



The Parliamentary groups of SPD, Bündnis90/Die Grünen and FDP have proposed a resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina titled ***Supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina as it embarks to a better future.***

We the undersigned believe that this resolution comes at truly important and challenging time for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We applaud the party groups' initiative and welcome the resolution's content.

The resolution is laudably comprehensive, listing numerous challenges which Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens face at the present moment. It draws its observations and recommendations on the basis of a comprehensive and clear analysis of the 25+ years of postwar reconstruction and peace implementation in BiH. It will also assist the latent constituency for dignity and democratic accountability in a state which functions in service of *all* its citizens.

We support the content of the resolution in its totality, but in this letter, as citizens of the region, we would like to underscore three elements:

We believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina can become a stable and functional democratic state based on the rule of law. Its constitution should guarantee protection and equality to all citizens and facilitate social integration rather than ethnic polarization. Serbs and Croats are integral and essential to Bosnia and Herzegovina's social fabric, rent so viciously and wantonly beginning 30 years ago. Their agency and engagement, along with Bosniaks and citizens of all self-identification, is essential to progressing out of Dayton's evolutionary dead-end. At present, group rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina precede individual





rights of its citizens. Politicians treat citizens as subjects, rightfully “theirs” based on their presumed (or proclaimed) ethnic identity. It is high time to proclaim that this stopgap system is unsustainable. Bosnia and Herzegovina requires a radical recalibration of its social contract, allowing it to join a now-rejuvenating alignment among liberal democracies, committed to defending fundamental values.

We support the resolution’s call for Serbia and Croatia to be helpful neighbors to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is in the interest of citizens of Serbia and Croatia to live alongside a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina. BiH’s protracted instability, which Germany and the rest of the democratic West can confront, has put wind in the sails of the most reactionary and irridentist elements in these two neighbors. These relationships were better 19 years ago than today, when the door to EU membership formally opened to the region at the Thessaloniki 2003 summit. This defies the prevailing presumption of progress. Supporting the destructive policies of Serb and Croat ethnonationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia work against the interests of their own citizens who predominantly and overwhelmingly want peace, stability and prosperity at home and in our neighborhood.

We find the intention to promote cooperation with liberal democratic civil society extremely important. We also hasten to add that civic actors in BiH have lessons relevant to established democracies now confronting a rise in identity-based polarization, often driven from above. European leaders wrongly focus on contacts and cooperation only with party leaders and elected officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are often responsible for the for-profit politics that yield endemic corruption and state dysfunction, driving citizens to Germany and beyond – impoverishing BiH while contributing where they settle – and thereby reinforcing the dominance of the party leaders.





We hope that this resolution passes with wide support in the Bundestag. It should inspire more democracies – particularly in the EU and NATO – to make similarly principled and well-informed declarations by cross-party groups as wide as feasible. Principled and forward-thinking European leaders should make an effort to reach out and strengthen partnerships with actors throughout society in Bosnia and Herzegovina who take initiative to entrench the rule of law and strong accountable democratic institutions. By focusing on cooperating predominantly with corrupt ethnonationalists, European officials undercut and demotivate those envisioning and pursuing an order based on individual dignity, political and legal accountability, and civic agency. Expanding a network of contacts and channels of support to progress-oriented actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina contributes to their capability to confront corruption and the lack of the rule of law, and aids their potential to challenge existing ethnonationalists.

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