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BUILDING BRIDGES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: THE COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING IN A FRAGMENTED SOCIETY

This research aims to explore peacebuilding mechanisms in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the roles played by major international organizations – the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Special emphasis has been placed on addressing the effectiveness of the mechanisms and the strategies deployed by these organizations and identifying the challenges they faced during their missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although focused on the post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, the research provides an overview of the wartime (1992-1995) background contextual information. Employing an inductive and qualitative approach, the research synthesizes a range of sources, including scholarly articles, archival materials, and case studies, to understand the strategies and impacts of these organizations in the peacebuilding process. The research aims to provide a comprehensive narrative of the controversial contributions of these organizations in the post-conflict environment, emphasizing their influence on Bosnia and Herzegovina's trajectory towards peace and stability.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina; conflict; peacebuilding; international organizations

INTRODUCTION

The modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina began in 1992, with the recognition as a sovereign state by the international community. However, the real political and diplomatic life in the country started after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, which ended a four-year war. To be more precise, it began following the first post-war democratic elections in 1996 and the establishment of government and democratic institutions. In the early post-conflict years, the country underwent significant changes in its constitutional-legal and political systems compared to its previous structure. Major problems for Bosnia and Herzegovina, including issues in its socio-political and constitutional-legal systems as well as internal and external integration, arose after the war ended. The country and its society have traversed a challenging path of multiple transitions: from war to peace, from a planned to a market economy, and from a one-party to a multi-party system. This entire historical period was marked by peacebuilding, reform processes, the democratization of society, the establishment of democratic institutions, and the efficient functioning of government institutions at all levels. The international community played a key role in all these processes (Pejanović 2015; Dobbins et at. 2013).

This research topic is complex and broad, offering room for various interpretations of available literature. Many international organizations involved in peacebuilding operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina during and after the war have been criticized by scholars, governments, and citizens alike. Despite some steps and concrete actions these organisations took, it remains debatable whether they fulfilled their duties and successfully completed their missions (Kappler and Richmond 2011). The primary goal of this research is to answer the following question: "How effective and successful have the peacebuilding strategies, mechanisms, and operations of international organizations (UN, NATO, OSCE, EU) been in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina?" The answer will be delivered through an analysis of relevant literature, case studies and archival material, assessing what has been accomplished by these organizations and the impact of their actions on peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Special emphasis will be placed on the specific actions taken by international organizations (UN, NATO, OSCE, EU) to foster peace and stability in the post-conflict environment.

An inductive approach has been adopted in this research to explore peacebuilding mechanisms in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. This study utilizes qualitative research methods, allowing for a bottom-up analysis that starts from specific instances

and observations to build a broader understanding of peacebuilding mechanisms. The research draws on various sources, including online books, scholarly articles, and previous research on similar topics. Additionally, archival materials and case studies have been utilized to delve into specific instances where international organizations such as the UN, EU, OSCE and NATO played roles in peacebuilding operations in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. By synthesizing information from these varied sources, the research assembles a cohesive narrative highlighting the strategies, mechanisms, and overall impact of these operations. This qualitative and inductive methodology aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the integral role played by international organizations in peacebuilding operations in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, before presenting the actual analysis of peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the concept of "peacebuilding" will be defined, and the strategies and mechanisms thereof will be further elaborated.

Peacebuilding mechanisms constitute a multifaceted approach to restoring and maintaining peace in post-conflict societies. These mechanisms, encompassing a wide range of activities and initiatives, are crucial in addressing the underlying causes of conflict and ensuring a sustainable transition to peace. At their core, peacebuilding mechanisms aim to establish the conditions necessary for lasting peace and stability, often focusing on areas such as governance, security, justice, and socio-economic development. A critical aspect of peacebuilding is the establishment of effective governance and the rule of law. This involves restructuring or strengthening political institutions to ensure they are inclusive, transparent, and accountable. It is essential for post-conflict societies to develop governance structures that represent all segments of society, thus preventing the marginalization of any group and reducing the likelihood of renewed conflict. Creating democratic institutions and processes, including fair and free elections, is also a key component of this effort (Paris 2004; Hayward 2012).

Security sector reform is another vital element of peacebuilding. It involves restructuring and reforming military and police forces to ensure they serve the interests of the entire population, rather than those of a specific group or regime. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs for former combatants are integral to this process, as they help to reduce the likelihood of a renewed armed conflict (Knight 2008). Additionally, justice and reconciliation processes are equally important in peacebuilding. These mechanisms, including truth commissions and war crimes tribunals, aim to address past human rights abuses and foster a sense of justice and closure among affected populations. Such processes are crucial in rebuilding community trust and promoting reconciliation (Minow 1998).

Economic recovery and development are also key components of peacebuilding. Post-conflict societies often face significant economic challenges, including high unemployment, destroyed infrastructure, and weakened institutions. Economic revitalization, through developčment aid, investment, and infrastructure rebuilding, is crucial for creating employment opportunities and improving living conditions, which can reduce the risk of conflict relapse (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2008). Peacebuilding mechanisms are essential for addressing the root causes of conflict and laying the foundation for sustainable peace. These mechanisms, which encompass governance, security, justice, and economic development, must be tailored to each post-conflict society's specific needs and conditions. The success of peacebuilding efforts hinges on the commitment and cooperation of local actors, international organizations, and donors, working together to rebuild and transform societies emerging from conflict. Notably, peacebuilding, by its own definition, refers to "a range of measures implemented in the aftermath of conflict to re-establish lasting peace and prevent the recurrence of violence. This involves addressing the root causes of conflict, rebuilding institutions, promoting social cohesion, ensuring justice and reconciliation, and supporting sustainable development" (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 4). Noteworthy is the fact that a hybrid concept of peacebuilding is applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which combines top-down and bottom-up elements of the approach to peacebuilding, embodied in the efforts of the aforementioned international organizations and local stakeholders. These efforts are focused on building functional institutions, strengthening the rule of law, adopting international standards and best practices, promoting partnerships, and ensuring local ownership of the peace processes. Although this approach is of key importance for the sustainability and legitimacy of peacebuilding efforts, it faces numerous challenges in relation to the different priorities and power dynamics. The success of this concept surely lies in understanding, trust, continuous cooperation and adaptability of international standards to local realities (Mac Ginty 2011).

NAVIGATING PEACE: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN BIH's; POST-CONFLICT[1] RECOVERY

Almost from the very beginning, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been at the center of attention for numerous international organizations, including the UN, OSCE, EEC, NATO, WEU, Arab League and others. Initially, the UN played a pivotal role in addressing the crisis, utilizing a variety of instruments provided in its charters, and undertaking numerous political, diplomatic, economic, and peace (yet failed) initiatives aimed at ending the war and finding a political solution to the conflict. Although the final peace agreement that ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted from diplomatic efforts by the US Government, the UN played a significant role in its subsequent implementation (Howard 2015). The Dayton Agreement defined the roles of the international community in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, dividing them into three categories of actors: state actors (primarily members of the Steering Committee of the Peace Implementation Council – PIC), international non-governmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations (Belloni 2001). The joint representative of these actors is embodied in the institution of the High Representative, whose primary task is coordinating and implementing the international community's will. Despite the plethora of challenges faced by this heterogeneous group of government institutions and non-governmental organizations in the mid-1990s, such as conflicting interests and the lack of coordination between the international forces responsible for the implementation of the military (IFOR) and civilian (OHR) parts of the Dayton Agreement, peace was preserved in the first post-war years, obstacles along the inter-entity demarcation lines were removed, and the infrastructure was slowly rebuilt (Barnett et al. 2007).

The international community's initial goal was to establish a stable, multi-ethnic state and promote ethnic reconciliation among the parties that had been at war until recently, moving towards a common future. As part of this plan, the international

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1 Although the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended almost two decades ago, with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords on 14 December 1995, the situation in the country is still tense and unstable and threatens to escalate into conflict or violence at any moment. What still makes the country a post-conflict society is the fact that the absence of war does not imply the presence of real peace, since the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are not able to ensure the long-term stability and security of the country, despite the heavy presence and efforts of the International Community. In addition to weak and dysfunctional institutions, corruption, poor management, and economic challenges in the form of high unemployment and poverty, ethno-national rhetoric and divisions, ethnic nationalism, and harmful external influences further deepen divisions and mistrust between peoples in BiH, making it difficult to establish sustainable peace and security.

community allocated significant resources: "approximately $1,200 per person was provided for the reconstruction of the country, nearly nine times more thank the Marshall Plan" (Belloni 2001: 167). The plan for post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a notable success; the country was built and transformed in many ways. The European Stability Initiative announced in 2001 that "although uneven, reconstruction efforts have been remarkably successful" (ESI 2001: 24). Since the end of 1995, the international community has provided around nine billion dollars in aid for the reconstruction of the country. Furthermore, the role of international organizations in peacebuilding in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina has been pivotal, encompassing a wide range of activities to promote stability, reconciliation, and reconstruction. Following the 1992-1995 war, Bosnia and Herzegovina faced immense challenges, including political fragmentation, a shattered economy, and deep ethnic divisions. International organizations played a crucial role in addressing these challenges and fostering peace and development in the region, even though the effectiveness and success of these organizations in contributing to peacebuilding operations have been debated and questioned over time (Caplan 2004; Dobbins et al. 2008).

SHADOWS OF SREBRENICA: EVALUATING THE UNITED NATION'S CHALLENGES IN CHAMPIONING PEACEBUILDING AND RECOVERY IN BiH

The United Nations (UN) played a multifaceted role in the peacebuilding process in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the onset of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 13 August 1992, the United Nations decided to deploy its forces to address the humanitarian crisis and escalate violence with the goal of protecting humanitarian convoys. The 23,000 members of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were granted very limited powers, primarily focused on creating conditions for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. This involved securing delivery routes, protecting convoys, and facilitating aid distribution. This support was crucial as the wartime conditions severely limited or completely denied the population's access to basic necessities, including food and medical supplies. However, UNPROFOR often faced serious challenges, such as blockades and attacks in the field, which significantly reduced the effectiveness of its mission (Melander 2007).

The next task for UNPROFOR in our country was to protect the civilian population in designated safe zones. This included the demilitarization of certain areas and

the establishment of a cessation of hostilities between the warring parties. In response to the grave humanitarian situation and mass displacement of civilians, the UN Security Council adopted Resolutions 819 and 824 in April and May 1993. These Resolutions declared six Bosnian towns – Srebrenica, Žepa, Sarajevo, Goražde, Bihać and Tuzla – as safe zones. UNPROFOR was tasked with negotiating and overseeing a ceasefire and demilitarization of these areas, which included protecting civilians and ensuring their freedom of movement (Markusen and Mennecke 2004). As part of these activities, peacekeeping forces were stationed in these towns, setting up control points and observation posts to monitor and prevent military activities. However, this proved to be very difficult, and almost impossible to implement in practice. As a result, the safe zones remained heavily militarized on the ground. The genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995 highlighted the inability of UN forces to adequately protect safe zones. Not only did UNPROFOR prove ineffective during the Srebrenica massacre, but the presence of UN peacekeepers arguably prolonged the war by delaying Western intervention (Melander 2007).

Despite its efforts, the UN has often been criticized for its limited authority, especially regarding the use of military force, and for failing to prevent the escalation of the conflict and adequately protect civilians, particularly during the tragic events of the Srebrenica genocide. This failure prompted significant introspection within the international community about the effectiveness and mandate of peacekeeping forces during complex conflicts (Burg and Shoup 1999; McMahon 2017). The effectiveness of these forces was severely compromised by a lack of political support from individual UN members, unclear guidelines from the UN Security Council, and insufficient human and material resources to confront the Serb armed forces on the ground. The peak of their impotence was evident in numerous incidents where the Republika Srpska Army took UNPROFOR members hostage. In response to the atrocities committed during the war, the UN established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) under Resolution 827 (1993) (ICTY 2000). This Tribunal was a milestone in international efforts to address war crimes, setting significant legal precedents by prosecuting high-profile figures like Radovan Karadžić for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The ICTY's role in delivering justice and facilitating reconciliation in the region was paramount, as it held individuals accountable for their actions during the war and contributed to the broader discourse on international law and human rights (United Nations Security Council 1993).

Furthermore, UN involvement extended to stabilizing the political and social landscape in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United Nations Development

Program (UNDP) was critical in governance reforms and sustainable development initiatives. These efforts aimed to rebuild the administrative and governance structures necessary for a democratic and stable Bosnia and Herzegovina (Minow 1998). Simultaneously, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) played a significant role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina during and after the war. The UNHCR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed the massive displacement of people, providing assistance to millions of refugees and displaced persons both within Bosnia and Herzegovina and in neighbouring countries. It facilitated the process of their return and reintegration, advocating for their basic human rights and respect for international humanitarian law, often working under very difficult and challenging conditions amid widespread ethnic cleansing and serious human rights violations (Eyffinger 2003).

The UNHCR's assistance was pivotal in registering and documenting refugees and displaced persons, which significantly facilitated the efficient distribution of humanitarian aid and supported their subsequent repatriation and reintegration. These latter activities became the focus of UNHCR's post-war engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, requiring extensive and complex logistics. In cooperation with myriad non-governmental organizations and international agencies, UNHCR also played a crucial role in reconstructing war-torn communities, repairing and rebuilding houses and infrastructure, and often providing legal assistance to individuals whose property had been confiscated or illegally appropriated during the war. Collaboration with local and national authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with the international community, on implementing reconstruction, recovery, and peacebuilding programs was part of a broader strategy to achieve long-term and sustainable return, reintegration, and reconciliation. UNHCR's work was crucial in mitigating the humanitarian crisis and addressing the rights and well-being of displaced populations (Waller 2015).

Various UN agencies, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), were actively engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, monitoring human rights violations, promoting reconciliation between different ethnic groups, and aiding the post-war reconstruction. This included reforms to the judiciary and police forces. The UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), established by UN Security Council Resolution 1035 and operational from December 1995 to December 2002, oversaw security sector reform. Its responsibilities included monitoring the return process of refugees and displaced persons, coordinating international aid, reforming the police force, establishing a safe environment conducive to the peace process, and assisting in implementing the civilian aspects of the peace agreement (Morgan 2005).

A crucial component of UNMIBH was the International Police Task Force (IPTF), which monitored, controlled, and advised local police forces in BiH. The IPTF played a key role in reforming and reconstructing police forces and introducing international standards to ensure professional, non-political, multi-ethnic, and effective law enforcement, enhancing inter-ethnic cooperation, reducing the influence of nationalist politics, and fostering trust and cooperation between police and the communities they serve (Caplan 2004; Bardos 2007).

The IPTF also provided extensive training for local police officers in various aspects of democratic police practices including human rights and community policing, with over 24,000 local police officers receiving training under IPTF programs (Dursun-Ozkanca 2010). The certification process involved thorough vetting of approximately 17,000 police officers to ensure adherence to professional standards. Of 17,000 local police officers being vetted, 15,700 were certified, which significantly contributed to improving the quality of police work, greater responsibility and professionalism of the police. Those who failed the vetting process were either dismissed or retrained (Fisher 2018). IPTF was also heavily involved in monitoring the work of the local police and conducting investigations into their misconduct, abuse of power and human rights violations. "Several high-profile investigations led to the dismissal or prosecution of officers involved in misconduct" (Howard 2015: 7), significantly contributing to reducing the number of misconduct cases. The mentioned IPTF activities laid the foundation for a professional, democratic, and sustainable local police system in Bosnia and Herzegovina that should be able to facilitate establishing security and stability in the country. Despite facing numerous challenges and resistance from local authorities, primarily due to a lack of trust, UNMIBH managed to improve the overall security situation in the country and lay the foundation for a long-term process of building sustainable peace, stability and reconciliation. Upon the completion of the UNMIBH mission in late 2002, its mandate was taken over by the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM), which continued to build on the foundations laid by UNMIBH (Burg and Shoup 1999; Howard 2015).

Despite the UN's and its agencies' significant contributions, the organization's efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not without challenges and limitations. The initial inability to prevent the escalation of the conflict and the failure to protect civilians in designated safe areas of Srebrenica and Žepa – resulting in a massacre of thousands of civilians, the most serious war crime in Europe since World War II – raised questions about the efficacy of the UN's approach to peacekeeping in complex ethnic

conflicts. These challenges highlighted the need for robust mandates and adequate resources for peacekeeping missions to effectively prevent atrocities and maintain peace (United Nations Security Council 1993; Gray 1997). In summary, the United Nations' role in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina was instrumental in shaping the country's path towards peace and stability. The UN made significant contributions to the nation's recovery through judicial processes, humanitarian aid, and efforts in governance reform and development. However, the complexities of the conflict and the challenges encountered underscore the necessity of continual evaluation and adaptation of UN strategies in peacekeeping and peacebuilding in complex post-conflict environments.

BRIDGING DIVIDES: THE EUROPEAN UNION'S STRATEGIC PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES AND INTEGRATION OF BiH

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina started at an inconvenient time for Europe, seemingly too early for it to react adequately. With the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the European Economic Community evolved into the European Union, and its member countries – particularly those that were the driving force of the Union – were preoccupied with their own challenges. At the onset of the war in BiH, Europe lacked the political will, readiness, and institutional capacities to actively and decisively intervene in the early phases of the war (Yordan 2003). Samuel Huntington observed that "the initial scheme of the European structure built on motives such as peace, progress, cultural self-realization, solidarity, unity of ideas and aspirations, was seriously shaken at that time" (1998) More importantly, the EU member states could not reach a political consensus on military engagement to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Europe's involvement was limited to sending UN peacekeeping forces (UNPROFOR). The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended due to the resolute peace initiative of the United States, which resulted in a consensus within the international community, ensuring a unified approach to finding a peaceful solution. Richard Holbrooke states, "Dayton symbolizes the political will and global strength of the United States of America, and the weakness and absence of the European Union and its member states in the first half of the nineties" (1999: 373). Peace negotiations led to the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, which ended the war and initiated the country's reconstruction. A key mistake Europe and the United States made in the early 1990s was treating the war as a localized humanitarian crisis rather than a strategic threat to Europe's collective security.

Despite its many shortcomings, the Dayton Agreement's value lies in its effectiveness in halting the war, ending the persecution and suffering of people, and stopping property destruction. Moreover, the Agreement preserved the continuity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood and historical borders and defined the role of the international community in its implementation (Pejanović 2015). At Dayton, a decision was made to implement the civil and military provisions of the agreement separately. Military annexes 1A, 1B, and 2 mandate that international multinational military forces oversee and monitor the military aspects of the agreement. Conversely, the Office of the High Representative and various civil agencies and international organizations worldwide are responsible for implementing the civil components. These include establishing government institutions, reconstructing the country's infrastructure and economy, facilitating the return of refugees and displaced persons, and promoting human rights (Christopher 2001).

The European Union's (EU) role in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina was significant, encompassing economic support, political stabilization, and integration initiatives. The EU's involvement was crucial for the nation's reconstruction, development, and aspirations for European integration (Mahncke 2004). Between December 1995 and May 1999, during the five donor conferences, the European Union, in collaboration with the World Bank, invested 5.2 billion dollars in the country's reconstruction programs. The first donor conference, held on 20 and 21 December 1995, included an emergency aid package for Bosnia and Herzegovina totalling 600 million dollars. Of this, the European Union provided 215 million, the World Bank 150 million, the United States 60 million, with the remainder coming from other smaller donors. Shortly after, the Economic Task Force (ETF) was established under the auspices of the Office of the High Representative. Its role was cooperating with international institutions such as the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The second donor conference, held on 13 April 1996, secured 1.3 billion dollars in support for the country's reconstruction. The third and fourth donor conferences, held in June 1997 and May 1998 respectively, each garnered 1.24 billion dollars. The fifth and final donor conference, held in May 1999 with participation from 45 countries and 30 organizations, raised just over one billion dollars (1.05), rounding off the 5.1 billion dollars in aid initially agreed upon at the first conference (Bowker 1998).

Through various financial programs, the EU significantly contributed to the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notably, the CARDS (Community Assis-

tance for Reconstruction, Development, and Stabilization) program provided essential funding for rebuilding infrastructure, strengthening governance, and fostering economic growth (European Commission 2002). These funds were instrumental in addressing the immediate needs of war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina and in laying the foundations for longer-term development. Beyond financial aid, the EU played a pivotal role in the political transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Stabilization and Association Process, offering the prospect of EU membership, was instrumental in driving political and economic reforms. This process encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt European standards in governance, human rights, and market economy principles (Filipov 2006). The EU's conditionality for membership served as a powerful incentive for reform, aiming to stabilize the region and align it more closely with European norms and practices.

By joining the Council of Europe in 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina took a significant step towards institutional integration into the European Union. The country's European journey had begun two years earlier at the summit of the EU and the Western Balkan countries, held in Zagreb on 24 November 2000 – the first such summit outside the EU area. The introduction of the so-called Brussels phase marked the end of the crisis management process, which entailed the departure of SFOR, the conclusion of the UN international police mission, and the closure of the UN mission office in BiH. It also led to the rationalisation and reduction of the presence of the OSCE and UNHCR fields. On 1 January 2003, the European Union launched its first civilian operation for assistance in crisis situations as part of its security and defence policy. The European Union Police Mission (EUPM) was established to replace the UN International Police Force (IPTF) (Perthes 2006; Rivaldi et al. 2012). "EUPM was the first civilian crisis control operation within the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)" (Lindström 2004: 117). This transition reduced the international community's role in the security sector, shifting more responsibility to BiH. In 2004, the EU further solidified its commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability through the EUFOR Althea mission. Established under the European Security and Defence Policy, this military operation took over peacekeeping responsibilities from NATO's SFOR. The mission underscored the EU's dedication to maintaining a safe and secure environment, essential for the ongoing political, social, and economic recovery of the country (Perthes 2006).

At the same time, the European Union intensified its relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina, becoming increasingly involved in all areas through various forms of cooperation. In the first post-war decade, the European Union invested 2.5 billion

euros in the country's reconstruction. At the beginning of 2000, the European Union adopted an aid plan to reconstruct Western Balkan countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. This plan marked a turning point by shifting the focus from humanitarian aid to investing in reform and democratization processes, improving human rights, and strengthening the market economy. Based on this strategy, from 2000 to 2006, the EU invested 4.65 billion euros (approximately 5.58 billion dollars) in reconstruction projects across the Western Balkans. The plan was formalized in 2005, with Bosnia and Herzegovina receiving 49.4 million euros (approximately 59.5 million dollars) intended for the implementation of reforms, economic and social development, assistance to refugees, and the establishment of an independent media sector – aiming at the overall development, reconstruction and stability (Reliefweb 2005; Rogers 2010).

In 2006, the European Union consolidated all previous pre-accession aid programs – CARDS, PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD – into a single new framework, the Instrument for Pre-Assessment Instrument (IPA), which became the main financial mechanism for supporting candidates and potential EU candidates. The IPA focuses on various areas, such as political and economic reforms, the adoption of EU standards, and the strengthening of administrative capacities. During the first phase of the IPA, which lasted from 2007 to 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina received 654 million euros. This support funded projects in several sectors, including public administration reform, institution building and capacity enhancement, human resources development, rural and regional development, cross-border cooperation, and transport and the environment improvements. The second phase, IPA II, which spanned from 2014 to 2020, was partly a continuation of IPA I. It adopted a more streamlined, sectoral, and strategic approach, focusing on a smaller number of significant areas such as the rule of law, democracy, and human rights; education, employment, social policy, competitiveness and innovation; and agriculture, rural development, energy, transport, and the environment (European Commission 2022).

Table 1. EU Funding allocation to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014-2017) under the IPA II program.

IPA II AND BIH

The priorities for the EU financial assistance for the period 2014 – 2017 to support Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards the EU accession are set out in the **Indicative Strategy Paper**.

Funding allocation 2014-2017: €165.8 million (not including the allocation for Cross-Border Cooperation)

Bosnia and Herzegovina	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total 2014-2017	Of which climate change relevant (%)
a. Reforms in preparation for Union membership	11	17	18	18	64	0
Democracy and governance	31				31	
Rule of law and fundamental rights	33				33	
b. Socio-economic and Regional development	24.7[1]	11.7	13.7	13.7	63.8	0
Competitiveness and innovation: local development strategies	63.8				63.8	
c. Employment, social policies, education, research and innovation, promotion of gender equality, and human resources development	4	11[2]	11[2]	12[2]	38	0
Education, employment and social policies	38				38	
TOTAL	39.7	39.7	42.7	43.7	165.8	0

Note. Source: official website of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina & European Union Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (https://archive.europa.ba/?page_id=41946)

As part of IPA II, whose primary goals were to strengthen the country's administrative capacity, support economic development and competitiveness, improve the rule of law, and protect the environment, Bosnia and Herzegovina received 552 million euros (European Commission 2022).

Table 2. Bilateral IPA II indicative funding allocations to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014-2020) amount to 552.1 million euros.

Bosnia and Herzegovina	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total 2014-2017	2018	2019	2020	Total 2018-2020	Total 2014-2020	Of which climate change relevant (%)
DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW	9.7	39.7	21.9	44.8	116.1	22.4	39.3	45.4	107.1	223.2	
Democracy and governance	7.9	17.2	18.9	15.3	59.3	47.3				106.6	
Rule of law and fundamental rights	1.8	22.5	3.0	29.5	56.8	59.8				116.6	
COMPETITVENESS AND GROWTH	66	0	25.1	30	121.1	80.1	65.5	62.2	207.8	328.9	
Environment, climate action and energy	51	0	0	0	51.0	63.2				114.2	40%
Transport	0	0	0	20	20.0	21.7				41.7	40%
Competitiveness, innovation, agriculture and rural development	14	0	20	0	34.0	65.4				99.4	
Education, employment and social policies	1	0	5.1	10	16.1	57.7				73.8	
TOTAL	75.7	39.7	47	74.8	237.2	102.5	104.8	107.6	314.9	552.1	

Note. Source: official website of the European Commission. (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/bosnia-and-herzegovina-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en)

Since the end of the war, the European Union's assistance has been pivotal for the country's post-war recovery, reconstruction, and reform processes. In addition to significant financial resources, the EU has provided valuable technical assistance in the form of expertise and advice to facilitate the implementation of reforms and the adoption of EU legislation, standards and policies. This technical assistance includes programs aimed at building the capacity of public institutions and implementing judicial and police reforms to strengthen the rule of law, all aimed at establishing a functional democracy in BiH (Woodward 1997; Puljek-Shank and Verkoren 2017). Moreover, the EU's political support has manifested in mediation efforts, backing political processes, and promoting democratic values. The multifaceted support of the European Union has been crucial in post-conflict stabilization and maintaining peace in the country. Through investment programs targeting the economy, social policies, education and infrastructure, the EU aims to reduce the poverty rate, increase employment opportunities, encourage economic development and integration into European markets, and improve the overall quality of life for citizens. The ultimate goal of these activities is not only to prepare the country for EU membership but also to foster deeper integration into European political, economic and social structures

through the harmonization of laws and the introduction of European standards, thereby strengthening peace and regional cooperation (Micinski 2016; Fisher 2018).

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in fully integrating Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU. Persistent political and ethnic divisions and slow progress in implementing necessary reforms have complicated the path to full EU membership. Nonetheless, the EU's continued engagement and support have been vital in guiding Bosnia and Herzegovina towards European standards, playing a crucial role in the country's post-conflict transformation. The efforts of the European Union remain critically important for the stability, political and economic development, and prosperity of not only Bosnia and Herzegovina but also the entire region (Gheciu and Paris 2011).

FROM CONFLICT TO STABILITY: ASSESSING NATO's; PIVOTAL ROLE IN BiH's POST-WAR TRANSFORMATION

After the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, the UN Security Council authorized NATO members to establish multinational forces tasked with assisting in the implementation of the military provisions of the agreement. Based on UN Security Council Resolution UNSCR 1031 (1995), 60,000 Implementation Force (IFOR) troops commenced their mission in December 1995. Simultaneously, UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali sent a letter to the Security Council formally confirming the conclusion of the ineffective UNPROFOR mission (Thirlwell 2010). In addition to NATO members, the door was opened for non-NATO members to participate in the IFOR peace operations, making the engagement of the Alliance in Bosnia and Herzegovina unique in its decades-long history. This was truly a historic moment for the Alliance – their first operation outside the NATO area and the first to involve Partnership for Peace member states under a single NATO command in accordance with NATO rules. Adapting to the new global security circumstances and expanding beyond the original mission's scope, NATO was instrumental in both the achievement of the peace agreement and its subsequent implementation.

The primary NATO mission during the 1992-1995 war, and also in the post-conflict period in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was to ensure the peace and stability of the country and Europe as a whole, aiming to end the most serious conflict on its soil since the founding of the Alliance. NATO's involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly impacted both the course and outcome of the war, as well as the post-conflict peacebuilding process. During the Bosnian War, NATO's military intervention, particularly through Operation Deliberate Force in 1995, marked a turning point.

This intervention, targeting Bosnian Serb military capabilities, was crucial in halting their offensive, contributing to the subsequent negotiation of the Dayton Peace Accords (Walker 1996; Sakwa 2008). Operation Deliberate Force marked one of the first instances of NATO using military force in a conflict zone, setting a precedent for the alliance's role in crisis management. The deployment of 60,000 NATO troops to Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995 represented the largest troop movement in Western Europe since World War II and the first such deployment since the formation of the NATO in 1949 (NATO n.d.). What made this mission special was that NATO managed to unite forces from more than twenty countries across Europe and North America, including Russia, which played a significant role in IFOR, the forces implementing the military part of the Dayton Agreement, later renamed SFOR. For the first time after decades of Cold War confrontation, the USA and Russia, recently fierce ideological enemies, joined forces in the process of stabilization and peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina on a partnership basis, making this mission unique (Rodman 1995; Zisk 1999; Fisher 2012). In this context, Richard Holbrooke observed, "For the first time since World War II, American and Russian military troops operated under a single command. The American-Russian joint engagement in Bosnia was the first cooperation of its kind for Russian and American soldiers since they met on Elba in the last months of World War II" (1998: 247)

Although the engagement of Russian troops as part of the NATO multinational forces in BiH was not without incidents – such as unauthorised private meetings with war crimes indictees Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, and open opposition to the arrest of war crimes suspects – the significance of their involvement is underscored by a joint statement from the heads of government and participating countries at a NATO meeting held on 24 April 1999 in Washington D.C.

> *NATO and Russia have a common goal in strengthening security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Close relations between NATO and Russia are of great importance for stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Since the conclusion of the Founding Act in May 1997, significant and encouraging progress has been achieved in intensifying consultations and cooperation with Russia. Russian participation in the implementation of the peace agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina was a significant step towards a new cooperative relationship. We have developed a broad dialogue on issues such as disarmament and arms control, peace operations, strategy, defense policy, and doctrines. The budget and infrastructure development programs are further examples of improving cooperation (Washington Summit Communique 1999: 4)*

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was demonstrated in the most concrete way that even yesterday's enemies can constructively cooperate on a partnership basis toward the common goals of peace, stability, and security in Europe (Danilov 1999).

In December 1996, IFOR successfully completed its mission of ensuring and monitoring the implementation of the military components of the Dayton Agreement, while also significantly contributing to the implementation of civilian provisions. These efforts included supporting the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), facilitating the first post-war elections in 1996, and improving civilian freedom of movement. The successor to IFOR, the Stabilization Force (SFOR), was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1088 (1996) (Gen. Smith 2002). "SFOR's primary tasks included consolidating the achievements of IFOR, preventing the resurgence of hostilities, removing threats to peace, improving public safety, and preserving an environment conducive to the smooth implementations of the Agreement's civil provisions" (Clinton 1998). Almost two decades later, in accordance with UNSC resolution 1575 (2004), NATO ended its operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the Stabilization Force. However, this did not mark the end of NATO's presence in our country. Concurrently, NATO Headquarters was established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, along with the newly formed EUFOR forces, continued to strengthen the security environment. With its expertise and advice, NATO made an invaluable contribution to the process of defence reform, the fight against terrorism, and support for the work of the ICTY (Schulte 1997; NATO 1997).

Perhaps the most significant achievement of NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the defence reform, which culminated in the establishment of unified armed forces capable of responding to any security challenges, including defending sovereignty and territorial integrity and representing the state in collective defence and peacekeeping missions (Asmus 2008: Ivanov 2008). Through the development of national defence capacities, BiH met the criteria for membership in the NATO Partnership for Peace program, which was achieved on 14 December 2006. On 29 November 2004, the BiH Parliamentary Assembly adopted the Law on the Defense of BiH and the Law on Service in the BiH Armed Forces. These laws established a joint command over the Armed Forces of BiH by the Presidency of BiH, with the President of Republika Srpska retaining limited powers only in the event of a state emergency or natural disasters. The laws also abolished entity-level defence ministries and military service, transferring responsibility for national security to the state. With the estab-

lishment of a joint Armed Forces, Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats began to serve under a unified national insignia for the first time since the war ended in 1995. This development marked a new phase in the country's recent history (Kovačević 2003).

In summary, NATO played a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Implementation Force (IFOR) and later the Stabilization Force (SFOR). Placed under a joint command with shared powers, these multinational forces proved to be an effective instrument in implementing the military aspects of the Dayton Agreement during the initial post-war years. The tasks assigned to these forces were successfully completed: military conflicts ceased and have not resumed, the belligerents' military forces were disengaged, and weapons and military hardware were withdrawn and secured in designated warehouses. Their presence was vital in maintaining a secure environment, facilitating the return of refugees, overseeing the disarmament of warring factions, and supporting the overall peace process (Morgan 2005; Gheciu and Paris 2011). NATO's SFOR mission provided a stable environment for Bosnia and Herzegovina's recovery and aided in rebuilding the nation's defence and security institutions. This assistance was part of a broader efforts to promote the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European and transatlantic structures. In the post-Cold War era, NATO's involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a notable example of the alliance's evolving role in peacekeeping and crisis management. While NATO's military intervention and peacekeeping efforts were largely successful in maintaining peace and stability, the long-term impact of its presence and actions on regional stability and the political dynamics of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a subject of analysis and debate (Caplan 2004).

STEERING PROGRESS: THE OSCE'S ROLE IN FOSTERING DEMOCRACY AND RECONCILIATION IN POST-CONFLICT BiH

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has played a significant and multifaceted role in the peacebuilding process of post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE's involvement was crucial in promoting peace, democracy, stability, human rights, and the rule of law - essential pillars for the nation's transition to a stable and peaceful society. One of the key contributions of the OSCE was its active involvement in organising and overseeing the first post-war democratic elections in September 1996. Ensuring the integrity and transparency of these elections was a critical step in re-establishing democratic processes and governance in

Bosnia and Herzegovina following the Dayton Peace Accords. The OSCE's election monitoring activities helped build public confidence in the electoral system and were fundamental to the nation's democratic transition (Kostić 2007; Dursun-Ozkanca 2010). The successful implementation of fair and free elections was a significant achievement in a region fraught with ethnic divisions and political instability.

In addition to its role in democratization, the OSCE was instrumental in promoting judicial reforms, strengthening the rule of law, and bolstering the democratic institutions in the country. By aiding in restructuring the legal system, the organisation contributed to enhancing judicial capacity, independence, transparency, and efficiency. This included support for war crimes trials, crucial for dealing with war's legacy and promoting reconciliation (Talbot 2005). Notably, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has been monitoring the processing of war crimes cases since 2004. By 2021, a total of 644 cases involving 978 defendants had been completed, while 495 cases involving 4284 suspects remained unresolved (Figure 1). Furthermore, the provision of support and training for civil servants, government officials, political party members, and parliamentarians helped improve their capacity to serve the public and adhere to democratic principles. This support was crucial for establishing accountability and ensuring upholding the rule of law in the post-conflict environment (Puljek-Shank and Verkoren 2017). The OSCE's efforts were aimed at laying the groundwork for a judicial system capable of addressing the legacy of the conflict and upholding human rights standards. The OSCE also focused on human rights education, building civil society, and strengthening institutions necessary for human rights protection. These initiatives were vital in fostering a culture of respect for human rights and encouraging active civic engagement. Promotion of human rights was particularly important in a context where violations had been widespread, and fostering a culture of respect and understanding was essential for long-term peace and reconciliation (OSCE 2021). Additionally, the OSCE has been actively involved in education reform projects, aiming to achieve multi-ethnic understanding and reconciliation, establish an integrated educational framework without discriminatory practices, and reduce ethnic divisions.
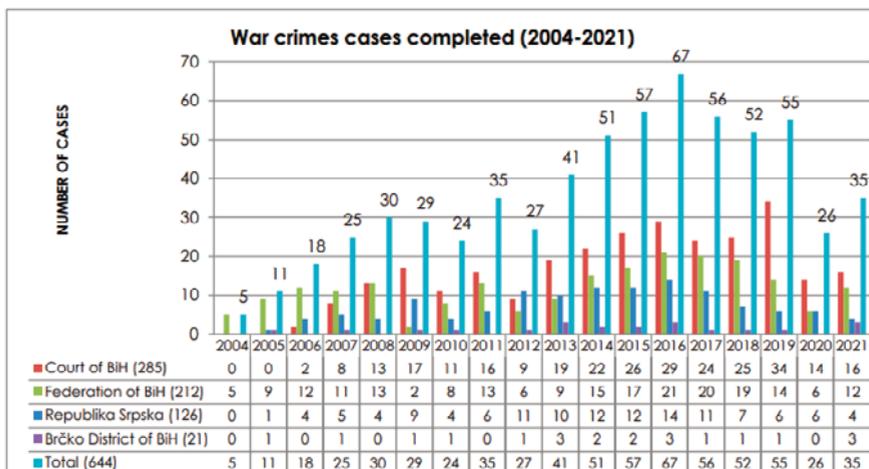
Figure 1. War crimes cases processing in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004-2021).
Note. Source: official website of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/494881).

Despite significant efforts, the OSCE faced challenges in fully achieving national reconciliation and effective governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the OSCE was instrumental in many aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding and democratization, it has faced severe criticisms for its work in the country. Notably, despite efforts to establish fair and transparent elections, persistent electoral corruption continues to threaten democratic processes. Judicial reform has progressed unevenly, with the judiciary still largely lacking the necessary independence. The system remains inefficient and susceptible to political influences, significantly hindering the establishment of the rule of law. The OSCE's successes in supporting local courts in processing war crimes cases have been limited. Moreover, the organization has been particularly criticized for inadequate progress in ethnic reconciliation, persistent strong ethnic divisions, and mistrust within the country (Hayward 2012; Micinski 2016). Perhaps the most significant criticism has been the continued presence of discriminatory practices in education, exemplified by the "two schools under one roof" system. The complex political landscape and deep-rooted ethnic divisions have posed significant obstacles to the organization's initiatives. However, despite these challenges, the OSCE's contributions have laid important foundations for Bosnia and Herzegovina's ongoing journey toward stability and integration into the European and global community (OSCE 2021).

CONCLUSION

The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) was a devastating conflict that resulted in significant loss of life and widespread human rights violations. As detailed by Burg and Shoup (1999), the conflict was marked by ethnic cleansing against Bosniak civilians, and severe psychological trauma among survivors, as reported by Lončar et al. (2006). The conflict culminated in the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, a significant international intervention that aimed to end hostilities and establish a framework for peace and governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zupčević and Čaušević 2009). While this agreement brought an end to the fighting, is also left a complex and often contentious political landscape in its wake. The post-war recovery process has been challenging, with ongoing efforts needed to rebuild the nation physically, economically, and socially. The Dayton Peace Accords, while effective in ending the war, created a complex and divided political landscape that has led to ongoing challenges in governance and the implementation of effective policies for reconciliation and nation-building (Zupčević and Čaušević 2009). The legacy of the conflict, particularly the ethnic divisions it deepened, continues to influence the political and social dynamics of the country. In conclusion, the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina had far-reaching consequences that extended well beyond the immediate cessation of hostilities. The human toll, the psychological impact on survivors, the destruction of infrastructure, and the enduring political challenges represent a continuing struggle for the nation as it seeks to heal and rebuild.

The peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina have been marked by significant contributions from international organizations, each playing a distinct role in steering the nation towards recovery and stability. The UN has focused on judicial processes and humanitarian aid, while EU has provided economic support and worked towards political stabilization. NATO's crucial military interventions and the OSCE's promotion of democracy and human rights have collectively shaped the post-conflict landscape. However, challenges such as political and ethnic divisions, slow progress in reforms, and the complexities of implementing effective governance and reconciliation strategies highlight the ongoing struggle to achieve sustainable peace. In other words, a plethora of challenges and limitations faced by the mentioned international organizations, both in the country and in the wider geopolitical context, resulted in their serious failures in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This research underscores the necessity of a coordinated and multifaceted approach in peacebuilding that encompasses governance, security, justice, and socio-economic development, tailored

to the specific needs of post-conflict societies like Bosnia and Herzegovina. The journey towards lasting peace and stability remains an evolving process, requiring continual evaluation, adaptation, and commitment from both local actors and the international community. Past experiences should serve as lessons learned to help remove the causes of controversial actions in order to successfully complete the process of peacebuilding and strengthening democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Despite the significant involvement of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, crucial for reconstruction, reform processes, and the building of a democratic society and institutions, the adoption and application of international standards and the overall functioning of the state in its recent history, the processes of internal and external integration remain incomplete. The reform processes and the post-conflict reconstruction of society and state have not been fully implemented. In other words, the country still faces serious, existential challenges. Although the reconstruction of the state has been partially successful in terms of rebuilding infrastructure and strengthening government institutions, complete reconstruction will require significantly greater efforts. Thus, the continued engagement of international institutions will be crucial not only for post-conflict reconstruction but also for the survival of the state. This is especially important considering that the political elite in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to varying degrees, continuously shows a lack of determination to undertake necessary measures aimed at integrating BiH into the community of prosperous, modern, democratic European countries.

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GRADNJA MOSTOVA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI: SLOŽENA DINAMIKA POSTKONFLIKTNE IZGRADNJE MIRA U FRAGMENTIRANOM DRUŠTVU

Sažetak:

Ovaj rad ima za cilj istražiti mehanizme izgradnje mira u postkonfliktnoj Bosni i Hercegovini, fokusirajući se na uloge ključnih međunarodnih organizacija – Ujedinjenih nacija (UN), Evropske unije (EU), Organizacije za sigurnost i saradnju u Evropi (OSCE) i Organizacije sjevernoatlantskog saveza (NATO). Poseban naglasak stavljen je na propitivanje djelotvornosti mehanizama i strategija korištenih od strane ovih organizacija, kao i na identificiranje izazova sa kojima su se suočavale tokom svojih misija u Bosni i Hercegovini. Iako usredotočeno na napore u postkonfliktnoj izgradnji mira, istraživanje daje pregled događaja iz perioda rata (1992-1995), a sve u cilju razumijevanja šireg konteksta. Koristeći

induktivni i kvalitativni pristup, istraživanje sintetizira niz izvora, uključujući naučne radove, arhivsku građu i studije slučaja, s ciljem boljeg razumijevanja strategija i uticaja ovih organizacija na proces izgradnje mira. Ukupni cilj istraživanja je pružiti sveobuhvatan narativ o kontroverznim doprinosima ovih organizacija u postkonfliktnom okruženju, naglašavajući njihov utjecaj na put Bosne i Hercegovine ka miru i stabilnosti.

Ključne riječi: Bosna i Hercegovina; konflikt; izgradnja mira; međunarodne organizacije

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