Transforming enemies into adversaries: Bosnia-Herzegovina between 'continuation of war by other means' and agonistic pluralism

GORAN TEPŠIĆ AND MILOŠ VUKELIĆ

University of Belgrade

Abstract

More than two decades after the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is still depicted as a 'continuation of war by other means', as described by the former High Representative Carlos Westendorp, among many. The post-war transition has even more polarized Bosnian society along the wartime lines, giving them structural and institutional qualities. As Gerard Toal explained: "Bosnia's political geography keeps wartime divisions alive and rewards exclusivist appeals more than others". Although we mostly agree with critics of liberal peacebuilding, who claim the whole peacebuilding process in Bosnia is 'failed by design' (Richmond) and categorizes post-war Bosnian state as either weak or failed, we would argue in this paper that Bosnia constitutes a different type of state and political order, which should not be considered anomaly of the international system. Bosnia is nothing more than one of many states not fitting to the normative concept of the 'Westphalian state', exposed by some authors as a myth (Bartelson). The post-war state in Bosnia is a part of a contemporary global trend, more regularity than an exception. Therefore, we would discuss in this paper that the most proper analytical approach to Bosnian statehood is the one of agonistic pluralism.

Introduction

Two and a half decades that passed of the Bosnian War (1992-1995) have been marked by the institutionalization and structuralization of different lines of social fragmentation in Bosnia-

1

Herzegovina, one of them being the question of the definition of war and its interpretation. As Kostić (2007) shows, 98 per cent of Bosniaks totally or somewhat agree that the war was aggression by Serbia, and 87 per cent of them believe that it was also aggression by Croatia, since they fought Croat-Bosniak War (1992-1994), as well. About 89 per cent of Croats support the Serbian aggression definition, but 83 per cent of them disagree with the Croatian aggression. In contrast, 92 per cent of Serbs oppose the notion of the Serbian aggression, and 83.6 per cent of them designate the conflict as a civil war (although 44 per cent of them support the Croatian aggression thesis). Members of all three groups mostly support the idea that their ethnic group has fought only defensive wars — 97 per cent of Bosniaks, 93 per cent of Serbs, and 92.5 per cent of Croats, but of course, their attitudes differ when it comes to the issue of which army was defending them. Over 90 per cent of Bosniaks name the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ARBiH) as defenders, while the approximately equal percentage of Serbs and Croats determine Croat Defense Council (HVO) and Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) respectively, as a defensive force (Kostić 2007, 319-232).

The dominant ethnopolitical elites of the three constitutive peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina support and advocate aforementioned war narratives — causing a 'metaconflict' (the conflict over the nature of conflict) — since interpretations of 1992-1995 war play a vital role in the Bosnian political discourse, and serve as significant sources of political legitimacy. Moreover, these narratives define who was a victim, and who was a perpetrator, including the ideational formulation of the enemy (the Other), which further determines the constructions of state and nation concepts. The persistence of such situation has led some of the authors to define Bosnian post-war transition as a "continuation of war by other means", meaning that "some parties have, through some special mechanisms, managed to produce in the other parties a very pessimistic belief that, first, either the war (1992-1995) continued, or that, secondly, the war is likely to break out again due to the partner's inability to partake in the common medium of (morally acceptable) discourse" (Pehar 2019, 4; see also Gilbert 2013 and Toal 2013). This brings us to the main argument of our paper: The war narratives play a substantial role in the post-Dayton Bosnia, as they determine the concepts of state and (ethnic) nation. However, there is a possibility of transformation of this reproduction of the war enmities, as the 'normalization" of the Serbian-Croatian relations in BiH suggests. That is the reason why we introduce agonistic pluralism, as an analytical tool.

The paper starts with the review of the relevant peacebuilding/statebuilding[1] literature, since "peacebuilding" is a generic term that subsumes all the issues of post-war transition in BiH. Mostly critical toward its subject, this literature is based on the criteria such as sustainable peace, "state-building and institutional objectives… democracy, development and national 'reconciliation'" (Newman 2009, 27). A downside of this approach is that it proclaims Bosnia an anomaly of the international system, a pathological case. Newman (2009, 44) argues that critical theories "seek to expose the pathologies associated with the contemporary peace operations and explain the relationship between peace-building and broader debates about world order and legitimacy", while Sarajlić (2011, 9) adds that BiH in an "almost ideal-type fashion… appears to embody most of the challenges the literature aims to understand and face: a difficult transition from socialism to democracy and the consequent problems in the transformation of the social, political and economic spheres, ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict, the revival of religion, low trust in institutions and an underdeveloped civil society".

On the contrary, we would argue in this paper that Bosnia is not an anomaly, but part of the post-Cold War international trend. In this period, as Menkhaus (2010) shows, the post-war transition, based on a UN trusteeship, became a new type of political system. Richmond (2014, 12) supports this argument, displaying a figure of 1.5 billion people living in these transitional states, as of 2013. Bosnia, in particular, could be designated as one of the trendsetters, as Woodward suggested in her article from 2001: "As more and more international intervention is aimed at increasing state capacity for autonomy, and more and more countries have internal conflicts that invite international efforts to assist in negotiating peace agreements and constructing one or more states in the aftermath of war so as to prevent the recurrence of war or further fragmentation, the Bosnian case will be part of a much larger universe" (Woodward 2001, 256).

Bosnia is indeed "part of a much larger universe", and we would argue that the problem with the peacebuilding literature is its ideological bias, particularly when it comes to the concepts of liberal peacebuilding (liberal economy and democracy), (Westphalian) state, failed state and statebuilding. Therefore, we suggest it is necessary to "de-center state making" (Bartelson et al.

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[1] Although peacebuilding scholars use various definitions of peacebuilding and statebuilding, they either consider them components of the same concept — the global governance (Roberts 2012), or determine statebuilding as a core element of peacebuilding (Newman 2009; Mac Ginty 2011). Sometimes, they even use them as synonyms (Franks and Richmond 2008).

2018) and to deconstruct the concepts of failed state and statebuilding (Woodward 2017), so as to open the space for the conceptual shift by introducing agonistic pluralism (Mouffe 2005) to the Bosnian case.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section covers the review of the (critical) peacebuilding literature about BiH; the second includes criticism of the critical peacebuilding literature, including the concepts of the 'local', hybridity, Westphalian state, failed state and statebuilding; while the third and fourth section discuss and operationalize the concept of agonistic pluralism, and apply it to the Bosnian case through the analysis of the dominant political discourses, primarily focusing on the constructions of the state concept as correlates of war narratives.

Bosnia-Herzegovina through the lenses of peacebuilding scholars

The case of post-war transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina (through shared domestic/international sovereignty), as Divjak and Pugh (2008, 373) argue, „has led critics to denounce the 'liberal peace' in BiH as a travesty of state-building". Criticism of peacebuilding and statebuilding in Bosnia is usually directed towards the Dayton Accords/system, because it failed to create "a functional liberal state" (Richmond and Franks 2009, 18), although critics acknowledge its success in ending the war (Chandler 2006a; Paris 2004). Only for the sake of analytical clarity, we would roughly summarize the reasons scholars suggest for this failure into two arguments: the 'local argument', which emphasizes domestic social/political/economic conditions as the main cause of the Bosnian stalemate, and the 'international argument' that steers the criticism of scholars toward the role of international community in the post-war Bosnian transition. As Bose (2005) framed it, it is either a question of the appropriateness of consociation and confederal paradigm for the Bosnian society or a question of international engagement with statebuilding and democratization in Bosnia.

When it comes to the first argument, Paris (2004, 111) suggests the problem with BiH is that war parties 'remained in place', perceiving each other as a threat, and democratization only reinforced their positions (giving them new legitimacy through the post-war democratic elections), providing them with the opportunity to obstruct the measures of moderation and reconciliation introduced by the Dayton Accords (see also Aggestam and Björkdahl 2013).

4

Newman (2009, 27) assesses Bosnian peacebuilding project as far from a success, because of its ethnic polarization, sectarian and nationalist politics, social and economic gaps, and stresses that its sustainability without the external support is very questionable. Bose (2005) gives a somewhat different explanation of the 'local' argument. He argues, although there is a space for serious criticism, the international community has brought more good than harm to the Bosnian state and society, and even though he acknowledges all the pitfalls of the political framework, he is cautiously affirmative about it. Furthermore, he explains that problem is not the Bosnian institutional structure itself, at least not primarily, but the "dire condition of the economy and mass unemployment; the emigration of highly educated and qualified citizens… the extremely poor quality of post-secondary education… and the extremely low calibre of the political class, which is ineffective more because of incompetence than inter-ethnic wrangling" (Bose 2005, 329-330). Bose (2005, 324-333) designates Bosnia as 'a fragment of a failed state' (Yugoslavia), where the 'fears of state failure still loom'. Bojičić-Dželilović (2009, 2014) gives a similar economic perspective on the topic and ascribes the problem of the Bosnian post-war transition to the shortcomings of neo-liberal political and economic reforms that generated "a kind of 'perpetual transition' characterised by unstable, socially divisive developmental patterns and low-level democracy, which obstructs progress to meaningful peace".

A recognizable representative of the second argument, Chandler (2006a, 17), rejects the "idea that the post-war transition has been frustrated by a surfeit of Bosnian governing institutions, protected by their Dayton status", and names international administration and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) the main culprits for "reducing the Bosnian institutions established by Dayton to administrative shells". He describes post-war BiH as not a case of statebuilding, but informal trusteeship (or shared sovereignty) that has done almost nothing to build the Bosnian state capacities, or to legitimate it in front of its population (Chandler 2006a; 2006b; see also Belloni 2009). Similar to Chandler, many authors direct their criticism particularly to the role of the High Representative, "the most powerful state-building agency in postwar Bosnia" (Gilbert 2012). They mainly criticize the self-acquired (through the Peace Implementation Council) 'Bonn powers' (1997), which gave the OHR unlimited legislative, judicial and executive authority in BiH. Or as Carlos Westendorp, the second High Representative (1997-1999), explained it —empowerment of the High Representative (HR) "to interpret his own powers" (Pehar 2019). Consequently, from 1997 until 2006, the mission

progressively expanded and embraced "virtually all facets of political and economic life in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Peter 2011, 60).

Majstorović (2007, 648) explains that OHR's politics in Bosnia ("a fragile country") is an example of a forced democratization, "an experiment that did not yield much self-sustainability and democracy in the country, but has resulted in the local perception of the OHR and international community as colonialist and authoritarian". It is a phenomenon Gilbert (2012) calls the 'democratization paradox' — a promotion of democracy through undemocratic means. Peter (2011) supports this argument, and adds that the statebuilding process in BiH is "without direction" and "unprecedented in the post-Second World War", which was, during the mandates of Wolfgang Petritsch (1999-2002) and Paddy Ashdown (2002-2006), largely expanded and transformed into an aggressive struggle with the local elites. In the period between 1998 and 2005, OHR removed 119 democratically elected officials from their offices, imposed 757 decisions, and 286 laws and amendments (Martinović 2012). That led Baros (2010, 6) to concludes that OHR's administration has been "the most sustained attack on the Rule of Law in the modern history so to speak" (see also Pehar 2019).

Richmond and Franks (2009) also focus on the international aspect of the post-war Bosnian transition, but from a broader perspective, assessing liberal statebuilding project in BiH as a very conservative: "sowing the seeds of its own failure by being unable to actualize the benefits of the liberal state in social and economic terms, just as in the political sphere" (Richmond and Franks 2009, 34). They conclude that, although the Dayton Accords and subsequent institutionalization of ethnic divisions appear to be the main structural obstacles to this project, more essential problem is the Western statebuilding model applied to the culturally and ideologically different society, including "the overbearing paternal influence of the internationals" (Richmond and Franks 2009). In his other piece, Richmond (2014, viii-12), similarly to Majstorović (2007), explains that these international practices "resemble the colonial projects of previous eras when looked at from the perspective of their recipients in far-flung corners", and adds that liberal peacebuilding/statebuilding "appears to be failed by design".

Whether they support the first or the second argument, or both of them, peacebuilding scholars generally agree that peacebuilding/statebuilding in Bosnia has been unsuccessful, since it created some sort of "ambivalent peace" and "Potemkin state" (Kostić 2007; De Guevara 2009). Or as Mac Ginty (2011, 139-143) puts it, the criticisms of the Bosnian case "are in

keeping with criticisms made of virtually every liberal peace intervention in the post-Cold War era: top-down, technocratic, neo-liberal, and unsustainable", making Bosnia just another "anomalous case".

Criticizing critical peacebuilding

We accept the designation of liberal peacebuilding in general as 'failed by design', due to the fact that the UN's top-down orthodox approach proved to be unsuccessful in harmonizing the confrontational local power structures with the determination of peacebuilders "to transfer" alien "methodologies, objectives and norms into the new governance framework" (Franks and Richmond 2008). We support the thesis that the fallacy of the design lies in the Kantian perception of universality which rests upon the belief that it is possible to mold a war-shattered society in accordance with an ideal-type liberal democratic state (Paris). Moreover, this perception insists that all of this is possible through the implementation of the institutional framework and concepts originating from a different culture, and in a time much shorter than it was needed for those institutions and concepts to develop and be established in their place of origin. This typical one-dimensional blank slate view considers that people's choices and actions are exclusively shaped by institutional arrangements rather than by a contextual agency as well (Richmond and Franks 2009).

Nevertheless, critical peacebuilding literature recognizes that expressing mere resentment towards the universalistic nature of orthodox peacebuilding principles and its ramifications should not, on the other hand, lead to 'static' and 'romanticized' perspectives of the 'local'. In practice, 'local' has often turned out to be an excuse for either local autocratic or obsolete yet lucrative practices of 'indigenous' ways towards peace, some of which have been 'rediscovered' in the light of the newly established 'grassroots' oriented INGO funds (MacGinty 2011, 62). Besides, the very local/international dichotomy is seen as an oversimplification of far more complex entities, which is blind to acknowledge how deeply intertwined are the two and that no pure ontological, epistemological and political reality evolved in isolation (Paffenholz 2015). For an example, one could argue, like George F. Kennan did, that aggressive nationalism and 'non-European' sentiment of ethnic hatred, that is 'inherent' to the Balkan nations, provided common ground for Balkan Wars both in the second and the last decade of the 20th century (Todorova

2009, 6). However, such a claim is not only problematic due to its essentialist nature but also because nationalism (both benign and aggressive) is a phenomenon of European origin *par excellence*, intended as "means to freedom from barbarity" where "barbarity itself was defined as localism, provincialism, parochialism, feudalism and tyranny" (Stoianovich 1992, 267). Universalism, in a collision with the 'local' ethnoreligious circumstances, brought a specific hybrid form of nationalism upon the peoples of the Balkans to which many of the violent historical episodes can be attributed (Todorova 2009; Stoianovich 1992).

The evolution of nationalisms in the Balkans can be viewed from the position of 'hybridity' and 'hybrid political orders' (HPO), which "are better able to tap into local knowledge, to mobilize citizens and to generate legitimacy than 'top-down' arrangements of governance" (Kraushaar and Lambach 2009, 1). Not every hybridization brings about peace, as explained before. 'Hybrid conflicts' or 'hybrid wars' are also among the possible outcomes of such endeavors. However, peacebuilding scholars aim to provide the methods for achieving 'hybrid peace', which should not be perceived as a mere static aim but a process "of social negotiation, coalescence, cooperation, and conflict" (MacGinty 2011, 208). Although HPO is analytically useful to a certain point, and the notion of hybridization recognizes the dynamic nature of peace, we claim that it rushes into normative conclusions before being enriched with another analytical dimension. As observed by Paffenholz (2015, 865): "… the current hybridity debate within the local turn in peacebuilding needs much more grounding in empirical realities as a means to unpack power and dominance".

Even though these scholars recognize "lack of cultural sensitivity and contextuality" of peacebuilding/statebuilding (Kappler 2013, 170), and sometimes even overestimate the singularity of "ontological, historical and ethical contexts" of particular positionalities (Richmond 2014, 8-9), they have not given up on the Westphalian state, its processes of failure and building, as conceptual tools. They do question and criticize the standard definition of the concept of liberal state (Richmond 2014), which is a first step of the "de-centering of state making". However, they miss to revise its conventional explanations "in order to make sense of cases that otherwise appear idiosyncratic or anomalous", and to use "insights from such idiosyncratic and anomalous cases in order to identify alternative paths to statehood and more general explanations of state making" (Bartelson et al. 2018, 2). Instead of trying to envision the notion of state beyond the 'Westphalian myth' (Bartelson et al. 2018), they search for the local non-state

8

alternatives to the liberal state, as the vast literature about the 'local turn' and hybridity demonstrates (Mac Ginty 2011; Kappler and Richmond 2011; Kappler 2013; Richmond 2014).

Bartelson et al. (2018) argue it is the case because of the strong current in social sciences that explains the spread of a sovereign state "as an unintended outcome of European expansion on other continents", and implies that more or less the same factors that once led to the state formation in Western Europe would give similar results in other contexts. That includes territorial boundedness, exclusive political authority, sense of nationality and popular legitimacy, as the main preconditions of sovereign statehood. Problem with some of these assumptions is that they do not travel well into other historical and geographical contexts. Therefore, the concept of state should be envisioned "without implying that political authority and community are territorially congruent" (Bartelson et al. 2018, 3; see also Richmond 2014). It would suggest stretching the notion of the state beyond conventional connotations in order to encompass the cases of political struggle that would otherwise fall out of the analytical scope.

 For example, states such as Bosnia can coexist with other forms of political authority, even if they rival and contest the central government. The Bosnian case shows that the central government is often overpowered by the subnational polities, either entities or cantons, for instance when they rejected to adopt the verdicts of the Constitutional Court of BiH (more than 90 rulings have never been implemented). It is important to stress that this is not only a characteristic of the Bosnian, or of any other case of post-Cold War statebuilding, but a transhistorical quality of a state. States have been often "characterized by divided sovereignty, plural and overlapping jurisdictions, and fuzzy boundaries" (Bartelson et al. 2018, 4). They are not embryos, and their agency cannot be taken for granted, as international relations (both in the political and academic sense) have been trying to persuade us. States consist of many distinct actors, who can act autonomously, and whose mutual relations, including the relations toward the state itself, could vary from amity to enmity (see Wight, 2007). For this reason, the concept of a failed state does not make much sense.

This concept's rise in popularity started with the end of the Cold War when the failed state began to represent "the primary cause of threats to international peace and security" (Woodward 2017, 12). Since the beginning of the 1990s and the civil wars in Somalia and Bosnia, the international organizations, governmental agencies, research institutes, and academic journals, have been progressively categorizing more and more countries as either fragile or failed

(although the categorized countries disagree with these labels). All that created an unchallengeable consensus that has no empirical foundations, as Woodward explained. She argues, as well, that the failed state concept "is not just a label but an ideology" that shaped the "common sense" of the wider public, and enabled social action based on the axiomatic set of beliefs. This axiom assumes that determining one state as failed means the problems belong to the inside, which calls for outside intervention in the form of statebuilding (Woodward 2017; see also Gilbert 2012 on the issue of 'inside/outside' distinction).

Although the consensus on the failed state-statebuilding nexus is largely undisputed, the practical results of these concepts are mainly unsuccessful, as we have argued in the previous paragraphs and sections. Woodward (2017) explains this ineffectiveness suggesting that statebuilding is more about developing resources and capacities of the intervening actors (for international interventions and eventual statebuilding in their own countries) than about rebuilding failed states. That is why the respond of these actors to the frequent criticism is a call for more capacities and resources, explaining dissatisfactory results as a consequence of their insufficient capacities. "In sum, the argument… is that the concept of a failed state is actually about the international system and actors intervening in states… This is not just one aspect of the concept, but its essence…" (Woodward 2017, 10)

When considering the case of Bosnia from an empirical perspective, this state did not even have an opportunity to become a failed state, since it acquired its independence in the April 1992, when the Bosnian War had already started. Yugoslavia was a state that collapsed, although some would argue it was intentionally deconstructed (see Campbell, 1998), but not Bosnia. The Bosnian War, in fact, reaffirmed Bosnian statehood, as the Serbian side gave up on the independence of its political entity, and recognized Bosnia as a state in Dayton. The similar situation was with the Croatian side, which intermittently fought for and against the Bosnian state. Although the war caused a lot of destruction and casualties, it did not make BiH a *tabula rasa* in a political sense, since wars represent significant content of the political (and of course, the political in BiH was already filled with various contents that preceded the war). That is why, among the other arguments, the concepts of failed state and statebuilding in this particular case are misleading. Therefore, we agree that these concepts "cannot serve either informed analysis and explanation or informed policy, and, thus, should be abandoned" (Woodward 2017, 25).

As we have tried to unpack the "power and dominance" of concepts of Westphalian state, failed state and statebuilding in this section, we will continue with the unpacking of the liberal notions of the political and politics. Since these concepts are intertwined with the abovementioned models of state, we find the political and its content the missing link with which the dynamics of the conflict and consequently the politics are determined. It is not a mere statement, romanticized or disillusioned view of the local, but the very tool that could provide us with an insight into what sort of material is crucial for future hybrid forms of political and social existence. Additionally, it could uncover the mechanisms that are essential for pointing out how 'we' and 'them' are transformed from enemies into adversaries.

'The political' between antagonism and agonism

By the political, Chantal Mouffe means "the dimension of antagonism' which is "constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics'" she means "the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political" (Mouffe 2005, 9). She grafts her work onto the conclusions of a notorious theoretician, Carl Schmitt, claiming that the notoriety by itself is not a sufficient argument to neglect Schmitt's criticism of liberal democracies. In fact, that one should think with Schmitt against Schmitt in order to avoid the negative consequences of ignoring his findings, which means supporting "widespread illusion that we can dispense with the notion of antagonism" (Mouffe 1993, 2). Schmitt's view is that the very essence of the political is the friend/enemy dichotomy as beautiful/not is in aesthetics, profitable/nonprofitable in economics, etc., because "the political must … rest on its own ultimate distinctions, to which all action with a specifically political meaning can be traced" (Schmitt 2007, 26). He assumes collective identity on the ontological level by acknowledging the enemy or the friend in the political can solely be public. Moreover, the logic of the political is universal (friend/enemy), but not its substance. Depending on the time and context, the content of the political can stem from moral, religious and other antitheses, or as it is the case with Bosnia, from ethnonational antitheses. Finally, the peculiarity of the political is "the ever-present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping" and the ever-present possibility of "the extreme case (war) taking place (Ibid., 29-36). Thus, for Schmitt, pluralism in one society is the ubiquitous possibility of war, and if a state intends to

survive in its existing form, it needs to eliminate the 'we' and 'them' potential in order to create or maintain unity.

Nevertheless, even Schmitt, we assume unintentionally, left a space susceptible to a reinterpretation of the political. The implicit conclusion from the thought that there is "the ever-present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping" (Ibid., 35), suggest there are conditions in which such groupings do not exist but the political remains. It is almost as we can qualify Schmitt among the conceivers of constructivism. Rogers Brubaker explains that ethnicity should not be used inseparably or interchangeably with the notion of 'group' (ethnic group, i.e.), the phenomenon which he labels as 'groupism', and that ethnicity functions even when grouping does not exist as "bounded and solidary groups are one modality of ethnicity" (Brubaker 2004, 3). Brubaker's argument, although several decades younger, irresistibly reminds us of Schmitt's latent and unintended understanding that more modes of political are possible, antagonistic being only one of them.

Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, offers us material with which other stages before antagonistic grouping could be filled but does not renounce the dichotomic nature of the political. Schmitt's insights about the necessity of we/they dichotomy, if nuanced in a more optimistic manner, could offer us new analytical tools. The tools which would offer more optimistic normative vision inseparable from a more realistic analysis. Mouffe finds "the political in its antagonistic dimension cannot be made to disappear by simply denying it or wishing it away" (Mouffe 2013, 10%). In fact, liberal denial of the Manichaean principle could cause much more damage than its acceptance as a constitutive postulate of every society. The political (as us/them relation) ought to be adopted as ontological predeterminant (Mouffe 1992: 3). For, arguing that a society could be ultimately harmonized is in its logic totalitarian and undemocratic, causing dissenting discourses, either to be violently silenced or provoking them into backlash which would adopt violent principles of struggle as legitimate ones. Consequently, as politics originating from the political "is always concerned with the creation of an 'us' by the determination of a 'them' … the novelty of democratic politics is not the overcoming of this us/them distinction – which is what a consensus without exclusion pretends to achieve – but the different way in which is established" (Mouffe 1999: 755).

Having in mind unavoidability of the political, Mouffe sought for modes to implement it into a radical democratic theory which would also keep pluralism as an analytical possibility and

a normative must. She found it within the framework of 'agonistic pluralism'. The basis of such conceptualization is to make a distinction between two types of relations in politics: "one of antagonism between enemies, and one of agonism between adversaries" (Ibid.). Enemies fundamentally deny each other, not allowing the interpretation of the 'other' to be legitimate. The 'other' (an enemy) is perceived as an entity that should be destroyed, in extreme situations. Having an adversary, on the other hand, does not necessarily mean that we managed to eliminate antagonistic dimension somewhere within a society but that there is 'other' whose ideas we are going to struggle with but will not deny 'them' "the right to defend those ideas" (Ibid.). This would mean that the political is relative both in its content/context and in its confrontational character. It is not static, but a dynamic phenomenon. Yesterday's non-issue can become today's political and the other way around, as much as today's enemies were yesterday's adversaries, vice versa.

According to Mouffe, pluralism is only possible when we acknowledge the political, hopefully in agonistic terms. Liberal thinking, in her opinion, has a serious problem of acknowledging the political due to the fact the "its individualism prevents it from understanding the formation of collective identities" (Mouffe 1993, 123) Moreover, if such thinking would acknowledge the political, it would automatically negate its own principles, such as is the idea of rational consensus (Mouffe 2005, 12). In that case, deliberative democracy (e.g.) would automatically lose its theoretical legitimacy based on a flawed presumption of a possibility to have a universally rational person, thus perfectly rational dialogue leading to rational consensus (Mouffe 1999, 749). Individual (referring to a person) is not the same as individualism. The latter is a context-dependent, Eurocentric understanding of an ideal-type person. Therefore, pluralism here is different from the typical liberal understanding of the same concept. It would include that a person is not liable to the universal idea of individuality. One's individualism, as a context-dependent phenomenon can include more of a 'we' than what universalists would assume. In that case, defending one's human rights might transcend the common understanding and may refer to the defense of collective discursive practices (Mouffe 2013).

Nevertheless, she accepts there should be at least some minimum of 'unity' in a society. Not the Schmittian one, which denies pluralism as such, but soft societal unity based on principles of democratic freedom and equality, which should assure antagonism is not the only option (Mouffe 2005). Furthermore, having an order based solely on freedom and equality does

not suppose the negligence of power and ignorance towards the idea that there exists a hegemonic discourse in each society. However, freedom and equality should ensure the possibility to challenge hegemony in a way that its claim of the 'knowledge' and mastery of 'social objectivity' can be demystified. Agonistic pluralism would serve to unpack such or any other claim of 'objectivity' as something discursive and inherently political, which means "it has to show the traces of exclusion that governs its constitution" (Mouffe 1999, 752).

Acknowledging the political and the 'other' that is excluded from the hegemonic constitution of the order has the analytical advantage of detecting the elements of a society whose claims are those of disagreement with the dominant ones. Therefore, dangerous if silenced and ignored. Different attitudes within the political are not mere disagreement, but a radical one. It embodies "conflicting perceptions, embattled beliefs, hardened attitudes, opposed truths, segmented realities, contrasting mental worlds, antithetic ideological axioms, incompatible ideological beliefs, alternative mental representations, differing views about reality, divergent discursive representations, different discourse worlds" (Ramsbotham 2010, 7). Therefore, the possibility of accepting the other's radically different attitude as legitimate is essential in order to avoid antagonism as the only solution.

Continuation of war or agonistic pluralism: Bosnian narratives about war and state

"Politics as a continuation of war by other means", an inversion of the famous dictum by Clausewitz, belongs to one of the Foucault's hypotheses on power (Foucault 2003, 15). According to Foucault (2003, 15), it means "that power relations… are essentially anchored in a certain relationship of force that was established in and through the war at a given historical moment that can be historically specified", and although power puts an end to war and establishes peace, it does not "neutralize the disequilibrium revealed by the last battle of the war". In other words, power and politics simultaneously sanction and reproduce this disequilibrium. That is the reason why Foucault claims post-war political disputes, struggles over or with power, and alterations of relations of force in a political system should be understood as a continuation of war (Foucault 2003, 16), which is very similar to Mouffe's notion of antagonism.

Carlos Westendorp (1997-1999) and Paddy Ashdown (2002-2006), the second and the fourth High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina (HR), used the same phrase to describe the

post-war political transition in BiH (Chandler 2006; Westendorp 1997). After the first post-Dayton local elections in BiH (1997), Westendorp stated that they "will continue to search for greater pluralism in the governments and not a continuation of war by other means" (Westendorp 1997). Starting from the Westendorp's statement, we will analyze the political discourses of the three Bosnian ethnopolitical elites in the post-Dayton period, to conclude whether they managed to transform these built-in mechanism "that retains the war-like attitudes and" (Pehar 2019, 4). The analysis will include the dominant narratives on state and war, in particular since they "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" (Gilbert 2013, 11). In other words, they determine the content of the political.

The main criterion for discerning between antagonism and agonism, or enemy and adversary, we will borrow from the theory of dediscoursification (Pehar 2019, 11-12): "Hence, when you have at least two actors who hold prima facie irreconcilable views of some key issues that they consider of critical importance to themselves and their relationship, the two should, and normally will try to bridge the difference through negotiations… However, if the two do not use language in accordance with such standards, the phenomenon of dediscoursification will take place, which means that they will cease to believe in the possibility of coming to an agreement within the medium of language, by negotiating. […] In other words, even in the best case scenario, after dediscoursificiation takes its toll in a social relationship, the relationship ceases to be, that is, the actors are no longer capable of forming a coherent whole, an association." It practically means that two actors should perceive the political positions of each other as legitimate, no matter how radically different they are, in order to be considered as adversaries, which is the essence of the concept of agonism. As opposed to agonism, antagonism or the continuation of war implies delegitimization of the political positions of 'the other', or 'the other' itself (the enemy). Of course, this should not be understood as a binary 'antagonism or agonism' situation, but more as a scale between the two poles.

War and state in the Bosniak political discourse

Bosniak war narrative defines the Bosnian War as primarily Serbian aggression (combined with Croatian aggression that followed later) that intended to destroy BiH, ethnically

cleanse the Muslim population and annihilate traces of Muslim culture and tradition. Accordingly, Bosniaks and other Bosnian patriots did not have a choice, they were forced to fight the war they did not desire. The narrative usually describes this period of war as "heroic times", "heroic struggle", or the time when the "chivalry of the Bosniak nation was forged" (Radio Sarajevo 2013a; Oslobođenje 2014a), while the enemies of Bosnia describes as fascists. As observed by B. Izetbegović: "Bosnia-Herzegovina was always defended from some kind of fascism, a rigid system, a xenophobic, chauvinistic, narrow-minded… we can draw a parallel between what our forefathers fought for between 1942 and 1945, and then 50 years later their grandsons…" (Oslobođenje 2013a) The position of the Croatian side in the Bosniak war narrative is twofold: they are considered allies since they contributed to the foundation and defense of the Bosnian state, but also the perpetrators of a "joint criminal enterprise" directed against Bosniaks (Dnevnik 2017).

War narratives include self-victimization, as well, and in the Bosniak case, they consider themselves almost an exclusive victim of the Bosnian War. The focal point of this exclusivity is the case of Srebrenica massacre, categorized as a genocide by the two international courts (ICTY and ICJ), which is largely disputed by the RS, and the Serbian political elite in general. Bosniak narrative designates the Srebrenica case as a "crime of planetary proportions", and a "symbol of evil and injustice for the whole of mankind" (Oslobođenje 2014b; Anadolu Agency 2013), while the perpetrators of this crime compares with the Nazi criminals of Hitler's Germany (VOA News 2013). Bosniaks are also considered victims of the Croatian aggression since their war narrative declares Croatian wartime parastate (Croatian Community/Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, HZ/RHB), and its army (HVO), "the synonym of suffering and unnecessary conflict" (Nezavisne, 2016a).

The representatives of the Bosniak political elite themselves recognize their post-war politics as a continuation of war by other means, as the president of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), and son of the late A. Izetbegović, Bakir, argued: "We entered the third decade of the struggle for the survival of the BiH's integrity, for its improvement, for the improvement of the position of our people. This struggle, both military and political, is led by the same kind of people. […] And this struggle is not over." (Nezavisne 2013a) They also caution both Serbs and Croats about their "anti-Bosnian" politics, either in the form of the RS' secessionism or Croatian

third entity, could lead the country to a new war. B. Izetbegović explained that every Bosnian patriot would defend what they achieved during the Bosnian War (Nezavisne 2017).

Highly correlated to the interpretation of war, Bosniak state narrative claims Bosniak elite has insisted on independent and sovereign Bosnian state as the most important Bosniak national interest, both during the war and after it, in the post-Dayton Bosnia. Their wartime leadership did not fulfill this goal entirely, and for that reason, Alija Izetbegović described Dayton Accords as unjust peace, but the best it could have been achieved at that time (Radio Sarajevo 2012a). The main problem this narrative has with the Dayton system is that it divided BiH and legalized Republika Srpska (RS). In September 1995, A. Izetbegović refused Richard Holbrooke's peace proposal (but only to accept it later), because of RS and its "genocidal basis", as he explained (Anadolu Agnecy 2012). This narrative also delegitimizes RS because of the discrimination of non-Serbs after the war. The situation in RS is often described as "occupation of the Bosniak/Bosnian land", or as an "apartheid-style system" (Oslobođenje 2013b), whereas the RS' government is still occasionally compared with the Nazis or fascists (B92 2012).

Bosniak state narrative offers two solutions to this issue of RS. First would be the unitarization of BiH and its transformation to a classical liberal state, including the abolition of the entities and cantons. The second solution is based on the idea that RS should be transformed to treat all constitutive ethnonationalities equally, which would, among other alterations, include the change of its name. The current Bosniak member of the Bosnian Presidency, Šefik Džaferović (SDA), explained that the name of RS itself is used to discriminate the non-Serbs in this entity (BH-Index 2019). His Serbian colleague in the Presidency, Milorad Dodik, responded that the name could only be changed to „Republika Srpska — Western Serbia" (Oslobođenje 2019). Furthermore, Bosniak narrative also rejects Croatian demands for a third entity as a continuation of a "joint criminal enterprise" of the HRHB and HVO.

Therefore, these narratives determine primarily Serbs as the Bosniak 'other', and to a lesser extent Croats. From the perspective of the Bosniak discourse, Serbs were those who tried to destroy BiH and committed genocide against Bosniaks during the war and continued with the anti-Bosniak/Bosnian politics in the post-war period. RS is still considered a threat to the Bosnian state and the Bosniak identity. Croats deserved their 'otherness' mostly because they reject to renounce the HRHB/HVO heritage, and because of their 'third entity' politics.

Serbian war narrative, formalized through the National Assembly of RS' (NSRS) declaration, denunciates the Bosniak qualification of war as a basis for the "satanization of the Serbian nation", so as to designate the 1992-1995 conflict as a "civil war with interethnic elements, and a high degree of the international factor involvement" (Bigportal 2013; Oslobođenje 2013c). It blames the Bosniak side for the beginning of the war, namely A. Izetbegović, who rejected the Lisbon Treaty (March 1992), because his plan was to break the political balance of the three nations in BiH, and to create unitary state dominated by the Bosniaks, as proposed in his "Islamic Declaration". According to this interpretation, the only war objective of the Serbian side was to defend Serbian people and RS, and post-war leadership continued to pursue the same goal (Oslobođenje 2013d). As Dodik once explained: „We must never forget the fact that VRS' Commander Ratko Mladić led our army with strong vigor and never retreated, as he does not retreat today. I can only imagine what kind of pressure Mladić and... Karadžić were exposed to. Despite all of this, our army has remained honest and upright in all hardships." (Glas Srpske 2014)

On the question of who was a victim, and who was a perpetrator, Serbian narrative acknowledges the crime in Srebrenica, but not as genocide, a qualification that Dodik, in this particular case, described as "the greatest fraud of the 20th century" and as a "politicized falsehood". Serbs consider themselves the exclusive victim of the Second World War (in the Independent State of Croatia, NDH), but also cumulatively the largest victim of the 1990's wars (Nezavisne 2015). The most important issue here is the Jasenovac case, which is categorized as genocide ("equal to Holocaust") and it is often used as a justification of the RS' existence: "If we had RS in 1941, we would not have Jasenovac" (Iskra 2017). The term 'genocide' is also employed to describe the crimes against Serbs during the Bosnian War (in Sarajevo, for instance) (Radio Sarajevo 2013b).

Serbian state narrative builds on Serbian war goals, as well, and therefore rejects any sort of contestation of RS, and advocates further decentralization of Bosnia, either as a return to the 'original' Dayton Accords (before the various interventions of HR taken place), or as a state union of three entities (Nezavisne 2013c). The third option this narrative suggests is the independence of RS, which became the 'trademark' of M. Dodik and his Alliance of the

Independent Social Democrats (SNSD). SNSD has won all the elections in RS since 2006, and this period has been marked by its policies of the Bosnian state deconstruction and RS' statehood promotion. On various occasions, Dodik declared that "Serbs have never really accepted BiH", that BiH has "the genetic error of its existence", and that the Bosnian state has been in a "permanent crisis" (B92 2013; Radio Sarajevo 2012b; Anadolu Agency 2012). Simultaneously, he promoted political subjectivity of RS as a second Serbian state, besides Serbia (Oslobođenje 2013e). Moreover, NSRS passed a motion to hold a referendum on independence, when the political occasions allow it. This provoked reactions from the Bosniak side, as SDA warned Dodik that referendum would not lead to the independence of RS, but its end (Patria 2015).

In the Serbian discourse, Bosniaks represent 'the other', but indirectly, through the concept of Bosnia. 'Bosnia' is the real enemy to them, either in the form of state (threat of unitarization) or nation (threat of assimilation). RS even rejects to recognize the Bosnian language, claiming it non-existent.

War and state in the Croatian political discourse

Croatian war narrative agrees with the Bosniak one on the issue of the Serbian aggression but disagrees with it on the question of the role of HZ/RHB and HVO. HNS also adopted a declaration defining the Bosnian War an integral part of the Homeland War (war in Croatia), declaring HVO legitimate Croatian armed forces that decisively contributed to the protection and defense of BiH, whilst rejecting the qualification of a joint criminal enterprise (by the ICTY) as unfounded and unjustifiably attributed to the HRHB and HVO (Deklaracija 2015). Although HRHB officially ceased to exist with the Washington Agreement (1994), it created an embryo of the Croatian political struggle in BiH, manifested through Croatian National Assembly (HNS), Croatian cantons and calls for the third entity. As Dragan Čović, president of both Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH) and HNS, explained, "wherever there was no organization and action of HRHB in any form, Croats no longer exist" (Nezavisne 2016b). Croatian self-perception as a victim is more related to the post-war Bosnia than to a period of war. As Božo Ljubić, one of the HNS' leaders, described, they consider themselves "collateral damage of the reshuffle of the Balkan historical disorder" (Hrvatska riječ 2012).

Croatian state narrative does not contest the Bosnian statehood but advocates state reforms that would meet the Croatian national interests in BiH. It considers the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (FBiH) a Bosniak dominated entity and proposes its decentralization to achieve political equality of Croats ("prisoners of the Dayton Accords") with the two other constituent peoples (Dnevnik 2016). HDZ BIH, together with HNS, suggested a few different solutions to this problem, varying from the establishment of new electoral areas (that would prevent Bosniaks from electing Croatian representatives), to the transfer of powers from FBiH to cantons, or abolition of FBiH and creation of the third entity. HNS practically founded the third entity after the Croatian referendum in 2000, but that decision was suppressed and annulled by the OHR and the NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR) (Martinović 2014). After this unsuccessful attempt, HNS became the surrogate for the third entity, as B. Ljubić, confirmed. He explained that the main goal of the HNS has been to fill the Croatian political deficit in BiH and to play the role of the Croatian legislative and executive authority until the constitution of the Croatian federal unit takes place (Večernji 2015).

Besides the problem of the institutional structure of (F)BiH, Croatian state narrative also stresses the issue of electing the 'illegitimate' Croatian representatives, for example, the current Croatian member of the Presidency (in his third mandate), Željko Komšić (DF). Since all the citizens of FBiH, regardless of their ethnicity, can vote for both the Bosniak and Croatian candidates, often happens that Bosniak voters elect Croatian representatives, as almost 70 per cent of the FBiH's population is Bosniak. As Kasapović (2016) shows, Komšić won the elections for Croatian member of Presidency in 2010 by acquiring only 19 756 of Croatian votes and 331 588 of Bosniak votes. In comparison, the second-placed candidate of HDZ BIH won 80 751 of Croatian votes.

In the dominant Croatian discourse, Komšić is considered a traitor, quisling, and a "Bosniak fraud" (BH-index 2014). Besides this internal 'other', described as "illegitimate representatives of the Croatian people", the primary 'other' in the Croatian discourse are Bosniaks. Similar to Serbian discourse, Croats perceive them as those who want to dominate the Bosnian state and FBiH and to majorize the Croats. However, compared to the Serbian discourse, there is one significant difference — Croats, all the same, recognize Bosnia as their state.

The Bosnian triangle

The Bosnian War issue and its mutually exclusive interpretations, except the Bosniak-Croatian consensus on the matter of the Serbian aggression, led to cognitive dissonance and conflict on other vital issues of the post-war Bosnian transition, such as the concepts of the state and the nation. Thus, three ethnonationalist visions of BiH have been constructed, as Mladen Ivanić, former Serbian member of the Bosnian Presidency (2014-2018), pointed out: "One vision… is dominant in Sarajevo and implies BiH without entities, the other in Banja Luka involves an independent Republika Srpska, if possible, while the third in Mostar refers to the establishment of a third entity or a special institution for representatives of the Croatian people" (Radio Sarajevo 2016). This tension between conflicting interpretations of war, state, and nation „aids political players in rendering almost every political issue in the country as primarily an issue of identity rather than practical politics, economy or something else" (Sarajlić 2011, 11).

Concerning the antagonism-agonism nexus, based on the previous analysis of dominant narratives, we conclude the relations between the Bosniak and Serbian political elite are highly antagonistic, and the same stands for the Bosniak-Croatian relations, although their antagonism is less destructive, and not so far away from the agonistic pole. Bosniak and Serbian narratives speak for themselves, and they almost need no further elucidation. Serbian side rejects to recognize Bosnian state as it is and to provide it with the necessary legitimacy. The other side responds that the problem is not BiH, but RS, which, in a current state, is unacceptable for them. In the case of Bosniak-Croatian relations, the situation is somewhat different, since Croatian leaders recognize BiH as their legitimate state, while the Bosniak elite acknowledges some of the Croatian demands as justified, but opposes their proposed solutions since they include "drawing of new borders". These two sides have managed to legitimize their radically different positions to a certain extent, and that leaves space for further agonization of their relations.

The third edge of the Bosnian triangle, Serbian-Croatian relations are already agonistic, since their elites consider each other political adversaries, sometimes even allies. Thus, in this case, the mutually exclusive interpretations of the Bosnian War (civil war vs. Serbian aggression), as well as of the Croatian War of Independence (operations 'Flash' and 'Storm'), or of the Second World War (NDH, Jasenovac), have not reproduced antagonism, as it is the situation with the two other cases. We suggest three possible explanations of that. First would be

21

that the Croatian political struggle and their national interests are completely focused on the FBiH, and they do not have any pretensions to the RS. A second possible explanation could be that both elites have reconciled with the idea that ethnic cleansing of Croats in RS was a compensation for the ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Croatia and Croatian parts of Bosnia, and that they gave up on these territories. Even though some members of the Croatian political elite in BiH, including the Catholic Church, criticize RS because of the depopulation of the Croats in this entity (using even the term 'genocide)', the dominant Croatian elite, led by HDZ BIH and HNS, relativizes these accusations through support they give to RS and its leaders. The third possible explanation and we think the most plausible, is that Serbs and Croats have developed agonistic relations because they share the same 'other', Bosniaks. Or as observed by M. Dodik: "We have a partnership with the HDZ BIH, which has, to a great extent, led to the rehabilitation of inter-ethnic relations, because we have seen that this plan of cunning unitarization of BiH is directed against the interests of both the Serbian and Croatian people" (Politika 2013).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to introduce new analytical tools in order to suggest an explanation of the post-war Bosnian transition beyond the notions of failed state and liberal peacebuilding/statebuilding. We agree with Sarajlić (2011, 19) who stressed the necessity of a new way of thinking about Bosnian post-war transition, so as to include the dynamic and open-ended nature of social conflicts, their irreducibility and irresolvability, and understanding that "the main question to be concerned with is not how to remove and prevent ruptures and tensions but how to provide them with democratic means of exhibition and occurrence". For that reason we have brought in the concept of agonistic pluralism, as a conceptual shift, an acknowledgment of "a plurality of 'contradictory and mutually neutralizing subject positions' existing simultaneously within a common framework, but without intrinsic drives for mutual annihilation and destruction" (Sarajlić 2011, 19). This theoretical perspective, supported by the empirical demonstration, shows that BiH is not an anomaly, but a state in the process of state formation, which is often contradictory, and characterized by "conflict, negotiation, and compromise between groups" (Légaré 2017, 18).

First of all, BiH is a hybrid state in multiple senses. Its particular local ethnoreligious diversity and political contingencies determined the nature of how nation-state is perceived. The rule that a religious community should govern itself together with the Western idea of nationalism created a specific environment subject to instrumentalization of people's ethnoreligious sentiments in the times of crises (wars). The very conflictual context, especially after the 1992-1995 war, cemented the content of the political. It is not the liberal ideal-type struggle between 'rational individuals' but between three antagonized collective bodies. The political is not decided by a decree, it evolved contextually and contingently. The mutual negation of legitimacy caused BiH to be labeled as a state with which a phrase 'continuation of war by other means' is often related. However, both Schmitt's and Mouffe's writings are dealing with a theoretical assumption where only two sides are inside the matrix (we/they). In Bosnia, the legitimacy is mutually questioned by the three warring entities. Nonetheless, we claim that an antagonistic relationship, in this case, is turned into an agonistic one from the moment when two sides started perceiving the third as a risk to their constitutive socio-political identity.. A mutual enemy, we claim, created adversaries between Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, while antagonism remained both between Croats and Bosniaks and Bosniaks and Serbs.

Secondly, despite the antagonistic relations which reside in Bosnia, it has not disintegrated as a country. This is not to claim it will never be the case and we are arguing in favor of temporal absolutism or perennialism of a state, but acknowledging that Bosnia-Herzegovina exists as a state for twenty-five years. In our perspective, states can exist, evolve, be part of the international system, for quite a time, even if its internal working are antagonistic, which is a potential to develop further analytic tools that would enhance agonism-antagonism relevancy, thus, provide even more optimistic normative outcomes.

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