

NON-ETHNIC MOTIVATIONS FOR THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the non-ethnic motivations of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is very often labeled as ethnic. By examining the alliance formation between the war parties, this thesis shows that ethnicity was not the only motivation. It also focuses on the intra-Muslim conflict that took place in the Bosnian war which represents another motivation for the conflict which was not connected with ethnicity. The second aim was to analyze how external factors contributed to the above mentioned processes. Without giving any implications on the wider understanding of ethnic wars, this thesis focuses only on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and argues that analyzing this war without taking into consideration the exogenous actors would represent a simplification of a very complex process.

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INTRODUCTION

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which occurred between 1992 and 1995, was one of the most devastating conflicts that took place in Europe since the Second World War. The world and especially Europe was not prepared and certainly did not expect that Yugoslavia would dissolve in such a violent way. From the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina until today the interest of scholars for the topic has not subsided.

A considerable amount of literature has been published about the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the nature of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many journalists, politicians and even some scholars, perceived it as the consequence of an ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ between its citizens.¹ Peaceful coexistence between different nationalities in Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was, in their understanding, only superficial. According to the logic of this argument, under a peaceful surface, the people who inhabit this area were in fact enemies who had hated each other for centuries, but were forced to live together under Yugoslavia’s socialist regime. When the Titoist regime collapsed, people were suddenly given free rein to act out old grievances and did so through instigation of and participation in the wars.

The “ancient ethnic” argument had some scholarly influence at the beginning of the nineties, but was later forcefully dismissed by a majority of scholars² looking at other factors and processes of participation in the war and alliance formation. Although “ancient hatreds” by now has been refuted, ethnicity however remains treated as a main motivator.³

¹ Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*.; Bill Clinton Cited in Dejan Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches", 101–103.

² V.P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, 2004.; Jovic, “The Disintegration of Yugoslavia A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches.”; Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*.

³ Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan Wars*, 1993.; Burg Stiven and Shoup Paul, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, 2000.; Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior’s Honor: The Third Balkan war*, 1998.

In my thesis I will mostly focus on the work of Stathis Kalyvas and Christia Fotini. According to Kalyvas labelling of wars, its actors, violence and motivations as ethnic can be misleading. What is perceived to be the main cleavage of the war very often is not complying on the events on the ground.⁴ Even if the war starts as a result of ethnic division, behaviour of ethnic groups in the wars are very often not connected to ethnicity, and their identity characteristics are not stable and fixed. In his work, he even questions the existence of the ethnic war itself because alliance formation in wars very often shows a different picture.⁵

The most convincing argument presented on the motivations for the war in B&H is provided by Christia Fotini in her book *Alliance Formation in Civil War*,⁶ where, focusing on the alliances between the three principal ethnic groups, she argues that in the process of creation of alliances ethnicity did not play the main role. During the conflict, in different periods parties in the war were allies and enemies: “Serbs against Muslims and Croats, Serbs with Muslims, Serbs with Croats, and Muslims against Croats”⁷ and even Muslims against Muslims. According to Fotini, some of the aforementioned alliances would not be possible because some of these groups do not share the same identity characteristics.

Fotini argues that the intra Muslim conflict that also took place in the Bosnian war continues to undermine the importance of ethnicity as well. She argues that alliance formation and fractionalization was driven mainly by power distribution and victory, and not by identity, race, language, religion or ideology.⁸ However, when analysing alliance formations between groups she omits to take into consideration external factors which highly influenced the above mentioned processes. This thesis addresses this problem by analysing the role of external actors and events which influenced these non-ethnic processes.

⁴ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Ontology of: Action and Identities in Civil wars*, 481 .

⁵ Kalyvas, “Civil Wars,” 420.

⁶ Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012.

⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁸ Ibid., 6.

In pursuing this line of argument the thesis will take the following route. The first chapter will examine the relevant literature from well-known and respected scholars on the issue and offer insight on the existing explanations for the war in Bosnia. It will show that the war is perceived in many different ways. The argument will not be that it was a civil war, with ethnic or non ethnic motivation, or an aggression. The Bosnian war was so complicated that it has elements of each one of them, and trying to put it in just one of these approaches is not sufficient to give a real picture of the events that occurred.

After providing the historical background on the war in the second chapter, the third chapter will introduce the theories on civil wars of the above mentioned authors and focus on the non ethnic motivations in the wars labeled as ethnic. I will proceed by applying those theories on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The forth chapter will present the case of intra Muslim conflict which occurred during the war in the western part of Bosnia, Cazinska Krajina. The case is under-researched in existing academic literature, and when it comes to the domestic sources there are few available and they are descriptive and biased⁹ by nature. The intra Muslim conflict will serve as another example of the Bosnian war where ethnicity cannot be considered as the main motivator.

My thesis is based on qualitative research. The largest sources of empirical data are the secondary sources: scientific books which provide a theoretical background of the war, as well as historical books and articles which focus on the sequence of events before and after the war started. In addition, I will also use primary sources such as documents and agreements signed by the war's elites, as well as media coverage of the events in question.

⁹ Senudin Jasarevic, *Treci Rat:Peti Korpus Protiv Autonomije.*; Nijaz Veladzic, *Krajske Gazije.*; Emin Huskić, *Svi Zločini Fikreta Abdića.*

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

There are many different theories and approaches when it comes to explaining the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the character of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina which occurred from 1992 until 1995. The fact that there is no simplistic explanation for the events that took place created the space for a large body of literature which deals with this topic, from many different angles. It is very difficult to present the full body of the theory offered on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and because of that this chapter is going to offer only the main arguments of respected scholars who study this issue.

1.1 *The Dissolution of Yugoslavia*

If one would like to explain the causes and the nature of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is necessary to look at the overall picture of the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the reasons for its dissolution. In his article '*The Disintegration of Yugoslavia, A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches*'¹⁰ Dejan Jovic offers a critical overview of the existing approaches for its dissolution. He emphasizes that it would be too simplistic to choose just one of them as a cause of the collapse of the state.

One of the arguments is the "ancient ethnic hatred"¹¹ which is not necessarily a scholarly one. The argument was presented in the media and in several books, and the most influential among them was Robert Kaplan and his book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*.¹² Certain prominent politicians, who were highly involved in the Yugoslav crisis and especially in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also had a similar opinion about the nature of the wars that occurred on the territory of Former Yugoslavia. One of them is former

¹⁰ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches."

¹¹ Ibid. 101.

¹² Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*.

president of the United States, Bill Clinton, who stated in 'The Sunday Times' in 1999 that intervention against FR Yugoslavia was justified because: "Under Communist rule, such Nations projected a picture of stability, but it was a false stability imposed by rulers whose answer to ethnic tensions was to suppress and deny them. When communist repression lifted, the tensions rose to the surface, to be resolved by co-operation or exploited by demagoguery."¹³ Another problem with this argument is also connected to the same politician, Bill Clinton, who said at the beginning of the nineties, that after he read Kaplan's book he realized that intervention in the Balkans and especially Bosnia "was doomed to failure, since the conflict was driven by uncontrollable 'ancient hatred'."¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the same line of arguments was used by the same person not to intervene in one period, and as a reason to get involved in a different period. This argument, however, has been dismissed many times.¹⁵ As Jovic states in his article and others agree, the wars in Yugoslavia did not start as an ethnic conflict and especially not as a consequence of a hatred which was ancient.¹⁶ The only importance of this argument today is to see how such claims affected the attitude of the US policy towards the ex Yugoslav republics, particularly Bosnia, at the beginning of the nineties.

Jovic also took other arguments into a consideration, and one of them is the cultural one, according to which the fatal destiny of the state can be connected to the cultural and traditional diversities of the Yugoslav Nations with an emphasis on Eastern and Western Christianity and especially Christianity and Islam. According to this argument, these differences were too great and the state in this form could not last long. However this does not explain how these supposedly different people were able to survive together for almost half a century after the Second World War. On the other hand, no nation is a fixed one, and

¹³ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches", 101–103.

¹⁴ Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, 5.

¹⁵ Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War* (2004), Dragovic-Soso, "Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?", Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*.

¹⁶ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia A Critical Review of Explanatory Approaches", 103.

Yugoslavia was not the only one that dissolved after the end of the Cold War, but was definitely the one with the biggest consequences. Cultural, linguistic, religious differences can certainly be a good starting point in trying to understand the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but cannot explain the wars that occurred on Yugoslav ground, especially in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where genocide and ethnic cleansing took place.¹⁷

On the one hand, keeping Yugoslavia together was always connected to one person, Josip Broz Tito, and on the other hand the dissolution is very often blamed on another one, Slobodan Milosevic. Josip Broz Tito was the most influential figure in Yugoslav history, and the fact that the Constitution from 1974 declared him as lifelong president of the state speaks for itself.¹⁸ No one can deny how strong his cult of personality was or that he was one of the factors that made Yugoslavia that strong, but it would be very naive to say that he was the only factor which kept the Yugoslav people together.

The most researched argument of all is the one which deals with the role of the political and intellectual agencies. This argument focuses on the Serbian nationalist politician, Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian Academy of Science and the famous Memorandum from 1986 and the explanation that the wars were “elite led, as opposed to grass roots phenomenon.”¹⁹ According to Luis Sell in his book *Slobodan Milosevic and Destruction of Yugoslavia*²⁰: “Yugoslavia did not die a natural death and Milosevic more than any other single leader is responsible”²¹ According to this approach, Milosevic had the final goal of creating a ‘Grater Serbian state’ with the slogan ‘all Serbs in one state’. This kind of politics

¹⁷ Ibid. 108–110.

¹⁸ Ibid. 112.

¹⁹ Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, 2004.

²⁰ Louis Sells, *Slobodan Milosevic and destruction of Yugoslavia*, 2002.

²¹ Louis Sells, *Slobodan Milosevic and destruction of Yugoslavia*, 4. cited in Dragovic-Soso, *Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?*, 14.

of creating a homogenous state for Serbs could not go without consequences, dissolution as the first, the wars as a second, and according to this argument he was well aware of this fact.²²

When Milosevic appeared in the political arena, the crisis in Yugoslavia became even severe. I will not even try to argue that his political actions to other Yugoslav republics were not radical or try to deny his huge role in the process of dissolution of the state and after in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it would be too simplistic to put the blame on just one person. It is certain that the nationalist politics of Slobodan Milosevic were far from positive, but he would not have been successful if he had not had support. As Jovic notes, he was the response to the already existing trends in Serbia, and the processes which started even before he came to power.²³

Another actor whose role is considered to be very important in researching the collapse of the state is the Serbian Academy of Science and Art and its Memorandum, which was drafted in 1986 by sixteen Serbian intellectuals. The Memorandum analyzed the post Tito crisis, focusing on the position of Serbia and the Serbs in Yugoslavia. Some scholars consider it as blue-print for war and the creation of greater Serbia,²⁴ while others refused to take this as truth. Even if the Memorandum is not taken as a master plan of creating Greater Serbia, it can definitely be taken as an indicator that the attitude towards Yugoslavia as a multiethnic state was changing.²⁵ This argument goes in line with Brubaker's article *Ethnicity without Groups*.²⁶ He argues that the main protagonists in framing the conflict as ethnic are different organizations which are very influential and powerful among certain ethnic groups. By organizations he means the "state and its organizational components,"²⁷ which can include ministries, law enforcement agencies, armed forces units, political parties, ethnic associations,

²² Sells, Slobodan Milosevic and destruction of Yugoslavia, 4. 5. Cited in Dragovic-Soso, "Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?," 14-15.

²³ Jovic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia," 113.

²⁴ Sells, Slobodan Milosevic and destruction of Yugoslavia, 44. Cited in Ibid. 14.

²⁵ Ibid. 19.

²⁶ Rodgers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 2006.

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

social movement organizations, churches, newspapers, the radio etc. These organizations classify people as being part of a certain group and then impose a category as to what it means to be a part of that particular group. Brubaker argues that analysts have to make a difference between these organizations and the groups in whose name they are speaking, because the “relationship between organizations and groups they claim to represent is often deeply ambiguous.”²⁸

In the attempt to explain the dissolution of Yugoslavia it is important to take all of the above mentioned factors into account, but bear in mind that singling out just one of them would represent a simplification of a very complex process. The collapse of the Yugoslav state had severe consequences, and the roots of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be found in this event, especially the irredentist politics of Slobodan Milosevic towards Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1.2 Understanding the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

To understand the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is necessary to go into the past and examine the interaction between its inhabitants through the centuries. In their book *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*²⁹ Robert Donia and John Fine offer a historical overview of Bosnian history. Since the middle ages, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a country where people of different religious backgrounds inhabited and shared the same territory. The Medieval Kingdom of Bosnia consisted of three Christian Churches; the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Bosnian Church. All three of these churches coexisted in one state, and were obligated to follow the state rules imposed by Bosnian rulers. Bosnia did fight wars against neighboring countries, though they did not fight civil wars against one another based on their ethnicity or religious confession. Few of the

²⁸ Ibid.16.

²⁹ Robert Donia and John Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, 1995.

inhabitants referred to themselves as Croat or Serb, and those who did lived in the border regions of the country. Considering the fact that the Ottomans characterized people by their religion, during the Ottoman rule, Bosnians were not labeled according to ethnicity. At the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia, there was some tension between the Bosnian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church about the possession of church buildings and taxes, but rather than settling these disputes through ethnic and religious wars, they were resolved in court. Various tensions arose as a result of Bosnia's partial adoption of the Islamic faith, but "Bosnians did not fight one another as members of religious groups in any time of the Ottoman period either."³⁰ After the rebel forces started to fight against the Ottoman regime, Bosnians could be found on both sides of the conflict, but this also cannot be considered an ethnic or religious war in Bosnia. During the period of Yugoslavia, there were no ethnic or religious wars on Bosnian territory with the exception of the Second World War when Bosnia was a part of the Croatian Independent State. The extreme nationalist regime, as a Nazi puppet-state, provoked nationalist sentiments, which resulted in ethnic violence.³¹

Bosnia and Herzegovina, unlike other Yugoslav republics, did not have a strong majority. The country was constructed from three ethnic constituent groups, Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs and different minorities (Roma, Jews etc). According to the last census, which was held in April of 1991, 44% of the population was Muslim, 31% were Serb, and 17% were Croat.³² In the survey on ethnic relations which was held in 1990, it was discovered that in a nationalist sample of 4,232 Yugoslavs, only 7% of them believed in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and another 62% of respondents said that being a part of the Yugoslav nation was very important to them.³³ The survey was also held on ethno-national relations in the work place where 36% considered them good, 28% considered them

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ Ibid. 6–13.

³² Kasim Trnka, *Konstitutivnost Naroda*, 29.

³³ Anthony Oberschall, "The Manipulation of Ethnicity", 998.

satisfactory, and only 6% perceived them as bad or very bad. The results regarding neighborhood relations showed that only 12% considered them bad or very bad.³⁴ Based the above, it is very difficult to understand how people who were work colleagues, friends, neighbors, husbands, wives became enemies practically overnight.

In his book *The Myth of Ethnic War*³⁵, Gagnon argues that the “violence of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s was a part of a broad strategy in which images of threatening enemies and violence was used by the conservative elite in Serbia and Croatia” with an aim to “silence, marginalize, and demobilize challengers and their support in order to create political homogeneity at home.”³⁶ He believes that the wars were not a product of “grassroots sentiment”³⁷ and that the violence in what he calls plural communities was created outside of those communities by the Croatian and Serbian political and military forces.³⁸ As he argues, the war and violence accompanying it was a strategic plan made by the conservative elite from Belgrade and Zagreb with the support of their followers in the “war zones”.³⁹ He shows that he is not trying to argue that Yugoslavia was a multiethnic paradise and that ethnicity was not important. His aim is to show that ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia were not bigger than in any other multiethnic state, and that no one could expect the level of violence that occurred, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Gagnon’s argument “is not a story of pure and simple manipulation, of leaders playing the ethnic card”⁴⁰ to produce the violence. On the contrary, the fact that the elite was not able to mobilize the population based on the ethnic card is the reason they chose other ways, and in the Yugoslav case it was “creating a violent conflict as a

³⁴ Yugoslav Survey 1990, 25 cited in Ibid.

³⁵ Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*.

³⁶ Ibid., xv.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.xvi.

strategy of political demobilization.”⁴¹Gagnon’s argument about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the reasons for wars, is very important in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By emphasizing the involvement of the neighboring countries, on the one hand, and questioning that the main reason for the war was ethnicity on the other, this piece represents a good starting point for the larger debate about the nature of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Stuart J. Kaufman starts his book *Modern Hatred: Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*⁴² with horrifying stories about the killing, raping and slaughtering of Bosnian Muslims by paramilitary Serbian forces. He continues with the claims that usually the actors of these horrible events were “outsiders”⁴³, but Serbs from Bosnia also participated in the aforementioned actions.⁴⁴ This story definitely does not go in line with the overall picture of Yugoslav ‘brotherhood and unity’ and Bosnian multiethnic history, tradition and tolerance. Kaufman tries to answer the question what motivates the leaders to organize this kind of horrible actions, and why their supporters decided to act on it even against their neighbors. He argues that there is no simple reason why ethnic wars occur, and trying to find a simplistic answer to this question will probably result in a misleading picture of the events.

He also provides a quick overview of the existing arguments about the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He starts by dismissing the ‘ancient ethnic argument, and then starts to analyze Gagnon’s argument about elite led violence and demobilization of the population. In his opinion, Gagnon’s argument can be viewed just as part of the puzzle, because it still does not answer the question why leaders in the first place have the “violent passions towards other groups”⁴⁵, and why people decide to participate in these projects. He continues with the ‘economic rivalry’ approach according to which groups

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 1.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 9.

will mobilize on ethnic lines if there is a common goal. In this case ethnic groups are perceived as any other interest groups. Kaufman finds that this still does not explain why people go to war. Before giving his view on why ethnic conflict occurs, he examines the claim that the main reasons for ethnic wars is a weak federal government and its inability to resolve the disputes between the conflicting ethnic groups, which started to feel threatened by each other. By protecting themselves other groups became a subject of threat. In the case of Yugoslavia, Milosevic and Tudjman started to reawaken the stories through state control media about the horrors of the Second World War, Jasenovac and Bleiburg⁴⁶ spread the fear among the population and created a security dilemma. However, Kaufman perceives that this argument does not answer the question why some republics were in the war and why others were not and that there is a missing link why the security dilemma started in the first place.⁴⁷

In Kaufman's opinion, if one wants to give an explanation as to why Yugoslavia dissolved and why such a high level of violence occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one needs to create a theory which will include all the above mentioned approaches. He offers a theory of ethnic symbolism which combines hatred, manipulative elite and economic rivalry. He emphasizes that the hatred is not ancient, but modern "renewed in each generation by mythologies that are typically modern revisions of older stories with quite different messages."⁴⁸ He concludes that mobilization of the population can be successful only if all three factors are present.⁴⁹ "Without perceived conflict of interest, people have no reason to mobilize. Without emotional commitment based on hostile feelings they lack sufficient impetus to do so. And without leadership, they typically lack the organization to act."⁵⁰ Here

⁴⁶ Revising the history of the Ustasa-run death-camp at Jasenovac was a useful means of casting Serbs as the victims of a 'Holocaust' by Croats. On the Croatian side, the massacre at Bleiburg (Austria) by Communist forces (or Serb-led Communist, as the case might be) in 1945 was also linked to the Holocaust. In both cases, the other side was accused of committing genocide... cited in David Macdonald, *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim Centered Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia*, 160.

⁴⁷ Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 2001, 9–10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 10–12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 12.

it can be seen that Kaufman emphasizes the importance of ethnicity in the dissolution of the state and wars that took place.

Some scholars perceive Slobodan Milosevic, Belgrade and Serbia as the most responsible for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵¹ Some of them even claim that military actions in B&H were strategically planned several months in advance by the Serbian government and Yugoslav National Army.⁵² There are also others interpretations of the role of Serbia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to which the war was a civil war, with emphasis on ethnic motivation for fighting. According to these approaches, Serbia had abounded the idea about Greater Serbia by the November of 1991, and did not have direct influence on the war.⁵³ However as argued in *Thinking about Yugoslavia* by Ramet Sabrina based on the existing literature and information that were provided during the trial of Slobodan Milosevic “Belgrade’s culpability in the war has been extensively documented.”⁵⁴

The nature of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a topic of debates among scholars. Some of them perceived it as a civil war, with an emphasis on the ethnic factor as the main reason for the conflict, which occurred between Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats, without any significant influence from neighboring states. Others think that it was a consequence of irredentist politics of nationalist politicians from Croatia and Serbia supported by the forces in Bosnia. Ethnicity is in majority of cases presented as the main reason for the brake up of the state and the war in B&H, but it is also questioned by many authors. The argument of this thesis will not be that it was a civil war, with ethnic or non ethnic motivation, or an aggression. The Bosnian war was so complicated that it has elements of each one of them, and tying to put the war in Bosnia in just one of those approaches is not enough to give the real picture of the events that occurred.

⁵¹ Sabrina Ramet, *Thinking About Yugoslavia*, 4.

⁵² Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse*, 187. cited in Ramet, *Thinking About Yugoslavia*, 5.

⁵³ Steven Burg and Paul Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, 2000, 89.

⁵⁴ Ramet, *Thinking About Yugoslavia*, 6.

The importance of this chapter is to show that there is no simplistic explanation for the dissolution of Yugoslavia which led to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war parties were not fixed or stable during the conflict. Bosnian Muslims, Croat and Serbs were changing sides very often, and those who were allies at one point, became enemies later and vice versa.⁵⁵ This fact also suggests that in the Bosnian war ethnicity was not the only motivation for the war. Scholars also neglect the fact that during the war, in western Bosnia, one part of the Bosnian Muslims decided to turn their back on the Central government in Sarajevo, and create their own separate entity, the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB). With Fikret Abdic as the president of the APWB they collaborated with the other self-proclaimed entities, Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia and Republic of Srpska, and they gained the support of the presidents of Croatia and Serbia. This also undermines the importance of ethnicity in the Bosnian war and gives another perspective to the war. One of the few scholars who deals with this part of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is Christia Fotini in her book *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* and I will refer to her work in the next chapters.

⁵⁵ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012, 153.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 1992-1995

Before B&H gained independence, it was one of six republics of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1991, Slovenia was the first who declared that it no longer wished to be a part of Yugoslavia, and Croatia followed shortly thereafter. Bosnia needed to make the choice whether to stay in what was left of the Yugoslav federation or leave. Bosnia and Herzegovina was a country with a highly mixed population.

According to the last census, which was held in April of 1991, 44% of the population was Muslim, 31% were Serb, and 17% were Croat.⁵⁶ From these statistics, it can be concluded that though Muslims constituted the majority with plurality, Bosnia did not have an absolute majority, unlike other Yugoslav Republics. The new situation in Yugoslavia represented a significant issue for Bosnia because it divided its multi-ethnic population. The majority of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats wanted to secede from Yugoslavia and live in the independent country of Bosnia, but a significant number of Bosnian Serbs did not share the same desires. Instead, they wanted to stay in Yugoslavia, where, since the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, Serbia had the biggest influence.

On the 27th of August, the European Community and its members decided to establish a peace conference, chaired by the Lord Carrington. They established the Arbitration Commission, known as the Badinter Commission, in order to provide the conference with legal advice. The commission laid down 15 legal opinions concerning the new situation in Yugoslavia, and the wishes of its republic to become independent states. On the 20th of November 1991, Lord Carrington asked the Badinter Commission: “Does the Serbian population in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as one of the constituent peoples of

⁵⁶ Kasim Trnka, *Konstitutivnost Naroda*, 29.

Yugoslavia, have the right to self-determination?”⁵⁷ The commission answered that whatever the circumstances, the right of self-determination cannot change existing frontiers at the time of independence except when the states concerned agree otherwise. The territorial integrity of international federal units was protected by the principle of *uti possidetis*. If there is one or more ethnic, religious or linguistic community within the country, the right to recognition of their identity is guaranteed under international law. By international law they referred to norms by which states are obligated to respect the rights of minorities.⁵⁸ From this it can be concluded that the Serbian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not entitled to secede from the country. They were entitled to declare the nationality of their choice, with the all rights and obligations under international and state law.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was not recognized as an independent country, on the first request, because the government did not hold a referendum to determine whether or not the population of the country was in favor of independence. The parliament called for a referendum in April 1992 while, at the same time, the members of the Bosnian Serb Assembly invited the Serb population in Bosnia to boycott it. Despite the boycott of the Bosnian Serb population, the results of the referendum showed that 99.4 %, out of 64.3 % of the population who voted, were in favor of an independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵⁹ Among them were also thousands of Bosnian Serbs from urban areas. As a response to the referendum, the Bosnian Serb elite established ‘The Republic of Srpska’ within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶⁰ Bosnia was recognized as a sovereign and independent state on the 7th of April 1992 by the European Community and the United States. After that, the irredentist claims of neighboring countries, Serbia and Croatia, became clear. These claims were supported by part of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats, who wanted the territories in which they

⁵⁷ Opinion of the Arbitration Commission (Badinter Commission)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Trnka, *Konstitutivnost Naroda*, 22.

⁶⁰ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 2002, 304–305.

were the majority be incorporated into Serbia and Croatia. War officially started right after the recognition of Bosnia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina represented a substantial challenge for the international community. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia served as a buffer between the Soviet Union and the West. It had a significant geopolitical importance but with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the importance of Yugoslavia disappeared. After its dissolution, Bosnia and Herzegovina became just a small former republic of Yugoslavia with no significant importance. The lack of interest from powerful countries meant that they had little willingness to become militarily engaged.⁶¹

At the beginning of the war in Bosnia, the United States did not want to be involved. They considered the war to be a concern of the European Community and they left it to Europe to demonstrate its efficiency in the Yugoslav crisis.⁶² After the siege of Sarajevo started and the war was spreading all over the country, Bosnian authorities demanded help from the international community. At the same time, the media started to show disturbing pictures from Bosnia, reminding the world that huge atrocities, war camps and ethnic cleansing were happening there, and they demanded military intervention from the major powers.⁶³ As a response UNPROFOR, the United Nations Protection Force, was sent to Bosnian territory with the aim of peace keeping. UNPROFOR was nothing more than a neutral United Nations force on Bosnian ground which provided humanitarian aid, but it was not allowed to use any force. The reason for this kind of behavior of the international community was the dilemma about the nature of the Bosnian war: “Was it a civil war or external aggression from Serbia?”⁶⁴ This dilemma was never fully resolved, and no appropriate measures were taken to stop the war. “The decision of the major powers not to act

⁶¹ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 273.

⁶² Leo Tindemans and International Commission on the Balkans, *Nedovršeni mir*, 56.

⁶³ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 273.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

militarily in the conflict meant that they would not defend the Bosnian state that they had recognized”⁶⁵ when it was very clear that Bosnia was at the same time attacked by “rebel forces and an external aggressor”.⁶⁶

Before and during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, several peace proposals were offered by the European Community, the USA, and the United Nation. Every peace proposal attempted to reach an agreement between the three national communities. The proposals were based on ethnicity, and with every new offer, the ethnic division within the country became stronger.

After the results of the Bosnian referendum, the great power of the European Community got together in Lisbon in February 1992 to talk about the new constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These negotiations became known as the Cutileiro plan. The leaders of the three constitutional communities participated in the negotiations. Firstly, the parties agreed that Bosnia should be divided into three constitutional units based on ethnicity. Before the units were defined, the President of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic withdrew his signature 10 days after he signed the agreement, because he was not willing to accept any kind of division of the country.⁶⁷

Very soon after the Lisbon conference, the war in Bosnia started and another conference of European Community members was held in London with the aim of stopping the violation of international laws by Serbian forces on Bosnian territory.⁶⁸ It was declared that the European Community would not recognize the territorial changes made by force; they demanded that the Serbian Government release civil prisoners, the protection of minorities, the closing war camps, and more. However, all the obligations were not taken seriously by the Serbian delegates, and the atrocities, ethnic cleansing and other horrors continued to happen

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Tindemans, *Nedovršeni mir*, 48.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

in Bosnia.⁶⁹ This conference was yet another indication of the lack of a strong will of the international community to stop the war.

After the second failure, in January of 1993, the international community presented the Vance Owen peace proposal as a solution for the Bosnian crisis. It was the last plan that made a “heroic effort to move away from the presumption of ethnic partition in the Lisbon Accord and to reconstitute the idea of Bosnian sovereignty.”⁷⁰ According to the plan, Bosnia would be organized into ten provinces, based on historical, geographical criteria and the ethnic composition of the country. In May of 1993, Serbian Leaders refused to accept the plan and the war continued to rage on.⁷¹

The next peace proposal, known as the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, will be remembered because it recognized the ethnic division of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Owen-Stoltenberg plan “returned to the ethnic principles of Lisbon and divided Bosnia into a confederation of three ethnic states.”⁷² The plan would divide the country in a manner in which 53% of the territory would be given to Bosnian Serbs; 17% would be given to Bosnian Croats; and 30% would be given to the Bosnian Government. The plan was rejected by the Bosnian government because it was very clear that if such a plan were implemented, the Serbian part of Bosnia would eventually become part of Serbia, and the Croatian part of Bosnia would become part of Croatia.⁷³

The Owen Stoltenberg plan was a crucial moment in which the international community set aside the multiethnic tradition and history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. “The fate of those committed to the idea of Bosnia and Herzegovina (pro-Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs; people from mixed marriages or parents; people who identified themselves as

⁶⁹ Tindemans, *Nedovršeni mir*, 48.

⁷⁰ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 304.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 310.

⁷³ Ibid.

Bosnians; and those who believed in a nonracial, non-exclusivist, or multiethnic state”⁷⁴ was lost.⁷⁵ The peace plans that were offered to Bosnia and Herzegovina to stop the war were almost all based along ethnic lines, and therefore did nothing to preserve the multiethnic tradition of this country.

The war was finally concluded with the Dayton Peace Agreement in December of 1995. It was signed by the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic, the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, and the president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman. Bosnia and Herzegovina was officially a divided country. Bosnian Serbs were given 49% of the territory under the name the Republic of Srpska and the Federation which was under the control of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats was given 51%.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 299.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: NON-ETHNIC MOTIVES FOR THE WAR

One of the elements of the Bosnian war was a civil war, and motivations for the war are usually considered as ethnic. This chapter aims to examine theories on civil wars which focus on providing other explanations for the conflict besides ethnic and even question the existence of ethnic war itself, and then applying those theories on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By using these theories I am not claiming that the war in Bosnia was a civil war, I am just examining the parts of theories which will give other perspectives to the war when it comes to its motivations, but also highlights what these theories omit when it comes to the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.1 Civil Wars

A civil war is considered to be an internal armed conflict, directed against the government of a sovereign state, which causes at least 1000 cumulative battle-related deaths.⁷⁶ They are usually described as binary conflicts, and their nature and cause are perceived to be based on their general cleavage. Following the aforementioned, civil wars can be labeled as ideological, ethnic, religious, or class wars. As a result of this approach, if the war is perceived as an ethnic conflict, the actor of the war will also be viewed as ethnic actors and the violence will be categorized as ethnic.⁷⁷ It is very problematic to have this kind of approach in analyzing civil wars labeled as ethnic, due to the fact “actions on the ground” very often do not correspond with the “master cleavage”.⁷⁸ The reason for this is that these actions can often be connected to local and private matters more than to what is understood to be the war's master cleavage, and that the local elite frequently used the war as a way to

⁷⁶ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 9.

⁷⁷ Kalyvas, “The Ontology Of “Political Violence”: Action and Identity in Civil Wars, 476.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 475-476.

“settle their local or private conflicts often bearing little or no relation to the causes of the war.”⁷⁹ Analyzing alliance formation in civil wars also offers an insight into motivations behind their creation which are usually not connected to a master war cleavage. Alliance is for local actors as a means rather than a goal. All this is very often neglected from the studies of civil war and very few scholars step away from the master cleavage of the war and focus on the events on the ground.⁸⁰

One should be very careful in labeling wars, its actors, violence and the motivation behind it as ethnic, because perceiving actors of the war as unitary can be misleading.⁸¹ What is considered to be the main motivation on the macro level very often is not the case on the micro level.⁸² Despite the fact that wars can start as a consequence of ethnic divisions, the characteristics connected to ethnic groups change as they are not fixed and stable.⁸³ Assuming that ethnic groups and their leaders are a “single actor” with the same motivations is arguable.⁸⁴

This raises the question of whether ethnicity is the main motivation for the actions on the ground and questions the very existence of ethnic war itself.⁸⁵ The fact that ethnic identities are usually considered to be fixed and stable during civil wars, which are labeled as ethnic, and in practice it is very often not the case. Another criticism of ethnic conflict is “constructivist” which claims that ethnicity is constructed. It does not undermine the meaning of ethnicity in these conflicts, but I point out that ethnicity cannot be considered as the main cause of the war.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Ibid., 476.

⁸⁰ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012.

⁸¹ Kalyvas, “The Ontology Of,” 481.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection in Civil War,” August 1, 2008, 1045.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1063.

⁸⁵ Kalyvas, “Civil Wars,” 420.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

3.2 The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The characterization of the wars in Yugoslavia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as ethnic conflict, especially when it comes to activities of the military forces is inaccurate.⁸⁷ Many times ethnic division is represented as the main cause of the conflict in Bosnia and because of that it is very surprising to notice that ethnic groups during the war were not fixed or exclusive, on the contrary.⁸⁸ During the conflict in different periods parties in the war were allies and enemies: “Serbs against Muslims and Croats, Serbs with Muslims, Serbs with Croats, and Muslims against Croats”⁸⁹ and also Muslims against Muslims.⁹⁰ Fotini in her book *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* argues if the war was of just an ethnic nature these alliances would not be possible, because these groups do not share the same identity characteristics. The only logical alliance would be that between Serbs and Croats, because of the fact that they are both Christians, but that was also not the case. So, if the ethnicity was not the only motivator for the actions what was?⁹¹ According to Susan Woodward in her book *Balkan Tragedy*⁹² actions were not driven by the “ethnic hatred, class conflict, or historical aspirations for the territory, but by the geopolitical and institutional preconditions of sovereignty”.⁹³ But there are also other explanations. It would be wrong to claim that ethnicity did not play important role in the conflict, and that some actions during the war were not driven by it, but claiming it was the only motivation would be misleading.

Fotini dedicated the whole chapter to alliance formation and group fractionalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She examines process formation and termination of alliances among the parties in war and focuses on the group fractionalization among them. She introduces a

⁸⁷ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 272.

⁸⁸ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012, 153.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*.

⁹³ Ibid., 272.

new term, multiparty civil wars. By multiparty civil wars she refers to wars where there are three or more domestic parties which are involved in the conflict. The conflicts between two parties are not the subject of her research because in a binary conflict there are no alliance formations.⁹⁴ Fotini points out that her definition of multiparty civil wars concentrates only on domestic parties, and she excludes the influence of any external actors.⁹⁵

Fotini starts by pointing out that in multiparty civil wars between Christians and Muslims, which was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon, it is logical to accept that an alliance will be formed between Christians, but in reality this was not the case. According to Fotini, “there is no impossible alliance in the context of civil wars”,⁹⁶ and any group regardless of its homogeneity can be the object of fractionalization.⁹⁷ She argues that alliance formation in multiparty civil wars is strategic, and driven mainly by power distribution and victory, and not by identity, race, language, religion or ideology. The elites of the war parties choose their alliances based on the aforementioned factor, and then they construct narratives by looking at identity characteristics of the group in order to justify their actions.⁹⁸ This argument shows that elites are offering groupness narratives in order to create group cohesion and alliance which can help them achieve their strategic political goal. The narratives which allegedly keep alliances together are simply invented by the elites so they could provide reasons for the population that will be more meaningful to them than the true reasons for the war.⁹⁹

Another factor of civil wars is group fractionalization, which occurs as a consequence of the complexity of intergroup relations in the time of uncertainty. This division of the group is very often a regional one or happens as a result of the elites’ disputes, but the main reason

⁹⁴Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 12

⁹⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 7.

for the group split, according to Fotini, is “asymmetric loss experienced by a group constituent subgroup.”¹⁰⁰ What is important to emphasize when it comes to group fractionalization is that, despite the fact that they share the same identity characteristics (ethnicity, language, religion and etc) the division of the group is very possible, which also undermines the importance of identity characteristics.

The division of homogeneous groups which share the same identity characteristics is also referred to as ethnic defection. “Ethnic defection is a process whereby individuals join organizations explicitly opposed to the national aspirations of the ethnic group with which they identify and end up fighting against their co ethnics.”¹⁰¹ With many examples Kalyvas has suggested that the main motivation for ethnic defection and taking sides with the enemy are the benefits that arise from that alliance. Like Fotini, Kalyvas also argues that “rebels” from the ethnic group will join the stronger side, even if it does not share the same identity characteristics, because at that moment they are in a much weaker position and afraid for their own survival. Also, he emphasizes the importance of geographical location, because according to him, it is more likely that ethnic defection will occur if the part of the ethnic group is isolated from the central government. He gives the example of isolated mountainous villages.¹⁰² Ethnic defection occurs in the wars that are perceived to be ethnic, which raises the question of whether the ethnic nature of the war is the real one.

Fotini emphasizes that if one wants to get the real picture of the war, they cannot omit looking at the alliance formation and fractionalization within the group. Also, one need to keep in mind that identity characteristics cannot be changed in such a fast way that they can be perceived as a reason for alliance changes or divisions in the same groups. According to the aforementioned, it is very clear that it is necessary to look beyond ethnicity, religion and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰¹ Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection in Civil War,” August 1, 2008, 1045.

¹⁰² Ibid., 1052.- 1059

other characteristics which are considered to be main reasons for civil wars, and find an explanation somewhere else.¹⁰³

The theories on civil war can be partially applied to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fact that Fotini claims that the war in Bosnia was a civil war and does not take in to account the influence of external factors, gives an incomplete picture about the war because the group alliance formation and fractionalization in the case of Bosnia was highly influenced by external factors.

3.3 The Influence of External Factors on Group Formation in Bosnian War

Shortly after Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized, by European Community and USA the war broke out. The members of three ethnic groups formed their armies. According to Fotini, Bosnian Serbs were the strongest because they inherited the majority of arsenal from the Yugoslav People's Army (YNA) which withdrew from Bosnia in the May of 1992.¹⁰⁴ This claim is accepted by those who perceive the Bosnian war only in the frames of civil war without the strong involvement of neighboring states, however Bosnian Serbs did not just inherit the arms from YNA, they were getting military and financial support from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the "Bosnian Serb Army remained fully integrated with the Yugoslav Army."¹⁰⁵ The President of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic provided paychecks for the Army of the Bosnian Serbs and he was also very much involved in creating the army's strategies and plans. By the end of 1993 more than "1,800 officers of the Army of Republic of Serbs were on Belgrade's payroll."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁵ Sabrina Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 313.

¹⁰⁶ Ramet, Sabrina P. (2004) Martyr in His Own Mind: The Trial and Tribulations of Slobodan Milošević, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5(1). Cited in *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 291.

When it comes to an alliance between Bosnian Croats and Muslims, Fotini argues that the alliance between these two groups was formed “in order to balance against the militarily stronger Serbs”¹⁰⁷ and that “the Muslim-Croat infighting was a result of the change in the balance of power when Serb forces withdrew from certain areas where they were a minority, leaving Croats and Muslims to divide power.”¹⁰⁸ But this picture can be expanded. When the war in Bosnia started the Croat Defence Council (HVO) together with the Bosnian Army played a very important role in defending Bosnia at the beginning of the conflict,¹⁰⁹ but this alliance did not end just because of the above mentioned reasons. “Cooperation between HVO and Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) broke dawn under the combined pressure of political disagreement, structural incompatibility and the treasonous politics of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and his Bosnian Croat proxies...”¹¹⁰. Tudjman’s politics towards Bosnia was very harmful. At the beginning of 1993 the head of the Bosnian Army from that period, Sefer Halilovic, stated that if this influence did not exist he would be able to resolve issues between the Bosnian Army and HVO “within minutes”.¹¹¹ This shows that analyzing group alliance and their termination without taking into a consideration external factors, in the case of Bosnia would give an incomplete picture.

To understand this kind of behavior of the president of Croatia, it is necessary to go deeper into the politics of Croatia and Franjo Tudjman towards Bosnia. Even before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina started, Tudjman showed interest in expending the territory of Croatia at the expense of Bosnian territory. On 25 of March, President Tudjman met with President Milosevic in Kradjordjevo.¹¹² The aim of this meeting was to talk about the future

¹⁰⁷ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012, 154.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Marko Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 64.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 85.

¹¹² Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 263.

potential division of Bosnia between these two states.¹¹³ This was confirmed by Stipe Mesic who won the presidential election in Croatia after Tudjman died. According to him Tudjman wanted to expand the territory of the country based on the borders that existed during the “short-lived banovina (1939-41).”¹¹⁴ Another meeting on the same topic took place in Tikves, the place near Osijek and this time Tudjman and Milosevic did not meet in person, instead they sent their political experts and academics to talk on the same subject until they reached some kind of agreement.¹¹⁵ They did not reach a consensus on the topic and that was the last meeting which was held between experts and academics. This did not mean that the idea about the Bosnian division was just a temporary.¹¹⁶

Despite the fact that there are some doubts about the veracity of the Karadjordjevo agreement, there are no doubts that Franjo Tudjman had irredentist claims towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was not just Stipe Mesic who agreed with this. According to his biographer, Darko Hudelist, after Yugoslavia dissolved Tudjman had a plan to expand the territories of Croatia to the parts of the territory of B&H where there was a Croats majority.¹¹⁷

After Bosnian Serbs seceded from B&H, they created their own mini state Republic of Srpska and openly opposed the idea of a multiethnic Bosnia. Meanwhile, Croats and Muslims were still cooperating with each other.¹¹⁸ The Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia already existed from November of 1991 but under the statement that it does not have any wish to separate from Bosnia and its central government with Izetbegovic as its President.¹¹⁹ Very soon HDZ (Croat Democratic Party) instructed by Tudjman politics, started separatist moves

¹¹³ Ibid.264.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Tanjung (10 April 1991), trans. In BBS Summary of World Broadcast (13 April 1991), on Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe cited in *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 264.

¹¹⁶ Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 264

¹¹⁷ Hudelist, *Tudjman-- biografija*, 672–682. Cited in *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 264

¹¹⁸ Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 264

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

between HVO and the Bosnian Army.¹²⁰ The situation had definitely changed after, under Tudjman's instruction, Stjepan Kljuic, the leader of the Bosnian Croats, was replaced with Mate Boban who transformed the name of the Croatian community to the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia and opposed the legitimacy of the central government from Sarajevo and eventually Croats and Muslims slid in to war.¹²¹

Tudjman's irredentist claims were very clearly stated by him in the transcript of his conversation with the Bosnian Croat Defense Minister, Gojko Susak, and the Croatian Army General, Janko Bobetko, who was the Chief of the General Staff at that moment. In that transcript Tudjman told them to provide help for Herzeg-Bosnia because "the future borders of the Croatian state are being resolved there."¹²² Another example of Tudjman's involvements took place in 1994. His main advisor, Ivic Pasalic, was sent to Banja Luka (the capital of Republic of Srpska) to continue negotiations with Radovan Karadzic on the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina even after the Washington agreement was signed in February 1994.¹²³

From everything aforementioned it is very clear that perceiving the war in Bosnia, its ethnic groups and their alliance changes, cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the external factors, in this case the involvement of two neighboring states, Croatia and Serbia and their presidents Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic. In her book *Aliance Formation in Civil Wars* Fotini takes a step outside of the ethnic frame that the war in Bosnia is usually put into, and gives a different perspective on the conflict. What she omits to do is include external factors in her research on Bosnia. The external factors were part of the Bosnian war from the beginning and not taking them in to a consideration gives an

¹²⁰ Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 127.

¹²¹ Ibid., 264–265.

¹²² As quoted in Sergej Abramov, "Tudjman '93: U Herceg-Bosni se rjesavaju buduce granice HR" Novi list (Rijeka), 3 April 2003, at www.novolist.hr [accessed on 3 April 2003]. Cited in *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 265.

¹²³ Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 265.

incomplete picture about the above mentioned processes. I am aware of the general literature on the role and impact of exogenous actors in the wars, but in my thesis I am just focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I am not going to discuss general implication of this case.

CHAPTER 4: THE INTRA MUSLIM CONFLICT IN CAZINSKA KRAJINA

The most puzzling part of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the intra Muslim conflict that took place in Cazinska Krajina, the western part of the country. In a war that is often characterized as ethnically based, it is very hard to explain the conflict which occurred between the members of the same ethnic group. At a time when Bosnian Muslims were victims of ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs and Croats with the support of Croatia and Serbia, it would be expected that the unity of the group should have become stronger not weaker, but this was not the case. Also, in this region Muslims and Croats were on the same side during the whole war and there were no big changes in this alliance. The intra Muslim conflict is just another example which contributes to the fact that perceiving the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as just ethnic is misleading.

4.1 Background Information about the Region of Cazinska Krajina

The Cazinska Krajina is the most western area of the country that occupies a territory of 1.500 km with a population of 150.000. What makes this part of Bosnia interesting is the fact that during the war, one of the members of the presidency, Fikret Abdic, created an unconstitutional, self-proclaimed entity, the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB) which resulted in intra Muslim conflict. One part of the population was loyal to Fikret Abdic and the other part was loyal to the central government in Sarajevo.¹²⁴

4.1.1 Fikret Abdic: An Introduction

Fikret Abdic was born in 1939 in a small village near Velika Kladusa. When he finished school, he started to work for the local agricultural firm. Twenty-five years later he

¹²⁴ Smail Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 101.

transformed it into one of the biggest agricultural food-processing industries in Yugoslavia, called Agrokomerc, which employed 13,000 people from this area. He managed to convert the Krajina region from a very poor area into a very prosperous one. Fikret Abdić became a very important person, and by joining the Bosnian Communist Party he even expanded his influence. “He was an emerging national figure and a very powerful man in the Bihać region where directly or indirectly, his influence touched the lives of many people.”¹²⁵ He started to refer to himself first as a visionary, and then as “babo” (father).¹²⁶ By this he wanted to point out that he was taking care of the Krajina population like fathers take care of their children. The nickname has stayed with him until today.

The golden days of Agrokomerc and Fikret were put in danger when, in 1987, he was charged with corruption and held in investigative detention for two years. “It was alleged that Agrokomerc had been effectively printing money for itself by abusing the Yugoslav bank bond system on a huge scale, and as a consequence the entire economy of north-west Bosnia was threatened with collapse.”¹²⁷ After 26 months in detention he was released and in a very short time he was able to recover as a politician and as businessmen. He took his place within the Communist Party and even became a delegate in the Assembly of the Yugoslav Republics. As a very successful and capable businessman he was also able to save Agrokomerc from falling apart after the controversial affair.¹²⁸ The affair did not affect his popularity very much. He was respected among the ordinary Muslim population and they perceived him as a person who had brought employment, wealth and prosperity to a very poor region.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Brendan O’Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 15.

¹²⁶ Huskić, *Svi Zločini Fikreta Abdića*, 17.

¹²⁷ O’Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 15.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 2002, 209.

4.2 Abdic's Political Career and Relationship with the First President of B&H

After the disintegration of the Communist Party in 1990, several nationalist parties appeared on the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other Yugoslav republics. In Bosnia, there was a Croat party (HDZ), Croatian Democratic Community, Serb party (SDS), Serbian Democratic Party, and the main Muslim party, SDA, Party of Democratic Action. The leader of SDA was Alija Izetbegovic, who was the only head of the governance who was not the member of the Communist Party. On the contrary, he was famous for the trial that was held against him and 12 other Muslim activists, with charges of conducting activities that were inspired by Muslim nationalism. He was sentenced to 14 years of prison, but after Communist Party fell apart he was released after spending four years in jail. He was also famous for the Islamic Declaration essay which he wrote in 1960, and which was the main document held against him in the trial. It was republished in Sarajevo in 1990 before the elections and some thought that it was Izetbegovic's way of saying that the future of Bosnia was in Islam. Bosnian Serbs presented it "as a blueprint for the transformation of Bosnia into a fundamentalist Islamic State."¹³⁰ According to Noel Malcolm in his book, *Bosnia, A short History*, the Islamic declaration was nothing of the aforementioned.¹³¹ The essay was about general politics and Islam in the world and does not even mention Bosnia and Herzegovina at all. Malcolm refers to the part of the Declaration's text which states that Islamic society and Islamic government cannot be introduced without an already existing Islamic society where the majority of people are practicing Islam. Without these necessary conditions, Islamic order can turn into a tyranny. It is very obvious that Bosnia and Herzegovina was not the country described in the essay considering the fact that Bosnian Muslims are considered to be the

¹³⁰ Ibid., 219.

¹³¹ Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 2002, 219–220.

most secular Muslims in the world and the majority of them perceive Islam only as part of their tradition and culture.¹³²

Because of his enormous popularity among the Muslim populations, especially in the western part of Bosnia, after joining SDA, Fikret Abdic came forth as the main opponent to Alija Izetbegovic as leader of the party and as a future Bosnian president. After the elections were over, the results showed that Abdic had 200,000 votes more than Izetbegovic, but surprisingly he announced that he was not going to accept the job of president, but that he planned to continue to be a member of the Presidential Council. The reason for this decision can be found in the fact that he did not have the support of the other members of the party, and there was also a lack of support from the Serb members of the Presidency.¹³³

The relationship between these two prominent Bosnian politicians would become the source of many controversies after 2 May 1992. On that day, President Izetbegovic was returning from the peace conference in Lisbon, and was not aware that the situation was worsened by the attempts of Bosnian Serbs to divide the city of Sarajevo and the fact that the commanding officer of the Yugoslav People's Army (YNA) Milutin Kukanjac was in control of Bosnian forces which demanded the surrender of all weapons. Izetbegovic was captured by the YNA soldiers and taken to a village that was controlled by Serbs. When he arrived there, a telephone was available to him so he called Sarajevo's TV station and announced that he was arrested by the JNA and nominated Ejup Ganic¹³⁴ as a person to take his place in his absence. During the discussion between Izetbegovic, Ganic and the TV host, Fikret Abdic walked into the studio. It was very surprising that he was able to come from Bihac and pass through all the Serb and Bosnian checkpoints and successfully arrive in Sarajevo. At this moment that was considered impossible. Ejup Ganic immediately started to doubt Abdic's good intentions and raised the possibility that Abdic was in cooperation with Serbs and that he was involved in the

¹³² Ibid., 210–220.

¹³³ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 15.

¹³⁴ Ejup Ganic was one of the members of the Bosnian Presidency

kidnapping of the Bosnian president, expecting to take his place. There is no evidence that would support this theory, but after that Abdic's political career in Sarajevo was over. Shortly after this event, he returned to Velika Kladusa and Krajina region where he was still considered important.¹³⁵

4.3 Proclamation of Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia

When Abdic returned from Sarajevo to Cazinska Krajina, the Serbs were already in control of 70 percent of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Krajina was totally surrounded by Serb forces and cut off from Sarajevo by 330 km. Communication with the center of the state was cut off because Serb forces controlled the entire radio and television system leaving the Krajina region almost completely blockaded. There was a lack of information about the situation in other parts in Bosnia.¹³⁶ This goes in line with the aforementioned that ethnic defection is more possible if the part of the ethnic group is isolated from the central government, which was definitely the case here.¹³⁷

Abdic announced his return by saying that he was coming back to save the people of the Krajina region. People started to feel much safer, because the confidence in Abdic's power was enormous, but with his return the political situation in the Krajina region started to change.¹³⁸ According to domestic scholars, Abdic started to plan secession from the moment he came back to Velika Kladusa. He was already a very respectable person in the eyes of the Krajina region inhabitants, but that was not enough because at that moment people were oriented towards the Bosnian Army and the 5th Korpus as the only protectors from the Serb aggression and Bosnia and Herzegovina as the only legitimate state. No one could imagine that Abdic would very soon announce the creation of the Autonomous Province of Western

¹³⁵ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 17.

¹³⁶ Ramiz Dreković, *U obruču*, 237–238.

¹³⁷ Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," August 1, 2008, 1059.

¹³⁸ Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 73.

Bosnia and divide the people. The first step was to present the already difficult situation in the region as a hopeless one, and then to present that the Bosnian Army and 5th Corps are in favor of war because they blindly follow the politics from Sarajevo, with an emphasis on Alija Izetbegovic.¹³⁹ He said that if the people of the Krajina region wanted to stop the bloody conflict they would have to rely on themselves, because according to him it was very clear that the UN had no means to protect Bihac, despite the fact that they had designated it a safe zone. According to him the 5th Corps was similarly not able to provide the same protection.¹⁴⁰

It is very important to mention that before the proclamation of APWB, Fikret was supported by David Owen,¹⁴¹ who was involved in delivering the peace plans for Bosnia and Herzegovina. That support was not directly aimed at the creation of a third entity in Bosnia but for him as a politician and negotiator. In his book *Balkan Odyssey*, David Owen expresses his impressions after meeting with Abdic for the first time:

...Fikret Abdic the leader of the Bihac Muslim. Though later often described as a businessmen and a rebel Muslim leader... He was in fact the member of the collective presidency which was the governing body of Bosnia and Herzegovina; popular as a secular Muslim, he had pulled the largest number of votes. The snag was that Fikret wanted to stay during the war in the Krajina region... He was forthright, confident and different from the Sarajevo Muslims. He was in favor of negotiation and compromising with Croats and Serbs to achieve a settlement, and scathing about those Muslims who wanted to block any such settlement. In many ways it was much easier to adopt this approach than Izetbegovic...¹⁴²

Some even argue that the peace plans that were being offered to war parties to resolve the conflict, specifically the Vance Owen Peace Plan in January of 1993 and the Owen Stoltenberg Peace Plan in October 1993 had encouraged Fikret to take a step and create the APWB which resulted in the intra Muslim conflict. As has been already mentioned, the Vance Owen Peace plan sought to divide Bosnia into ten provinces and Cazinska Krajina was

¹³⁹ Ibid., 76–77.

¹⁴⁰ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 18.

¹⁴¹ David Owen was the Co-Chairman of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Cited in Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*.

¹⁴² David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 87.

province number one, and according to some scholars, this and the fact Fikret was appreciated as a politician by David Owen and Stoltenberg influenced his decision to create his little province.¹⁴³

He was also in negotiations with the president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, at the time when he was already marginalized by the central government. Franjo Tudjman and Fikret Abdic met in Brijuni, an island of Croatia, to discuss future negotiations. It was very surprising that Tudjman was meeting with a person who was already rejected by the central government because of its announcement against the Bosnian Army and the presidency, especially Izetbegovic.¹⁴⁴ This can be connected to the aforementioned Karadjordjevo Agreement because, at that meeting, Tudjman agreed with Milosevic that he would restore the boundaries of Croatia from the period of 1939-1941,¹⁴⁵ and also that he would be given the part of the so-called Turkish Croatia: Cazin, Velika Kladusa i Bihac.¹⁴⁶ Tudjman was aware of the fact that it would be much easier to accomplish any kind of settlement with Fikret Abdic who was ready for negotiations and a partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, unlike Alija Izetbegovic.

The following events made clear Abdic's intentions. Supported by important European and Franjo Tudjman to come back on the political scene,¹⁴⁷ on the 7th September 1993, he held the meeting in Agrokomerc's offices in Velika Kladusa with his supporters and formed the committee which aimed to promote the Initiative for the establishment of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia. In several days they were able to collect 17,238 signatures. Fikret claimed that he had an overwhelming support of the population from all parts of the Krajina region. For the ordinary people (ex or present workers of Agrokomerc) who were in

¹⁴³ Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 106.

¹⁴⁴ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Ramet, *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, 263–264.

¹⁴⁶ Magas and Zanic, *Rat U Hrvatskoj I Bosni Hercegovini 1991-1995*, 35.

¹⁴⁷ Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 306.

isolation from the beginning of the war, any promise for a safer future would get their support especially from someone like Fikret, who was the subject of their trust and admiration. For those members of the 5th Corps from Kladusa and Cazin, it was clear that Fikret would be able to provide higher paychecks than the government from Sarajevo was able to. It soon became obvious that support came that from people who were connected with Agrokomerc in any way, and that Fikret did not receive support from the majority of the population. Despite this fact, the APWB was self proclaimed in Velika Kladusa on 27 September 1993, and the region was very soon divided politically and militarily.¹⁴⁸ The text of an initiative stated the following:

...Not accepting the Initiative about the formation of Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia can mean only one. The Krajina region will exist according to the views of Izetbegovic, Ganic and others who share their opinion, and that means life without bread and life in blood, isolation and dungeon, the island of fear, poverty, misery and the blackest Stalinism. Don't let tyrants, non-Krajsnici, and non-Bosnians, foreign citizens and extremists decide about your faith and choose for you death instead of life and prosperity...I want to remind you, that in the 34 years that I've worked for you, your Babo (Father) has never betrayed your interests. Everything that I promised I delivered. If you do not accept this initiative, you would do me a great favor, because then I would leave Velika Kladusa and move to a more pleasant place in the world. I know that this initiative is your unique chance, and if you do not accept this offer that will mean your damnation, and I would not be able to participate and share that choice with you...Our future is not giving up from democracy and freedom..This is not understood by the command of 5th Corps because they are carrying out aggression towards its people...together with Alija Izetbegovic and his extremists...¹⁴⁹

These kinds of proclamations had a significant impact on the region and its population, especially because of the fact that they were almost completely blockaded, had little information about what was going on in Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia, and the fact that this was coming from a person who enjoyed a lot of support and confidence from the people of Cazinska Krajina. For them, Sarajevo seemed very far because of the blockade and that is also one of the reasons why Fikret Abdic had more influence on people than Alija Izetbegovic

¹⁴⁸ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 22–23.

¹⁴⁹ The Proclamation of Fikret Abdic to Population of Western Bosnia

did. Basically, Abdic presented an already bad situation in the region as a worse one, discredited the central government, which was not that difficult since people did not have any contact with them, accused the 5th Corps to blindly following Izetbegovic's orders and promised people peace and prosperity.¹⁵⁰

In analyzing Abdic's statements, Smail Klicic in his book *Intra Muslim conflict in Cazinska Krajina 1992-1995*, acknowledge the fact that there were some religious officials, politicians and military officers who wanted to see Bosnia as an Islamic state and Izetbegovic was not one of them. The generalizations based on the individual cases would be misleading. In the Bihac region where there was no conflict between Muslims and Croats, cooperation between different nationalities was a common thing. To confirm this he quotes the statements of Bosnian Serbs who stayed in Bihac during the war. According to him, Bosnian Serbs who stayed in the region were not mistreated and they enjoyed all the privileges like other citizens and many of them were even members of the 5th Corps.¹⁵¹ The claims about Islamic fundamentalism according to Zimmerman Warren, the US Ambassador to the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia before its disintegration, were first started by Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic. The Serbian and Croatian media started to represent Bosnia in the same manner that its government wanted to establish the Islamic state in what he called was the heart of Europe, but this was not the case. Milosevic and Tudjman were the ones who advocated the partition of Bosnia based on ethnic lines and "Izetbegovic was the one who wanted to preserve the multiethnic frame of Bosnia and Herzegovina."¹⁵²

The political elite of the self-proclaimed Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia were not able to mobilize the population based on their ethnicity, so they replaced that by claiming that they were fighting for Western democracy unlike President Izetbegovic who

¹⁵⁰ Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 75–76.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵² Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, 143. Cited in Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 104.

according to them wanted to create an Islamic state on Bosnian territory. The Bosnian Army and 5th Corps were represented as the fundamentalist mujahidin, and Fikret also mentioned the Islamic declaration written by Izetbegovic to support his claims.¹⁵³ Basically, Abdic used the same rhetoric as politicians from Serbia, the Republic of Serbs, Croatia and Herzeg-Bosnia and tried to portray Izetbegovic was advocating radical Islam. On the other hand, Izetbegovic stated that Muslims finally became constitutional people and that “Abdic is trying to pull us for at least fifty years back just to become a head of the state. He is cleaving us into tribes, he is trying to feudalize us, and he is giving our territory to Serbs and Croats.”¹⁵⁴

The Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia had many elements of a state: “There is a Prime Minister, a government and parliament, complete with all the usual trappings of the mini-state mania that had swept the former Yugoslavia...”¹⁵⁵ As a response to its creation, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina abolished the decision about the establishment of the APWB and declared it as unconstitutional.¹⁵⁶ The fighting between the two sides started very soon after that and another conflict was created on the Bosnian ground. Who started first is still a topic of debate between those who supported Abdic and the opposite side. Each side places the blame on the other.¹⁵⁷

4.4 The Cooperation with the Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croats and Neighboring Countries

On the 21st of October 1993 Abdic went to Zagreb to sign a peace agreement with the president of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, Mate Boban.¹⁵⁸ There are some

¹⁵³ Kličić, *Međubosnjački Sukob u Cazinskoj Krajini 1992.-1995*, 101.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁵⁵ The New York Times, July 2 1994. Cited in Fotini, *Following the Money: Muslim versus Muslim in Bosnian’ civil war*, 467.

¹⁵⁶ Official Journal of RB&H, number 1/94

¹⁵⁷ Fotini, *Following the Money: Muslim versus Muslim in Bosnian’ civil war*, 468.

¹⁵⁸ O’Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 23.

allegations that Franjo Tudjman was also present, but there is no concrete evidence to support this. The next day with an invitation from the president of Republic of Srpska, Slobodan Milosevic, Abdic travelled to Belgrade to sign another peace agreement with the president of the Republic of Srpska, Radovan Karadzic. According to this agreement, the Republic of Serbs declared recognition and respect for the APWB as one of the three constituent republics according to the Owen Stoltenberg Peace Plan. They declared cooperation on political, economic, cultural and every other level. As a witness of this agreement, which took obligation to be a mediator in the case of the difficulties between the parties, Slobodan Milosevic added his signature.¹⁵⁹ These agreements according to Abdic' followers, represented the first era of autonomy.

Other means of cooperation were present between the aforementioned parties. According to Stipe Mesic, former president of Croatia, in the end 1993, Croatian independent media outlets discovered that an enormous amount of fuel was transported from Croatia, through the territory under Serb control to Velika Kladusa and Fikret Abdic, who would then sell it to the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁶⁰ David Owen states in his book *Balkan Odyssey*¹⁶¹, that Croats were selling fuel to Bosnian Serbs so they would protect territories of Bosnian Croats which were under the attack of the Bosnian Army. Another motivation was to assure that Bosnian Serbs would provide assistance to Fikret Abdic because of his strong connections with the "Croatian financial community". Owen also emphasizes that Abdic was also supported from Belgrade.¹⁶²

Since he was not able to get support from the central government in Sarajevo, the only way for Abdic was finding support in Zagreb and Belgrade. He was aware of the fact that

¹⁵⁹ Official Journal of Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia, December 1993, number 2.

¹⁶⁰ Žanić, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1991-1995*, 260.

¹⁶¹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 1996.

¹⁶² Ibid., 384.

when he won over support from Tudjman and Milosevic, Bosnian Serbs and Croats would follow that lead. Every party had its own interest in the creation of the APWB.

4.5 The End of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia

At the beginning of 1994, most of the territory of the APWB was taken over by 5th Corps and a ceasefire was signed between the two parties, but this did not last for long.¹⁶³ In February of the following year, the fighting started again and lasted until the summer. Abdic was in the losing position. He and 30,000 of his supporters left their homes and went to Croatia. In December of 1994, the situation had changed and Abdic was again in control of Velika Kladusa, and this period is considered to be a second era of autonomy. The second era did not last for very long. As a consequence of the new Croat (from Croatia)-Muslim cooperation agreement, the 5th Corps was much stronger and was able to finally take back Velika Kladusa.¹⁶⁴ Abdic's political career was over after Izetbegovic signed the peace agreement and put the war to an end. Soon after the war was over, Abdic's supporters were allowed to return to the Krajina region to their homes. In the following year only 10 000 of them decided to return because they were afraid of the hostilities.¹⁶⁵

4.6 Existing Explanations for the Intra Muslim Conflict

Fotini in her book *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* uses the intra Muslim conflict to prove her theory about the group fractionalization in civil wars. One of the reasons for the fractionalization can be found in the elite's disputes. The political rivalry between Alija Izetbegovic and Fikret Abdic serves as a perfect example for this claim. Another factor which is more important according to Fotini is the "asymmetric loss experienced by a group"¹⁶⁶. The evidence of this can also be found in the Bosnian war, considering the fact that when Abdic

¹⁶³ Fotini, "Following the Money," 468.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ O'Shea, *Crisis at Bihać*, 238.

¹⁶⁶ Fotini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012, 33.

proclaimed his APWB, the Bosnian Army from central Bosnia suffered some losses, and the 5th Corps was successfully defending the region but was not progressing.

In the article, *Ethnic Defection in Civil Wars*, Kalyvas¹⁶⁷ does not take intra Muslim conflict as an example, but it can be easily applied. He argues that this kind of event can occur when ethnic group is afraid for its survival and it will even align with the stronger side despite the fact that they do not share the same identity characteristics. The main motivations for this are the benefits that come from that alliance. He also mentions geographical isolation as one of the contributing factors.¹⁶⁸ All these elements can be found in the intra Muslim conflict. The situation in the region was far from good even before Abdic returned but when he came back and started to use the above mentioned rhetoric people were even more afraid for their lives. Considering the fact that Abdic was a successful businessman who cooperated with all sides, the benefits from aligning with him were obvious. The fact that Cazinska Krajina was isolated from the central government and in a complete blockade also contributed to the mentioned events.

Other explanations can also be found. In her article *Following the Money: Muslim versus Muslims in Bosnian's Civil War*¹⁶⁹ Fotini argues that even in conflicts that are in general perceived as ethnic, "local economic initiatives can still prove important in the presence of charismatic local leadership."¹⁷⁰ In a situation like this, ethnicity is not going to be the main motivator and it will occupy the second place and the first place will be given to the economic benefits. When ethnicity does not play the main role there is a possibility that the same ethnic group, with the same ethnic characteristics, will start fighting against their co ethnics. In her article she emphasizes that this will be possible only if there are strong local elites who will offer better conditions, peace, freedom, but at the same time give access to the

¹⁶⁷ Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 1052-1059.

¹⁶⁹ Fotini, "Following the Money."

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 463.

economic benefits.¹⁷¹ She uses the intra Muslim conflict in Cazinska Krajina to prove that theory.

Fotini also briefly offers other alternative explanations for the conflict. She takes into account the geographical and historical elements.¹⁷² The geographical element is explained in the same way as Kalyvas where isolation plays the main role, but also she adds that even before the war people from Krajina were more oriented towards Zagreb as their center, due to the geographical proximity. Another reason Fotini finds is the history of the region. By examining the history of Cazinska Krajina she points out that this region is characterized by its charismatic leaders who did not have problems cooperating with other ethnic groups. She gives the example of Mujo Hrnjica who lived in the Ottoman period “who believed in the flexible nature of ethnic alliance.”¹⁷³ Another example is Huska Miljkovic, a Muslim who lived in the period of the Second World War who did not have problems in aligning with fascist Croats and Germans. Those who supported Abdic as well those who considered him a traitor perceived him as a person who followed the ideologies of the aforementioned persons.¹⁷⁴ Another thing that was mentioned is the fact that Krajina Muslims were less religious than Muslims from other parts of Bosnia, but still this point out only the differences between them and Muslims from other parts of Bosnia and does not explain the conflict which happened between them.¹⁷⁵

As one of the possible explanations she mentions the role of the international community and the peace agreement in the creation of the APWB, specifically the aforementioned Vance Owen plan in January of 1993 and the Owen Stoltenberg plan which

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 471.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 471-472

took place in December of the following year.¹⁷⁶ She admits that the peace plans were in line with the proclamation of the APWB, but they definitely cannot be blamed for that. In the end she emphasizes the importance of Abdic's role in the conflict by pointing out that before Abdic proclaimed the APWB the political situation in Caziska Krajina was good and no one could expected that something like that would happen. Only after Abdic came back to the region the division started to take place.¹⁷⁷

What Fotini omits to mention in her book and as her article is the influence of the neighboring countries and the support provided from the president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, and David Owen. She focuses on the micro level and the role of the local elite in explaining the conflict and the only factor that she mentions and just as an alternative explanation are the above mentioned peace plans. If one wants to give a full account of the war in Bosnia and this specific conflict one also needs to take the external factors into consideration because they played an important role in those events.

For one part of the population, Abdic was a savior who wanted to bring peace, freedom, and prosperity and for others he was a traitor, who cooperated with the enemy with an aim to create the APWB. Whether Fikert Abdic was a *traitor or savior*¹⁷⁸ of the population of Cazinska Krajina is still the subject of many debates in the country, but this is not what I am trying to answer in my thesis. I present this case for different a purpose. Intra Muslim conflict represents just another example of non-ethnic motivations for the conflict in the war which is usually qualified as ethnic. Also this case shows the influence of several external factors (some members of the international community, the President of Croatia and the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 474.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 469.

President of Serbia), which cannot be directly blamed for the intra Muslim conflict itself but they cannot be omitted from the overall picture of the events.

The intra Muslim conflict which occurred in Cazinska Krajina is not widely researched. Aside from the domestic literature which is usually very descriptive and biased, very few scholars focus on this part of the Bosnian war. The case study offered in my thesis presents the case from a different perspective. Besides the fact that through my thesis the case is used as another example of non ethnic motivation in the war very often perceived as ethnic, it also highlights the influence of external factors in creating the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia and in that way contributing to the conflict, which is very often omitted from the existing literature.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina still represents a challenge for scholarly works. By examining the relevant existing literature on the topic this thesis highlights that it would be misleading to characterize this war as a civil war with ethnic or non ethnic motivation, or as an aggression of the neighboring countries Croatia and Serbia. It had all the aforementioned elements and labeling the war with just one of them would provide an incomplete picture. By focusing on the non ethnic motivation for the war, I am not claiming that ethnicity was not an important part of it, but that it was certainly not the only one. In a war that is very often characterized as ethnic it is very surprising to notice that the war parties in question did not follow this line of this argument

The aim of this thesis was to examine the alliance formation between the war parties in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and show that ethnicity was the not the main motivation behind these actions. The second aim was to analyze how external factors contributed to the above mentioned processes.

The support for my thesis I found in the work of scholars who focus on the non ethnic motives in the war labeled as ethnic and especially the work of Christia Fotini and her book *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. As Fotini argues, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be considered only as ethnic because the alliance formation of the war parties was not driven by ethnic motivation. In the different time periods the alliance formation between three ethnic groups took a course which would not be possible if ethnicity had played the main role. Their actions were driven by other factors like power distribution, and victory. This thesis shows how the intra Muslim conflict follows the line of this argument and undermines the importance of ethnicity even more.

Moreover, external actors and events were shown to have a key impact on the alliance formation within the conflict. The irredentist politics of the President of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, and the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, highly influenced the behavior of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs, but also encouraged the formation of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia. This thesis also addresses the role of members of the international community and peace plans that were offered to settle the war

Without giving any implications on the wider understanding of ethnic wars, this thesis focuses only on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on the findings in this research, this paper has argued that analyzing this war without taking into consideration the aforementioned exogenous actors would represent the simplification of a very complex process.

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