ADRIENN LILLA JUHÁSZ

Emerging Social Realities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Limits of Institutionalizing Ethnicity*

Almost 12 years have passed since the end of armed conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and the conflict has gone non-overtly violent and exists in a phase that is somewhere between war and peace. Now rivaling symbols, inflammatory rethorics, memories and commemorations, conflicting political agendas, school-curriculas, war- and historical-narratives, representations, visibilities and audibilities of religious institutions mark public spaces throughout Bosnia. Post-war settings thus are rather recreating war-time ethnocentric reflexes and stereotypes than diminishing them. The political developments in Republika Srpska coupled with those of the Koštunica-government in Belgrade (i.e., seccessionst rethorics from Banja Luka systematically linked to the status of Kosovo and the implicit territorial claims of Serbia on Republika Srpska) can be considered a radicalization of territorialized and institutionalized ethnic divisions. The Belgrade office of the Helsinki Committee assess those developments most worrisome for both

Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina,[1] while the International Crisis Group (ICG) have foreseen 2007 a dangerous year.[2] Together with the tension between growing domestic powers, the euro-atlantic integration process, and the all-time dirtiest election-rethorics in 2006 (Alija Izetbegović's tomb blown-up in August 2006), the present period must be regarded as crucial, and shows no improvement. Moreover, the country can be found at present without fully functioning administration, the Council of Ministers (CoM)[3] operating only in technical mandate.[4]

The present study aims to highlight how ethnicity remains dispro-portionate and how it is exacerbated by political choices. It also evalu-ates today's socio-political developments that can result in new realities for inhabitant communities. In other words, it explores how the actual political regime reshapes both community-forging dynamics and percep-tions of the 'Others'. The ethnic categories that the country's constitutions affirm (as constituent peoples – "kao konstitutivni narodi") – that is, Bos-niaks, Serbs and Croats – have their limits and have no practical value in many social settings. Therefore, trying to understand the country on the basis of ethnicity will unavoidably lead to simplicism and a captured logic. Now, all identity cards read "Nationality = BiH." This move merely aims to lift ethnic and territorial boundaries similarly to the creation of the uni-fied currency, unified military, unified immatriculation signs on cars, etc, and would introduce a category based on citizenship. But it fails to do so. No one can identify with such a functional, denaturalized "identity," and no loyalty towards central Bosnian authorities can be forged on that basis. None of the people interviewed in Bosnia and Herzegovina referred to themselves as Bosnians or citizens of BiH, but hold multiple and tran-sitional identities. Directly following the 'Nationality' category on IDs the place of birth appears in bold face. When coupled with the birthplace, the given name and surname reveal an evident ethnicity. Such an indi-rect marker of ethnic identity can also be instrumental in the recreation of

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1   *Human Rights: Hostage to the State's regression*. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia – Annual Report: Serbia 2006. Belgrade, 2007.

2   ICG Report Nr. 180 – *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A new international engagement strat-egy*, 15 February 2007.

3   The state level executive power, responsible for the functioning of the admin-istration. Its Chair is nominated by the collective Presidency. The position has been held by Nikola Špirić (SNSD) up to his recent resignation following the 19th October reforms. See also 182.

4   The manuscript was closed on the 5th November, 2007.

ethnic logic. It is a sensitive subject that 'sets the table' for discrimination. Constitutional categories as well as the mixed, socially developed, and narrative-driven categories (the chetnik, ustasha, Turks/Turci, wahhabit, etc. rethoric) intersect and are complicated by religion's penetration into politics and political pressure on religious institutions. As a consequence, religious affiliation is succeptible to reaffirming ethno-territorial boundaries. Also, because of the lack of loyalty to the center, local elites, often engaged in transnational networks, deliberately play the role of national, ethnic, or ethno-religious 'sovereigns' and present issues and set political agendas in transnational ethnic terms, as collective consciousness. Ritually and violently affirmed ethnic and religious boundaries lead to an unavoidable ethnicization of the political space, a top-down separationist-segregationist logic, and an erosion of central legitimacy. Ritualization of exclusion and ethnic discrimination can be demonstrated in everyday practices of public administration and legislative measures, the banalization of violent nationalism and the reproduction of stereotypes through 'street symbolism.'

For Bosnian Muslims, ethnicity imposes additional obstacles in default of documented identity, since the nation-building is a still ongoing process for them. This is why Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina tend to perceive themselves, and tend to be perceived as, a transitional and potentially dangerous people who are either being captured in a 'reservation' with diminishing territories – though adding up to a majority – or are being target of the same stereotypes as framed in connection with non-constituent minorities, most often the Roma.[5]

Scientific, 'pseudo-scientific' and political critics of the Dayton arrangements concentrate mostly on the institutional level. The ICG[6] and the European Centre for Minority Issues[7] emphasize the disfunction in the current ethnicity-based institutions and the failure of statebuilders. Some other sources emphasize that the *status quo* of war-time genocidal territorial creations reinforce ethno-nationalism and are the

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[5]   On the basis of interviews made between December 2006 and October 2007. See also Damir Nikšić: 'If I wasn't Muslim' video (2004) at http://www.damirniksic.com/videoworks.html

[6]   ICG Report Nr. 180 – *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A new international engagement strategy*, 15 February 2007.

[7]   Bieber, Florian: *Institutionalizing Ethnicity in the Western Balkans – Managing change in deeply divided societies*. European Centre for Minority Issues – Working Paper, 2004.

grounds for separatism at the expense of integration. All this highlight-
ing the enourmous contradiction of the Dayton-logic: legitimized results
of ethnic cleansing at the institutional level vs. efforts to eliminate those
results from societal point of view.[8] It is evident that the present politi-
cal arrangements bear different starting points for all three peoples: for
Bosnian-Serb nationalist political forces and their voters, Republika Srp-
ska's autonomy is a step – at least rhetorically – toward a separate state;
for Bosnian-Croat nationalists constitutes a trap and an obstacle against
the possibility of having their own autonomous entity, and for Bosniak
(Muslim) political and religious elites who cannot switch on disintegra-
tionist options, it is the only possible frame for their bounded existence.
This situation dooms all institutional reforms to be contested by either
of the communities.

Informal discrimination in formal parity

The Bosnian state, as an international protectorate is a *de jure* forced
union of the not less forced Bosniak-Croat Federation and the territo-
rially delimited-detached Republika Srpska (RS) which has multilay-
ered and stronger relations with Serbia than with the Federation itself.
Then there is the self-governing, neutralized, multiethnic Brčko – with
its strategic position (as a 'plug' separating RS and Serbia) and an even-
tual special status for Srebrenica[9] (claimed on the basis of security rea-
sons, but if agreed, serving as a 'certificate' for Muslim victimhood). The
Bosnian state-building complex is topped with and pervaded by a qua-
si-sovereign and extremely complicated international authority that can
be abstracted to the UN-mandated High Representative and its shadow
equivalent, the EU-mandated Special Representative, which possesses
paralell competences, that is the supervision of the Dayton-principles.
The High Representative Office was due to close doors in June 2007, but
that step was postponed to the end of June 2008 on decision of the Peace
Implementation Council's Steering Board as „the time has not yet come

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[8]   Presentation of Xavier Bougarel entitled 'Sorties de guerre et injustices du
quotidien'/'Nepravda svakodnevice u posleratnom dobu', held on 17th October
2007 at the Faculty of Political Science, Belgrade.

[9]   For more details see Szilágyi, Imre: Bosznia – Identitások, entitások, lemaradá-
sok. *Hírlevél*, Magyar Külügyi Intézet, Vol. I. Nr. 3, 2007.

to leave Bosnians govern themselves on their own."[10] Miroslav Lajčak, the present High Representative and EU Special Representative in one person places police reform (as the key for the EU integration process), 'facing the past'[11] (as the key for reconciliation) and state institutional reforms (as the key for cooperation) at the top of his priorities.

The constitutions prescribe the strict parity of the three nations. This was conceived as a mechanism to ensure equal representation of all main groups, but in practice, it does not translate to their equality in status. Inherited from the pre-1990 constitution, the parity-concept aimed to motivate people of different ethnicities to cooperate through a tripartit sharing of power and proportional-representation electoral system, but it resulted in extreme institutionalization of parallels and the strategies of non-acting, obstructing and withdrawals instead. As it would take hundreds of pages, the present study will not provide a thorough description of Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutional system;[12] rather, it seeks to emphasize that almost all the government institutions are founded upon the idea of ethnic power-sharing, and serve as a tool for exclusion, except for the upper chamber of the state parliament, but this latter has been losing power. Also, most government-sectors are constructed according to that logic, even the economy is 'nationalized' and constructed in parallel. This latter results in each community having parallell transnational economic relations with neighbouring countries, Islamic states, and countries where diasporas are important. The ethnic-key is ignored only in the centralized Constitutional Court, which has managed to impose some homogenizing measures. However, in 2000, it passed a most controversial decision on constituent peoples' veto rights:[13]

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[10] On the basis of interviews with EUSR's spokesperson, Eldar Šubašić (December 2006, May 2007) in Sarajevo. Schwarz-Schilling was aiming to leave all power to Bosnians by that time.

[11] On the basis of an interview, appeared in the DANI on the 17th August 2007.

[12] For more details and a concise overview see Juhász, József: *Két korszak határán – tanulmányok Kelet-Európa jelenkortörténetéből*. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2007. And also: Győri Szabó Róbert: *Kisebbség, autonómia, regionalizmus*. Budapest: Osiris, 2006.

[13] 3rd Partial Decision in Case U 5/98 as of July 2000, the Serb and Croat judges dissenting. In *Strengthening Legislatures for Conflict Management in Fragile States*. Princeton University – Woodrow Wilson School. See also: Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Case U 5/98 Partial Decision III Issue of the "Constituent Peoples", Venice Commission, http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2000/CDL(2000)081-e.asp

„With a narrow 5:4 vote, and the Serb and Croat judges dissenting, the Con-stitutional Court decided that all of the three constituent peoples have to be also constituent peoples on Entity level in order to break up the national homogenisation of the Entities without, however, giving clear directions for the necessary constitutional amendments and thereby institutional changes except for a warning to introduce 'vital interest clauses', i.e. veto powers of constituent peoples, on all levels of government."

In opposition to the ammendment's original intent, the veto mecha-nism has been abused as a tool for political pressure, and its scope is not clearly set. The fact that any decision can be outvoted at state-level leads to paralysis and legitimizes obstructions and blockages in governance. The latest set of measures undertaken by the High Representative on the 19th October, 2007 concerns the CoM and aims to outpace obstructionism by obligating decisions. Just like other OHR-measures, it was immediately obstructed by nationalist forces from the Serb side,[14] resulting in the resig-nation of the CoM's Chairman, and the falling into total inability.

Unconnectedness and everyday uncertainty

The administrative and governmental-structures in Bosnia that diverge to create a parallel and segregated system can be the best under-stood through local public institutions: schools – 'two schools under the same roof'-logic, initially launched to accomodate returnees with diverging historical narratives, but that have turned into places where a hostile image of the 'others' is disseminated; municipality (*opština*) gov-ernments – obstructing the returnee-process; police-headquarters – the failure of unification, war criminals still serving, obstruction and har-assements; and media – reflecting ethnically-biased rethoric. How to run, for example, a state-level history museum or a national library col-lectively? In the absence of consensus on narratives, the collection of the History Museum based in Sarajevo that presents the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina is basically reduced to pre-second world war periods and suffers a great deal from lack of financing.

Polarized party politics and nationalist-populist rethoric serve as tools of legitimization in the hands of political elites and entrepreneurs.

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14   It used to be Bosniak members who repeatedly boycotted decision-making.

The lack of grassroot implications for politicians and disregard of local, down-to-earth issues[15] make ethnicity-bound narratives the most effective means of community-building. Narratives generate bounded perceptions, such as perceived insecurity and uncertainty, and create the state of fear – of the future, of the present and of the past –, which provide the necessary *marge de manoeuvre* for political, identity and religious entrepreneurs. By pretending that security is exclusively rooted in a strong and coherent ethno-religious community, entrepreneurs create para-state loyalty bonds. Those mobilizable cognitive schemes – highly situational but having collective elements – are artificially shepherded into a homogenized cathegory called 'identity', the ethnic element of which is activated and mobilized through polarized representations of general themes (mostly: security, economy and property issues). And it is precisely those narratives which block any constructive cooperation and even communication among parties, and which make institutionalized blockages inherent to the power-sharing system. As a result, the system of parallelisms, ethnically exclusive institutions and party-systems generate mutual avoidance and the nationalist parties continued use of inflammatory rethoric and "divisive mobilization in elections"[16] in order to maintain power. The overwhelming majority of political parties are ethnically homogeneous, which further exacerbates the logic of denaturalized or missing citizenship as well as the logic of 'Othering.' All this supposes that votes are ethnically-bounded too. Those continually reelected, traditionally exclusive-nationalist parties (SDA, SDS and HDZ)[17] and the newly emerging ones (SNSD, HDZ 1990, SBiH) master the space of insecurity, act as 'sovereignty entrepreneurs,' tend to muddle political categories, and often buy votes through economic concessions. Since no coalition was possible right after the 2006 elections, agreement

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[15] As all crucial decisions are made by the High Representative, party-politics are somehow released from substantive work and can concentrate more on populist rethorics. See Juhász, 198.

[16] Oberschall, Anthony: *Conflict and Peace Building in Divided Societies – Responses to ethnic violence*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. 34.

[17] SDA: Stranka Demokratske Akcije – Party of Democratic Action, SDS: Srpska demokratska stranka – Serbian Democratic Party; HDZ: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – Croatian Democratic Community, SNSD: Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata – Party of Independent Social Democrats, HDZ 1990: Hrvatsko Zajedništvo – Croats Together, SBiH: Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu – Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

to form a state-level government was achieved only in January 2007, considered a breakthrough. The country has already gone through too many governments (ninth after-Dayton elections in 2006), and only two things seems stable: voting on ethnicity and a lack of cooperation. Nevertheless, there are some fields in which cooperation proves impeccable: for example, the rejection of legislation pertaining to the seizure of assets gained from illegal activities, anti-corruption laws, etc. We cannot ignore the fact that the omnipresent, international politico-military presence is unable or unwilling to repress sprawling maffia-networks or on the omnipotent elites penetrating the media (Miroslav Mišković for instance and his role in financing Milošević's war project), police, politics and church affairs and, in the process, implicating those institutions themselves and creating a space in which insecurity spreads rather than diminishes.

The fascination of nationalism and the accessibility of ethnicity and religion make the nuclear elements of society (family, friends, schoolmates, priests and the religious community) the basic narrative sources for reinforcing boundaries: here, top-down ethnic discourse is reproduced, essentialized, interiorized and localized consequently as a new socialization context. It is new in the sense that before the 1990s, polarization of stereotypes and differing narratives (of course, such stereotypes and narratives existed, but not polarized)[18] was not a general phenomenon. Although the sense of belonging should eliminate a feeling of rootlessness, and violent rituals that construct boundaries (in politics, in culture, in sports, on the streets) should eliminate the feeling of defenselessness, uncertainty persists in security terms as well. 'Facing the past' goes hand-in-hand with re-reading the past. Certainly, it would take generations to (1.) socialize populations according to reconciled historical narratives, if this is at all possible[19] (2.) reach justice for 'real victims' of the previous war. While these diverging narratives provide a daily accessible framework for coping with the past and its highly-visible scars, families of war-victims still have not been recompensated. This results in the phenomenon of justice-seeking, individually, in small collectives or through women's associations, for instance, and individual justice-

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[18] See Tone Bringa: *Being Muslim the Bosnian way*; Ivo Andrić: *Bridge on Drina-river*, etc.

[19] Serbian history books has been constructing a history of wars, genocide and violence and socializing on the basis of it for long.

making[20] – thus, allowing people to become auto-proclaiming entre-
preneurs or masters of life and death. In the absence of a representative
civil service (mainly in the case of split police units) and the problematic
small arms-harvest (as there are reportedly still huge stocks of hidden
arms[21]), minority inhabitants do not know what will happen from one
day to another, and continue to link the perception of insecurity to the
closeness of the 'Others'. Deprivation of arms easily evokes the war-time
scheme of being disarmed in the face of the hostile 'Other', armed to the
teeth, and results in alternative security-building measures (e.g. recourse
to rearmement through maffia-networks). As a response, the EUFOR
replacing the NATO-mandated SFOR since 2004 have launched the so-
called LOTs (Liaison and Observation Teams) at potentially instable or
strategically key areas. The small mobile teams are participating directly
to community life: monitoring inter-ethnic coexistence,[22] harvesting
remaining small arms, attending potentially conflictual commemora-
tions, football matches, etc. and predicting threats on security.

   As one of the major handicaps of post-war setting's territorial logic is
that the new boundaries divided quite a number of *opštinas* (e.g. North of
the Posavina corridor, the RS municipality of Trnovo), bringing radically
changed socio-political and mental realities to the lives of their inhabit-
ants: these people are becoming a minority-population in their previous
natural living space. Which means becoming segregated, rejected, and
discriminated against in the workplace, schools, administrative offices
and police. Becoming isolated, intimidated, harrassed, reduced to being
secondary citizens, thus denaturalized of self-esteem and self-determina-
tion. And also, derooted, desecuritized, and depoliticized in the absence
of credible leaders. Because of discriminatory land-allocation, micro-
strategies and practices on the majority's behalf, they are even expelled
(and very often denied their earlier real-estate and other property), the

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[20] There are still about 14.000 thousand pending cases, that is missing people (of
   which 8000 from Srebrenica alone). These people are neither dead nor alive; and
   their families are not eligible for financial support on the basis of that 'in between'
   status. On the basis of interviews made at the Sarajevo-based Red Cross Society
   of Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2007.

[21] On the basis of interviews made between December 2006 and October 2007 in
   Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

[22] LOT-reports on problematic issues of coexistence are strangely kept secret.

majority population entering into illegal occupancies.[23] The belt along the two entities' borderline is a demographic grey-zone that does not have pure ethnic divisions and where the transition from one entity to the other represents an exciting semiotic problem. Although, one very obvious sign tells at those places how ethno-religious local geopolitics are shaped as a tool of rivalry: the condition of cemeteries and churches. The names on the graves and the graveyard's religious symbolism carry striking information about whom used to be living on the land before the war, and the state of graves shows who is actually living there.

Throughout the Balkans, the returnee question is a shared burden since many people have not finally returned to their original homes. When traveling in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is observable neglect – deserted houses along main roads and in the middle of villages, places to which people have never returned. As the return-process was conceived by emphasis on the 'ethnic minority return', this phenomenon has also caused serious institutional and administrative dilemmas. Many people returned only to get their properties back and then to sell them. Not without reason: who would want to return to a minority position? To hostile neighbours? Or to face police obstruction in the implementation of the peace settlement and the whole process of return? In Serb-inhabited areas Bosniak returnees are often declared Muslim extremists who are trying to restart the war and undermine Republika Srpska.[24] As a result, new demographic and territorial realities have begun consolidating by affirmation of boundaries and striking cultural seclusion: brand-new, huge, ostentatious mosques built along contested border-zones; housing-developments spreading within Eastern Sarajevo that project a total Bosniak-Serb segregation in the capital and the duplication of Sarajevo.

And finally, the social key for bridge-building, that is post-war mixed marriages is practically absent, or quite rare even in towns.

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23 Dahlman, Carl & Ó Tuathail, Gearóid: The 'West Bank' of the Drina – land allocation and ethnic engineering in Republika Srpska. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 31, Nr. 3, 2006. 304–322.

24 Ibid.

Desintegrational forces

A platform shared by both Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat nationalists is the entity issue. The Republika Srpska is already a (para)state within the state, but interested in further desintegration and a constitutional shift that would, thus, strenghten the cause for autonomous Herzegovina.[25] In January 2007 this was openly reaffirmed by the statement that "each people must have its entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina" ("svaki narod treba dobiti svoj entitet u BiH").[26] Also, a recent joint declaration of Croat nationalist forces in Bosnia[27] stipulates that:

> "A new Bosnian constitution would abandon the existing two-entity organization and establish a more functional and just organization, which will not discriminate against or favour any one people…The document envisages Bosnia as a decentralized state with local, regional and state-level governments, where the regional and state level authorities have legislative, executive and Judicial powers. The most disputed layer of government – on the regional level – is intended to be established on the basis of historical, ethnic, geographic, economic and other important criteria "with the possibility of territorial discontinuity of the present organizational units . . . Sarajevo, as the capital of Bosnia, would enjoy special status."[28]

Republika Srpska – captured by Serbia and Kosovo

Since he was promoting multiethnic reconciliation and ardently opposing the Milošević regime and Radovan Karadžić's ethnic-cleansing policy in Bosnia, Milorad Dođik mainly owes his 1997 election as prime

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[25] A continuation of separation-attempts; the previous one took place in 2001, when the HDZ leaders proclaimed in Mostar the self-governing Croat entity and involved Croat soldiers deserting from the Federation army.

[26] Ivo Lučić: Politička i Medijska Revizija Prošlosti U Bosni i Herzegovini. *Status*, broj 11, proljeće 2007.

[27] The declaration was signed by leaders of the Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia, the Croatian Democratic Union, 1990 (HDZ 1990); the Croatian Party of Rights; the Croatian Rights Party; the Croatian Christian Democratic Union; and the People's Benefit through Work Party.

[28] Ibrahimagić, Omer: *Bosnia, defended but not liberated*. Sarajevo: Vijeće Kongresa Bošnjačkih Intelektualaca, 2004.

minister to Bosniak voters. At that time too, the Banja Luka-Pale political rivalry reached its peak, and as a result, ties with the Federation under the Plavšić-Dođik tandem were forged and deepened. Since then, Dođik and his party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), have radically shifted towards nationalism, decentralization and separatism, and are reproducing a more palatable version of Radovan Karadžić's early 1990s exclusivist rethoric. Karadžić's annoncement – as in the prior ideology of Serbs in Bosnia – was formed as follows:

> „We can't live in a unified state. We know it very well: wherever fundamentalism comes in, one can no longer live, there is no toleration. Serbs and Croats, given their birthrate, cannot control the incursion of Islam into Europe; in a united Bosnia, within 5 or 6 years the Muslims will be over 51% …There will be no Muslim foundations laid in any Serb area or any Serb village, for we will give instructions to the Serbs that they must not sell any land to Muslims. Any foundations laid will be blown up."[29]

The SNSD are continuously making allusions to the 'Islamic danger,' the assimilation, and their rethoric in response to every verbal attack becomes harsher. In the October 2006 election campaigns, Dođik's slogan was "RS, a better part of BiH."[30] This was a response to calls for the abolition of the RS from the Party for Bosnia and Hercegovina and for the planned assassination of Dođik. He also very recently met Dobrica Ćosić[31], one of the most influential members of the infamous Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a former president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 1992–93, who helped bring Karadžić to power in Bosnia. Taking into account the 'mainstream' or overall view of young people regarding the actual political regime of RS – i.e., Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić as absolute heroes, Milorad Dođik also as a "great guy", Slobodan Milošević as "respected, but rather not liked,"

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[29] Florence Hartmann, interviewed by Dani (Sarajevo), uploaded: Thursday, 16 August, 2007. Bosnian Institute, http://www.bosnia.org.uk/news/news_list.cfm

[30] Milorad Dođik: We will fight for stronger and better Republic of Srpska, interview made by Nezavisne Novine, on 24th, September 2006. English version online: http://www.vladars.net/en/pm/nn_240906.html

[31] Ćosić's literary works from the end of 1980s and the 1990s (Time of the Evil – *Vreme Zla*, Time of the Dead – *Vreme Smrti* and Time of Power – *Vreme vlasti*, The real and the possible – *Stvarno i moguće*, etc.) are again published in Belgrade and according to librarians are very popular.

and "don't like Tito at all"[32] – we must postulate that recycling the image of defenders of the nation in education results in hero-like perceptions of actual leaders too. Actually, the same happens in Serbia as the state's educational policy is controlled by nationalist forces.[33] When referencing to the relationship between RS and the Federation, SNSD party members tend to employ the victimization scheme and even distance themselves from the state-identity: "Bosnians (!) try to create a new conflict, like that one in Srebrenica, to try to stop RS working" and "Bosnian part cannot keep up with RS, that is why they try to stop it developping…. by creating conflict areas."[34] Dođik has been threatening to call a referendum on the entity's status, thus, systematically linking Bosnia's fate with the future of Kosovo. To back the threat, Vojislav Koštunica stated that "if we would renounce Kosovo (and Metohija), then we would also renounce the right to defend and protect RS as a part, an independent part of Bosnia and Herzegovina."[35] Disposing of this aggressive bargaing strategy, Dođik's rethoric illegitimizes and questions the competence and authority of the OHR. In May 2006, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, a former High Representative in Bosnia, categorically refused any possibility of a referendum on RS's status since it would mean that „some decisions can be made and forced through war."[36]

> „Republika Srpska is neither Kosovo nor Montenegro. The referendum in Montenegro was a special case in accordance with the Constitution of former Yugoslavia. There is no historic Republika Srpska, which would be a basic precondition for its secession. Hence, both the outcome of the referendum in Montenegro and a final decision on the status of Kosovo cannot have any influence on the situation in BiH. This state was agreed, finally, in

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[32] On the basis of interviews made with 18 year-old Bosnian Serbs, finishing students of the '28th June Secondary School' in Serbs-inhabited Eastern Sarajevo, in May 2007.

[33] On the basis of information, provided by the most critical Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (Helsinški Odbor za Ljudska Prava u Srbiji) in October 2007, in Belgrade.

[34] On the basis of an interview made with an eminent figure of the SNSD in Eastern Sarajevo, in May 2007.

[35] ICG Report Nr. 180 – *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A new international engagement strategy*, 15 February 2007.

[36] In an interview with Schwarz-Schilling, appeared on 29th May, 2006 in Večernje Novosti, Sarajevo, English version accessible at OHR-BiH homepage, among archives.

Dayton. Its borders are internationally recognized and there are no open-ended issues. Simply, this is not related to BiH in any way."[37]

When Schwarz-Schilling warned the prime minister of the possibility of being dismissed by the 'Bonn Powers,' Dođik evoked the possibility of collective mobilization for protest and, implicitly, for violence. "If the High Representative wants to see that I can gather 200,000 people in Banja Luka, he can try to remove me, and we shall see what will happen. Do you want me to bring 50,000 Serbs to demonstrate in Sarajevo now?"[38] According to the International Crisis Group report on Bosnia "a substantial majority of RS residents would like to join Serbia."[39] Each entity has its own privatization law, which in the case of the RS allows vast amounts of financial resources to be channeled from Serbia. Through these financial means (i.e., direct investment in Republika Srpska's entity-level budget through the process of privatization process) and the direct political and religious control, Serbia aims to prevent integration of RS with the Federation.[40] This is likely to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina in a state of sustained dependency – from international aid and from Serbia indirectly – and instability. The Dayton agreement relegated the taking-up of special engagements to the competency of entities, which opened the way for the "Special Ties Agreement" between the RS and Serbia in September 2006. The agreement explicitly aims to promote economic and institutional cooperation, but as it implicitly contains territorial claims on behalf of Serbia, it is seen as an attempt to create cross-border Serbian hegemony. In order to make militantism loose ground, removal of the four cyrillic "C"s[41] from the flag of the Republika Srpska was decided, but along with

[37] Ibid.

[38] ICG Report Nr. 180 – *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A new international engagement strategy*, 15 February 2007.

[39] Ibid.

[40] On the basis of information, provided by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia in October 2007, in Belgrade.

[41] "Samo Sloga Srbe Spasava" (Само Слога Србе Спасава), "Only Unity Saves the Serbs" preaches the most important ethno-nationalist mundane slogans of pride and patriotism; it is echoed in street-graffiti, in the ornament of orthodox crosses (even if they had an original and presentable sacred meaning) and T-shirts. During the war, the four 'C's became a kind of insignia Serb militias and the JNA placed on ruined and exploded buildings.

the '3 fingers' (a sign of warmongering among young people), it has rather become an even more popular symbol.

Desecularization and the penetration of the church

In reshaped public settings, superimposed religion acts as a legitimacy vacuum-filler and provider of a cultural model.[42] Moreover, it constitutes a security-net through popular mobilization, rituals as well as through high visibility, audibility, and mediatization–politicizing the spiritual role of church-leaders. Religious indoctrination of political ideas (i.e., reaffirming ethnic and religious roots; the Orthodox Church's involvment in ethnographic discourse on 'Serbianness', identity and community-building through dogmatization and re-traditionalization) make religious entrepreneurs a source of mapping power and indisputable knowledge, possessing the power of 'political Gods.' Churches act as 'para-states' and provide collective knowledge in 'street-politics.' Reis Cerić, Vinku Pulić and Patriarch Pavle are prominent church-leaders that have been vested with overwhelming political and ideological power. In his book entitled 'Nasilje idola' (Violence of idols), professor of theology Mile Babić states that during the war religious institutions usurped the idea of nation in order to consolidate their power;[43] they even portrayed themselves in ethnographic discourses about the ethnic and religious roots of Croatness, Muslimness and Serbianness[44]. On Muslims' side, the recently staged 'Moj ummete: The six centuries of Islam in Bosnia' (My umma) carries three symbolic meanings, which are all collectively concieved from war narratives. First, the celebration was organized in Sarajevo's Koševo stadium. Koševo stadium is a symbolic space for both Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs: the latter were ousted from that part of the town during the war, and, therefore, it marks the former's victory and read as a symbol of their superiority. Second, the event linked traditionally non-conservative Bosnian Muslims to a more 'traditional' and dogmatic Islam. This is true

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[42] Iveković, Ivan: Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion – The politization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslav Successor States. *Social Compass*. Vol. 49, Nr. 4, 2002. 523–536.

[43] Babić, Mile: *Nasilje idola. Did*. Sarajevo. 2002.

[44] Vladeša Jerošić's Вера и Нација (Truth and Nation) is one example of Orthodoxy's nationalist books; it was issued in Belgrade in 2004 and diffused throughout Orthodox communities in the Balkans.

inasmuch as the event is held in several Islamic strongholds in Bosnia, and return to traditions is financed through transnational religious networks (e.g., financial support for women who wear the veil and traditional clothing). Third, via television images, the event spreads the notions about idyllic and secure living conditions in a 'brand-new' – de-ethnicized and confessionalized – community-context and, thus, allowed TV spectators to partake of these sentiments. As is evidenced by the well-groomed appearance of Koštunica (otherwise an ardent believer) at religious events and ceremonies, the practice of Orthodox Church is to deploy power through spectacle; also the introduction in Serbian schools of faith-based education aims to condition the public and affect collective cognition in a similar manner. Finally, the Croat Catholic temple in Mostar (the so-called 'Catholic mosque'), which was built as soon as guns were silenced, marks a powerfully cynical control of space. Its huge minaret-like tower and the giant-cross in its background can be viewed from every non-Catholic window. Minarets and churches are otherwise often erected in places where they have never existed.

Conclusions – about the limits of ethnicity

In Bosnia-Herzegovina the war ended in a deeply divided society, without real societal reconciliation and without substantive transition to 'disarmed' states of mind; though it is doubtful whether any rapid transition is possible after such an unthinkable bloodshed. Some mechanisms of the Dayton-system were originally conceived to diminish ethnic logic, by promoting for instance the return-process, thus, implicitly allowing micro-strategies for 'land-reconquering'. However, it also provided the mechanisms that have cemented the power of nationalist parties. Paradoxically, if practices that obstruct the land-reconquest are eliminated (state-controlled, de-ethnicized police units, dismissal of resisting officials, etc.) the regime could easily recreate circumstances necessary for collective actions in some rural areas, and violence directed at returnees by civilians is expected to reinforce. In other words: while top-down political processes mark a latent institutional revision of the Dayton logic,[45] their impacts, together with the exclusivist party-politics inten-

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[45]   For scenarios, see: Szilágyi, Bosznia – Identitások, entitások, lemaradások, op. cit.

sify conflictuality at the bottom-levels in aspects related to the sensible numerical arrangements.[46]

In the aforementioned settings, nationalism seems to be quite a natural phenomenon, with its particular feature that previous wars contextualize politics and serve as a basis for legitimizing the politics of exclusion and discrimination.[47] But legitimized and institutionalized ethno-nationalism poses a wide range of theoretical and practical dilemmas. In the first place, ethnicity is no more an imagined community, but acts as a political community in the Bosnian state-complex, partly due to community borders coinciding entity ones. On the basis of unresolved in-war responsibilities, and the lack of post-war justice, ethno-religious self-determination is the only possible source for political power-building in the hands of community-leaders. Haris Silajdžić's[48] militant politics is often considered for instance as aiming the construction of an Islamic state. It is as alive rethoric as possible, but at institutional levels limits the scope of governability and leads to a disfunctional state with blockages and, thus, stagnation. In the second place, the ethnicity-based power-building strategies of political leaders are bounded or limited by several factors. First, the power-sharing system acts in itself as an institutional constraint as well. Second, the omnipotent political supremacy, the OHR-EUSR has authoritarian tools to sanction non-compliance in the human dimension of the governance. Third, if it is not by political arrangements, people will get along in their everyday life by personal, interpersonal ones, the need being a most important driving force. Here enters the picture the concept of 'Veze i Poznanstva' or V.I.P. meaning 'contacts and acquaintances', as one of the most important rules of life; a post-communist legacy that has resulted in a strange and barely conceivable admixture of old and new life-managment tactics, irrespectful of ethnic and religious affiliation. At the same time, ordinary people criticizing the present system most frequently cite the complete lack of understanding of needs and its distance from social realities. And fourth, if ethnicity constitutes a politically liable, or at least acting community,

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[46] As a bureaucratic continuation of the 'war of numbers', no official census has since come to light.

[47] On the basis of interview with Ugo Vlaisavljević, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo in May 2007.

[48] The bosniak member of the collective presidency, party: SBiH. The other two members are: Željko Komšić (SDP-Croat), and Nebojša Radmanović (SNSD).

then its leaders act rather as embodiments than delegates of it.[49] Non-ethnic voting occurs, which can be considered a refusal of the bounded logic, but we cannot talk about the emergence of a demos-like political community.

It is the above contradictions that cannot deter one from thinking about the future desintegration of the whole construct and the failure of the post-conflict state-building process. At present, it is quite unthinkable that politics will take a turn towards de-ethnicization. The intervention from outside and from the very-top will certainly not transform the main patterns of the political culture in Bosnia.

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[49] Sven Gunnar Simonsen: Addressing Ethnic Divisions in Post-Conflict Institution-Building – Lessons from Recent Cases. *Security Dialogue,* Nr. 36, 2005. 297.