



AIDDATA

A Research Lab at William & Mary

Civic Space Country Report

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Measuring
civic space risk, resilience, and
Russian influence

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Executive Summary

This report surfaces insights about the health of Bosnia and Herzegovina's civic space and vulnerability to malign foreign influence in the lead up to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Research included extensive original data collection to track Russian state-backed financing and in-kind assistance to civil society groups and regulators, media coverage targeting foreign publics, and indicators to assess domestic attitudes to civic participation and restrictions of civic space actors. Crucially, this report underscores that the Kremlin's influence operations were not limited to Ukraine alone and illustrates its use of civilian tools in Bosnia and Herzegovina to co-opt support and deter resistance to its regional ambitions.

The analysis was part of a broader three-year initiative by AidData—a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute—to produce quantifiable indicators to monitor civic space resilience in the face of Kremlin influence operations over time (from 2010 to 2021) and across 17 countries and 7 occupied or autonomous territories in Eastern Europe and Eurasia (E&E). Below we summarize the top-line findings from our indicators on the domestic enabling environment for civic space in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as channels of Russian malign influence operations:

- **Restrictions of Civic Actors:** Bosnian civic space actors were the targets of 91 restrictions, almost exclusively harassment or violence (98 percent), between January 2015 and March 2021. Nearly half of all recorded restrictions took place in 2016 and 2017. Seventy percent of the incidents of violence and harassment recorded in those two years were attacks against journalists and other media personnel. Journalists were the most frequently targeted and the Bosnian government (35 instances) was the primary, though not only initiator. There were 19 instances of restrictions involving the Republika Srpska.
- **Attitudes Towards Civic Participation:** Bosnians were increasingly willing to participate in many forms of political activity between 2013 and 2019, despite trailing their regional peers in their interest in politics,

participation in political discussions, and membership in voluntary organizations. Although Bosnians were pessimistic about institutions overall, they viewed NGOs as relatively less corrupt. A growing share of Bosnians became engaged in less political activities over the last decade, reaching a high point of over 60 percent of respondents donating to charity and helping strangers in 2021.

- **Russian-backed Civic Space Projects:** The Kremlin supported 3 civic space-relevant projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina between January 2015 to August 2021. These activities centered around promoting a separate identity for the Republika Srpska and ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs spearheaded cooperation and training activities for Republika of Srpska's Ministry of the Interior, whose mandate for counterterrorism, public security, and property protection provides a pretext for police units to constrain and repress civic space actions. The Gorchakov Fund supported a convening of the pro-Kremlin Balkan Dialogue conference in Sarajevo, attracting 60 participants from E&E countries to discuss the region's history and regional affairs.
- **Russian State-run Media:** Russian News Agency (TASS) and Sputnik News referenced Bosnian civic actors 57 times from January 2015 to March 2021. Political parties such as the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats and Istocna Alternativa were the most frequently mentioned domestic actors. Russian media coverage of named Bosnian domestic civic actors was primarily neutral in tone. The Kremlin reserved more negative coverage related to Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to NATO, as well as seeking to position the autonomous Republika Srpska as a proxy to voice dissent against the involvement of Western nations and the United States in the region.

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A Note on Vocabulary

The authors recognize the challenge of writing about contexts with ongoing hot and/or frozen conflicts. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consistently label groups of people and places for the sake of data collection and analysis. We acknowledge that terminology is political, but our use of terms should not be construed to mean support for one faction over another. For example, when we talk about the government of an occupied territory, we do so recognizing that there are de facto authorities in the territory who are not aligned with the government in the capital. Or, when we analyze the de facto authorities' use of legislation or the courts to restrict civic action, it is not to grant legitimacy to the laws or courts of separatists, but rather to glean meaningful insights about the ways in which institutions are co-opted or employed to constrain civic freedoms.

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1. Introduction

How strong or weak is the domestic enabling environment for civic space in Bosnia and Herzegovina? To what extent do we see Russia attempting to shape civic space attitudes and constraints in Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance its broader regional ambitions? Over the last three years, AidData—a research lab at William & Mary’s Global Research Institute—has collected and analyzed vast amounts of historical data on civic space and Russian influence across 17 countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia (E&E).¹ In this country report, we present top-line findings specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina from a novel dataset which monitors four barometers of civic space in the E&E region from 2010 to 2021 (see Table 1).²

For the purpose of this project, we define civic space as: the formal laws, informal norms, and societal attitudes which enable individuals and organizations to assemble peacefully, express their views, and take collective action without fear of retribution or restriction.³ Here we provide only a brief introduction to the indicators monitored in this and other country reports. However, a more extensive methodology document is available via aiddata.org which includes greater detail about how we conceptualized civic space and operationalized the collection of indicators by country and year.

Civic space is a dynamic rather than static concept. The ability of individuals and organizations to assemble, speak, and act is vulnerable to changes in the formal laws, informal norms, and broader societal attitudes that can facilitate an opening or closing of the practical space in which they have to maneuver. To assess the enabling environment for Bosnian civic space, we examined two indicators: restrictions of civic space actors (section 2.1) and citizen attitudes towards civic space (section 2.2). Because the health of civic space is not strictly

¹ The 17 countries include Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

² The specific time period varies by year, country, and indicator, based upon data availability.

³ This definition includes formal civil society organizations and a broader set of informal civic actors, such as political opposition, media, other community groups (e.g., religious groups, trade unions, rights-based groups), and individual activists or advocates. Given the difficulty to register and operate as official civil society organizations in many countries, this definition allows us to capture and report on a greater diversity of activity that better reflects the environment for civic space. We include all these actors in our indicators, disaggregating results when possible.

a function of domestic dynamics alone, we also examined two channels by which the Kremlin could exert external influence to dilute democratic norms or otherwise skew civic space throughout the E&E region. These channels are Russian state-backed financing and in-kind support to government regulators or pro-Kremlin civic space actors (section 3.1) and Russian state-run media mentions related to civic space actors or democracy (section 3.2).

Since restrictions can take various forms, we focus here on three common channels which can effectively deter or penalize civic participation: (i) harassment or violence initiated by state or non-state actors; (ii) the proposal or passage of restrictive legislation or executive branch policies; and (iii) state-backed legal cases brought against civic actors. Citizen attitudes towards political and apolitical forms of participation provide another important barometer of the practical room that people feel they have to engage in collective action related to common causes and interests or express views publicly. In this research, we monitored responses to citizen surveys related to: (i) interest in politics; (ii) past participation and future openness to political action (e.g., petitions, boycotts, strikes, protests); (iii) trust or confidence in public institutions; (iv) membership in voluntary organizations; and (v) past participation in less political forms of civic action (e.g., donating, volunteering, helping strangers).

In this project, we also tracked financing and in-kind support from Kremlin-affiliated agencies to: (i) build the capacity of those that regulate the activities of civic space actors (e.g., government entities at national or local levels, as well as in occupied or autonomous territories); and (ii) co-opt the activities of civil society actors within E&E countries in ways that seek to promote or legitimize Russian policies abroad. Since E&E countries are exposed to a high concentration of Russian state-run media, we analyzed how the Kremlin may use its coverage to influence public attitudes about civic space actors (formal organizations and informal groups), as well as public discourse pertaining to democratic norms or rivals in the eyes of citizens.

Although Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine February 2022 undeniably altered the civic space landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the broader E&E region for years to come, the historical information in this report is still useful in three respects. By taking the long view, this report sheds light on the Kremlin's

patient investment in hybrid tactics to foment unrest, co-opt narratives, demonize opponents, and cultivate sympathizers in target populations as a pretext or enabler for military action. Second, the comparative nature of these indicators lends itself to assessing similarities and differences in how the Kremlin operates across countries in the region. Third, by examining domestic and external factors in tandem, this report provides a holistic view of how to support resilient societies in the face of autocratizing forces at home and malign influence from abroad.

Table 1. Quantifying Civic Space Attitudes and Constraints Over Time

Civic Space Barometer	Supporting Indicators
Restrictions of civic space actors (January 2015–March 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of instances of harassment or violence (physical or verbal) initiated against civic space actors ● Number of instances of legislation and policies (newly proposed or passed) that include measures to further limit the ability of civic space actors to form, operate or speak freely and without retribution ● Number of instances of state-backed legal action brought against civic space actors in an effort to intimidate citizens from assembly, speech or activism
Citizen attitudes toward civic space (2010–2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of citizens reporting that they are interested in politics ● Percentage of citizens reporting that they have previously engaged in civic actions (e.g., petitions, boycotts, strikes, protests) ● Percentage of citizens reporting that they might be willing to engage in civic actions (e.g., petitions, boycotts, strikes, protests) in future versus those who say they would never do so ● Percentage of citizens reporting that they engaged in apolitical civic engagement (e.g., donating to charities, volunteering for organizations, helping strangers) ● Percentage of citizens who reported trust/confidence in their public institutions
Russian projectized support relevant to civic space (January 2015–August 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of projects directed by the Russian government to institutional development, governance, or civilian law enforcement in the target country ● Number of projects directed by the Russian government to support formal civil society organizations or informal civic groups within the target country

Russian state media mentions of civic space actors (January 2015–March 2021)

- Frequency of mentions of civic space actors operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Russian state-owned media
- Sentiment of mentions of civic space actors operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Russian state-owned media
- Frequency of mentions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the U.S., and the European Union, as well as the terms "democracy" and "West," in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Russian state-owned media
- Sentiment of mentions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the U.S., and the European Union, as well as the terms "democracy" and "West," in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Russian state-owned media

Notes: Table of indicators collected by AidData to assess the health of Bosnia and Herzegovina's domestic civic space and vulnerability to Kremlin influence. Indicators are categorized by barometer (i.e., dimension of interest) and specify the time period covered by the data in the subsequent analysis.

2. Domestic Risk and Resilience: Restrictions and Attitudes Towards Civic Space in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A healthy civic space is one in which individuals and groups can assemble peacefully, express views and opinions, and take collective action without fear of retribution or restriction. Laws, rules, and policies are critical to this space, in terms of rights on the books (de jure) and how these rights are safeguarded in practice (de facto). Informal norms and societal attitudes are also important, as countries with a deep cultural tradition that emphasizes civic participation can embolden civil society actors to operate even absent explicit legal protections. Finally, the ability of civil society actors to engage in activities without fear of retribution (e.g., loss of personal freedom, organizational position, and public status) or restriction (e.g., constraints on their ability to organize, resource, and operate) is critical to the practical room they have to conduct their activities. If fear of retribution and the likelihood of restriction are high, this has a chilling effect on the motivation of citizens to form and participate in civic groups.

In this section, we assess the health of civic space in Bosnia and Herzegovina over time in two respects: the volume and nature of restrictions against civic space actors (section 2.1) and the degree to which Bosnians engage in a range of political and apolitical forms of civic life (section 2.2).

2.1 Restrictions of Civic Space Actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Targets, Initiators, and Trends Over Time

Bosnian civic space actors experienced 91 known restrictions between January 2015 and March 2021 (see Table 2). These restrictions were weighted toward instances of harassment or violence (98 percent). There were no instances of state-backed legal cases (0 percent) and few cases of newly proposed or implemented restrictive legislation (2 percent); however, these instances can have a multiplier effect in creating a legal mandate for a government to pursue other forms of restriction. These imperfect estimates are based upon publicly

available information either reported by the targets of restrictions, documented by a third-party actor, or covered in the news (see Section 5).⁴

Table 2. Recorded Restrictions of Bosnian Civic Space Actors

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021-Q1	Total
Harassment/Violence excluding Republika Srpska	7	20	17	9	5	7	2	67
Harassment/Violence in Republika Srpska ⁵	6	3	3	6	2	2	0	22
Restrictive Legislation	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
State-backed Legal Cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	13	23	22	15	8	9	2	91

Notes: Table of the number of restrictions initiated against civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, disaggregated by type (i.e., harassment/violence, restrictive legislation or state-backed legal cases) and year. We also include a row to capture civic space restrictions initiated against civic space actors in the autonomous region of Republika Srpska. All instances of restriction (including restrictive legislation and legal cases) in the occupied territory are coded as "harassment/violence." Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

Instances of restrictions of Bosnian civic space actors were unevenly distributed across this time period (Figure 1). The highest concentration of restrictions of Bosnian civic space actors in a single year was in 2016 (25 percent), followed by 2017 (24 percent). Seventy percent of the incidents of violence and harassment recorded in those two years were attacks against journalists and other media personnel. Although there were large protests in both 2016 and 2017, we did not observe reports of mass detentions of protestors or state-backed legal cases against political opposition as seen in some other countries in the region. It is possible that restrictions are underreported in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as media frequently comes under attack (Figure 2).

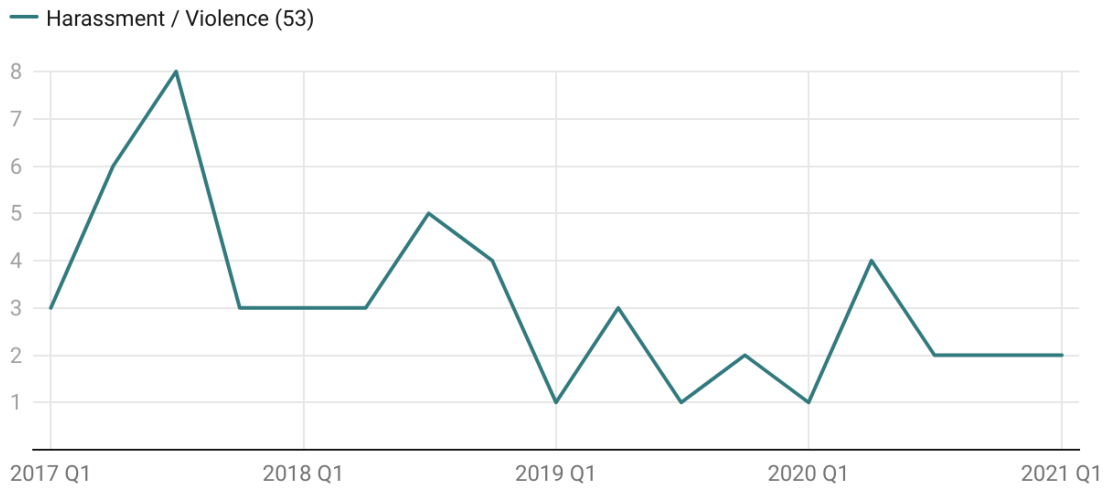
⁴ Much like with other cases of abuse, assault, and violence against individuals, where victims may fear retribution or embarrassment, we anticipate that this number may understate the true extent of restrictions.

⁵ AidData's profile on Republika Srpska offers a more in-depth analysis of civic space in the autonomous region.

Figure 1. Restrictions of Civic Space Actors in Bosnia & Herzegovina

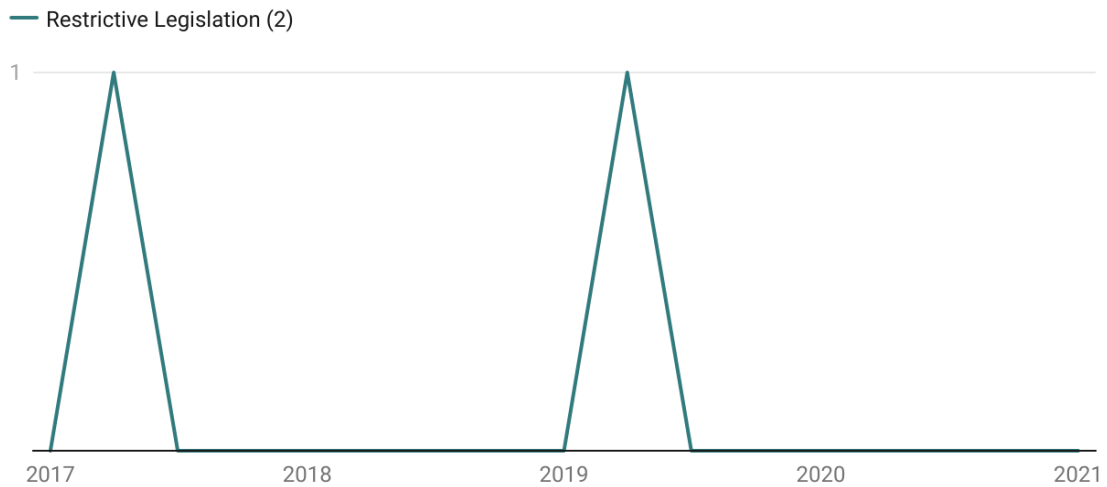
Number of Instances Recorded

Harassment/Violence



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Restrictive Legislation



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Key Events Relevant to Civic Space in Bosnia & Herzegovina

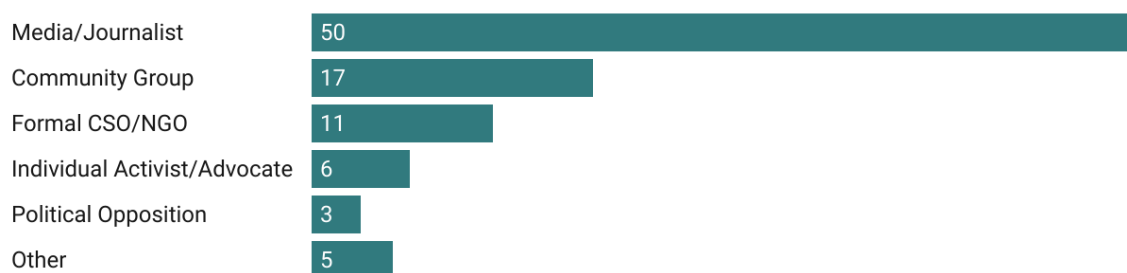
February 2015	Bosnia's parliament approves Denis Zvizdic as Prime Minister after he promised to unblock the country's stalled bid to join the EU.
July 2015	Marches and events commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre of Bosnian Muslims. Demonstrators throw rocks at Serbian PM Vucic.

November 2015	Serbian Prime Minister Vucic announces that the country will be donating \$5.4 million to the Bosnian town of Srebrenica
March 2016	UN Tribunal finds Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzic guilty of war crimes and sentences him to 40 years in prison. Vojislav Seselj is acquitted of war crimes.
May 2016	Tens of thousands of people rally in separate demonstrations for and against the regional Bosnian-Serb government in the city of Banja Luka.
September 2016	The Republika Srpska votes to affirm Jan 9 as a pro-Serbian holiday to commemorate their 1992 Declaration of independence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, violating the constitutional court's rulings.
June 2017	Retrial begins for Serbian secret police chiefs Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic, charged with crimes against humanity, at the Hague
October 2017	Thousands of pensioners from across Bosnia's Bosniak-Croat Federation, most living in poverty, protest in Sarajevo for better pensions and health care.
March 2018	The body of David Dragicevic was found after he went missing. Widespread protests start after the police rule the death an accident, but the public alleges a police cover up.
September 2018	The parliament approves long-delayed changes to the criminal code, bolstering the rule of law. The amendments are expected to hasten Bosnia's bid for EU membership.
October 2018	Serb nationalist Milorad Dodik, who opposes Bosnia as a state, is elected to the tripartite presidency. Sefik Dzaferovic and Zeljko Komsic won the other two seats.
March 2019	The UN Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia extends Radovan Karadzic's sentence to life in prison.
May 2019	Hundreds protest outside the country's top judicial body after a video emerged of its head, Milan Tegeltija, taking bribes through a middleman, himself a police officer.
October 2019	Bosnia's two rival autonomous regions adopt joint socio-economic reforms in a rare display of unity, in line with EU recommendations.
March 2020	Bosnia's autonomous Bosniak-Croat Federation declared a state of disaster, which will enable it to introduce emergency measures to halt the spread of the coronavirus.
November 2020	Nationwide municipal elections are held amid a surge in COVID-19 infections and deaths. Opposition candidates displace long-entrenched nationalists in Bosnia's biggest cities.

Notes: The figure visualizes instances of civic space restrictions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (including Republika Srpska), categorized as: harassment/violence, restrictive legislation, or state-backed legal cases. Instances are disaggregated by quarter and accompanied by a timeline of events in the political and civic space of Bosnia and Herzegovina from January 2015 through March 2021. Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

Figure 2. Harassment or Violence by Targeted Group in Bosnia

Number of Instances Recorded, January 2015–March 2021



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Notes: This figure shows the number of instances of harassment/violence initiated against civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, disaggregated by the group targeted (i.e., political opposition, individual activist/advocate, media/journalist, other community group, formal CSO/NGO or other). We have categorized all instances of restriction in Republika Srpska (including restrictive legislation and legal cases) as “harassment/violence.” Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

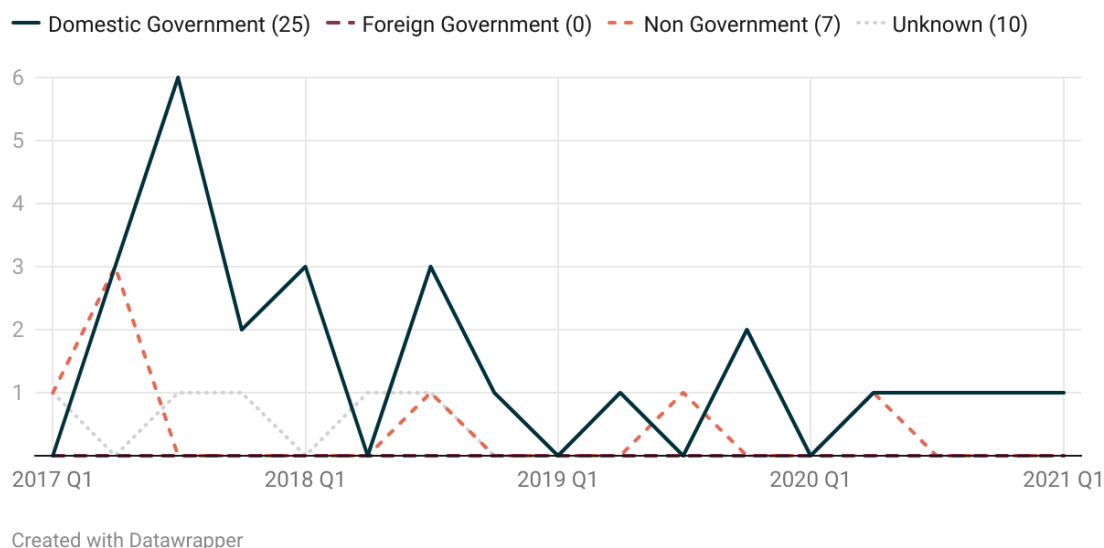
The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the most prolific initiator of restrictions of civic space actors (35 recorded mentions), frequently initiated by the police, but including politicians and bureaucrats who engaged in verbal attacks and threats (Figure 3). Domestic non-governmental actors were identified as initiators in 9 restrictions and there were many incidents involving unidentified assailants (26 mentions). By virtue of the way that the indicator was defined, the initiators of state-backed legal cases are either explicitly government agencies and government officials or clearly associated with these actors (e.g., the spouse or immediate family member of a sitting official).

The category “De Facto Authorities – Occupied Territory”⁶ identifies 19 instances of restriction initiated by local authorities in the autonomous region of Republika Srpska, as opposed to the Sarajevo-based Bosnian government. There were no instances of restriction where we identified a foreign government’s involvement.

⁶ Although Republika Srpska is not “occupied territory” like some other regions we have analyzed (the Donbas and Transnistria, for example), we retain this category for consistency in the dataset.

Figure 3. Restriction of Civic Space Actors in Bosnia by Initiator

Number of Instances Recorded



Notes: The figure visualizes the number of recorded instances of restrictions of civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, categorized by the initiator. For standardization purposes, incidents initiated by Sarajevo-based authorities were captured under “domestic government,” while those initiated by authorities of the autonomous region of Republika Srpska are included with the “de facto authorities–occupied territory” category. Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

Figure 4 breaks down the targets of restrictions by political ideology or affiliation in the following categories: pro-democracy, pro-Western, and anti-Kremlin.⁷ Pro-democracy organizations and activists were mentioned 3 times as targets of restriction during this period.⁸ Pro-Western organizations and activists were mentioned 6 times as targets of restrictions.⁹ There were 3 instances where we

⁷ These tags are deliberately defined narrowly such that they likely understate, rather than overstate, selective targeting of individuals or organizations by virtue of their ideology. Exclusion of an individual or organization from these classifications should not be taken to mean that they hold views that are counter to these positions (i.e., anti-democracy, anti-Western, pro-Kremlin).

⁸ A target organization or individual was only tagged as pro-democratic if they were a member of the political opposition (i.e., thus actively promoting electoral competition) and/or explicitly involved in advancing electoral democracy, narrowly defined.

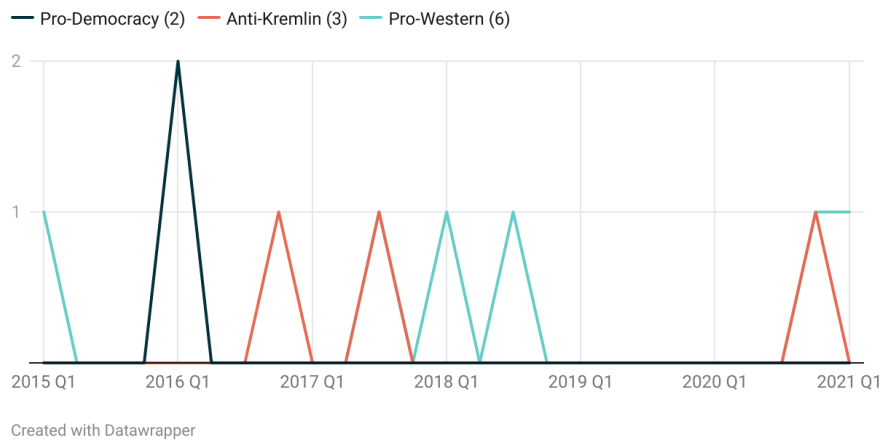
⁹ A tag of pro-Western was applied only when there was a clear and publicly identifiable linkage with the West by virtue of funding or political views that supported EU integration, for example.

identified the target organizations or individuals to be explicitly anti-Kremlin in their public views.¹⁰

It should be noted that this classification does not imply that these groups were targeted because of their political ideology or affiliation, merely that they met certain predefined characteristics. In fact, these tags were deliberately defined narrowly such that they focus on only a limited set of attributes about the organizations and individuals in question.

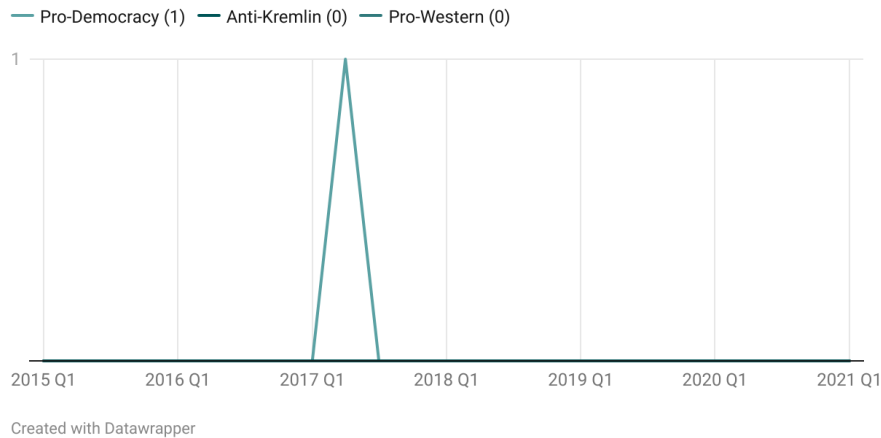
Figure 4. Restrictions of Civic Space Actors in Bosnia by Political or Ideological Affiliation

Number of Instances Recorded
Harassment / Violence



¹⁰ The anti-Kremlin tag is only applied in instances where there is a clear connection to opposing actions of the Russian government writ large or involving an organization that explicitly positioned itself as anti-Kremlin in ideology.

Restrictive Legislation



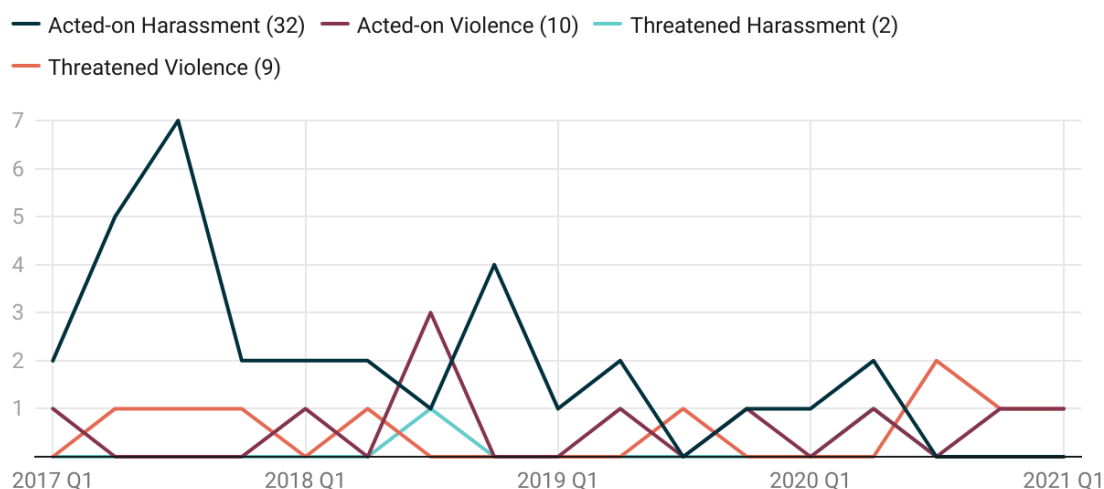
Notes: This figure visualizes the targets of recorded restrictions of any type initiated against civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Republika Srpska, between January 2015 and March 2021. The targets were manually tagged by AidData staff to identify groups or individuals known to be “pro-democracy,” “pro-Western,” or “anti-Kremlin.” Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

2.1.1 Nature of Restrictions of Civic Space Actors

Instances of harassment (3 threatened, 59 acted up on) towards civic space actors were more common than episodes of outright physical harm (13 threatened, 15 acted upon) during the period. The vast majority of these restrictions (82 percent) were acted on, rather than merely threatened. However, since this data is collected on the basis of reported incidents, this likely understates threats which are less visible (see Figure 5). Of the 90 instances of harassment and violence, acted-on harassment accounted for the largest percentage (65 percent).

Figure 5. Threatened versus Acted-on Harassment or Violence Against Civic Space Actors in Bosnia

Number of Instances Recorded



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This figure visualizes the instances of harassment/violence against civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina (and Republika Srpska) categorized by type of harassment or violence and year. Sources: CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

Recorded instances of restrictive legislation (2) in Bosnia and Herzegovina are important to capture as they give government actors a mandate to constrain civic space with long-term cascading effects. This indicator is limited to a subset of parliamentary laws, chief executive decrees or other formal executive branch policies and rules that may have a deleterious effect on civic space actors, either subgroups or in general. Both proposed and passed restrictions qualify for inclusion, but we focus exclusively on new and negative developments in laws or rules affecting civic space actors. We exclude discussion of pre-existing laws and rules or those that constitute an improvement for civic space.

- In June 2017, the parliamentary assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina drafted amendments to the Law on Administration that would enable authorities to carry out inspections and closely monitor CSOs in the country.

- In June 2019, the Prosecutor’s Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced its intention to investigate people who questioned the work of the judiciary, claiming that this was essential to protect the judiciary from interference and destabilization. However, the policy was met with intense criticism from civil society and viewed as a threat to prosecute critics of the judiciary.

There were no recorded instances of state-backed legal cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina between January 2015 and March 2021. We identified only one recorded instance of a state-backed legal case against a civic space actor in Republika Srpska¹¹. In January 2019, Aleksandar Gluovic, an activist from the "Justice for David" movement, received a court verdict sentencing him to 20 days in prison and a fine of 250 KM (USD 150) for participating in protests. This solitary case may indicate either that Bosnia and Herzegovina relies less on its courts to restrict actors in the civic space, as compared to some other countries in the region, or that there is a gap in the reporting of these instances.

2.2 Attitudes Toward Civic Space in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnians were increasingly willing to participate in many forms of political activity across three surveys conducted between 2013 and 2019, despite trailing their regional peers in their reported interest in politics, participation in political discussions with friends or on social media, and low levels of membership in voluntary organizations. Limited confidence in institutions and the widespread belief that the government is corrupt likely still has a chilling effect on political participation. However, Bosnians had relatively positive perceptions of NGOs as less corrupt than other institutions. Meanwhile, a growing share of Bosnians became engaged in less political activities over the last decade, reaching a high point of over 60 percent of respondents donating to charity and helping strangers in 2021. In this section, we take a closer look at Bosnian citizens’ interest in politics and participation in political action. We also examine how Bosnians’ involvement in less political forms of civic engagement—donating to charities, volunteering for organizations, helping strangers—has evolved over time.

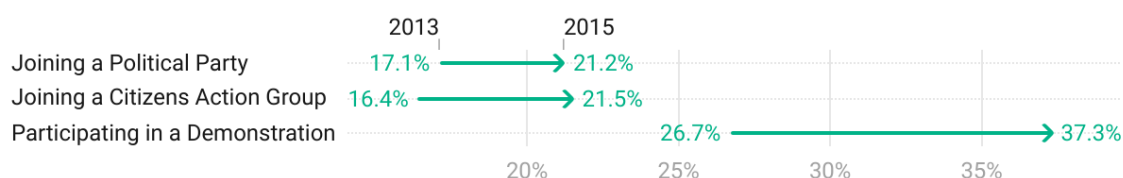
¹¹ Refer to the AidData profile on Republika Srpska for more details

2.2.1 Interest in Politics and Willingness to Act as Barometers of Bosnian Civic Space

In 2013, a minority of Bosnians were willing to participate in demonstrations (27 percent) and even fewer would consider joining a citizens' action group (16 percent) or political party (17 percent), according to a Prism Research survey. Attitudes towards political participation improved somewhat in 2015 (Figure 6), with modest increases in the percentage of Bosnians who said they were willing to join a political party (+4 percentage points), join a citizens' action group (+5 percentage points) or participate in demonstrations (+11 percentage points).¹²

Figure 6. Political Action: Bosnian Citizens' Future Willingness to Participate, 2013 versus 2015

Percentage of Respondents



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Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents reported future willingness to participate in each of three types of political action—joining political parties, joining citizens action groups, and participating in demonstrations. Sources: Prism Research for UN RCO reports 2013 and 2015.

Although sixty-eight percent of respondents to the World Values Survey (WVS)¹³ conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019 were reportedly disinterested in politics (Figure 7), Bosnians' willingness to participate in civic activities substantially increased in comparison to the earlier 2013 and 2015 Prism studies. Three-quarters of Bosnian respondents to the WVS said they had already taken part in petitions or would be willing to do so in future, while over half said the

¹² The 2013 and 2015 survey results are from two opinion polls conducted by Prism Research for the UN RCO in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹³ Note that the WVS wave here and throughout the profile refers to the Joint European Values Study and World Values Survey Wave 2017–2021 (EVS/WVS Wave 2017–2021) which is the most recent wave of WVS data. For more information, see Section 5.

same regarding boycotts, and/or demonstrations (Figure 8).¹⁴ These results could imply one of three things: (i) a growing openness in Bosnia to civic participation in general; (ii) that Bosnians view certain types of political activities (i.e., the petitions, boycotts, and demonstrations in the 2019 survey) as more attractive than others (i.e., joining political parties or citizens' action groups, the options posed in the 2013 and 2015 surveys); or (iii) that the nature of the questions and samples were sufficiently different to make comparison difficult.

Comparatively, Bosnians in 2019 reported a slightly lower level of interest in politics than their peers in the E&E region¹⁵ (-4 percentage points) but were more likely to say they had engaged in political activities such as boycotts, demonstrations, petitions, or strikes by 2 to 14 percentage points (Figure 9). However, Bosnians were reportedly less actively involved than their Balkan peers in public discussions, protests, social media discussions, and political discussions with friends, according to the 2019 Balkan Barometer (Figure 10).¹⁶ The same survey also identified that Bosnians were more likely to have not discussed political issues at all in any forum (+3 percentage points).

Figure 7. Interest in Politics: Bosnian Citizens versus Regional Peers, 2019



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents that were interested or not interested in politics in 2019, as compared to the regional average. Sources: The Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

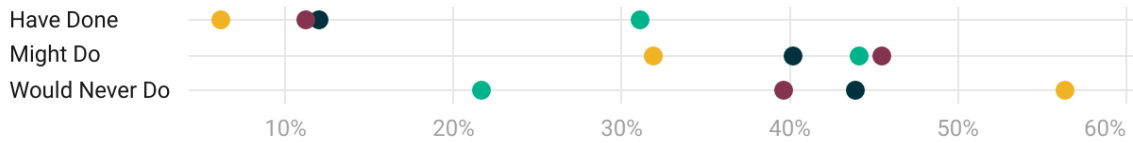
¹⁴ It should be noted that the questions and the choice of civic activities offered to respondents is somewhat different than the two Prism surveys in 2013 and 2015, as compared to the WVS 2019. That said, the 2019 results appear to be consistent with the earlier upward trend (+10 percentage points) in reported interest in civic participation between the 2013 and 2015 surveys.

¹⁵ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine.

¹⁶ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia.

Figure 8. Political Action: Bosnian Citizens' Willingness to Participate, 2019

Percentage of Respondents

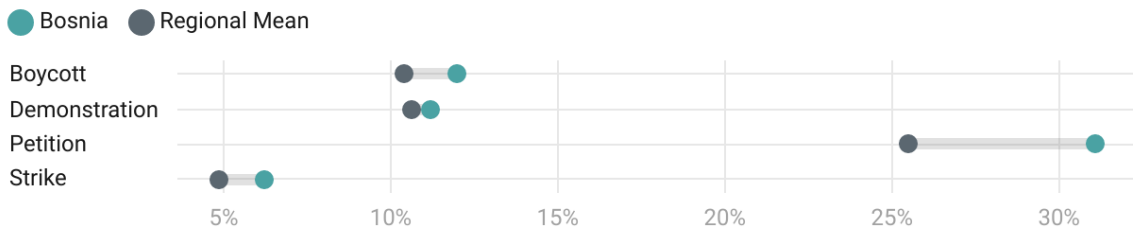


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Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents that reported past participation in four types of political action—petition, boycott, demonstration, and strike—and future willingness to do so. Sources: Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

Figure 9. Political Action: Participation by Bosnian Citizens versus Regional Peers, 2019

Percentage of Respondents Reporting "Have Done"

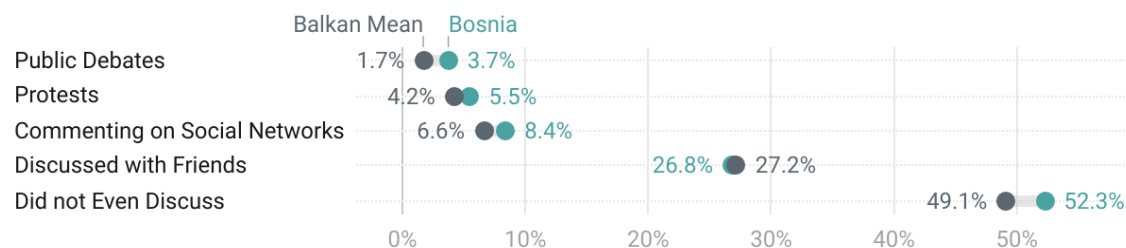


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Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents who reported past participation in each of four types of political action as compared to the regional average in 2019. Sources: The Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

Figure 10. Political Action: Participation by Bosnian Citizens versus Balkan Peers, 2019

Percentage of Respondents



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents that reported past participation in each of five types of political action as compared to the Balkan average in 2019. Sources: Balkan Barometer 2019.

Bosnian respondents in 2019 were less likely than their peers across the E&E region to be members of voluntary organizations (Table 3), except for religious organizations and sport or recreational organizations (Figure 11). This included a low rate of membership in political parties (5 percent). Overall, Bosnian confidence in political parties (12 percent) and the central government (18 percent) was also markedly low (Table 4). Over 80 percent of Bosnian respondents viewed their parliament, judiciary, and civil servants as corrupt.

There is good reason to believe that distrust in the government and perceived institutional corruption has had a chilling effect on civic participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When asked why they were not actively participating in government decision-making, 20 percent of Bosnian survey respondents said they did not believe that they could influence government decisions and a further 16 percent said they did not trust the government (Figure 12). Both responses exceeded the Balkan regional averages by +5 percentage points.¹⁷ Responses indicating disengagement, a belief that the voting is enough, and a fear of retribution, on the other hand, were either on par with regional peers or slightly lower than the average.

¹⁷ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia.

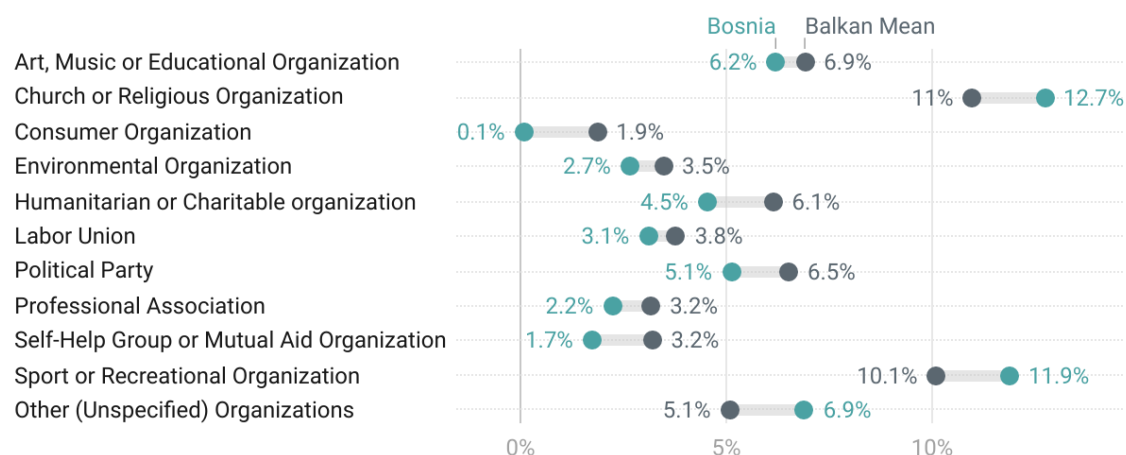
Taken together, Bosnians' low confidence in government and low interest in politics on the one hand, combined with a high willingness to participate in civic activities and high rates of membership in religious organizations on the other, underscore the importance of apolitical (or at least less political) outlets of civic engagement in Bosnia that are seen as relatively less corrupt. NGOs may provide an attractive entry point for greater civic participation in the future, as Bosnian survey respondents rated this group as the second least corrupt after religious institutions. This implies that Bosnian NGOs may be able to translate these perceptions of greater public trustworthiness to distinguish themselves from the perceived corruption of other overtly political institutions in the country.

Table 3. Bosnian Citizens' Membership in Voluntary Organizations by Type versus Regional Peers, 2019.

Voluntary Organization	Bosnian Membership, 2019	Regional Mean Membership, 2019	Percentage Point Difference
Church or religious organization	13%	11%	+1
Sport or recreational organization	12%	10%	+2
Art, music or educational organization	6%	9%	-2
Labor union	3%	11%	-8
Political party	5%	8%	-3
Environmental organization	3%	4%	-2
Professional association	2%	5%	-3
Humanitarian or charitable organization	5%	6%	-2
Consumer organization	0%	3%	-3
Self-help group, mutual aid group	2%	4%	-2

Notes: This table shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents that reported membership in various categories of voluntary organizations in 2019 versus regional peers. Rounded to nearest percent. Sources: Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

Figure 11. Voluntary Organization Membership: Bosnian Citizens versus Regional Peers, 2019



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This graph highlights membership in a selection of key organization types for Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Other community group" is the mean of responses for the following responses: "Art, music or educational organization," "Labor Union," "Environmental organization," "Professional association," "Humanitarian or charitable organization," "Consumer organization," "Self-help group, mutual aid group," "Other organization." Sources: Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

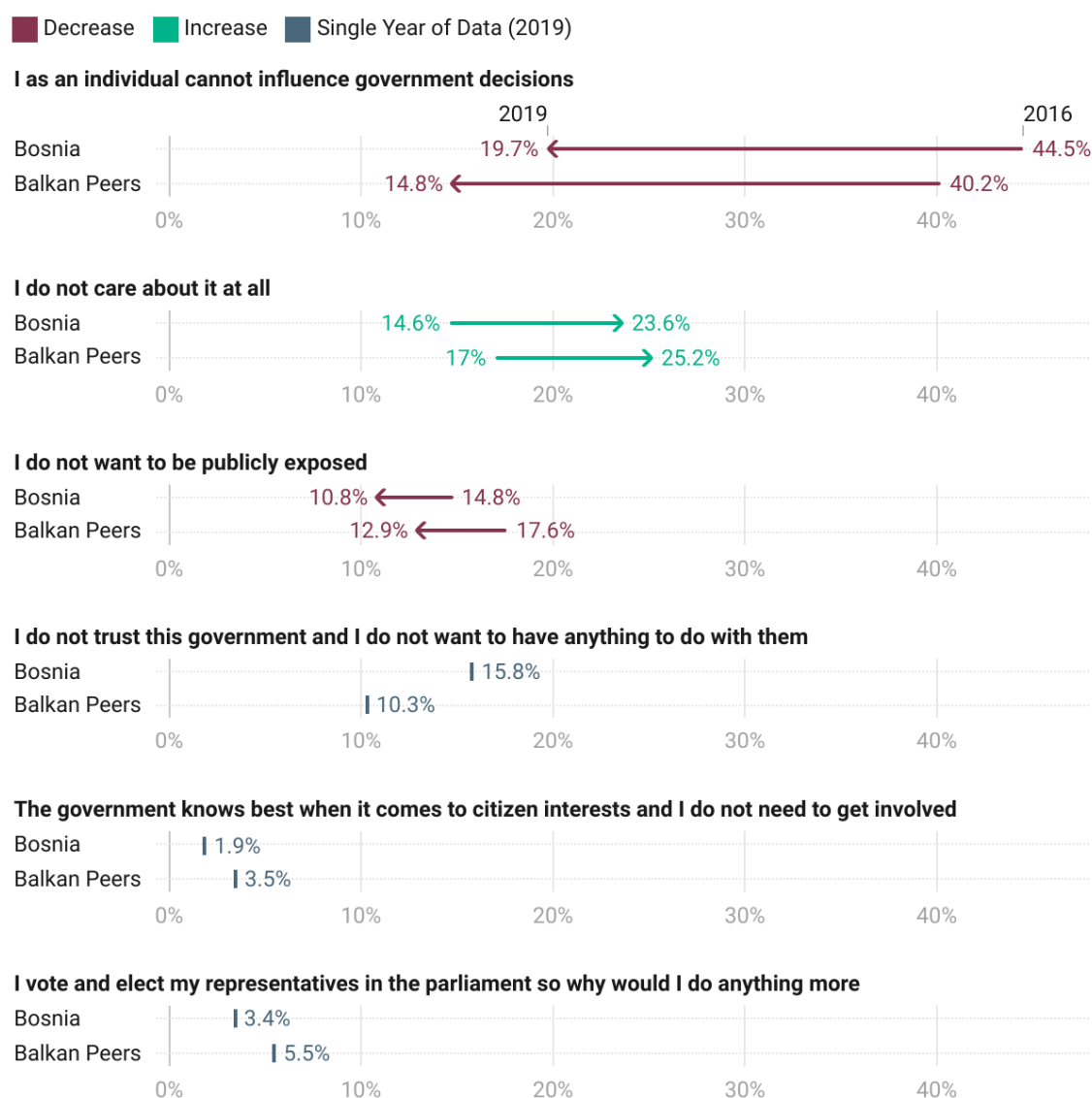
Table 4. Bosnian Confidence in Key Institutions versus Regional Peers, 2019.

Institution	Bosnian Confidence, 2019	Regional Mean Confidence, 2019	Percentage Point Difference
Churches	56%	68%	-12
Armed Forces	55%	71%	-16
Press	17%	34%	-17
Labor Unions	25%	31%	-5
Police	57%	57%	0
Courts	28%	41%	-13
Government	18%	42%	-24

Political Parties	12%	26%	-13
Parliament	16%	36%	-19
Civil Service	32%	46%	-14
Environmental Organizations	39%	44%	-5

Notes: This table shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents that reported membership in various categories of voluntary organizations in 2019 versus regional peers. Rounded to nearest percent. Sources: Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey Wave 2017-2021.

Figure 12. Political Activity: Reason for Non-Involvement, Bosnia versus Balkan Peers, 2016 and 2019



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This figure shows the percentage of Bosnian respondents' reported reasons for not engaging in political action as compared to the Balkan region average in 2019. Sources: Balkan Barometer 2019.

2.2.2 Apolitical Participation

The Gallup World Poll's (GWP) Civic Engagement Index affords an additional perspective on Bosnian citizens' attitudes towards less political forms of participation between 2010 and 2021. This index measures the proportion of citizens that reported giving money to charity, volunteering at organizations, and helping a stranger on a scale of 0 to 100.¹⁸ Overall, Bosnia and Herzegovina's civic engagement index scores improved throughout the period, though there was high volatility from 2014 to 2017. Bosnians showed a clear preference for donating to charities and helping strangers, 38 and 40 percent respectively on average, as compared to volunteering (6 percent) over the twelve-year period.¹⁹

Bosnia and Herzegovina's performance on the Civic Engagement Index appears to be positively correlated with the strength of the country's economy (using GDP as a proxy).²⁰ Presumably, citizens may have felt more secure in aiding their peers as the economy improved over the decade. Yet, economic performance is not entirely deterministic, as the country's civic engagement score improved in 2020 despite a dip in GDP, in line with an uptick in solidarity and altruism across the region in response to COVID-19 (see below). Beyond economic factors, it is likely that political and social factors also played a role in Bosnians' decision to engage with their fellow citizens.

Towards the start of the period (2010-2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina's civic engagement score trailed the regional average—22 to 27 points, respectively (Figure 12). During this six-year period, 30 percent of Bosnian respondents reportedly gave money to charity, 5 percent volunteered at an organization, and

¹⁸ The GWP Civic Engagement Index is calculated at an individual level, with 33% given for each of three civic-related activities (Have you " Donated money to charity? Volunteered your time to an organization in the past month? Helped a stranger or someone you didn't know in the past month?) that received a "yes" answer. The country score is then determined by calculating the weighted average of these individual Civic Engagement Index scores.

¹⁹ In a departure from most other E&E countries, where one or two of these factors drive overall performance on the index, in Bosnia all three factors appear to move in concert.

²⁰ The Civic Engagement Index correlated with GDP (Constant convertible mark) at 0.800**, p=0.006.

31 percent reported helping a stranger.²¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina's civic engagement score saw a dramatic drop in 2015 (-7 index points), as the share of citizens who donated to charity fell from 53 percent the previous year to 25 percent. It could be that the wave of demonstrations and riots in 2014 reduced Bosnians' appetite to engage in less political activities, though this setback appeared to be temporary as the country's civic engagement score rebounded by 2016 (+13 percentage points).²² The specific drivers of this resurgence are unclear. Elsewhere in the Balkans, elections have coincided with heightened civic engagement,²³ but the GWP survey in 2016 was conducted well in advance of the country's September municipal elections and Republika Srpska's controversial referendum creating a national holiday.²⁴

Later in the period, Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2020 index score improved by 5 points compared to the previous year in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 13): 50 percent of Bosnians helped a stranger and nearly 45 percent donated to charity that year. Bosnians also increased their level of volunteerism to 9 percent (up from 3 percent in 2019). This growth in civic engagement continued in 2021 (+10 index points), surpassing the regional mean—44 points to 30 points—with over 60 percent of Bosnians reporting they had donated to charity and helped strangers that year. This upward trend is consistent with improving civic engagement around the world as citizens rallied in response to COVID-19, even in the face of lockdowns and limitations on public gathering. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen as to whether this initial improvement will be sustained in future.

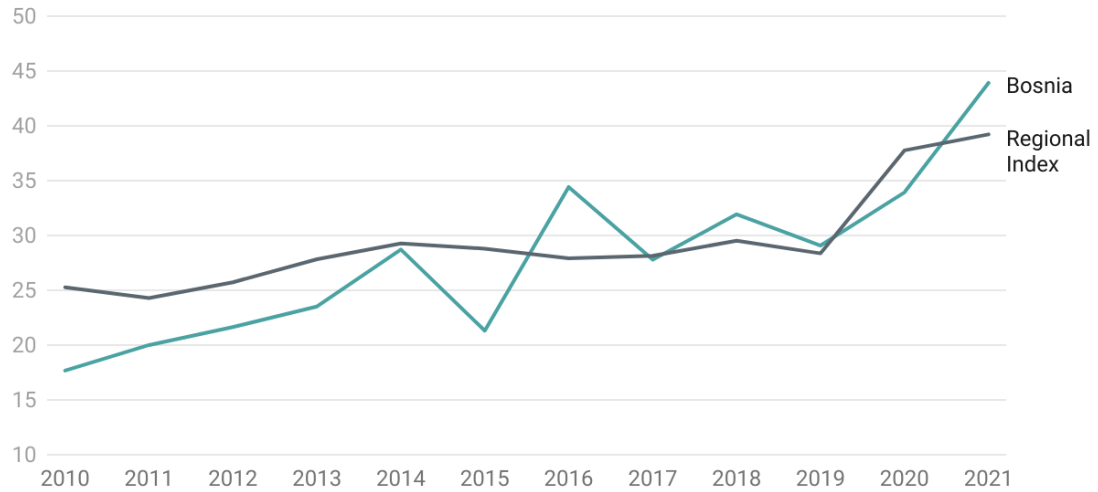
²¹ During that period, Bosnia and Herzegovina trailed the regional mean for volunteering by an average of 15 percentage points and trailed the regional mean for helping strangers by an average of 9 percentage points. However, Bosnians exceeded the E&E regional mean for donating to charity by 9 percentage points.

²² Donating to charity improved by 19 percentage points, volunteering by 2 percentage points, and helping strangers improved by 18 percentage points.

²³ Following Serbia's March 2014 elections, the GWP recorded high rates of charity and an overall increase in Serbia's civic engagement in July and August.

²⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2017>

Figure 13. Civic Engagement Index: Bosnia versus Regional Peers



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This graph shows how scores for Bosnia and Herzegovina varied on the Gallup World Poll Index of Civic Participation between 2010 and 2021, as compared to the regional mean of E&E countries. Sources: Gallup World Poll, 2010-2021.

3. External Channels of Influence: Kremlin Civic Space Projects and Russian State-Run Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Foreign governments can wield civilian tools of influence such as money, in-kind support, and state-run media in various ways that disrupt societies far beyond their borders. They may work with the local authorities who design and enforce the prevailing rules of the game that determine the degree to which citizens can organize themselves, give voice to their concerns, and take collective action. Alternatively, they may appeal to popular opinion by promoting narratives that cultivate sympathizers, vilify opponents, or otherwise foment societal unrest. In this section, we analyze data on Kremlin financing and in-kind support to civic space actors or regulators in Bosnia and Herzegovina (section 3.1), as well as Russian state media mentions related to civic space, including specific actors and broader rhetoric about democratic norms and rivals (section 3.2).

3.1 Russian State-Backed Support to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Civic Space

The Kremlin supported 3 civic space-relevant projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period of January 2015 to August 2021. The Kremlin's relationship-building activities centered on promoting a separate identity for the Republika Srpska and ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two projects directly channeled support to local government institutions in the Republika Srpska (RS) to promote cooperation and joint training activities (Figure 14). Although somewhat distinct from the Kremlin's strategy elsewhere in the region to deepen relationships with Russian minorities via cultural promotion, it is consistent with Moscow's recurring interest in promoting distinct ethnic groups and exploiting socio-political fissures.²⁵

²⁵ For example, the Kremlin's support to Republika Srpska is not dissimilar to its revealed interest in channeling support to occupied territories such as Transnistria (Moldova), South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia), though the former is not traditionally thought of in the same way as the latter post-Soviet frozen conflicts. For more information, please see AidData's companion profiles on each of 7 occupied territories.

Figure 14. Russian Projects Supporting Bosnian Civic Space Actors by Type

Number of Projects Recorded, January 2015–August 2021

Year	CSO Support (1)	Institutional Development (2)
2015	0	1
2016	0	1
2017	0	0
2018	1	0
2019	0	0
2020	0	0
2021	0	0

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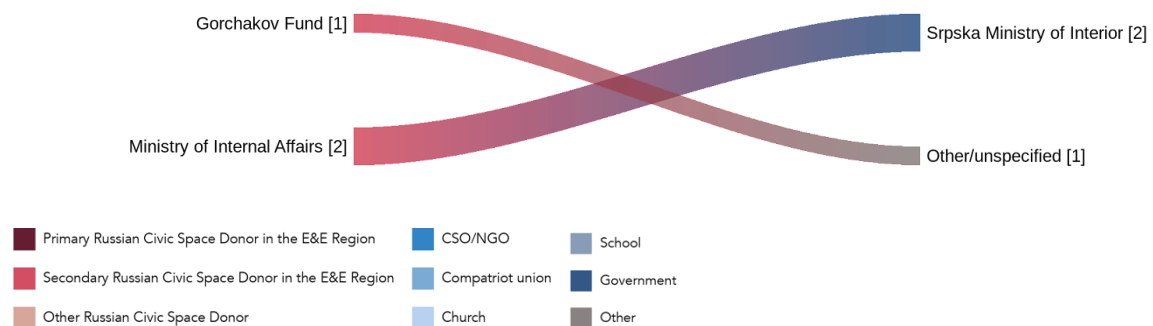
Notes: This figure shows the number of projects directed by the Russian government to either civic society actors or government regulators of this civic space between January 2015 and August 2021. There were no civic space relevant projects meeting our criteria identified after 2018. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

The Kremlin routed its engagement with Bosnian civic space through two channels: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Gorchakov Fund (Figure 15). While the primary remit for the Ministry of Internal Affairs is law enforcement within the Russian Federation, the Ministry also conducts external outreach with partner countries. The majority of these activities focus on memorandums of understanding (MoUs), information sharing agreements, and training (both sending Russian trainers to partner country offices or sending local law enforcement to train with Russian units). Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Main Directorate for Moscow spearheaded cooperation activities with the Republic of Srpska's Ministry of the Interior. Head of the Directorate Baranov Anatolievich signed an MoU with RS Minister of the Interior Dragan Lukac in October 2015. The Moscow directorate facilitated personnel exchange between the RS Ministry of the Interior and Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2016.

The Kremlin has a more limited footprint in Bosnia and Herzegovina than elsewhere in the E&E region. There are no branches of Rossotrudnichestvo in the country, and Russkiy Mir’s outreach is limited to supporting a single Russian language center at the University of East Sarajevo. The Gorchakov Fund, one of the Kremlin’s key funding instruments for NGOs/CSOs abroad, only supported one identified activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the time period—the April 2018 convening of the annual Balkan Dialogue conference. This 2018 pro-Russian conference on regional affairs appears to be an attempt by the Gorchakov Fund to build a new network of like-minded actors in Sarajevo, rather than provide support to specific civil society actors. The downstream results of this effort are unclear and subsequent conferences in 2019 and 2020 took place in Sofia and Belgrade, not in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 15. Kremlin-affiliated Support to Bosnian Civic Space

Number of Projects, 2015–2021



Notes: This figure shows which Kremlin-affiliated agencies (left-hand side) were involved in directing financial or in-kind support to which civil society actors or regulators (right-hand side) between January 2015 and August 2021. Lines are weighted to represent counts of projects such that thicker lines represent a larger volume of projects and thinner lines a smaller volume. The total weight of lines may exceed the total number of projects, due to many projects involving multiple donors and/or recipients. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

3.1.1 The Recipients of Russian State-Backed Support to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Civic Space

The Republika Srpska’s Ministry of the Interior was the main recipient of identified Kremlin support to institutional development (Figure 16). This Banja Luka-based body oversees police, counterterrorism, public security, and

property protection activities for the majority Serb political Entity. The ministry's mandate for public security and property protection provides the justification for police units to constrain and repress demonstrations or public political actions, potentially curtailing one component of civic space. In this respect, Kremlin support enables the RS police to constrain civic space through harassment and investigation of political opposition and community groups. These two tactics were both used by RS police throughout 2018 and 2019 to restrict the "Justice for David" protests in Banja Luka, whether by banning the group from gathering near certain buildings and dispersing protests, or by issuing warrants for the arrest of the protests' leader, Davor Dragicevic.

Notably, Russian support to the Republika Srpska Ministry of the Interior is not counterbalanced by similar overtures to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), as there have been no identified instances of Russian support to the FBiH Ministry of the Interior. The support to the RS Ministry of the Interior appears to align with the Kremlin's playbook of exploiting ethnic rifts to advance its interests. Beyond institutional development and civic space, Russian business actors also favor the Republika Srpska over the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in foreign investment and energy projects. The Alliance for Securing Democracy has linked this two-pronged approach (i.e., targeted relationship-building with both government and business counterparts) to a broader Kremlin strategy of promoting separatism in the Republika Srpska.²⁶

While not directly targeting Bosnian civil society actors, the 2018 Balkan Dialogue conference attracted 20 experts and 40 participants to Sarajevo from Russia and countries across the Balkans. Sponsored by the Gorchakov Fund, the conference was a notable departure from the Kremlin's modus operandi in that Bosnian organizations were relatively absent from the event planning and organization, as well as the roster of speakers. This is in stark contrast to the Gorchakov Fund's normal approach of integrating local partners through outright grant writing or logistical support. Interestingly, although the Gorchakov Fund featured academics from Russia, Greece, Turkey, and Serbia,²⁷ the only

²⁶ Salvo, D., and De Leon, S. (2018). (Rep.). German Marshall Fund of the United States. Retrieved April 20, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18769>

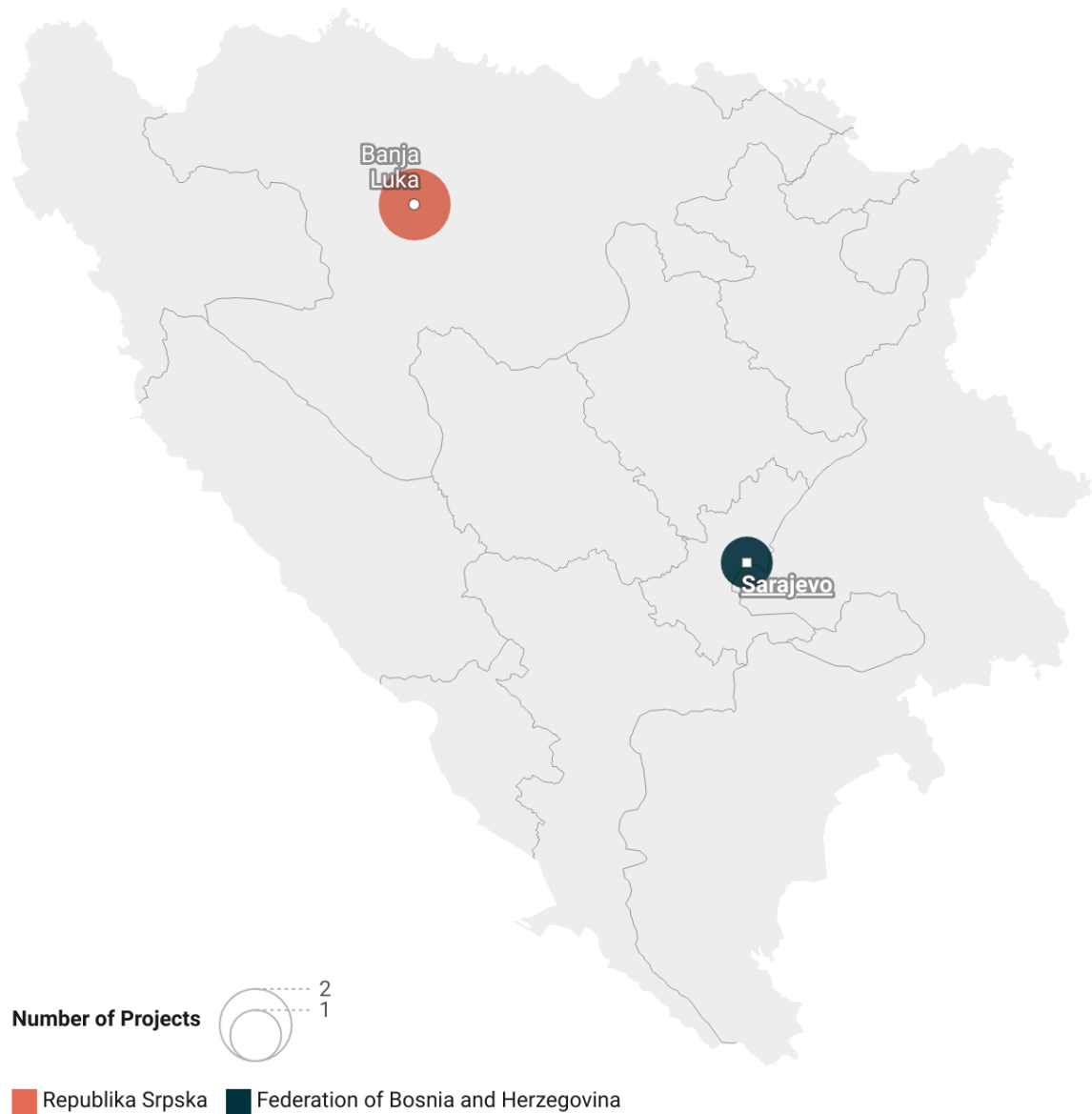
²⁷ Including former Serbian MP and current Sputnik columnist Dusan Prorokovic.

citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina that spoke at the 2018 Balkan Dialogue event was the former Ambassador to Russia, Ivan Barbalic.

The emphasis on Serbia extended to the attendees of the event, with the Gorchakov Fund specifying in its call for applicants that it would pay for “accommodation in double rooms, meals, as well as an organized transfer of all participants from Belgrade to Sarajevo.” This apparent prioritization of Serbian participants underscores the Kremlin’s desire to cultivate ties with ethnic Serbs (particularly Serbian citizens), and its dearth of rooted civic space partners within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 16. Locations of Russian Support to Bosnian Civic Space

Number of Projects, 2015–2021



Created with Datawrapper

Notes: This map visualizes the geographic distribution of Kremlin-backed support to civic space actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

3.1.2 Focus of Russian State-Backed Support to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Civic Space

As seen elsewhere in the E&E region, the primary mode of Russian support to organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina appears to not be direct transfers of

funding, but rather other modes of non-financial support, such as training, technical assistance, and other in-kind contributions to its partners. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the two principal modes of engagement from Russian actors were memorandums of understanding and a commitment to implement joint training for members of the RS Ministry of the Interior. In their October 2015 MoU, the RS Ministry of the Interior and the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for Moscow cited the need for closer cooperation and contact to counter transnational crimes and serious criminal offenses. This document set the groundwork for joint training, support to further staff specialization, and mobility of staff between the two units.

In April 2016, the RS Ministry of the Interior and the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs built upon the October 2015 memorandum by bringing Russian instructors to train members of the RS Ministry and arranging for members of the Special Police Unit (Specijalna Antiteroristička Jedinica - SAJ) to train in Russia. This elite unit of the RS police is responsible for counter-terrorism operations, detecting and neutralizing criminal groups, hostage situations, repressing rebellions in institutions for the implementation of criminal sanctions, and establishing public order and peace in high-risk situations.

The only instance of Russian support to civic space that was not directly focused on institutional development was the Gorchakov Fund's opening of the aforementioned Balkan Dialogue conference. This iteration of the annual conference promoted a pro-Russian view of Balkan regional politics, with panel topics that included "Balkan states – relations with Russia and the European Union," "Dayton Agreement—solution or the reason for today's problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina," and "Russia's role in peace solutions implementation." The thematic focus of pro-Russian lectures on history and regional affairs is consistent with the Kremlin's strategy to engage with civil society actors across the region.

3.2 Russian Media Mentions of Civic Space Actors

Two state-owned media outlets, the Russian News Agency (TASS) and Sputnik News, referenced Bosnian civic actors 57 times from January 2015 to March 2021. Approximately one-third of these mentions (18 instances) were of

domestic actors, while the remaining two-thirds (39 instances) focused on foreign and intergovernmental actors operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina's civic space. Russian state media covered a variety of civic actors, mentioning 26 organizations by name and 7 informal groups. To understand how Russian state media may seek to undermine democratic norms or rival powers in the eyes of Bosnian citizens, we also analyzed 51 mentions of five keywords in conjunction with Bosnia and Herzegovina: North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO, the United States, the European Union, democracy, and the West. In this section, we examine Russian state media coverage of domestic and external civic space actors, how this has evolved over time, and the portrayal of democratic institutions and Western powers to Bosnian audiences.

3.2.1 Russian State Media's Characterization of Domestic Bosnian Civic Space Actors

Fifty percent (9 instances) of Russian media mentions pertaining to domestic actors in Bosnian civic space referred to specific groups by name (Table 5). The 7 named domestic actors consist primarily of political parties (6 mentions). Other specific named groups include media organizations (2 mentions) and formal civil society organizations (1 mention). The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and Istocna Alternativa (Eastern Alternative), both political parties, were the two most frequently mentioned (2 mentions each) domestic organizations by Russian state-owned media. Every Russian state media mention of specific Bosnian civic space actors we identified was neutral in tone.

The other half (9 instances) of Russian media mentions pertaining to domestic actors in Bosnian civic space referred to more general actors or informal groups. These references included mentions of activists, protesters, local trade union representatives, and journalists. The vast majority (8 instances) of these mentions were neutral in tone. However, one instance referring to an "angry crowd of Muslims" attending a commemoration for the Srebrenica massacre was coded as "extremely negative." Russia has refused to recognize the 1995 Srebrenica massacre—an event where over 8,000 Muslims were killed by Bosnian Serbs—as a genocide, possibly because the Kremlin views Serbia as an important ally in the Balkans. This relative attentiveness to ethnic Serbs is consistent with the

example of the Kremlin’s approach to the 2018 Balkan Dialogue conference in Sarajevo.

Table 5. Most-Mentioned Domestic Civic Space Actors in Bosnia by Sentiment

Domestic Civic Actor	Neutral	Grand Total
Activists	3	3
Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)	2	2
Istocna Alternativa (IA, Eastern Alternative)	2	2
Local Trade Union Representatives	2	2
Protestors	2	2

Notes: This table shows the breakdown of the domestic civic space actors most frequently mentioned by the Russian state media (TASS and Sputnik) between January 2015 to March 2021 and the tone of that coverage by individual mention. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

3.2.2 Russian State Media’s Characterization of External Actors in Bosnian Civic Space

The majority (39 instances) of Russian state media mentions pertain to external actors in Bosnia’s civic space. Sputnik News Service and TASS mention by name 10 intergovernmental organizations (23 mentions), 9 foreign organizations (13 mentions), and 3 more generalized groups (3 mentions). The majority of these external actors fall into three categories: intergovernmental organizations (e.g., NATO, UN, EU, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; foreign media organizations actively reporting on Bosnia; and three foreign civil society organizations operating in Bosnia (e.g., Faith Matters, Immortal Regiment Movement, Human Rights Watch). Table 6 identifies the most

frequently mentioned external actors and the tone of Russian state media coverage towards them.

Intergovernmental organizations such as NATO (3 mentions) and the United Nations Security Council (1 mention) attracted more negative coverage from Russian state media. Given that Russia is opposed to NATO and its role in Bosnia, it is not surprising that the majority of NATO mentions in these articles is somewhat negative. It is interesting to note, however, that many of these NATO mentions appeared alongside mentions of the EU that were coded neutrally. There was one positive mention of the EU in the context of its pledging of financial assistance to support Bosnia in navigating a refugee crisis in 2021.

Table 6. Most-Mentioned External Civic Space Actors in Bosnia by Sentiment

External Civic Actor	Somewhat Positive	Neutral	Somewhat Negative	Grand Total
European Union	1	4	0	5
NATO	0	1	3	4
European Commission	0	3	0	3

Notes: This table shows the breakdown of the external civic space actors most frequently mentioned by the Russian state media (TASS and Sputnik) in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina between January 2015 to March 2021 and the tone of that coverage by individual mention. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

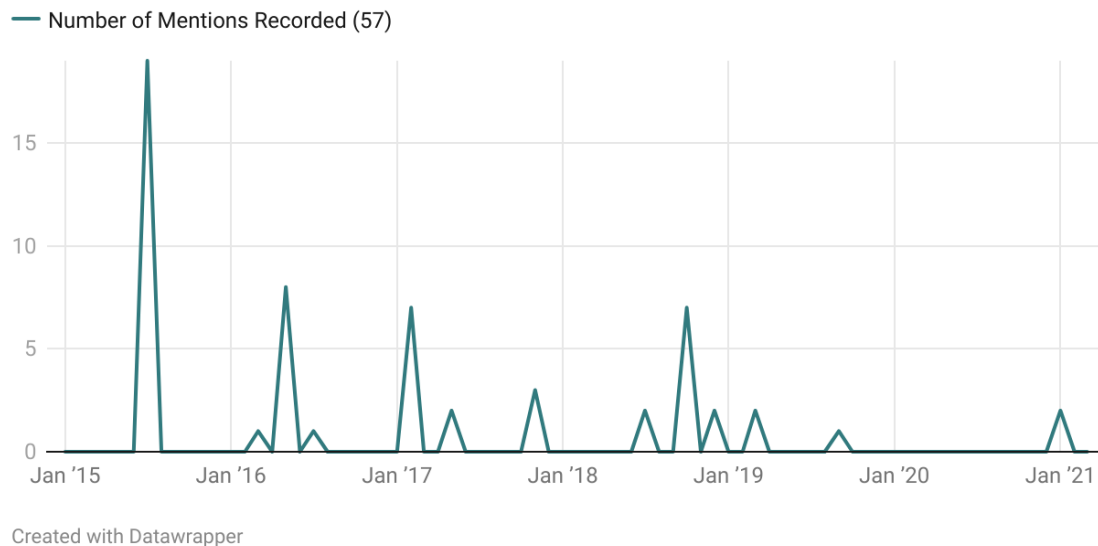
3.2.3 Russian State Media’s Focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Civic Space over Time

Russian state media mentions of Bosnian civic actors is comparatively unique to coverage of other E&E countries in that there are long periods of time when no media mentions occur, punctuated by high volumes of mentions concentrated around specific events (Figure 17). The first and largest spike occurred in July 2015 during protests about the imposition of EU labor laws in the country. Other spikes occurred in May 2016 in response to an attack on foreign journalists,

February 2017 when a Serbian politician was attacked during a memorial at Srebrenica, and October 2018 when a general election was held.

Figure 17. Russian State Media Mentions of Bosnian Civic Space Actors

Number of Mentions Recorded



Notes: This figure shows the distribution and concentration of Russian state media mentions of Bosnian civic space actors between January 2015 and March 2021. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

3.2.4 Russian State Media Coverage of Western Institutions and Democratic Norms

In an effort to understand how Russian state media may seek to undermine democratic norms or rival powers in the eyes of Bosnian citizens, we analyzed the frequency and sentiment of coverage related to five keywords in conjunction with Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁸ Two state-owned media outlets, the Russian News Agency (TASS) and Sputnik News, referenced four out of the five keywords, all except democracy, from January 2015 to March 2021 (Table 7). Russian state media mentioned the European Union (13 instances), the United

²⁸ These keywords included North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO, the United States, the European Union, democracy, and the West

States (5 instances), the “West” (11 instances), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (22 instances) with reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina during this period. The majority of mentions were negative.

Table 7. Breakdown of Sentiment of Keyword Mentions by Russian State-Owned Media

Keyword	Somewhat Positive	Neutral	Somewhat negative	Extremely negative	Grand Total
NATO	0	6	8	8	22
European Union	2	6	4	1	13
United States	0	1	3	1	5
West	1	1	6	3	11

Notes: This table shows the frequency and tone of mentions by Russian state media (TASS and Sputnik) related to four key words—NATO, the European Union, the United States, and the West—between January 2015 and March 2021 in articles related to Bosnia. There were no recorded references to democracy in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sources: Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Data manually collected by AidData staff and research assistants.

Russian state media mentioned NATO the most frequently (22 instances) in reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Coverage was predominantly focused on Bosnia & Herzegovina’s accession to NATO—73 percent of mentions were negative, with the remaining coverage neutral in tone. The next most frequently mentioned term was the European Union (13 instances) and many articles referred to talks and events surrounding Bosnia and Herzegovina’s entrance into the EU and NATO. However, references to the EU were somewhat less negative (38 percent negative, 46 percent neutral) than NATO.

The West received 11 mentions, overwhelmingly negative (82 percent). Several of the negative mentions of Western nations were in the context of their support for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in opposition to the Kremlin-supported autonomous region of Republika Srpska. Lastly, we recorded 5 mentions of the

United States during this time period. The majority (80 percent) of these mentions were negative. Three of these mentions of the U.S., all negative, also referred to Republika Srpska, illustrative of the Kremlin's efforts to exploit pre-existing ethnic tensions in the region to stoke cleavages between allies of Banja Luka versus Sarajevo.

4. Conclusion

The data and analysis in this report reinforces a sobering truth: Russia's appetite for exerting malign foreign influence abroad is not limited to Ukraine, and its civilian influence tactics are already observable in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere across the E&E region. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see clearly how the Kremlin invested its media, money, and in-kind support to promote pro-Russian sentiment within Bosnia and Herzegovina and discredit voices wary of its regional ambitions.

The Kremlin was adept in deploying multiple tools of influence in mutually reinforcing ways to amplify the appeal of closer integration with Russia, raise doubts about the motives of the U.S., EU, and NATO, as well as legitimize its actions as necessary to protect the region's security from the disruptive forces of democracy. Russian state media sought to stoke negative reactions to Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to NATO. In parallel, the Kremlin paid outsized attention to civic space projects and coverage promoting a separate identity for the Republika Srpska and ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Taken together, it is more critical than ever to have better information at our fingertips to monitor the health of civic space across countries and over time, reinforce sources of societal resilience, and mitigate risks from autocratizing governments at home and malign influence from abroad. We hope that the country reports, regional synthesis, and supporting dataset of civic space indicators produced by this multi-year project is a foundation for future efforts to build upon and incrementally close this critical evidence gap.

5. Annex — Data and Methods in Brief

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the data and methods used in the creation of this country report and the underlying data collection upon which these insights are based. More in-depth information on the data sources, coding, and classification processes for these indicators is available in our full technical methodology available on aiddata.org.

5.1 Restrictions of Civic Space Actors

AidData collected and classified unstructured information on instances of harassment or violence, restrictive legislation, and state-backed legal cases from three primary sources: (i) CIVICUS Monitor Civic Space Developments for Bosnia and Herzegovina; (ii) RefWorld database of documents and news articles pertaining to human rights and interactions with civilian law enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina operated by UNHCR; and (iii) Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. AidData supplemented this data with country-specific information sources from media associations and civil society organizations who report on such restrictions.

Restrictions that took place prior to January 1, 2015 or after March 31, 2021 were excluded from data collection. It should be noted that there may be delays in reporting of civic space restrictions. More information on the coding and classification process is available in the full technical methodology documentation.

5.2 Citizen Perceptions of Civic Space

Survey data were collected from three sources—the Prism Research F2F Omnibus (Prism) Waves 1 and 2, the Joint European Values Study/World Values Survey (EVS/WVS) 2017-2021, the Balkan Barometer Public Opinion Poll 2019, and the Gallup World Poll (2010-2021). These broad surveys capture information across a wide range of social and political indicators. The coverage of the three surveys and exact questions asked in each country vary slightly, but the overall quality and comparability of the datasets remains high.

The fieldwork for the Prism Wave 1 survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted from May 7 to May 22, 2013, with a nationally representative sample of 1500 randomly selected citizens over the age of 18. The research team did not note a methodology for error estimation.

The fieldwork for the Prism Wave 2 survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in January 2015, with a nationally representative sample of 1500 randomly selected citizens over the age of 18. The research team did not note a methodology for error estimation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's country values for the Prism Wave 1 and 2 Question "To what extent are you willing to take part in the following activities?" were based on the percentage of respondents that indicated that they were "Ready" to take part in the activities. The list of activities provided included "Voting in the elections," "Participating in demonstrations or protests," "Leaving BiH," "Joining a citizens' action group," "Joining a political party," and "Using violence or force in demonstrations or protests." For this analysis, only the responses to participation in demonstrations or protests and joining political parties were examined.

The fieldwork for EVS Wave 5 in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian between March and June 2019 with a nationally representative sample of 1725 randomly selected adults residing in private homes, regardless of nationality or language.²⁹ The research team did not provide an estimated error rate for the survey data after applying a weighting variable "computed using the marginal distribution of age, sex, educational attainment, and region. This weight is provided as a standard version for consistency with previous releases."³⁰

The E&E region countries included in the Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 dataset, which were harmonized and designed for interoperable analysis, were Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

²⁹ See

<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/methodology-data-documentation/survey-2017/methodology/>.

³⁰ *European Values Study (EVS)*. (2020). *European Values Study (EVS) 2017: Methodological Guidelines*. (GESIS Papers, 2020/13). Köln. <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssnar.70110>.

Regional means for the question "How interested have you been in politics over the last 2 years?" were first collapsed from "Very interested," "Somewhat interested," "Not very interested," and "Not at all interested" into the two categories: "Interested" and "Not interested." Averages for the region were then calculated using the weighted averages from all thirteen countries.

Regional means for the Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 question "Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it: Signing a petition; Joining in boycotts; Attending lawful demonstrations; Joining unofficial strikes" were calculated using the weighted averages from all thirteen E&E countries as well.

The membership indicator uses responses to a Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 question which lists several voluntary organizations (e.g., church or religious organization, political party, environmental group, etc.). Respondents to WVS 7 could select whether they were an "Active member," "Inactive member," or "Don't belong." The EVS 5 survey only recorded a binary indicator of whether the respondent belonged to or did not belong to an organization. For our analysis purposes, we collapsed the "Active member" and "Inactive member" categories into a single "Member" category, with "Don't belong" coded to "Not member." The values included in the profile are weighted in accordance with WVS and EVS recommendations. The regional mean values were calculated using the weighted averages from all thirteen countries included in a given survey wave. The values for membership in political parties, humanitarian or charitable organizations, and labor unions are provided without any further calculation, and the "Other community group" cluster was calculated from the mean of membership values in "Art, music or educational organizations," "Environmental organizations," "Professional associations," "Church or other religious organizations," "Consumer organizations," "Sport or recreational associations," "Self-help or mutual aid groups," and "Other organizations."

The confidence indicator uses responses to a Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 question which lists several institutions (e.g., church or religious organization, parliament, the courts and the judiciary, the civil service, etc.). Respondents to

the Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 surveys could select how much confidence they had in each institution from the following choices: "A great deal," "Quite a lot," "Not very much," or "None at all." The "A great deal" and "Quite a lot" options were collapsed into a binary "Confident" indicator, while "Not very much" and "None at all" options were collapsed into a "Not confident" indicator.³¹

The fieldwork for the Balkan Barometer 2016 Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in Bosnian with a nationally representative sample of 1000 randomly selected adults residing in private homes, whose usual place of residence is in the country surveyed, and who speak the national languages well enough to respond to the questionnaire. Responses were weighted by demographic factors for both country-specific and regional demographic weights. The research team did not provide an estimated error rate for the survey data.

The fieldwork for the Balkan Barometer 2020 Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in Bosnian with a nationally representative sample of 1000 randomly selected adults residing in private homes, whose usual place of residence is in the country surveyed, and who speak the national languages well enough to respond to the questionnaire. Responses were weighted by demographic factors for both country-specific and regional demographic weights. The research team did not provide an estimated error rate for the survey data.

The E&E region countries included in both waves of the Balkan Barometer survey were Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Respondents to the question "Have you ever done something that could affect any of the government decisions?" were allowed to choose multiple options from the following options: "Yes, I did, I took part in public debates," "Yes, I did, I took part in protests," "Yes, I did, I gave my comments on social networks or elsewhere on the Internet," "I only discussed about it with friends, acquaintances, I have not publicly declared myself [sic]," "I do not even discuss about it [sic]," and "DK/refuse." Most respondents selected only one option, however, due to double coding the values in this analysis were

³¹ For full documentation of the questions, see doi:10.4232/1.13560, pp. 293-294

calculated by the total number of respondents who selected each option in any combination of responses, and therefore add up to a total percentage slightly greater than 100%. Balkan means were calculated using the regional respondent weights from all six Balkan Barometer countries.

Respondents to the Balkan Barometer 2016 question "What is the main reason you are not actively involved in government decision-making?" were allowed to choose a single response from the following options: "I as an individual cannot influence government decisions," "I do not want to be publicly exposed," "I do not care about it at all," and "DK/refuse." Balkan means were calculated using the regional respondent weights from all six Balkan Barometer countries. These response options differ from those available in 2018, so the two waves' values cannot be directly compared for Bosnia and Herzegovina but should be assessed relative to the regional mean.

Respondents to the Balkan Barometer 2019 question "What is the main reason you are not actively involved in government decision-making?" were allowed to choose a single response from the following options: "The government knows best when it comes to citizen interests and I don't need to get involved," "I vote and elect my representatives in the parliament so why would I do anything more," "I as an individual cannot influence government decisions," "I do not want to be publicly exposed," "I do not trust this government and I don't want to have anything to do with them," "I do not care about it at all," and "DK/refuse." Balkan means were calculated using the regional respondent weights from all six Balkan Barometer countries. These response options differ from those available in 2016, so the two waves' values cannot be directly compared for Bosnia and Herzegovina but should be assessed relative to the regional mean.

The perceptions of corruption indicator uses responses to a series of Balkan Barometer 2019 questions which asks respondents "To what extent do you agree or not agree that [institution] in your economy is affected by corruption?" for several institutions (e.g., religious organizations, political parties, the military, NGOs, etc.). Respondents to the survey could select whether they "Totally agree," "Tend to agree," "Tend to disagree," "Totally disagree," or "DK/refuse." The "Totally agree" and "Tend to agree" responses were collapsed

into the binary indicator of “Agree” and the “Tend to disagree” and “Totally disagree” responses were collapsed into the binary indicator of “Disagree.” Balkan means were calculated using the regional respondent weights from all six Balkan Barometer countries.

The Gallup World Poll was conducted annually in each of the E&E region countries from 2010-2021, except for the countries that did not complete fieldwork due to the coronavirus pandemic. Each country sample includes at least 1,000 adults and is stratified by population size and/or geography with clustering via one or more stages of sampling. In 2019 the survey was conducted with 1,080 adults rather than 1,000. The data are weighted to be nationally representative. The survey was conducted in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian each year from 2010 to 2014 and 2016 to 2019, and Bosnian only in 2015, 2020, and 2021.

The Civic Engagement Index is an estimate of citizens’ willingness to support others in their community. It is calculated from positive answers to three questions: “Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about donating money to a charity? How about volunteering your time to an organization? How about helped a stranger or someone you didn’t know who needed help?” The engagement index is then calculated at the individual level, giving 33% to each of the answers that received a positive response. Tajikistan’s country values are then calculated from the weighted average of each of these individual Civic Engagement Index scores.

The regional mean is similarly calculated from the weighted average of each of those Civic Engagement Index scores, taking the average across all 17 E&E countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The regional means for 2020 and 2021 are the exception. Gallup World Poll fieldwork in 2020 was not conducted for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Turkmenistan. Gallup World Poll fieldwork in 2021 was not conducted for Azerbaijan, Belarus, Montenegro, and Turkmenistan.

5.3 Russian Projectized Support to Civic Space Actors or Regulators

AidData collected and classified unstructured information on instances of Russian financing and assistance to civic space identified in articles from the Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones between January 1, 2015 and August 30, 2021. Queries for Factiva Analytics pull together a collection of terms related to mechanisms of support (e.g., grants, joint training), recipient organizations, and concrete links to Russian government or government-backed organizations. In addition to global news, we reviewed a number of sources specific to each of the 17 target countries to broaden our search and, where possible, confirm reports from news sources.

While many instances of Russian support to civic society or institutional development are reported with monetary values, a greater portion of instances only identified support provided in-kind, through modes of cooperation, or through technical assistance (e.g., training, capacity building activities). These were recorded as such without a monetary valuation. More information on the coding and classification process is available in the full technical methodology documentation.

5.4 Russian Media Mentions of Civic Space Actors

AidData developed queries to isolate and classify articles from three Russian state-owned media outlets (TASS, Russia Today, and Sputnik) using the Factiva Global News Monitoring and Search Engine operated by Dow Jones. Articles published prior to January 1, 2015 or after March 31, 2021 were excluded from data collection. These queries identified articles relevant to civic space, from which AidData was able to record mentions of formal or informal civic space actors operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be noted that there may be delays in reporting of relevant news. Each identified mention of a civic space actor was assigned a sentiment according to a five-point scale: extremely negative, somewhat negative, neutral, somewhat positive, and extremely positive. More information on the coding and classification process is available in the full technical methodology documentation.