

**Civil Society in a Post-Conflict Multiethnic Setting:
A Case Study of Bosnia**

Dragana Bodruzic
Department of Political Science
University of Toronto
dragana.bodruzic@utoronto.ca

Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Montreal, June 1-3, 2010

Introduction

The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), signed in Dayton, Ohio, ended the 1992-95 war. The Agreement was hailed as the most ambitious document of its kind in modern history, taking on the task of establishing a functioning, multiethnic democracy (Bose, 2002). This task recognized that the “central question of post-conflict societies remains political: how to construct a stable form of domestic power sharing and governance” (Barnes, 2001: 86).

Academically, there is little agreement on how this could best be achieved, as exemplified by the debate between Arend Lijphart and Donald Horowitz. Focusing on the needs of divided societies, Lijphart (1969) introduced the concept of consociational democracy, proposing a power sharing model, which divides power between a country’s main groups. Lijphart’s approach has been strongly criticized by Horowitz, who argues that, “[f]or most leaders, most of the time, there are greater rewards in pursuing ethnic conflict than in pursuing measures to abate it.” (1990: 452). Horowitz develops an electoral approach, meant to encourage the election of moderate rather than radical candidates. There is one point on which Lijphart and Horowitz seem to be in agreement. Namely, they both agree on the premise that ethnic divides will express themselves in the form an emerging polity takes. Where they disagree is in how to best deal with the resulting consequences. The example of Bosnia can provide insight into this debate.

Bosnia’s Constitution contains several consociationalist principles. The Constitution, an annex to the GFAP, places primary importance on ethnicity, and strives to protect the interests of Bosnia’s three main ethnic groups (Bosniac, Croat and Serb). The GFAP has produced a complex set of governance structures that have proven cumbersome. Attempts at reform are continuously met with obstructions (Belloni, 2009), and Bosnians are increasingly becoming disillusioned with the country’s prospects and with the manner in which politics are carried out. One of the primary problems is the nature of the country’s present consociational structure, which has allowed for the continued domination of ethnopolitics, and has made it increasingly difficult to achieve the type of progressⁱ that the international community expected.ⁱⁱ This is exemplified in the continued need for the presence of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the main international governance body in Bosnia. While there were plans to close its doors in 2006, this has since been postponed indefinitely.

Members of the international community were not entirely oblivious to the potential problems which might arise out of the implementation of a consociational structure that privileges ethnic groups over individuals. As a result, one of the thrusts of their effort to promote democracy in Bosnia included an emphasis on the promotion of a democratic civil society (Chandler, 1999a). Significant funds were invested in establishing a wide range of organizations, primarily involved with providing services (such as psychosocial services trying to deal with the traumas of war). These efforts were meant to instil in Bosnians a spirit of democracy and moderation. The international community

looked to civil society to provide that push for moderation that might be needed to counterbalance consociationalism's emphasis on ethnicity.

This essay considers the development of civil society in Bosnia since 1995 within the consociational structures established in Dayton. Drawing on secondary literature and interviews conducted primarily with academics and members of the civil society sector in Bosnia, I present a snapshot of the current state of civil society development, and discuss barriers it has faced.ⁱⁱⁱ I consider arguments that barriers have been the result of civil society's relations with government, the approach of the international community, and a degree of apathy among Bosnia's population, while also paying attention to how certain problems within civil society may be slowing down its development. Additionally, I consider the degrees to which the entrenchment of ethnic divisions has impeded civil society development, and to which this state of affairs is supported by the political provisions of the Dayton Agreement itself.

The Legacies of the Bosnian War and the Constitution Established at Dayton

A discussion of Bosnia cannot take place without reference to ethnicity and nationalism. However, a thorough historical analysis of nationalism in Bosnia is beyond the scope of this paper. Prior to 1992, the nature of settlement in Bosnia was largely mixed, meaning that in Bosnia, "it was impossible to identify sizeable contiguous geographical areas where a single ethnic group was locally dominant" (Donia and Fine, 1994: 86), and overall rates of inter-ethnic marriage were estimated at 27% (Eastmond, 1998: 165). The primary difference between Bosnia's ethnic groups is religion. Their members cannot be easily distinguished on the basis of cultural practices and language alone. As ethics professor Asim Mujkić pointed out in our interview, what has recently taken place in Bosnia is in some sense a story of the active creation of difference.

Following similar events in Slovenia and Croatia, Bosnia held multiparty elections in November 1990. Political parties were allowed to be organized along ethnic lines, with the nationalist parties together collecting 84% of the vote (Arnautović, 2007: 7). There was an attempt at power sharing, but efforts at joint rule failed, and a general paralysis of the political system emerged. The situation deteriorated and escalated into full-blown war by May 1992. A detailed discussion of the events of the Bosnian war is beyond the scope of this paper. In reality, this was a series of conflicts, with changing alliances. In the media, the war was often presented as a break-out of primordial ethnic hatreds. However, such a reductionist interpretation overlooks external economic and political factors, the role of domestic opportunistic elites, and domestic economic crisis, all of which helped to create a fertile ground for conflict (Andreas, 2004). Nonetheless, the nature of how the conflict played out strengthened ethnic identification.

The GFAP was signed on November 21, 1995 in Dayton, Ohio. However, the same leaders who were responsible for the war were the ones negotiating the peace treaty. The GFAP is a highly ambitious document (Bose, 2002). The international community was

aware at its signing that Dayton must not be the matrix for the establishment of a sustainable state (Petritsch, 2005). Rather, Dayton was meant as a basis on which a process of democratization could be promoted. The democratization agenda has had two thrusts: a top-down approach focusing on the “regulations of elections, institutional development and economic management, and also ‘bottom-up’ assistance to develop a democratic political culture through civil society-building” (Chandler 1999a: 1). Annex 4 of the GFAP is Bosnia’s Constitution. The Constitution establishes the status of “Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs, as constituent peoples (along with Others)” (GFAP Annex 4 Preamble), establishing BiH as a state recognised under international law. Collective rights thus take precedence over individual human rights. As a result, to paraphrase Bieber (2004), in Bosnia ethnicity has become ‘institutionalised’.

Bosnia is composed of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska (RS). The Federation, in turn, is composed of ten cantons. The consociational set-up of the Bosnian state provides for a weak central structure at the state level, with many competencies falling to the entities. Parliamentary seats are allocated according to group membership, and each constituent group has veto rights in cases where proposed decisions are perceived to be destructive to their vital interests. Bosnia’s governance structures are staggeringly complex. BiH has fourteen constitutions, the same number of governments and parliaments, and 180 ministries. The financing of this state apparatus takes up 54% of GDP, and more than half of that total is spent on the salaries of officials (Rašidagić, 2006: 186). This is a significant burden on the Bosnian economy, which continues to struggle. Rather than being defined professionally, the state apparatus is defined ethnically, and is seriously under-resourced (Rašidagić, 2006).

The GFAP charged the High Representative (HR) and the OHR with the task of implementing the Agreement. In 1997, in Bonn, the HR’s powers were widened, making him the highest legislative and executive level in the country, with unlimited powers to decide on laws and resolve political issues (by, for example, removing elected politicians) (Sali-Terzić, 2006). While various HRs have used their powers differently, overall the OHR has taken a highly interventionist approach. Finally, though this resulted in some positive changes following the end of the war, the limits of international intervention have increasingly become glaring (Chandler, 1999a; Belloni, 2009).

Development of Bosnian Civil Society Prior to 1992

The concept of civil society has a long historical tradition. While there are numerous definitions of civil society, the term broadly refers to a sphere of associations and organizations which allow citizens to express their interests (Kopecky, 2003). Civil society gained increased attention following its role in opposing totalitarian regimes in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Eastern Germany (*Ibid.*). In this resurgence of interest, liberal ideas of civil society, which differentiate the sphere of civil society from the political and economic spheres, have become almost hegemonic. As Kopecky (2003), shows, however, such a division may not be feasible since many civil society groups try to

influence the state. According to Khilnani, moreover, “[i]n a period of rising political animosities and mistrust, it has come to express a political desire for greater civility in social relations” (2001: 11). This focus on civility is likewise tied to notions of membership in a community and citizenship. The citizenship literature, which primarily refers to the Western context, considers questions of rights and responsibilities of members of communities. Kymlicka and Norman argue that the health of a democracy depends not only on its structures, but the qualities and attitudes of its citizens, their “sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities” (1994: 352-3). However, such goals are more difficult to achieve in multiethnic societies.

It is necessary to place the development of civil society in Bosnia since 1995 within its historical context. Bosnia experienced little civil society development akin to that in Western Europe. During Titoist Yugoslavia, the difficulties faced by civil society were linked to official ideology, and, constitutionally, to the country’s establishment as a one-party state. The party and the state extended into all forms of social life, even the family realm (Živanović, 2006), though numerous sports and cultural organizations did exist. Starting in the 1970s, there was a clear growth in the questioning of the Communist Party’s authority, and greater calls for free speech and accountability. In Bosnia, a fledgling civil society started to develop in the late 1980s; however, as Andjelić argues, the “basis for civil society was not broad enough” and lacked “critical mass” (1998: 300).

While civil society continued to gain freedom, events elsewhere in Yugoslavia (by June 1990, nationalists ruled in Croatia and Serbia) took the course of Bosnian history in a different direction. During this time, civic organizations remained a primarily urban and elitist phenomenon (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006). This fledgling civil society was then decimated during the war. In Tuzla, for example, prior to the war there were some 800 citizen associations, falling to 44 by its end (Sali-Terzić, 2001: 178). Equally importantly, the war served to sever bonds of trust, ensuring that any post-war efforts to develop civil society, particularly on an inter-ethnic basis, would face a significant challenge.

Civil Society Development Following Dayton

The first phase of development of Bosnia’s civil society took place between roughly 1995 and 2002.^{iv} In 1992, international organizations, particularly humanitarian ones, began to operate in Bosnia. The first domestic NGOs were established in 1993 in larger urban centres, primarily as part of international donor projects, and focused on questions considered priorities at that moment: e.g., psychosocial help for victims of trauma and the delivery of humanitarian aid (Sali-Terzić, 2001).

The approach taken was guided by the international community’s liberal vision of civil society. Barriers identified to civil society development were related to incapacities of the Bosnian polity itself (Belloni, 2001). Firstly, there was an opinion that Bosnian elites lacked technical and organizational capabilities to bring about long-term civil society

development and change. Secondly, there were perceived problems at the level of Bosnian society. This included a view of Bosnian citizenry as suffering from an ethnic mentality as well as the argument that Bosnians lack an awareness of democratic processes and culture.

The focus of international organizations, then, was to promote civil society through the provision of training to address the perceived inadequacies of the civil society sector. Primarily, however, they concentrated on funding local NGOs. During this period, an NGO sector that concentrated on delivering services was established. Moreover, funding was given primarily to short-term projects. This made it difficult for NGOs to establish long-term visions that they could pursue consistently, and civil society was highly donor-driven. There was also very low cooperation between state authorities and civil society, and NGOs had minimal access to governance structures.

Beginning in the mid-2000s, there was a new phase in the development of civil society. The international community began to take into consideration some of the criticisms that were levelled against its involvement in the years following Dayton, and has attempted to shift away from a short-term project focus, to placing a greater emphasis on providing skills training and encouraging sustainability. Thus, the NGO sector today is less donor-driven. Funding has also decreased in recent years. Some of the members of the NGO sector in Bosnia with whom I spoke saw this change in an ambiguous light. While they felt that a decrease in funding clearly results in there being less money for worthy projects, they also indicated that this has forced local NGOs to plan their projects better. However, this may disadvantage smaller NGOs that lack the skills to complete the complicated funding applications donors now seek.

The degree of cooperation between NGOs and state authorities has also increased. According to Fadil Šero, the former Executive Director of the Civil Society Promotion Centre (CPCD), this second phase can also be distinguished by civil society taking a more active role in trying to impact public politics. The NGO sector is beginning to move away from service delivery, and towards political engagement. Nonetheless, many NGOs continue to act as service providers. According to Šero, 29% of social services continue to be delivered by NGOs.

Gauging the size of civil society in Bosnia is not an easy task. Recent research has indicated that according to criteria derived from the European Community, 9,095 civil society organizations exist (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006: 315). However, it is estimated that around half that number are not active, while the number of NGOs is estimated at around 4,629 (*ibid.*). What type of growth this represents is unclear, given a lack of information about earlier numbers, and given a lack of understanding about the operations of these organizations. Many registered NGOs are small with few members and engage in limited activity. Sixty percent focus on a specific region or canton, and activities are mostly conducted within individual municipalities (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006: 318).

Furthermore, it should be noted that civil society is not limited to the NGOs established or funded by the international community. It is a much wider sphere, which includes numerous other organizations. Sali-Terzić (2001) points out that the international

community chose to overlook organizations with ties to Bosnia's communist past, including cultural and sports organizations. Overall, some of these organizations are indeed providing a sphere for the articulation of interests in a manner which supports democratic development.

Overall, some of these organisations – be they NGOs or other members of civil society – are indeed providing a sphere for the articulation of interests, as per liberal theories of civil society, in a manner which supports democratic development. However, others would perhaps best be classified as uncivil society. Veterans' groups, for example, count a membership of 4.4% of the Bosnian population (Živanović, 2006: 39). While some veterans' groups undertake initiatives to lobby for peace, other veteran organisations engage in activities that can best be seen as divisive. For example, when under international pressure, the RS government made efforts to capture International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indictee Radovan Karadžić in late 2004, it sparked strong opposition from RS veterans' groups, who spoke of a conspiracy against the RS by international forces (Tuathil, 2005).

NGOs Promoting Civic Initiative and Civil Society

Bosnia is an interesting case for studying civil society since one of the main goals of a number of Bosnian NGOs is to promote the further development of civil society. These NGOs also promote government accountability and civic initiative. Indeed, it is these NGOs that we must look to in considering whether the international community's goal of establishing within civil society a form of counterbalance to the domination of nationalism in political life has met with any success.

Among the most prominent NGOs to promote these goals are the Centres for Civic Initiatives (CCI), *Centar za Promociju Civilnog Društva*—Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society (CPCD), and *Gradjansko Organizovanje za Demokratiju*—Citizens Organized for Democracy (GROZD), which is actually a coalition of NGOs, including CCI and CPCD, among others (Association Alumni of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo (ACIPS), 2007).

These organizations have since their inception been funded by foreign donors. CCI was even created by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a Washington-based non-profit organization. CCI and CPCD share many of the same donors, including USAID, the European Commission, and the Soros Foundation (CCI 2008; CPCD 2006). My interviews and document analysis revealed that these organizations see themselves as fitting within the larger goals of democratization in BiH. The goals of increasing citizen engagement and accountability of politicians are seen as crucial towards achieving democratic progress in Bosnia.

Encouraging citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable is not an easy task. According to GROZD's Omir Tufo, unless people are shown that a citizens' initiative

can bring about concrete results, they will have little incentive to rethink the wide-spread opinion that there is little they can do to change the political situation in the country. However, the ability of NGOs to achieve concrete results is closely tied to their ability to engage with those in government. In the first years following the war, there was competition between government actors and certain civil society groups. Government actors were also unaware of the degree to which civil society could be a partner and a useful resource (Živanović, 2006; Sejfića, 2010). It was through intervention of the OHR that a remedy was attempted. As late as 2004/5, civil society organizations had little access to government, particularly at higher levels. The OHR assisted NGOs by signing letters sent to ministers and government officials, and by accompanying NGO representatives to meetings with government representatives. In effect, the OHR worked to open the door for NGOs to try to impact government policy and establish a basis on which future cooperation could be built.

A more ambiguous goal expressed by NGO representatives during our discussions is what many refer to as the need to change the mindset of the Bosnian people. They point to the fact that despite the inadequate record of elected parties in Bosnia since Dayton, Bosnians continue to vote nationalist parties into power. Many also continue to shun wider participation in political life. However, I argue that these facts do not simply lead to the conclusion that Bosnians do not know how to be democratic citizens. Using such ‘cultural’ arguments, and assuming that there is a general apathy and lack of democratic spirit, may overlook the complexity of the Bosnian situation. I believe that amongst the NGOs studied, there is some awareness of this complexity. For example, Milan Mrdja of CPCD warns of the dangers of assuming that voters are the problem without analysing the actions of political parties, and the manner in which BiH’s political system operates. What many Bosnians may indeed lack is an understanding of how to engage in advocacy. I would be reluctant to call that which is needed, then, an education in democratic principles. Rather, what is needed is a greater understanding amongst Bosnians about the avenues available to them for pursuing their interests.

To understand the potential of civil society to form any kind of counter-balance to the domination of ethnopolitics, it is important to analyse what impact NGOs can have on promoting civic virtues and the identification of individuals with the state of BiH. Many of the analyses of the development of civil society in Bosnia, in focusing greatly on the role of the international community, do not discuss ethnicity in great detail.

Mujkić (2007a) argues that since political representation depends exclusively on ethnic affiliation, civic initiatives are discouraged. Namely, one’s interests are not to be expressed as individual interests, but must somehow fit within the wider interests of his/her collectivity. Further, in our interview he pointed out that access to public space in Bosnia is immediately encoded in ethnic terms. Thus, he suggests that civic associations are often used by nationalist elites. The NGOs researched operate in both entities of the country, and have members from all ethnic groups. However, understanding the degree to which this allows them to go beyond the ethnic encoding of which Mujkić speaks is not easy to gauge.

What my conversations and research reveal is that these NGOs – while not perhaps speaking about ethnicity as such, or publicly taking a clear stance on ethnicity – are, through their efforts to promote what they view as democratic principles of accountability and participation, attempting to encourage non-ethnic identification with the state of BiH. They also try to set the example that ethnicity should not determine whom one chooses to work with. When it comes to their ability to overcome ethnic divisions, a portion of the NGO sector, then, as represented by these organizations, is ahead of other sectors of Bosnian society. Nonetheless, there is no uniform stance on ethnicity that is shared by all members of the NGO sector.

Promoting the further development of civil society and the development of civic forms of identification is a long-term project, and is, in the words of Zija Dizdarević, a prominent Sarajevo journalist, a Sisyphean task. Thus, whether these efforts will succeed is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, some conclusions can be made, particularly thanks to a detailed analysis by ACIPS of a particular NGO project—the GROZD 2006 pre-election campaign—designed to inform voters about party platforms and to encourage them to base their decision on non-ethnic criteria (ACIPS, 2007). Nevertheless, the same ethnic parties were voted back into power. Many in the NGO sector felt disappointed with this outcome.

Several hypotheses are offered in explanation. Firstly, there is a question of the degree to which civil society can encourage this type of citizen orientation given the political framework within which it is operating. In describing Bosnian elections, Mujkić (2007b) introduces the notion of the ‘ethnic prisoner’s dilemma’. He argues that since Bosnian citizens tend to view all political options as equally corrupt, they reason that they may as well vote into power ‘their’ corrupt leaders, since they are still seen as more trustworthy than the corrupt ‘others’. Secondly, there appeared to be confusion amongst the NGO sector about what they were trying to encourage voters to do: as the ACIPS (2007) report points out, none of the NGOs during the pre-election campaign told people who it was that they supported. The ACIPS report argues that a clearer vision is needed among members of the NGO sector, in addition to increased sustainability and financial independence, in order for them to achieve more long-term impacts.

This discussion indicates that these NGOs still have a great deal of work ahead of them in their efforts to realise their goals. However, the very existence of GROZD in the first place, and the fact that GROZD was able to collect half a million signatures in support of their work, indicates that the profile of these NGOs is increasing, and that they are becoming a stronger presence in the public sphere. This is an improvement on the years following Dayton, when they lacked both the profile and the capacity to engage with government.

Barriers to Civil Society Development in Bosnia

The very existence of NGOs promoting civil society development suggests something about the nature of civil society in Bosnia; i.e., that its development is by no means

complete. During an interview, Zdravko Grebo, a professor of law in Sarajevo, stated, somewhat jokingly, that there is no civil society in Bosnia. I am inclined to respectfully disagree, but I share the belief, held by everyone I interviewed and reflected in what has been written on Bosnia, that the development of civil society has been weak. The organisations I researched are among some of the strongest NGOs in Bosnia, and their activities show that there is great potential in civil society. However, as I discuss next, the development of civil society has continuously faced barriers in its development.

Economy and Government Relations

Many Bosnians are preoccupied with ensuring their everyday survival. Thus, expecting them to take on a more proactive role in civil society is asking them to take on an extra burden. Moreover, the level of funding that civil society organizations in Western countries receive from private donations cannot be expected in a state still recovering from a devastating war. Consequently, the progress of civil society development is deeply tied to the progress of the Bosnian economy.

Civil society's impact also depends on the degree to which it is able to engage with government. As late as the early 2000s, NGOs needed to turn to the OHR in their efforts to engage with government. A cooperation agreement has since been signed between the government and a coalition of NGOs, but problems continue. Legal issues regarding the operation of civil society persist, and it is still difficult for NGOs to present initiatives to Parliaments. One of my interviewees, who works extensively with MPs, revealed that MPs primarily think of civil society as a nuisance. Ivica Čavar of CCI, for example, cites an instance of criticising the then Chair of the Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzić, for not meeting promises to improve the visa regime for Bosnians. Mr. Terzić became upset at being criticised by a member of the NGO sector, prompting Mr. Čavar to reply that it was his job to try to hold elected representatives accountable. I have made the point that NGOs see Bosnians as reluctant to turn to civil society unless NGOs can show that they can make a difference. Since civil society's attempts to do so are tied to its relations with government actors, this relationship needs to improve for further civil society development.

Role of the International Community

Though the international community envisaged a political role for Bosnian civil society – instilling a democratic culture in Bosnian society – the approach it took was much more neutral. Belloni argues that, the “international community has discarded conflicts of interest, allocation of resources, and power relations in favour of a neutral approach committed to helping any local NGO that is nominally committed to multi-ethnic and gender-sensitive principles” (2001: 169). However, as shown, many of the NGOs established following Dayton were primarily service providers, engaged in short-term projects. Chandler (1999b) thus argues that despite the rhetoric of investing in a strong, pluralist, socially integrated civil society, the situation on the ground was rather different, focusing primarily on service delivery.

Sali-Terzić (2001) refers to the international community's approach as a new form of 'colonialism', based on the unequal distribution of symbolic and financial power between international and domestic actors. Since international organizations were the main source of funding for local civil society, they were the ones in the position of power. NGOs were promoted, while other types of associations with roots in the socialist past – such as pensioners' associations, trade unions, and sports groups – were neglected (Živanović, 2006).^v

The international community, moreover, has created a situation of financial dependency. Rather than focusing on developing sustainability, local NGOs have learnt how to produce good project proposals (Sali-Terzić, 2001). The fact that the NGO sector is a large employer within a weak economy (its annual revenue is estimated at 4.5% of GDP, and its annual expenditure at 2.4% of GDP (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006: 319)) has also meant that some NGOs are more interested in pursuing funds than in understanding key problems and then addressing them. This is exacerbated by a lack of financial transparency in the NGO sector.

Sali-Terzić (2001) thus argues that decisions regarding the priorities for civil society action are rarely or ever made with the cooperation of local actors. Priorities are set without thorough considerations of the context of Bosnian history and society. As an example, she brings up the question of women in Bosnia, which was taken up by the international community with great passion. What many of these programs, which argued that they were fighting for gender equality, failed to take into account is that the position of women in socialist Yugoslavia was not one of repression. In many respects, it was on par, or even superior, to their position in some of the donors' home countries. As a result, though women's programs clearly do need support, the international community failed to take a sufficiently contextualised approach.

Furthermore, in attracting a section of Bosnia's intellectual elite, civil society development has negatively impacted the development of the public sector. Finally, by taking on a service provision role, and offering social and education services, the NGO sector has made it easier for nationalist elites to avoid responsibility for the mismanagement of funds intended for services (Fagan, 2005).

Consequently, the primary critique is that NGOs were expected to achieve a political result (instilling democratic values and encouraging moderation) through apolitical means (that is, service delivery), and by following a set of uncoordinated and often confused short-term goals set by the international community. Indeed, several authors have argued that various members of the international community have played a stronger role than the people of Bosnia in shaping the present state of civil society in the country (Chandler, 1999a; Sali-Terzić, 2001; Živanović, 2006).

However, the international community's approach has recently become more participatory (Fagan, 2005). Nonetheless, mistakes made in this initial period contributed to a lower level of civil society development than the international community may have envisaged. Financial problems remain, even among the largest NGOs, and little funding

goes towards capacity building. According to ACIPS (2007) 40% of NGOs have admitted to implementing programs developed by donors. According to Milan Mrdja, this shows that the ‘de-projectization’ of civil society has yet to be achieved.

Political Participation and Wider Citizen Involvement

Tradition is often pointed to as a barrier to civil society development in BiH. When discussing my research topic during my stay in Bosnia, I was often told that Bosnia has been ruled by external powers for much of its history and people are simply not used to having to solve their own problems. According to Maglajlić and Hodžić, this is referred to as the “phenomenon of waiting” (2006: 328); namely, Bosnians wait for others to come and solve their problems and lack public perception and understanding of the role of NGOs in democratic processes. There are two points here, which should not be confounded. Firstly, there is the argument that Bosnians are apathetic, and simply do not have an interest in engaging in public politics. Secondly, there is the assumption that Bosnians lack civic virtues.^{vi} Thus, while NGOs like CCI and CPCD may engage in promoting the latter, they run into problems if their efforts do indeed meet with apathy.

Claims of general apathy are often supported by pointing out that voter turnout has consistently decreased between 1997 and 2004 (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006). This perceived lethargy among Bosnians extends not only to voting, but also to wider engagement in the public sphere. Many interviewees lamented that youth have no interest in public engagement. In the early 2000s, youth organizations in BiH included in their membership only 5% of the country’s youth (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006: 328). Amela Skrobo, a youth activist, states that youth are inert, in part because they do not believe that they can improve the situation in Bosnia, and many do not bother to even vote (voter turnout for the 18-30 age group in 2004 stood at 25% (Maglajlić and Hodžić, 2006: 324)).

Consequently, the level of political participation in Bosnia is seen as insufficient to produce the type of civil society development that would allow the country to move towards a more democratic system. However, a DFID study shows that 5.36% of the economically active population in Bosnia engages in volunteering in comparison to the international average of 2.5% (2005: 4). While the study admits that some individuals see volunteerism as a means of obtaining employment, and may hence reflect the country’s economic problems as much as civic initiative, this figure stands in contrast to many of the apathy arguments so often presented. According to Professor Dino Abazović, it may be too soon to expect very wide civil society engagement in a post-conflict society like Bosnia, where pre-war social links and institutions have been largely destroyed.

The question, rather, may not lie so much in the purported apathy of the population, as in the nature of its relations with and trust in these NGOs. People may not feel that these NGOs fully represent their interests. It is therefore necessary to ask whether Bosnia has a democratic civil society or an elite NGO sector. This mirrors the challenge that arose in pre-war efforts to build civil society. Many of Bosnia’s NGOs essentially contain the country’s elites in terms of their level of education and standard of living. This negatively impacts the image of the NGO sector among Bosnians.

As mentioned, arguments emphasising tradition also point to a lack of skills amongst Bosnians to engage with the public sphere. My interviews suggest that this argument has merit. For example, Omir Tufo points out that some people attending local GROZD meetings declined to join once they discovered that volunteering for GROZD did not involve compensation. This suggests that NGOs need to continue promoting public awareness of the civil society sector, and of the benefits of involvement. Namely, they need to show Bosnians how civil society can contribute to democratic processes, and how increased involvement would be of wider benefit not just to them, but also to all of BiH.

Ethnicity and Constitutional Arrangements

By emphasising division, the domination of ethno-politics in Bosnia is proving to be a significant barrier to the development of civil society, which ultimately rests on a search for commonality amongst Bosnians. Bosnia's constitutional arrangement, while not establishing ethnic divisions, has served to institutionalise them. Hence, Mujkić writes:

The ethnically-centered Dayton Agreement has become the *main obstacle to the establishment of civil society* in [BiH], and at the same time serves as a means for “ethnically disciplining the citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Instead of civic virtues, new virtues have been brought to the fore – the *ethnic virtues* that are dominant in contemporary Bosnian public life. (2007a: 115)^{vii}

In seeing the state of the country's political system, many are discouraged to engage in political life since they feel that there is little they can do to improve the situation. In our interview, Aziz Hadžihasanović, an author and retired political science professor, noted that:

Dayton is a ‘constructed concept’, upon whose basis a wide web of NGOs and civil society initiatives has developed, but at the same time, the country has been practically divided into three wholes, mentally certainly. New generations do not even know of anything different.

Namely, Dayton has created a power-sharing system that places ethnicity at the heart of political life. One's membership in the Bosnian polity is via one's membership in one of the three main ethnic groups. Thus, the type of civic identification that is promoted by civil society organizations is not finding wide support among Bosnians.

Political actors pursue their own, often non-transparent political and economic goals. Despite this, and despite the perception of the general public that many, if not most, politicians are corrupt, people continue to vote for nationalist parties. Earlier I introduced Mujkić's (2007b) concept of the ethnic prisoner's dilemma, which points out that fear of other ethnic groups often motivates individuals to vote for their own ethnic parties. In our interview, Mujkić argued that there is no research that he is aware of that proves that there is no confidence among ethnic groups in Bosnia, but politicians prior to elections generate crises which feed on whatever fears may be lingering from the recent war, thus ensuring

that they are re-elected. Therefore, the support for nationalist parties need not indicate that all of these voters are strongly nationalist. It is difficult to expect people to adopt a non-ethnic choice, when the electoral system itself is ethnically discriminatory. For instance, Bosnia's consociational structure established a tripartite Presidency, with one president representing each of the three main ethnic groups (the Serb member is elected in the RS, while the Croat and Bosniac members are elected in the Federation). A member of one of Bosnia's 'Other' communities (say Jewish or Roma) cannot run for the Presidency, nor can, for example, a Serb living in the Federation or a Bosniac living in the Serb Republic.

Reductionist explanations, which simply focus on the historical and universal appeal of ethnicity in Bosnia, fail to recognise that Bosnia has a long history of "*suživot*", i.e., of different groups living together. For example, the notion of *komšiluk*, which translates roughly into 'neighbourhood', expresses an idea of friendly local relations based on respect and reciprocity not only between individuals but also between communities. Tolerance, thus, has a precedent in Bosnian history, which existed long before communism. It served to build trust and bring people together within communities. From an anthropological perspective, *komšiluk* could be expressed as a basis on which to build civil society. This tradition was one of the main victims of the recent war. The displacement that has taken place – both as a result of ethnic cleansing, and as a result of more voluntary movements – has ensured that previously ethnically mixed areas have become primarily monoethnic.

In our interview, Aziz Hadžihanović, argued that the promotion of '*gradjanstvo*,' or civic identity, is primarily a long rehabilitation process of rebuilding the strands of mutual cohabitation and trust that the war has shattered. He argues that a return to the "*kult komšiluka*", or the cult of neighbourhood, could be a historically consistent means through which tolerance and integration could be approached. Without such rehabilitation, the development of a civil society that goes beyond ethnic divisions may be very difficult to achieve.

The Bosnian political set-up, however, goes against this type of rehabilitation. The Constitution, in placing ethnicity above the citizen, has produced a situation where the continued emphasis on difference has been desirable to political actors. That is not to say that consociationalism should be entirely dropped in Bosnia. Namely, whether the political system should be some form of consociationalism, which places much stronger emphasis on the citizen, while also protecting ethnic groups, is a question on which there is no agreement within Bosnia. However, I argue that in a divided society like Bosnia, by emphasising ethnic over civic identification, consociationalism is slowing down civil society development.

Conclusion

Despite their differences, Donald Horowitz and Arend Lijphart have one point of agreement – in ethnically divided societies, ethnic divisions will express themselves in the operation of the society's polity. The Dayton Peace Agreement, and Bosnia's Constitution,

an Annex to the Agreement, established a consociational power-sharing structure. The GFAP, which intended to appease all warring parties, established a political system that places primary emphasis on ethnic groups, while discriminating against individual human rights. The present situation in Bosnia is one of the domination of nationalist politics, the constant use of inflammatory rhetoric, and very little compromise between political leaders. I have argued that this dominance of ethnopolitics, as supported by the political set-up established at Dayton, is arguably the most significant barrier to the development of an inclusive civil society. Dayton needs to be surpassed, but currently no agreement exists in Bosnia regarding how that can be done, and how the country should be organized.

Finally, the self-identification of individuals within a multiethnic society can shape how multiethnic nations are imagined (or not) and how civil society develops. At the beginning, I quoted Kymlicka and Norman's (1994) argument that the health of a democracy depends on the attitudes of its citizens to competing forms of national, ethnic or religious identification. I have argued that in Bosnia, there is an overwhelming emphasis on ethnic identification, at the expense of civic forms of identification with the entire state of BiH. This not only impedes civil society development, but also raises serious questions about Bosnia's future. Since the current political options thrive on division, prospects for continued peace are by no means assured. The effects of war have been key in perpetuating this situation. Hence, I believe that what is needed is a move towards a greater emphasis on reconciliation. Civic identity implies a commonality between peoples. However, commonality is hard to promote when individuals continue to distrust members of other ethnic groups.

One of the problems in the promotion of civic identity is that many Serbs and Croats would prefer for parts of Bosnia to join Serbia and Croatia. Moreover, Serb and Croat politicians often try to equate the promotion of a civic Bosnian identity with Bosniac unitarist goals. Nerzuk Ćurak, a Bosnian scholar, argues that some Bosniacs do use the term Bosnia with unitarist connotations (i.e., they want to see the creation of a Bosniac nation-state). He thus argues that:

This is the planting of doubt in the unity of fate, the creation of a new... geopolitical spirit which is used to castrate the syncretic myth of Bosnia. That Myth whose fragile but untearable constitution calls for a Logos. A Logos which takes Bosnia to knowledge. About itself for itself, as an undeniable civic identity.... Because without such an identity, there would be no Bosnia. (Ćurak 2006: 157)^{viii}

He is thus critical of such unitarist goals. However, what Ćurak points out is that for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward, there must be some development of a civic identity and a commitment to the survival of BiH. Among many Bosnians, this is lacking. The international community is unlikely to remain in Bosnia indefinitely, forcing politicians to compromise, or passing and implementing laws when they fail to do so. Foreign forces cannot forever ensure that war does not break out once again. A peaceful future must involve some form of commitment to the idea of a united Bosnia, and it must involve some movement on the development of a common identity that can coexist with

ethnic identities. It is in the promotion of such ideals that civil society in Bosnia (or at least those sectors of civil society that have an interest in pursuing such goals) can play one of its most important roles.

Endnotes

ⁱ Bosnia's main goal, which drives the nature of the political and social changes promoted by the international community, is European Union (EU) membership. When members of the international community speak of progress, then, it is often in relation to how far EU membership requirements are being met.

ⁱⁱ Though I use the term 'international community', I acknowledge that this is not a homogenous group with a clearly defined set of interests. In Bosnia, there is a wide range of international actors, whose roles have changed through time.

ⁱⁱⁱ I interviewed the following people as part of my research. Omir Tufo, Director of GROZD, Sarajevo, BiH, July 13, 2007; Slavisa Šucur, Policy Advisor, Governance Accountability Project, July 16, 2007, Suad Arnautović, Member of the Central Electoral Commission, August 21, 2007; Zija Dizdarević, Journalist for *Oslobodjenje*, August 14, 2007; Milan Mrdja, Executive Director of the Civil Society Promotion Centre (CPCD), July 21, 2007; Ivica Čavar, Centres for Civic Initiatives Project Manager, July 27, 2007; Amela Skrobo, youth activist, August 21, 2007; Aziz Hadžihasanović, Author, former editor of *Oslobodjenje*, and former diplomat and professor at the University of Bologna, August 17, 2007; Steven Tweedie, National Democratic Institute Parliamentary Programs, August 8, 2007; Dino Abazović, Professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo, July 23, 2007; Fadil Šero, former Executive Director of CPCD, August 24, 2007; Admir Alihodžić, Project Manager for CPCD, August 6, 2007; Asim Mujkić, Professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo, July 21, 2007; Muamer Hodžić, Project Manager, CPCD, August 6, 2007; Kemal Begović, MP for the Federation of BiH, August 8, 2007; Ilvana Jaganjac, Legal Advisor for the OHR, August 30, 2007; Zdravko Grebo, Professor at the Faculty of Law in Sarajevo, August 23, 2007; Srdja Obradović, Legal Advisor, OSCE, August 13, 2007.

^{iv} For the timeline division, I draw on my interview with Fadil Šero.

^v A DFID (2005) study has shown that cultural organizations, for example, have higher levels of membership than NGOs more widely.

^{vi} While civic virtues do include a desire to engage with one's polity, they also refer to the skills that allow one to do so. It is to the latter that I am referring.

^{vii} Author's emphasis.

^{viii} The translation from Bosnian is mine.

References

Association Alumni of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies (ACIPS). 2007. *Civilno društvo i izbori 2006: Da li je bilo uzalud?! Retrieved January 15, 2008* (http://www.acips.ba/documents/Civilno_drusvo_i_izbori_2006.pdf).

-
- Andjelić, Neven. 1998. "The Evolution of Civil Society in a Pre-War Bosnia-Herzegovina." In *State Building in the Balkans: Dilemmas on the Eve of the 21st Century*, ed. S. Bianchini and G. Schopflin. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Andreas, P. 2004. "The Clandestine Political Economy of War and Peace in Bosnia." *International Studies Quarterly* 48:29-51.
- Arnautović, Suad. 2007. *Ten Years of Democratic Chaos: Electoral Processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1996 to 2006*. Sarajevo: Promocult.
- Barnes, S. H. 2001. "The Contribution of Democracy to Rebuilding Post-Conflict Societies." *American Journal of International Law* 95(1):86-101.
- Belloni, Roberto. 2001. "Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Journal of Peace Research* 38(2):163-180.
- Belloni, Roberto. 2009. "Bosnia: Dayton is Dead! Long Live Dayton!" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 15(3):355-375.
- Bieber, Florian. 2004. "Institutionalizing Ethnicity in the Western Balkans: Managing Change in Deeply Divided Societies." *European Centre for Minority Issues Working Paper #19*. Retrieved June 26, 2007 (www.ecmi.de/download/working_paper_19.pdf).
- Bose, Sumantra. 2002. *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Centres for Civic Initiatives (CCI). 2008a. *About Us*. Retrieved December 10, 2007 (<http://www.ccibh.org/main.php?lang=ENG>).
- Chandler, David. 1999a. *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton*. London: Pluto Press.
- Chandler, David. 1999b. "The Limits of Peacebuilding: International Regulation and Civil Society Development in Bosnia." *International Peacekeeping* 6(1):109-125.
- Civil Society Promotion Centre (CPCD). 2006a. *Resursni Centar Civilnog Drustva BiH*. Retrieved January 25, 2008 (Electronic document, <http://www.civilnodrustvo.ba/v2/index.php>).
- Ćurak, Nerzuk. 2006. *Obnova Bosnanskih Utopija*. Sarajevo: Synopsis.
- DFID (UK Department for International Development). 2005. "Paper 1: Reader's Guide and Summary Conclusions and Recommendations." *Employment, Social Service Provision and the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Sector: Status and Prospects for Bosnia and Herzegovina: Analysis and Policy Implications*.

-
- Donia, R.J. and Fine, J.V.A. 1994. *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Eastmond, Marita. 1998. "Nationalist Discourses and the Construction of Difference: Bosnian Muslim Refugees in Sweden." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11(2):161-181.
- Fagan, Adam. 2005. "Civil Society in Bosnia Ten Years After Dayton." *International Peacekeeping* 12(3):406-419.
- General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFAP)*. 1995. Retrieved January 11, 2008 (http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=380).
- Horowitz, Donald L. 1990. "Making Moderation Pay: The Comparative Politics of Ethnic Conflict Management." In *Conflict and Peace-making in Multiethnic Societies*, ed. Joseph V. Montville. Toronto: Lexington Books.
- Khilnani, S. 2001. "The Development of Civil Society." In *Civil society: History and Possibilities*, ed. S. Kaviraj and S. Khilnani. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kymlicka, W. and Norman, W. 1994. "Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory." *Ethics* 104(2):352-381.
- Kopeccky, Petr. 2003. "Civil Society, Uncivil Society and Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe." In *Uncivil Society: Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Petr Kopeccky and Cas Mudde. London: Routledge.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1969. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics* 21(2):207-25.
- Maglajlić, R.A. and Hodžić, Edin. 2006. "Political Participation." In *Democracy Assessment in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, ed. Dobrila Govedarica. Sarajevo: Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Mujkić, A. 2007a. "We, the Citizens of Ethnopolis." *Constellations* 14(1):112-128.
- Mujkić, A. 2007b. "The Ethnic Prisoner's Dilemma." In *We, the Citizens of Ethnopolis*. Unpublished Book. Political Science Faculty, University of Sarajevo.
- Petritsch, Wolfgang. 2005. "Predgovor." In *Bosna i Hercegovina na Putu ka Modernoj Državi? Perspektive i Prepreke*, ed. Azra Džajić and Amela Sejmenović. Sarajevo: Fondacija Heinrich Boll.
- Rašidagić, E.K. 2006. "Government Effectiveness and Accountability: Is the Government Accountable to the People and Their Representatives?" In *Democracy Assessment*

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ed. Dobrila Govedarica. Sarajevo: Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Sali-Terzić, Sevima. 2001. "Civilno Društvo." In *Medjunarodne Politike Podrške Zemljama Jugoistočne Europe: Lekcije (ne)Naučene u BiH*, ed. Žarko Papić. Sarajevo: Muller.
- Sali-Terzić, Sevima. 2006. "Civil and Political Rights: Are Civil and Political Rights Equally Guaranteed for All?" In *Democracy Assessment in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, ed. Dobrila Govedarica. Sarajevo: Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Sejfija, Ismet. 2010. "Nevladin Sektor u BiH Izmedju Tradicije i Tranzicijske Stvarnosti." *Transion* 10(21-22).
- Tuathail, Gearoid O. 2005. "Embedding Bosnia-Herzegovina in Euro-Atlantic Structures: From Dayton to Brussels." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 46(1):51-67.
- Živanović, Miroslav. 2006. "Civil Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Lost in Transition." In *Civil Society and Good Governance in Societies in Transition*, ed. Wolfgang Benedek. Belgrade: Centre for Human Rights.

* I want to thank Corinne Caumartin, Saoirse de Bont, Rachel Dekker, Bojan Bodruzic, Igor Drljaca, and Anne Staver for their comments on earlier versions of this work.