consociational institutions to create an environment inimical to civic parties' operation. Nevertheless, parties that attempt to reach across the divide occupy a small but defined territory in post-Agreement politics in Northern Ireland. Amidst such barriers, the post-settlement landscape has also afforded these actors some openings: firstly, in the shape of an alternative niche between the two rival nationalist blocs; and, secondly, within the power-sharing institutions themselves. How do civic parties move through this space, negotiate its constraints and capitalise on its openings? This chapter explores this question, assessing these parties' strategies. It finds that the opportunities available to civic actors can lie in tension with their principles and goals, creating strategic dilemmas for these parties.

This chapter presents empirical findings from the case of Northern Ireland. It draws upon 32 interviews (primarily with party elites, as well as civil society representatives)

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<sup>2</sup> This section reproduces extracts from the published paper: Murtagh, C. (2015) 'Reaching Across: Institutional Barriers to Cross-Ethnic Parties in Post-Conflict Societies and the Case of Northern Ireland,' *Nations and Nationalism*, 21(3), 544–565, as outlined in A Note on Published Papers.

and five focus groups with voters, carried out in Northern Ireland in 2012, 2013 and 2015, as well as analysis of key party documents, as detailed in Chapter Two. The chapter further presents findings drawn from a focused case study of the 2015 General Election involving observation and media analysis carried out in Northern Ireland during the campaign. See Appendix C for a description of data collection participants and methods.

This chapter begins by analysing the core constraints civic parties face in Northern Ireland's post-settlement political framework, in both its formal and informal structures, and the interplay between these two. The second section illustrates some of these structural barriers through the case study of the 'flag protests' and 2015 General Election campaign in East Belfast. The third section considers the openings these parties can nevertheless seize within this inhospitable landscape. The fourth and final section thus turns to the strategies civic parties use to navigate these constraints and opportunities.

#### **4.1 Structural Barriers to Civic Parties in the Post-Settlement Political Framework**

##### *Discursive Constraints: Marginalisation, Contestation and Co-optation*

In interviews and focus groups the most dominant theme to emerge on the question of constraints faced by civic parties was that of the dominant ethno-national political discourse. The data spoke to a lack of ideational space for these parties' offerings within political debate and the media. Indeed it pointed to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of their agenda in this context, as well as attempts to co-opt civic politics.

##### *Marginalisation*

The dynamic of party competition in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, as outlined, has been characterised as driven by a "societal security dilemma" (Mitchell, 2015: 20-21). Fear and insecurity remain dominant features, as parties vie for the protection of 'their group's' interests and identity, which are presented as being in direct competition with that of the other group. Divisive issues between communities, such as around the constitutional future of Northern Ireland, dealing with the legacy of the

Troubles, or the preservation of one group's culture (not least flags, emblems and parading), are often politicised by ethno-national parties, with a polarising effect on the electorate. This zero sum dynamic, long prevalent in Northern Ireland politics, has persisted in the post-Agreement power-sharing context (Mitchell, 2015: 34; 47). Discursively, this dynamic of party competition sees the dominance of issues pertaining to ethno-national identity and virtual drowning out of civic issues of concern to all citizens, such as socio-economic policies. A tendency for MLAs to focus disproportionately on symbolic and divisive issues, and a corresponding lack of progress on 'bread and butter issues' in the Assembly were highlighted in the annual 2012 Peace Monitoring Report (Nolan 2013: 145).

In interviews with representatives of civic parties and civic organisations this dynamic was cited as marginalising the civic agenda. Some complained of difficulties within such an environment in getting their voices heard and advancing policies that relate to wider society rather than communal interests (Interview with Agnew, 2013; Interview with Farry, 2012). The president of the cross-community students association NUS-USI, for example, reported having to couch her organisation's demands when lobbying political parties in terms of their impact on 'Catholic students' or 'Protestant students' (Interview with Peltz, 2013).

This culture evidently consigns the civic agenda to the periphery of politics and creates an environment that is less than conducive to the advancement of issues which are specific to neither community, such as pertaining to social justice, environment, gender or human rights, – issues generally championed by civic parties. Alliance MLA Stephen Farry explains the challenge this side-lining of the civic agenda can pose for the party, not least in terms of the media coverage it receives:

“Well, a lot of public policy and the media narrative around Northern Ireland is weighted against us. So, often in elections you have ‘battle within unionism’ [narrative], ‘battle within nationalism’, and... ‘how do we cover the Alliance Party, their narratives?’ (Interview with Farry, 2012).

## *Contestation*

With no clear role in the binary dynamic of party competition outlined above, and few competitors in the civic field, the Alliance finds itself in something of a unique position in the party system. This does not mean that it does not face competition from its ethno-national counterparts, however. The party competes with unionist and nationalist parties for some of the same sections of the vote, intensely in certain areas, such as with DUP in East Belfast. In this sense, the Alliance encounters a number of competitive discourses from ethno-national parties, including that of being *weak*; *irrelevant*; *suspicious*; and *traitorous*.

In a polarised environment, adopting a position of cooperation and compromise, can lead the party to be caricatured as bland and *weak* (Interview with Long, 2012; Interview with Lyttle, 2013). Alliance Deputy Leader Naomi Long explained:

“The other caricature that you need to overcome is that to be liberal is somehow to be woolly and weak . . . I would say that a lot of the people that I know in Alliance are actually people with very strong opinions, people with a very strong drive.” (Interview, 2012).

Another discourse the party encounters from its ethno-national opponents, and indeed, indirectly from the media, is that of *irrelevance*. Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle argued that this was a deliberate strategy of these parties to dismiss cross-community parties and cross-community politics more generally, in an attempt to play down their significance.

Lyttle said:

"I think at the time [the 2010 UK General Election] the party was given the recognition that [winning the East Belfast seat] was a huge achievement. But as time has gone on I think the communications strategies of other political parties have tried to dampen the significance of that.

“You still have East Belfast, for example, rather lazily by the media referred to as a ‘unionist constituency’. In May 2010 it voted for an explicitly cross-community MP. So why not refer to it as a ‘cross-community constituency’ then? And so, the scale of the challenge to get that message across is significant, whenever you have a media that is willing to lazily adopt some of those labels at times.” (Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

Indeed, this ‘irrelevance’ discourse was evident in an interview with one DUP representative who dismissed the notion that his party faced any competition from the Alliance (Interview, 2013). In analysis of the 2015 General Election campaign, this discourse was also apparent in the treatment of the Alliance by the DUP Deputy Leader during a televised party leaders’ debate. The MLA notably ignored the party, refraining from mentioning its name when referring to other parties, and twice dismissing the “others” as too small to make a difference (BBC Newsnight, 2015).

A third discursive strategy used by Alliance’s ethno-national counterparts to compete with them is that of *suspicion* of its civic, cross-community stance and insinuation that the party is ‘really’ aligned to one ethno-national community or the other. A number of cross-community representatives thus described the reluctance of their ethno-national rivals to accept their non-aligned stance and their tendency to try to characterise the party as ‘really’ nationalist or ‘really’ unionist (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with McNamee).

Alliance MP Naomi Long outlines this tactic:

“Our opponents will try, based on individual decisions, to characterise us as unionist or nationalist, depending on their own views. So there’s a tendency for people to try to characterise us in that way because it’s a comfortable place. People always want to put you in a box in Northern Ireland and when you defy that and you refuse to be boxed off, I think people find that quite challenging because they keep wanting to know what you are really, as though what you are really can’t be what I am, which is an open, liberal, tolerant person.” (Interview, 2012).

Likewise, one Alliance councillor in Belfast City Council describes the perils, in this sense, of holding the balance of power between nationalist and unionist parties in the council:

“If we hold the balance of power, we’re essentially the king makers, but that’s a blessing and a curse all rolled into one. It is, because you watch the tweets going out from one council meeting; one minute we’re part of a pan-nationalist front, the next we’re a closet unionist party.

“We’re just voting on the issues.” (Interview with McNamee, 2013)

In light of these attempts to ‘expose’ cross-community parties as truly unionist or nationalist, one cross-community MLA, from another party, said he was conscious of

his voting record in the Assembly. If seen by his ethno-national opponents to have voted more often with one bloc than the other, he anticipated that this would ‘come back at him’ at election time.

“By the nature of our politics we tend to be more left of centre, which means when it comes to voting we probably vote more with SDLP and Sinn Féin. That’s not exclusively the case and certainly we don’t follow their whip, but I can certainly see my unionist colleagues in [my constituency] thinking . . . again it’s that thing, ‘I must put him into a box; what is he? He’s voting with them ones again’.

“It’s something I’m mindful of and it’s certainly something I’m fully expecting to come back at me at the next election. I fully expect some of my unionist colleagues-stroke-opponents to bring some of that stuff out.” (Interview with MLA, 2013).

Indeed, ethno-national party representatives interviewed demonstrated this tendency, portraying Alliance alternatively as a ‘soft unionist’ party, or one sympathetic to nationalism. One Sinn Féin MLA argued that, by accepting the constitutional status quo, Alliance is de facto unionist:

“I mean most people, most nationalists, would look upon the Alliance Party as a soft unionist party. Their position is not for a united Ireland, their position is that they’re happy within the, inverted commas, ‘United Kingdom’, and British jurisdiction, and all of that.” (Interview, 2013).

Meanwhile, a UUP MLA expressed distrust at the party’s ethno-nationally non-aligned stance:

“How cross-community they are is quite hard to know . . . The problem is with them, you don’t know whether they’re unionist or nationalist. Do they want to be in the United Kingdom or do they want to be in an all-Ireland state? Because to me that’s the constitutional issue, that’s the main issue that needs answered here in Northern Ireland. It would leave me very unsure of where they are, unsure of why you would vote for them.” (Interview, 2013).

Finally, Alliance members related experiencing the accusation from rival parties that they had somehow acted *traitorously*, betraying one community by cooperating or compromising with the ‘other side’. Alliance MLA Stewart Dickson, for example, described how his home was attacked in 2002 by local loyalists after the party supported a Sinn Féin candidate, Alex Maskey, for Lord Mayor of Belfast, the first republican politician to hold the position (Interview with Dickson, 2013).

Whilst each of these discourses can be discerned in the accounts of Alliance representatives and experienced to this day, those of weakness and irrelevance were associated more closely with the earlier years of the party in interviews (Interview with Ford, 2013), while some believed that those of suspicion and traitorousness have become more prevalent in recent years as the party has grown in strength, and hence poses a greater threat to its nationalist and unionist rivals (Interview with Lyttle, 2013). These hostile discourses are most prevalent at moments of instability and polarisation, when ethno-national party competition is intensified. Members of Alliance interviewed cited polarising events such as the republican prisoners' hunger strikes of 1981, when the party lost much of its electoral representation in the Catholic areas of west Belfast, and the Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985, which it supported in the face of unionist opposition, as some of the most challenging times for the party, when support for the two ethnonational blocs was reinforced and its cross-community position marginalised (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Ford, 2013). Long expressed the party's difficulty during such periods:

“In some ways, the more reinforced the blocs are, the more challenging it is to be able to make headway because I think fear is the driver in those elections. It's no longer about people voting for what they want. It's about voting against what they're afraid of. And. . . it's very, very difficult to reach into that and give people a more optimistic perspective.” (Interview, 2012).

Focus group discussions also attested to the 'security dilemma' dynamic of party competition in Northern Ireland and its effect on civic parties. Some participants referred in this sense to the common practice of 'tactical' or 'defensive' voting for the main ethnonational parties representing their community, in order 'to keep the other side out' (Focus Group(c), 2013; Focus Group (d), 2013).

The dominant discourse of ethno-nationalism also propagates a normalisation and legitimisation of ethno-national representation - whereby politicians explicitly or implicitly claim to represent 'their' community, advocate for its perceived interests and make exclusive appeals for its support. This schema of ethno-national representation appears prominent in the minds of voters, as well as the political classes, with a survey carried out following the 2011 Assembly Election finding that voters attributed responsibility for the lives of Protestants primarily to the DUP and that for the lives of Catholics mostly to Sinn Féin (Garry, 2013). Indeed, this embedded

culture was cited by one DUP MLA interviewed as an obstacle to cross-community politics, and to his reaching out to Catholic voters. Given the ‘zero-sum’ discourse that characterises Northern Ireland politics, he believed his work in Catholic areas would be perceived by his Protestant supporters, not as additional to, but at the expense of work undertaken in their areas:

“So if we were perceived in our own community to be pursuing Catholic votes, nationalist votes, the inevitable consequence of that would be not for people to say, ‘Well that’s good because you’re doing that in addition to . . .’, Some people would say, ‘You’re doing that instead of unionist votes’ (Interview with DUP MLA, 2013).

### *Co-optation*

In addition, the dynamic of party competition can have the effect of not only marginalising and contesting civic issues, but also monopolising them as the terrain of one community. In the case of Northern Ireland, given the nature of the conflict and its power dynamics, the nationalist community has to an extent historically ‘owned’ the equality narrative in Northern Ireland politics and the minority rights agenda enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement has formed a site of contestation between the nationalist and unionist politicians post-Agreement, often presented by the former as a means to redress past inequalities between the communities and the latter as a nationalist attempt to erode unionist culture and position in society (Nagle, 2016; Tonge, 2014). Such “ethnic seepage” (Horowitz, 2000) into the equality and human rights realm arguably creates a barrier to broad cross-communal political, and hence societal, support for this agenda. Indeed, Tonge and Evans note the rise to prominence of the social conservatism debate in Northern Ireland politics and its prevalence in the 2015 General Election (2015: 128). Scholars have also observed however that the liberal/conservative debate, such as that surrounding same sex marriage, has not transcended ethno-national politics, but rather mapped onto it, with unionist and nationalist politicians lining up on opposing sides (Tonge & Evans, 2015: 130; Thomson, 2016: 496). This has been demonstrated in the case of unionist parties’ use of the communal veto to block nationalist party legislative motions on same sex marriage, as illustrated in Chapter Three. Thomson thus underlines the danger of socio-cultural issues, such as same sex marriage and abortion rights, being politicised along sectarian lines in Northern Ireland (Thomson, 2016: 496-497). This argument

has been advanced by one founder member of NIWC and prominent human rights and equality activist Bronagh Hinds. Hinds posited that the prospects for progressive policies, such as gender quotas and same sex marriage, were being held back by nationalist parties' claimed ownership of this agenda (Hinds, 2015).

In this sense, the legitimacy of civic politics, broadly conceived, faces challenge in the post-Agreement political framework. Such marginalisation, ethno-national contestation and co-optation of the civic agenda thus create potential pitfalls for civic parties in their attempts to advance these issues.

### *Lack of Allies*

Given the continued dominance of ethno-national parties in this post-Agreement context, civic parties' potential for cooperation and alliance with other parties is strictly limited. In the first Northern Ireland Assembly, the Alliance had the potential civic partners of the NIWC, which gained two seats in the 1998 elections, while post-2007 the Green Party has been present as a potential ally, holding one seat from 2007-2016. Nevertheless, given the marginality of this central space, the Alliance's capacity to build a broad coalition in support of its integrationist agenda is evidently restricted. Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle thus expressed the challenge of winning cross-party support for its 'shared future' policies, even amongst the supposedly moderate nationalist and unionist parties, SDLP and UUP, which "when push comes to shove", he argued, adopted "very sectional positions" on issues such as the flag dispute at Belfast City Hall (Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

Furthermore, an analysis of vote transfers under the STV system in Northern Ireland by Jarrett suggests that the Alliance suffers electorally as a result of its relative isolation in the system. He demonstrates a tendency for unionist and nationalist party voters to transfer only within their own bloc, meaning that Alliance does not benefit from vote transfers in the same way, given the absence of any other significant civic party from which it might receive lower order preferences (Jarrett, 2016).

Beyond parties, there is a dearth of alliance potential for cross-community parties in the media and civil society, given the alignment of most organisations in these sectors with the nationalist or unionist position.

### *Institutional Marginalisation: Consociational Rules and Procedures*

As illustrated in Chapter Three, the devolved political institutions established by the GFA were deeply rooted in the principles of consociational power-sharing. How does the system, in its particular form in Northern Ireland, affect civic parties specifically? This is a question to which this section turns, in analysing the institutional constraints non-ethnic actors face in the power-sharing framework.

#### *Communal Designation and Assembly Voting Procedures*

Some of the community guarantees in the Stormont institution are underpinned by the so-called ‘designation rule’, a corporate feature in an otherwise largely liberal model of consociational power-sharing. In line with centripetalist and integrationist critiques, the Alliance Party has, as outlined, since the 1980s, advocated a more liberal form of power-sharing for Northern Ireland; one that fosters cooperation between parties across the ethno-national divide, accommodates more flexible notions of identity and ultimately facilitates integration between communities. Though falling short of these principles, the party supported the Good Friday Agreement. At the same time, however, it condemned the more rigid, corporate aspects of the system for institutionalising division by focusing on the accommodation of unionist and nationalist identities and promoting ethno-national representation at the expense of cross-community integration and cooperation (Farry & Neeson, 1999). This is a critical stance it has maintained since the signing of the Agreement, present in each of its subsequent election manifestos and flagship publications (APNI, 2003; 2007; 2011; 2013; 2015; 2016). Indeed, it has reserved particular censure for communal designation and cross-community voting procedures, consistently campaigning for their replacement with provisions for a simple weighted majority vote, free from designation (APNI, 2003; 2007; 2011; 2013; 2015; 2016). But what of the impact of these structures on the party specifically?

In interviews, members of Alliance depicted the designation rule above all as morally wrong, unfair and an affront to their civic principles. Naomi Long referred to the procedures as “direct discrimination”, stating: “It’s structurally embedded within the system that you are a unionist or a nationalist and if you’re neither you count for less”

(Interview, 2012). Likewise, Alliance MLA Stewart Dickson expressed a deep sense of injustice and inequality at the rules:

“... there was an academic paper this week which described [designation] as 'irking some people'. No, it doesn't irk me; it's *wrong*. I understand the purpose that it served... [But] politics, it's a live, growing thing, and we've got to move on from that. And that my vote doesn't count in the same way as others, it doesn't irk me, it quite simply is wrong. And the people who voted for me expect and need me to have the same value vote as everybody else in this institution.” (Interview, 2013).

Other civic representatives referred to the “disempowering” impact of the rule. Alliance MLA Anna Lo articulated: “So who are we? What are we? We are nothing. Others mean nothing” (Interview, 2012). This effect, furthermore, renders the issue difficult to raise in the public arena, for risk of highlighting such impairment to voters, as Green MLA Steven Agnew explained:

“Well it's not something we trumpet . . . ‘In these votes our vote doesn't count’. It's one of those things. We do want to point out the ludicrous nature of the system whereby if you are, by definition, cross-community, your vote doesn't count in a cross-community vote. So yeah, we do highlight it at times, but it's disempowering.” (Interview, 2013).

These rules and their implications for civic parties came into sharp focus in 2001 when members of Alliance and the NIWC temporarily re-designated in the Assembly, as outlined in Chapter Three. Party Leader David Ford presented the move to re-designate in 2001, which appeared to directly contradict its principles, as an act of self-sacrifice for the greater good of preserving the Agreement. Writing in an op-ed following the vote, he declared: “The situation in which Alliance found itself this past weekend stank. But for those of us who want real stability and peace in Northern Ireland, some of us are reluctantly prepared to hold our noses for a week.” (Ford, 2001). In an interview with the author, Ford recounted the conflict the party's decision to temporarily re-designate invoked in him, recalling how the experience made him feel “physically sick”.

“Because I'd spent my time in politics trying to get away from that kind of nonsense, and yet the only way we could actually move things on . . . was by swallowing everything I believed in.” (Interview with Ford, 2013).

By contrast, NIWC Leader Monica McWilliams reported that neither communal designation nor the requirement to re-designate in 2001 evoked any great tension for the party. Indeed, she viewed the capacity to re-designate as a strength of the civic party, allowing it to creatively navigate the institutions and an opportunity to demonstrate its cross-community principles –encompassing nationalist, unionist and other identities. In this sense, she recalled that the party’s two MLAs had originally attempted to sign in to the Assembly as ‘Nationalist, Unionist and Other’ in 1998 and, when not permitted to do so, signed in as ‘Inclusive Other’. She said: “... we signed in as ‘Inclusive Other’ and that was a position we lived very comfortably under.” (Interview with McWilliams, 2012).

In relation to the re-designation affair, McWilliams added:

“Unfortunately the Alliance objected and wouldn’t [re-designate] and then had to do it and then asked for the regulation to be changed so that when you re-designated back you could never do it again. Whereas we knew that the possibility lay there for us to do it as often as we wanted, which was smart for a cross-community party to understand that we could do it... So we never had a problem as long as that permission existed...” (Interview with McWilliams, 2012).

Leaving to one side the moral and symbolic implications of designation and cross-community voting procedures for civic parties, what can be said of the practical effects? Some interviewees cited practical restrictions as a result of these procedures, such as not being able to solely sponsor an Assembly event on behalf of an external organisation without a supporting signature from a Nationalist and a Unionist MLA (Interview with Lo, 2012). In respect of cross-community voting procedures, one political commentator, highlighted that these rules prevent cross-community parties from holding the balance of power in key votes, and thus playing a more significant role in the Assembly (Interview with Devenport, 2013). In terms of day-to-day politics, however, one Alliance member noted that controversial ‘cross-community votes’ were relatively infrequent in the Assembly (Interview with Farry, 2012), while others struggled to cite determining examples of such decisions or instances when they felt particularly constrained by Assembly rules – a fact they attributed to the nature of chamber business, dominated by Private Members’ business (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Lyttle, 2013). There appears little evidence, furthermore, to

suggest that these rules impact directly upon civic parties' electoral performance. No cross-community representative interviewed made such a claim explicitly, while some cast doubt upon it (Interview with Long, 2012). Those asked if this issue was ever raised by voters, or if voters appeared aware of it, responded in the negative (Interview with Lo, 2012; Interview with Farry, 2012; Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Lyttle, 2013; Interview with Agnew, 2013). Indeed, in focus group discussions with voters about these parties, this matter was not raised by participants and, when prompted, most were unaware of its existence.

Nevertheless, in terms of community designation procedures, the *principle* of disadvantage was generally accorded more weight than the practice. Cross-community representatives invariably stressed the symbolic impact of these rules first and foremost – the inequality they represented, the fact that they imposed upon them an identity that they did not themselves recognise and somehow denied them a sense of legitimacy as civic actors within the system (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Farry, 2012; Interview with Lo, 2012; Interview with Long, 2012; Interview with Lyttle, 2013). Practical implications came largely as a subsequent consideration. This is not to suggest that these procedures bear no substantive effects, but that such effects appeared secondary in the minds of civic actors to symbolic implications relating to equality, identity and legitimacy. Indeed, one Alliance member argued that the problem is nonetheless important for being symbolic, sending out “a very dangerous message to society that we are perpetually divided” (Interview with Farry, 2012).

The communal veto, triggered through the Petition of Concern, emerged as a particular source of discontent in interviews with civic representatives (Interview with Agnew, 2013; Interview with Ford, 2013). While intended to serve as an effective community veto for the protection of minority rights, given the lack of strict definition in legislation of what can constitute such a concern, the trigger for a cross-community vote has controversially been used on a number of occasions by nationalist and unionist parties to block ordinary legislation to which they are opposed on ideological and other grounds, for example, as outlined in Chapter Three, on same sex marriage and welfare reform.

Yet, how do veto procedures affect civic parties specifically? Some representatives suggested that the rule disadvantaged their parties indirectly, by frustrating the civic, integrationist agenda they sought to advance. Ford described how the Petition of Concern can allow the main nationalist and unionist parties to effectively block legislation and, as such, prevent Alliance from getting its policy through the Assembly. These rules do not stop the party from having its voice heard and putting its policy forward through legislative proposals, he argued – such as an amendment to a Sinn Féin motion on same-sex marriage in 2013 which would exempt religious institutions from the reform. However, the rules do constrain Alliance when it comes to getting that legislation passed, he added; that amendment having no hope of passage following the use of the veto (Interview with Ford, 2013).

More broadly, a number of figures from within the civic sphere and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland have observed that such veto mechanisms further frustrate the civic agenda and sustain the pattern of politics being shaped around identity rather than issues (Hinds, Belfast, 2015). These procedures can therefore be seen to reinforce the ethno-national representation culture present in Northern Ireland politics, which can work to marginalise and de-legitimise civic politics.

#### *Executive Power-Sharing through d'Hondt*

The form of executive power-sharing in Northern Ireland has been criticised by certain observers for denying cross-community actors a meaningful role. Under the d'Hondt system, as outlined in Chapter Three, parties are effectively guaranteed a place in government without first having to reach agreement or compromise with potential coalition partners (though, since 2014, provisions have been in place for an official opposition in the Assembly and the agreement among the Executive parties to a Programme for Government following an election, as outlined in Chapter Three). More integrative forms of power-sharing, where such consensus is required, are held up by critics as conducive to ethno-national parties' moderation, but also more accommodating of cross-community parties. Under these conditions civic actors stand to play a more pivotal role, it is argued, potentially to government formation (Wilson, 2005; 2010). The Alliance has long called for the Assembly to move from this non-integrative form of executive power-sharing towards voluntary coalition and for

requirements for greater collective ministerial responsibility (APNI, 2016; 2015; 2011; 2007), a view reiterated in interviews (Interview with Long, 2012; Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

### *Proportional Representation Electoral System*

A further institutional appendage to the consociational system that civic parties encounter in Northern Ireland is the electoral system in the shape of single transferable vote (STV) proportional representation (PR). In the literature, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, Horowitz holds electoral incentives as fundamental to the promotion of multi-ethnic parties and coalitions, and advances vote-pooling systems as most conducive to their success (1985), the Alternative Vote being his preferred option (2002b). For Northern Ireland however, he claims PR-STV to be “perfectly compatible with the maintenance of ethnically based parties and not particularly supportive of multi-ethnic coalitions” (Horowitz, 2001: 100). The constituency-based STV system did not prove conducive to the Women’s Coalition’s success, given the geographically dispersed nature of its support, he argues, and a form of List PR would have provided more opportunity for smaller parties (2002). Wilford and Wilson likewise point to poor inter-ethnic transferring under STV, meaning parties need not appeal beyond their core ethnic constituency (2006:23). They propose its replacement with an ‘Alternative Vote Plus Top Up’ system (2006: 43). Kilmurray and McWilliams furthermore cite the electoral system as a key factor in the Women’s Coalition’s poor electoral faring in the Assembly post 1998, contrasting it with the ‘list plus top-up’ system adopted for the 1996 Forum elections, which proved more favourable (2011) while members of the party interviewed cited the electoral system as a key factor in the loss of its representation in 2003 (Interview with McWilliams, 2013; Interview with Killmurray, 2013).

More recently, Jarrett has analysed the effects of the STV system on the Alliance. He concludes that, although the system theoretically favours small parties, allowing them to garner lower preference transfers from larger parties, overall it proves disadvantageous to the civic party. Given the tendency of unionist and nationalist party voters to transfer only within their own bloc, Alliance does not benefit from vote transfers in the same way, given its relative isolation in the party system and absence

of any other significant non-ethnic party from which it might receive transfers (Jarrett, 2016).

The argument that the PR-STV electoral system poses a barrier to Northern Ireland's civic parties is contested in scholarship and practice, however, with some contending that the system rather offers an advantage to these actors. McGarry and O'Leary claim that whilst cross-community parties had been squeezed since devolution, they have arguably only been kept alive by PR-STV (2004: 14; 2009: 65). Indeed, Alliance, the largest civic party in the region, favours this system and, as illustrated, successfully opposed the Women's Coalition lobby in the Forum for a 'list plus top-up' system to be adopted for Assembly elections (Leonard, 1999: 54). It has even called for the First Past the Post system used for UK General Elections to be replaced with PR-STV (APNI, 2015). Whilst the electoral system did not form a strong theme in interviews with Alliance representatives, this supportive stance towards STV came across. Long cited the party's ability to appeal to voters for lower order preferences, if not their first preference (Interview with Long, 2012). Meanwhile, Farry expressed support for STV as a "fair" system that was relatively favourable to Alliance, adding that the party would oppose any move to AV, for example (Interview with Farry, 2012).

### *Group Autonomy*

As noted in the previous chapter, group autonomy forms the least prominent feature of the power-sharing model in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, communal autonomy in the areas of culture and education undoubtedly bears consequences for civic parties in the region. Whilst this institutional component was not directly commented upon in interviews with civic party representatives, the challenge of progressing their integrationist policies, which contradict this principle, formed a strong theme (Interview with Lyttle, 2013). In this sense, the Alliance's policies around integrated education, shared space and shared symbols have been portrayed discursively at certain points as an attack on community rights and culture.

This effect is particularly notable with regards to integrated education, with the current system of primary and secondary schooling, which is organised and publicly funded on a religious basis, a right stoutly defended by nationalist and unionist parties. The

Alliance Party has long advocated a move away from this segregated schooling system towards an integrated public education system (APNI, 1998; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2013). In 2013 the Alliance published a strategy for a “shared future” for Northern Ireland entitled *For Everyone*, which set out ambitious integrationist policies for education, as well as the economy, children and young people, public space, culture and dealing with the past. On education, it pledged to create more opportunities for shared and integrated education as steps towards a “single overarching education system in Northern Ireland”, advancing specific targets such as a minimum of 20 per cent of children being educated in integrated schools and 40 per cent in mixed schools by 2020 and a requirement that all future new-build schools should be integrated unless an exceptional case for single-identity provision is made (APNI, 2013). As in the Alliance’s 2011 Assembly election manifesto however, the 2013 strategy acknowledges the current system of communal education and accepts that it will persist for the foreseeable future:

“It must be accepted that for the foreseeable future, there will remain a number of different education sectors. The creation of a single, overarching, shared education system can encompass these different sectors provided that there is effective collaboration between schools on a cross-sectoral basis.” (APNI, 2013).

Following the publication of *For Everyone*, Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle recounted a report of the strategy in the nationalist-aligned newspaper *The Irish News*. The report appeared under the headline, ‘End Catholic Education’ (Manley, 2013) – a characterisation he described as “grossly unfair and inaccurate” and unreflective of the party’s policy (Interview with Lyttle, 2013). The row surrounding the Union flag, outlined below, further demonstrates how the formal institutional principle of communal autonomy can play out in the informal structure of political discourse, in which Alliance policies are depicted as posing a threat to this right. Formal institutions interplay with informal in this way, with consequences for civic parties.

#### **4.2 Case Study: The Flag Protests and the 2015 General Election Campaign**

Some of the structural barriers encountered by civic parties in Northern Ireland were played out dramatically in the political dispute that engulfed the Alliance Party over the issue of flag flying at Belfast City Council in 2012. This section presents a short

case study of this affair, including its impact on the 2015 UK General Election campaign in East Belfast.

### *The 'Designated Days' Policy*

As outlined in Chapter Three, in December 2012, Belfast City Council voted on the question of when to fly the Union Flag at Belfast City Hall. The Alliance, which held the balance of power on the council, used its casting vote to support a compromise option – that the flag should fly on designated days of the year – as opposed to the unionist parties' position that it should fly every day and the nationalist parties' preference for its permanent removal. In the wake of this decision, street protests spread across Northern Ireland and Alliance members were subjected to intimidation, attacks on their premises and even death threats (McDonald, 2012). This unrest was precipitated by a political campaign by unionist parties, including the distribution of 40,000 inflammatory leaflets in predominantly Protestant areas of the city, which revealed the contact details of Alliance members and depicted the party as nationalist sympathisers (BBC News, 2012) (See Image 4.1). The campaign was notably concentrated in East Belfast, traditionally a DUP stronghold, where it has faced increasing competition from Alliance in recent years, including losing the Westminster seat (previously held by DUP leader Peter Robinson) to the party's Naomi Long in 2010. Image 4.2 below shows a protest following the decision by Belfast City Council, including a banner that reads: "Defend Our Flag: Smash the Alliance Party".

**Image 4.1: Leaflet Distributed to Homes in Belfast in November 2012 Following the Flag Vote in Belfast City Council**



Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20317461>

Narratives play a powerful role in post-Agreement politics and while the dominant theme within nationalism has been equality, that within unionism has been loss and erosion of its position in society (Nolan 2013: 17). A common feeling among members of Alliance interviewed was that this narrative of ‘loss’ had been exploited by unionist parties in the flag dispute – and deployed against the Alliance. The Alliance’s actions were thus depicted as *weak*, *traitorous* and ‘selling out’ unionists (Interview with Lyttle, 2013; Interview with McNamee, 2013). One representative targeted in the dispute, Naomi Long MP, described how unionist opponents tried to portray her as ‘the common enemy’ and a ‘Sinn Féiner in sheep’s clothing’ in order to unite the community against Alliance and for their parties.

“There’s a narrative that has been fed into loyalist communities now for a long time by unionist representatives, which is part of a strategy of: ‘You need us

because we're fighting your corner, because you're losing out; you're losing out and you need stronger unionism'.

“So the narrative in unionism . . . dating right back, has always been that once you've compromised you're weak and you've lost something and what you need is for somebody stronger to come in who'll never do that again.” (Interview with Long, 2013).

Likewise, Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle described ethno-national parties' attempts to 're-sectarianise politics in Northern Ireland in order to quell cross-community politics', as illustrated by the flag dispute.

“I think there's an explicit strategy from some of the other political parties to create and manufacture identity-based issues in order to heighten people's fears that compromise is somehow a win-lose situation as opposed to a win-win situation. And I think we have a challenge to communicate that everyone can benefit out of compromise, everyone can benefit out of building a shared future.’

“Some of the parties are manipulating those issues [flags, emblems, dealing with the past, parading] and using those to try and inflame people's fears against cross-community politics.” (Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

**Image 4.2: Flag Protest in Belfast, December 2012**



Source: Adrian Guelke, IPSA Conference, 2015

Interviews with unionist politicians, in turn, proved revealing of these narratives. While condemning violence perpetrated in the wake of the flag protest, they expressed little sympathy for Alliance, portraying its actions as naïve and speculating that they would be punished by Protestant voters at the ballot box (Interview with UUP MLA, 2013; Interview with DUP MLA, 2013). An interview exchange with one UUP Member illustrates this attitude:

UUP MLA: There is no excuse for any violence that was turned on [Alliance] or indeed any other party or individuals. So I believe they weren't treated well in that sense. But politically they do have to stand up and explain why they took the vote in the way they did. I don't believe they've done that very successfully. Because they do get quite a lot of unionist voters . . . because they're seen by some unionists maybe as being a very soft side of unionism.

Author: Do you think that the flag dispute will make those voters see them differently?

UUP MLA: I think it will, yeah. I think it will (Interview, 2013).

### *The 2015 Election in East Belfast*

In the 2015 General Election which followed, the Alliance-DUP contest for East Belfast took centre stage in national debate, as a key battleground seat. Following a unionist pact between the DUP and UUP, the election became a two horse race between Alliance incumbent MP Naomi Long and DUP candidate Gavin Robinson. Whilst the DUP appeared keen to run a relatively moderate campaign in East Belfast, fronted by a measured candidate, and avoid referring to the flag dispute, the issue of the flag and the Union nevertheless featured prominently in the debate. The Alliance's campaign, in turn, could be characterised by its twin policy platform of integration and liberalism. It presented itself as standing apart from every other party in Northern Ireland, as the only responsible voice on the side of integration, stability and economic development. The party's core message was a positive one about civic empowerment, the future of Northern Ireland and a new politics for the region. These themes were embodied in campaign slogans which appeared in its manifesto and election posters such as: 'Step Forward'; 'Forward. Back. It's Your Choice.' and 'Your Choice, Not Theirs'. Furthermore, while Alliance's DUP opponents appeared to avoid overtly raising the flag protests, the Alliance positively embraced the issue to highlight the

tactics of their ethno-national opponents and contrast this with its own principled and reasonable civic stance (APNI, 2015; BBC, 2015; East Belfast Hustings Debate, 2015; UTV, 2015).

In an election in which the liberal-conservative debate rose to the fore, with unionist parties firmly in the conservative camp, the Alliance confidently asserted a progressive position on controversial issues like same sex marriage and LGBT rights, putting itself forward as an unashamedly liberal party (See Images 4.3 and 4.4 below). Evans and Tonge note the contrast in the 2015 campaign between the Alliance's progressive stance on such issues and the DUP's social conservatism – a cleavage of increasing salience in Northern Ireland politics. Indeed in his 2014 party conference speech then DUP leader Peter Robinson derided the “flag-lowering, parade-stopping, gay marriage supporting, pro-water charging, holier-than-thou Alliance Party” (Tonge & Evans, 2015: 124).

**Image 4.3: Alliance Party 2015 General Election Poster for Naomi Long's East Belfast Campaign**



Source: Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

A heated exchange during a televised leaders' debate ahead of the election illustrates these dynamics. In the following altercation between Long, representing Alliance, and Danny Kennedy MLA, representing the UUP, Kennedy challenged Long on her party's commitment to the Union:

**Kennedy** (in response to a question on DUP-UUP electoral pacts): “We face a new House of Commons that has, probably the highest number ever, of nationalist or republican or separatist representatives from other parts of the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland. And from a pro-union point of view, from an Ulster unionist point of view that firmly supports the Union and the Union remaining in place, we want to play our part in ensuring that unionists are re-elected.”

**Long:** “The Union is not at stake in this election. This is a myth that has been created.”

**Kennedy:** “Of course, Naomi’s party is agnostic on the Union and doesn’t support the Union. The Union is of course at stake.”

**Long:** “What is at stake are the visions and values of the people who will go and represent, the quality of representation that people will get and how much they can deliver for their constituents. That’s what people will be voting on. It’s not about the Union.” (UTV, 2015)

Later in the debate, Kennedy repeated his claims regarding the Alliance’s lack of support for Northern Ireland’s union with Britain, invoking the flag dispute:

**Kennedy:** “I’ve already explained that the Alliance Party are agnostic on the Union. It doesn’t support or believe in the Union. And the evidence of that was when they voted with others to take the flag down at Belfast City Hall.”

**Presenter:** “Naomi Long, agnostic on the Union?”

**Long:** “I think Danny is now really grasping at straws. The only reason there is a unionist pact in East Belfast is to do with personal issues... to do with the fact that the DUP lost their seat and they don’t have the confidence of believing that they can win it back on their own. But the reality is that delivery in Westminster...”

**Kennedy** (interrupting): “Naomi, are you a unionist? Do you believe in the Union, Naomi?” (UTV, 2015).

In line with the discursive contestation of the civic position outlined above, these exchanges exemplify a strategy used by unionist parties, in which they attempt to bring the Alliance onto the territory of the constitution in order to demonstrate its comparative *weakness* on this front and, at times, its effective *betrayal* of the unionist community. The discussions also display the standard Alliance response, in trying to

expose these tactics on the part of ethno-national parties and return the focus to the ‘real’ issues and policies of the day.

**Image 4.4: Alliance Party 2015 General Election Poster for Naomi Long’s East Belfast Campaign**



Source: Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

Following the flag dispute of 2012-13, most Alliance interviewees were resolute in their belief that their opponents’ misrepresentation tactics would not resonate with voters, nor result in a loss of electoral support for the party, and indeed that it may galvanise some voters against ethno-nationalist divisive politics and for their progressive vision (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Ford, 2013). Thus far, these predictions appear to be vindicated, with the overall net effect of the affair on the party’s electoral performance appearing to be neutral, potentially indicating some loss of support and some gain (Interview with Lynch, 2015). In the May 2014 local government elections, Alliance gained 6.9 per cent of the vote, only slightly down on their 2011 performance of 7.4 per cent ([www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)). In the May 2015

General Election Alliance's however, Long ultimately lost the East Belfast seat back to the DUP. Nevertheless, she increased her share of the vote by 5 per cent on the 2010 result, and this in the context of a unionist electoral pact ([www.ark.ac.uk/elections/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/)).

### **4.3 Structural Openings for Civic Parties in the Post-Agreement Landscape**

#### *Discursive Openings: Issue Ownership*

The Alliance Party's relative isolation in the Northern Ireland party system, could also be interpreted as something of an advantage in the current configuration. In the context of a small space open to civic parties, dominating this niche might appear the optimal position for the party. Indeed, as noted, the Alliance's 'uniqueness' in a sphere dominated by ethno-national actors is a trait it has been keen to highlight to voters over the years and present as something of a virtue. The distinctive 'cross-community' label is very much a part of the party's identity, worn as a badge of pride by its representatives (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Lo, 2012; Interview with Long, 2012; Interview with Lyttle, 2013). Furthermore, certain actions by the party in the past have suggested a desire to continue to monopolise this niche in Northern Ireland politics, rather than supporting the growth of other cross-community parties which might compete for this space. In the talks that preceded the GFA, for instance, Leonard documents the Alliance Party's opposition to the introduction of an electoral system for the new Northern Ireland Assembly that featured a list 'top-up' mechanism. Indeed, he identifies the party as pivotal in the adoption of PR-STV over a top-up system, the latter being advocated by the NIWC (Leonard, 1999: 55-56). Whilst such a top-up system is generally more favourable for smaller parties than STV, and therefore might have been expected to win the support of the Alliance, Leonard ventures that it would also have benefitted other small cross-community parties competing on the same ground as the Alliance, such as NIWC, and was thus strategically blocked by the party. He further notes that in the first Assembly elections in 1998, the Alliance only fielded one candidate in Belfast South, despite having had sufficient support in the affluent constituency to field two, due to the fact that NIWC leader Monica McWilliams was also standing in the constituency (Leonard, 1999: 56). In the event, McWilliams took one of the six seats in the constituency, while the

Alliance candidate failed to win a seat, though an analysis of transfers demonstrates a significant erosion of support from Alliance to SDLP, rather than to NIWC per se (Leonard, 1999: 56). Indeed, in an interview with this author, the NIWC leader recounted encountering the contention from Alliance party members, following her election in Belfast South in 1998, that the NIWC had deprived the Alliance of the seat, despite the fact that it was not she but an SDLP candidate who won the last seat in the constituency under the transferrable vote system (Interview with McWilliams, 2012).

Thus despite suffering from a lack of allies in the Assembly, on occasion, the Alliance's actions have not worked to support the development of other cross-community parties in Northern Ireland. Indeed, in a rational manner, Alliance appears to seek to continue to dominate this civic sphere of politics, rather than encouraging plurality and competition therein. Indeed, building alliances with other civic parties in the Assembly was not a theme that arose distinctly in interviews with Alliance representatives.

#### *Institutional Openings: Opportunities in the Power-Sharing System*

The Alliance Party participated in the Executive from 2010-2016 with one portfolio assumed through a cross-community vote outside of the d'Hondt procedures following the Hillsborough Agreement – the contested Justice brief – and another through d'Hondt, based on the party's strength in the Assembly following the 2011 election. As noted above, the Alliance has long been critical of the d'Hondt procedures for executive formation and urged a more integrative approach that would require prior agreement of the parties. However, far from disadvantaging cross-community parties, others have pointed to the ways in which Northern Ireland's relatively liberal consociational structures privilege these actors. McGarry and O'Leary present Northern Ireland's form of power-sharing Executive – open to any party – as favourable to smaller actors (2006: 274), and, together with McCrudden and Schwartz, point to the fact that there is no restriction to non-aligned parties taking on the roles of First or Deputy First Minister (McCrudden et al., 2013: 235). Following the 2011 election, furthermore, it enjoyed two ministerial seats as a result of the particular transitional power-sharing agreement – more than either of the second largest unionist

or nationalist parties. Indeed, a study of the 2011 Assembly election demonstrates that Alliance did disproportionately well in terms of its proportion of executive portfolios in comparison with its proportion of parliamentary seats, with a percentage share of ministerial positions double either its seat or vote share (Garry, 2011: 22).

A number of Alliance members interviewed attested to the benefits of being in government, in boosting the party's profile, its influence in the political system and its perceived significance amongst voters (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Farry, 2012; Interview with Ford, 2013; Interview with Lo, 2012). Representatives attributed the party's nomination for the role of Justice Minister to the perception amongst other parties of Alliance being trustworthy and "in a position of reasonable integrity and reasonable balance" (Interview with Ford, 2013). As then party leader and Justice Minister David Ford put it:

"The fact that I became Minister of Justice three years ago was not because people love me, it's because they hate each other more. There was a measure of trust that an Alliance minister would be capable of doing justice in a fair way." (Interview with Ford, 2013).

Other representatives felt the party's execution of the role had contributed to a reputation it already held of being a credible "honest broker in politics in Northern Ireland" (Interview with Dickson, 2013) and capable of commanding "the respect of the entire community" (Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

Alliance MLA Stewart Dickson said:

"I think there is a confidence that Alliance holds a sensible centre ground position. And the more we're exposed to the public and the more the public is exposed to us, the more they get to understand our message. And that has come about through ministers." (Interview with Dickson, 2013).

A study by Evans and Tonge, furthermore, highlights strong support for the power-sharing government among Alliance supporters, potentially enhanced by the party's inclusion in the Executive (2012: 12). Representatives of unionist and nationalist parties interviewed also highlighted that Alliance has benefitted from the particular transitional power-sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland, given the two ministerial seats it held in the Executive during this period (Interview with Sinn Féin MLA, 2013; Interview with DUP MLA, 2013).

#### **4.4 Negotiating the Power-Sharing Landscape: Civic Party Strategy**

##### ***Party Positioning***

Since its formation in 1970 the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland's (APNI) self-image has been neither unidimensional nor static. The party's positioning as a civic party in the Northern Ireland context has evolved over time, in line with the contours of politics and the peace process, as outlined in the previous chapter. Most notably, the Good Friday Agreement and resulting consociational political system have had a significant effect on how the party conceives of itself as a "cross-community party" and presents this image to voters.

In the post-settlement context, the Alliance defines itself above all by its commitment to an integrated society. Formed at the height of the conflict, for the core purpose of pursuing peace, the party's ideology has remained true to its founding principles, albeit with a progressive shift in emphasis over the years from the cessation of violence to positive societal integration. This position is embodied by policies including integrated education, mixed housing and shared public space - measures that link it firmly to efficient governance and economic development, emphasising the cost of segregation through duplication of public resources (APNI, 2016; 2015; 2013; 2011). The party's 2011 election manifesto, for example, included the pledge that 20 per cent of children would be taught in integrated schools by 2020 (up from about 7 per cent) (northernireland.foundation) and that so-called 'peace walls' between Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods would be progressively removed (APNI, 2011). In addition to this integrationist ethos, the party also views itself as liberal, championing individual rights and freedom of expression over exclusivist group rights and prescriptive identities. Its 2011 manifesto also made a commitment to work to introduce a Single Equality Bill and to deliver a Sexual Orientation Strategy (APNI, 2011).

In expressing what the party stands for, Alliance members interviewed consistently highlighted these two core strands: integration and liberalism (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Farry, 2012; Interview with Ford, 2013; Interview with Long, 2012).

Alliance Deputy Leader and then sole Member of Parliament Naomi Long stated:

“Well, for me, in terms of the reason for the formation of the party... it’s about trying to bring people together in Northern Ireland in a way that isn’t superficial. It isn’t about carving up or sharing out things in Northern Ireland, it’s actually about bringing people together at a more fundamental level so that they see themselves as part of one community... and that has always been the basis on which the party has operated.

“We would be a broadly liberal party for that reason, because we believe the focus should be on trying to build cohesive communities and not focus on the differences between communities. And we also believe in things like civil liberties because we believe that it’s important that people are able to express themselves freely and openly, but in a community setting.” (Interview with Long, 2012)

The party’s definition of itself as civic in this sense is based, not on holding representation of members of both communities within its structures, membership or support. Rather, it rests on its *ideology* and vision: that of a civic, united Northern Ireland. In its internal party structures and operation, Alliance eschews quotas based on ethnic, national or religious identity, as an approach that would run contrary to its principles. Members interviewed thus took pride in the fact that they did not know the religious or national affiliation of their party colleagues, nor members, treating this as an irrelevance. By way of illustration, one member recounted that after the death of a close party colleague, with whom she had worked for several years, she had to enquire in which of the town’s churches the funeral would be held (Interview with Long, 2012).

Alliance Party MLA Stephen Farry further articulates this sentiment:

“I’ve no idea [about party members’ stance on the constitutional question]; we never ask them. We don’t ask people what religion they are; we don’t ask people what view they take on the border – that’s their own choice, the party’s not defined around those issues.

“We know we are a cross-community party because these things become apparent over time. Some people are more open about saying who they are, but there’s no sense of ever asking or needing to ask.” (Interview with Farry, 2012)

Alliance holds a liberal, cosmopolitan conception of identity. Whilst respecting that people in Northern Ireland hold different religious, ethnic and national identities and aspirations, the party maintains that identity is not fixed, as ethno-national parties might proffer, but fluid, multiple and complex. This view of identity is clearly articulated in the party's flagship strategy document for a "shared future" published in 2013, entitled *For Everyone*:

"We acknowledge that people identify with and belong to religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities. These however are not permanent or stable, but are open and fluid. People can have open, mixed and multiple identities. They can belong to many groups, have a complex identity, and have loyalties to different structures and levels of government." (APNI, 2013: 14)

In support of this stance, members highlight the increasing emergence of shared and civic identities in Northern Ireland, pointing to recent public opinion data which suggest that a high proportion of people identify as Northern Irish (21 per cent in the 2011 census) (Census 2011, 2012), and as neither unionist nor nationalist (40 per cent in a 2015 survey) ([www.ark.ac.uk\(a\)](http://www.ark.ac.uk(a))), as outlined in Chapter Three.

Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle thus argued:

"[Alliance is] passionate about a fluid, diverse identity... I think in some of the most recent surveys [a large proportion] of people identified as 'other' and you have a new emerging Northern Irish identity as well. So I think the community is potentially more fluid and diverse than our elected representation portrays at times."

"From our perspective, my perspective, I think identity is much more fluid than people at times accept. I think, especially now, it's possible in Northern Ireland to be British, to feel Irish, to feel you're from Ulster. And I think, from our point of view, people should be given the opportunity to decide for themselves rather than being labelled." (Interview with Lyttle, 2013).

Then Alliance MLA Anna Lo articulated this conception of identity in personal terms:

"For generations we've been voting for our community and that's always the way we vote, and I think we need to be moving away from that, to let people see that we need to be voting on what the parties will do for you, on general things - on jobs, on employment, on education, on health - rather than keeping your identity.

“Is [identity] that important really? What is an identity anyway? Orange identity or green identity. We all have multiple identities. As far as I’m concerned, I’m a mother, I’m a woman, I’m a politician, I’m against sexism. There are so many identities, I don’t want to be defined as just one identity.” (Interview with Lo, 2012)

In portraying Alliance as integrationist and liberal, members also emphasised the *unique* character of the party in Northern Ireland. Representatives interviewed commonly defined themselves in contrast to all other parties in the system, as something of a lone voice of reason in the midst of ethno-nationalist politicking (Interview with Farry, 2012; Interview with Lyttle, 2013). This discourse of exceptionalism marks a continuation from the party’s formation period, when criticism of ethno-national parties lay central to its founding principles, as outlined in Chapter Three (APNI, 1970a; 1970b).

In Alliance key documents, integration is thus identified as the party’s ‘USP’. Outlining the party’s civic offering in his foreword to its manifesto for the 2015 UK General Election, leader David Ford states: “That’s the Alliance vision. *Unique* in Northern Ireland. A message to inspire and motivate people.” (APNI, 2015: 3; emphasis added).

Likewise, in the party’s manifesto for the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly election, Ford draws a clear line between Alliance and every other party, on the integration question:

"These steps are built on our one key objective: it is time we stopped the delay, the fudge, and the waffle of other parties and moved ahead, further and faster, to build a United Community. *No other party* puts that first. *No other party* has that commitment. *No other party* can be trusted to deliver on that essential change." (APNI, 2016: 3; emphasis added).

In interviews, Alliance members also single out integration as the niche that it alone occupies in Northern Ireland politics. Stephen Farry MLA thus staked ownership over this civic agenda:

“Within [Northern Ireland politics] there are essentially three coherent positions. You have the unionist position which the DUP own, you have the nationalist position which Sinn Féin own, and you have the shared future, alternative position which we own.” (Interview with Farry, 2012).

The Alliance's self-positioning as a civic liberal actor, unique in Northern Ireland, comes across clearly and consistently in both party documents and interviews. But what role can such a party play within a political system based on the accommodation of two rival ethno-national positions? As illustrated in the previous chapter, the Alliance Party has been observed to perform two distinct roles since its formation: that of "bridge-builders" (mediation) and that of "civic liberals" (integration) (Leonard, 1999) – roles that have co-existed and, by times, come into tension with one another. In this sense, under the civic party typology presented in Appendix A, the Alliance can be seen to have straddled both the accommodationist and integrationist types, with both positionings existing to varying degrees within the party and shifting over time. The accommodationist, mediation role has been associated to a greater extent with Alliance's historic position, not least during the 1970s and 1980s, when it explicitly positioned itself as something of a conduit or 'honest broker' between the nationalist and unionist blocs in negotiations aimed at settlement (Leonard, 1999; Mitchell, 2015). Indeed, even in the post-devolution era, the party has presented itself in this light, raising the possibility in the 1998 election that it could hold the balance of power between the parties and thus lie pivotal to holding the Assembly together. The party's first Assembly manifesto stated: "The position of Alliance, at the heart of the Assembly, will be central to the future of Northern Ireland. While others will try to tear it apart, you can vote in a strong Alliance team to hold it..." (APNI, 1998).

The integrationist role can be most plainly observed in the party in its more recent and current guise, as it presents itself as a civic, liberal party in its own right, set apart from the other parties in Northern Ireland. Alliance members interviewed thus predominantly advanced this latter role for the party and distanced themselves from the 'mediator' or 'bridge-builder' position. Alliance MLA Stephen Farry assigned that role largely to the party's past:

"That was our historic assumption, that we were the honest broker; that we never had any views of our own, we were just there for the process and as and when there was a blockage, we would either produce an idea or sacrifice ourselves in some convoluted way to make things move along.

"At times the party was put in that situation and it always acted in what we viewed as being the best interests of Northern Ireland as a whole, even if that

at times maybe cut across what would have been the more narrow interests of the party. I mean, today with the situation a bit more bedded down, we're called on that to play that role less often." (Interview with Farry, 2012).

Others rejected the accommodationist mediator role as a misrepresentation of their party. Far from being a party of the moderate middle confined to forging compromise between two extremes, they argued, Alliance is a party with its own distinct agenda – an agenda for radical change (Interview with Dickson, 2013; Interview with Long, 2012). If one views Northern Ireland politics from a 'segregationist/integrationist' as opposed to a 'nationalist/unionist' perspective, Alliance is on the "extreme end of that spectrum", Long claimed.

She stated:

"I think that the assumption that we're just moderate... In some ways we are, because of that narrative, seen as benign. And then when we actually do something that affects people and impacts on them, they're kind of horrified, because they assume almost by voting Alliance.... they don't expect anything radical to happen. But actually if you read our manifestos and if you look at our policies, we actually stood on a manifesto of leading change. We're saying to people, it's not about maintaining the status quo, it's not about doing things the way it's always been done, we're actually looking at radical change.

"But I'm not sure, because of the way we're parodied on occasion, that people actually get the message. They just assume that we don't have an agenda other than to find a compromise between the two extremes. We actually have our own political agenda which is about removing the two extremes as the main political force in politics and actually finding a different alignment in politics." (Interview with Long, 2012).

In an interview, party leader David Ford likewise claimed that the party represented, not a compromise between two tribal positions, but "an alternative to tribal politics altogether" (interview with Ford, 2013). This view echoes that advanced by then party leader Sean Neeson and party organiser Stephen Farry, who, writing after the signing of the Agreement, presented Alliance as a "liberal, pluralist, non-ethnic party" rather than a collection of moderate "soft" unionists or nationalists in an "uneasy coalition" (Farry & Neeson, 1999: 1224).

Another discourse that emerges from party members' accounts of themselves is that of 'watchdog', performing a scrutinising or supervisory function in respect of the other parties. This role has been observed in Alliance's contribution to the party talks that

preceded the GFA (Leonard, 1999; Farry & Neeson, 1999: 1233). Likewise, the watchdog role was invoked in interviews when party members referred to its position in the Executive and in the various multi-party talks which have taken place since the signing of the Agreement (Interview with Ford, 2013).

In the party's conception of itself and its role in Northern Ireland politics, both continuities and breaks with the past emerge. The image of the party as a pragmatic, solutions-focused actor that stands apart from all other parties in the system can be traced back to its inception, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, a gradual shift is apparent from a more accommodationist to a more integrationist stance; from a view of the party as a mediator between two blocs – something of a means to an end - to a civic party with distinct policies operating on its own terms – an end in itself. However, this shift has not been linear and both conceptions of the party continue to coexist, at times somewhat uneasily. Whilst the party eschews the moderate 'middle-man' label, it has continued to perform this role within the power-sharing system in some ways. For example, its assumption of the contested Justice Ministry in the Northern Ireland Executive in 2010 placed it back in this intermediary position to an extent. Indeed, former Alliance leader Seamus Close launched an intervention following the 2016 elections, warning the party that to take up the post once again, allowing themselves to succumb to pressure from the two main Executive parties the DUP and Sinn Féin, would be a mistake, leading the electorate to view them as "patsys" of the main unionist and nationalist parties (Young, 2016). Likewise, at the local government level, where power-sharing does not operate, Alliance has held the balance of power in a number of councils and been forced on occasion to use this position to offer compromise solutions between nationalist and unionist parties. The most notable example of this trend was the decision taken by Belfast City Council in 2012 to fly the Union Flag on designated days of the year only, leading to street protests and violence. Thus, while Alliance presents itself as a distinct civic option, in the polarised context of post-Agreement Northern Ireland the role of mediator is one it finds difficult to escape.

The tensions surrounding the way the Alliance presents itself to voters also arose in focus group discussions. Participants in these groups overwhelmingly expressed

disillusion with the nationalistic dynamics of Northern Irish politics and a desire for more ‘normal’, issue-based politics; nevertheless, some expressed a reluctance to embrace the Alliance Party as that alternative (Focus Group b, 2013; Focus Group d, 2013). Indeed, some showed fatigue with the Alliance’s messages of ‘cross-community’ reconciliation (Focus Group d, 2013), suggesting limited appeal of the bridge builder image for voters in post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

For its part, the NIWC presented itself as something of a ‘transversal’ party, comprising nationalists, unionists and others; British and Irish identities, and both (Interview with McWilliams, 2012; Interview with Morrice, 2013). In interviews representatives stressed this diversity as the core strength of the party, explaining that the internal dialogue it engaged in to reach consensus on issues allowed it to foster compromise and consensus with other parties (Interview with McWilliams, 2012). The NIWC accepted the necessity of the consociational power-sharing system as a transitional framework and had no problem with the ‘other’ designation, former leader and MLA Monica McWilliams reported. The NIWC also supported affirmative action to ensure equal representation, including gender and religious quotas – notably for the new Police Service of Northern Ireland in the case of the latter (Interview with McWilliams). In this sense, the NIWC can be classed as an accommodationist party under the typology set out in Appendix A. Indeed, McWilliams draws a line in the sand between the NIWC and the Alliance in terms of its positioning in this sense:

“... we had always said that, unlike the Alliance, that we were nationalist, unionist and others. And we had no difficulty having that description. Whereas Alliance describes themselves as the party of the centre, we said ‘no, we’re truly cross-community, the people in our party are nationalists and unionists and others who wish to bring those identities into a coalition where we can work out from that what we want to do in order to reach an agreement’.

“And because we had that richness inside our party we probably had figured out what we needed to do in terms of the various pieces of the Agreement, from the constitutional issues to the security reform, through to the social, economic and human rights, equality pieces, through to reconciliation.” (Interview with McWilliams, 2012).

The Green Party meanwhile, appears to align to a greater extent with an integrationist than an accommodationist position in its policies and positioning. Nevertheless, it could be defined as a ‘post-ethnic’ party in the sense that it does not situate itself on

the integration-accommodation spectrum in its self-positioning and, in some ways, rejects this premise of the distinction. Representatives distinguish the Green Party from the Alliance in the sense that it is “naturally cross-community” by virtue of being an issue-based party, rather than making this central to its platform (Interview with Agnew, 2013; Interview with Barry, 2013). Green Party leader and MLA Steven Agnew argues that the party differs from the Alliance in the sense that it is not defined by anti-sectarianism, but rather by its policies. Opposing sectarianism is something that the party takes for granted, he explains, rather than constituting its “raison d’etre”:

“Maybe one of the reasons why I wasn't attracted to the Alliance Party is that by being a cross-community stroke anti-sectarian party, it's what you're against almost more than what you're for. You know, you even describe it as a cross-community party; in any other country it would be called a party...

“So again it's the language... you can't escape it. And again there's good contextual reasons for having that type of language and referring to cross-community parties. But as I say, we're not defined by it. We're defined by our policies, we're defined by what we're for, we're defined by our policies on social, environmental justice, decision making at the lowest effective level and direct democracy, non-violent direct action, and these types of things.” (Interview with Agnew, 2013).

The Green Party in Northern Ireland has been characterised by some as a “post-conflict party” in this way (Interview with Agnew, 2013).

### *Electoral Strategy*

Civic parties also face a difficult balancing act in Northern Ireland between consolidating their support and expanding to secure broad cross-community support across the region. In the case of the Alliance, whilst the party attracts a relatively evenly balanced support from Protestant and Catholic voters, as shown in Chapter Three, that support lies predominantly in urban, Protestant majority, and often affluent, areas in the east of the region. Whilst this issue was not proactively raised by civic party representatives in interviews, when asked, most Alliance representatives acknowledged that this was something the party must consider in its electoral strategy. One representative attributed the party’s strength in Belfast and the surrounding areas to its approach of building a reputation for effective constituency case work, which is easier to achieve in suburban than rural, or even inner city, areas (Interview with Ford,

2013). He said that the party was making efforts and electoral progress in the more Catholic and rural west of Northern Ireland, but at the same time, “it is much easier to... consolidate and build up” (Interview with Ford, 2013). Another Alliance representative recognised the need for the party to break into the west, but also, as a relatively small party, to capitalise on its areas of strength in the east: “That's why it's vital that we grow equally, that our appeal is what it is: cross-community. But you have to take your advantages where those advantages are” (Interview with Dickson, 2013). One longstanding party member furthermore observed that the party’s strategy since the 1990s, after it lost much of its support in Catholic majority areas during the 1980s particularly following the polarising effect of the hunger strikes, had been to concentrate its resources in those areas in the east where it had established an electoral base (Interview, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

The post-settlement political space in Northern Ireland is evidently wrought with challenges and pitfalls for civic parties. As this chapter has demonstrated, the formal and informal structures of post-Agreement politics interplay to challenge the legitimacy of civic politics and civic actors. Informal structures pertaining to political discourse and dynamics of party competition – discursive marginalisation, contestation and co-optation and an absence of potential partners – create an environment in which civic actors appear to be perpetually swimming against the tide. Meanwhile formal institutions of the power-sharing system – primarily in the shape of corporate voting procedures and vetoes – reinforce these informal features. Formal and informal dynamics of politics can thus work in concert to marginalise civic parties and their form of politics and, ultimately, deny them a legitimate role as actors in their own right, equal to others in the system. Indeed, at times these structures interplay to place civic actors in the cross fire or facing the invidious choice of self-sacrifice for the greater good of peace, as illustrated in the re-designation affair, or integration as demonstrated in the flag protest.

Yet, amidst these inimical conditions, the post-settlement landscape also features some potential opportunities that can be exploited by non-aligned actors. Whilst operating in an ethnic party system presents these parties with patent challenges, as outlined,

being the only significant cross-community party in this context also bears some advantages. Informally, this isolated position creates something of a niche for the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland politics; a distinctive offering that it can present to voters. Indeed, this analysis has shown that the party has actively presented itself in opposition to other parties, as unique within Northern Ireland. Furthermore, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the party has done little to foster support for other civic parties, nor widen the central space open to these actors in the party system. Formally, the d'Hondt system, as part of Northern Ireland's liberal consociational framework, has also allowed the Alliance to participate in the Executive in recent years. Furthermore, occupying the unique position of centre party in a transitional and contested arrangement has also opened up institutional opportunities for the Alliance, in its assumption of the contested justice ministry from 2010-16 by virtue of its non-aligned stance.

This opportunity structure can present civic parties with difficult choices, however. Firstly, in terms of how they position themselves as a party, the openings the system affords often lie in conflict with their goals and self-images. As seen, the Alliance has been keen to present itself as a post-ethnic, civic liberal party with a distinct identity and distance itself from the accommodationist 'bridge builder' between nationalist and unionist parties that it was often called upon to perform in its early years. Nevertheless, its decision to assume the contested justice ministry in some ways places it back in the role of the mediator in the power-sharing framework. In the context of power-sharing between two polarised party blocs, this is arguably a position that affords the Alliance most relevance and legitimacy in the institutions. Thus, the Alliance's bid to shed the role of bridge builder has been a challenge when the transitional dynamics of power-sharing in Northern Ireland still require such a part to be played. This dynamic can create something of a strategic dilemma for civic parties as they must decide whether to step into these mediation positions when they arise and take advantage of the power and influence they afford, or to decline the opportunity in a bid to maintain a distinct integrationist image, as a civic party in its own right.

In terms of electoral strategy, as relatively small parties, civic actors must balance the need to consolidate its position and grow, with the need to attract broad cross-

community support and maintain their legitimacy as a non-ethnic actor. In the case of the Alliance, as demonstrated, the strategy of recent years appears to focus on consolidating its strongholds in the urban east of the region, where the demographic is majority Protestant, at the expense of breaking into the more rural and Catholic west. Additionally, with regard to alliances, civic actors face the strategic choice of attempting to occupy and 'own' the civic niche between the nationalist and unionist blocs and of that of reaching out to other civic parties, and perhaps more moderate nationalist and unionist parties, to build a cross-community coalition to achieve their policy goals. From the evidence, it appears that the Alliance strategy in the post-Agreement space has been characterised by the former approach.

The civic integrationist party, as which the Alliance presents itself, thus appears to lie in tension with the bridge party that it is sometimes required to act in practice in the post-GFA landscape. The question thus emerges to what extent, as long as post-settlement politics in Northern Ireland remains ethno-nationally polarised, civic parties can escape the role of intermediary actor, and transition to become the 'normal' issue-based party to which they might aspire.

**Part III**  
**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

## **Chapter Five**

### **Keeping Multi-Ethnic Bosnia Alive? The Emergence and Evolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Civic Parties**

In a polity but two decades removed from a brutal war, in which the parties to that conflict now share power, the space for civic parties is not only constrained but deeply contested. Despite extensive international peacebuilding efforts to foster political moderation in post-war Bosnia, politics remains intensely divided along ethnic lines. Rigid consociational arrangements implemented to end the 1992-95 war laid the foundations for a heavily ethnicised political framework, widely deemed dysfunctional, discriminatory and divisive. And in this framework, ethno-national parties continue to dominate. Nevertheless, a distinct non-ethnic bloc exists in Bosnian politics, and has remained into the post-settlement era. How do these civic parties experience this political framework and, moreover, survive amidst such inauspicious conditions? To begin to address these questions, this chapter sets out the context in which Bosnia's civic parties emerged and operate. It traces the historical evolution of the country's political structures and, in turn, its non-ethnic parties.

This chapter proceeds by sketching out the origins of Bosnia's conflict and the historical antecedents to its political structures of ethno-national identity, political parties and institutions. The second section outlines the shape of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which brought the 1992-95 war to an end, and the complex institutional system it bestowed on the Bosnian state. The third section depicts the dynamics of post-settlement politics; the contours of the party system, public opinion and the relationship between parties and voters. Finally, the fourth section introduces the primary civic parties during the period of investigation – the Social Democratic Party and Naša Stranka – their origins, policy positionings and political trajectories to date.

#### **5.1 Origins of the Conflict**

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) constitutes a polity of 3.5 million people deeply divided along ethnic lines in which approximately 50 per cent of people identify as Bosniak, 30 per cent as Serb and 15 per cent as Croat (popis2013.ba). Many of the defining features of contemporary Bosnian politics - not least the politicisation of ethno-national identity, ethnic political mobilisation and ethnic power-sharing - have

their roots in historical periods of governance. This section provides a brief overview of the political history of Bosnia up to the post-war period, giving particular attention to the legacies that shape the phenomenon under investigation.

### *From Ottoman Rule to the First Yugoslavia*

While Bosnia and Herzegovina has existed as an integral territory for several centuries, prior to 1992 it had no experience as an independent state (Bieber, 2006: 5; Keil, 2013: 82). Indeed its history reads as a series of conquests by external powers: governed by the Ottoman Empire from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, followed by a period of Austro-Hungarian rule from 1878-1914, becoming part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes - later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia - after World War I and forming one of the six republics of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia following World War II, before gaining independence in 1992 amidst the breakup of Yugoslavia and the new state's descent into war (Malcolm, 1996).

Ottoman rule saw the development of separate religious identities in Bosnia – primarily Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox - their gradual alignment with national identity and their politicisation. A large portion of the population became islamised during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, incentivised to do so by the Ottoman state through tax incentives and superior career prospects (Malcolm, 1996: 65-66). Keil notes that the Millet system, which organised society on a religious basis and openly discriminated against non-Muslims, who were subject to higher taxes, exerted a significant impact on identity and contributed to the effective merging of religion and nationality in Bosnia (2013: 57-58).

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed the rise of neighbouring states in the region, particularly Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and with it the awakening of Serb, Croat and Muslim national consciousness (Keil, 2013: 58). In this sense, Keil notes that conversion of religious groups into nations that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Bosnia occurred firstly for Serbs, then Croats and lastly for Muslims (2013: 80). Furthermore, the principles of consociation can be traced back to the late Ottoman period when a Consultative Assembly in BiH was formed in 1867 on the principle of ethnic representation with Muslim, Christian and Jewish delegates from each region (Keil,

2013: 60). National identity was further strengthened during Austro-Hungarian rule. Despite the regime's attempts to propagate a unified Bosnian identity, Malcolm notes that the forces of Croat and Serb nationalism rendered the project futile (1996: 148-149). The first political parties and organisations thus emerged during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century along ethno-national lines (Bieber, 2006: 7) – the Muslim National Organisation (1906), the Serbian National Organisation (1907) and the Croatian National Union (1908) (Malcolm, 1996: 151). Following the official annexation of Bosnia into the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908, the Constitution of 1910 recognised the main religious groups in Bosnia and granted a level of autonomy to each. Indeed, the first Bosnian Parliament, established in 1910, enshrined the principle of ethnic representation, constituting reserved seats for Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic and Jewish representatives (Keil, 2013: 61-62).

Ethnic political parties remained a dominant feature of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, of which Bosnia formed part in the inter-war years, during which they struggled to find consensus on the nature of a common state (Bieber, 2006: 8; Keil, 2013: 65-66). The Second World War saw the invasion of Yugoslavia by Germany in 1941 and Bosnia's annexation into the Independent State of Croatia, governed by the local fascist movement the Ustaše which committed genocide against large numbers of Jews and Serbs (Bieber, 2006: 9). The Independent State of Croatia faced armed resistance from two movements during the war, the largely Serb Četniks and the communist and multi-national Partisans led by Josip Broz 'Tito', with the latter prevailing to form the dominant political movement of the post-war socialist state of Yugoslavia (Bieber, 2006: 10; Malcolm, 1996: 177).

### *The Second Yugoslavia*

The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1963) came into being following the Second World War, under the leadership of President Josip Broz Tito. The federation composed six socialist republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Tito would rule the state until his death in 1980. National identity assumed a somewhat contradictory place in the SFRY. While nationalism was strongly opposed and

Yugoslav unity championed during President Tito's rule - encompassed in the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity' - nationality nevertheless formed the building blocks of the federal state (Belloni, 2007: 19; Keil, 2013: 68-69). With the exception of Bosnia, which was established as the homeland of three equal constituent peoples, nationality constituted the principle on which the state's component republics were formed (Keil, 2013: 68). During the Yugoslav period, furthermore, Bosnian Muslim national identity gained official recognition on a par with Serb and Croat identity, with Muslim recognised as an ethnic category (*narodnost*) in the 1961 census, as an ethnic group alongside Serbs and Croats in the 1963 constitution and deemed an equal nation (*narod*) in the 1971 census (Malcolm, 1996: 198-199; Touquet, 2012a: 8). Indeed, in the late 1960s and 1970s a system of proportional representation of Serbs, Bosnian Muslims and Croats - the '*ključ*' or ethnic key - was introduced, for allocation of positions in the Communist Party in BiH, political administration and the civil service (Burg, 1997: 125; Keil, 2013: 71; Silber & Little, 1996: 207).

As noted, Muslim national consciousness developed later than that of Serb or Croat. Indeed, Muslim identity did not gain recognition until the latter decades of the Yugoslav Republic, as noted. It is notable furthermore that most of those who chose the Muslim designation in the 1961 and 1971 censuses had historically chosen to designate as 'Yugoslav, not nationally defined', with the proportion of those identifying as Yugoslav, after the introduction of Muslim as an ethnic category, falling in the 1968 census (Sekulić et al, 1994: 84 in Touquet, 2012a: 10; Malcolm, 1996; Bougarel et al, 2007: 1). Indeed, the religiously-neutral term *Bosniak* came to replace Muslim only during the war in 1993 (Belloni, 2009: 357; Bougarel et al, 2007: 1). Touquet thus deems *Bosniak* nationalism, which identifies with the federal state, as a "fairly recent phenomenon" and "generally weaker than Croat and Serb nationalism" (2012b: 216).

Sociological accounts of pre-war Bosnia, with varying emphasis, paint a picture of a country in which ethnic difference was present but not politicised, where distinct ethnicities co-existed peacefully and in mutual respect (Bougarel et al, 2007: 16; Kolind, 2007: 138; Malcolm, 1996). Ethnicity and religion were but two of a number of identity categories of salience in society (Kolind, 2007: 138). Burg documents the

presence of a significant multi-ethnic Yugoslav identity - “an expression of civic consciousness” - in 1970s and 1980s Bosnia, with 15.3 per cent of marriages recorded as nationally ‘mixed’ in nature and 8 per cent of Bosnian citizens declaring a Yugoslav identity in the 1981 census, compared to 5.4 per cent in Yugoslavia as a whole (Burg, 1997: 125). These proportions are noteworthy, he argues, in the context of institutional and political disincentives to declare a non-ethnic identity, with Yugoslavs systematically disadvantaged for public employment under the ethnic key system (Burg, 1997: 124-125). The story was multi-dimensional, nevertheless; Burg notes that this transnational identity existed alongside ethnic exclusiveness and insecurity (Burg, 1997: 125). Multi-ethnic identity and inter-ethnic contact have, furthermore, historically been more prevalent in Bosnia’s cities with greater ethnic distance and less diversity in rural parts of pre-war Bosnia (Touquet, 2012a:10; Toal & Dahlman, 2011: 73). Non-ethnic identity was considerably more widespread in urban areas, Burg finds, with urban dwellers accounting for 75 per cent of Yugoslav identifiers (Burg, 1997: 125). Donia and Fine furthermore note that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of urban marriages between World War II and the early 1990s were ‘mixed’, between people of different national groups (1994: 9). The contrast between urban and rural areas in this respect is notable, as, while 12 per cent of marriages in Bosnia in the 1980s were mixed, three quarters of these were in urban areas (Burg, 1997: 124-125).

### ***Break-up of Yugoslavia and Descent into War***

Increasing economic and political instability, growing competition between the republics and escalating nationalist tensions gave way to the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The collapse was also precipitated by the rise of Serb nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević and his faction within the Communist Party and their moves to assert Serb dominance in the region (Silber & Little, 1996: 64).

Following the disintegration of the Communist Party, Bosnia’s first multi-party elections were held in 1990. Despite a proposal by the ruling League of Communists to ban ethnic parties from competing in the elections, such a ban was ruled unconstitutional and the polls resulted in an overwhelming victory for ethno-nationalist parties at all levels and relatively modest performances by non-nationalist actors (Kapidžić, 2015: 315; 319). The newly emerged nationalist parties secured

almost three quarters of the vote and 98 out of 130 seats in the Bosnian parliament (Bose, 2002: 212), making gains in rough proportion to the distribution of these ethnic identities in society. The principal competition to the nationalists in these elections came from parties emerging from the former communist establishment, the League of Communists-Social Democratic Party (SK-SDP) and the Union of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia in BiH (SRSJ BiH) led by Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic, which together won 27 out of 130 seats (Sedo, 2010; Kapidžić, 2015: 320). The results of the 1990 elections are set out in Table 5.1 below. As Štiks notes, the 1990 polls took place in an intensely volatile and insecure political environment, amidst the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ensuing rise of ethno-politics across the federal republic and were heavily influenced by the results of elections held earlier that year in Slovenia and Croatia where nationalist parties made the greatest gains (2011: 249-250). In the aftermath, a ‘grand coalition’ government was formed between the three major nationalist parties – the largely Muslim Party for Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije; SDA), the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka; SDS) and the Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine; HDZ BiH). The power-sharing coalition nevertheless collapsed in 1991 amidst continual ethnic-related disputes and the near total absence of elite consensus or cooperation (Burg, 1997: 135-137; Malcolm, 1996: 223).

**Table 5.1: Council of Citizens of the BiH Parliament Election Results, 1990<sup>3</sup>**

Party	% Vote	Seats
SDA	31.3	43
SDS	26.1	34
HDZ BiH	16.1	21
SK-SDP	12.4	15
SRSJ BiH	8.5	12
Others	5.36	5

Source: Kapidžić, 2015

Developments in neighbouring republics largely dictated the pace of events in Bosnia during this period. In 1991 Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, precipitating

<sup>3</sup> The SDA is a Bosniak nationalist party; the SDS is a Serb nationalist party; HDZ is a Croat nationalist party. SK-SDP and SRSJ were non-ethnic parties.

the outbreak of war in Croatia when the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army entered the new state in the name of protecting the local Serb minority (Malcolm, 1996: 225-226). The break-away of these two republics, in response to Milošević's expansionist ambitions, made Bosnia's slide towards independence somewhat unavoidable, as to remain would leave it in a rump Yugoslavia under Serbian control (Malcolm, 1996: 230). Bosnia accordingly declared independence in March 1992 after a contested referendum boycotted by the majority of the Serb population, as instructed by the SDS. In response, Bosnian Serbs declared a Bosnian 'Serb Republic' of 'Autonomous Regions' with its own parliament, Republika Srpska (RS) (Malcolm, 1996: 231-232). In April 1992 the siege of Sarajevo by the Yugoslav army commenced and war had arrived in Bosnia. A brutal three-and-a-half-year conflict ensued in which systematic murder, rape and use of detention camps were deployed on a mass scale as part of a project of 'ethnic cleansing' of territory (Malcolm, 1996: 245). Ultimately, the war in Bosnia left an estimated 100,000 people dead and more than 2 million displaced (UNHCR, 2004).

While the war in Bosnia began as one waged by the Serb-led Yugoslav army against allied Muslim and Croat forces in the shape of the Bosnian Army, this dynamic shifted in 1993 as fighting broke out between Muslim and Croats in Herzegovina and central Bosnia. This new line of aggression followed the Bosnian Croats' establishment of the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosna and their pursuit of ethnically homogenous territory, largely in response to the 1993 Vance-Owen peace plan, led by UN and EC representatives, which proposed cantonisation of the country (Keil, 2013: 76).

### *Interpretations of Bosnia's War*

In scholarly attempts to interpret Bosnia's tumultuous history a number of divergent narratives emerge. A key schism centres on the nature of ethnic identity and division. On the one hand, Bosnia is depicted as inherently divided and the 1992-95 war a culmination of 'ancient hatreds' - an interpretation common within the international media and amongst certain world political leaders and policymakers at the time (Silber & Little, 1996: 254; 288) as well as within some scholarly work (e.g. Meštrović, 1993; Kaplan, 1994). Such accounts interpret the recent conflict as a form of civil war. An alternative perspective stresses Bosnia's history of ethnic diversity and peaceful

coexistence and attributes the 1990s war to external aggression, primarily from Serbian and Croatian powers (Malcolm, 1994; Silber & Little, 1996), marking an aberration in a largely peaceful and tolerant past (Malešević, 2012: 301; Malcolm, 1996; Silber & Little, 1996; Donia & Fine, 1994). A third perspective charts a middle course through these positions. Bieber argues that the recent war started as a result of external interference but developed into communal violence (2006: 28), while Bose acknowledges both the country's tradition of inter-ethnic tolerance, but also its historical periods of intermittent ethnic conflict (2002: 17). Indeed, this 'hatred vs tolerance' narrative is paralleled in the debate surrounding the future of Bosnia, to which subsequent sections turn, with integration promoted at one end of the spectrum and partition at the other (Bougarel et al, 2007: 12).

This brief historical overview reveals a number of path dependent legacies necessary to understanding contemporary Bosnian politics and the place of civic parties therein. From this account, it is clear that the structuring of Bosnian society along ethno-national lines, the political mobilisation of these identities and their expression in political institutions, bear deep roots. In this sense, Keil identifies strong continuities from Bosnia's history in terms of ethnic power-sharing, territorial integrity, influence of foreign powers and influence of neighbouring countries (2013: 80-87). The conflict which emerged in the late 1980s, erupting into war in the 1990s, marked a critical juncture that brought new political actors to the fore and effected a dramatic politicisation of ethnic identity and restructuring of society. This chapter now turns to the nature of the settlement which drew this war to a close and the institutions it put in place.

## **5.2 'To End a War': The Dayton Political Settlement**

The conflict that consumed Bosnia for some three and a half years was brought to a halt with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFA) or Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. This section sets out the parameters of this settlement.

### ***The Dayton Peace Agreement***

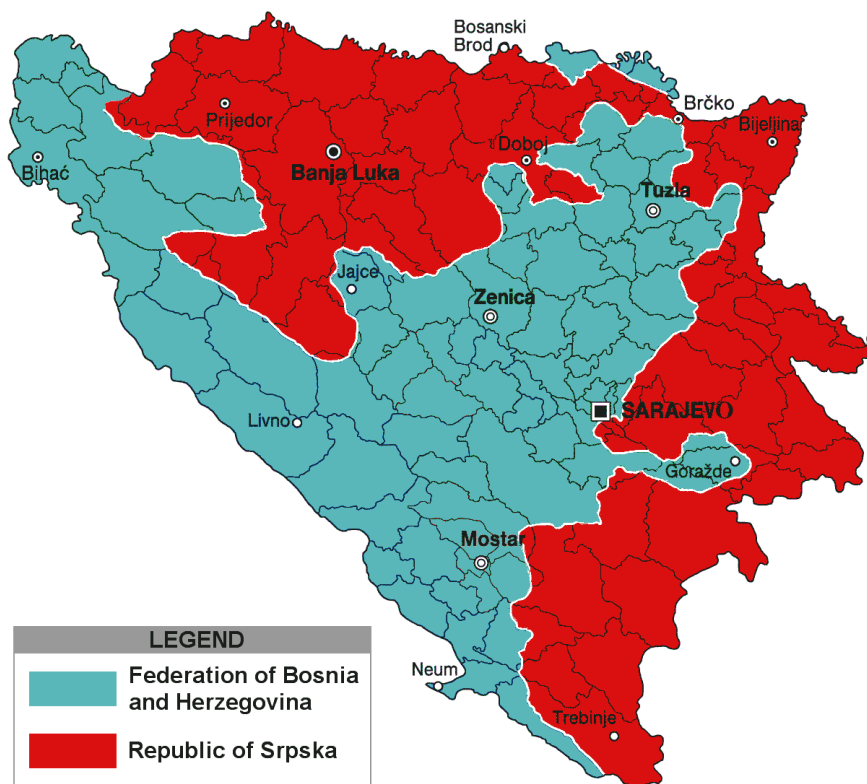
Following a number of ill-fated attempts by the international community - primarily in the shape of the European Community, the United Nations and the United States – to end the war, peace between Croat and Bosniak forces was first brokered in 1994 through the Washington Agreement. The pact established a Bosniak-Croat Federation, a federal arrangement made up of 10 cantons with significant powers, based on pre-war Croat and Muslim majorities. As such, it established the principle of ethnic division of territory and set the scene for the Dayton Agreement to follow (Malcolm, 1996: 256-257; Bieber, 2006: 67). The truce also allowed allied Croat and Bosniak armies, with international backing, to win back large portions of territory previously ‘taken’ by Serb forces in an effort to ‘rebalance’ territorial gains and achieve the territorial split seen as necessary to a settlement (Bose, 2002: 60; Kennedy & Riga, 2013: 168). Bosniak-Croat advances, in combination with NATO bombing, thus eventually forced Serb forces into peace negotiations in autumn 1995 (Belloni, 2009: 358).

The war which had ravaged Bosnia for over three-and-a-half years was thus finally drawn to a halt with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement on 14 December 1995. The pact, signed by the leaders of Bosniak, Serb and Croat forces - President of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman - was the product of 3-week US-led negotiations at a military base in Dayton Ohio between the warring parties brokered by international policymakers, chiefly US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke (Malcolm, 1996: 268).

The purpose of the Dayton Peace Agreement was two-fold: firstly, to end a war and, secondly, to establish a multi-ethnic state (Daalder, 2000). These twin purposes speak to a tension at the heart of the Agreement, on the one hand recognising the ethno-territorial division of the country as a result of ethnic cleansing and, on the other, seeking to preserve and reintegrate the war-torn state (Malcolm, 1996: 267). As a means to end a war, the settlement reflects a compromise between three warring sides – the Serb and Croat sides, which sought maximum control over the ethnically homogenous territory they had gained through war, and the Bosniak faction, which strove for a unified, integral state (Belloni, 2009: 356). It marks an attempt to appease

the Bosniak desire for a multi-ethnic Bosnia, while simultaneously addressing Serb and Croat demands for self-government and fears of Bosniak domination (Keil, 2013: 136). The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, contained in Annex 4 of the GFA, thus created a confederal state composed of a weak central state and two federal entities - the Serb dominated Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (a 49:51 territorial split) (Tonge, 2014), as represented in the map in Image 5.1 below. The document recognises Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs as the “constituent peoples” of Bosnia and Herzegovina and details rigid provisions for their shared power within the country’s political institutions, further detailed below. A map demonstrating the ethnic make-up of Bosnia before and after the war is shown in Image 5.2.

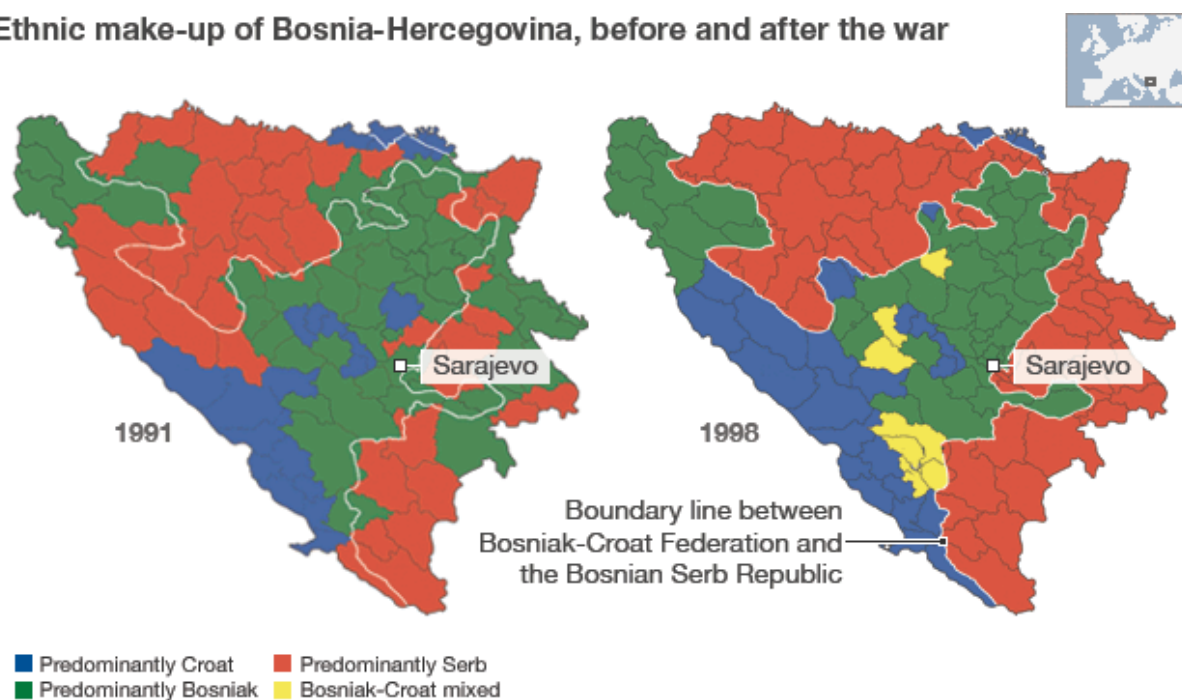
**Image 5.1: Political Map of Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina**



Source: <http://yugoslavos.blogspot.co.uk>

**Image 5.2: Map Representing Ethnic Make-Up of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1991 and 1998**

**Ethnic make-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, before and after the war**



Source: [http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/53026000/gif/53026669\\_bosnia2\\_624x369.gif](http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/53026000/gif/53026669_bosnia2_624x369.gif)

At the same time as institutionalising some of the consequences of the war, the settlement also reflects the aspirations of the international community to undo its effects. The constitution entails extensive human rights guarantees, including the right to safe return for refugees, displaced during the war, to their pre-war places of residence (Annex 4, GFA, 1995) - a measure that it was hoped would lead to some reversal of the results of ethnic cleansing. Annex 3 contains further integrationist goals, allowing voters to cast their vote in the municipalities in which they lived before the war, based on the 1991 census, in an attempt to see electoral outcomes reflect pre-war ethnic heterogeneity (Annex 3, Article 4.1, GFA, 1995; Kennedy & Riga, 2013: 176). Underlying the tension between ethnic separation and reintegration, Kennedy and Riga expose two contradictory beliefs held by US policymakers engaged in the Dayton negotiations: a practical acceptance of ethnically homogenous territory for the purpose of governance, though “brutally achieved”; and an aspiration to offset these ethnicised structures through human rights provisions (Kennedy & Riga, 2013: 164; 166; Riga & Kennedy, 2013).

Dayton carved out a central role for international actors in the political system. The GFA provided for an internationally appointed High Representative to oversee the “civilian implementation” of the peace settlement. The powers of the Office of High Representative (OHR) have grown substantially since Dayton, initially charged with facilitating, coordinating and reporting on the activities of the international community in Bosnia and, in 1997, adorned with legislative and executive powers (Bieber, 2006: 83-84), including the capacity to impose laws and dismiss elected representatives and public officials. Indeed, Bieber deems the OHR the most influential institution in Bosnia (2006: 84), while authors such as Keil (2013: 106) and Bell (2015: 14) argue that the international community constitutes a central actor in the Bosnian power-sharing system. International actors are also embedded in a number of state-level institutions including the Constitutional Court, the Central Bank and the Human Rights Chamber (Bieber, 2006: 59). Keil thus describes post-war Bosnia as a case of “internationally administered” multinational federation (2013: 4).

### *Consociational Power-Sharing Arrangements*

The political system to which Dayton gave birth can be characterised as rigidly consociational and corporate in form, comprising a loose, complex and asymmetrical federation. The multi-layered structure is composed of a weak central state, two entities with considerable autonomy – one centralised, the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic; RS) and one further decentralised into cantons, the Bosniak-Croat Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; FBiH) – 10 cantons, 143 local municipalities (which lie directly beneath the entity level in the RS and subordinate to the cantonal level in the Federation) and one semi-autonomous district. The principles of consociational power-sharing are stringently embedded within this system (Bieber & Keil, 2009: 345). Consociation’s four key features, as theorised by Lijphart - grand coalition, mutual veto rights, proportionality and segmental autonomy (1977) - are visible at almost every layer of governance. Governments at state and entity levels must include members of all three ‘constituent peoples’. Meanwhile at the state and entity tiers, and in most cantons, each group

reserves the right to veto decisions that may adversely affect its national interests (Bieber, 2006: 44). Proportional representation of groups within elected office and public administration, through ethnic quotas, based on population data from the 1991 census –according to which 43.5 per cent of the population was Muslim, 31.2 per cent Serb and 17.4 per cent Croat (popis2013.ba) - furthermore features at state and, more recently, at entity level. Finally, group autonomy is granted at state level by devolving power down to the entities and, in the Federation, to the cantons (Bieber, 2006: 44-45). This three-way power-sharing principle now runs through the top three tiers of government in Bosnia: state, entity and canton. For the first seven years following Dayton power-sharing between all three groups was practised only at the level of the state, and between Bosniaks and Croats in the Federation. A judgement by the Constitutional Court in 2000, however, ruled that entity constitutions discriminated against one or two of the constituent peoples. Constitutional amendments imposed by the OHR in 2002 accordingly extended three-way power-sharing amongst each of the constituent peoples to the levels of the state, both entities and the cantons (Bieber, 2006: 43-44).

#### *Grand Coalition and Proportional Representation*

The powers of the Bosnian *state* have been variously described as ‘weak’, ‘threadbare’ and ‘skeletal’, encompassing primarily foreign affairs, trade, defence, immigration, communications and currency (Bose, 2002: 24; 216; Wilson 2010a: 66). The primary state institutions comprise the State Presidency, the Council of Ministers, the bicameral Parliamentary Assembly, the Constitutional Court and the Central Bank. The three-member presidency, made up of one member from each group, rotates its chairmanship every eight months during a four year term. The Serb member is directly elected in the RS while the Bosniak and Croat members are elected in the Federation (Bieber, 2006: 50). Presidents are elected on a First Past the Post basis on separate lists, with voters in the Federation opting for a Bosniak or Croat candidate and those in the RS electing a Serb candidate (OSCE, 2010).

The Council of Ministers functions as the state-level government. No more than two thirds of ministers can be appointed from the Federation and deputy ministers must not be from the same constituent people as the minister (McEvoy, 2015: 113). The

Chair of the Council of Ministers effectively serves as the Prime Minister and must have two Vice Chairs from different constituent nations (Bieber, 2006: 52; Bose, 2002: 65).

In the Parliamentary Assembly meanwhile, the lower house, the House of Representatives, comprises 42 members who are directly elected (two thirds with the Federation and one third within the RS). Deputies are elected to the House of Representatives through a Proportional Representation (PR) open party list system (a reform introduced for the 2000 elections before which lists were closed) (Bieber, 2006: 95). In the Federation, 21 of the 28 seats are elected in five multi-member constituencies, with the remaining seven seats are allocated from compensatory political party lists; in the RS nine seats are elected in three multi-member constituencies with the remaining five elected from party lists. There is a 3 per cent threshold for entering parliament and seats are allocated using the Sainte-Lague method ([www.electionguide.org](http://www.electionguide.org)).

Meanwhile, the upper House of Peoples, contains 15 seats, which are reserved for each of the three constituent peoples (five for Bosniaks; five for Croats; five for Serbs). The five Serb representatives are nominated by the parliament of the RS with the five Bosniak and five Croat seats nominated by the parliament of the Federation (Biber & Keil, 2009: 347; Bieber, 2006: 54-55; Bose, 2002: 62). All decisions taken in the lower chamber must be approved by the upper chamber.

#### *Group Veto*

A key feature of Bosnia's power-sharing institutions is the *ethnic veto*. Designed as a safeguard, each group possesses an ultimate block on legislation that affects its national interest (Bieber & Keil, 2009: 352). Veto players include both executive and legislative actors and the procedure features in the Presidency and the Parliamentary Assembly at state level and both upper houses at entity level. In the state parliament, a decision in either chamber can be declared to be destructive of a constituent people's 'vital national interest' (VNI) by a majority of delegates within one national bloc present and voting in the House of Peoples. The decision is then referred to a three-member commission convened by the Chair of the House of Peoples and made up of

a delegate of each bloc. If consensus is not reached within five days the decision is then referred to the Constitutional Court to deliver a binding opinion. (McEvoy, 2015: 111-112). Furthermore, within the three-member Presidency, a decision by two members can be declared by the third to adversely affect their group's vital interest. The decision is then referred to the relevant entity parliament and if the President's dissent is supported by two thirds of the vote in the RS National Assembly or the majority of the Bosniak or Croat bloc in the Federation House of Peoples, that decision is overturned (Bose, 2002: 64). Ethnic interests are further safeguarded by the 'entity veto' in the House of Representatives, whereby a decision can be blocked by two-thirds of the representatives from either entity (McEvoy, 2015: 112). Scholars have observed the entity veto, rather than the VNI veto, to be the main source of blockage in the system (Bieber & Keil, 2009: 354; McEvoy, 2015: 115), used most frequently by RS delegates (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011: 907). Within the entities, furthermore, two thirds of the delegates of one constituent people can veto legislation in the Federation and RS parliament respectively (McEvoy, 2013: 262). In addition to these formal procedures, McEvoy points to an informal veto exercised by representatives simply remaining absent from the given institution, thus delaying the passage of legislation and of decision making in the Council of Ministers (2015: 115). Bieber and Keil thus note Bosnia's use of "wide-ranging veto rights with low thresholds and executive and legislative veto players" (2009: 353).

Bosnia's veto system has been heavily criticised for creating impasse in the passage of legislation, efficient governance and progress (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011: 899; McEvoy, 2013: 263; 2015: 114). Indeed, in the 2006-10 legislative period it has been estimated that only 30 per cent of planned legislation was in fact adopted (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011: 899; McCulloch, 2014a: 507). In 2005, a report by the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters, warned that the VNI veto "entails a serious risk of blocking decision-making". It noted the absence of a definition within the Constitution for what constitutes such a vital interest, leaving it open to wide interpretation, and called for a "precise and strict definition" with a focus on rights of particular importance (Venice Commission, 2005: 9-10). The Commission furthermore deemed the 'entity veto' redundant in light of this 'vital interest veto' (Venice Commission, 2005: 10).

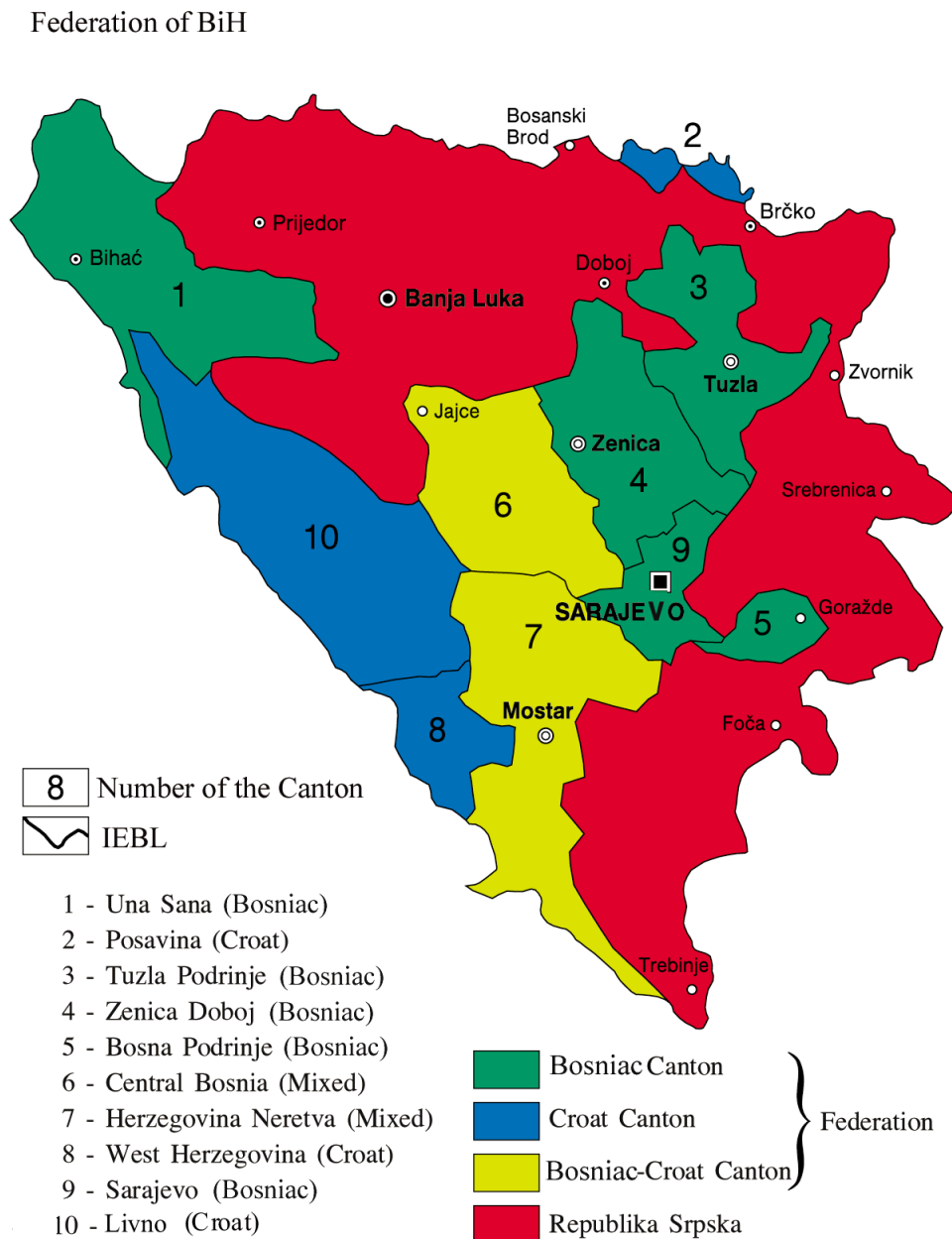
Serb delegates constitute Bosnia's chief veto players, exercising the right primarily through entity voting and generally for the purpose of maintaining the constitutional status quo and blocking any movement of powers from the entities to the state (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011: 907). Bosniak parties oppose the procedures while Croat parties argue entity voting to be unfair as, unlike their Serb and Bosniak counterparts, Croat delegates lack sufficient numbers to reach the two thirds threshold to trigger the procedure in their entity (McEvoy, 2013: 267). The international community meanwhile bemoans the rules, regarding the entity veto as a tool used to prevent any progress in the state (McEvoy, 2015: 114). Indeed, following the failure of a constitutional reform plan in 2006 known as the 'April Package', discussed below, in 2007 the OHR imposed measures aimed at restricting the use of the veto and reducing its obstructive power, which reduced ethnic quotas for voting in the Council of Ministers (McEvoy, 2013: 265-266).

#### *Group Autonomy: Territorial Decentralisation*

A number of scholars have observed that 'the real power' in Bosnia's lies in the *entities* (Stiks, 2011: 256; Wilson 2010a: 66), responsible for all capacities not expressly assigned to the state under the constitution (Annex 4, GFA, 1995). At entity level the Federation features a 98-member House of Representatives and a 58-member House of Peoples (Bieber, 2006: 67) The lower House of Representatives is directly elected while members of the upper House of Peoples are elected by the cantonal legislatures. The upper house contains an equal number of reserved seats for the three constituent nations (17 each), plus seven seats for 'others' (<http://www.parlamentfbih.gov.ba>). Meanwhile in the Republika Srpska the National Assembly of the RS comprises 83 directly elected members while, since 2002, a 28-member Council of Peoples contains reserved seats for 8 Serbs, 8 Bosniaks, 8 Croats and 4 'others' (<http://www.vijecenarodars.net>). As at state level, candidates for the House of Representatives of the Federation of BiH and the RS National Assembly are elected through open party lists with a compensatory mechanism (OSCE, 2010: 4). The RS additionally holds a President and two Vice Presidents, each from different national groups, directly elected since 2000 using the preferential Alternative Vote system (Bose, 2002: 220).

Beneath the entity level in the Bosniak-Croat Federation lies a framework of ten *cantons*. Of these ten federal units, five are predominantly Bosniak in population, three predominantly Croat and only two multi-ethnic: Central Bosnia and Herzegovina-Neretva (Bieber, 2006: 64). A map displaying FBiH's cantonal structure is displayed in Image 5.3 below. Cantons feature varying forms of power-sharing between constituent nations, depending on the national make-up of the territory (Bieber, 2006: 71) with special power-sharing measures in the two ethnically mixed units under the Federation constitution (Bose, 2002: 80). In cases where the majority ethnic group within a local municipality (the subordinate level of government) is different to that of the canton, powers are further devolved to the municipality where one ethnic bloc dominates (Bose, 2002: 80). Bose notes that much of the significant power in Bosnia's multi-layered system lies within the cantons, which exercise control over police forces, educational, cultural and housing policy amongst other central areas (Bose, 2002: 79). Below the cantonal level in the Federation and the entity level in the RS sit 143 municipalities (79 in FBiH and 63 in RS) which possess relatively limited powers over local matters (Bose, 2002: 79).

**Image 5.3: Map of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)**

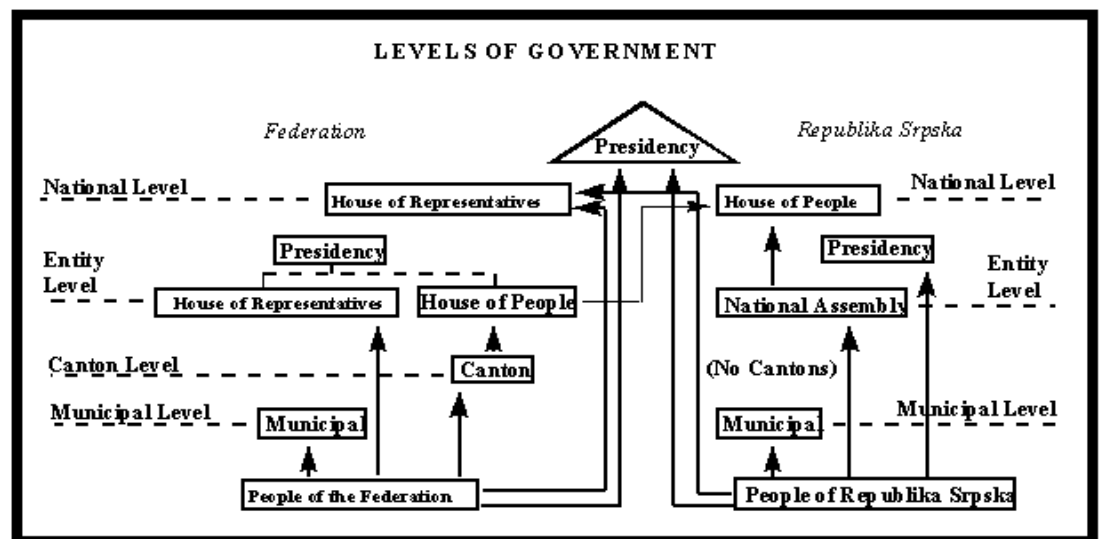


Source: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces

A further asymmetry in Bosnia’s political system is marked by the Brčko district. After agreement failed to be reached at Dayton over the entity to which this multi-ethnic, disputed town should belong, an arbitration process in 1999 placed the district under international administration until 2004 (Bieber, 2006: 43). The tribunal determined that Brčko would become the territory of both entities - as well as “a single administrative unit of local self-government under the sovereignty of BiH” (Article 1,

Statute 1999), though lacking representation in the joint institutions (Bieber, 2006: 61). In practice however, Brčko operates relatively autonomously from both the entities and, with legislative and executive powers equal to theirs, “constitutes the third (de facto) federal unit of BiH” (Stjepanović, 2014: 4). Moreover, the district exhibits an informal method of power-sharing that features minimum reference to ethnicity (Bieber, 2006: 137). Rather than featuring rigid power-sharing measures, such as veto powers, the Assembly requires a three fifths majority for important decisions to be passed (Bieber, 2005: 426). The structure of the Bosnian political system is represented graphically in Image 5.4 below.

**Image 5.4: Structure of the Political System in Bosnia and Herzegovina**



Source: Democracy in Divided Societies, School of Social and Political Science, The University of Edinburgh

### *Constitutional Reform*

From its inception this system of governance has been the subject of near universal criticism for its dysfunction, inefficiency, discrimination and institutionalisation of division. The extensive protections for ethnic groups within this corporate consociational model leaves it extremely vulnerable to deadlock and renders progress elusive (Belloni, 2009: 359-360; 2007: 46). Constitutional reform has thus been continually on the agenda since Dayton (Belloni, 2009: 360), with a number of attempts trialled and failed. In its 2005 report the aforementioned Venice Commission

delivered a scathing judgment of the system, highlighting the inefficiency and dysfunction of the institutions, as well as the lack of local ownership over the peace process. It called for sweeping reforms including strengthening the central state, improving efficiency and removing legislative and executive powers from the OHR (Venice Commission, 2005). In the wake of this assessment the international community launched a cross-party constitutional reform process. A package of constitutional reforms – the so-called ‘April Package’ - which would have led to more integrated, efficient institutions, ultimately collapsed in 2006 however, when it failed to win the support of a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives. This collapse followed ethnic outbidding in the Bosniak and Croat blocks by hard-line break-away parties The Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) and HDZ 1990 respectively, which withdrew their support for the reforms on the basis of their claimed detrimental impact on ‘their’ ethnic group (Belloni, 2007: 165). This gave way to a polarised General Election campaign in 2006 in which SBiH campaigned on the slogan, ‘Bosna bez entiteta’ (Bosnia without entities) (Belloni, 2007: 55). Subsequent internationally brokered cross-party talks in the shape of the 2008 ‘Prud Process’ proposed constitutional reforms, including restructuring the state into four political units (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011: 915). These negotiations similarly faltered, however, as the issue of constitutional change exposed further divisions between the parties and heightened ethnic polarisation.

In 2008 Bosnia signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, promising future EU membership ([www.dei.gov.ba](http://www.dei.gov.ba)), giving way to a vexed and lengthy process of negotiations between European and domestic elites on the required reforms for its activation. International pressure for constitutional change stepped up significantly in 2009 following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the Sejdic-Finci case. In the case, taken by a Roma and a Jewish citizen of BiH, the Court found the Bosnian Constitution to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights in its corporate consociational requirements for candidates seeking election to the State Presidency and the House of Peoples to designate as one of the three constituent peoples (McCrudden & O’Leary, 2013: 478). By determining that one must be a Serb from the RS or a Croat or Bosniak from the Federation to run for either office, the ECHR ruled that the Bosnian constitution discriminated against Serbs

from the Federation and Bosniaks and Croats from the RS, as well as others who do not identify with any of these ethnic identities. Despite significant pressure from the international community and protracted EU-facilitated negotiations however, Bosniak, Croat and Serb political parties have as yet been unable to agree on changes to these electoral procedures to implement the ruling and thus liberalise Bosnia's consociational framework. The deadlock has been highlighted by the international community as a major obstacle to progress in the post-war state and, until recently, to European integration (European Commission Memo, 2014). Nevertheless, progress was marked in March 2015 when the SAA with the EU was eventually activated after the signing of a declaration by the tripartite presidency pledging its commitment to implement the necessary reforms (European Council, 2015).

### **5.3 The Post-Dayton Political Landscape**

Having broadly outlined the shape of the political institutions conceived by the Dayton Peace Agreement and their evolution since 1995, this chapter now moves to examine the way politics is practised within that framework; the shape of the party system, the relationship between parties and voters and the place of civic parties within this dynamic.

#### ***Parties and Party Competition***

Bosnia exhibits a quintessential 'ethnic party system'. Parties largely approximate the ethnic make-up of society, with the majority drawing their support from one ethnic group. Party competition thus occurs primarily within three separate blocs, rather than between (Manning, 2004: 71). Few parties mobilise across both entities and those that do tend to appeal exclusively to one constituent nation (Bieber, 2006: 41). Indeed, a study of party competition in municipal elections in Bosnia from 2006-14 shows that parties of different ethno-national blocs rarely compete within the same communities, with 90 per cent of municipalities dominated by one party bloc (Hulse, 2015a). Party competition exhibits clear elements of the dynamics characteristic of ethnic party systems outlined in Chapter One, with the phenomena of ethnic outbidding (Horowitz, 2000), polarisation (Howard, 2012) and ethnic tribune (Mitchell et al., 2009) all in evidence in the interaction between parties in the pursuit of votes, and indeed the

interaction between parties and the electorate. Issues relating to ethno-national identity form the central issue dimension and a centrifugal dynamic can thus be observed in the way parties compete, with parties coming under pressure from their intra-ethnic rivals to adopt increasingly extreme positions on such matters.

Nationalist parties continue to dominate the Bosnian political arena, with war-time actors SDA, SDS and HDZ maintaining power up until 2006, barring a brief period from 2001-2002, as outlined below (Keil, 2013: 117). Though these parties have been challenged and, in some the cases, overtaken in recent years, this challenge has predominantly come from splinter parties produced by nationalist party splits, rather than the emergence of wholly new collectives (Sedo, 2010). The Bosniak political field is currently dominated by the SDA while HDZ remains the main party in the Croat scene. In the Serb bloc the SDS was surpassed in 2006 by Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats; SNSD), led by RS President Milorad Dodik. Once promoted by the international community as an agent of moderation and reform, Dodik now ranks as the most extreme nationalist leader in BiH, regularly employing provocative rhetoric and vaunting the prospect of a referendum on RS secession (Belloni, 2009: 367), with his party adopting a resolution in 2015 calling for such an independence poll to be held in 2018 if the entity's autonomy is not sufficiently strengthened by that point (Zuvela, 201). A number of such seemingly moderate ethnic parties have emerged since Dayton, including SBiH in the Bosniak field. Whilst these parties initially positioned themselves as civic in outlook, in a climate of polarisation - particularly amidst the 2005-06 constitutional reform debate - they grew steadily more hard-line and ethnically defined (Keil, 2013: 120). The key features of Bosnia's political parties are set out in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: Political Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

	<b>Party Name (Translated)</b>	<b>Formed</b>	<b>Split From</b>	<b>Positioning</b>	<b>Constitutional Position</b>
<b>SDA</b>	Party of Democratic Action	1990	---	Bosniak nationalist; conservative	Pro-centralisation; Strengthened BiH state
<b>SBiH</b>	Party for BiH	1996	SDA	Bosniak nationalist; centre-right	Pro-centralisation; Strengthened BiH state
<b>SBB BiH</b>	Union for a Better Future of BiH	2009	---	Bosniak nationalist; populist right	Pro-centralisation; Strengthened BiH state
<b>SDS</b>	Serb Democratic Party	1990	---	Serb nationalist; conservative	Further autonomy / secession for the RS
<b>SNSD</b>	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats	1996	---	Serb nationalist; social democratic	Secession of the RS
<b>HDZ BiH</b>	Croatian Democratic Union of BiH	1990	---	Croat nationalist; conservative	Creation of a third Croat entity
<b>HDZ 1990</b>	Croatian Democratic Union 1990	2006	HDZ BiH	Croat nationalist; conservative	Creation of a third Croat entity
<b>SDP BiH</b>	Social Democratic Party of BiH	1991 (1909)	---	Civic; social democratic	Pro-integration; pro-centralisation and strengthened BiH state
<b>Naša Stranka</b>	Our Party	2008	---	Civic; liberal	Constitutional reform on civic lines
<b>DF</b>	Democratic Front	2013	SDP BiH (Founder split from SDP)	Civic; social democratic	Pro-integration; pro-centralisation and strengthened BiH state

As a state only two decades removed from a bloody conflict, insecurity and fear remain potent forces in Bosnian politics. As a number of scholars have observed however, political elites play a significant role in shaping voters' beliefs and perceptions of

insecurity. The parties are adept, in this post-war setting, at playing upon the ‘security dilemma’ to stimulate a sense of injustice and fear of the ethnic ‘other’ (Bougarel et al, 2007: 21; Manning, 2004: 66; Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010: 152). This existential threat is invoked most strongly at election time, in order to impress on voters their community’s need for protection from ‘their own’ ethnic representatives. Mujkić and Hulsey thus argue that politicians in Bosnia are most successful when they focus on zero-sum issues such as constitutional changes that would affect the territorial division of the country, like a Croat third entity, the succession of the Republika Srpska, or indeed its abolition. The scholars posit that in a pre-election atmosphere of perceived threat and uncertainty, voters, in the absence of information on how others will vote, face a form of “prisoner’s dilemma”: to vote for change through a moderate political option, as they would prefer, or to vote for the ethnic party that represents their group in the assumption that voters of other groups will do likewise. Under these circumstances, therefore, many voters opt for ethnic parties, not out of positive endorsement, but fear (Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010). Manning hence distinguishes between what might constitute collectively rational electoral behaviour in Bosnia – voting nationalist parties out of office – from individually rational behaviour – voting for the nationalist party that you believe will secure your material and economic security (2004: 68).

21 years on from the war, the Bosnian state remains deeply contested (Belloni, 2009: 358) and this lack of legitimacy continues to shape its politics. Keil observes the divergent interpretations of the Dayton Agreement held by each group of ethnic elites, with Bosniaks viewing the pact as the foundation of a strong, unified state with some devolved powers, and Serbs and Croats perceiving it as the final approval of their “sovereign” territory within BiH (2013: 132). Parties’ pre-goals have altered little, leading many scholars to characterise post-Dayton politics as a continuation of war by other means (e.g. Belloni, 2009: 360; Stojarova, 2010b). Serb nationalist parties thus persist in seeking greater autonomy for the Serb Republic, and - at the extreme end - independence, as well as closer ties to Serbia. Croat nationalists, likewise, campaign for increased autonomy for the Croat community on a par with Serbs and Bosniaks, through reforms including cantonisation of the state or the creation of a third entity, as well as stronger ties to Croatia. Bosniak parties meanwhile call for the weakening or

abolition of the entities and creation of a more unified Bosnia with strengthened national institutions (Stojarova, 2010c). The constitution and its reform thus forms a central issue dimension in party competition and a source of ethnic outbidding. In this way, parties depict the ethnic ‘other’ as the enemy, while presenting themselves as the best protector of their group in the face of this threat and their intra-rivals as sell-outs (Belloni, 2007: 50-51). Sedo hence notes that, having so far failed to achieve their constitutional ambitions, parties instead use these goals to mobilise voters (2010).

The Bosnian party system betrays a number of further distinctive features. Sedo highlights three: Bosnian parties are generally linked to an ethnicity, however they may present themselves; beyond nationalism, ideology plays a minimal role in politics, with parties’ positions shifting considerably between elections, often in response to the wills and ambitions of party leaders; party programmes may diverge significantly from party actions (Sedo, 2010). Keil and Hulsey further underline that ethno-national parties in Bosnia differ primarily in terms of the personal networks of their leaders, rather than in their ideologies (Keil & Hulsey 2014; Hulsey, 2015b). An additional particularity of the Bosnian party system is a distinct lack of internal party democracy as parties tend to be highly centralised with power concentrated in the hands of the leadership (Sedo, 2010; Touquet, 2012: 212; Vrgova, 2012: 428). Scholars remind readers, furthermore, that the Bosnian state and its democracy remain young and have yet to be fully consolidated (Stojarova, 2010c; Keil, 2013: 88).

### ***Identity, Public Opinion and Civil Society***

#### *Ethnic Identity*

The nature and salience of ethnic and national identity has transformed dramatically in Bosnia in the last thirty years. The rise of ethno-nationalism in the late 1980s followed by the country’s descent into war in the 1990s affected a politicisation of ethnic identity and, as Kolind argues, of everyday life (2007: 125). The conflict physically dismantled the formerly ethnically mixed country by creating ethnically ‘pure’ territories. Yet, it also mutated the very nature of identity. A number of scholars have underlined the hardening of ethnic identities as a result of the violence and a shift from pluralistic to particularistic identities in Yugoslavia (Kaufmann, 1996: 143;

Kuran, 1999). As has been argued, the war aimed not only to terrorise and remove the ‘enemy’, but to ensure that people of different ethnicities could no longer live together, thus inhibiting the exiled population’s return (Sorabji, 1995: 81; 09; cited in Bougarel et al, 2007: 17).

In physical terms, the war carved out largely ethnically homogenous territories. The international peace negotiators’ goal of reversing these effects through refugee return, as provided for in Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement, has been only partially realised. Whilst the period from 1998 to 2003 saw over 40,000 returns each year and 1 million had returned by 2004, the rate has slowed in the intervening years and in 2010 100,000 people remained internally displaced (Guss & Siroky, 2012: 312; UNHCR, 2004). Furthermore, return has been minimal to those areas in which the refugee now constitutes a minority in ethnic terms, not assisted by a failure to provide for the security of these minorities on the local level (Abazović, 2007: 200; Bieber, 2006: 30). At the time of writing Bosnia constitutes a highly ethnically segregated society. According to the 2013 census results, published in 2016, Bosniaks account for 50.1 per cent of the population, Serbs for 30.8 per cent and Croats for 15.4 per cent while those designating as “other” – national minorities and those who do not identify with any of the three constituent people - make up 2.7 per cent (popis2013.ba). 92.11 per cent of all Bosnian Serbs live in the RS, covering the north west and south east of the country. Meanwhile 91.39 per cent of Bosnian Croats and 88.23 per cent of Bosniaks live in the Federation (popis2013.ba). Within the Federation, high proportions of the Bosniak population live in the urban centres of Sarajevo, Zenica and Tuzla while the Croat population is particularly concentrated in Herzegovina, parts of Central Bosnia and the northern Posavina region. See Image 5.2 for a graphic representation of the distribution of ethnic communities in Bosnia.

The salience of ethnicity in the country’s politics and territory, however, masks great complexity in the fabric of contemporary Bosnian society. Though often overlooked in scholarly analysis, as Bougarel et al point out, post-war Bosnia constitutes a multi-layered construct marked by a range of salient divisions, beyond the ethnic (2007: 13). Rural/urban, war veteran/non-participants and gender are but some of the arenas of contestation in the transitional society (Bougarel et al, 2007: 20; 24; Helms, 2007:

252). Abazović even questions the extent to which Bosnia can be defined as an “ethnically divided society” (2007: 197).

Moreover, resistance to this ethnicisation of politics and daily life and expression of a *multi-ethnic, non-ethnic* or *civic* identity can also be observed. The city of Tuzla stood in contrast to the rest of the country prior to and during the war, having eschewed nationalist politics throughout and maintained a non-nationalist political administration (Armakolas, 2011) – a civic tradition it has preserved to a remarkable extent in the post-war context in spite of ethno-national pressures (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2003: 297-299). Kolind, furthermore, depicts resistance to national narratives of ethnic politics at the local level. Amongst Muslims in the Western Herzegovinian town of Stolac, he identifies a counter-discourse to the dominant one of ethno-national exclusion, based on concrete experiences with local Croats (2007: 137). Whilst this discourse exists alongside macro-level ethnic stereotypes and mistrust, it reflects tolerance on the micro level and a rejection of ethnic politics (Kolind, 2007: 133).

Multi-ethnicity is a highly fraught concept in post-war Bosnia, however. Whilst the notion lies prey to contestation in any deeply ethnicised political environment, it is particularly so in the Bosnian context due to a number of intersecting factors. Firstly, on a practical level, multi-ethnicity formed a strong tradition in pre-war Bosnia, particularly in its urban centres such as Tuzla and Sarajevo (Donia & Fine, 1994: 7; Malcolm, 1996; Armakolas, 2011). However, as outlined, the major population shifts effected by ethnic cleansing during the war have resulted in significant ethnic homogeneity across the country. The capital city of Sarajevo, celebrated for its ethnic diversity in the pre-war period, with 50 per cent of population identifying as Bosniak, 28 per cent as Serb, 7 per cent as Croat in 1991 (International Crisis Group, 1998), is now estimated to be demographically over 80 per cent Bosniak. In this sense, whilst the tradition or *idea* of multi-ethnicity remains strong in certain elements of Bosnian society, particularly in cities like Tuzla and Sarajevo, its practice - not least in the political sense - is frustrated by the reality of ethnically homogenised regions.

An additional complicating factor in the discussion of multi-ethnicity is its conflation with the identity of the largest ethnic group, Bosniaks, the historical basis of which is discussed above. A strong connection exists, furthermore, between multi-ethnicity and

urban life in Bosnia, as outlined. Civic identity in post-war Bosnia thus maintains a complex relationship with both Bosniak and urban identity.

### *Civil Society and Public Opinion*

In post-war Bosnia, the relationship between citizens and the political class is a complex one, shaped by historical experience, not least some 40 years of socialist rule and a devastating three and half year war in its recent history. An interesting aspect of this multifaceted picture of Bosnian society is the coexistence of ethnic mobilisation, on the one hand, with intense public disillusion with politics, on the other. Grandits notes the dominance of two constructs in public consciousness of politics in post-war Bosnia: 'zajedno' ('together') and 'foteljasi' ('armchair politicians'); the former connoting the import of national unity and the latter frustration with the political elites who advance such claims (2007, 101). Public feeling towards politics and politicians in contemporary Bosnia is thus characterised by a deep disillusion, mistrust and apathy that goes beyond attitudes commonly found in democratic societies (Touquet, 2015; Helms, 2007: 238). In a 2010 opinion poll, confidence in the national government in Bosnia ranged from 34 per cent amongst Serbs to 29 per cent amongst Bosniaks to a low of 19 per cent amongst Croats. 93 per cent of citizens in the Federation and 71 per cent in the Serb Republic believed corruption to be widespread throughout the government of BiH. Meanwhile, 74 per cent of respondents across the state said they disapproved of the national political leadership, while 65 per cent said they did not feel that they were represented politically (Gallup, 2010).

The source of this disillusion is not difficult to identify in the political reality of post-war Bosnia. Unemployment stands at over 40 per cent and economic growth remains stagnant (tradingeconomics.com). At the same time, the country of less than 4 million people hosts three presidents and twelve education ministers and ministries (Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, 2015). Moreover, this myriad of political representation and bureaucracy presides over a deeply dysfunctional administrative system. Corruption in Bosnia, as measured by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index was amongst the worst in Europe in 2014, ranked 80 out of 174 countries (www.transparency.org). Political corruption notably includes privatisations of state assets, as witnessed across the former Yugoslavia since the 1990s wars (Kraft, 2015:

205). The public perception of international actors as, at times, overseeing such corruption, negligence and ethno-national politicking on the part of domestic elites, and doing little to avert or improve the situation, has seen a complex relationship develop between citizens and the international community (Bougarel et al, 2007: 28). This disillusion therefore in some respects extends to international political actors. Indeed, some scholars have argued that key international organisations' endorsement of neo-liberal economic reform and austerity policies has deepened this animosity (Arsenijević, 2014: 45). In the context of such entrenched political and economic problems, as shown, EU membership remains some way beyond reach. According to some observers, the intersection of these conditions has led to a feeling amongst citizens in BiH, and across the Balkans, of 'endless transition' to democracy and a questioning of the very transition discourse (Kraft, 2015: 201; 2015; Štiks & Horvat, 2014: 83).

An image of politics in Bosnia as inherently *dirty*, whilst having a basis in the facts on the ground, is also deeply culturally embedded, reflected in the commonly heard phrase, 'politika je kurva' ('politics is a whore') (Helms, 2007). The roots of this anti-politics sentiment can be traced to oppositional activity in the socialist period, as Touquet demonstrates (2015: 398). The alienation and distance ordinary citizens felt from politics in Yugoslavia has grown since the war (Kolind, 2007: 125). Helms furthermore exposes the gendered nature of political life in the Bosnian context, in which politics is perceived as, at once immoral and, at the same time, a male arena, in which 'decent' women have no place (2007: 236).

In this culture, participation in politics, and even civil society, is a risky pursuit. Unsurprisingly, civil society – the space outwith the remit of the state – in post-war Bosnia is severely stunted. In the absence of significant political modernisation in socialist Yugoslavia, Kolind observes that civil society never fully developed. As in other post-socialist societies, the state that emerged from the former Yugoslavia was marked by a poorly developed civil society and a lack democratic experience amongst citizens (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2003: 291). The subsequent war and its ethnicisation of political space in Bosnia has inhibited the growth of a civic sphere in which citizens

can participate as citizens. Many of the grassroots voluntary organisations that do exist are structured along ethnic lines (Touquet, 2015: 388).

Thus ‘civil society’, as it is now known in Bosnia, is largely composed of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in which the international community has heavily invested. The international community has significantly supported the NGO sector and treated it as the principal focus of its civil society building efforts (Belloni, 2009: 363). Belloni hence refers to a “virtual civil society” (2007: 112) while Touquet comments on the ‘NGO-isation’ of society, whereby organisations working on a project basis carry out services formerly provided by the state (2015: 403). In this sense, scholars depict a problematic relationship between the NGO sector and the Bosnian public, in which NGOs’ agendas are viewed as driven first and foremost by their foreign donors, rather than the needs of society with their accountability oriented above, not below (Touquet, 2015: 403; Abazović, 2007: 199; Belloni, 2007: 111-112). As noted in Chapter One, a process of “ethnic seepage” (Horowitz, 1985) is clearly at play in Bosnia, whereby ethnicity permeates virtually every policy and any political issue can be ethnicised by elites. Many NGOs, furthermore, are not perceived to be independent of politics or political parties (Touquet, 2015: 400), and are hence broached with the same deep seated suspicion as the political sphere.

Civic mobilisation in this climate has been strictly limited since the war. Nevertheless, Touquet has documented notable incidences of such activism, including citizens’ protests in Sarajevo in 2008, following the murder of a boy on a tram (2015). Moreover, recent years have witnessed the emergence of civic protests on a larger and more significant scale. The Bebolucija protests in 2013 saw citizens stage a series of protests, most notably outside state parliament and government buildings in Sarajevo, in response to state parliamentarians’ failure to agree draft legislation on personal identification numbers following a dispute in which Bosnian Serb politicians argued that the digit designating region should respect entity borders (Armakolas & Maksimovic, 2013). The impasse left new-born children unable to attain passports and medical cards and ultimately led to the death of a baby, prevented from travelling abroad for life-saving treatment. The following year witnessed the emergence of a wave of social protests and citizens’ assemblies – or ‘plenums’. The action was

initially sparked by alleged corruption surrounding the closure of a number of factories in the northwestern industrial town of Tuzla before broadening to encompass wider social and economic grievances and spreading to other towns and cities (Murtagh, 2016), as detailed in a case study in Chapter Six.

If engagement in the civic sphere is problematic in Bosnia, that in the political sphere is positively dubious. Against this backdrop of an ethnicised political space and a weak civil society, the picture that emerges is one of a passive citizenry. Given the effective requisition of this space to ethnonational interests, some authors argue, citizens who may seek to mobilise on social and political issues are deprived of agency, leading many to retreat to the private sphere. Arsenijević refers in this sense to the “privatisation” of public space in post-war Bosnia, in which victimhood has been imposed on citizens by a corrupt ethno-national elite in conjunction with an international community and NGO sector that upholds the status quo (2014: 46; 49). Belloni, likewise, implicates international actors in contributing to the problem of civic passivity. In promoting NGOs over organic, grassroots participation the international community has focussed on the wrong actors, he claims, making citizens objects of international initiatives rather than agents of change (2009: 363). This top down approach which fails to recognise local resources may well hinder civic participation, he ventures (Belloni, 2007: 112). These conditions have contributed to a passive, disillusioned citizenry that have possessed little belief in the possibility of change (Sadiković, 2014: 76).

Political participation in this context, carries negative connotations rather than positive associations relating to empowerment, according to a 2009 study by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) into social capital in Bosnia. Indeed, the research found that political engagement – in the form of joining a political party – was only pursued for strategic reasons connected to personal gain as opposed to the betterment of society or the community, a further discussed below (UNDP, 2009: 70). Voter turnout in general elections has fallen from a high of 71 per cent in 1998 to 55 per cent in 2014, a level at which it has hovered in every election since 2002 (<http://www.idea.int>).

When it comes to the electoral behaviour of those that do use their vote, however, a very different story emerges. As shown, in successive elections since the war, ethno-national parties have been returned to power with comfortable margins. Indeed, Mujkić & Hulseley argue that public opinion polls demonstrate that voters in Bosnia are highly dissatisfied with the performance of their politicians and “have expressed their displeasure in every way but at the ballot box” (Mujkić & Hulseley, 2010: 144). Hulseley, furthermore, notes that the stability of election results since Dayton stands in stark contrast to widespread dissatisfaction of the population, expressed for example in social protests in 2013 and 2014 (2015). The relationship between parties and voters is thus characterised by a lack of accountability, whereby politicians are very poorly held to account (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2003: 291; Hulseley, 2015a).

### *Patronage and Clientelism*

Fundamental to understanding the relationship between voters and parties in post-war Bosnia, is the practice of patronage. Patronage and clientelism refer here to a form of social organisation characterised by ‘patron-client’ relationships in which “relatively powerful and rich ‘patrons’ promise to provide relatively powerless and poor ‘clients’ with jobs, protection, infrastructure and other benefits in exchange for various forms of loyalty” (UNDP, 2009: 74). Indeed, Chandra theorises the inextricable link between this practice of party patronage and ethnic mobilisation through the case of India (2004).

A culture of patronage runs deep through Bosnian society. A UNDP study found that Bosnian society is heavily based on informal social and familial networks, whereby personal connections are routinely used – and often necessary - to obtain public goods and services (UNDP, 2009: 69). The report identifies ‘štela’ – a local notion connoting a form of nepotism – as a core currency in Bosnian society (2009: 74). This informal system is commonly used for gaining access to employment, public services, particularly better education and healthcare, and obtaining official documents, and can range in scale from small favours to bribery and corruption (Touquet, 2011: 141; UNDP, 2009: 74). Whilst not unique to Bosnia the UNDP report notes that what is unusual in the state is the scale of the phenomenon, appearing to “pervade entirely” so

many institutions (UNDP, 2009: 85). In this sense, society is widely perceived by Bosnian citizens as connections-based as opposed to rules or merit based.

Politics is deeply invested in this clientelistic culture. The European Commission's 2014 BiH Progress Report noted that, "Political patronage networks are widespread and influence all levels of government" (2014: 15). Political parties that control significant state resources thus act as patrons, providing public goods and services to 'their' loyal clients - voters (Abazović 2007: 196; Grandits, 2007: 108). In this sense, the UNDP study found political participation to be associated by citizens primarily with joining a party to gain connections, and hence personal benefits; getting involved in politics only deemed useful if one belonged to the governing political party in one's area, which would stand in a position to supply such benefits (2009: 69). The types of goods that parties can offer in contemporary Bosnia range from positions on the boards of state companies at the higher level, to public sector jobs, school and university places and agricultural subsidies at the lower levels. These goods are exchanged for party loyalty, membership and indeed votes at election time, a reciprocal obligation which often extends beyond the individual to members of their family. Bougarel et al note that war-related categories are nurtured and kept alive by nationalist parties in post-war Bosnia, for example distributing public goods based on citizens' wartime roles and status (2007: 21). Indeed, the relationship can entail elements of intimidation as well as co-optation, with clients required to "take care" in order to keep the jobs or other goods granted them, as Grandits describes in parts of Herzegovina where HDZ exerted considerable control in the post-war years (2007: 108-109). Party control in BiH extends, notably, to the media. Despite progress by the OSCE to tackle the issue from 1996-98 (Manning, 2004: 64), Bosnia's media remains starkly divided along ethnic lines and under strong influence from the respective political parties (Abazović, 2007: 201; Freedom House, 2013).

The lineage of this informal system has been traced back to the socialist Yugoslav period and the operation of nomenklatura (Abazović 2007: 196; Cox, 2003: 268). Patronage and clientelism thus became embedded during and after the war when the main parties acted as separate "party states" or "para-states" (Cox, 2003: 268; Grandits, 2007: 110-111). The war allowed these parties to seize control of state assets

in their areas such as utilities, transport networks and pension funds (Manning, 2004: 68). These parallel systems failed to be dismantled in the post-war years, with parties continuing to control the management boards of public companies and hold a monopoly over financial transfers, enabling them to mingle public and party finances (Cox, 2003: 268). A weak state and rule of law then, provided the conditions for this shadow system of patronage to continue in post-war Bosnia (Belloni, 2007: 14). Dayton, furthermore, granted ethnonational elites significant autonomy in areas like policing and education but also over the privatisation of state companies after the war (Belloni, 2009: 360). This process saw businesses with close ties to the wartime parties take control of large parts of pre-war companies (Bieber, 2006: 35). In this sense, Manning argues that the post-war constitution allows parties to carve out separate spheres of political and economic power (2004: 75).

In a context where parties possess such economic control, co-optation and intimidation of potential challengers are ready tools at their disposal in the electoral arena. Hulseley thus points to the high barriers that parties place in the path of voters changing the political system through the ballot box (2015).

#### **5.4 The Place of Civic Parties**

Amidst this ethnicised landscape the place of parties that attempt to attract support from across society is a precarious one. Non-communal parties have been few and their success in sustaining broad, cross-cutting support, limited. This section introduces these parties and their place in the post-Dayton framework.

##### ***The Social Democratic Party***

The *Social Democratic Party* of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Socijaldemokratska Partija; SDP BiH) was, for long Bosnia's primary civic party. Emerging in 1991 from the remnants of the former Communist Party, the SDP presents itself as a social democratic, left of centre party that promotes social justice, equality and freedom of opportunity (Vrgova, 2012: 464). In its programme, the party casts itself explicitly as a 'multi-ethnic party', in the sense of appealing to all main ethnic groups in society, to the exclusion of none. According to party rules every party council must have at least 20 per cent representation of ethnic minorities, as well as 35 per cent of women and

33 per cent of youth (Touquet, 2012: 214). In this way, it can be classed under the typology set out in Appendix A as an accommodationist party, as further elaborated in Chapter Six. The party's agenda is a centralising one, advocating strengthening state-level institutions and a more pluralistic, multi-ethnic democracy (Bieber, 2006: 41; Pickering, 2009: 72). Indeed, the SDP has called for the abolition of the RS (Touquet, 2012: 214).

On the criteria of support, however, the party's 'multi-ethnic' status is more problematic. Despite presenting as a multi-ethnic party in its programme and internal organisation, this image is called into question in the Bosnian political arena by the ethnic make-up of its support and membership, which remains heavily Bosniak (Bieber, 2006: 104; Bose, 2002: 209; Keil, 2013: 119). Its electoral support lies predominantly in the Federation and therein primarily within Bosniak-dominated areas of central Bosnia and urban centres, with strongholds in Sarajevo and Tuzla. It struggles, meanwhile, to make gains within the Serb-dominated RS or Croat majority areas of the Federation (Touquet, 2011: 456). A study of municipal elections between 2006 and 2014 by Hulsey found that support for SDP lies predominantly in areas where Bosniak parties do well and that SDP competes primarily with Bosniak parties for support. Whilst SDP gains some support in areas where Croat parties are present, Hulsey suggests that this support lies in mixed Croat-Bosniak areas and comes from Bosniak voters; the party gains negligible support in Croat majority areas, where Croat parties do very well. Hulsey concludes that the SDP does not compete to any significant degree with Serb or Croat parties (2015). Furthermore, analysis of the 2010 General Election - where the SDP emerged as the largest party at state and Federation level, with 26 per cent of the vote in the Federation, as outlined below – shows that the party registered meagre results in most Serb and Croat majority areas. In the RS, the party received less than 5 per cent of the vote in the elections to the parliament, the House of Representatives, with only four exceptions: Prijedor (6.8 per cent), Kostajinica (5.6 per cent), Vukosavlje (16.1 per cent) and Doboj (6.8 per cent) – each of which host significant Bosniak returnee communities. Meanwhile, at the cantonal level, in the predominantly Croat cantons of Western Herzegovina and Livno the SDP garnered 0.8 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively (Toe, 2014). The distribution of the party's vote in the 2010 election is represented in Image 5.5 below.

Furthermore, the party's membership in 2007 was composed of 65 per cent Bosniaks, 20 per cent Serbs and 15 per cent Croats (Vuletic', 2007 cited in Touquet 2012: 214). In this sense, Bieber classes the SDP as a "non-national" but not a "cross-national" party, as it possesses a non-group specific programme and the potential to appeal to more than one group, yet its electoral base remains primarily Bosniak voters (2006: 104). In an analysis of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia Keil and Hulseley furthermore observe that: "The SDP-BiH can be considered a Bosniak party in the sense that the vast majority of its voters are Bosniaks and the party has represented Bosniak interests relative to Croats and Serbs while in office. However, unlike nationalist parties, the SDP explicitly embraces a non-nationalist ideology and maintains Croats and Serbs in its leadership hierarchy" (Keil & Hulseley, 2014). In a study of non-nationalist voting amongst Bosniak voters, Pickering found the only factor to have significant influence on support for the SDP was self-positioning on the left-right ideological scale, with factors like ethnic identity and social capital bearing no significant impact (Pickering, 2009: 584). The SDP has, furthermore, been noted for its centralist tendencies and lack of internal party democracy (Keil, 2013: 119; Vrgova, 2012: 429). The party has had only three leaders since its formation in 1990, with previous leader Zlatko Lagumdžija – in post from 1997 to 2014 – regularly accused of autocratic leadership in the media (Vrgova, 2012: 437).

### *Post-Dayton Trajectory*

The electoral performance of civic parties in post-war Bosnia relative to their ethnic counterparts has been modest on the whole, with some notable exceptions. Following the Dayton Agreement, general elections to state, entity and cantonal institutions were held every two years until 2002, after which they were staged every four years (Bieber, 2006: 87). The first elections were held in September 1996, a mere nine months after the war ended. These hastily organised polls took place in an atmosphere of extreme insecurity marked by a continuation of war-time rhetoric by the main parties, which commanded considerable control over the media (Bieber, 2006: 91; Manning, 2004: 63). They also witnessed widespread fraud and manipulation on the part of these parties, with SDS and HDZ in particular manipulating absentee voting to ensure voters cast their vote in the municipalities where they most needed their support (Manning,

2004: 64). The 1996 elections thus saw a major victory for the nationalist parties and, as many have argued, legitimised their wartime gains and cemented their grip on power (Manning, 2004: 63; Bieber, 2006: 90). Meanwhile, the moderate coalition of which SDP formed part, 'United List' (Združena Lista, ZL), enjoyed meagre gains, garnering only 7.9 per cent of the vote in the Federation (Bieber, 2006: 91).

The 2000 elections brought a change in fortunes for civic parties. These polls witnessed a number of electoral reforms introduced by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the body charged with running elections in post-Dayton Bosnia, including the introduction of open party lists, preferential voting in the form of the Alternative Vote (AV) for the RS Presidency and new rules for the election of the Federation House of Peoples (to allow both Bosniak and Croat canton assembly members to elect both Bosniak and Croat delegates) (Bieber, 2006: 94). At the same time, the OSCE openly encouraged voters to support non-nationalist, moderate parties in this election (Bieber, 2006: 99). Yet the results of this experiment in electoral engineering on the part of the international community proved limited, with little evidence of cross-ethnic voting and significant wins for Croat and Serb extremist wartime parties, HDZ and SDS (Belloni, 2007: 85; Manning, 2004: 69; McCulloch, 2014b: 44). Nevertheless, the polls did see an increase in support for the SDP (mainly at the expense of the Bosniak SDA), allowing for the creation of a post-election coalition of 10 moderate parties with SDP at its helm from 2001-02 (Bieber, 2006: 99). The so-called 'Alliance for Change', forged with the support of the international community, proved short lived, however, with the nationalist parties returned to power in the 2002 elections, demonstrating, according to Belloni, the "shallow roots" of the arrangement (2007: 86). The SDP proved the single biggest loser in this election, haemorrhaging nearly half of its votes and mandates in the House of Representatives and dropping from the first to the fourth party therein (Bieber, 2006: 102). Nevertheless, the party did secure the Croat presidency, elected in the Federation, with its candidate Željko Komšić, an ethnic Croat. These election results are set out in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 and Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below.

### *The 2010 Election and Beyond*

In 2010, the fate of civic parties shifted dramatically once again as the SDP emerged as the largest party in the state and Federation parliaments, following an energetic, positive campaign that promised change to the status quo of political inefficiency and corruption, in a context of disillusion with the largest Bosniak party in the ruling coalition in the Federation from 2006-10, the SDA. Winning 26.07 per cent of the Federation vote for the state House of Representatives and eight mandates (Central Election Commission BiH, 2010a), it went on to make up the leading party in governing coalitions at Federation and state level, as well as retaining the Croat Presidency with its candidate Komšić.

The SDP's ensuing tenure proved highly controversial however. Following the 2010 elections a political crisis ensued as nationalist parties failed to agree on the formation of a governing coalition, leaving Bosnia without a state government for 16 months. The initial dispute centred on which party should hold certain key positions in government. While the SDP maintained that it should name the Chair of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), as it had won a plurality of votes, Croat parties HDZ and HDZ 1990 claimed that they were entitled to the position, citing an informal system of rotating key posts among the three national groups (in 2002 the Bosniak SDA took the position, while in 2006 the Serb SNSD assumed the role) (Toe, 2014). When the SDP subsequently proposed a Croat from within its own ranks, Slavo Kukić, to fill the position, HDZ and SNSD voted against the nomination in the House of Representatives, with the Croat party refusing to recognise Kukić as a legitimate representative of the Croat people. An 'entity veto' by Serb delegates, outlined above, effectively blocked the SDP's nomination. The deadlock was eventually resolved in January 2012 when a HDZ member was confirmed prime minister. It has been suggested that the SDP's actions to exclude the Croat parties from this role fuelled the extremist rhetoric of these parties and their calls for a third Croat entity (Toe, 2014). Moreover, the moves rendered a situation of protracted deadlock, with no hope of forming a functional government without the support of these parties (Toe, 2014).

Having initially attempted to establish government without the main Bosniak, Croat and Serb parties, in late 2011 the SDP eventually established alliances with the SDA,

HDZ BiH, and the SNSD in ruling coalitions in the Federation and at state level (Social Overview Service, 2016: 12). A fresh crisis erupted in 2012 however, following a dispute between the SDP and the Bosniak SDA – then the main governing parties at state level - over proposed cuts to the state budget. In October 2012 the SDP garnered the support in parliament to dismiss two SDA cabinet ministers, but only through a compromise deal with Serb and Croat nationalist parties, SNSD and HDZ BiH. This pact supposedly entailed the nationalist parties' support to remove the SDA ministers in exchange for an SDP pledge to water down its position on further centralisation of the state, through reforms that would have seen the state weakened in favour of the entities (Freedom House, 2013; Keil & Perry, 2015: 85). The SDP thus stood accused of seeking to retain power at the price of compromising its multi-ethnic, integrationist principles (Stuebner, 2012). One Sarajevo-based think tank thus pessimistically concludes:

“By joining the Bosniak ethno-political block after the 2010 elections and by reinforcing its Bosnian patriotic (also seen as Bosniak populist) positions, SDP effectively showed that ethnically-divided policies have no serious alternative in BiH.” (Social Overview Service, 2016: 12).

This tumultuous term in office left the SDP widely accused of jeopardising its ideals and engaging in corrupt and nepotistic practices on a par with its nationalist rivals. The party was subsequently punished at the ballot box in the October 2014 General Elections when its vote in state parliament elections plummeted to 9.5 per cent in the Federation, leaving it with only three seats in the House of Representatives (Central Election Commission BiH, 2014a). It also sustained heavy losses to the Demokratska Fronta (Democratic Front; DF), a new electoral force formed in 2013 by former SDP member Željko Komšić from a split within the party. The DF made significant gains at the 2014 election, winning five mandates and 15.3 per cent of the Federation vote for the House of Representatives (Central Election Commission BiH, 2014). Given the recent emergence of this party however, it will not be analysed in depth in this thesis.

The SDP's victory in the contest for the Croat presidency in 2006 and 2010 – elected by voters in the Federation - also proved highly controversial. The party secured this win in both elections with candidate Željko Komšić, an ethnic Croat who fought during

the war for the Bosnian Army, rather than the Croatian HVO (Belloni, 2007: 167) – who would later split from the SDP in 2013 to form DF, as noted. The party gained this mandate, in part, due to a split in the traditional vote for Croat ethnic parties between HDZ and HDZ-1990. Thus in turn, opponents, primarily from within these parties, questioned the legitimacy of Komšić’s election as Croat President on the basis that it was secured mainly by Bosniak votes in the Federation rather than those of Croats, as he failed to win a majority in any of the three Croat-majority cantons (Belloni, 2007: 167). In this way, Komšić was depicted by nationalist rivals as not being a true Croat representative and his election as a manipulation of the rules by the SDP in order to effectively gain two Bosniak representatives in the Presidency. In this sense Belloni argues that consociation condemns cross-ethnic voting and undermines the legitimacy of leaders who are not elected solely by and for one ethnic group (2007: 167).

Amidst these fluctuations in the SDP’s vote nationally and at Federation level, its support in the RS has remained consistently low, averaging 2-3 per cent in the last three General Elections. Whilst the party does stand candidates in the Serb Republic its support there is thought to lie primarily amongst the Bosniak minority community, with a significant share of the vote from the absentee ballots cast outside the entity.

### *The Emergence of Naša Stranka*

Alongside the SDP, a newer non-ethnic actor of note has been Naša Stranka (Our Party). Formed in 2008 out of an NGO campaign by civil society activists and artists to make Bosnian politicians more responsible for citizens’ wellbeing (Touquet, 2011: 457), the party advances liberal, social democratic policies. It stands for equality for citizens of BiH regardless of ethnicity and a more civic, transparent and effective form of politics for Bosnia. In its founding documents, Naša Stranka paints itself as a civic party based on the values of liberalism, individual rights and equality and – crucially - a new, clean, effective politics for Bosnia and Herzegovina (General Programme Principles, 2008). The party’s General Programme Principles thus present it as a civic party that represents “all” of the people of Bosnia, rather than referring to each of the ethnic groups:

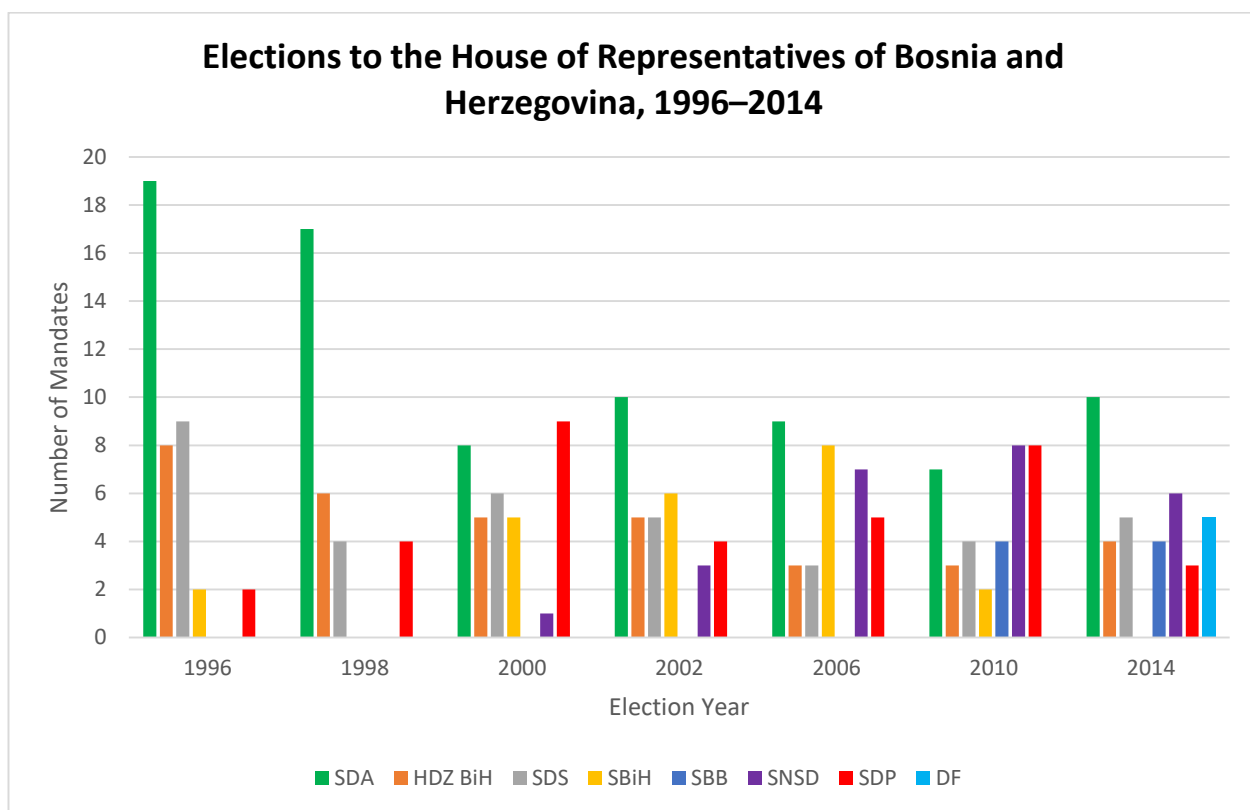
“We are pro-Bosnians (read: pro-Bosnians and pro-Herzegovinians). The whole BiH, all its peoples, and all its minorities are our target group, and in the name of peace, freedom and equality we address everyone.” (Naša Stranka, 2008).

Democratic accountability, civic participation, transparency and efficient governance constitute core principles in the party’s General Programme Principles (2008). In this sense, the party can be classed as integrationist under the civic party typology set out in Appendix A, positioning itself as ‘post-ethnic’, as characterised by Touquet (2011) and further explored in Chapter Six. In terms of support, however, similarly to SDP, the party’s representation is confined to the Federation and therein heavily concentrated in the urban centres of Sarajevo and Tuzla.

Naša Stranka made its first electoral outing at the municipal elections of 2008. The party has so far failed to gain representation at state level, registering just over 1 per cent in the 2010 and 2014 elections to the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, the 2010 elections saw it win two mandates at cantonal level in Sarajevo Canton whilst it returned 15 local councillors in the 2012 municipal elections. In 2014, the party increased its representation at cantonal level to three seats in Sarajevo and made a breakthrough to the entity level, securing one member to the Federation House of Representatives (Central Election Commission BiH, 2014b). While Naša Stranka fielded candidates in the RS in its first General Election in 2010, in 2014 it contested solely in the Federation.

The results of state-level elections in Bosnia from 1996-2014 are set out in Figure 5.1 and Table 5.3 while the electoral performance of SDP in these elections is detailed in Table 5.4 below.

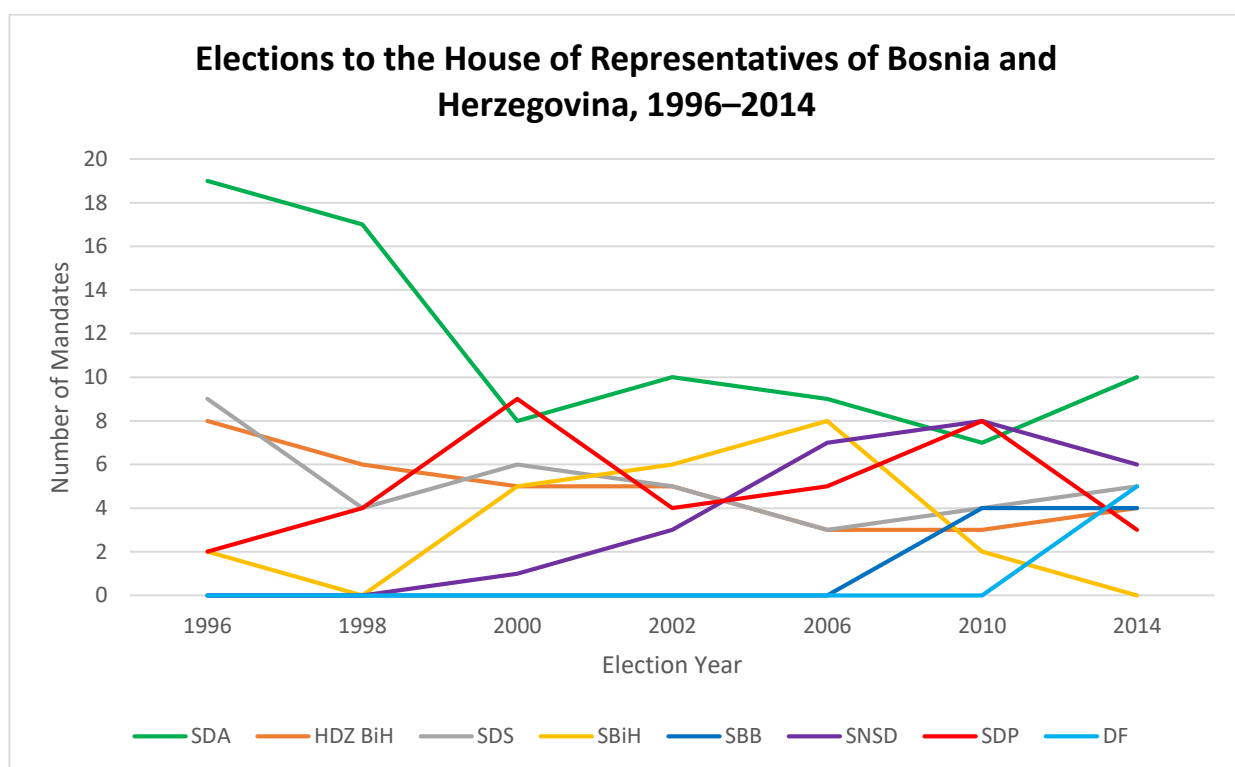
**Figure 5.1: Election Results by Mandate to the House of Representatives of BiH, 1996–2014<sup>4</sup>**



Source: <http://www.izbori.ba/>

<sup>4</sup> These parties can be classified accordingly: SDA, SBiH and SBB are Bosniak nationalist parties; HDZ BiH is a Croat nationalist party; SDS and SNSD are Serb nationalist parties; and SDP and DF are civic parties.

**Figure 5.2: Trends in Election Results by Mandate to the House of Representatives of BiH, 1996–2014**



Source: <http://www.izbori.ba/>

**Table 5.3: Election Results by Mandate to the House of Representatives of BiH, 1996–2014**

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2006	2010	2014
<b>SDA</b>	19	17	8	10	9	7	10
<b>SDS</b>	9	4	6	5	3	4	5
<b>SNSD</b>	---	---	1	3	7	8	6
<b>SBiH</b>	2	0	5	6	8	2	0
<b>HDZ BiH</b>	8	6	5	5	3	3	4
<b>SBB</b>	---	---	---	---	---	4	4
<b>SDP</b>	2	4	9	4	5	8	3
<b>DF</b>	---	---	---	---	---	---	5

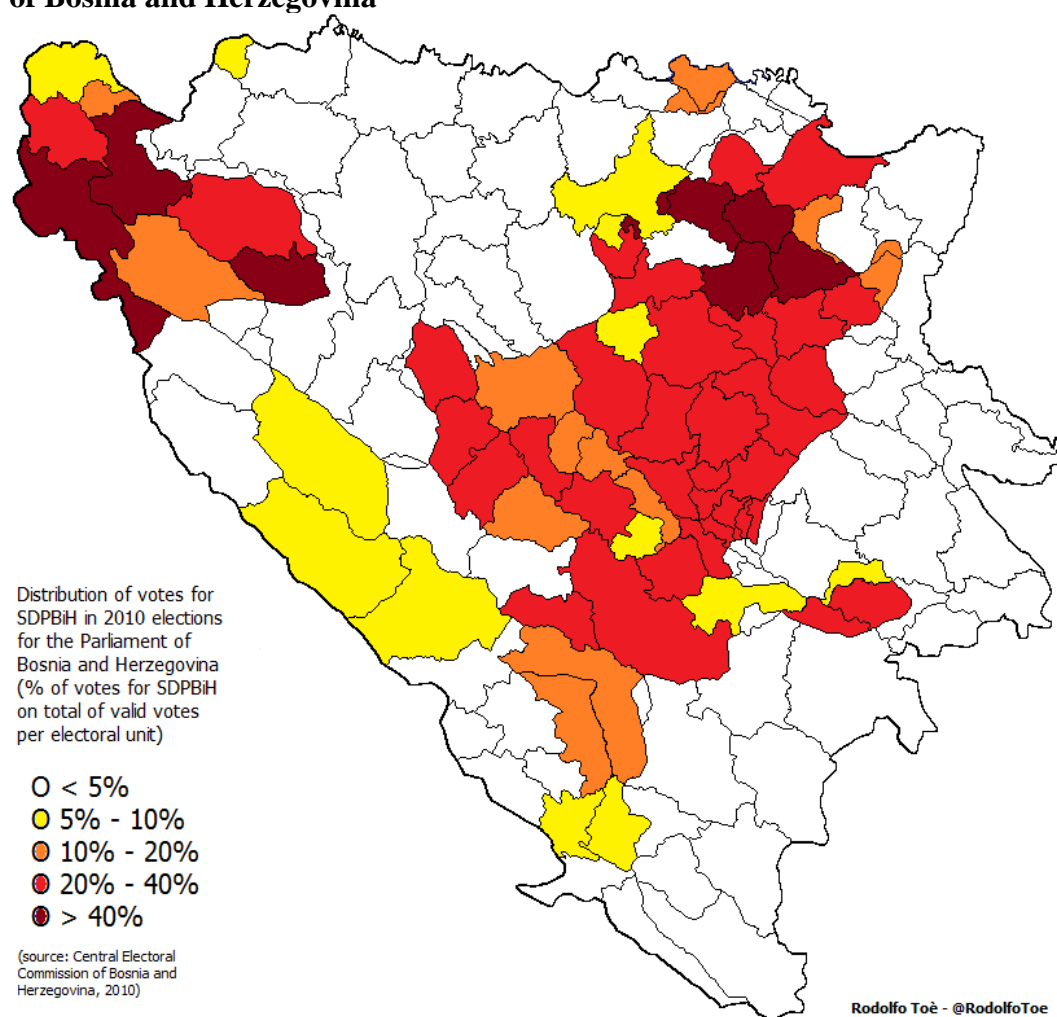
Source: <http://www.izbori.ba/>

**Table 5.4: SDP Election Results to the House of Representatives of BiH, 1996-2014**

Year	Election	% (FBiH)	Seats
1996 <sup>5</sup>	General (BiH HoR)	7.1	2
1998	General (BiH HoR)	14.5	4
2000	General (BiH HoR)	27.3	9
2002	General (BiH HoR)	15.7	4
2006	General (BiH HoR)	15.4	5
2010	General (BiH HoR)	26.1	8
2014	General (BiH HoR)	9.5	3

Source: <http://www.izbori.ba/>; Bieber, 2006; Hulseley, 2015b.

**Image 5.5: Distribution of SDP Vote in 2010 Election to House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina**



Source: <http://www.transconflict.com/2014/11/bosnia-herzegovina-and-the-failed-revolution-of-the-sdp-2010-2014-part-1-241/>

<sup>5</sup> In 1996 the SDP stood as part of the United List electoral coalition, including other parties: UBSD, HSS, MBO, REPUBLIKANCI.

The post-Dayton landscape has proven an inhospitable one for civic parties in the context of a highly ethnicised corporate consociational framework on the formal level and amidst deeply polarised party competition, widespread practice of ethno-national party patronage and high levels of public disillusion in politics. Nevertheless, given the survival of the main civic actor and indeed the emergence of new actors into the civic bloc, the period has clearly also offered these parties some structural openings. Amongst these opportunities have been the international support for political moderates in 2000, through institutional reform and facilitation, which saw the SDP enter government and lead a short-lived governing coalition. Meanwhile these parties have managed to seize and capitalise on a central discursive space in the midst of disillusion with ethno-national parties, as witnessed in the 2010 elections. The next chapter explores these structural barriers and opportunities and the ways in which civic actors have chosen to navigate them.

## **Conclusion**

Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina constitutes an inimical institutional terrain for civic parties to tread, as this chapter has demonstrated. Introducing the case, it has charted the historical evolution of some of the core structures of Bosnian politics - identity, political parties and the political system. Furthermore, it has traced the legacies underlying the current place of non-ethnic political parties in the polity. This chapter has demonstrated the exclusion of civic parties from the peace process and agreement and their subsequent marginalisation in the corporate power-sharing system that emerged. Neither the formal structures, based on a mix of ethnic and territorial representation, nor the dynamics of ethno-national party competition and discourse that surround them, have been conducive to these actors and their form of politics. Nevertheless, civic parties continue to represent a distinctive, if contested, force in Bosnian politics. They have succeeded in maintaining a space in Bosnian politics and found openings within the consociational structures. Having established the structural context in which civic parties emerged and operate in Bosnia, the next chapter, through the analysis of empirical data, explores how these structures affect these parties specifically and how they, in turn, negotiate this framework.

## Chapter Six

### **Negotiating a Fractured Landscape: Civic Parties in Post-Dayton Bosnia**

In the course of my empirical research in Bosnia and Herzegovina, civic parties presented their experiences as akin to swimming against a tide. Their efforts to pursue a normal, issue-based politics were taking place within a context of ethno-national fervour in which they faced continual marginalisation, contestation, and, at times, co-optation. What's more, these dynamics were supported by a corporate consociational framework with ethnic representation at its core. In the midst of this inhospitable landscape, however, civic parties have nevertheless managed to survive and secure ground between the three ethno-nationalist blocs that make up Bosnian politics. They have done so by claiming the civic niche in politics, at times capitalising on voter disillusion and demand for change, but also by seizing opportunities presented in the institutional framework and using the structures of the consociational system strategically to their own advantage. In this sense, these parties have navigated this system by, on the one hand presenting themselves as the civic alternative to the main parties and remaining critical of the institutionalisation of ethnic representation, and on the other, using some of its features, such as the ethnic quota system and electoral decentralisation to advance. The openings this system affords these parties are therefore double edged in a sense, and present civic actors with strategic dilemmas. In contradicting their principles, they bear the potential to undermine their civic standing and reinforce the adverse ethno-nationalist discourses with which they contend.

Having outlined the structures of Bosnian politics in Chapter Five, this chapter explores how these structures work in practice. In depicting the way in which politics is 'done' in post-war Bosnia, it examines how these structures constrain and enable civic parties. Moreover, it considers how these parties adapt to this framework and the strategies they use to navigate it. This chapter thus presents empirical findings from qualitative elite interviews, focus groups and document analysis carried out in Bosnia from February to July 2014. As outlined in Chapter Two, it draws primarily upon 44 interviews: 19 with representatives of civic parties (nine with the Social Democratic Party, six with representatives of Naša Stranka and four with other civic parties); eight with representatives of ethnic parties; four with representatives of the

NGO sector; three with representatives of the international community in Bosnia; one with a Bosnia-based journalist; and nine with representatives of a civic protest and citizens' assembly movement. This research is also informed by three focus groups carried out with voters, designed to elucidate their perspectives on civic parties and the barriers and opportunities they face within the political system. One such group was conducted with university students in the state capital Sarajevo, one with language school students and associates in Sarajevo and one with university students in Republika Srpska capital Banja Luka.

The first section of this chapter depicts the informal and formal constraints civic parties meet within post-Dayton politics, in the shape of discursive obstructions, clientelistic practices, political disillusion and institutional marginalisation in the consociational system. The second section explores the openings these parties find in this system, both discursively and institutionally. The third section presents a case study of a citizens' assembly and protest movement that emerged in BiH in 2014 and its implications for the structural opportunities and barriers facing civic movements and parties. The fourth and final section assesses the strategies civic actors employ in response to these structures.

### **6.1 Structural Barriers to Civic Parties**

Chapter Five outlined the complex configuration of the Dayton political system. How does this system operate in practice? And how do these dynamics bear upon civic parties? It is to these questions that this chapter turns, firstly depicting the ways in which these dynamics inhibit civic actors.

#### *Discursive Constraints: Marginalisation and Contestation*

In the interviews with civic representatives carried out in this research, in describing their experiences in the Dayton framework, the ethno-national political discourse and structures of party competition emerged as a dominant theme. Civic actors presented these forces as a major obstacle to their attempts to appeal to voters and advance their agenda. This section shines a light on these dynamics, exploring how the discursive strategies used by ethno-national parties, the issue dimensions of party competition

and the ethno-national framing of issues can work to varyingly marginalise and contest the civic position in Bosnian politics.

*Marginalisation: Being Heard amidst the Politics of Fear*

The ethno-national dynamic of party competition outlined in Chapter One emerged as a clear theme in interviews and focus groups. In interviews with civic representatives, multiple examples of the ‘security dilemma’ dynamic of party competition were furnished. One SDP member of the House of Representatives FBiH described how memories of the war are routinely invoked to exploit insecurity politically, suggesting, for example, that the vandalism of Muslim graves and war memorials common around election time is often perpetrated on behalf of Bosniak nationalist parties, as a means to stoke ethnic fear and shore up support (Interview with SDP representative, House of Representatives, FBiH, 2014). Amidst this cycle of fear and insecurity, civic party representatives tended to characterise the high levels of support for ethno-national parties, regrettably, as little mystery. A number of SDP representatives lamented ethnonational parties’ continued ability to manipulate voters’ fear of the other ethnic community and the zero sum threat of loss at the local level (Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Karajbić, 2014). Some expressed frustration at the ease with which these could win votes in this fashion, as opposed to having to campaign on social and economic issues and demonstrate achievements, as they felt obliged to do (Interview with Mešić, 2014; Interview with Živanović, 2014).

Members of Naša Stranka interviewed were particularly exercised about the competitive strategies deployed by their nationalist party rivals and the impact it had on their party. Then party president Dennis Gratz underlined the challenge for civic parties to get through to voters in this context:

“In RS it is quite impossible to talk about political issues and... not address issues of war. Here [the Federation] to a lesser extent, but it's the very same thing. This is how the big parties, they throw the ball to each other. They pump up the hatreds and tensions between each other and sort of rely on the people to vote out of spite. 'Well I know he's a crook, but at least he's my crook'” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

Amidst this discourse of fear of the ethnic other, positive, issue-based campaigning becomes a major challenge, according to Naša Stranka representatives (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Naša Stranka member of the Canton of Sarajevo, and Serb delegate to the House of Peoples FBiH Predrag Kojović voices the test it presents:

“They bring this country to the edge of the war before every election. It creates an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty and then people do what people do and it's not specific for Bosnians...

“It's the fear. It's the cheapest and most available fuel in politics and if you're going to use it it's really hard to go against it. It's *really* hard. Especially when you're talking about just normal, reasonable things – like how we're going to organise public transportation.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Kojović maintains that it is possible to get through to voters with the party's message of hope and a better future for Bosnia based on democratic reform and social democratic policies. However, this requires significant time and resources and progress is vulnerable to reversal by the forces of negative campaigning:

"I can convince anybody in 15 minutes to vote for Naša Stranka. But once they go home and they turn on the TV, I think half an hour later they are back to where I took them from...

“[You can] go to Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, and you sit with a guy who is a really radical nationalist... After three hours he's not a nationalist anymore, he's a worried father, he's worried about his job and things like that.

“So all you need to do is spend three to four hours with 3.5 million people. Or, you go and you say: 'Long live Serbia!' And they all go 'Long live...' and you can go in five minutes to your next rally.

“That's why I said it's the cheapest, most available fuel in politics, this populism based on this radical ethnic [rhetoric]. What we are proposing takes time and explanation and understanding and listening. It takes more than a soundbite.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Indeed, findings from focus groups with ordinary citizens reveal an acute awareness of these ethno-national discourses and competitive strategies used by ethnic parties (Focus Group a, 2014; Focus Group b, 2014; Focus Group c, 2014). Participants in a group conducted with university students in Banja Luka repeatedly referred to parties'

manipulation of voters' fears and insecurities and showed resentment towards such practices. One participant argued: "They are not giving people a chance to discuss about other questions like education, the economy. The only issues for us are Muslims and Croats and it's not a problem that we have not developed the economy, that all [our] companies are closing." (Focus Group c, 2014).

*Contestation: Ethno-National Framing*

In this climate civic messages are often heard and interpreted differently by different ethnic communities – sometimes as a *threat*. Furthermore, civic parties' policies and positionings are often deliberately framed as such by ethnonational elites.

In one example of this effect, Naša Stranka's Kojović described the way in which, in a context in which the debate over Bosnia's constitutional arrangements remains infused with emotion and fear of a return to war, proposals for much needed constitutional reorganisation are often automatically read as an attack on one's own ethnic group (Interview with Kojović, 2014). He recalled the experience of promoting the proposals for constitutional reform commissioned by the party in 2012, which included strengthening the state level and organising the country into four ethnically-neutral entities and two districts, to make governance more efficient and effective (Sarčević, 2012):

"Like when we were promoting our constitutional proposal which advised on making four regions with two districts. And then we were doing a tour around Bosnia promoting it... You go and talk to different ethnic groups and they all say, 'Oh you're doing this because you're siding with the Bosniaks', 'You're proposing this [because] you want to kill Republika Srpska', things like that." (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

This strategy of contestation also sees civic parties encounter hostility and negative representations on the part of ethno-national parties. In not belonging to any of the ethnonational blocs, civic parties theoretically pose a competitive threat to all three groups of parties – and potentially to their very ideology. In engaging in this competition, a number of discursive strategies are thus deployed by the ethno-national actors towards their civic counterparts. In these discourses civic parties are varyingly framed as: *weak*, *illegitimate*, *suspect* and even *traitorous*.

A number of SDP members interviewed cited attempts by ethnic parties to paint them as *weak* and ineffectual in the face of the threat from the ethnic other and thus incapable of adequately representing voters' interests (Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014). As elaborated below, representatives of both SDP and Naša Stranka complained of being treated as *illegitimate* representatives of the three constituent peoples, when they served in roles reserved for members of these communities under the ethnic quota system (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014). Another discursive strategy that civic parties encounter in this environment is *suspicion*. In the prevailing security dilemma discourse, the non-ethnic or multi-ethnic stance is regularly not accepted as credible and these parties rather painted as 'really ethnic' and trying to hide their true ethnic identity. Given their presence overwhelmingly in Bosniak-majority areas of the Federation and low profile in the RS (or relative absence in the case of Naša Stranka), the accusation most commonly levelled at civic parties is that they are really Bosniak parties masquerading as multi-ethnic. This discursive strategy was displayed in interviews with representatives of ethnonational parties. A HDZ representative of Mostar City Council interviewed categorically defined both SDP and Naša Stranka as Bosniak parties and maintained that not a single multi-ethnic party existed in BiH (Interview, 2014):

“For example, SDP, they are nominally multi-national party. In the leadership they have Croats, they have Serbs... but by membership and especially by their voters, they are a Bosniak party. That's *clear*.

"In Mostar also, SDP, they have a few Croats on lists. For example, this minister on the federal level, he's a Croat from Mostar. But in the election... 99 per cent Bosniaks, maybe 1 per cent Croats will vote for SDP. Maybe some people who have nostalgic feelings for Yugoslavia, because SDP is the legal successor of the communist Party.” (Interview with HDZ representative, 2014).

Furthermore, a representative of the Serb nationalist party SNSD argued that, due to its pro-centralisation position SDP will only ever attract significant votes from the Bosniak community and thus only ever be a Bosniak party (Interview, 2014).

SDP representatives spoke of how this discourse of the party being suspect and 'really Bosniak' was used by its opponents to deny it credibility (Interview with Borić, 2014;

Interview with SDP member and commentator, 2014). One representative thus complained that, on the one hand, her party was accused by Serb and Croat parties of ‘really’ being an ethnic (Bosniak) party and, on the other, by Bosniak parties of not being able to truly represent Bosniaks (Interview with Borić, 2014).

This suspicion of the non-ethnic position was also referred to in Naša Stranka interviews. Kojović spoke, in this sense, of the controversy over President Dennis Gratz’s name – a key marker of ethnic identity - during an election campaign in 2008. The events, as Touquet relates (2011: 465), erupted when it was revealed during the 2008 municipal elections, in which Gratz stood as a candidate, that he had changed his name from Muhamed Gračić (a traditionally Bosniak name) to Dennis Gratz. This affair left the Naša Stranka member accused of trying to hide his true ethnic identity and - particularly by his Bosniak opponents - of being ashamed of that identity (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Indeed, newcomer DF has experienced scepticism of its multi-ethnic stance, according to one representative. He reports, when in the RS, having to combat the claim that the party will inevitably be a Bosniak party, particularly given that its leader Željko Komšić (an ethnic Croat) fought during the war with the Bosnian Army (Interview with Marjanović, 2014).

Some of the more hostile discourses used by ethnonational parties towards civic parties go beyond insinuation to explicitly portray them as *traitorous*. As Grandits demonstrates, the ‘traitors’ (‘izdajnici’) accusation retains currency in post-war Bosnia, particularly in the Croat political community (2007: 106; 115). He describes how, during the 2000 general election campaign, the Croat HDZ attempted to discredit Croat candidates in other parties by denouncing them as ‘traitors’ and ‘judases’ for reasons including failing to join the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane, HVO) during the war, failing to observe the Catholic faith and cooperating with non-Croat parties. Indeed, in its communications to Croat voters, voting for a party other than HDZ was also depicted by the party as an act of betrayal (Grandits, 2007: 117-118).

SDP representatives interviewed recounted encountering this ‘traitor’ allegation, either explicitly or implicitly (Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Karajbić).

Some described how the party's stance on certain policy issues, which they deemed to have no relevance to ethnicity, was played by their ethno-national opponents as a betrayal of their community. SDP representative of the House of Peoples BiH Mehmed Bradarić for example cited the state-wide residency law, which was supported by the SDP but vetoed by Bosniak parties who claimed it would discriminate against Bosniak returnees in the RS. Refuting these claims as unfounded, the MP said the SDA portrayed the SDP in the media as endangering Bosniaks living in the RS, after which he received "hundreds of threatening emails saying: 'You are betraying the Bosniak people'". He added: "And that really made me feel uncomfortable. I was really aware that passing this law was part of the reform processes BiH needs to go through. But still, it's a very strange feeling." (Interview with Bradarić, 2014). Another SDP member and public commentator pointed to the pressure the party came under from the Bosniak party SDA during the debate that preceded the Census carried out in 2013, to support its campaign for people to declare their ethnicity Bosniak, their religion Islam and their language Bosnian, in order to boost these figures in the outcome (Interview, 2014).

In a further example, Bradarić recalled an experience when he was Mayor of the central Bosnian town of Maglaj in 2000. The former Mayor related being denounced by the SDA as betraying the Bosniak community when he oversaw the evictions of members of the Wahhabi community from homes owned by Serbs before the war, to which they had a right to return under the Dayton Agreement (Interview with Bradarić, 2014).

He said:

"And basically the biggest obstructions came from SDA because they were accusing me of attempting to drive out their Muslim brothers from that part, whereas I always said that it is not legal to build on somebody else's land and that these people might come back one day, which they eventually did after they got the right to come back to their properties." (Interview with Bradarić, 2014).

Meanwhile, Naša Stranka representative of Sarajevo canton and Serb delegate to the House of Peoples FBiH Kojović, reports accusations from his opponents in the cantonal assembly that he fought with the Serb forces in Sarajevo. While he

vehemently rebutted the above claim at the time, he argues that such insinuations can have lasting resonance with voters. He recalled an exchange from a focus group subsequently conducted by the party to demonstrate this point:

“One guy said: 'You know, I really like Pedja Kojović but he was with the Četniks [Serb paramilitary group] during the war'. And the other guys says: 'Really? Oh I didn't know that. I really liked him, but now that I hear that...’” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Civic party representatives tended to interpret such attacks as motivated by self-preservation on the part of the ethnonational parties, who see them as a threat to the dominance of ethnonational politics and, hence, their power. One SDP Member of Parliament explained these parties' hostility towards SDP, particularly over its winning of the Croat Presidency in 2006 and 2010, as anger at the civic actor “ruining their system” whereby “the Croat should be from the Croatian party, the Bosniak from the nationalist Bosniak party...” (Interview with Martinović, 2014). Furthermore, a representative of Naša Stranka explained such animosity as driven by these parties' perception of it as challenging their corrupt and nepotistic practices (Interview with Šerak, 2014). Meanwhile, Naša Stranka's Kojović observed that the accusations of his association with the Serb army emerge most strongly when he appears to pose a political threat to his rivals, such as following the proposal in 2014 that he be nominated as Prime Minister of the cantonal government of Sarajevo (Interview, 2014).

Beyond party interaction, focus groups with citizens suggest that these ethno-national framings also find resonance with voters. Discussions in a group conducted with students in the RS – each of whom identified as Serb (or Bosnian Serb) in a participant questionnaire - reveal a strong suspicion of “multi-ethnic” parties. Indeed some participants claimed that there were no such parties in BiH and that those that did proclaim themselves as such – namely SDP and Naša Stranka - were “fake”, using the term as a “mask” with which to hide their Bosniak identity and a Bosniak majoritarian agenda. One participant argued that the SDP had damaged the very concept of “multi-ethnic” and, indeed, of citizenship, using these terms as bywords, to his mind, for Bosniak. He further claimed the party “abused” the system by getting a candidate

elected as Croat president through predominantly Bosniak votes (Focus Group c, 2014).

Another participant in this group said:

“[Naša Stranka] are clearly a Muslim, Bosnian, Bosniak party; they're not multi-ethnic. That's just a mask. You know, if you are trying to create a new identity by spreading your identity, you will not succeed. And if you are trying to create a new identity, but really new identity, new forms, new flags, new everything, maybe you will try.

“What SDP and Naša Stranka are doing is just spreading their own identity, *their* Bosnian identity. That's not our Bosnian identity. I have a Bosnian identity: I am Bosnian Serb - I wrote it there [in the participant questionnaire]. Because Bosnian is my regional identity and Serb because that's my national identity. And that Bosnian that they are trying to make me to accept it, they will not.” (Focus Group c, 2014).

This is not to suggest that these perceptions are purely created by the parties, with no prior basis, but that public opinion and party messages exist in a complex and reinforcing interaction.

### *A Dearth of Allies*

A further barrier to civic parties that emerged from this research in Bosnia was their isolation within the system due to an absence of potential partners, in politics and civil society more broadly. Access to government under Bosnia's proportional representation power-sharing system, at state, entity and cantonal levels, is clearly only viable through coalition with other parties. Given the dominance of ethno-national parties and dearth of non-ethnic actors in the system however, this presents considerable impediments and a potential strategic dilemma to civic parties in terms of forging alliances with other parties, either in the form of pre-election pacts, post-election governing coalitions or, indeed, day-to-day cooperation on policy and legislation. Entering government at state and entity level, almost inevitably entails coalition partnership with ethnic parties – with the exception of the short-lived Alliance for Change coalition which formed following the 2000 election. However, working with ethno-national parties, of any description, carries a risk for civic parties, threatening to taint their civic image and lead them to compromise their non-ethnic principles. The SDP's experience after emerging as the largest party in the Federation

in the 2010 General Election and subsequently at the helm of the governing coalition at state and FBiH level from 2010-14, demonstrates some of these risks. This tenure was marked by instability, immobilism and lack of cooperation between the governing parties. Their rein was notable for the severe delays, in government formation after the SDP failed in its attempt to form governments without the main Bosniak, Croat and Serb parties, as outlined in Chapter Five, and for disputes between the SDP and its coalition partners, most notably SDA, resulting in mid-term changes to the composition of government. The term also witnessed ideological compromise on the part of the SDP, not least in its “deal” with Serb and Croat nationalist parties, exposed in 2012, on reforms that would have seen the state weakened in favour of the entities. The experience of DF following the 2014 General Election, in which it emerged as the second largest party in the Federation, is also instructive. The newly formed civic party entered coalition at FBiH level with Bosniak nationalist party SDA and Croat nationalists HDZ BiH, yet the pact dissolved within months with the DF citing irreconcilable differences with the nationalist parties (Freedom House, 2016).

The dilemma of cooperation with other parties emerged as a strong theme in interviews with civic party representatives. A number of SDP representatives expressed regret and resentment at the legacy of their coalition experience in the 2010-14 term and the damage this had done to the party’s perception amongst voters (Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). One Member of Naša Stranka also noted the dearth of non-ethnic parties with which it could do business (Interview with Mujezinović, 2014). Naša Stranka’s General Secretary said that he accepted the necessity of working with ethno-national parties, in order to wield any influence in the system, but that the party’s members were extremely reluctant to associate with ethnic actors, presenting a strategic challenge (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Meanwhile, members of the newly formed DF interviewed raised pre and post electoral alliances as a thorny issue which it had to seriously consider ahead of the 2014 elections, with one member floating the prospect of a controversial pact with the populist Bosniak party Savez za Bolju Budućnost BiH (Union for a Better Future of BiH; SBB BiH) (Interview with Hagić, 2014; Interview with Marjanović, 2014).

Yet, ethnic parties aside, the prospect of cooperation and alliance *among civic parties* in BiH also emerged in this research as a tricky endeavour. Indeed, pacts between

civic parties in post-Dayton politics have been few and their record limited, with the Alliance for Change coalition of 10 parties proving unstable and transient. Member of the Sarajevo cantonal assembly and the FBiH House of Peoples for Naša Stranka, Predrag Kojović, expressed the difficulty of doing business with any other party in the Assembly, including the SDP. Other parties' lack of ideological profile and the fact that they obtain their direction solely from their leadership make them unreliable allies, he reported.

“[We work with other parties] from issue to issue. That's one thing that is lacking here ... they say that they can predict all [of] our reactions to certain proposals. I can't predict theirs. And you should be able to predict. If they were ideologically formed, with policies, you should be able to predict how they're going to react.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Kojović relayed an instance when he was “burned” by SDP colleagues in the cantonal assembly, when they had provisionally agreed to support him in his use of the veto over the naming of candidates for positions on the boards of public companies, all of whom were Bosniak.

“The opportunity to raise the question of vetoing it came when the budget came and I had a conversation with people from SDP that I will [use] the Serb ethnic vital interest and say 'It's not about Serbs but it's about other ethnic groups who are also missing from this list'. And the SDP guy said 'Yes, let's do it'. And I went back to the session and I stood up and I said this and then I asked for a break in which the Serb delegates will formulate this request and when we came to the break the SDP guy said, 'Oh we got a phone call, we changed our minds'. So I was left hanging.... I mean you can't deal with people who receive their opinions through sms messages.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Furthermore, Kojović related the challenge of forming pre-election pacts with other civic parties in Bosnia, given their undefined ideological profile, in his view. Naša Stranka had considered forming an electoral bloc with other non-ethnic centre-left parties ahead of the 2014 General Election, he said, but abandoned the idea given its unfeasibility in this context.

“We wanted this bloc to be a centre-left bloc... But you just can't. Because I don't know what SDP is. We are small, but I like that we are very ideologically profiled. I mean I can tell you exactly how our members, without any consultation, will vote on certain things, future questions in the municipalities or the city government....You can't predict how [SDP] are going to vote.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Admitting that this lack of potential coalition partners formed a major barrier to Naša Stranka gaining power and advancing as a party, Kojović added, “But we will not go with people that don't have any beliefs.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Indeed, the issue of electoral pacts also arose in the 2014 election campaign with the formation of the ‘Domovina’ (Homeland) electoral coalition in the RS. The pact arose as a product of the ‘Prvi Mart’ (First of March; Bosnian Independence Day), a campaign to register a sufficient number of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in the RS in order to secure the election of five representatives from the entity to the state House of Representatives who do not deny genocide. In this way, the initiative bore the additional aim of subverting the use of the ‘entity veto’ by RS delegates to block pro-Bosnian legislation, including with respect to EU integration. In the event the coalition gained one seat among the RS representatives to the parliament (Keil & Perry, 2015: 86). A number of parties took part in the electoral pact, including the newly formed DF, as well as Bosniak parties SBB, SDA and SBiH and the small Croat party, the Croatian Party of Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HSP BiH). The SDP chose not to partake in the coalition, however. In interviews ideological reasons were cited for this decision with one representative claiming the coalition represented a Bosniak nationalist initiative and thus conflicted with its civic principles (Interview with Karajbić, 2014). Nevertheless, the centrality of its rival, the DF, to the coalition (with two leading figures within the party having launched the Prvi Mart initiative) could be presumed to form a factor in the SDP’s opposition. Standing no candidates in the RS in 2014, Naša Stranka did not take part in the electoral coalition. Nevertheless, one senior official also expressed reservations about the extent to which its agenda would be perceived as non-ethnic (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). The lack of civic party unity on this issue demonstrates, firstly, the ethnic taint that attaches to many civic issues in Bosnia - particularly any matter relating to strengthening the Bosnian state - and the conflation of the integrationist agenda with the Bosniak nationalist agenda in this climate. Secondly, it speaks to the power of personality in Bosnian politics and proneness to leadership divisions and rivalries among parties, as seen in Željko Komšić’s acrimonious split from the SDP to form DF. Both of these dynamics present steep challenges to cross-civic solidarity.

The potential for Bosnia's civic parties to work together, as a moderate alliance and potential 'fourth force' alongside the three ethno-national blocs, thus appears limited. Beyond the party sphere, as noted in Chapter Five, much of Bosnian civil society is structured along ethnic lines and indeed co-opted by political parties, with civic space outwith the purview of parties extremely underdeveloped. In this context, a number of civic party representatives underlined a dearth of allies in civil society, notably, among trade unions and media (Interview with Živanović, 2014).

### *Clientelism and Patronage*

In researching the opportunities and constraints civic parties encounter in post-war Bosnia, the country's informal system of patronage and clientelism, in which parties can use their political and economic power to both co-opt and intimidate, emerged as a dominant theme. In interviews with civic parties – particularly Naša Stranka - this system was depicted as a major asset to the ethno-national parties in BiH and a significant handicap to those seeking to play a different game.

The theme of patronage was raised by SDP members in interviews most prominently by way of explaining the party's limited success in Serb and Croat majority areas. Representatives identified ethnic party patronage as a key barrier to it breaking into these regions where such parties had strong "infrastructure" and control over state resources (Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014).

Member of the House of Peoples Bradarić explained:

"What you have is really domination of these political parties on local level. For example, in schools you have principals of schools who are appointed if they belong to a political party. And managing boards, not people working in these schools but people appointed from outside - also political party affiliates. "And it is a strong political infrastructure built in those areas and it's very difficult to eradicate it. They engage local people and they tell them 'we need to keep our status here, we need to keep our influence here, otherwise you will lose your positions, you will be driven out'. So this is how they basically get their support and why it is difficult to break into that." (Interview with Bradarić, 2014).

Former SDP Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo Miroslav Živanović furthermore articulated how this system of “political rent” makes it very easy for ethnonational parties to maintain power in BiH.

"The majority of political organisations will not lose their energy and time in introducing and implementing policies related to real life problems. What they will do is try to introduce this system of political rent. 'I will rent your support. And, in return, I will give you a job; I will give you benefits; I will give you a blind eye on your misusing of resources, or violation of the law, or whatever, avoiding tax, etc., etc., etc.'"

“At the end of the day, I have a constituency, 10,000 people, very actively involved, they have their own networks of 5, 10, etc., etc. At the end of the day I have 200,000 voters and I am in. It's not [rocket science].” (Interview with Živanović, 2014).

Some SDP interviewees furthermore underlined how civil servants appointed by other parties had obstructed the SDP’s agenda and stifled its progress in office from 2010-2014 (Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Živanović, 2014). Officials under the patronage of other parties had engaged in a variety of underhand tactics, one Member of Parliament reported, including hiding mail from SDP ministers (Interview with Martinović, 2014).

Naša Stranka members interviewed were even more forthright regarding the detrimental effect of party patronage on its progression (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Haverić, 2014; Interview with Mujezinović, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Then party President Dennis Gratz explained that, staking its reputation as a new party that does not engage in corruption, Naša Stranka did not take up the positions on boards of publicly-owned companies to which it was entitled. This principled stance has made the party very “unsuccessful” in Bosnian politics in the short term, he said, depriving it of power in these spheres and making it less attractive to donors seeking to influence the political process. This, in turn, renders Naša Stranka less able to secure media coverage, which, he reported, can be bought in Bosnia.

"We are not attractive to people with money because they know they can't influence us. If we don't have money then we can't conduct a proper campaign. It's all about money... I mean it's around €4000 to pay a local channel to just have a guest in their shows during the campaign, it's quite a lot of money, 5 per

cent of our overall campaign budget for 2012 and 2010.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

“The other problem is, you influence political processes in this country by having the share in power. We were not interested in sharing that portion of power [positions on boards] that was belonging to us on the basis of our election results because it would immediately equalise us with the others. So we are not interested in having our people on different boards... But we knew if we did that we would just be another party that kind of emerged and then ceased to exist.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

Indeed, General Secretary Zuhrić recounted that a number of new members who joined the party after its founding, left when they realised that they were not going to secure any personal gains, such as employment, from their membership (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Likewise, Sabina Mujezinović, a Member of the Party Presidency from Tuzla emphasised the challenge Naša Stranka faced when other parties are “literally... buying votes”. She cited the example of the Bosniak SDA which held the Ministry of Agriculture in Tuzla canton at the time of interview, allocating agricultural subsidies to those likely to vote for the party. In this context, she argued, even with the best agricultural policies, it is difficult for a small party, with neither the power nor the will to engage in such clientelistic practice, to compete (Interview with Mujezinović, 2014). In forming a financial barrier to small, new players on the party scene, patronage is a particular impediment to Naša Stranka.

As well as co-opting voters, party clientelism is used as a tool of intimidation and deterrence in BiH, as one senior member of the newly formed DF attested. The interviewee reported that some influential members of the community in Bosnia, from whom that the party was hoping to attract support, had received threats and blackmail that they may lose their positions if they were to declare support for the new party (Interview with DF member, 2014).

Citizens who participated in all three focus groups were keenly aware of the pervasiveness of party patronage in Bosnia and the issue emerged at the foreground of discussions (Focus Group a, 2014; Focus Group b, 2014; Focus Group c, 2014). In the group conducted with students in the RS, participants expressed deep cynicism about political parties and political participation, agreeing that the *only* reason that one would join a party was in order to secure a job, or improve one’s prospects of doing

so. To be “successful” in Bosnia, in either public or private sector employment, they felt, one must be connected to a political party (Focus Group a, 2014). Likewise, participants in a focus group in Sarajevo, in explaining why people vote overwhelmingly for ethnonational parties, pointed to incentives for small material gain and fear of losing those benefits they already possess. In the context of widespread unemployment and poverty, participants felt citizens had little power to resist such forces (Focus Group c, 2014).

One participant said:

“I think the problem is that people are afraid. Because they are always thinking about the small things. They are bribed by the government, by the promises. You know, they are giving them cows... small amounts of money. 100km [Bosnian currency; equivalent to €50] is enough to buy a vote I think.” (Focus Group c, 2014).

Furthermore, the belief was expressed in two groups that electoral fraud was widespread in the country (Focus Group a, 2014; Focus Group b, 2014). Participants in one group even reported that public employees were sometimes required by their local ruling party to take a photograph of their ballot paper as proof of their vote (Focus Group a, 2014). The patronage system thus appears to work hand in hand with the dynamics of party competition outlined above to instil fear in voters that not voting for the dominant ethnonational party in their area will result in a very real loss.

Members of the international community working in Bosnia lamented the prevalence of the patronage system, which they viewed as entrenching the power of nationalist parties at the expense of moderates (Interview with International Diplomat a, 2014; Interview with International Diplomat b, 2014). One democratisation NGO representative interviewed noted that electoral fraud, whereby voters’ ballots are not secret, whether real or perceived, is believed to operate in Bosnia, particularly in rural areas:

“People don’t assume that their votes are secret here. Even if votes are secret, many people think their votes are not secret. Electoral fraud, whether real or perceived, is real in the minds of voters.

“Are you going to vote against the local party if Uncle Tom has his job because of them and he is the sole breadwinner of the family? You might not vote, but

you will be unlikely to vote against the party.” (Interview with NGO representative a, 2014).

Indeed, one international diplomat admitted that, in urging Bosnian voters to resist these pressures and ‘vote for change’, international actors were expecting more from them than they would of voters in their own countries (Interview with International Diplomat a, 2014).

Patronage thus contributes to ethno-national party dominance in Bosnia, in a path dependent fashion - used as a tool to perpetuate their political power and set high costs for parties lacking either the resource or will, that seek to break through and change voter preferences. Nevertheless, the SDP has itself been accused of utilising clientelist networks to its own advantage on a scale equal to that of the ethnically based parties, not least during its term in state government from 2010-14 (Interview with NGO representative (a), 2014). When asked about their strategy in countering this barrier, two SDP members of state parliament admitted that the SDP also attempts to secure jobs and positions for its supporters in order to compete with the other parties (Interview with Martinović, 2014), which have been engaged in such practice “for decades” (Interview with Mešić, 2014). One claimed, however, that at the same time the party was trying to change legislation to eradicate such practice on the macro level (Interview with Mešić, 2014). Members of Naša Stranka on the other hand maintained the principled stance that it would take no part in this clientelistic system and rather continue its fight against corruption in politics (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

### *Civic Disillusion and Apathy*

Amidst this framework, civic parties must also contend with deep-rooted distrust amongst the electorate in the political class and the political system as a whole and their potential to deliver change. Whilst the high levels of political disillusion in Bosnian public opinion outlined in Chapter Five could theoretically translate into an appetite for civic parties, the evidence from focus groups and interviews suggests that this culture presents a further challenge to non-ethnic actors. With little trust in political elites, nor belief or hope in the capacity for politics to produce change for the good, civic party messages often fall flat. This political disillusion and apathy emerged

potently in the focus group with students in the RS. Participants referred to political parties as “business groups” which had no relation to ideology. They expressed no belief in the possibility of change through the electoral process and some said, when they voted, they opted for the “less disgusting” or “less evil” party (Focus Group a, 2014).

Such apathy arose as a source of grievance for civic representatives, for which they blamed their ethno-national counterparts. One SDP parliamentarian bemoaned the absence of trust in all political elites and the fact that voters make no differentiation between the parties in this sense (Interview with Borić, 2014). Another linked this effect to the SDP’s participation in the governing coalition from 2010-14, when she believed it was collectively blamed for the dysfunction and stalled progress effected by ethno-national parties during that term (Interview with Martinović, 2014). Naša Stranka representatives furthermore expressed frustration at voters’ lack of faith in the political process and its knock-on effect for their party. One member lamented the fact that many voters respond positively to the party’s policy but nevertheless continue to vote for nationalist parties, remarking, “They do not realise that they have the key to the changes in their hands.” (Interview with Šerak, 2014). Meanwhile, then party president Dennis Gratz related the challenge of trying to convince voters in this climate that a vote for Naša Stranka was not a waste of time. In this context civic messages can be heard as naïve, he explains:

“Our biggest enemy is not the people. Our biggest enemy... the nationalism of course... but our biggest enemy is [the] apathy that the nationalist parties have produced. Because they rely on very little amount of votes and usually these votes are bought. So they don't want people to get optimistic and to have some sort of aspirations. This is what we are trying to sell to people - hope.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

Gratz continued:

“And we are trying to convince them that it is a win-win strategy, that the more people actually [vote for us] that we might really get in [to state parliament]. So you should think that the glass is half full rather than half empty. But in this country economic stagnation and general [corruption] has made people very cynical. So when you tell them, like Obama, like hope, they laugh. They just observe us as naïve.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

Civic disillusion and apathy in the post-war state thus form a hefty obstacle for civic parties trying to sell the possibility of change.

The depoliticisation and ‘NGO-isation’ of civil society, as outlined in the previous chapter, can also be seen to work against the development and growth of civic parties. The toxic nature of politics in this environment, as illustrated, leads many civic grassroots organisations and social movements to eschew engagement with the formal political sphere through avenues such as alliances with political parties (including civic parties), advancement of overtly political issues or, indeed, party formation. Furthermore, the proliferation of NGOs supported by international donors has arguably militated against the bottom-up development of civic activity on the community level, as shown in Chapter Five. This can create something of a disjuncture between grassroots and formal civic politics and a blockage in the critical pipeline between the two. This effect is further explored in the case study of the 2014 Bosnian protest and plenum movement below.

### *Institutional Constraints: Corporate Consociational Structures*

The formal rules and procedures of the Dayton system, as sketched out in Chapter Five, were clearly not designed with civic actors in mind. Yet, how do these institutions impact non-ethnic actors specifically? This section presents empirical evidence to address this question.

### *Ethno-territorial Decentralisation*

The division of the territory of BiH into largely ethnically homogenous electoral units and decentralisation of power to these units represents a patent obstacle to cross-ethnic parties in Bosnia. As illustrated in Chapter Five, the entities form the electoral units for the two upper tiers of governance - state and entity level - with one third of delegates to the state House of Representatives directly elected in Serb-dominated Republika Srpska and two thirds elected in the Bosniak-Croat Federation of BiH, while the Serb member of the tripartite state Presidency is likewise elected in the RS while the Croat and Bosniak members are elected in FBiH. At cantonal level within the Federation entity, eight of the ten cantons have either a Bosniak or Croat majority, as shown, while the majority of local municipalities are mono-ethnic in make-up. Such decentralisation to ethnically homogenous electoral units evidently provides little incentive for parties to organise on a cross-ethnic basis and poses considerable costs for such attempts (Mujkić & Hulsey, 2010: 154; Touquet, 2012a: 236; Bahtić-Kunrath,

2011: 916). The use of multi-member list PR electoral system in these constituencies, furthermore, does not require parties to appeal to voters from more than one ethnic group in order to get elected (Aitken, 2007: 260; Belloni, 2004: 339). Indeed, scholars have pointed to the “paradox” of federalism (Erk & Anderson, 2009) and ethnic partition (Jenne, 2009) as a means of managing ethno-national conflict, in defusing ethnic tensions on the one hand but at the same time structuring post-war politics along ethno-national lines and socialising parties and voters in this way.

Thus, whilst state-wide or cross-territorial parties are on the decline globally, they form a particular exception in Bosnia. The majority of parties in this framework operate within only one entity and those that organise in both entities tend to attract support from only one ethnic group. In spite of their non-ethnic platforms, even civic parties struggle to escape this trend. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the core support of both SDP and Naša Stranka lies in Bosniak majority areas of the Federation, with scant representation in either the RS or Croat majority areas of the Federation. In this sense, Bieber argued in 2006, that while “non-national parties”, as defined by their civic programme, such as the SDP, existed in Bosnia, a “cross-national party”, which appeals to and attracts support from across the state’s ethnic groups and territory, had yet to emerge (2006: 104).

A number of SDP representatives interviewed lamented this reality. While pointing to the representation the party commanded in the RS in 2010-14, which included three members of the 83-seat RS National Assembly and the Vice President of the entity (Central Election Commission BiH, 2010c; 2010b), they admitted that these representatives were themselves Bosniak and their support came primarily from members of the Bosniak minority community in the RS, most of whom were ‘returnees’ (refugees and displaced people who have returned to the entity) (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). Likewise, some noted that the support the party garners from Croat and Serb voters in BiH tends to come from those living in areas of the Federation where they form the national minority (Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Karajbić, 2014).

### *Ethnic Quotas*

Bosnia's corporate consociational system represents a mixture of ethnic and territorial power-sharing, as demonstrated in the previous chapter (Keil, 2013: 95-96). In combination with the territorial provisions outlined above, it entails an elaborate system of ethnic representation through reserved seats or 'quotas' for positions in government, legislature and public administration at various levels. This system is applied most notably in the three-member state Presidency, the Council of Ministers (central government) and the upper houses of parliament at state and entity levels. Indeed, as noted, the Bosnian Constitution was found to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights in the 2009 Sejdić –Finci ruling for its requirement for candidates seeking election to the state Presidency and the House of Peoples to designate as one of the three constituent peoples (McCrudden & O'Leary, 2013: 478). Whilst at entity level, the upper houses in FBiH and the RS contain seats reserved for 'others' alongside Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats, state level institutions entail no recognition for non-ethnic actors. Exploring the implications of the Sejdić –Finci ruling and possibilities for constitutional reform to implement the judgement, Hodžić and Stojanović put forward a number of proposals (2011). These include a "geometric mean" system for the election of the Presidency whereby there would be one electoral unit made up of the entire state of BiH, allowing voters of both entites to cast one vote for any candidate, while three candidates would be elected from three electoral units (the RS; five cantons with a Bosniak majority; five cantons with a Croat majority) based on a weighting of their support both in that region and across the state and candidates could designate as Bosniak, Croat, Serb and other (Hodžić & Stojanović, 2011: 98-101). This system would not only allow citizens to choose any candidate, including those of no national designation, but would also have the effect, they believe, of encouraging moderation, by requiring candidates to campaign across the state, and of reducing polarisation by allaying Croat fears of being 'outvoted' (Hodžić & Stojanović, 2011: 100). Hodžić and Stojanović also propose reform of the House of Peoples along the lines of the FBiH House of Peoples, open to delegates of Bosniak, Croat, Serb and other designations (2011: 114-118).

In the absence of reform to the system to date however, actors positioning themselves as explicitly non-ethnic are theoretically denied recognition and positions of power in

these state institutions in Bosnia. Furthermore, the rules arguably socialise voters to a system of ethnic representation in which Bosniak citizens are represented by Bosniak representatives and so forth. The effect of ethnic quotas in BiH is not straightforward, however, and can be creatively navigated by civic parties, as discussed below.

### *Ethnic Vetoes*

A key feature of Bosnia's power-sharing institutions, and one that has been particularly contentious, is the *ethnic veto*, as demonstrated in Chapter Five. In a post-war context in which the former warring sides retain divergent visions for the state, it is hardly surprising that such veto mechanisms result in gridlock. The frequent use of the procedures to block development can be seen to imbue Bosnian politics with a sense of continual conflict and absence of cooperation, highlighting this to the public as the defining feature of politics. Indeed, such intransigent use of the veto can be used by elites to display their ethnic tribune credentials in order to reap electoral rewards, as Bahtić-Kunrath highlights in the case of SNSD in the 2010 elections (2011: 914).

In interviews with SDP representatives, Bosnia's veto system was bitterly condemned, both for arresting progress in the country and for its detrimental effects on the party. A number of representatives blamed the system, and its misuse by ethnic elites, for preventing the party from advancing its agenda, stifling decision-making in the Council of Ministers in the 2010-14 term and blocking proposed legislation in areas like economic development, poverty alleviation and anti-corruption (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014). The use of the veto to block the SDP's attempts to form government at state and Federation level following the 2010 elections, when it emerged as the largest party on both tiers, was also cited (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). In the wake of these polls, as demonstrated, delegates from the RS, in cooperation with Croat nationalist delegates, deployed the entity veto to block the SDP's nomination of a Croat member for Prime Minister, leaving Bosnia without a central government for over a year.

Some SDP representatives furthermore blamed the veto procedures in part for its declining popularity in its 2010-2014 term and the general disillusion and

disappointment with the party following a positive, successful 2010 election campaign. With no allies amongst other parties, nor the ethnic party-controlled media, they felt the SDP received the public blame for the governing coalition's lack of cooperation and progress on social and economic matters during this period – in spite of the fact that this failure resulted from ethnic parties' frequent use of the veto (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Živanović, 2014). One SDP member of the state parliament furthermore suggested that the current situation in which the veto was regularly deployed contributed to an atmosphere of “panic and fear” in Bosnian politics. This climate of polarisation made voters more likely to support ethnic parties rather than the multi-ethnic alternative, he believed (Interview with Mešić, 2014). In this way the veto procedures could be argued to contribute to the marginalisation of civic politics amidst the dominance of ethno-national discourses, as discussed above.

Naša Stranka members interviewed also voiced strong opposition to the veto regime and the deadlock it wrought within the political system (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). As might have been expected however, given the scale of its representation in Bosnia at the time of research (primarily on the municipal and cantonal levels, with one indirect mandate in the House of Peoples of FBiH), Naša Stranka representatives did not claim that veto procedures held the party back specifically. Likewise, General Secretary Zuhrić argued that the system of ethnic vetoes was highly detrimental for Bosnian democracy, but not for Naša Stranka as a party, per se: “As a political party they don't affect us that much, but they do affect the citizens.” (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

This section has explored the ways in which post-Dayton politics works in practice and how this impacts on civic parties. In this way it has demonstrated the significant effect of the informal structures of ethno-national discourse and party competition and party patronage, as well as the formal structures of consociational institutions. These formal and informal effects cannot be considered in isolation, however, and rather exist in a mutually determining dynamic. In this sense, ethno-national discourses and modes of competition can be reinforced by institutional structures that enshrine the principle of ethnic representation, such as quotas and vetoes. Furthermore, the practice of

patronage is enabled to an extent by territorial decentralisation which grants parties considerable autonomy and control of public resources. Formal and informal structures thus interplay in BiH to constrain civic parties' progressions.

## **6.2 Structural Openings for Civic Parties**

The structures of Bosnian politics work to impede civic parties' progress in a number of ways, as demonstrated. However, civic actors can also find space within this framework to occupy and from which to advance. Indeed certain structures can facilitate their success, as this section outlines.

### *Discursive Space: The Civic Niche*

In spite of the dominance of ethno-national discourse, as illustrated, a small discursive space evidently remains in Bosnian politics for civic political ideals. The rise of the SDP in 2010 and indeed the breakthrough of Naša Stranka in 2008 demonstrate the existence of this space in the party system and the ability of civic parties, at certain points and in certain areas, to tap into voter disillusion with ethno-national politics and demand for change. Furthermore, the sustained presence of Naša Stranka, albeit heavily concentrated in Sarajevo, demonstrates the existence of an urban, liberal niche in Bosnian politics. The party has recognised this opening and stepped into the space, focusing primarily on local issues and targeting the municipal and cantonal levels first and foremost. Furthermore, it can be seen in some respects to eschew policies which may have broader appeal in favour of those that will consolidate its support amongst this limited group of voters, being one of the few parties for example to advance environmental protection and LGBT rights, as further discussed below.

In this sense, both SDP and Naša Stranka define their parties in opposition to ethno-national parties which dominate the system, thus presenting themselves as the civic alternative and seeking to occupy this niche. Indeed, in an analysis of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia, Keil and Hulsey conclude that such parties represent an alternative to ethno-national parties, as opposed to a bridge between the ethno-national blocs. The scholars find a surprising level of support for these actors, in spite of the inimical institutional structures of the state. They characterise the SDP's support as coming

predominantly from “frustrated Bosniaks”, minorities living in areas where another group is the majority, people from mixed marriages and “former communists” and that of Naša Stranka from voters from Sarajevo, those who are highly educated, young people (25-45 years), urban dwellers and people who have lived abroad and returned to Bosnia (Keil & Hulsey, 2014). The positionings of these parties are further elaborated below.

### ***Institutional Space: Opportunities in the Consociational Framework***

#### *Ethnic Quotas*

As discussed, the SDP defines itself as a ‘multi-ethnic’ party, reflected in its use of internal ethnic quotas. In line with these principles, the SDP participates fully in the consociational ethnic quota regime, taking up positions reserved for Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs at all levels of government. Elected SDP representatives interviewed accepted ethnic quotas as the normal way of doing business in Bosnian politics and appeared to have no issue with their party’s participation in the system (Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). Indeed, one representative owed her position to such conventions, holding the role of Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Federation of BiH as a Serb delegate (Interview with Grgić, 2014). Moreover, some depicted the party’s ability to fill positions reserved for all three constituent peoples as a *measure* of its multi-ethnicity (Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014) and something of which they were “proud” (Interview with Karajbić, 2014).

Yet, beyond symbolism, participating in the ethnic quota system undoubtedly affords the SDP access to positions – and hence *power* - without which it would find itself marginalised. In this way, the rules can be utilised creatively to the party’s advantage. Unlike ethnic parties which can generally manage to fill positions for only one ‘constituent people’, supported by its policy of internal quotas, the SDP has the ability to assume positions reserved for all three (Interview with SDP member and commentator, 2014). This capacity proves particularly useful to the party in areas where these groups form the minority, leaving it well placed, for example, to fill Serb positions in the Federation and Bosniak positions in the RS. Indeed, the party has, on

occasion, arguably navigated quota rules in this way to advance its multi-ethnic accommodationist agenda. One notable case in point was the election to the position of Croat member of the state Presidency (directly elected in the Federation) in both 2006 and 2010 of former SDP representative and ethnic Croat Željko Komšić (now leader of the break-away Demokratska Fronta party), as outlined in Chapter Five.

Members of Naša Stranka interviewed generally expressed ideological opposition to Bosnia's system of ethnic quotas, on the grounds of its discrimination against 'others' who do not identify as Serb, Croat or Bosniak and its inefficiency and duplication of public resources (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Haverić, 2014; Interview with Šerak, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Some advocated a more limited system of ethnic quotas whereby minimum representation of each group were guaranteed (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014). On a practical level, however, Naša Stranka representatives did not generally claim that ethnic quotas specifically disadvantaged the party. Indeed, some demonstrated how it had creatively used such quota rules to its own advantage. In 2010, for example, Naša Stranka gained a Serb seat in the upper House of Peoples of the Federation of BiH, (elected by cantonal assemblies), after one of its members of the Canton of Sarajevo, Predrag Kojović tactically designated as Serb. Having identified as Yugoslav before the war and Bosnian and Herzegovinian thereafter, Kojović describes the rationale behind his decision to designate as Serb and the "strange" experience of doing so:

"I became a Serb only for elections in 2010 because when you apply to the Central Electoral Committee you have to determine the ethnic backgrounds of your candidates and since I come from a mixed marriage we decided that I'm going to be Serb because our chances of getting into the House of Peoples in the Federation would be best if we go that way. So it's completely opportunistic."

"And then when it came it was a strange thing, psychologically, to accept this party decision. It's not really easy being a Serb after the war here. If you could choose you'd probably choose something else – like, who wants to be a German right after the Second World War, living in Poland or France? But I thought, ok, maybe it's a challenge, maybe it's actually good to show that not all Serbs think like Karadžić." (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

While opposing the principle of ethnic quotas therefore, Naša Stranka retains the ability to pragmatically use the system to its own benefit. In this sense ethnic quotas represent a potential opportunity for civic parties in BiH.

### *Territorial Decentralisation: Access to Lower Levels of Representation*

The heavy territorial decentralisation of the country into entities, cantons and municipalities, whilst presenting obvious barriers to civic parties seeking to mobilise across ethnic lines in Bosnia, as outlined above, was nevertheless also depicted in interviews as bearing some advantages for these actors. In interviews with Naša Stranka representatives, some argued that the only way the party could aspire to develop from its current level (represented at cantonal and municipal levels) into a state-wide party in future was to build from its foundations (Interview with Mujezinović, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Indeed, the decentralization of power in the Bosnia works to the advantage of the party in this respect, according to party General Secretary Zuhrić. As a small, relatively new party, it allows Naša Stranka to gain representation at a lower level, but one which has significant power, such as the Canton of Sarajevo where the party gained three seats in 2014. Given the limited power of the state and the considerable competencies of the entities and cantons, the General Secretary said he does not see the party's absence on the upper tiers as a significant problem at this point.

“Not being a party on the national level is a problem elsewhere; it's not so much of a problem here because of the way our country's structured... The state level has very little authority in Bosnia.

“And the budget of the Canton of Sarajevo and what it controls includes primary, secondary and higher education, it includes healthcare. The Canton of Sarajevo really has state powers within Sarajevo, which is the largest canton and the richest one. So having control here really allows you to control most of the issues that people care about.” (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

This argument was reinforced by Naša Stranka President Dennis Gratz who pointed to the extensive competencies of the Canton of Sarajevo (Interview with Gratz, 2014). These powers have enabled the party to make important advances on a number of its agendas in the capital, including the introduction of a plastic bag levy in the city and the implementation of the ‘Sejdić -Finci ruling’, whereby ‘others’ are now constitutionally entitled to form a caucus in the cantonal assembly and to be elected as Vice-President (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014; Interview with Šerak; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014; Oslobodjenje, 2013).

### 6.3 Case Study: Civic Mobilization in BiH<sup>6</sup>

Having outlined the structures with which civic parties in post-war Bosnia interact, this section analyses the phenomenon of one civic mobilisation in the state. It considers the case study of a non-ethnic protest and plenum movement which emerged in BiH in 2014, its experiences in this political opportunity structure and its subsequent strategic choices.

#### *The 2014 Protest and Plenum Movement*

In February 2014, a non-ethnic protest dramatically broke out in BiH. Against a backdrop of entrenched political division and civic passivity, the mobilisation invoked the possibility of bottom-up transformation. Nevertheless, the movement chose to refrain from entering the fray of institutional politics. Rather, it adopted an approach that appeared at once political and apolitical; pursuing demands for political accountability, yet resisting invitations to engage with political actors, institutions or matters of high politics. This section presents the 2014 “protest and plenum” movement as a case study, exploring the rationale behind its choices through the opportunities and threats it encountered in BiH’s political structures.

The 2014 mobilization began in Tuzla, a north eastern industrial city with a strong tradition of multi-ethnicity, worker solidarity and non-nationalist politics (Armakolas, 2011: 230), as a workers’ protest in response to the closure of a number of factories following their allegedly corrupt privatizations had ensued for some time. On 5 February however, these localized protests turned into mass demonstrations in which public anger was directed at much wider grievances: widespread poverty, unemployment, corruption and political inaction in the face of such problems. Violence erupted as protesters clashed with police and occupied cantonal government buildings (Busuladžić, 2014). The scenes in Tuzla quickly found resonance and by 7 February protests had spread to towns and cities across the Federation, including

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<sup>6</sup> This section reproduces extracts from the published paper: Murtagh, C. (2016) ‘Civic Mobilization in Divided Societies and the Perils of Political Engagement: Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Protest and Plenum Movement,’ *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 22(2), 149-171, as outlined in A Note on Published Papers.

Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica and Bihać. After a dramatic beginning, when public buildings were set alight, including cantonal offices in Tuzla, Sarajevo, Zenica and Mostar, the movement quickly transformed into a peaceful and, moreover, organized, action (See Images 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 below).

Within days a new body had formed as the institutional arm of the protests, known as the plenum. This civic forum operating on the principles of direct democracy was established in a number of towns and cities, attracting a diverse range of citizens. This included people who were unemployed, workers – particularly those who had not received salaries or benefits to which they were entitled and whose workplaces faced closure - pensioners, academics and students (Husarić, 2014: 68). Maintaining a non-hierarchical structure, the plenum hosted deliberative debate in which speakers were granted equal time and decisions made on a one-person-one-vote basis (See Image 6.4). Some established working groups on policy areas, such as culture and education. Demands were thus formulated and presented to representatives of the relevant political institutions. At the heart of these appeals lay *social justice*: improved social and economic rights, as well as redress against political corruption and unaccountability. Demands included government resignations, revision of allegedly corrupt privatizations, cuts to excessive benefits for politicians, the installation of expert governments, and investigation into the events surrounding the initial protests including the treatment of protesters by police (bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com).

**Image 6.3: Protest in Sarajevo, February 2014**



Source: Author's image

Plena organized on town and city level with demands directed primarily at municipal and cantonal governments. 13 to 14 plena were reportedly in operation at the height of the movement in areas including Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar, Zenica and Bihać. Around 1000 members of the public were reported to attend initial plena in Sarajevo (Interview with activist, Sarajevo (b), 2014) and Tuzla (Husarić, 2014: 68). Some limited inter-plenum action was coordinated to present demands to the Federation entity government, with a small number of demonstrations held at the Federation Government and Parliament buildings in Sarajevo. Protests and plena occurred primarily in the Federation and, therein, within Bosniak majority areas, with little organized public activity in Croat majority areas of the Federation, or in Republika Srpska (Mujkić, 2014). Some minor demonstrations were held in the latter however, including protests by war veterans in Banja Luka, demanding improved benefits for veterans in the entity, an end to corruption in its association, as well as wider action to address social and economic problems ([bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com](http://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com)). Furthermore, within the Federation, cross-ethnic participation was reported in particular areas with mixed Bosniak-Croat populations, such as the city of Mostar and the central town of Fojnica.

**Image 6.4: Plenum Meeting in Sarajevo, February 2014**



Source: Author's image

The action elicited some immediate response: four cantonal governments resigned and some agreed to end certain benefits and privileges for political representatives, such as the so-called white bread perk, whereby cantonal ministers could continue to receive their salaries for a year after leaving post. In Tuzla canton an expert government was installed, undertaking to work in cooperation with the plenum. The activity dissipated in May 2014, however, following limited response from governments, particularly at the Federation entity level, and the onset of devastating floods in BiH and the wider region.

**Image 6.5: Protests in Sarajevo, February 2014**



Source: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/>

### *The Perils of Political Engagement*

Emerging as a civic force against a deeply divided political backdrop, the transformative potential of the protest and plenum movement inevitably arose. Activists reported encouragement from the international community in particular to engage in the institutional political sphere in order to deliver broader political change – either by forming a new political party, engaging with existing political parties (through lobbying or alliances), or engaging in the perennial debate on constitutional reform (Interview with activist, Tuzla (b), 2014; Jasmina Husanović, Sarajevo Peace Event 2014). Such suggestions met with resounding resistance from within the protests and plena, however, as observed in the majority of interviews with participants and plenum discussions (Open University Sarajevo, 2014.; Bassuener, 2014). A

strategy of limited political engagement informed the movement's approach to *party formation, alliances, campaign issues and scale of mobilization*.

These choices can thus be better understood in light of this political framework which presented the movement with severe constraints and limited openings. The reluctance to *party formation*, for example was informed in part by the deep distrust and anger towards the political establishment, out of which the movement grew. One organiser of the Sarajevo plenum reported total hostility to the idea of forming a party: "The mention of the possibility of forming anything related to a political party makes people angry, infuriated, screaming and threatening to leave." (Interview with activist, Sarajevo (a), 2014).

On the leadership level, however, this aversion appeared more calculated. Interviewees demonstrated an acute awareness of the highly charged ethno-political environment in which they were operating and the risk of ethno-national manipulation or appropriation if they tried to enter the institutional arena. They believed such attempts had been successfully resisted, but if operating as a party, they would be impossible to withstand (Interview with activist, Mostar (a), 2014). Some activists furthermore opposed the move based on lessons learned from previous attempts at forging civic parties in BiH. When the issue of party formation was raised during a roundtable discussion of plenum activists in May 2014, therefore, the idea received limited consideration. One contributor responded, to broad agreement, that if the plenum were to form a party it would ultimately be seen as another Bosniak party and another Sarajevo-based party (Open University Sarajevo, 2014). The experience of Naša Stranka proved instructive in this sense, as a civic party that emerged out of a social movement that struggles to gain support beyond urban and Bosniak-majority areas.

### *Understanding Movement Choices*

In spite of some expectation therefore, the civic movement that arose in Bosnia in 2014 did not attempt to enter the sphere of formal politics. The mobilization developed a distinct set of approaches characterized by restricted political engagement. Early and definitively, it chose not to form a political party nor form alliances with parties or even to lobby these actors, nor form serious pacts with NGOs or international actors.

It refrained from entering debate on constitutional reform, keeping the focus strictly on basic social and economic issues. It remained, furthermore, relatively local in scale, making limited attempts to extend horizontally, across entities, or vertically, to state level.

The movement's reluctance to engage in formal politics in this sense drew some criticism, with one academic commentator lamenting such "strategic mistakes" (Keil, 2014). The approach also elicited frustration within party, diplomatic and NGO spheres. One representative of an international democratization NGO dismissed the mobilization as no more than a leftist "Occupy 2.0," which missed its opportunity to effect real change by failing to form a political party or engage with existing parties to influence their programmes (Interview by with NGO representative (a), 2014). Movement strategies are developed in reciprocal interaction with structures, however (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 186). Underlying the plena's resistance to engage in institutional politics, lay an acute awareness of the structural environment in which they were operating, the restricted openings it afforded to civic political actors and, moreover, the threats it posed.

In the ethnicized political environment of post-war Bosnia, the civic nature of this mobilization was subject to intense contestation, and indeed *manipulation*. In the wake of the protests, Mujkić observes that "ethno-national spin" was spread by all three nationalist blocs in a bid to ethnicise, divide and delegitimize the movement (Mujkić, 2014). Serb and Croat elites thus claimed the action was orchestrated against *their people* and painted the movement as a solely Bosniak affair. The leader of the ruling party in the RS, SNSD and President of the entity Milorad Dodik depicted it as an attempt to destroy the RS, casting veterans' protests there as coordinated by Bosniak nationalist forces (Balkanist, 2014). Croat nationalist leaders meanwhile presented the movement as a Bosniak effort to majoritise the country and abolish cantons - and hence Croat autonomy. One representative interviewed from the principal Croat nationalist party HDZ BiH argued that participation in Mostar's protests and plena was almost entirely Bosniak, attempting to evince his claim with a video recorded by party activists which showed the majority of protesters leaving a protest outside the City Hall and walking towards the Bosniak-majority east of the city (Interview with HDZ

BiH representative, 2014). Some Bosniak elites, furthermore, portrayed the action as an external move to fracture the unity of the Bosniak people, while others reportedly attempted to co-opt the movement. Plenum activists reported efforts, most notably by the populist Bosniak party SBB BiH, to infiltrate the plena for electoral advantage in the October 2014 General Elections (Interview with activist, Sarajevo (b), 2014; Interview with activist, Tuzla (a), 2014).

The movement furthermore encountered active *intimidation* by political parties and authorities, in an attempt to stave off the action, activists reported. A number claimed police brutality, as well as attempts to portray protestors as criminals (Hodžić, 2014: 53; Ibrišimović, 2014: 32). Indeed some Mostar activists alleged that police were deterring protesters from moving into a street on the Croat-majority west side of the city, in a bid to give it the appearance of a Bosniak-only action (Interview with Activist A. and Activist B., Mostar, 2014). Furthermore, given the control parties exert over public resources and extensive clientelistic networks, a significant number of participants were reportedly threatened with losing their jobs, with their family losing their jobs, or with having their businesses exposed to prohibitive fines if they did not quit the activity. Members of the Mostar plenum related that the numbers of Croat and Bosniaks participating in the protests and plenum were about equal at the beginning of the action, yet following intense intimidation from the local Croat ruling party HDZ, Croat participation dropped off over time (Interview with activist, Mostar (b), 2014). In this sense, one prominent activist in the Mostar plenum and protests, notes that, tellingly, no “cross-ethnic threats” were made by parties, only intra-ethnic intimidations.

“They did not [make] any cross-ethnic threats. [Bosniak party] SDA did not threaten a single Croat or Serb. They were all threatening their own people.” (Interview with activist, Mostar (b), 2014).

Clientelistic intimidation thus appeared to deter wider participation in the movement – and, critically in some areas, cross-ethnic participation. Many of those actively involved in the action were reported to be either unemployed or self-employed with no dependence on government contracts (Interview with Activist A. and Activist B., Mostar, 2014). Activists furthermore pointed to threats by ethno-national elites to delegitimize protesters, as a means to discourage mobilization. One Sarajevo activist

reported being named by a member of a Bosniak party in Sarajevo canton during a televised assembly meeting and having her family linked to Serb nationalist party SDS in a bid to discredit her - an implicit warning to other potential activists to stay away from the protests (Interview with activist, Sarajevo (c), 2014).

An examination of the political context in which the movement operated elucidates the reasoning behind these choices. On the surface, the decision to remain beyond the fray of formal politics appears straightforward: political engagement did not fit with the principles of a movement born out of wholesale rejection of the political establishment. Yet, the level of aversion towards any form of engagement also reflects a strategic response to the political environment. In this heavily ethnicized framework – in which polarized party competition and patronage are institutionalized in the corporate consociational arrangements - the action met with intense ethnonational intimidation, manipulation and co-optation. In a self-defensive rationale, interaction with formal politics was thus very consciously avoided by the leadership in a bid to preserve the civic movement. Mindful agents, aware of passive and active threats in their path, adapted their actions accordingly.

Furthermore, short-term political change was not the ultimate goal of this movement. The mobilization's *raison d'être* for activists lay deeper: in fundamental shift in civic discourse and thinking. In this view, awakening citizens to the possibility of change, and their own power to effect it, could be the first step in a bottom-up process of real reform in Bosnian politics. They believed any attempt to interact with the political structures for short-term ends would inevitably divide and delegitimize the movement as a civic force, placing this goal in peril. The 2014 protests and plenum movement thus navigated the deeply ethnicized corporate consociational framework of post-war Bosnia by adopting an approach marked by restricted political engagement. The mobilization's capacity to effect civic political change was strictly limited on the level of formal politics. Rather, its potential appeared to lie in longer term development of civil society.

This case study demonstrates the opportunities and constraints faced by a civic social movement in Bosnia's consociational framework, much in common with civic parties. Whilst the protests managed to seize discursive space by channeling public frustration

with citizens' social and economic difficulties and the failure of political elites and the system as a whole to address these problems, they came up against severe constraints, in the form of ethno-national contestation and co-optation and ethno-national patronage. This opportunity structure shaped the movement's choices and saw it remain at the level of 'small p' politics rather than engaging with or making the transition to 'big p' politics. Whilst these choices appear wholly rational and perhaps most effective for the realization of the goals of this movement, the case underlines a number of points relevant to this research. On the one hand its very emergence illustrates the blockage in the Bosnian political system to the advancement of non-ethnic issues. On the other, its experience demonstrates the obstacles to any form of civic mobilization and limits to its progression to formal politics. It illustrates, furthermore, the disjuncture between civic politics at the grassroots level and at the party political level in Bosnia and the limited capacity for the former to feed into the latter.

#### **6.4 Navigating Constraints and Openings: Civic Party Strategies**

Having sketched the barriers and openings which civic parties encounter in Bosnia's post-Dayton landscape, this chapter now turns to the question of how they navigate this political opportunity structure.

##### ***Party Positioning***

In interviews with SDP representatives, 'multi-ethnicity' emerged as central to the party's self-image. In this sense, it can be classified as an accommodationist civic party under the typology set out in Chapter One and Appendix A. The assertion that the SDP is 'the only multi-ethnic party in Bosnia' was vocalised with pride at the outset of a number of interviews (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). Some representatives, furthermore, linked this multi-ethnic image of the party to their vision for a harmonious, multi-ethnic Bosnia and presented the party as a kind of microcosm of this ideal country (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Kovačević, 2014) This positioning thus appears intrinsically connected to the SDP's construction of the nation of BiH. The party's association with the former Communist Party, socialist Yugoslavia and

Bosnia's pre-war multi-ethnic past were also evident in some representations. Indeed, a portrait of Josip Broz Tito still hangs in the Sarajevo SDP party office (Observed in interview with Kovačević, 2014). Secularism formed a strong theme in the self-representations of SDP members. Many representatives interviewed said they identified with one of the three ethnic groups or religions on a personal level, but believed that such identity had no bearing on their politics (Interview with Bradarić, 2014). Some stressed the multi-ethnicity of their own personal background, such as being the product of, or partner in, a "mixed marriage" (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014).

On the question of what defines the party as multi-ethnic, the key factor articulated in interviews with SDP members was *representation*. Members appeared to measure the multi-ethnic nature of the SDP primarily by the ethnic make-up of its representatives, rather than by that of its support (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). Indeed, this definition fits with the strategy of internal ethnic quotas within the party, outlined in Chapter Five. Representation of all three ethnic groups and others within the party stands central to the party's identity. It thus displays a strong culture of internal ethnic quotas, with every party council required to hold at least 20 per cent ethnic minority representation, as shown (Touquet, 2012: 214). As discussed in Chapter Five, in a path dependent effect, this culture can be traced back to the socialist era (and arguably beyond) and the legacy of the 'ethnic key' then used to fill positions within state institutions and the Communist Party, in which the roots of the SDP lie.

The discursive strategies used by ethno-national parties outlined above clearly raise delicate issues for civic parties. When probed on their strategies to respond to these discourses, many betrayed exasperation at the scale of the challenge. One SDP member observed that, in this context of party competition, when an issue was ethnicised by other parties, such as the census, the party generally takes a cautious approach and avoids engaging in the debate. Nevertheless, in certain contexts, she noted, the SDP is pushed to champion ethnic rights, such as in Konjevic Polje, a small town in the RS where a group of Bosniak parents have protested against their children being taught the Serb rather than the Bosniak curriculum (Interview with SDP member, 2014).

While the SDP adopts an accommodationist positioning, Naša Stranka's stance aligns more closely with the integrationist model of a civic party. In contrast to the emphasis placed on *multi-ethnicity* in SDP self-representations, the image of Naša Stranka presented by members was rather one of a *post-ethnic* party. While acknowledging the multi-ethnic character of the party, Naša Stranka representatives generally treated this trait as a given and not that which the party stands for, nor which attracted them to it. Moreover, they depicted Naša Stranka, in line with its founding principles, as a modern, civic party based on the values of individual liberalism and equality. The model on which the party was based, according to some interviewees, was one of a 'normal' issue-based European party, such as the Greens in Germany (Interview with Gratz, 2014). Creating this new form of politics based on democratic accountability, civic engagement and efficiency – in contrast to that practised by all other parties in BiH - was uppermost in the reasons offered by interviewees for why they first became involved with the party. The multi-ethnic aspect of the party appeared secondary in their minds, and rather, a natural consequence of its civic ideology (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Haverić, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

Naša Stranka President Dennis Gratz articulates this sentiment:

“[Multi-ethnicity] was a pre-given... it was a requirement that was self-understood due to the fact that we wanted to form a citizen-oriented movement; a movement of secular citizens who are aware that their individual rights are not being protected on the same level as the rights that they have protected as collectives.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014).

Naša Stranka contrasts with SDP, not only in the importance to which it accords non-ethnic or multi-ethnic identity, but in how it measures the concept. Rather than representation of the different ethnic groups within the party - the core criterion for SDP - Naša Stranka representatives rather stressed the *civic ethos* of its members. For a number of interviewees, it was not the ethnic designation of its representatives, its members, nor its territorial presence which made it a civic party, but the values of its people and the values underpinning its policies (Interview with Haverić, 2014). In this way, it has been conceptualised by Touquet as a *post-ethnic* party (2011: 461).

In line with Naša Stranka's post-ethnic integrationist stance, and in contrast to the SDP's accommodationist strategy, the party does not operate a policy of internal ethnic quotas. As senior members of the party explained, when it comes to ethnic balance for positions within the party and on electoral lists, the party has moved since its foundation from a formal approach to a more "relaxed" method whereby such standards are "implied" rather than enforced (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Kojović, 2014). Equal representation – ethnic and indeed gender - is an issue of which the party consistently "takes care" and "pays attention" and therefore does require rules to uphold (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

In characterising its strategy in responding to ethno-national party competition, Naša Stranka members stressed its focus on *positive campaigning* on the one hand and *avoidance* on the other. General Secretary Albin Zuhrić explained the party's strategy of 'ignoring' the issue of ethnicity in an attempt to move beyond it and focus on issues and policies.

"I honestly don't know [the best way to move away from the focus on identity issues in Bosnian politics] because we ignore it. In some ways – this is perhaps not a good way to go - but we don't deal with issues of ethnicity. We sort of want people to expect us to simply respect ethnic communities and understand the values of western civilisation without us having to constantly preach it. Anyone you ask about Naša Stranka, you just take it as it is. They know where we stand, we just don't want to discuss it.

"The moment you start discussing we're afraid [other parties] draw us into the war stories. They are very good at forcing you to do negative campaigning. We really, really try to avoid it. So I honestly don't know. I think most people understand, looking at our party members, how we've dealt with certain issues, that we are multi-ethnic, and we just don't want to talk about it anymore." (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

This underlines the careful navigation of issues relating to identity required by civic parties amidst the dominant discourse of ethno-nationalism.

### ***Institutional Strategies***

#### *Strategic Use of Quotas*

As demonstrated, both SDP and Naša Stranka have adapted to the corporate consociational system of ethnic quotas by participating in the system and have reaped

significant advantages from this strategy. In the case of SDP this strategy is facilitated by a policy of internal ethnic quotas, as the party effectively replicates the power-sharing structures within its own organisation. One high profile SDP member and media commentator referred to the party's strategic use of ethnic quotas as "a chase for credibility" and a means to "prove" its multi-ethnic credentials (Interview, 2014).

However, this strategy also proves problematic for both parties. The principle of ethnic representation, embedded in the Dayton system and embodied most clearly in the quota regime, also creates a significant 'legitimacy problem' for civic parties. The institutionalisation of a regime whereby certain positions are reserved for representatives of one ethnic group fosters a mind-set and culture in which only individuals (and parties) of a certain ethnic group can adequately represent citizens of that group. Taken to its conclusion, this thinking deems ethnic representatives legitimate and authentic and their non-ethnic counterparts illegitimate and suspect.

A clear illustration of this phenomenon was witnessed in the reaction to the election of SDP representative Željko Komšić as Croat member of the state Presidency in 2006 and 2010, elected by voters in the Federation. An interview with a member of the Croat party HDZ in the party's stronghold city of Mostar proved revealing of this 'illegitimacy' discourse. Referring to Komšić's election to the Presidency, the member of Mostar City Council questioned his legitimacy as President, arguing that he was elected by Bosniak voters. Komšić's inability to properly represent Croats has been demonstrated, he claimed, by his failure to act specifically on behalf of the Croat communities, as opposed to the general public.

"Especially after this second Komšić term, it's very clear - no one denies it - that he's elected by Bosniak votes...

"[Komšić] said that he's representatives of *all* peoples, of *all* citizens... He came to Mostar, to his party conventions and stuff like that, but he never came to Široki Brijeg or to where Croats are 100 per cent of the population."  
(Interview with HDZ Representative, 2014).

In further support of his argument, the HDZ representative cited a case of a diplomat appointed by Komšić to a post, reserved under the ethnic quota rules for a Croat, who

was in fact a Bosniak who had tactically declared as Croat to take up the position (Interview with HDZ Representative, 2014).

The controversy surrounding Komšić's election was referred to in interviews with SDP representatives. SDP Member of the House of Representatives Danijela Martinović, herself an ethnic Croat, speaks to this contested legitimacy with which the party must contend:

“We basically ruined their [the ethnic parties'] system; we were destabilising their system in which the Croat should be from the Croat party, the Bosniak from the nationalist Bosniak party, etc.

“For these parties we are not equivalent Croats because we are not from the Croat majority population areas. And then we are not adequate Serbs because we are not from Republika Srpska. And we are not enough of Bosniaks because we do not go to the mosque.” (Interview with Martinović, 2014).

Another example raised in interviews of how this 'legitimacy problem' has manifested was the blockage to the formation of the Council of Ministers following the 2010 elections, outlined above, when Croat party HDZ objected to the appointment of SDP representatives to Croat positions in government, challenging his credibility as an authentic representative of the Croat community (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014).

SDP member of the House of Representation in the Federation of BiH Besima Borić furthermore cites the example of occasional instances where SDP representatives trigger the 'Vital National Interest' veto, for any constituent people, but particularly Serb and Croat. Such interventions tend to be treated as illegitimate by their ethnic party colleagues, she explained, “as if [to say], 'Who are you to raise this concern?’” (Interview with Borić, 2014).

Indeed, it is not only when it comes to representing Croat and Serb voters that the SDP encounters this problem. Borić describes how SDP members that assume Bosniak positions in government are likewise depicted as illegitimate representatives of the Bosniak community:

"It goes so far that when the SDP is required to take seats [anywhere], the Bosniak members are not perceived as the real Bosniaks." (Interview with Borić, 2014).

Former SDP Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo Miroslav Živanović, nevertheless, criticised the party's ethnic quota policy as ideologically problematic for a multi-ethnic party which seeks to move beyond such divisions. The party should continue to work within the system to advance its agenda, Živanović argued, but use every opportunity to highlight its opposition to these rules and their dysfunction for the country (Interview with Živanović, 2014).

The SDP therefore has a somewhat contradictory relationship with the ethnic representation measures in Bosnia's consociational system. While appearing to conflict with its principles, the party embraces the system, attempts to use it to demonstrate its multi-ethnic credentials and, in many ways, gains advantage from it. These rules thus prove something of a double-edged sword for the party, affording it access to power and positions and allowing it to vaunt its multi-ethnic nature, while at the same time calling those very credentials into question, opening it up to attack by ethnic parties and raising an ethnic legitimacy issue with voters.

This 'legitimacy problem' also transpired in the case of Naša Stranka. Kojović describes the animosity shown by the party's ethnic counterparts towards Naša Stranka's civic stance and its opposition to the ethnic representation system, as this position effectively threatens their interests. He recalls experiencing hostility from his Croat colleagues in the House of Peoples of the Federation of BiH in 2011, surrounding a potential vote to remove Federation President Živko Budimir, a Croat representative from a small Croat party.

"'You Serbs should not be involved in this at all' - that's how they see this. 'We [Croats] have this position of the President. And the Croatian delegates in the House of Peoples should decide which one it's going to be.'

"'And that's something I will not allow. It's the same argument about Željko Komšić, which is, 'Oh yeah, he's a Croat but he's not *our* Croat, he's not a *real* Croat'." (Interview with Kojović, 2014).

Indeed, this legitimacy issue was evidenced in the focus groups conducted with voters in Bosnia. In two of these groups doubt was cast on the SDP's credibility as a non-ethnic or multi-ethnic party, due to its participation in the ethnic quota system and strategic use of that system to gain power and influence (Focus Group a., 2014; Focus Group c., 2014). Participants in one group, conducted in Sarajevo, argued that it would be impossible for a true party of citizens to operate within this system (Focus Group a, 2014). Meanwhile, in a group conducted with university students in RS capital Banja Luka, highly suspicious attitudes were expressed towards both the SDP and Naša Stranka, as noted above (Focus Group c., 2014). One participant referred in a derogatory manner to "professional Serbs" who join the SDP as they can be effectively guaranteed a position through the quota system. Another shared the joke that 'The only Croatian part of [Croat Presidency member] Željko Komšić's body is a bullet' – a reference to his membership of the Bosnian Army during the war, rather than the Croatian HVO (Focus Group c., 2014).

Furthermore, in light of this 'illegitimacy' discourse, one strategist for the newly formed civic party DF, led by Komšić, said that the party faced something of a dilemma in whether to stand a Bosniak or Croat candidate for the three-member state presidency in the 2014 General Elections. If it solely ran a Croat candidate it could potentially be seen as a more multi-ethnic party; but, in doing so, it could also expose itself to attack from HDZ as undermining the representation of the Croat community. This, in turn could turn Croat voters against DF and thus make it less multi-ethnic in terms of its support (Interview, 2014). In the event, the party stood candidates in both the Croat and Bosniak contest, neither of whom were elected.

Thus the ethnic quota system presents civic parties in Bosnia with an invidious choice: of participating by playing the system and experiencing such contestation; or remaining outside the governance system. Indeed, this does not appear much of a choice for a political party seeking to win elections and enact its policies. In this sense the fact that civic parties engage in these strategies demonstrate their limited alternative options in this system.

### *Electoral Strategy*

On the question of electoral mobilisation and performance, members of SDP interviewed acknowledged that the concentration of their support in Bosniak-majority areas created something of an ‘image problem’ for the self-professed ‘multi-ethnic party’. Most characterised the issue as incidental, owing to ethnic cleansing and subsequent creation of homogenous political units (Interview with Mešić, 2014), some reiterating the party’s long-term constitutional goal of abolishing Bosnia’s entities (Interview with Grgić, 2014) and cantons (Interview with Borić, 2014). One representative, nevertheless, admitted that the SDP’s message of a unified Bosnia was more likely to appeal to the Bosniak community (Interview with Bradarić, 2014). In any case, members invariably attested to the party’s efforts to appeal to all three ethnic groups and to be a party of all of Bosnia and Herzegovina and insisted that this remained central to its mission. Indeed, many expressed pride in the fact that the SDP persists in its attempts to maintain a presence across the state and to break into Serb and Croat dominated areas, despite limited electoral rewards from this strategy (Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Karajbić, 2014). One SDP Member of the House of Representatives, Federation of BiH thus explained:

“We are doing this in spite of the fact that the election strategy agencies are usually saying that you should not go there, where the area is difficult... But we are persisting in these areas and we are gradually winning more and more support. That is in contrast with political pragmatism, but that is us.” (Interview with Grgić, 2014).

The SDP’s strategy to make electoral inroads in the RS and Croat-majority regions of the Federation (most notably Herzegovina) centres upon building networks of activists and strengthening local boards in these areas, Grgić, who was a member of a board established to look into the issue for the 2014 elections reported (Interview with Grgić, 2014). Another representative stressed the importance of multi-ethnic representation in the leadership of these boards and on the electoral lists in these areas, to ensure, for example, Serbs in prominent positions on election lists in the RS (Interview with Borić, 2014). A number of interviewees pointed to strides made by the SDP in the 2012 municipal elections in Croat-majority areas like the West Herzegovinian towns of Ljubuski and Široki Brijeg where it managed to return a number of local councillors

(Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Bradarić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). Nevertheless, representatives characterised the party's endeavours in Serb and Croat majority areas as a long-term process and no radical plans were proposed for how the current trend might be reversed in the foreseeable future.

The SDP's electoral strategy also appears to include appealing to ethnic minorities, as discussed above, and positioning itself as the 'party of minorities' in Bosnia (Interview with Borić, 2014; Interview with Grgić, 2014; Interview with Karajbić, 2014; Interview with Martinović, 2014; Interview with Mešić, 2014). In this sense, its 'multi-ethnic' accommodationist stance leaves it particularly well placed to attract votes from Bosniaks living in the RS and Croats and Serbs living in Bosniak-majority areas of the Federation. Indeed, one representative of an RS-based international democratisation NGO, which works directly with parties in BiH, reported that the SDP was making little genuine effort to win votes beyond the Bosniak minority community in the Serb entity (Interview, 2014).

Members of Naša Stranka interviewed likewise acknowledged the locus of the party's support to be in the Federation and its representation exclusively within the Bosniak-majority city of Sarajevo (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Nevertheless, this was depicted as less of a problem in terms of the party's ideological stance and more of a practical issue concerning party finance and resources (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Naša Stranka opted not to stand candidates in the RS in the 2014 general elections and senior members confirmed that the Serb entity was not an electoral priority for the party at present (Interview with Gratz, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). Indeed, Party General Secretary Albin Zuhrić reported a shift in party strategy since 2012, under his leadership, from attempting to mobilise and build support across BiH, to focusing in on its areas of strength (the cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica in the 2014 elections) and consolidating its support in these centres. Zuhrić described this strategy in pragmatic terms as "a practical thing, not a thing of ideas". He recounted unapologetically how he had closed down at least 20 local party boards (branches) since 2012 (about half of which were in the RS), noting that in the 2012 municipal elections the party campaigned in 23 municipalities compared to 50 in the

2008 municipal polls, yet returned an almost identical number of local councillors. Zuhrić and other members of the party thus appear to interpret the party's absence in RS as a purely logistical issue and its Sarajevo-focus as only natural for a relatively young party that originated in the capital (Interview with Mujezinović, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

Zuhrić explained:

“I don't think that the geography has anything to do with it, but the politics and the people who are in the party. So the multi-ethnic character of the membership of the party in Sarajevo and our policies are really what in my opinion determine what kind of party we are. It's not where you're present - that's determined by money. And I know exactly how much it costs to open up a new board. And if I get that money I'll open it up.” (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

In outlining how Naša Stranka deals with the challenge of expansion in this ethno-national political framework, however, some resignation could also be detected among interviewees. Breaking into certain areas and groups of voters in Bosnia was portrayed as beyond feasible for the civic party in the current climate. To do so, in some cases, would require the party to compromise its civic principles - a move it was not prepared to take. Thus, on the question of the RS, where the party stood candidates in its first two elections, but did not compete in the 2014 polls, Party President Gratz explained its thinking:

"In RS, we have a couple of boards but it's very, very hard there. It's a very isolated entity... The party in power is actually a dictatorship. It's a very criminal dictatorship and people are scared. And you have to be aware that they are much, much poorer. So their fears are much stronger. And of course there is this whole... which I will never understand, this promise that they sort of live in of becoming independent.

“And at the beginning we would always emphasise and we still do emphasise that we respect the fact that RS exists because it's a part of the constitutional settlement of the country. But eventually it ended up what we called 'Charming the *Četnik*'. So you know, I really can't communicate with people who deny genocide. And it's always... it's like, people are interested in where was Pedja [Kojović] born, not what could Pedja do.” (Interview with Gratz, 2014)

Similarly, on the issue of expanding its voter base, Kojović suggested limits to how far Naša Stranka could advance. By way of example, he relayed a story of when, soon

after its founding, the party supported the first gay pride parade in BiH, in spite of warnings from actors, including the US Embassy, that to do so would be politically damaging for the new party.

“In Naša Stranka we don't do that [compromise our beliefs]. We really do things, even to our own damage, that we believe in. I mean, when we were putting the first statement, I remember, in 2008, supporting the first [gay pride] parade here... And I got phone calls from the American Embassy saying, 'Listen, this is going to destroy you' and stuff like that. We got warnings from everybody. And I thought, 'I'm going to compromise with gay people in Bosnia now; the next time it's not going to be popular to defend Bosniak people in Banja Luka? Politically it will not benefit me and I will not do that.' I don't think you make compromises on that.

“When we put the statement around at noon, our headquarters was full of people coming and burning their membership cards, tearing them up. We lost 30 per cent of our membership in a single day... And I said, I'm glad we did this because if we didn't do this these people who should not be in Naša Stranka would be still in Naša Stranka and then they would leave you at some other point down the road. So at least now I know. Those who stayed, those are the people that I'm interested in.” (Interview with Kojović, 2014)

When asked about the party's intentions to advance beyond its current urban base and break into rural areas, representatives expressed little ambition (Interview with Kojović, 2014; Interview with Gratz; Interview with Šerak, 2014; Interview with Zuhrić, 2014). General Secretary Zuhrić explained that the dominance of ethnic parties and their negative campaign tactics in these areas made it very difficult for Naša Stranka to gain any ground. Secondly, he believed attitudes in these areas were too conservative for the party to hope to win votes there.

“...we're socially too liberal for rural areas. In Bosnia, and a lot of Western countries even, you don't get to defend LGBT rights and be present in rural areas. It's just a fact of life.” (Interview with Zuhrić, 2014).

This underlines Naša Stranka's move to occupy the narrow civic, liberal niche in Bosnian politics and own this terrain, as discussed above. Furthermore, it aligns with the party's electoral strategy of establishing a local presence in key cities – most notably Sarajevo – and building up from this base. The extent to which such a party can progress in the current Bosnian political framework and transition from niche to broader appeal, however, appears limited.

## Conclusion

On the face of it, the very existence of civic parties in Bosnia's deeply divided consociational framework presents a puzzle. This chapter has addressed that problem, probing how the structures of Bosnian politics constrain and enable these actors and how they, in turn, negotiate those conditions. Through analysis of qualitative empirical data, it has elucidated the steep impediments these parties face, both informally, in the form of discursive marginalisation and contestation, party patronage and civic apathy, and formally, through rigid consociational procedures that present incentives for ethnic mobilisation and high costs for civic mobilisation and voting. These formal and informal structures lie on a spectrum and interact in a mutually reinforcing dynamic, as shown, with inimical discourses and practices facilitated by the institutional mechanisms. Nevertheless, these constraints only form part of the story. This chapter has also illustrated that the consociational framework can also offer civic parties key openings, discursively, in the ability to occupy a civic niche between the ethno-nationalist blocs, and institutionally, in the capacity to gain entry and representation at lower levels of governance and to creatively utilise the quota system to access positions of influence. Civic parties thus navigate this corporate power-sharing framework by presenting themselves as the civic alternative – either multi-ethnic or post-ethnic – and using the quota system and decentralised electoral framework to the best of their advantage, purportedly in line with their multi-ethnic accommodationist principles in the case of SDP, and explicitly strategically and for practical ends in the case of the more integrationist and post-ethnic Naša Stranka. These opportunities and strategies can stand in conflict with one another however. The attempt to occupy the civic niche in politics appears to lie in contradiction to the policies of taking up positions reserved for ethnic groups and of consolidating electoral support in ethnically homogenous areas, rather than attempting to achieve cross-national, cross-ethnic electoral spread. Furthermore, these choices can contribute to the discursive contestation that civic parties face in this ethno-national environment which challenge their legitimacy as civic actors. Thus, while opportunities exist for civic parties in Bosnia's consociational framework, these opportunities often prove double-edged and provoke strategic dilemmas for these actors.

## **Part IV**

# **Comparative Conclusions**

## Chapter Seven

### **Civic Dilemmas: Civic Parties in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina in Comparative Perspective**

Civic parties, by their very nature, occupy a perilous position in ethnically divided societies, somewhere between the ethno-national blocs that constitute the political scene. In consociational power-sharing systems, where institutions have been designed to recognise and accommodate the latter, that space is theoretically even more limited and contested. Nevertheless, rather than being absent or relegated to insignificance, as might be expected, these non-ethnic actors have secured and maintained a presence in such polities. This thesis has explored this puzzle, asking how we can understand the enduring existence, in spite of the odds, of civic parties in divided societies. It has probed what space lies open to these actors amidst the structures of post-conflict power-sharing systems, and how they navigate that space.

Investigating the phenomenon of civic parties comparatively in the post-conflict consociational frameworks of Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this thesis has found that civic actors encounter constraints within both the formal and informal structures of power-sharing politics, and that these structures - the formal rules of the game and the informal ways in which politics is 'done' in practice - interplay in a mutually reinforcing dynamic. Nevertheless, these structures also afford civic parties critical openings, both formally, in the form of consociational rules that can be creatively interpreted by non-ethnic actors, and informally, in the shape of an ideological niche to be filled between the ethno-national blocs in politics. Such opportunities can prove double edged, however, often placing these parties' short-term pragmatic interests as parties seeking to win elections in conflict with their civic ideologies and longer term goals. In this way, they present civic parties with intricate strategic dilemmas as to how they position themselves, negotiate the consociational system and mobilise electorally. Whilst uncovering many parallels in the experiences of civic parties within these two consociational frameworks, this research has also demonstrated some key differences in the constraints and openings they find in these political systems and the ways in which they deal with these structures. First and foremost, in comparison to the more liberal consociational framework of Northern Ireland, civic parties in Bosnia's corporate consociational framework ostensibly meet

with more stringent barriers in its formal structures, in the form of ethno-territorial decentralisation and rigid ethnic quotas. Furthermore, Bosnia's informal political landscape presents civic actors with the additional challenges of ethno-national party clientelism and a more divided and under-developed civil society and higher level of civic apathy. Meanwhile, civic parties in each setting traverse differing openings, arising from distinct institutional rules. These varying openings lead the parties to adopt distinctive strategies, most notably in how they position themselves. Civic parties in Northern Ireland position themselves most notably as integrationist, while also adopting an accommodationist approach at times and availing of such opportunities within the transitional power-sharing system. While those in Bosnia position themselves as both accommodationist and integrationist, the primary civic actor mobilises as a cross-ethnic accommodationist party and takes particular advantage of the corporate power-sharing system to assume positions on this basis.

This chapter will draw together the empirical findings from the cases studies of Northern Ireland and Bosnia and bring a comparative and theoretical perspective to bear on these conclusions. In this way, it will present the core similarities and variations that emerge between the two cases and face the research questions and propositions set out in Chapter One against these findings. The first section will summarise the distinct institutional contexts in which civic parties in Bosnia and Northern Ireland move. The second section will thus compare and contrast the structural barriers civic parties meet in each setting while the third section will comparatively assess the structural openings they encounter. The fourth section will comparatively explore the ways in which civic actors strategically navigate their settings in each case. The fifth and final section will reflect on what these comparative findings mean for the propositions set out in Chapter One and thus consider the overarching question of how we may understand the enduring presence of civic parties in deeply divided societies. This section will thus assess the implications of these conclusions for the theory and practice of civic parties in divided societies.

## **7.1 Distinct Consociational Contexts**

Bosnia and Northern Ireland largely embody the two distinct forms of power-sharing theorised in Chapter One: *corporate* and *liberal* respectively. This section summarises

the key points of comparison and contrast in the formal institutional contexts of each case and their informal structures of politics.

### *Formal Institutional Frameworks*

The Dayton Peace Agreement, as outlined in Chapter Five, constituted a strict interpretation of consociationalism, with detailed prescriptions for power-sharing between pre-determined groups: the designated ‘constituent peoples’, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs (McCulloch, 2014b: 39). This principle translates into institutional arrangements that combine ethnic and territorial power-sharing, including: decentralisation of the state into ethnically defined political units; reserved seats - or ‘quotas’ - in legislature and executive for members of the three constituent peoples; and proportional representation in government of delegates from each of the country’s two ethnically-defined entities. Whilst voters vote on a common roll, electoral units are largely ethnically homogenous and, for the election of the three-member state presidency, voters from the Federation may only vote for the Bosniak and Croat candidate while those from the Serb Republic may only elect the Serb candidate. Significantly, the consociational framework also features considerable international supervision, primarily in the shape of the Office of High Representative (OHR) which wields extensive legislative and executive power. To this extent, international representatives constitute integral actors in the system, administering the multi-national federation and ensuring an “imposed” stability (Keil, 2013: 4; McCulloch, 2014b: 50).

By contrast to Dayton, the Good Friday Agreement approximates a largely liberal, self-determined consociational settlement, though with some distinct corporate, pre-determined elements, leading McCulloch to term it a “hybrid” form of power-sharing (2014a: 505). Rather than ensuring proportionality in the executive through reserved seats or territorial quotas, the Northern Ireland Executive is established through d’Hondt, a formula which allocates seats in government sequentially based on party strengths in the legislature, allowing any party with sufficient representation in the Assembly to take office. Voting through the preferential Single Transferrable Vote (STV) system takes place on a common electoral roll with no bar to voters electing candidates representing other ethnic groups (or none). However, Northern Ireland’s

form of consociation does nevertheless bear a pre-determined flavour, with Assembly members required to affiliate to a community - Nationalist, Unionist or Other - and cross-community voting procedures in the Assembly, providing for corporate guarantees (McCulloch, 2014a: 506; Nagle, 2016). Under this system non-aligned parties are assigned something of a secondary role, given their ultimate exclusion from key decisions on which their votes do not count towards the super majority, as outlined in Chapter Three. Furthermore, rule changes incorporated by the St Andrews Agreement have, as shown, seen the institutions assume a more corporate form. The reforms entrenched the practice of designation, by preventing Members from re-designating during an Assembly term, and extended veto procedures, so that when a decision cannot be achieved by consensus in the Executive any three members can require the subsequent vote to be taken on a cross-community basis (The St Andrews Agreement 2006: Annex A).

However, non-ethnic parties are still permitted a role in the institutions and, to a certain extent, able to participate *as non-ethnic actors* – albeit under the label of ‘Other’ and thus not on their own terms, nor on equal terms with ethnic parties. Yet, ‘Others’ may take seats in the Executive through the d’Hondt system. Indeed, were the ‘Other’ designation to become the largest or second largest in the Assembly it would be possible for a civic party to nominate and assume the position of co-premier, as McCrudden, McGarry, O’Leary and Schwartz point out (McCrudden et al., 2013: 235).

While crisis and efforts towards constitutional reform have formed a feature of both frameworks since their inception, power-sharing has nevertheless withstood thus far in Northern Ireland and Bosnia – if precariously. Northern Ireland’s crises have emerged in the form of institutional collapse and suspension – or threats thereof - while Bosnia’s problems have come in the shape of immobilism and stasis, thanks in the main to a stability imposed by the international community.

In formal institutional terms, therefore, key points of departure between the two consociational frameworks, reflecting the corporate-liberal distinction, are: the presence of internal ethno-territorial decentralisation in Bosnia and its absence in Northern Ireland; pre-determination of power-sharing actors through the use of ethnic

quotas in Bosnia and their self-determination to a greater extent in Northern Ireland; and the centrality international actors in the former. Nevertheless, both cases feature some form of group designation requirement for legislators in order to ensure group guarantees, including vetoes. Power-sharing in Northern Ireland, in this sense, does grant some recognition to non-aligned actors through the designation of 'Other', though this grouping is not extended the same status and rights as that of Nationalist or Unionist actors in the Assembly.

### *Parties, Party Competition and Civil Society*

In terms of how politics is 'done' in practice, while ethno-national party competition forms a potent feature of each case, it can be observed that Bosnia's tri-polar party system has witnessed more extreme ethnic party competition than its bipolar Northern Irish counterpart, including intense intra-ethnic outbidding and more pronounced resort to the politics of fear and invocations of the conflict. Bosnian politics is marked in this sense by a deeper dissensus between elites over the country's constitutional future than that of Northern Ireland. Indeed, this reality reflects the widely different nature of the conflicts in each case and hence distinct forms of agreement necessitated. While the Dayton agreement was, for many intents and purposes, a ceasefire, internationally imposed out of necessity, Northern Ireland's journey to peace followed a more evolutionary, consensual and home-grown path.

This dynamic of party competition is supplanted in Bosnia with a deeply embedded system of party patronage and greater co-optation and contestation of civic space by ethno-national interests. As well as the intensity of ethno-national party competition and the related operation of party patronage, the under-development of civil society and non-political civic space set Bosnia further apart from Northern Ireland in this comparison.

Observing the party systems in each case, civic parties can be seen to constitute a more significant force in the post-settlement politics of Bosnia, occupying a larger space than those in Northern Ireland. Civic parties in Bosnia collectively accounted for some 26 per cent and 25 per cent of the vote respectively at the 2010 and 2014 general elections in the Federation entity, compared to the 9 per cent and 12 per cent shares

won by civic parties in Northern Ireland in the 2011 and 2016 Assembly Elections. Nevertheless, underlying this apparent success of civic actors in the Bosnian system is deep contestation of their civic stance, owing to their heavy reliance on the support of members of one ethnic group, Bosniak, and concentration in Bosniak majority areas, as illustrated in Chapters Five and Six. The main civic party in Northern Ireland, by contrast, though represented electorally primarily in the east of the region - and having an over-representation of Protestants in its membership, as shown, – nevertheless receives significant support from both Protestant and Catholic voters and, in this sense, its non-aligned position is not subject to the same level of controversy. While contestation of civic parties within the dominant ethno-nationalist discourse forms a feature of both cases, a more blurred distinction between civic parties and ethnic parties emerges in the case of Bosnia.

## **7.2 Structural Barriers to Civic Parties in Consociational Frameworks**

The analysis of civic party experiences in the consociational frameworks of Bosnia and Northern Ireland in Parts II and III has unearthed striking parallels, as well as key differences. This section compares the constraints with which civic parties meet in each case, as found in this research, in both the formal and informal structures of politics.

### *Informal Constraints*

In both cases, the most potent barrier to emerge from interviews with civic party representatives was that of ethno-national discourse and their experiences of marginalisation, contestation and co-optation within it. Representatives related having their civic agendas side-lined amidst the hegemonic discourse of ethnic politics. Within the dynamics of zero-sum ethno-national party competition, parties in both cases experienced frustration at the lack of space for their policies to be heard and, moreover, heard in their own terms. They reported a tendency for civic issues to be either ignored within political debate and the media, or framed in an ethno-national light, such as the representation of Alliance's campaign for integrated education in Northern Ireland as a bid to end Catholic schooling, or the depiction of Naša Stranka's bid for constitutional reform along civic lines in Bosnia as part of a majoritarian

agenda. This contestation of the civic agenda was sometimes accompanied by the threat of co-optation by one ethno-national side given the tendency towards “ethnic seepage” and the “permeative propensities of ethnicity in each society (Horowitz, 1985) – such as the nationalist parties’ claiming of the equality agenda in Northern Ireland. The risk of being drawn into the ethno-national nexus can lead, furthermore, to a depolitication of civic politics at the grassroots level, most notable in Bosnia, where social movements and NGOs often frame their demands in apolitical terms. Indeed, this effect emerged distinctly in the case of the 2014 protest and plenum movement in Bosnia, which resisted any engagement with formal politics, as outlined in Chapter Six. As this case demonstrates, such depoliticisation can result in a disjuncture between ‘small p’ and ‘big p’ politics, and a blockage in the pipeline from civic grassroots political activity to civic parties, hampering not only possible alliances between these two, but the potential for transition from civic movements to civic party formation.

In both Northern Ireland and Bosnia, the marginalisation of civic actors in the dominant political discourse and contestation of their position has seen them subjected to negative representations and outright hostility. Parties in each case were framed in the ethno-national discourse, varyingly, as weak, illegitimate, suspect and traitorous. Indeed, in some instances, civic parties relayed feeling that their form of politics was under attack by ethno-national elites for whom it represented a threat. This was particularly evident in Northern Ireland during the flag protests in which the Alliance Party was depicted by their unionist opponents as *weak* for compromising on an issue of identity, *traitorous* for betraying the community in this way, and *suspicious* in their intentions for selling out to the nationalist community. In Bosnia, these discourses were patently deployed by ethno-national actors with reference to the election of the SDP’s Željko Komšić to the position of the Croat presidency in 2006 and 2010. The party and its candidate were depicted in this sense as something of a ‘fake’ and illegitimate representative of the Croat people.

Civic parties in both cases were additionally constrained by a dearth of allies, in party politics, as well as the media and civil society, structured in both cases largely along ethno-national lines. The alignment of media outlets to ethno-national blocs and, in

the case of Bosnia, its co-optation by ethno-national parties can also work to reinforce the marginalisation and contestation of these parties in political debate. Furthermore, the high level of public apathy, disillusion and passivity, was felt by civic parties to be inimical to their progress, particularly in the case of Bosnia. A lack of belief in the potential for change in this framework was depicted as a barrier to voters opting for their parties, and indeed emerged in focus groups with voters as a factor in their reluctance to support civic parties.

In Bosnia, these discourses and dynamics of party competition were reinforced by a pervasive system of informal party patronage and clientelism. This system, in which civic parties either cannot compete, or in which they choose to engage at the expense of their credibility as the civic alternative, formed an additional structural barrier to these actors. Whilst such dynamics are by no means unique to Bosnia and undoubtedly exist in Northern Ireland to an extent, they did not appear to form a systematic feature of the political scene in the latter as they did in the former and did not emerge in this research as a distinct barrier there.

Common structural barriers to civic parties in Bosnia and Northern Ireland therefore include marginalisation and contestation in the hegemonic ethno-nationalist discourse and a lack of civic allies. Ethno-national party patronage and clientelism and the pervasiveness of civic apathy in society form further constraint distinctive to Bosnia.

### *Formal Constraints*

On the level of formal institutions a number of parallel constraints emerged in each case with respect to the mechanisms of power-sharing. In both Bosnia and Northern Ireland the requirement for politicians at the national level to communally affiliate - in the former as Bosniak, Croat or Serb, and in the latter as Nationalist, Unionist or Other - bears significant implications for civic actors. These implications play out differently in the more corporate and liberal frameworks, however. Civic parties in Bosnia's corporate consociational framework operate within a system of rigid quotas for elected office, where access to many key positions in government and legislature, most notably at state level, is only open to self-designated Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. With no roles reserved for 'others', this system theoretically excludes non-ethnic actors from

these positions and thus denies them considerable power and influence. However, in practice, as discussed below, these rules are creatively navigated by civic parties in Bosnia which assume positions reserved for all three groups. In this sense, the majority of representatives interviewed from the accommodationist SDP voiced no opposition to the principle or practice of ethnic quotas. Indeed, some depicted the party's ability to fill positions for Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs as a source of pride and evidence of its multi-ethnicity. Members of the more integrationist Naša Stranka, on the other hand, expressed ideological opposition to the system which it portrayed as discriminatory and dysfunctional. Nevertheless, it too used the rules strategically to take up positions reserved for the three constituent peoples, doing so in a more self-consciously pragmatic way than their SDP colleagues, in line with its post-ethnic integrationist ethos.

In Northern Ireland, the designation rule facilitates corporate group guarantees in the Assembly and Executive, as shown, allowing for veto mechanisms through cross-community votes on certain key decisions and triggered by a 'petition of concern'. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, these rules were deeply opposed by civic actors, on both practical and principled grounds. In terms of practical impact, responses in interviews and focus groups suggested that the existence of these rules did not register to any significant degree with voters. On the question, furthermore, of whether these mechanisms work to impair civic parties' electoral performance, there is no clear evidence either way. Yet, while the practical impacts were discussed in some cases, it was the symbolic implications of these rules that were stressed above all by civic actors; the inequality they represented and the disempowering effect they had on their parties, forcing them to define themselves in a way with which they were uncomfortable and denying them the ability to act on their own terms, equally alongside other actors in the institutions. The conflict such corporate rules present to the Alliance Party's integrationist principles was patently demonstrated during the redesignation affair of 2001. Thus, civic parties in Northern Ireland are disadvantaged both practically and ideologically by being compelled to affiliate in the legislature. Unlike parties in Bosnia's corporate framework, however, civic parties in Northern Ireland at least retain the option of designating as 'Other' and, moreover, the ability to participate in the Executive through d'Hondt on this basis. The more liberal – or

hybrid - consociational system of Northern Ireland thus gives civic actors more choice, offering them a role in the institutions *as non-ethnic actors* – if not on equal terms with their nationalist and unionist colleagues.

The operation of group vetoes in both Bosnia and Northern Ireland was reported by civic representatives to exert a polarising effect on politics, further marginalising civic politics. Vetoes have been used more extensively and to more dysfunctional effect in Bosnia, forming a major barrier to legislative progress. In Northern Ireland, meanwhile, while the extent of veto use has not been as noteworthy (McEvoy, 2013: 268), their inappropriate use has proved controversial in recent years, with petitions of concern triggered for issues unrelated to communal rights, including welfare reform and same sex marriage. This misuse of the rules arguably exerts an ethnicising effect on broader social and economic issues, reflecting Horowitz's observation of 'ethnic seepage' in divided societies (1985), and potentially impairing broad cross-community support for progressive civic politics.

When it comes to group autonomy, furthermore, civic parties in Bosnia and Northern Ireland face very different conditions under their varying forms of power-sharing. Civic actors in Bosnia move in a highly ethno-territorially decentralised framework, where most electoral units are mono-ethnic, making electoral mobilisation across the entire state – and hence across the country's ethnic communities - deeply challenging. Thus, only one of the civic parties examined in Bosnia, the SDP attempted to mobilise across the state, in both the Federation and RS, and at that, garners most of its support in the RS from Bosniak minorities and in the Federation from Croat and Serb minorities, as reported in Chapter Six. Meanwhile, Naša Stranka confined its electoral presence to the Bosniak-majority Federation.

In Northern Ireland, communal groups are granted some policy autonomy, most notably in the areas of education, culture and language. As illustrated in Chapter Four, this policy differentiation stands in direct contradiction to many civic party policies, such as the Alliance's campaign for integrated education, making progress on these issues a particular challenge. However, while territorial autonomy forms part of the GFA in the form of devolution of powers from Westminster to the Stormont institutions, internal territorial autonomy or decentralisation does not form a

component. Civic parties in Northern Ireland, thus operate in a largely unitary system where only local councils lie below the level of the devolved power-sharing government. While Protestant and Catholic communities are relatively concentrated in certain regions in Northern Ireland and many electoral constituencies bear ethnic majorities, electoral districts overall are significantly more ethnically mixed than those in Bosnia. Securing a relatively ethnically balanced vote is thus more feasible for civic parties in the Northern Irish framework.

Both Northern Ireland and Bosnia feature proportional representation electoral systems of different forms – open list in the case of Bosnia’s state elections and STV in the case of Northern Ireland’s devolved elections. Both of these systems have been highlighted by critics of a centripetalist persuasion as failing to incentivise voters to reach across the ethnic divide at the ballot box, or for parties to appeal beyond their ethnic core vote to get elected (Mujkić & Hulse, 2010; Wilford & Wilson, 2006). Nevertheless, the specific impact of these systems for civic parties did not emerge as a significant theme in the research findings and limited evidence exists to suggest that another system, such as the Alternative Vote advocated by Horowitz and Reilly (Horowitz, 2002b; Reilly, 2001), would reap more favourable results for civic parties. Indeed, the use of AV for the RS presidential election in 2000 did not result in moderation on the part of the electorate (Belloni, 2007: 85; McCulloch, 2014b), and the main civic party in Northern Ireland opposes its introduction, favouring the retention of STV.

### *Formal-Informal Interplay*

This research demonstrates that, in both cases, these formal and informal structures interplay in a complex dynamic. In this sense, consociational institutions such as territorial decentralisation and ethno-national vetoes reinforce the hegemony of ethno-national discourses and party competition and these discourses, in turn, affirm and legitimise the need for such measures. For example, in the case of Northern Ireland the requirement for Assembly members to designate appeared to further facilitate ethno-nationalist suspicion of civic parties, revealed in one civic representative’s concerns that his voting record would be scrutinised by his unionist colleagues and used to try to demonstrate his alignment with nationalist parties, as outlined in Chapter

Four. In the case of Bosnia, furthermore, territorial decentralisation can be seen to facilitate the practice of ethno-national party patronage and clientelism, as shown in the case of the intimidation and co-optation of activists and citizens that took place during the 2014 protest and plenum mobilisation, outlined in Chapter Six.

### **7.3 Structural Openings for Civic Parties in Consociational Frameworks**

Amidst the barriers to civic actors erected by the consociational framework, this research has found that these parties also traverse openings within this system, both formally and informally. This section assesses these discursive and institutional openings in turn.

#### *Discursive Openings: Claiming the Civic Niche*

On the informal level, in both cases, civic parties seize on the small but distinct ideational space that lies between the ethno-national blocs. This ideological space has fluctuated in both cases. It has appeared to expand at times of particular dissatisfaction with the political status quo in Bosnia when demand for change is high, such as the 2010 General Election, or at points of institutional change and promise of reform in Northern Ireland, such as following the Good Friday Agreement. This space has, in turn, contracted at times of particular polarisation, such as the 2006 General Elections in Bosnia, following the failure of the ‘April package’ of constitutional reforms and the 2003 elections in Northern Ireland following a period of crisis and instability for the power-sharing institutions.

In this way, civic parties are able to present themselves as the civic alternative to ethno-national politics, unique in the system, and to claim a degree of ownership of this niche. This was observed in Northern Ireland in the case of the modern Alliance Party, which proudly and definitively presented itself in many ways as embodying the third force in Northern Irish politics. In Bosnia, this was observed in the case of both the SDP, despite its accommodationist positioning, and the integrationist Naša Stranka. SDP representatives emphasised their uniqueness, depicting themselves as the “only multi-ethnic party in Bosnia”. Meanwhile Naša Stranka’s electoral and policy strategies since formation could be observed to be aimed at trying to cultivate the small, liberal, urban niche within Sarajevo and other key cities in FBiH, rather than trying to expand

to a party of broader appeal and national reach. Its decision to endorse the first LGBT march in Bosnia, against the advice of the US Embassy, as reported in Chapter Six, illustrates this strategy.

Indeed, civic parties in both cases can benefit from facing few competitors in the central space, to monopolise this niche. In terms of building alliances with more moderate nationalist parties or other civic parties, there appeared little success or impetus towards this in either case, for varying reasons. Indeed, in Northern Ireland, some evidence emerged of a lack of will within the Alliance Party for cooperation with the NIWC during its period of existence.

### *Institutional Openings: Consociational Opportunities*

On the formal level, civic parties in both settings have also used consociational rules and appendages to their advantage, in distinct ways, arising from the different opportunity structures in each setting. In Northern Ireland's liberal/hybrid power-sharing system, civic parties have been able to access formal, direct openings within the system, as well as ad hoc openings in the transitional institutions. The Alliance Party has thus taken part in the Executive, assuming a ministerial position for two Assembly terms, from 2011-16 obtained through the d'Hondt mechanism as a product of its strength in the Assembly. Furthermore, as a consequence of the transitional nature of the institutions, the Alliance won its first executive department in 2010, appointed outside of the d'Hondt procedures, through a cross-community vote, when it assumed the contested position of the newly devolved Justice Minister by virtue of its non-aligned stance.

In Bosnia's corporate power-sharing framework, on the other hand, civic parties cannot access formal openings - their stance not recognised in the institutions alongside the three constituent peoples. They must therefore, to an extent, create their own opportunities. In this sense, the two civic parties in Bosnia studied in this research have creatively navigated the rigid consociational rules, taking up positions reserved for members of all three constituent peoples. They have thus been able to access positions in executive and legislature - and the power, influence, visibility and ability to realise policy goals that come with them. Furthermore, Naša Stranka has negotiated

the state's decentralised political system to the best of its advantage, seeking to establish representation on the cantonal level as a base on which to build as a new party.

These distinct political opportunity structures enable civic actors in different ways. Northern Ireland's liberal consociational system, as discussed above, allows civic actors, to an extent, to participate legitimately *as civic actors* – albeit on lesser terms to their ethnic counterparts. In the absence of this option in BiH's corporate consociational mechanisms, civic parties nevertheless seize the opportunity to navigate the rules by creative means to access positions of power, thus acting on the same terms as their ethno-national rivals. In so doing, furthermore, they can, if so inclined, make a political point with regard to their multi-ethnic credentials, as the accommodationist-oriented SDP has chosen to do. This forms a qualitative difference between these two cases with respect to the form of consociational power-sharing in place. Thus while Northern Ireland's liberal/hybrid structures offer civic parties more legitimate and formal space, that space is of secondary status. Bosnia's corporate structures meanwhile deny civic parties formal space but allow them to engage on equal terms, yet only by acting, in a sense, as ethnic actors.

#### **7.4 Distinct Strategies to Navigate Distinct Structures**

Having comparatively assessed the structural constraints and opportunities civic parties find in BiH and Northern Ireland, this section turns to the second research question, to consider how civic parties traverse these barriers and openings.

##### ***Party Positioning***

In terms of positioning, whilst parties in both cases present themselves as the 'civic alternative' in their respective party systems, this research suggests nuances in the approach that the primary civic actors take in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, in response to distinct political opportunity structures.

Under the classification of civic parties outlined in Chapter One and represented in Appendix A, civic parties in Northern Ireland have positioned themselves as both accommodationist and integrationist, varying over time and by party. The main civic

party of the post-GFA era, the Alliance positions itself as chiefly integrationist, though it historically put forward a more accommodationist stance in its early life and has, over the years, embodied both approaches at times. The NIWC, which mobilised from 1996 to 2006, represented a primarily accommodationist ethos, while the contemporary Green Party can be seen to assume a more integrationist approach, but somewhat post-ethnic approach. These positionings can be clearly linked to Northern Ireland's institutional structures, their historical evolution and that of the peace processes. The Alliance emerged at the critical juncture of the Troubles when a clear opening presented for a civic alternative in the party system, but also for a mediator between the extremes of nationalism and unionism. In this way, it played the role of bridge builder, not least in the short-lived Sunningdale power-sharing agreement. Over the years, however, its positioning progressively shifted to that of an integrationist party, advancing a 'one community', civic liberal approach (Leonard, 1999). The NIWC, furthermore, formed at the critical juncture of the peace talks, for the sole reason of influencing the GFA. It presented itself as a party of nationalists, unionists and others and often played the role of facilitator between nationalist and unionist parties in the talks. The Green Party, in turn, while its policies and positioning align closely with an integrationist party, situates itself somewhat beyond the accommodation-integration continuum. With its origins in the Ireland-wide party and indeed the international green movement, it has historically been more removed from Northern Ireland's conflict and peace process. As such, it presents itself as a 'normal' issue-based party that is "naturally cross-community" rather than being defined by this trait and thus somewhat post-ethnic in its orientation.

Civic parties in Bosnia have likewise presented themselves as both accommodationist and integrationist. The main civic actor in the post-Dayton space, the SDP, positions itself definitively as an accommodationist 'multi-ethnic' party, of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs and others, a stance closely linked to its vision of a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Representatives measured its multi-ethnicity primarily by the make-up of its representatives. This position is reflected in its policy of internal ethnic quotas and its embrace of the ethnic quota system within the power-sharing system, the party in some ways mirroring the consociational structures. Meanwhile, Naša Stranka lies on the integrationist end of the spectrum, taking a post-ethnic approach that highlights

universal human rights and liberalism. Unlike the SDP, the party chooses not to overtly orientate itself around the ethnic cleavage, eschewing internal quotas and measuring its civic nature by its principles as opposed to the identity of its representatives or its electoral support.

### *Navigating the Consociational System*

Civic parties in Northern Ireland and Bosnia also demonstrate distinct approaches to the consociational system, given the different forms this system assumes in each case, as demonstrated above. Those in Bosnia thus engage in more strategic use of consociational rules, by necessity, given the absence of options to participate in many elements of governance as non-ethnic actors. Meanwhile, those in Northern Ireland largely participate as ‘others’ in the political system, with a few exceptions, as in 2001 when the Alliance and NIWC temporarily redesignated during the nomination of the First and Deputy First Ministers in order to save the institutions from collapse. Civic parties in Northern Ireland have also found indirect strategic openings in the system and seized upon opportunities arising from the transitional nature of the settlement, most notably in the Alliance’s assumption of the contested Justice Ministry, in some ways inadvertently playing the role of ‘mediator’.

### *Electoral Strategy*

When it comes to electoral strategy, civic parties in both cases must balance the need to achieve cross-territorial spread and hence ethnic balance in their support, with the basic and more immediate one of winning elections and, indeed, surviving as a party. Civic actors in both cases can be seen to pragmatically consolidate their electoral position in areas where they draw significant support, sometimes at the expense of maintaining cross-ethnic balance in representation. Differences in electoral strategy and approach can also be observed between parties, in line with their positionings with respect to the ethnic divide. In this sense, in BiH, the ‘multi-ethnic’ accommodationist SDP, can be seen to use a relatively differentiated approach to elections. It uses creative strategies to gain representation across the country’s ethnically homogenous regions. This includes placement of representatives of the majority group as candidates – thus presenting ‘different faces’ in different places - as well as appeals to

ethnic minorities in those regions. Parties advancing a more integrationist position, on the other hand, Naša Stranka and Alliance, tend to pursue a less differentiated approach to election campaigning, less concerned with ethnic balance in terms of candidates and districts contested. Naša Stranka for example, chose not to contest elections in the RS in the 2014 General Election in Bosnia. These integrationist parties furthermore appear to view the concentration of their support in areas where one communal group is dominant as a logistical issue, perhaps conflated with the urban-rural divide, as opposed to a fundamental one that compromises their civic standing. In this sense, they tend not to treat it as something with which they need concern themselves to any significant degree.

It appears from this analysis that Northern Ireland's liberal structures provide more openings for integrationist parties, while Bosnia's corporate structures incentivise accommodationist parties to a greater degree. Nevertheless, it appears that both types of party can exist within each framework. This analysis also shows that party positionings are time specific and civic parties may shift over time from one approach to another, perhaps with a shift in the political opportunity structure. Civic parties appear relatively path dependent in this sense, the time in which they form and emerge onto the political scene critical in shaping their approach. Furthermore, it emerges from this study that parties may embody both positionings to varying degrees simultaneously, as in the Alliance Party.

Having demonstrated the key comparative findings of this research, the next section discusses these findings and their theoretical and practical implications.

### **7.5 Understanding the Potential and Limits of Civic Parties in Consociational Frameworks**

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this research with regard to the experiences of civic parties in consociational frameworks. This section reflects on these conclusions and their implications for the theory and practice of democracy in divided societies.

### *Core Empirical Contributions*

With reference to the assumptions set out in Chapter One, relating to Research Question 1, we can observe from the findings outlined above that civic parties encounter institutional barriers, but also opportunities, within the formal and informal institutions of consociational power-sharing systems. Formal constraints emerge in the shape of consociational rules that marginalise non-ethnic actors in the institutions. Informal constraints arise primarily in the hegemonic ethno-national discourses of these societies, in which civic parties find themselves marginalised, contested and co-opted. Civic parties are also informally impeded by a lack of allies in the civic field and, in the case of Bosnia, by practices of party patronage and the effect of widespread civic disillusion and apathy. As illustrated, these formal and informal structures interplay to constrain non-ethnic actors. Nevertheless, civic parties also find critical openings in consociational systems and demonstrate significant agency in seizing upon such opportunities.

Secondly, civic parties meet with varying institutional barriers and opportunities under different forms of consociational power-sharing – the more liberal/hybrid variant found in Northern Ireland and the more corporate form in place in Bosnia. With regard to the assumption that civic parties will face more severe constraints and fewer and lesser opportunities under corporate than liberal consociation, and vice versa, however, the picture that emerges is more complex. In Northern Ireland civic parties find more direct and legitimate openings in the system (as well as more ad hoc opportunities arising from the evolutionary nature of the institutions and the lack of trust between the ethno-national power-sharing partners). This option, by contrast, is foreclosed in Bosnia. Yet, while civic parties in Northern Ireland are expressly included to an extent in the consociational system, that inclusion is not on a fully equal basis to their ethnic counterparts, given the corporate requirement to designate in the Assembly as Nationalist, Unionist and Other and the unequal treatment of the votes of Others. Meanwhile, civic parties in Bosnia are not expressly included in the institutions and are therefore compelled to ‘play’ the system to an extent and act on an equal basis to ethnic parties. Thus, though civic actors appear to face more severe constraints, both

formally and informally, in Bosnia's corporate consociational framework, they nevertheless access openings in the system through creative navigation of those rules. Whilst this strategy grants them more inclusion, it also leaves them more prey to contestation and challenges their legitimacy as civic players. Whilst shining a light on the ways in which consociational politics can facilitate as well as impede civic actors, even in a rigidly corporate framework, this research has also found that these opportunities can prove double edged for civic parties. In this way, availing of these openings can raise strategic dilemmas for these actors, threatening to undermine their overriding goals as civic actors.

With reference to Research Question 2, concerning civic party strategy in response to these structures, it appears from the findings, that civic parties adopt different approaches and strategies within the distinct opportunity structures of liberal and corporate power-sharing frameworks, as postulated in Chapter One. As a result of their adaptation to these distinct institutional environments, furthermore, different subtypes of civic parties emerge in liberal and corporate power-sharing frameworks, and within the same framework over time. It could be inferred from the findings that in corporate consociational settings, in which participation in the institutions is heavily restricted to ethnic actors, accommodationist parties are more likely to emerge, as in the case of the SDP in Bosnia. Meanwhile, in more liberal consociational frameworks, integrationist parties are more likely to mobilise, as in the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland. However, as shown, the Alliance has also embodied an accommodationist ethos alongside its integrationist stance, and assumed the role of mediator at various points in its existence, including post-Agreement. It could therefore also be inferred that in emerging and transitional consociational frameworks - that may emphasise the moderate middle, or require centre actors to play a bridging role - accommodationist parties find institutional openings and may be expected to emerge.

In summary, it can be concluded from the findings of this research that civic parties survive within consociational frameworks by claiming the civic niche in their divided polities and skilfully negotiating the institutional landscape to access strategic opportunities. Civic parties thus meet with both structural openings and constraints in the varying consociational frameworks of Bosnia and Northern Ireland, but these

opportunities and barriers differ, as do their strategies for their negotiation. The liberal/hybrid form of power-sharing in place in Northern Ireland appears to offer more space for civic parties, but that space is of secondary status to that granted to ethno-national actors in the institutions. Civic parties in this political opportunity structure are more likely to adopt an integrationist positioning, with accommodationist tendencies. The corporate form of power-sharing practised in Bosnia offers little legitimate space for civic parties, but nevertheless allows these actors to seize space indirectly and creatively, essentially by acting as ethnic actors in the system. Taking these opportunities can thus prove a risky endeavour for civic parties, raising tensions with their civic principles and threatening to undermine their credibility as non-ethnic actors. Civic parties in this political opportunity structure are, furthermore, more likely to adopt an accommodationist positioning, in order to avail of the openings it affords.

### *Theoretical Implications*

From the empirical contribution of this research, outlined above, flow a number of inferences for the theories of democracy in divided societies. This section reflects on these implications, specifically for the fields of consociational democracy and civic mobilisation in divided societies discussed in Chapter One.

Abstracting upwards from the findings above, the following basic observations can be made with regard to civic parties in consociational power-sharing frameworks:

1. Civic parties encounter structural constraints, but also openings, within consociational frameworks. Formal and informal structures of politics interplay in this way to enable and constrain civic parties.
2. The structural opportunities and constraints that civic parties encounter and the strategies they adopt vary in corporate and liberal consociational frameworks.
3. The structural opportunities that civic parties access in consociational frameworks can be double-edged, giving rise to strategic dilemmas that they must negotiate.

As discussed in Chapter One, civic parties have been accorded an ambiguous and under-theorised role in consociational theory. Meanwhile, in the work of centripetalist

and integrationist critics of consociation, an assumption runs that consociational power-sharing categorically disadvantages non-ethnic parties, rendering them relatively passive actors. This research has demonstrated, however, that, whilst civic parties are undeniably marginalised to varying degrees in the consociational systems examined, they can also seize openings therein and display vital agency. Moreover, the particular form of consociation imposed lies critical. The evidence from this study suggests that civic parties find more space in liberal consociational settings where they are granted institutional recognition and can participate in the institutions on an equal basis with their ethnic counterparts. This space is compromised when corporate mechanisms differentiate the roles of ethnic and non-ethnic actors and accord the latter lesser status in the institutions, as in Northern Ireland's hybrid framework. However, the evidence also demonstrates that even in rigidly corporate power-sharing settings, such as Bosnia, civic parties can still demonstrate significant agency and capitalise on strategic opportunities to gain representation and influence in the system. Furthermore, this research also demonstrates that civic parties can play a potentially pivotal role in transitional power-sharing systems, as shown in the case of the Alliance Party's assumption of the newly devolved justice ministry in Northern Ireland in 2010. This mediation role is not without its potential problems for civic parties and their longer term goals, however, as illustrated, and requires careful consideration on their part.

These findings reinforce the need for theories of democracy in divided societies to take greater account of civic parties and the critical role they can play in power-sharing systems. They also underline the importance of the specific nature of consociational institutions and the distinction between its liberal and corporate forms, as argued by a number of contemporary consociational scholars (McGarry & O'Leary, 2007; McGarry & O'Leary, 2009; McCulloch, 2014a; McCulloch, 2014b; Nagle, 2011; Wolff, 2010). These findings furthermore contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of the impact these structures exert on civic parties and politics.

These findings also speak to the emerging literature on gender and power-sharing and bear implications for gender inclusion. In one sense they align with the argument advanced by some feminist scholars that power-sharing is not categorically 'bad' for

actors mobilising on identities and issues other than the salient communal one on which the power-sharing institutions are structured (Bell, 2015; Byrne & McCulloch, 2012). Non-salient groups like explicitly civic actors, or women organising as women, can exhibit considerable agency and find openings in these structures. Nevertheless, while formal institutions such as gender quotas, can facilitate these actors, this research has shown that informal institutions, such as institutional discourse, can constrain the advancement of non-ethnic issues, including gender equality.

### *Practical Implications*

What do these conclusions imply for public policy and practice in the field of democracy in divided societies? In short, these findings demonstrate that the design of post-conflict institutions matters; for the type of politics and the type of political actors that emerge and sustain in the post-settlement period. The effects of power-sharing on civic parties are not straightforward, but complex and vary according to the particular form it takes, and the ways in which these formal institutions interplay with the informal structures of politics in a given context. In designing democratic institutions for divided societies therefore, policymakers must pay attention to the precise nature of consociational institutions, and to both the formal and informal structures of politics, and the interaction between the two.

The practical implications of these findings for the case of Northern Ireland suggest that reform of the institutions along more liberal lines would grant civic parties a more equal role in the institutions. Such reform would entail, first and foremost, abolishing the requirement for members to designate in the Assembly and moving towards a designation-free weighted majority system of cross-community voting, as proposed by a number of advocates, discussed in Chapter Three. In Bosnia, reform of the institutions to shift the system from its current rigidly pre-determined corporate structure to a more liberal self-determined form would undoubtedly render more space for civic actors. Reforming the electoral system for the Presidency, in line with the 2009 ECHR ‘Sejdic-Finci’ ruling, so that all citizens could vote for all candidates – Bosniak, Croat, Serb or, theoretically ‘other’ or ‘non-aligned’ - could also facilitate cross-ethnic voting, encourage parties to appeal beyond their core ethnic group and perhaps increase the legitimacy of civic representation in the political discourse and

the minds of voters. While the mechanics of such reforms lie beyond the scope of this thesis, imaginative proposals have been put forward by scholars such as Hodžić and Stojanović, as outlined in Chapter Five, such as : reforming the system for the election of the Presidency so that voters can cast their vote for any candidate – Bosniak, Croat, Serb or ‘other’ – three of whom are then elected on the basis of their performance both in the three regions and across the state; and remodelling the state House of Peoples along the lines of its FBiH equivalent to open it up to delegates of ‘other’ groups alongside ethnically aligned representatives (2011). Such reforms to grant recognition to ‘others’ in the institutions would include non-ethnic actors alongside Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs, with equal institutional rights, providing more space for civic actors to act as civic actors in the system, if they so wish, and perhaps over time, granting them a more legitimate, less contested role in Bosnian political discourse. Electoral engineering to require candidates to appeal across Bosnia’s ethnic constituencies and to address the fears of ethnic minorities (particularly Bosnian Croats) could also incrementally lead to moderation among elites and a lessening of polarisation in voting behaviour.

More broadly, provisions for broader inclusion in politics that rest on a wider definition of diversity, human rights and equality could help foster a more civic political culture. This could include provisions such as gender quotas to guarantee equal representation of women, alongside measures to guarantee representation of ethnic and non-ethnic groups.

As these findings demonstrate, however, formal institutions only form part of the story of civic parties in divided societies. Ultimately more fundamental to the development of civic politics are policies to support long term transition towards a more integrated and shared society, such as integrated education and housing. Critical to this goal are support for the development of civil society from the bottom up, by facilitating grassroots community activity on cross-cutting issues and initiatives such as deliberative democracy fora, where they emerge. Over time, this might help address the disjuncture between informal and formal civic politics that exists in such societies and the blockage in the pipeline between these two spheres. As the case of the Bosnian protests and plenums illustrates, however, such activity must arise organically and

there are strict limits to how much policymakers can intervene to propagate or encourage it. Nevertheless, domestic and international practitioners should remain mindful of facilitating a more shared and secure environment in which civic activity can emerge and flourish, or, at the very least, of recognising its inherent value and ensuring their actions do not inadvertently impede it. Furthermore, policies to bolster the rule of law and tackle cultures of party patronage and clientelism, in formal and informal politics, would help address this deeply embedded structural barrier to civic parties and social movements.

## **Conclusion**

This research thus concludes that civic parties operating in power-sharing settings find both opportunities and constraints within their political structures. However, while offering political gain, these opportunities can conflict with their civic ideologies and threaten to undermine this stance, presenting them with strategic dilemmas. Civic parties in consociational systems must thus tread a fine line between playing the power-sharing game, advancing within that system, and preserving their civic credentials and long-term civic goals. Furthermore, the particular form consociation takes makes a difference to civic actors, with liberal frameworks allowing more space for them to mobilise on their own terms and on equal terms with their ethnic counterparts.

These findings indicate a number of avenues for exploration through future research. This inquiry could be extended to further comparative cases, to include greater variation in the model of consociational power-sharing. Including the cases of Macedonia, which exhibits a more liberal form of power-sharing, and Lebanon, which hosts a rigidly corporate model (McCulloch, 2014a), could make for a deeper comparative analysis. Furthermore, full-scale comparative study of civic social movements in varying consociational settings and their relationship to civic political parties therein could probe the gap that emerges in these settings between the formal and informal spheres of civic politics. I hope that this research might provide some foundation for such future inquiries.

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Activist and organiser, Mostar plenum and protests. Interview by the author, 2 July 2014, Sarajevo, (b).

Activist A. and Activist B., Mostar plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Mostar, 10 April 2014.

Activist and organiser, Sarajevo plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 26 March 2014 (a).

Activist and organiser, Sarajevo plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 1 April 2014 (b).

Activist and organizer, Sarajevo plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 2 April 2014 (c).

Activist and organiser, Tuzla plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Tuzla, 10 May 2014 (a).

Activist and organiser, Tuzla plenum and protests. Interview by the author, Tuzla, 10 May 2014 (b).

Bogicević, Radislav, Member of Brčko Assembly, National Democratic Movement (Narodni Demokratiski Pokret; NDP). Interview by the author, 11 July 2014, Brčko. Interpretation by Kristina Varcaković.

Borić, Besima, Member of the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 14 May 2014. Interpretation by Inga Kotlo.

Bradarić, Mehmed, Member of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 19 June 2014. Interpretation by Elma Mahmutović-Hodžić.

Dedeić, Ismet, President of Union for a Better Future of BiH (Savez za Bolju Budućnost BiH, SBB) in Brčko. Interview by the author, Brčko, 10 July 2014. Interpretation by Sandra Pandurević Dobrijević.

Democratic Front member, Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 1 April 2014 (a).

Democratic Front member, Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 16 June 2014 (b).

Domić, Anto, Mayor of Brčko, HDZ. Interview by the author, Brčko, 10 July 2014. Interpretation by Sandra Pandurević Dobrijević.

Gratz, Dennis, President, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 6 May 2014.

Grgić, Mira, Vice-Chair (Deputy Speaker) of the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 20 May 2014. Interpretation by Inga Kotlo.

Haverić, Tarik, Member of Canton Sarajevo, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 23 May 2014.

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Journalist, international news agency, Sarajevo. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 17 April 2014.

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Karajbić, Elvir, Member of the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, May 2014. Interpretation by Inga Kotlo.

Kojović, Predrag, Member of Canton Sarajevo and the House of Peoples, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 6 May 2014.

Kovačević, Slaven, Municipal Councillor, Sarajevo Centre Municipality, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 5 May 2014.

Prodanović, Lazar, Member of the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, SNSD. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 3 July 2014. Interpretation by Selma Gondžetović.

Marjanovic, Damir, Member of the Party Presidency, Democratic Front and Demokratska Front candidate for 2014 General Election. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 23 May 2014.

Martinović, Danijela, Member of the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 23 May 2014. Interpretation by Inga Kotlo.

Member and public commentator, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 17 June 2014.

Mešić, Mirsad, Member of the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 14 May 2014. Interpretation by Inga Kotlo. Transcription and translation by Kristina Varcaković.

Mujezinović, Sabina, Member of the Party Presidency, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author via Skype, 27 May 2014.

NGO representative, International democratization NGO. Interview by the author, Banja Luka, 28 May 2014.

NGO representative, International democratization NGO. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 8 May 2014 (a).

Osborne, Nigel, Coordinator, International Support Group for Social Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 9 May 2014.

OSCE representatives A & B. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 23 May 2014.

Pećanac, Nermin. President of Social Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDU) and Minister of Internal Affairs of the Canton of Sarajevo. Written answers provided to author through e-mail correspondence, 16 July 2014.

Silajdžić, Haris, Former Bosnian Prime Minister; Former Bosniak Member of the Presidency, Founder of SBiH. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 13 June 2014.

Šerak, Anisa, Member of the Party Presidency, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 26 May 2014.

Spokesperson, SBB BiH. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 5 May 2014.

Vidović, Danijel, Former Deputy President, Mostar City Council, HDZ BiH. Interview by the author, Mostar, 26 June 2014.

Vučić, Vladimira, Programme Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI) Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska. Interview by the author, Banja Luka, 28 May 2014.

US NGO representatives A & B. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 13 June 2014.

Živanović, Miroslav, Former Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo, current party member and activist, Social Democratic Party. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, June, 2014.

Zuhrić, Albin, General Secretary, Naša Stranka. Interview by the author, Sarajevo, 19 May 2014.

### *Northern Ireland*

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland former senior party official. Interview by the author, 10 April 2013, Belfast.

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland senior party official. Interview by the author, 12 April 2013, Belfast.

Agnew, Steven. MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Green Party in Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 9 April 2013, Belfast.

Barry, John. Councillor, Green Party in Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, April 2013, Belfast.

Bell, Eileen. Former MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 1 May 2013, Belfast.

Black, Boyd. Member of Labour Party in Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 15 April 2013, Belfast.

Chief Executive, community organisation. Interview by the author, 7 April 2013, Fermanagh.

Devenport, Mark. BBC Northern Ireland Politics Correspondent, Interview by the author, 16 April 2013, Belfast.

Dickson, Stewart, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 18 April 2013, Belfast.

Durkan, Mark. Member of Parliament, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). Interview by the author, 6 April 2013, Derry/Londonderry.

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly. Interview by the author, 1 May 2013, Belfast.

Farry, Stephen, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 5 April 2012, Belfast.

Ford, David, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly and Party Leader, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 12 April 2013, Belfast.

Guelke, Adrian, Professor Emeritus, Queens University Belfast. Interview by the author, 3 April 2012, Belfast.

Kilmurray, Avila, former member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Interview by the author, 11 April 2013, Belfast.

Lyttle, Chris, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, April 2013, Belfast.

McCallister, John, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, NI21. Interview by the author, 16 April 2013, Belfast.

McDonough-Brown, Emmet, Councillor, Belfast City Council, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 6 November 2015, Belfast.

McNamee, Laura, Councillor, Belfast City Council, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, April 2013, Belfast.

McWilliams, Monica, former MLA, Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Interview by the author, 4 April 2012, Belfast.

Morrice, Jane, former MLA, Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Interview by the author, 5 April 2013, Down.

Lo, Anna, MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 3 April 2012, Belfast.

Long, Naomi, Member of Parliament and Deputy Leader, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 5 April 2012, Belfast.

Long, Naomi, Member of Parliament and Deputy Leader, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 12 April 2013, Belfast.

Lynch, Gerry, Former executive director and parliamentary candidate, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Interview by the author, 28 April 2015, Belfast.

Nelson, Sam, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland East Belfast Campaign Manager, General Election 2015. Interview by the author, 4 November 2015, Belfast.

Peltz, Adrienne, President National Union of Students –Union of Students of Ireland (NUS-USI). Interview by the author, 16 April 2013, Belfast.

Roulston, Carmel, former member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Interview by the author, 3 May 2013, Belfast.

Sinn Féin MLA (a), Northern Ireland Assembly. Interview by the author, 11 April 2013, Belfast.

Sinn Féin MLA (b), Northern Ireland Assembly. Interview by the author, 17 April 2013, Belfast.

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly. Interview by the author, 15 April 2013, Belfast.

Wilson, Robin, independent researcher. Interview by the author, 5 April 2012, Belfast.

## **Focus Groups**

### ***Bosnia and Herzegovina***

Language school student and associate group, Sarajevo, 20 May 2014 (a).

Postgraduate student group, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 27 May 2014 (b).

Undergraduate student group, University of Banja Luka, Banja Luka, 28 May 2014 (c).

### ***Northern Ireland***

Community association group, 10 May 2013, Derry/Londonderry (a).

Community association group, 23 April 2013, Enniskillen (b).

Student association group, 1 May 2013, Belfast (c).

Women's organisation group, 25 April 2013, Belfast (d).

Women's organisation group, 8 May 2013, Belfast (e).

## Appendix A

### Civic Party Typology

<b>Party Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Party Subtype</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Common Characteristics</b>
<b>Civic</b>	Appeals to and attempts to attract support from all voters in society - either as citizens or as members of an ethnic group – without excluding any voters on the basis of ethnic group membership, and defines itself in these terms.	<i>Accommodationist</i>	Appeals to voters on both an individual and group basis in an attempt to accommodate the ethnic groups that make up society	<p>Cross-community approach</p> <p>Recognises distinct ethno-national identities and communities in society</p> <p>Advances pluralist, multi-cultural policies</p> <p>Emphasis on individual and group rights</p> <p>Peace and reconciliation often central to platform</p> <p>Positionings include multi-ethnic and cross-ethnic</p> <p>Pro-quotas (internally and externally)</p> <p>Less likely to oppose consociational power-sharing</p>
		<i>Integrationist</i>	Appeals to voters solely on an individual basis with little or no reference to ethnic	<p>One-community approach</p> <p>Seeks to move beyond ethno-national division in society and politics</p>

			group identity	<p>Views identity as fluid, multiple and overlapping</p> <p>Advances integrationist policies</p> <p>Campaigns on alternative issues</p> <p>Places emphasis on individual human rights and equality</p> <p>Positionings include non-ethnic and post-ethnic</p> <p>Anti-quotas (internally and externally)</p> <p>More likely to oppose consociational power-sharing</p>
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**Appendix B.1**  
**Focus Group Consent Form**



**Participant's Consent for Participation in Focus Group**

I AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

I have read and understood the Participant Information Leaflet and have been given a chance to discuss this with the researcher.

I understand that this focus group discussion will be recorded.

I understand that my anonymity and confidentiality will be respected in this research.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this study and to ask questions.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this focus group.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B.2**

**Focus Group Participant Questionnaire**



**Focus Group Participant Questionnaire**

*Please be assured that the information provided in this questionnaire will be treated as confidential in this research*

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Age**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation/Group (if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role (if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of time involved in organisation (if applicable)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(Optional) How would you describe your national identity/identities?**

*Please do not feel obliged to complete this section but your response would be very helpful for the purposes of this research*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B.3

### Focus Group Participant Information Leaflet (BiH Sample)



#### Focus Group Participant Information Leaflet

**Researcher:** Cera Murtagh, PhD Candidate, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh.

This focus group is being carried out as part of a PhD research project at the University of Edinburgh. This research focuses on cross-community (cross-ethnic) political parties in post-conflict societies as well as cross-community grassroots organisations. The term ‘cross-community’ is used here to refer to a party or group that attempts to appeal to, and represent, different communities within such a society. This study looks at how these groups operate in post-conflict societies and the challenges and opportunities that they encounter in that environment.

Through this focus group the researcher would like to discuss this topic with participants, as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The focus group will take the form of a discussion facilitated by the researcher, where participants will be invited to discuss a variety of topics, including: their perceptions of cross-community political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their perceptions of the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The exercise will take approximately one hour.

This research will be carried out in a sensitive and discrete manner and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be fully respected.

The data gathered from this focus group will contribute to the findings of this thesis. The researcher is happy to share these findings with participants on request when the project is completed.

Thank you for your participation in this research. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

## Appendix C

### Data Collection Framework

<b>Method</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Participants/Items Selected</b>	<b>Selection Method</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Semi-structured elite interviews	Interest in elites' first-hand accounts and discourse  Lack of other available sources on topic	Civic parties  Ethno-national parties  Independent observers, experts and civil society representatives  Civic activists	Snowballing	76
Semi-structured focus groups	Exploration of voters' views of civic parties and politics	Natural groups (civil society organisations; community groups; student groups)	Network sampling	8
Document analysis	Examination of official party perspective	Election manifestos  Party publications  Speeches  Media interviews	Archival and online searches  Access to limited party archives and files	