1. Bosnia and Herzegovina
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> Is there peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Whoever is asked this very question has a different answer. 'Yes, of course', 'No, not at all' or 'I really don't know what to say'.
>
> Stefanie Kappler, 2013, p. 168

INTRODUCTION

After the Cold War, the trend in war settlements changed from dominance of military victories to the prevalence of negotiated settlements. This shift brought about the concept of power sharing as one of the dominant approaches to post-war transition and reconstruction. Although preferable and necessary to end deadly ethnic wars, power sharing (as an integral part of a negotiated settlement) has not proved a sustainable long-term solution (see Reilly, 2008; Sisk, 2008), especially in ethnically divided societies like Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Even though the notion of transition implies a process of change from one state of affairs to another – in the case of post-war transition, the transformation of a war-torn society to a peaceful and viable community – this process can also take the path of 'deformation', making a political situation intractable and leading to a transition stalemate or even recurrence of violence. The post-war status quo – often including ethnic division and discrimination, authoritarianism, repression and a high level of poverty – can last for decades. Moreover, post-war political transitions became a new form of political system in the post-Cold War era, including the revival of the old UN's role in trusteeship (Menkhaus, 2010).

The Bosnian political transition has rapidly moved into the direction of 'cold peace' (neither war nor peace), characterised by a lack of basic consensus, reform stagnation, political immobilism and ethnic antagonism. The peace settlement in Bosnia has established preconditions for a new political order, but the transition to a viable federal democratic state became entangled in nationalist politics and international interventionism.

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The Bosnian post-war society built itself on war divisions constituted 'around the fixed and unyielding social boundaries of ethnicity' (Sisk, 2008).

Therefore, the main question this chapter discusses is: why has BiH become so entrenched in ethnopolitical struggles and resistant to any meaningful political and social change? It attempts to identify patterns and commonalities of the transition, and analyses the structural factors of this process, internal and external alike. After a brief pre-history of the Bosnian transition in the first part of the chapter, the second section describes the logic of the transition from the agency-structure perspective, and furthers this approach by analysing Bosnian hegemonic political discourses and the distinctive ethnic identities they construct.[1] The second section continues with a critical evaluation of the international community's role in the Bosnian political transition, while the third segment of the chapter assesses the implications and changes brought about by said transition. The case of BiH demonstrates all the shortcomings of neo-liberal economic and political reforms that created 'a kind of "perpetual transition" characterised by unstable, socially divisive developmental patterns and low-level democracy, which obstructs progress to meaningful "peace"' (Bojičić-Dželilović, 2009, p. 214).

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The post-socialist political transition in BiH started in 1990 when the first democratic elections after the Second World War took place. Although the electoral system had attempted to reconcile inclusion and ethnic representation to foster inter-ethnic politics, the elections resulted in the decisive victory of exclusively ethnoantionalist parties. As Muslims (officially termed 'Bosniaks' in 1993), Serbs and Croats composed over 90 per cent of the Bosnian population, their major ethnic parties – the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH), respectively – won over 75 per cent of the seats in the BiH Parliament and all the positions in the Presidency of BiH (Kapidžić, 2015). The rise of these ethnopolitical actors turned BiH into one of the cases that demonstrated the deficiencies of liberalisation and democratisation as they later led the country to ethnic bloodshed (see Newman, 2009; Richmond, 2014).

The newly elected Bosnian Government fell apart with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia (June 1991) and the beginning of the Yugoslav wars. As SDS wanted BiH to remain a part of Yugoslavia, it resisted SDA and HDZ's calls for Bosnian independence and boycotted the referendum

on sovereignty, held on 29 February and 1 March 1992. With a turnout of 63.7 per cent and 99.7 per cent of votes supporting the secession notwithstanding the Serbian boycott, Bosnia declared its independence (see Kovačević-Putnik Dajić, 1994, pp. 38–49; Kasapović, 2005, p. 10). The referendum was a prelude to the Bosnian War, which lasted from April 1992 to December 1995 (see Woodward, 1995; Burg and Shoup, 1999; Anđelić, 2003; Bougarel, 2004).

Although Brubaker (2002, p. 176) was partially right when he pointed out that Yugoslav wars had more to do with 'thuggery, warlordship, opportunistic looting and black market profiteering than with ethnicity', identity in fact did play a significant role in the Bosnian conflict. As a political concept, Yugoslavia was the answer to different national questions (including Muslim/Bosniak, Croatian and Serbian), and its collapse reopened them, giving them the highest priority on the political agenda of the respective political elites. Consequently, the war in BiH was an instrument of 'writing' new answers, which included ethnic homogenisation and ethnic cleansing (Ringmar, 1996). After almost four years, 100,000 casualties (Zwierzchowski and Tabeau, 2010), more than 2 million forcibly displaced people (GICHD and CIDA, 2006; Porobić, 2016), severely damaged infrastructure[2] and a few unsuccessful peace proposals,[3] the Dayton Agreement brought peace to the region. Annex 4 of the Agreement (the Constitution) established BiH as an 'asymmetrical (con)federation' made up of two entities with 'all the characteristics of states within a complex state': the multi-ethnic Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) – divided into ten cantons, and the unitary Republic of Srpska (RS) with three constituent peoples: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats (Kasapović, 2005).

The Dayton Agreement did stop the war, but it also recognised the battlefield situation and war 'achievements', including ethnic cleansing – the creation of largely ethnically exclusive territories – and ethnic segregation. The first post-war elections in 1996 confirmed that situation through the convincing victory of the parties that started and led the war.[4] To a large extent, the peace agreement rewarded the Bosnian political institutions and actors with access to power, which only strengthened and legitimised their aims and positions acquired during the war, providing them with an opportunity to continue to pursue the same goals in the process of post-war political transition (Aggestam and Björkdahl, 2013). Therefore, the peace agreement could be viewed as a compromise of interests and not, as Mirjana Kasapović (2005) points out, as the main cause of the political transition stalemate. Although the 'Dayton Bosnia' is an excessively complex and weak state, the central source of its

disorganisation is the lack of a minimal consensus of all three nations' elites on the state and political system and its necessity and desirability.

Furthermore, the accord also envisioned economic transformation from a command (socialist) and war economy to a liberal market economy that revoked protections and introduced very limited social services, highly affecting the post-war process of distributive justice. Additionally, the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was seen as a step toward prosecuting crimes and human rights violations that occurred during the war, all as a precondition for better inter-ethnic understanding and reconciliation. These efforts were managed and controlled by international actors almost exclusively through 'neotrusteeship' institutions of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and the Office of the High Representative in BiH (OHR), while military aspects of the post-conflict transition were controlled by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and most recently the European Union (EU; Chandler, 2006; Belloni, 2007; Gilbert, 2012; Kappler, 2013).

ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS

Internal Factors I: Structural Selectivity

As political discourses serve as a tool for legitimisation and justification, their relation to social practice and context must be acknowledged (Hayward, 2011; Hyde-Price, 2013). Another issue that is also essential for the political transition and discourses, especially the discourses of those in positions of political hegemony, is the relation with the power which constitutes them. If correlating to specific political practices, discourses are representations of reality – otherwise they are no more than a simulation of the phenomenal world, a *simulacrum* (Baudrillard, 1989). Therefore, political practices have a function of either constituting or undermining the discourses. Elites, being in a position of structural power, use discourses to (re)construct the social context, the structural environment, affecting the whole community and not just the group they represent. These 'discursive entrepreneurs' shape the rules of production (control and selection) and reception of discourse in the public sphere, which usually includes criteria for social exclusion and inclusion, for true/false ('regimes of truth') and (morally) right/wrong divisions (Foucault, 1981; Hayward, 2011).

In the case of BiH, political elites have used their discourses to establish structural/strategic selectivity (McAnulla, 2002; Hyde-Price,

2013) that privileges ethnopolitics, ethnic entrepreneurship over non-ethnic or trans-ethnic politics, thus turning the Bosnian post-war transition into a 'continuation of war by other means' (Chandler, 2006). They utilised their political strategies 'as a medium for upholding the ideology or principles of a particular group …', where '[s]uch principles help to affirm the historical integrity of their group, to rationalize the stance taken by group leaders in response to the present situation, and to imagine the ideal position of the group in the future' (Hayward, 2011, p. 5). Post-war political discourses also maintained construction of the enemies from the 1992–95 War, turning war rivals into identitarian Others – a complete or partial negation of the collective Self. This led to the creation of parallel ethnic sub-communities (and realities) and a loss of purpose for political elites to legitimise themselves before the entire Bosnian population. They had no need to appeal to the members of other groups because their political action was determined mostly by ethnicity (at least on the discursive level) and they were accountable only to members of their own ethnic groups – their electorates.

Ethnicity, just like gender, class or religion is what constitutes a social agency of an individual, and, as Margaret Archer argued (2004, p. 261), every human being is an agent 'since being an [a]gent is simply to occupy a position on society's distribution of scarce resources'. However, what matters the most for political transition is not its agents but the actors of the political process, as they occupy social/political positions endowed with social/political power. Agency is a characteristic of belonging to different social groups and identities, 'always and only employed in the plural', while only the actors 'properly exist in the singular and … meet the strict criteria for possessing unique identity' (Archer, 2004, p. 61). Nevertheless, agency determines what social roles we can acquire (for example, only a Serb can become a Serbian member of the Bosnian Presidency) and facilitates the construction of our social identities and actions. Therefore, an agent (plural) constitutes an actor (singular), but, at the same time, actors (re)construct agencies through discourses and practices they perform, preserving or changing their content (see Wight, 2006). In possession of structural power, actors steer the construction of structures and agents, the social system itself, thus determining the process of political transition.

In BiH, ethno-religious identities greatly dominate the primary agency of people. They determine and motivate their social action and mobility – for instance, if a member of a certain ethnic group is discriminated against, this would probably determine his social goals and direct his activities against the system. Through the articulation of their interests and needs, people organise themselves to retain or reshape the structural

conditions of their social contexts. That is what Archer (2004) labels a corporate or secondary agency, which may take a form of interest groups, social movements or associations.

The most important corporate agents in BiH are political parties, their leaders and members because only individuals can hold agency. Politicians, grouped into ethnic and religion-based political parties (Bosniak, Croat or Serb), have constructed contexts that privilege their primary and corporate agencies in their respective communities. Consequently, their concepts of peace and state, their answers to 'national questions' stemming from their interpretations of the 1990s War and the role the nation they belong to had played in it, have created the ethos of structural exclusion and discrimination towards non-ethnic, and towards ethnic corporate agencies of other two constituent peoples, depriving them almost entirely of the possibility for structural/strategical change ('collectivities without a say').

Being either 'victims of perceptual power' or 'voluntary adherents to consensual precepts' (Archer, 2004, p. 271), primary agents mostly remain incapable of articulating dissident ideas. Counter-hegemonic endeavours remain marginalised, with insufficient resources and organisation to attract any wider support.[5] Hegemonic elites, on the other hand, remain trapped in their one and only discourse, often assessing the possibility of promoting new ideas as too costly and potentially hazardous to their privileged social status. In Toal's (2013, p. 199) words: 'Bosnia's political geography keeps wartime divisions alive and rewards exclusivist appeals more than others'.[6]

Internal Factors II: Discourses of Exclusion

Hegemonic political discourses are not owned by, or under complete control of, any political actor. They are embedded in structures and cannot be simply switched off when some of their proponents leave the scene. For instance, ethno-nationalist SDS lost power in RS, but the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) – previously pro-Western and pro-Bosnian – adopted the same exclusive discourse. Bosnian elites (actors) have therefore changed to a certain extent, but discourses and practices have maintained continuity. These discourses have become a part of the political tradition or political formula (Mosca, 1939, p. 72) in Bosnia, and any political effort seeking legitimacy and popular support must take them into account or suffer public denunciation.

The primary element of that formula is the interpretation of the 1992–95 War in BiH, including the inevitable issue of victimhood. Dominant Bosniak discourse interpreted the War as a heroic phase of

their history when the Bosnian state was forged, and a glorious resistance against Serbian aggression (Tepšić, 2013). The self-perception of their role in the War was best described by their war leader and the first president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović: 'When going to negotiations to the European countries I do not have to bow my head because we did not kill women, children and old people. We did not attack anyone's sanctuaries. However, our enemies did all that, and right before the eyes of the entire West' (Tepšić, 2013, p. 13). Croatian discourse supports the Bosniak position on the War regarding its main cause – Serbian aggression – but disagrees with it when it comes to the issue of Herceg-Bosna (HB, the Croatian entity that existed during the war) and the Bosniak–Croatian war (1992–94). While Bosniaks see it as an aggression against BiH and a 'synonym of suffering and pointless conflict' (*Dnevnik*, 17 November 2016), Croats regularly celebrate the day of founding of HB as a symbol of Croatian survival, biological as well as cultural/political, and struggle against Bosniak majoritarianism (*Nezavisne*, 17 November 2016). The prevailing Serbian narrative – officially adopted by the Assembly of RS in 2013, as the *Declaration on the Causes, Character and Consequences of the Deadly Armed Conflict in BiH (1992–1995)* – opposes both positions. The Declaration rejects the definition of the Bosnian War as the Serbian aggression and defines it as a 'civil war with a high degree of international factor involvement', adding that other interpretations of the war – including the narratives of the ICTY – have served as a basis for the satanisation of Serbs and imposition of collective guilt on them. From the Serbian perspective, the main cause of the war was the Bosniak political elite's endeavour to make BiH a Bosniak-dominated unitary state, based on the principle of 'one person, one vote', which would clearly favour Bosniaks as a relative majority[7] in BiH (Tepšić, 2013, pp. 13–14).

Despite the Bosniak–Croatian consensus regarding the 'Serbian aggression', the issue of the Bosnian War and mutually exclusive interpretations of it have led to a 'cognitive dissensus' (Horowitz, 1991) on other important questions of political transition, such as the concept of state and nation. There are three almost entirely exclusive visions of Bosnia, as Mladen Ivanić[8] summarised it: the first, coming from Sarajevo, involves the abolition of entities; the second, stemming from Mostar, includes the creation of a third entity or some other form of further political subjectivisation of the Croatian identity; and the third, with its political centre in Banja Luka, advocates independence of RS or transformation of Bosnia into a union of three independent monoethnic states (*Radio Sarajevo*, 2016). Therefore, one of the major obstacles to the constitution of a consensual concept of the Bosnian state, and the

whole political transition, is this tension between the conceptions of state and (ethnic) nation. 'It is this tension that aids political players in rendering almost any political issue in the country as primarily an issue of identity rather than practical politics, economy or something else' (Sarajlić, 2011, p. 11).

Serbian political discourse, especially the rhetoric of the most powerful Serbian leader in Bosnia, Milorad Dodik,[9] has been focused mostly on the denial of Bosnian statehood (as a 'provisional category') and affirmation of RS as a state ('permanent category'). In this discourse, RS and FBiH are not counterparts – RS and Bosnia are. BiH was constructed as something external, as the Serbian Other, and Dodik had described it on numerous occasions as an 'unsustainable state', a 'state without future', a 'big mistake of the West', a 'forced state', a 'banana republic', a 'devil-state', 'monstrous', 'artificial', 'unnatural', 'impossible', 'rotten' and 'virtual' (Toal, 2013). As opposed to this delegitimisation of BiH, at the beginning of the 1990s the Bosniak political elite had adopted the idea of a sovereign and integral Bosnian state ('100 per cent Bosnia' was the famous slogan), including the framing of RS as the biggest obstacle to the achievement of their essential goals. They described RS as immoral and illegitimate, building their arguments mostly on the 'Srebrenica case' – which includes depictions of RS as a 'genocidal creation', 'anti-Bosniak apartheid-style entity', 'occupation of the Bosnian land', etc. (Toal, 2013; Gilbert, 2013). This discursive struggle could also be described as 'mirror-imaging acts of competing victimology' (Gilbert, 2013, p. 27), which led the Serbian elite to dispute the 'Srebrenisation of Bosnia' (Toal, 2013) and instrumentalise the Second World War 'Jasenovac case' (as well as other crimes against Serbs) as counterweight. The case of Jasenovac and the mass extermination of Serbs by the fascist Independent State of Croatia (which then included the territory of BiH) have been regularly used to justify the creation of the Serbian political entity – as Dodik explained: 'In the 1990s, Serb people fought so that Jasenovac would not happen again, and the result of that fight is the Republic of Srpska' (Gilbert, 2013, p. 2).

While Serbs and Bosniaks unquestionably perceive each other as identitarian Others, Croats lead dual discursive politics. They officially advocate sovereignty and integrity of BiH, but they also recognise Bosniaks as their primary Others, as they fear their supremacy in the shared entity of FBiH (seeing themselves as underprivileged and discriminated). For this reason, they often support Serbian secessionist claims. In brief, they consider themselves, as Dragan Čović[10] stated in *Dnevnik* on 22 November 2016, 'prisoners of the Dayton Agreement'.

All these different narratives construct the discourses of Selfhood and Otherness. As constituents of a collective identity, these constructs are the most important part of the political formula because they tell us who we are as a social group and political subjects. In Gilbert's words (2013, pp. 10–11):

> … proponents of state projects deploy historical narratives and target a population or people on whose behalf a war is fought or in whose name the state is constituted, and whose legitimacy they seek. […] In sum, historical narratives deployed to legitimize a state idea or state project play an important role in shaping the identity of groups or communities and thus the kinds of actions that can be undertaken by such groups or communities. They are exercises in the making and unmaking of political possibility.

The perceptions of the collective Self and the Other inhibit the political transition in BiH because they prevent an inter-ethnic consensus concerning any essential political issue, such as a joint state and society, but also the common past and common future. Discourses and particular identities they construct stay entrenched in the categories of war, turning BiH into a typical case of post-war transition stalemate.

External Factors: International State-Building or State-Failing?

From the Balkans experience (of BiH, but also Kosovo), peacebuilding processes appear to be a playground for the international community's interventionism based on Western epistemic (reintroducing Orientalism and Balkanism), economic and political hegemony, which essentially contributes to the political impasse and reification of the societies' divisions (Majstorović, 2007; Peter, 2011; Pehar, 2012, 2014). International administration in the form of 'shared sovereignty' or 'informal trusteeship' (Chandler, 2006) has provoked new conflicts, unintentionally or not. Their efforts affected domestic power relations, processes of political legitimisation and democratisation, leading to various conflicts with local political elites and producing new cycles of enmity and tension (Aggestam and Björkdahl, 2013; Richmond, 2014). Grounded in the infamous 'Bonn powers' – which gave the international community unlimited (legislative, executive and judicial) authority in BiH – the OHR imposed 757 decisions, 286 laws and amendments, and removed 119 legitimate officials from their positions just in the period between 1999 and 2006 (Martinović, 2012; Pehar, 2014). That led Baros (2010, p. 6) to describe OHR's administration as 'the most sustained attack on the Rule of Law in the modern history so to speak'.

Moreover, the externally imposed inside–outside division of actors is primarily a category of rule, more than a category of distinction. By introducing this division, international peacebuilders self-authorised themselves as unequal to local Bosnian actors, as benign experts in democratic reforms and European standards dealing with planning, engineering, and management (Gilbert, 2012). The deconstruction of the inside–outside division shows that the international community has been an essentially internal (or hybrid) actor in BiH, albeit without local legitimacy or any democratic relation to the citizens of BiH. Moreover, the practice of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (HR), as the 'final authority in the theatre', was mainly illiberal and undemocratic, contributing to the deterioration of the local political system and transition (see Majstorović, 2007; Peter, 2011). Even Paddy Ashdown, the fourth HR, described it as 'near imperialism' (Glover, 2002).

Apart from being undemocratic, the HR's activities were largely ineffective due to the resistance of the local elites, and have only aggravated the process of Bosnian political transition. Two of the most obvious consequences of international administration in BiH were the reform of the FBiH and the legally questionable transfer of authority from the entities to the central government. The former was perceived by the Croatian political elite as support to Bosniak domination and has consequently deepened the Bosniak–Croat conflict, while the latter polarised and escalated the Bosniak–Serbian conflict (centralism vs. secessionism). All this gave the international administration a reputation of being pro-Bosniak (and pro-Bosnian), because they, at least officially, shared the same goal: full sovereignty and integrity of BiH (Pehar, 2014). Both Croatian and Serbian elites used this fact to resist the 'biased' decisions of the HR, declaring them anti-Croat or anti-Serb.

Therefore, Croatian and Serbian discourses successfully framed the HR as an actor of the 'conflict by other means', which also contributed to the limitation of 'the range of positive and social identities for Bosnians to choose from' (Majstorović, 2007, p. 648). For many Serbs and Croats, BiH and the Bosnian identity have the tone of Western imperialism (Gilbert, 2012), which is often emphasised, especially in the Serbian discourse (Dodik): 'Serbs have never truly accepted Bosnia. […] Bosnia did not suffer the fate of former Yugoslavia because of the existence of a strong "international factor" and its wish to preserve it' (Tepšić, 2013). Moreover, the international community maintained the fiction of Bosnian sovereignty (because the central government never had effective control over the entire territory), and that fiction was itself a generator of conflict. It is because of it, and the international presence, that the local

elites did not have to face the consequences of war or engage in meaningful transition processes; they knew the internationals would deal with it so that they could continue with their maximalist and ethnically exclusive demands (Pehar, 2014).

A similar situation applies to the economic transition, where international actors insisted on rapid improvement in the fiscal and monetary policies while neglecting the importance of microeconomic parameters. Current widespread poverty (not present before the war), inequality, social exclusion (especially among the most vulnerable groups such as refugees, internally displaced person (IDPs), former fighters, etc.) and long-term unemployment are clear signs that billions in international assistance were not successful in buffering the negative effects of the elusive quest for economic growth seen as the key factor of economic post-conflict transition (Bojičić-Dželilović, 2009). The most worrisome aspect of this transition has been the fact that the internationally led privatisation had resulted in a redistribution of resources which are now also controlled by political elites, thus creating 'inequalities between culturally defined groups or groups with shared identities … formed by religion, ethnic ties or racial affiliations' (Stewart, 2008, pp. 12–13). In this way, the interaction between political and ethnic divisions, created during the war, with economic cleavages as a result of the post-war transition, reinforces the continuation of conflict and political stalemate.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRANSITION

Political Changes

The most important implication of the post-war political transition in BiH is the fragility of the state (lacking legitimacy and political capacity to fulfil the basic requirements of the well-being, development and security of its population), where the only thing unclear is the level of fragility.[11] The only uncertainty is whether it should be defined as a weak, failing, failed or collapsed state (Turčalo, 2011, pp. 27–8). This assertion is supported not only by political discourses and practice, but also by public opinion surveys. The 2015 public opinion poll showed that 69.1 per cent of Bosnian citizens had a negative opinion of the Bosnian Government/ state; the BiH Parliament also had an unfavourable reputation (65 per cent), while OHR was a bit less unpopular – 53.8 per cent. Citizens showed the most support for religious institutions (65.2 per cent), which

just confirmed their attachment to ethno-religious identities, as boundaries of ethnicity and religion almost completely overlap in BiH (Analitika, 2015). Another survey showed that 64.4 per cent of the RS population supported the independence of this entity, while only 15.8 per cent were against it. Furthermore, almost 60 per cent of them saw BiH as an artificial state in the process of dissolution (*Glas Srpske*, 2014). The UN-sponsored survey from 2013 indicated that only 28.5 per cent of Bosnian citizens were satisfied with the current Bosnian state, whereas 71.9 per cent of Serbs and 53.6 per cent of Croats wanted to live in independent monoethnic entities (in contrast to only 20.6 per cent of Bosniaks). Most of them also believed that potential dissolution of the state would not end peacefully (almost 60 per cent of Bosniaks, 55 per cent of Croats and 45 per cent of Serbs), and only 13 per cent of all three groups' members thought reconciliation was possible (*Radio Sarajevo*, 2013a).

Beside the lack of a basic consensus among the local elites, the status of quasi-protectorate is what is also stalling political transition and disrupting both the state and the possibility of credible democratic reforms. As former EU's Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn explained: 'The OHR cannot take this country to where you want to go next … there is no way a quasi-protectorate can join the EU. Nor will an EU membership application be considered so long as the OHR is around …' (Baros, 2010, p. 8). European integration is actually one of the rare issues that the Bosnian political elites and the citizens of both entities happen to be in agreement, and the process of EU accession has the constant support of 50 per cent or more people in both entities (*Slobodna Evropa*, 2016). Still, when it comes to the actual accession process, at the moment BiH is the country (along with Macedonia) with the least prospects of joining 'the European club' in the foreseeable future. The support for NATO membership again reflects different war narratives: between 70 and 90 per cent of the population of FBiH supports potential membership as 'the people of BiH experienced NATO intervention as an act of justice', in contrast to only between 25 and 30 per cent in RS where the citizens believe that 'NATO bombed the Serbs and the Republic of Srpska, dropping depleted uranium here …' (Tepšić, 2013; Oslobođenje, 2017).

What BiH lacks the most, in terms of political transition and positive change, is the sense of community that surpasses ethnic boundaries. Even the international community has recognised this problem as one of the most important political issues and obstacles to post-war transition:

… the real question – in my view – is not one of constitutional change, of finding the 'perfect text' or of simply amending laws. It is one of amending 'minds and hearts' if you so will, and this refers to the issue 'identity-building as the ultimate stage in the state-building process in BiH'. Only once all citizens … not peoples, or ethnic groups, or collective bodies … can identify with the state of BiH as a whole and a reality, then and only then the project of state-building will have succeeded (Petritsch, 2006, p. 7).

Economic Changes

By the end of the war, the Bosnian economy was devastated – half of the population was displaced (1.2 million refugees and 1 million IDPs; Porobić and Jansen, 2016) and dependent on humanitarian assistance, the social system was completely paralysed and more than half the work-force was unemployed. Three separate politico-economic units were established, with different currencies, restricted movement of people and goods, and without formal economic cooperation. But besides political sovereignty, post-war BiH also lacked economic sovereignty. Economic transition was almost completely steered by the international community, with some positive results in areas such as fiscal consolidation and monetary stability. However, most of the economic transition has been trapped in ethnopolitical struggles, which stunted the reforms. Although BiH received billions of dollars in international assistance – more per capita than any European country under the Marshall Plan – the outcome has been very limited (see Bojičić-Dželilović, 2009; Pasić, 2011).

The unemployment rate in Bosnia is 40.55 per cent – the highest in Europe and the third highest in the World, with an even higher unemployment rate among the youth population (over 50 per cent). BiH is also perceived as the seventh most corrupt state in Europe (Trading Economics, 2016). Furthermore, as argued by Bojičić-Dželilović (2009), approximately 20 per cent of the population is considered indigent. Income has remained low for the majority of the citizens, while deprivation is widespread and entrenched. Social exclusion, combined with ethnic divisions, reinforces feelings of personal insecurity for many in post-war BiH.

The post-war transition has created horizontal inequalities – inequalities between groups regarding access to political, economic and social resources – that never existed before the war. The war was also a tool of material resource redistribution, which continued throughout the post-war period (privatisation) and resulted in the concentration of wealth and resource control in the hands of ethnic elites. Consequently, access to government and ethnic clientelistic networks became the means for gaining economic advancement (Reilly, 2008). 'If we assume that

(post)conflict societies are faced with a particularly high degree of sociopolitical as well as material instability, then the ways in which people find attachment in different regimes, norms or groups, can be considered particularly relevant to making sense of the socioeconomic underpinnings of peace and peacebuilding' (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p. 899.)

Social Changes

Potential for social and political change in BiH is very limited. Most of the people are dissatisfied with the situation in the society but disempowered to articulate their social agency in an alternative manner. The attitude of young people toward migration is a good example of this 'social despair' – almost 70 per cent would like to leave BiH (Žiga et al., 2015). At the same time, BiH holds the 135th place (out of 138) on the list of countries with capacity to attract people from abroad (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Recently there have been several examples of social activism with the intent to change the current system. The most prominent was the Bosnian citizen movement in 2014, motivated by the closure of four factories. Consequently, nearly 10,000 people were left without jobs, which initiated mass protests for social justice and against corruption, nepotism and ethnic exclusion. Although efforts were made to institutionalise the movement through the organisation of 'plenums', the endeavour was not long-lasting. The calls for more inclusive institutions, higher participation of citizens in politics and greater accountability of the politicians were mostly ignored by the local elites, but also by the international community. Instead of endorsing the locally owned initiative, the international community – namely the High Representative Valentin Inzko – recognised it as a need for additional international intervention, reaffirming the well-known distrust in the capabilities of local actors to promote 'proper' values without international guidance. In addition to this, there have been a few other examples of creating the 'space of trust and difference', which promoted values of solidarity and justice and tried to reduce ethnic polarisation, such as the Youth Cultural Center Abrašević in Mostar or the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Mozaik in Sarajevo, but without wider outreach (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016).

Furthermore, these communal endeavours of citizens and local organisations (civil society) have been mainly derogated as illegitimate, perceived as agents of the international community or 'donor-sponsored artifice'. The new hierarchy of international regulation has included some of the locals, but has disempowered the majority, introducing a 'new

divide' between the pro-Western (minority of cosmopolitan like-minded people who have endorsed 'liberal values') and the anti-Western (ethnically bounded majority strongly linked to the local reality) population (Belloni, 2001).

Cultural Changes

After the war, Bosnian ethno-elites divided the official language (Serbo-Croatian) into three separate mother tongues: Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian. Development of separate school curricula was the second step in this process, which led to ethnic separation and segregation of the Bosnian school system. As Veličković (2012) discusses, all three nationalisms had the same goal in the area of education – to attract the support of future voters to their own values and objectives. Therefore, the regulation they adopted institutionalised 'national groups of courses', which included native language, history, geography, and religious education. Consequently, this led to the ethnification of education and division of schools into Bosniak, Croatian or Serbian. The school system is integrated only in the Brčko District (which officially belongs to both entities), although pupils attend their 'national courses' separately.

A survey conducted in 2013 showed that students and their teachers from three Sarajevo high schools – Bosniak, Croatian and Serbian (Eastern Sarajevo) – were perfectly integrated into the whole 'clash of discourses', as they had completely different perceptions of the 1992–95 War and the post-war transition. 'When a Serb is put on trial for crimes committed against the Bosniak population, I get the impression that no matter how severe the sentence is, it is not severe enough' – was one of the impressions among the Bosniak pupils. On the other side, a girl from a Serbian school explained that when she goes to a Serbian website she finds information that seems appropriate to her as a Serb. But when she goes to another site, she sees that Serbs are blamed for everything and cannot believe in something so unobjective (*Radio Sarajevo*, 2013b).

According to Feinberg (2012), one of the main functions of the school system is to reproduce basic societal values and ensure their intergenerational continuance. For a sustainable society it is important to construct an inclusive identity, a sense of belonging to a wider community that includes different religious, ethnic and other affiliations. In the case of BiH, public education has just the opposite function – it promotes intra-ethnic unity coupled with exclusion, segregation, and intolerance toward other groups.

CONCLUSION

More than 20 years after the War, Bosnian elites have preserved their war goals. The armed phase of the conflict ended in 1995, but the fundamental contradictions continued to determine the political struggle in BiH. Political actors have changed in the course of these two decades, but their agencies and structures have not. The mutual constitution of the agents and structures has created a vicious circle where agents construct mutually exclusive structures, and vice versa – structures empower these exclusionist agents by facilitating their political discourses and practices. Ethnonational identities play a central role here because they serve as means of ethnopolitical system reproduction, where 'the strong emphasis on historical grievances is embedded within … identity politics, which tend to drive the conflict dynamics' (Aggestam, 2013, p. 34).

The transition process in BiH is stalled because elites have failed to recognise injustices and grievances of other groups, their sense of victimhood and distinct identity. Political elites have manipulated the sense of self-victimisation to cement the division between 'us and them', but have not been willing to recognise the perspectives of other sides. The groups have been preoccupied with their own traumas and victimisations, transforming them into lenses through which to perceive and interpret both the past and the post-war transition in BiH. This resulted in a fragile state and transitional political system, although the concepts of fragility and transitionality have been largely misunderstood.

First of all, as Menkhaus argues (2010), the inclusion of criteria such as low capacity to provide public security, social services and the rule of law, low levels of civil liberties and democracy, delegitimation of the state, factionalism, poor economic performance, foreign intervention, inability to regulate political conflict and other – makes state fragility not an exception, but a regularity. Second, misunderstanding stems mainly from the presumption that the problem of state failure is a matter of low capacity. Therefore, the usual answer is more funding, more administration reforms, more democratisation, which is the essence of state-building. What is omitted here is that, in some circumstances, state failure happens to be a desired outcome; it is not a problem to be solved, but something to be invested in. Political elites sometimes adopt the strategy of state failure, usually as a consequence of intent to preserve their political autonomy and separate identity, or as a consequence of political survivalism and enrichment of the ruling caste. From that perspective, central government is more a threat than a political good.

Fragile states such as BiH have weak central governments; however, they usually have their alternative forms of governance – subnational polities – and these should serve as building blocks of a new state authority. This means that the central government should not be trying to replace them; it should instead engage them in a dialogue known as the mediated state model (Menkhaus, 2010). Although a chaotic and controversial process, it is a necessity and a *modus vivendi* for most fragile states today.

NOTES

1. As Hansen (2006, xiv) argues: '… policies are legitimised as necessary, as in the national interest, or in the defense of human rights, through reference to identities, yet identities are simultaneously constituted and reproduced through formulations of … policy'.
2. Approximately 56 per cent of residential buildings in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) were destroyed or damaged (29 per cent in Republic of Srpska [RS]), and 70 per cent of the farm equipment and 60 per cent of livestock were lost. The World Bank estimated the costs of destroyed assets at USD20–25 billion. Furthermore, the war left more than 16,000 hazardous areas (minefields and other explosive remnants of war) that affected 1,366 communities or 1,375,000 people (GICHD and CIDA, 2006).
3. There were four official international peace plans before the Dayton Agreement: the Carrington–Cutileiro plan (1992), the Vance–Owen plan (1993), the Owen–Stoltenberg plan (1993), and the Contact Group plan (1994) (see, for example, Bougarel, 2004).
4. The war parties – SDA, SDS and HDZ – won 36 of the 42 places in the House of Representatives, Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (Arnautović et al., 2015, p. 89).
5. Based on the criteria of political party relevance (Arnautović et al., 2015, pp. 46–50), the 1996–2015 elections data show that in that period there were only five politically relevant parties: HDZ BiH, SDA, SDS, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and Social Democratic Party of BiH (SDP). Among them, only SDP is not formally an exclusive monoethnic party, although its electorate has been almost entirely Bosniak.
6. Furthermore, the entire post-war transition in BiH resembles Archer's (2004) 'pre-modern scenario' of structure-agency relations. It is a system where corporate and primary agents are 'starkly delineated', and the distinction is maintained through their mutual interaction which makes it long-lasting. There is a small elite of corporate agents (ethnopolitical elites) at the top of the social and political hierarchy, and a vast majority at the bottom, confined to the status of primary agents. The elites nurture hegemonic ideas through a clientelistic system – allocation of material and non-material (identity, security, the image of the enemy, etc.) resources based on ethnopolitical suitability, maintaining the support of their co-nationals and the political status quo. The clientelistic system facilitates incorporation of primary agents into the existing corporate agencies (pro-government political parties and organisations), thwarting the articulation of oppositional corporate agencies. Moreover, it fosters perception of the ideas available to citizens as very restricted and homogeneous, and makes alternative ideas look politically insignificant and illegitimate.

7.   Based on the results of the 2013 population census, Bosniaks are an absolute majority (50.11 per cent) in BiH, although the Serbian political elite and the RS Government have refused to recognise the results (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016, p. 54).
8.   Serb member of the Bosnian Presidency (2014–18), former Prime Minister of RS (2001–03), and Minister of Foreign Affairs of BiH (2003–07).
9.   President (2010–18) and former Prime Minister of RS (1998–2001, 2006–10).
10. Croat member of the Bosnian Presidency (2002–05, 2014–18).
11. The Fragile States Index (2017) describes BiH as neither sustainable nor stable, rather classifying it under the 'warning' category. The two most alarming indicators of Bosnian fragility are the factionalisation of elites (8.7/10) and external intervention (8.2/10). Nations in Transit assesses BiH as a 'transitional government or hybrid regime' with a score of 4.54/7 (1 – most democratic, 7 – least democratic). Out of seven indicators, the worst scores that BiH received were in the 'national democratic governance' (6/7) and 'corruption' (5/7) categories. Furthermore, Bosnian democracy has been in constant decline since 2008, when its score was 4.11 (Freedom House, 2017).

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