



UDC 323.1:327.57(497.6)
<https://doi.org/10.22182/spt.1622017.2>
Manuscript received: 09.09.2017.
Accepted for publishing: 31.10.2017.
Original scientific paper

Serbian Political Thought
No. 2/2017,
Year IX,
Vol. 16
pp. 23-38

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Building Nations Instead of Peace(s): the Bosnian Metaconflict

Abstract

The author argues that a significant problem with the ongoing international administration in Bosnia is an epistemic hegemony of the West, which has further deformed Bosnian conflicted society through the establishment of approaches that resemble Western colonialism/imperialism. Although illiberal and lacking local legitimacy and accountability, this informal trusteeship has adopted discourses of liberalism and Europeaness to justify itself in front of the local and global public. Nevertheless, that caused local resistance — mostly in the form of ethnopolitics. Political elites, both internal and external, have framed post-war society of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a ‘continuation of war by other means’, which resulted in the construction of mutually contested national identities and ethnicized peaces. Therefore, the author uses critical approach to peacebuilding, interpretative methodology and discourse analysis to argument his general hypothesis.

Key words: Bosnia and Herzegovina, metaconflict, ethnopolitics, liberal peace, statebuilding, political discourse.

Introduction

The *Fragile State Index*, more than two decades after the signing of the Dayton agreement, describes Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as neither sustainable nor stable, but classified under a “warning” category. The two most alarming indicators of Bosnian fragility are factionalization of elites (8.7/10) and external inter-

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vention (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 score BiH got for “national democratic governance” (6/7) and “corruption” (5/7) categories. Combined with the highest unemployment rate in Europe, high levels of poverty, social exclusion and ethnic discrimination is what makes BiH highly fragile, if not completely failed state (Tepšić, Džuverović 2017). Hence, the main question this article discusses is why have BiH become so entrenched in the ethno-political struggles and resistant to any meaningful political change? It tries to identify the patterns and commonalities of the post-war transition, and explain construction of mutually contested identities and the “continuation of war by other means” context. In order to grasp these complexities first part of the article deals with epistemic issues of peacebuilding, the second section analyzes discourse and practice of international community in BiH, while the third segment discusses ethnonational discourses and structural selectivity they construct.

An epistemic challenge to liberal peacebuilding

Although thesis about external intervention as a primary cause of Yugoslav wars (Gibbs 2009) may be an exaggeration, there is a lot more to it than the mainstream interpretations are willing to recognize. Doctrinal basis of the international community activities in these conflicts was the humanitarian interventionism based on the precedence of human rights over the rights of states — sovereignty and territorial integrity. Two main interventions, in BiH and Kosovo/Serbia, have resulted, respectively, in a creation of fragile state and a quasi-state. What started as a political and military intervention has continued as a liberal peace/statebuilding (continuation of intervention by other means).

As Richmond argues, these two cases, among others, are the real examples of liberal peace (peace-as-governance) crisis, lasting for over two decades now. From East Timor and Cambodia to the Balkans, these peacebuilding missions have had unintended consequences or failed to achieve their ambitious objectives, mainly because of the lack of grounded legitimacy, contextual knowledge and ability to construct meaningful relations with the locals (Richmond 2009; 2012; 2014). Peacebuilding in BiH has been transformed into a political stalemate,

making this case protracted social conflict. Politics in this country have developed specific internal logic, a form of resistance (mixed with a particular 'dose' of acceptance and cooptation) to the concept of liberal peacebuilding, based on elite levels and identity politics, prioritizing community, self-determination, and ethnonationalities. Furthermore, collective endeavors of citizens and local organizations (civil society) have been mainly derogated as illegitimate, being perceived as agents of the international community or 'donor-sponsored artifice' (Franks & Richmond 2008; Belloni 2001).

The problem is that concept of liberal peace was developed in a particular epistemic community, which claims universal applicability of its ideas and values (Newman 2009). This epistemic superiority and a consequential Orientalist/Balkanist perspective is a systematic factor that alienates these activities from the target population, which often perceives them as imperial or colonial (Newman 2009; Paris 2009). All of that construes a phenomenon Lemay-Hebert (2009) calls a 'statebuilding paradox', meaning that direct governance of international administration, in general, creates some form of local reaction to foreign rule, and more the internationals strengthen their control, their governance becomes politically weaker and more illegitimate ('legitimacy dilemma'), at least from a local perspective. If the locals perceive an international administration as a completely exogenous, they will most likely develop some kind of resistance agenda.

Furthermore, from a perspective of local (epistemic) communities, these efforts of the international community usually seem as highly unethical political and economic experiments, processes that do not engage with deep-rooted problems and casual factors of conflict — such as needs, culture, customs, identity, religion, etc. Also, liberal peacebuilding perpetuates tension between 'universal' liberal values and particular culture/identity, between individual and collective rights, between the (neo)liberal state model and local autonomies, which leads to further deformation (as an opposite of transformation) of existing conflict, making it more inflexible, ethnically exclusive and structurally and culturally violent. Partial or complete aberration of liberal norms and institutions in practice ('democratic paradox') is also a common result. Democratization, development, and free trade reforms, although processes normatively inclined to peace, have their dark side: authoritarianism, majoritarianism, corruption, market deviations, cronyism, deprivation of human needs, rights, and freedoms, etc. (Richmond 2014). All this

can make liberal peacebuilding a *simulacrum*, a simulation of reality since behavioral practice does not follow a discursive one.

To grasp these epistemic differences, the top-down (international) vs. bottom-up (local) perspective, we should, as Gilbert (2012) rightfully claims, take into account communicative and performative dimensions, i.e. political rhetoric of peace and state building processes. Rhetoric is performative in a sense that represents “political action, an intervention in the political process that seeks to promote certain claims and de-legitimize others” (Toal 2013: 170), and it needs to be understood as part of multifaceted context, with the goal of constructing legitimacy and attracting support. In other words, performativity is “the acting that is needed to accumulate and retain power... to mobilize and lead, to connect and affirm in ways that serve their ends” (Ibid.). Actors of this “discursive entrepreneurship” involve various communication strategies, such as self-positioning, adversarial framing and symbolic issues development (Ibid.).

The main problem here is that — as Gilbert (2012) has shown in the case of BiH — common research methodology of this and similar problems has some significant omissions, which make it blind to phenomena such as legitimacy, publicity (public persuasion) and understanding of peacebuilding practices: “Thus, most state-building is shaped by academic disciplinary cultures with a strong undercurrent of positivism, including a drive to generalization, the use of individual cases to verify or build theoretical models with transhistorical and transcultural validity, and the privileging of prediction and parsimony. All of these elements dovetail with the interests of policy-makers, practitioners and influential elites looking for research with applicable results — for universal, portable ‘Best Practices’ and a uniform approach that promise to make current and future state-building more effective. As a consequence, most scholarship on state-building shares the conceptual coordinates and categories of practice of state-building practitioners.” (Ibid: 4)

It is what Newman (2009: 28-29) calls *the narrow approach* to peacebuilding, which includes “tangible, sometimes quantifiable, targets and benchmarks, such as number of refugees resettled or repatriated, demobilization and disarmament targets, employment indicators, nutrition and health figures, and economic development”, as an opposite to *the broader approach*, which resists quantitative benchmarking methods and measuring of peacebuilding, formulaic thinking and universal blueprints, and insists on conflict resolution, reconciliation, and subjective and contextual issues such as identity and sub-state actors.

A common oversight in the “narrow” conceptualization of research is an adoption of the inside/outside distinction logic, which is again a consequence of the manner its practitioners conceive international intervention. The idea of a clear division between the state realm and international relations is based on the norm of sovereignty, which consequently leads to the perception of political legitimacy and accountability as only a matter of domestic political elites and citizens. That is a glaring omission because societies are not bounded totalities, they are not closed systems, but “constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power” (Mann 1986: 1). Moreover, as historical sociologists, in particular, have shown, international and domestic realms are mutually dependent and constitutive (MacMillan 2013; Hobden, Hobson 2002). What we should take into account in the case of international peacebuilding is also an agency of international community in “domestic” political relations, including relations of legitimacy and accountability with the target population. Most of the international intervention analyses lack exactly these dimensions, operating within a problem-solving paradigm, where peacebuilding projects and results are evaluated against “the self-defined intentions and goals of the intervention agencies themselves” (Gilbert 2012: 5).

In practice of peacebuilding, international staff worldwide is responsible for maintaining the liberal *status quo*, and that is why they are rarely chosen for their knowledge of local culture, tradition or history. On the contrary, they are selected because of their universal knowledge, which places like BiH are reportedly deficient of, such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, security reforms, etc. Moreover, as the local is usually blamed for peacebuilding failures, ignorance of such local knowledge is often seen as a virtue (Gilbert 2012). Consequently, individuals and communities organize and mobilize themselves in parallel processes of peacebuilding, as a resistance to the liberal model, constructing critical agency of political elites, NGO’s, identity groups, etc.

In BiH, agents of resistance are mostly political elites as the representatives of different national identities (ethnopolitical entrepreneurs), claiming either secession (Serbs), higher autonomy (Croats and Serbs) or reintegration (centralization) of the state (Bosniaks). In this and similar contexts of chaotic or poorly organized “informal trusteeships” and “shared sovereignties” (Chandler 2006), political elites pursue their particularistic interests in the mutual authoritarian struggle for power and dominance, which turns their post-war societies into hybrid agonistic

states and peaces (Richmond 2009; 2012). Although these resistant peace projects may not seem too constructive, being often ethnically exclusive, that depends on an answer to the central question of peacebuilding: *peace for whom?* Moreover, I would argue here that there is no such a thing as universal, completely inclusive peace (except in normative theory), because logic of political practice is the one of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the key goal of peacebuilding should not be to create a utopian, completely inclusive community, but to make the post-war community less exclusive, and to make that exclusion less violent.

Political elites of BiH have responded to the aforementioned question with the more or less same answer: *peace for our ethnic group, i.e. nation* (peace-as-self-determination), which has brought us to the situation with multiple parallel peace, state and nation building processes, agencies, discourses and practices — and frame “almost every political issue in the country as primarily an issue of identity rather than practical politics, economy or something else” (Sarajlić 2011: 11). Therefore, to properly evaluate a case of peacebuilding, beside the discourses of international community, internationally supported political elites and externally financed NGOs, we should also study discourses of antagonized political elites and citizens. Usually, these discourses include narratives about main political topics — identity, recognition, participation, security, etc. In addition, they inevitably deal with the interpretative framing of the violent past, constituting a distinct form of conflict: “metaconflict” or “conflict over the nature of conflict”. These “social struggles to label, interpret and explain” past conflicts are not external to them; they are consequential but internal parts of conflicts (Brubaker, 2002).

Liberal peacebuilding and illiberal practice

The Dayton Agreement did stop the war in BiH, and that was an admirable achievement, but it also created a framework for institutionalization of the war gains and ethnic cleansings, and what is more important — provided the “continuation of war by other means” (as Paddy Ashdown described it; see Chandler 2006). The flexibility of Dayton framework had enabled international actors (primarily the Office of the High Representative [OHR], Peace Implementation Council [PIC], and EU/NATO) to reshape the Bosnian post-war transition to fit their interpretative perspectives and decisions, and, consequently, created internationally recognized independent state without sovereignty (re-

sponsible to the international community, not its citizens), and without need to “politically engage Bosnian citizens in the post-conflict process of transition” (Chandler 2006: 18; Pehar 2012). Just as Richmond (2009: 62) argues: “...the post-conflict individual, who is relatively powerless, is required to perform ‘liberal peace acts’, such as voting, paying taxes, engaging in the free market and expecting rights, in order to keep the international gaze satisfied, but is not to expect that this performance carries any weight.”

The main problem OHR confronted was how to legitimize its presence among the local population and how to manage an emerging “democratic paradox” — the promotion of democracy through undemocratic means (Majstorović 2007; Gilbert 2012). OHR’s ‘Bonn powers’ have created an unprecedented case out of the Bosnian post-war reconstruction, introducing an international body with unlimited power, and without internal legitimacy and accountability, violating the rule of law and human rights, and undermining the very essence of the Dayton Agreement (Chandler 2006; Martinović 2012). “By this practice the High Representative has made the most sustained attack on the Rule of Law in the modern history so to speak.” (Baros 2012: 6) His mandate was based on four political figments: self-constitution, non-opposability, direct executability of his decisions, and interpretative superiority (Pehar 2014). Therefore, Pehar (2012) described him as a pre-modern sovereign with unlimited rights, and no responsibility, who practices tyranny in a subtle and sophisticated form. Moreover, both the Constitutional Court of BiH and the European Court of Human Rights have rejected jurisdiction over the OHR’s decisions, making it also *de jure* unaccountable (Pehar 2012). Even Paddy Ashdown, the fourth HR, admitted that “[w]hat we have now is near imperialism” (Glover 2002). Thus, it is understandable that most of the OHR’s public discourse has been devoted to the justification of its authority, and defense against criticism.

Firstly, OHR adopted an evaluative, pedagogic and paternalistic approach based on the discourses of liberalism and “European standards and values”. Grounded in the epistemic hegemony of the West, this method was intrinsically violent (culturally and structurally), because it presupposed expertise of the foreigners and immaturity of the locals. Secondly, this approach distributed responsibility and accountability of political actors in a particular manner: OHR was presented as a mediator and neutral supervisor of the Bosnian politics, while the internal actors were shown as the most or only responsible. Therefore, OHR con-

structured itself as a passive and limited body that only intervenes when it is highly necessary, once internal actors endanger the whole peace process. The purpose of this kind of interpretation was to distance foreign actors from responsibility for the Bosnian state and politics and to give OHR and its “Bonn powers” *raison d'être* (Gilbert 2012).

In fact, two discursive positions can be designated in the analysis of the OHR's agency, first dealing with inevitable “European future” of BiH, and second with the model of liberal democracy. The “European future/dream” metaphor is quite common for the European integration discourse in the Western Balkans, along with the “European home”, “European family” and “Europe(anization) as a path” metaphors. It implies that the Western Balkan countries live in the nationalist past burdened by war, and that European integration is their only chance — European future, or no future at all. All these metaphors designated the Western Balkan nations as not mature or not European enough and invoked authoritarian paternalism of the EU and the West (Petrović 2012; Majstorović 2007).

In the case of BiH, OHR envisioned itself as a supreme arbiter of “Europeanness” and “democratiness” — in Paddy Ashdown's words: “Will you join Europe or will you be left behind as the stagnant pool of the Balkans?” (Glover 2002), or “a black hole in the Balkans”, as he stated on another occasion (Majstorović 2007: 645). Both European values and liberal democracy were presented as undisputed ideals, which OHR used for justification of its interventionism — such as the imposition of unconstitutional decisions and laws or removal of elected officials. For instance, two years after the beginning of Bosnia's European integration process, OHR decided to reform Council of Ministers through the strengthening of the Council's Chairman position — transforming it into *de facto* prime minister of BiH — and to found Directorate for European Integration empowered with “special responsibilities”, all for the purpose of easier coordination with EU and the harmonization of domestic laws with the *acquis communautaire*. Along with the “double-hatting” of Paddy Ashdown as the first EU Special Representative in BiH (EUSR) and the High Representative (in 2002), this marked the beginning of EU's “ownership” of BiH (Chandler 2006; Peter 2011). Therefore, although OHR was illiberal and authoritarian body, lacking any democratic relation to the people of BiH, it has partially succeeded to legitimize itself by invoking European and liberal discourse. By insisting on the inability of local actors to create “normality” in the post-war

society, OHR took a role of the defender of Bosnian people against the “predatory elites”.

Apart from being illegitimate, decisions of the OHR were also mostly ineffective. The “Europeanness” and “democrateness” of Bosnian society never really outgrew their ritual dimensions, being reduced only to elections and similar formal procedures. Furthermore, Bosnian elites, even when they had accepted OHR’s decisions, always found a way to adjust them to their causes or to avoid them completely. Nonetheless, Wolfgang Petritsch (1999-2002), together with his predecessor Carlos Westendorp (1997-99) and successor Paddy Ashdown (2002-2006) enacted 757 decisions, removed 119 officials from their positions (Ashdown removed 59 of them in just two days) and imposed 286 laws and amendments. Consequently, this trio belongs to the group of *aggressive HRs*, while the last three HRs, Christian Schwarz-Schilling (2006-2007), Miroslav Lajčák (2007-2009), and Valentin Inzko (2009-) belong to the group of *defensive HRs* (Martinović 2012; Peter 2011). So, what has changed after the Ashdown’s mandate (named “King Paddy” by the Guardian) and during the reign of the three last HRs? Why did HRs almost give up their “Bonn powers”, especially Schwarz-Schilling and Lajčák? Well, in the process of Bosnian “ownership” transfer to EU, Europeans started to advocate the closing of OHR and transition of its authorities to the representative of EU in BiH. In 2011, the EU elected Peter Sorensen as EUSR and as the head of the EU delegation, which officially marked the discontinuation with the double position of EUSR and HR. Olli Rehn, the former Commissioner for Enlargement, probably best described the change of EU attitude toward OHR, in his 2009 speech: “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... to avoid any misunderstandings: a country with a High Representative cannot become a candidate country with the EU.” (Baros 2010: 8)

The analysis of peacebuilding performative dimensions showed that discourse of liberal democracy, in the case of OHR and BiH, had two functions: the function of discipline and authorization, and of the inequality structuring between local and international actors. By adopting the inside/outside distinction, international interveners have managed to self-authorize themselves as external supervisors of democratic and European reforms implementation and not as equal actors of the Bosnian post-war process. In other words, they have transferred categories

of difference into categories of the rule. However, this inside/outside division has also produced some unintended consequences. Bosnian political elites have used the image of the outsider as a self-sufficient reason to resist OHR's decisions and also for the legitimization of their politics. Furthermore, they often opposed self-representations of the OHR, contending it and reframing as "neocolonial", "anti-Croat" or "anti-Serb" agency (Gilbert 2012). So, as I argued before, the whole OHR behavior and a struggle to make certain frameworks and categories relevant can only be properly understood if we contextualize it, together with the locally relevant categories and interpretative frameworks, as ongoing interactions of the Bosnian peace and statebuilding process.

Peace as continuation of war by other means

A local politician that marked the last ten years of a twenty-year long political history of the post-Dayton BiH was Milorad Dodik, who rather successfully transformed himself from pro-USA and pro-EU social democrat in the 1990s, to the pan-Serbian national leader (a hegemonic interpreter of the Serbian national interests in BiH). His political discourse from 2006, when he became the Prime Minister of RS for the second time (after that he was elected President of RS in 2010 and again in 2014), has been mostly based on the negation of the Bosnian state (and in general of Bosnia as a concept) and affirmation of RS' statehood (a "permanent category", compared to BiH as a "contingent" one), including the idea that RS has the right to referendum and a separation from BiH. As Gilbert argues, advocates of exclusive state projects always deploy narratives to the population whose legitimacy and support they seek, and by doing that they reproduce the sense of belonging and particular social identity — in this case, the Serbian ethnonational identity — while they deconstruct alternative ones: "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." (Gilbert 2013: 11)

In Dodik's discourse counterparts are not the entities — FBiH and RS — but RS and BiH (including OHR) as something external, BiH as the Other. Dodik's discourse brought him popularity in RS and fostered delegitimization of BiH among Serbs, designating it as: "unsustainable

state”, “state without future”, “big mistake of the West”, “forced state”, “banana republic”, “devil-state”, “monstrous”, “artificial”, “unnatural”, “impossible”, “rotten”, and “virtual” (Toal 2013). He summed up his position in a few sentences: “I am positive that Bosnia has no future... We Serbs do not live in Bosnia, we live in the Serb Republic. Bosnia is a burden for us, something we want to shake off our back. Foreigners who have met here every Friday for years to make decisions on BiH know that. The clan of ambassadors knows that a multiethnic society can be implemented somewhere else, but in Bosnia it is impossible. Bosnia is a divided country in people’s minds.” (Toal 2013: 166) At the same time, this discourse has insisted on the RS’ statehood as the only guarantee of the Serbian existence in Bosnia, both physical and in terms of identity, and as a defense against further disrespect and humiliation of the Serbian people. Dodik declared that RS and Serbia are both Serbian states and that RS, just as Serbia, has all the attributes of a state: government, territory, and people (Oslobođenje 2013).

As opposed to the Serbian one, dominant Bosniak political discourse, from the beginning of the post-Dayton BiH, has emphasized an importance of the Bosnian sovereignty and integrity for the Bosniak identity, and has challenged the legitimacy and morality of RS existence, occasionally designating it as a “genocidal creation” that has no future, as an anti-Bosniak apartheid-style entity, an occupation of the Bosnian land, etc. (Toal 2013; Gilbert 2013; B92 2012). Since these interethnic discourses were mutually constitutive, accusations of genocidal creation have continually been deconstructed by the Serbian discourse entrepreneurs — Dodik even warned them if those accusations of genocidal creation do not stop, they would get an answer called “the people” and “the referendum”, and urged them to stop the “Srebrenization of Bosnia” (Toal 2013).

Furthermore, both Serbian and Bosniak dominant political discourses affirm the victimhood of their nations. Their proponents have been engaged in a “mirror-imaging acts of competing victimology” (Gilbert 2013: 27), and while the Bosniak victimhood was generally based on Srebrenica, Serbian was mostly built on the Second World War and Jasenovac (additionally, Serbian victims of the last “Fatherland War” also have an important role). As Dodik explained in 2008, the 1990s war was a continuation of the WWII: “The world never accepted or understood the truth about Jasenovac... If the world understood Jasenovac, it would understand the most recent war and would not be oriented harshly against one side... In the 1990s the Serb people fought so that Jasenovac

would not happen again, and the result of that fight is the Republika Srpska.” (Gilbert 2013: 2)

While Bosniaks and Serbs, as mutual “ideational enemies”, had, respectively, Serbian national entity (or the whole ethnic group) and the Bosnia as a concept (mostly equated with Bosniaks and international community) as their Others, Croatian political elites led dual discursive policy. They supported Bosnian independence and the creation of a Bosniak-Croatian entity, but they had also fought Bosniaks in the war and later confronted their “politics of domination” in the FBiH. Their identity struggle has been mainly directed toward Bosniaks as the Other since they feared their supremacy. As their undisputed leader and a close ally of Dodik, Dragan Čović (HDZ BiH) has often repeated that territorial autonomy would be a rational solution for the Croats and a precondition for the proper functioning of BiH. He argued, as well, that “what we have now absolutely does not offer any possibility but to perceive Federation of BiH as an entity of the Bosniak nation” (Nezavisne 2012).

A good example and a culmination of Bosnian metaconflict were another referendum crisis in RS. It all started in November 2015 with the Constitutional Court’s decision, based on the Bakir Izetbegović’s (leader of the Party of Democratic Action [SDA] and Bosniak member of the Presidency of BiH from 2010) appellation, to ban the RS’ Republic Day as unconstitutional and discriminative toward Bosniaks and Croats, constitutive peoples of RS since 2000. The problem with the Republic Day was the fact that it honored January 9, 1992, a day when the self-proclaimed Assembly of the Serb People in BiH (without Croatian or Muslim/Bosniak representatives) founded the Republic of Serb People of BiH. Following their main political discourse, all Serbian parties in the National Assembly of the RS reacted with an adoption of a formal decision to hold a referendum in RS, with the idea to ask the citizens of RS whether they support the celebration of January 9 as the Republic Day. Their explanation was that “Bosnian authorities have neither effective, nor formal legitimacy”, describing them as a consequence of OHR’s violent imposition, and not a result of a dialogue between entities or constituent peoples. Furthermore, they again invoked metaconflict framework, alluding to the outvoting in the 1992 referendum, which has continued through the work of OHR and Constitutional Court, and insisted that the Court’s decision was just a first step towards the abolition of the RS’ name, or even the entity itself (Nezavisne 2016). On the

other side, Bosniak and international elites (with the exception of the Russian Ambassador in BiH) countered this argumentation, declaring referendum a violation of Bosnian constitutional order and statehood, and a “trial balloon” for an independence referendum in RS (Oslobođenje 2016). Croatian leader Dragan Čović stated he had no any problems with the RS’ Republic Day or the referendum, but also emphasized that all decisions of Constitutional Court must be respected, which perfectly reflected the Croatian political discourse in BiH (Nezavisne 2016). Nevertheless, even after the Constitutional Court had temporarily banned the referendum, Serbian politicians remained committed to the RS’ Assembly decision.

Conclusion

To summarize, Bosniak elites support international community’s fiction of independent and unified Bosnian state, Serbian elites mostly oppose it, while Croatian elites do not challenge Bosnian statehood explicitly, but they resist any centralization of the state and struggle for further political subjectivization of the Croatian constitutiveness. That fiction of sovereignty itself is a generator of conflict, factor that deepens and protracts ethnic polarization. For all sides in BiH, that becomes a political weapon that encourages the continuation of war by other means. Political elites do not have to face the causes of the post-war conflict; they do not have to take care of a reconciliation process, because they know that international community will decide instead of them, so they can keep having their maximalist demands and opposing the idea of compromise (Pehar 2014). As a result, there are three ethnonational concepts of state (and peace) in BiH: the Serbian concept that envisions BiH as a confederation of two or three states, where RS will gain its sovereignty as a nation-state (with the possibility to leave the Confederation); the Bosniak concept that insist on the Bosnian sovereignty and statehood as their exclusive homeland, with a possible abolition of the entities; and the Croatian concept that is similar to the Serbian one of confederated BiH (third entity or a reconstruction of cantonal structure in FBiH), including a sense of belonging to a broader national body of Croats (Sarajlić 2011).

When it comes to the international political elite in BiH, especially the HR, situation is ambivalent. The democratization of the HR is impossible because his mandate is based on the premise of the undemocratic

rule. The position of the HR could be only abolished, which would imply international community's recognition that its interpretation of the Dayton Agreement and invention of "Bonn powers" were extreme, unreasonable and incorrect. That makes OHR both desirable and undesirable for the members of international community, and leaves BiH with only two solutions: to continue its existence as an empty state under the authoritarian trusteeship of OHR (or some other "high representative"), or to transfer its "ownership" to local actors, ethnopolitical elites that would probably lead Bosnia to further disintegration (possibly violent), as there is no basic consensus about the post-Dayton state and other important issues (Pehar 2012).

Therefore, this Bosnian metaconflict and its competing discourses (both national and international) have even more polarized Bosnian post-war society along the wartime lines, not just of the 1990s Bosnian war, but also of the WWII, turning Bosnia into mutually exclusive, antagonistic, political and moral communities. By doing that, political elites have achieved something — whether intentionally or not — they have maintained war framework as a form of discursive selectivity that rejects and devaluates other alternative discourses and narratives in their respective domains (Gilbert 2013). "Bosnia's political geography keeps wartime divisions alive and rewards exclusivist appeals more than others." (Toal, 2013, p. 199)

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