

## **BOSNIA AND THE BALKANS: SECESSIONISM, EUROCENTRIC PARTITIONING**

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### **From Bosnia's crisis to Balkan fragmentation**

Recent developments around the leadership of Republika Srpska, including its intensified secessionist rhetoric and high-profile external contacts, have once again propelled Bosnia and Herzegovina to the forefront of regional security debates. These moves are frequently treated as a narrowly defined constitutional dispute within a single post-conflict state, to be managed through incremental sanctions or diplomatic pressure. This commentary starts from a different premise: it asks how secessionist pressures in Bosnia intersect with the broader ways in which Europe has conceptualised and organised the Balkans over the past three decades. It argues that the current crisis is inseparable from a longer-standing pattern of divisive labels, fragmented integration tracks, and semi-peripheral statuses that weaken regional coherence and leave Bosnia in a structurally vulnerable grey zone.[\[2\]](#)

### **Divisive policies and the Western Balkans construct**

Building on this post-[\[1\]](#) context, external approaches to the region are often perceived as reinforcing fragmentation rather than overcoming it. The entrenched use of the Western Balkans label, along with differentiated integration roadmaps and ad hoc groupings, tends to separate a handful of states from the wider Balkan whole and to frame them as a semi-[\[3\]](#) appendage to the European project. In conceptual terms, this vocabulary weakens the idea of the Balkans as a coherent historical and political space, replacing it with a set of loosely managed sub-[\[4\]](#). For Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has translated into a prolonged grey zone: a country that is repeatedly affirmed as a partner and candidate, yet whose integration advances in fits and starts, leaving it structurally exposed to external pressure, internal secessionist leverage, and chronic institutional fragility.[\[4\]](#)

### **A Balkan-wide integration approach**

Against this cumulative background, responding to Bosnia's crisis requires moving beyond episodic sanctions and reactive crisis management toward a regionally coherent strategy. Such an approach would treat the Balkans as a political whole rather than as a set of segmented sub-[\[5\]](#) and would prioritise institutional arrangements that reinforce Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and functionality while offering a credible, time-[\[6\]](#) path toward deeper integration. Instead of normalising permanent interim formulas and open-[\[7\]](#)

transition statuses, European and international actors should aim to close the grey zone that enables secessionist brinkmanship. Abandoning fragmenting labels and double standards, and fostering regional cooperation explicitly on a Balkan basis, would help undercut both partitionist agendas and the room for manoeuvre enjoyed by external powers seeking to instrumentalise Bosnia's institutional vulnerabilities.[\[1\]](#) IFIMES Editorial Theme, Full Title of the Article, Name of Website or Publication, January 24, 2026, accessed February 16, 2026, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/24012026-security-and-geopolitical-crisis-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-russian-influence-secessionist-policies-of-republika-srpska-and-international-responses-analysis/>.

[\[3\]](#) Simon Sweeney And Seb Bytyci, The Western Balkans And The EU: A New Era Of Enlargement Amid Geopolitical Shifts?, The UK In A Changing Europe, February 9, 2025, Accessed February 16, 2026, <Https://Ukandeu.Ac.Uk/The-Western-Balkans-And-The-Eu-A-New-Era-Of-Enlargement-Amid-Geopolitical-Shifts/> ; Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, THE EU'S ENLARGEMENT PARADOX: POLITICS OVER PRINCIPLES?, Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Analysis, August 6, 2024, No: 2024/2, Accessed February 16, 2026, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/THE-EU-S-ENLARGEMENT-PARADOX-POLITICS-OVER-PRINCIPLES>

[\[5\]](#) Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, Slovenian Document on Dismemberment of Bosnia  Confirms the Necessity of Continuing the PIC  Powers, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), analysis, October 15, 2025, accessed February 16, 2026, No:2021/18, <https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/SLOVENIAN-DOCUMENT-ON-DISMEMBERMENT-OF-BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA-CONFIRMS-THE-NECESSITY-OF-CONTINUING-THE-PIC-OHR-BONN-POWERS>, doi: 10.31219/osf.io/xpwhb ; Stormy-Annika Mildner, Tina Bories, and Avi Shapiro , Aspen Institute Germany, Structural Change in the Western Balkans, report, 2023, accessed February 16, 2026, <https://www.aspeninstitute.de/wp-content/uploads/Structural-Change-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

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