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**Bosnia: new survey shows country as divided as ever along ethnic lines;  
suspicions linger about the United States and the West, despite hopes for EU  
accession**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Ten years after the end of the war and in the lead up to EU accession, Bosnia’s three main ethnic groups – Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs – remain divided and ambivalent about important political choices that are likely to affect the pace of their country’s development, according to a recent survey conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based media and opinion research firm InterMedia.

The survey, which polled 2,500 adults 15 and older across Bosnia, showed that despite recent progress towards reconciliation, ethno-political divides persist, as do theories about international conspiracies.

“Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs are unable to rally around common political leaders; instead, each ethnic group has its own favorite,” said Aneta Genova, InterMedia analyst for the Balkans. “Equally troubling for a country that has yet to find its feet, more than one-third of the people interviewed (34 percent) show no sympathy for any of the leading local politicians. Small wonder then that more than half (51 percent) are worried by the lack of strong leadership to steer the country away from the present hardships.”

Among Bosniak respondents, the front-runner is Haris Silajdzic, leader of the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Croats favor Dragan Covic, leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), and the Serbs prefer Milorad Dodik, prime minister of Republika Srpska. Bosniaks are particularly concerned: 56 percent identified the absence of determined leaders as one of the critical problems facing the country, compared with 46 percent of the Croats and 47 percent of the Serbs.

Conspiracy theories continue to float in the public mind. Fully 53 percent of those polled agree at least somewhat that foreign plots are responsible for most of their country’s problems. Serbs are particularly fatalistic, with 63 percent inclined to blame their plight at least in part on scheming foreign powers. Bosniaks and Croats are also wary of outside influences, though to a lesser degree: roughly half of the respondents in either ethnic group tend to see themselves as victims at the hands of malicious outsiders.

Bosnians remain wary of the outside world: 44 percent perceive foreign influences as a threat to their culture. Serbs and Bosniaks are particularly cautious: 51 percent and 45 percent, respectively, feel their culture is threatened. Croats are more outward looking: only 35 percent believe foreign influences might endanger their cultural heritage.

InterMedia data also show there is considerable, though not unequivocal, support for EU membership. Bosniaks are most keen on getting access to the EU: 48 percent of those polled agree strongly that their country should become a member, and another 32 percent agree somewhat. Croats and Serbs are also in favor, but are less enthusiastic: 36 percent of Croats agree strongly and 33 percent agree somewhat; the numbers for the Serbs are similar.

The picture is more mixed as regards NATO. Bosniaks and Croats are generally positive: majorities agree strongly or at least somewhat that their country should join the Alliance. The Serbs, many of whom still feel they are citizens of Serbia rather than of Bosnia, are divided: 30 percent agree with an eventual NATO membership, 24 percent disagree and 36 percent can not make up their mind.

On the United States and the West, pluralities in each ethnic group said they are neither favorably nor unfavorably inclined. “Bosnians seem to be wary of the United States and other Western powers, possibly due to these countries’ shifting positions during the Bosnian war,” said Genova. “Those unfavorably inclined towards the United States cite the war in Iraq and the country’s foreign policy in general as the two main sources of their views.” The share of those non-committed is highest among the Serbs (47 percent). The Serbs are also least sympathetic: 35 percent are somewhat or very unfavorably inclined towards the United States, and only 13 percent hold a favorable view. Among Bosniaks, 27 percent are unfavorably inclined and 19 percent hold positive opinions; numbers for the Croats are similar.

**InterMedia** is a leading international media research, public opinion, evaluation and consulting organization creatively equipping clients to understand their audiences, gauge their effectiveness and target their communications in transitional and developing societies worldwide. Based in Washington, D.C., and active year-round in more than 60 countries, InterMedia helps clients understand complex issues in challenging research environments. The company’s strengths include its people—area experts skilled in scientifically-based research and focused on client solutions—its vast global network of local research partners and contacts and its rich data archive of close to 500 media and opinion surveys carried out over the past 15 years.

***Survey note: The most recent InterMedia-sponsored survey was of 2,500 adults 15 and older and was conducted between 6 and 21 December 2005. Range of error with a 95 percent confidence interval is +/- 1.96 percent.***