



Weekly Briefing

Bosnia-Herzegovina Social briefing:
Report: Think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ivica Bakota

China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.
 +36 1 5858 690
 office@china-cee.eu
 china-cee.eu

Report: Think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

This report will provide a brief overview on the most influential think-tanks operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the sake of brevity and comprehensiveness, only those directly partaking country's public and foreign policy will be debriefed, other think tanks will be just mentioned.

Think tanks can be classified according to their source of funding, relative size, impact on country's institutions and politics, media exposure, history and research focus. Taking into account all these factors, the think-tank network in Bosnia and Herzegovina is focused on public policies (capacity building, reform implementation), transition issues (democratization, EU integration, rule of law, etc.), post-war reconciliation (interethnic dialogue, multiethnic community building, anti-discrimination policies). Similar to other regional countries, Bosnian think tanks "specialize" in helping implementation and monitoring of market reforms, corruption watch, judiciary reform, improving business environment, etc. Due to unfavorable political and economic conditions, insufficiently mature civil society, Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to have stronger presence of foreign think tanks, foreign-funded think tanks and other research center and institutes financed from abroad, which consequently have more impact on country's decision-making levels, bigger media clout and stronger appeal in society.

Specific constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina coupled with above mentioned factors determined the scarcity of think tanks focusing on country's foreign policy, foreign relations and the EU and NATO integration policies. According to BIH constitution, tripartite Presidency is in charge of foreign policy, making decision-making process more extensive, consensus on FP goals more reductive, therefore, think tanks (and any consulting agency) less necessary.

Branches of foreign think tanks

Sustaining common perception on Bosnian foreign policy as being largely formed by "the Western embassies" is the fact that Sarajevo branches of foreign think tanks are among the biggest, well-funded, having good relations with Bosnian media and government institutions, financially supporting other think

tanks and NGOs, hence, being the most influential in the country. Some of the most important, include:

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Sarajevo Office. This leading German CDU think tank is one of the oldest foreign think tanks present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among its main activities is organizing lectures, hosting public roundtables and conferences, providing scholarships and conducting several projects covering EU integrations, rule of law, media freedom, interreligious dialogue, etc. **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung** is the second biggest German funded think tank in BIH. Established in 1994, it opened offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. According to its webpage, it follows transition issues in the country and is committed for cooperative dialogue between political level and NGO sector. This think tank is one of the most influential in terms of the cooperation with academia and govt. institutions. **Heinrich Boll Stiftung** BIH Office is also active think tank. Following the guidelines of the mother organization, in Bosnia and Herzegovina it specializes in migrant crisis, post-war reconciliation, rule of law, etc. **Transparency International** BIH is one of the active branches of German-based global think tank. It specializes in coordination of projects related with corruption in Bosnian public sector, good governance and public tenders. **Open Society Fund** Bosnia and Herzegovina operates from two offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. It is one of the most important funds for providing financial support to other NGOs with focus on civil society and social justice. In BIH conducts several projects in the field of fiscal transparency, public health, education and anti-discrimination policies. **Austrian Institute** is newly funded think tank branch focusing on EU integrations and economic relations with regional countries.

Party-based

Bosniak leading SDA party has established **SDA Political Academy**. As the one of the first of this sort in Bosnia and Herzegovina, SDA PA provides political education for young leaders, govt officials as well as NGO and media representatives. HDZ BIH has also established its own **HDZ BIH Political Academy**, with more academic attire and political education for “prospective young cadres” and being more focused on European integrations. In the Republic of Srpska several parties (SNSD, PDP) established similar political academies, with primary goal to provide political education to its members, but to participate in creating political platform on some social, political or FP issues. However, given the relative influence, funding and publications, it can be said that party-based think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not yet fully developed to provide ideological or decision-making support to their political parties.

Govt affiliated

First to mention is Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under this institution is the **Center for Balkan(ological) Research**. Eponymous academy of the Republic of Srpska has **Institute for History** and **Institute for Social Research**. Both entities also have separate Chambers of Commerce providing support and expertise in conducting foreign trade policies and economic diplomacy.

Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Trade have no officially affiliated institutions providing support in drafting strategies and decision-making. According to the Foreign policy strategy of BIH for 2018-2013 period, MFA is expected to establish Diplomatic Academy to serve as institution supporting education for diplomatic staff and conducting research on specific issues. Also, the Strategy proposes establishment of parliamentary committee for foreign relation and its more active participation in drafting future FP strategies.

The **Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina** enjoys international support and is endorsed by all three members of Presidency. It was established in 1997 with help from the [World Conference of Religions for Peace](#), its members include highest religious authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina with say in regional as well as international circles. However, despite of some think-tank characteristics the Council has political and social role more akin to lobby group or advisory body.

Academia based

Institute for Social Research is a chief research center of Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. This institute was influential research center in pre-war period, today its media presence and political and social relevancy subsided. Within Institute operate Center for migration studies, and several workgroups covering strategic studies, democracy & HR, information security. Sarajevo Journal for Social Questions is their main publication. **NIRSA** Center (Center for scientific research) of Faculty for Philosophy (Sarajevo University) is funded in 2010 to pool research of several institutes and centers affiliated with the faculty in humanities and social sciences (history, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, etc.). It is R&D unit of the Faculty, rather than independent think tank, but given the size of Faculty of Philosophy and relative influence of its researchers, it deserves to be included in the list. **Economic Institute**, University of Sarajevo is only partially budget-funded institute, providing research and consulting services for domestic and foreign institutions and companies. Other university-based institutes and research centers include: **Institute for Social Research**, University of Banja Luka, **Economic Sciences**

Center, Faculty of Economy, University of Banja Luka and **Economic institute** of Mostar University. Other educational institutions such as University of East Sarajevo, University Dzemal Bjedic Mostar, private universities like American University of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo School of Science and Technology have also capacity for providing independent expertise on various issues covering foreign and trade policy. Foreign funded cultural centers operating within universities (British Council, Goethe Institute, Confucius Institutes, etc.) are liminal cases offering research and consulting services as well as educational and cultural activities.

Civil sector

The **Centre for Security Studies** (CSS), established in 2001, and located in Sarajevo, is an independent research, educational and training enterprise dedicated to encouraging informed debate on security matters and to promoting and sustaining democratic structures and processes in foreign and security policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the region of South-East Europe. The Center has established active cooperation with other regional think tanks, has media presence in topics covering Bosnian security issues, such as migration crisis, ISIS training centers, NATO policy, etc. The **Foreign Policy Initiative** was established in 2004 as a non-profit, non-government organization, dedicated to advance and influence the debate and discussion on foreign policy among academics, activists, and policy and decision makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This “inter-academic” think tank publishes regular official reports on the progress of reforms in BIH by governmental institutions and international organizations, make critical view on various political, economic, and social issues. Foreign Policy Initiative has chief mission in investigating and analyzing foreign policy, international relations and international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have drafted a report on Chinese foreign policy initiatives, assessing the benefits for Bosnia and Herzegovina in partaking 16+1 and Belt and Road Initiative.

Research Center Banja Luka specialized in legal issues concerning reform implementation and EU integration policy. Moreover, this Center has been given media attention in organizing discussions and meetings related with public support for NATO accession in the Republic of Srpska. **Center for Civil Initiatives** is one of the biggest non-party affiliated and non-profit NGO organization. According to their own site, its mission is to encourage and promote active participation of citizens in democratic processes and to strengthen the capacity of organizations and individuals to effectively solve problems in communities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Populari** is an independent

think tank, founded in 2007, provide credible research and analysis to social and political issues. Through creative and practical approach in explaining complex social issues, it was the only think tank from Bosnian and Herzegovina included in Top Think Tank Report published by Penn Uni in 2014. Populari operates throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, combining desk and field research. According to its site, the FP specialty of Populari is BIH relations with Turkey, Turkish foreign policy in BIH and the Balkans and Turkish economic clout over Southeast European countries. The **Center of Strategic Studies** under International Forum Bosnia was founded in December 2000, professing to aim a sound and genuine nucleus of the strategic and geopolitical thought of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Center's Board is composed of prominent names from public life. The aim of the Center for Strategic Studies is to assist the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina through: ongoing analysis of the regional and global political, security, economic and cultural reality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an interpretation of trends and interactions; interpretation, evaluation and forecasting the strategies of neighboring states and their impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina; and contribution to deliberations by the local and foreign public on issues of significance for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The **New Security Initiative** focuses on research services, training, data processing and analysis, and expert support for the development of society. Its members are a team specializing in providing technical assistance to donors, private security companies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, government agencies and private companies. **Foundation for the Political Initiative** was also a think tank aiming to create platform for changes, advancing progressive political thought and linking of same minded NGO organizations.

Other socially relevant NGOs primarily engaged in political and civic education, democratization, economic transition, but also with think tank function within the scope of the main interests, include the Initiative for Civic Action from Sarajevo, Brussels affiliated European Center for Liberal Democracy, center for civic education Civitas, Center for Democracy and Transitional Justice from Banja Luka, Center for Development Evaluations and Social Research from Sarajevo, etc.

Ethnically affiliated

Despite being contested outside Bosniak community, it is worth to mention **Bosniak Institute**, partially foreign funded institute that is primarily engaged in scientific work on the cultural and political history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosniaks, as well as the geopolitical position of BIH and Bosniaks throughout the history. Croat and Serb affiliated think tanks include branches of **Matica**

hrvatska in Mostar and **Matica srpska** in Banja Luka. Other cultural organizations that can also be perceived as fulfilling think tank function include: (Council of) the **Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals**, **Serb Civic Council**, Croat Cultural Society “**Napredak**” (Progress), Bosniak society “**Preporod**” (Renaissance), Serb cultural organization “**Prosvjeta**“ (Enlightenment), etc.