RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Politics, Practice and Paradox of 'Ethnic Security' in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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The international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina was intended to support conflict resolution by introducing territorial self-government and power sharing as the foundation for a governance framework that would provide for collective and individual security alignment over time. Instead, it has contributed to the ethnification of security whereby collective security in the form of an 'ethnified state' remains at the forefront of political discourse and practice. Social acceptance of this ethnified state as the guarantor of security—despite the fading reality of the ethnic threat in public perceptions of post-war insecurity—has been actively manufactured by the country's ethnic elites using the very institutional means put in place by the international intervention. The result is an 'ethnic security paradox' in which the idea of individual safety—linked to the protection of ethnic identity in the form of an ethnified state—unsettles both collective and individual security alike.

Introduction

In many respects, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a paradigmatic case of a liberal peace-style international intervention, aimed to ensure stability by building effective democratic and economic governance and by promoting societal reconciliation. Anchored in the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina that ended the 1992–1995 war, international intervention has avoided a reversion to violence and enabled most of the population to begin rebuilding their lives. The constitution established as part of the Agreement has implemented territorial separation along ethnic lines and human rights protection standards that have guarded against a resumption of community violence in line with the liberal view of security through effective democratic state institutions (Philipsen 2014). Although the absence of widespread violence over the past two decades can be credited to this formula, Bosnia-Herzegovina's political body has been beset by demands—particularly from Bosnian Serbs and Croats—for more territorial autonomy; an occurrence which has also preoccupied the reform efforts overseen by international actors. These groups justify their demands by a claim that only rule by one's own (ethnic) people can provide protection and security following a war that turned the three constituent peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina against each other. Thus, in the Bosnian post-war context, ethnic identity has been securitised and the country's ethno-national political elites—who still command a strong following—have

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identified 'ethnic security' as the axis of political discourse and action (Haynes 2008; Beha & Visoka 2010). While this can be expected in the case of ethno-national parties ideologically committed to the notion of security as the protection of ethnic identity, it is ominous that some nominally civic political parties have also embraced the idea of ethnic security in one form or another (McClelland 2013; Azinovic *et al.* 2011; Saferworld 2012). This suggests that, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic security has become the social reality.

The main goal of this article is to conceptualise the relationship between (the idea of) collective and individual security as a result of the liberal peace intervention, using Bosnia-Herzegovina as an illustration. I submit that the relationship between the idea of security as protection of ethnic identity and individual security is manifested as an 'ethnic security paradox'. Collective security in the form of an ethnified state should be accepted socially despite the pervasive individual insecurity that afflicts every citizen when ethnicity is instrumentalised and ethnic security is used as a political tool. When ethnicity becomes the main organising principle of politics and the 'all dominant social marker', it affects the exercise of public authority by introducing arbitrariness and unpredictability (Simonsen 2005: 298). Consequently, every individual, regardless of their ethnicity, is affected by the manner in which power is exercised (Dyrstad 2012; Simonsen 2005; Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013). Furthermore, this paradox—whereby the idea of individual safety unsettles and compromises both collective and individual security—operates against the fading reality of the ethnic threat in peoples' perceptions of what makes life secure. These perceptions have increasingly—albeit with some variation particularly between rural and urban areas, and to some degree among ethnic groups—coalesced around the priorities of livelihood and welfare (Efendic *et al.* 2014a; BTI 2014; Saferworld 2012; Haynes 2008). The early 2014 cross-ethnic mass protests against deteriorating living standards and corruption are a good illustration of this. Thus, while

the social reality makes ethnic fear relevant, it is not necessarily perceived as a threat to the security of ethnic groups in the sense of direct violence. Were that so, it would provide some foundation for the ethnic security discourse promoted by ethno-national elites, and it would also serve as a straightforward explanation of the enduring support for ethnic parties. Instead, it is a product of the combined effects of the discourse and practice of ethnic elites and everyday experience in the institutional context shaped by the international intervention.

Before I set out the structure of the paper, a caveat is in order. This discussion does not attempt to deal with identity politics or the effectiveness of power sharing in post-conflict divided societies. Rather, it has a much narrower and specific focus on how international intervention contributes to the production of ideas of collective and individual security in societies receiving support as well as the 'security gap' created therein (Kaldor & Selchow 2014).

The discussion moves in four steps. The first part assesses liberal peace-style international interventions with a specific focus on Bosnia-Herzegovina before elaborating on the theoretical argument with reference to critical peace-building scholarship. The second part explores the politics of insecurity by investigating ethnic elite discourse on security and political practice. The following section explores the everyday experience of post-war (in)security and includes a discussion about the paradox of 'ethnic security.' The final section concludes by reflecting on the broader conceptual implications of this study with respect to the relationship between collective and individual security (i.e. 'security gap') in international interventions.

Liberal Peace Intervention and Security Outcomes in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The origins of liberal peace-style international intervention in post-conflict countries can be traced to the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992—commissioned

by then United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali—which explicitly introduced post-conflict interventions to 'strengthen and solidify peace' (Paris & Sisk 2009: 5). The principal security function of these international interventions was to stabilise countries emerging from war and to prevent a recurrence of armed conflict. It was some years later—and against a growing view that state weakness and failure were at the core of post-Cold War violence—that state building took centre stage in both the theory and practice of peace-building (Paris & Sisk 2009; Wolff 2011; Rocha Menocal 2011). The result of this shift was their eventual and problematic conflation (Call & Wyeth 2008). The understanding that the state was often responsible for human rights violations, humanitarian catastrophes and economic mismanagement led to arguments that the mandate of international actors should be to build effective systems and institutions of governance, i.e. the liberal state (Paris 2004; Paris & Sisk 2009; Philipsen 2014). Using institutions as the main tool in post-conflict state building, international interventions have attempted their construction and consolidation across an expanding range of areas including good governance, human rights, rule of law, democracy and market economy. The underlying rationale is that stable society is unlikely to emerge without these institutions and their apparatuses (Bojicic-Dzelilovic *et al.* 2014).

In terms of liberal peace logic, a minimum level of security (i.e. the absence of direct physical violence) is needed to successfully build state institutions. According to Stefan Wolff, 'security first is an accepted paradigm of state building' (Wolff 2011: 1779). Although a liberal peace-style international intervention reflects a narrow understanding of security—and its priority is short term stabilisation in post-conflict zones—at the same time it recognises the importance of security for the legitimacy of institutions, which is a necessary precondition for institutional consolidation, effectiveness and the achievement of stable peace. Hence, Wolff

posits, 'institution building…provides the link between a security based on coercive capacity (of domestic and/or external actors) to a security that derives from rule of law', namely a security bestowed by universal and non-discriminatory rules and their effective enforcement (Wolff 2011: 1780). Therefore, the choice of institutional arrangement is critical in post-conflict societies whose existing institutions have been transformed by the experience of war (Bastian & Luckham 2003; Paris 2004; Wolff 2011).

If a choice of institutional arrangements in post-conflict divided societies is critical for both collective and individual security outcomes, then the question of the nature of societal division in a post-war country is paramount. The answer is inevitably linked to the prevailing understanding of the causes of a particular conflict and its drivers. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international community sided with the view—supported by a robust body of scholarship—that the conflict was about inter-ethnic violence rooted in a history of ethnic hatred. This thinking was strongly attuned to the security dilemma logic, according to which, very crudely, ethnic identities are fixed and irreconcilable and require a redrawing of the map (Xu 2012; Jeffrey 2013: 69; Jenne 2012). By embracing an ethnic conflict view, international actors adopted the security discourse generated by local ethnic parties (Hansen 2006; Campbell 1998). These were the same political parties that had led Bosnia-Herzegovina to war by inciting ethnic fear through a combination of inflammatory rhetoric and violent practice. Ultimately, these parties defined both the context and content of peace negotiations that culminated in the signing of the General Framework Agreement. The 'Dayton formula' of territorial self-government and power sharing pursued stability and security through territorial and institutional separation with an explicit focus on the pivotal role of elites in building the state. In line with the liberal peace and state-centric conceptions of security, decentralization on ethnic principles was conceived as a form of statist

security and therefore as the principal conflict management tool. With the stroke of a pen, the country was divided into entities, cantons and municipalities around more or less homogenous ethnic territories carved out by brutal acts of violence. The constitutional categorisation of minorities from among the three constituent peoples—hitherto unknown in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or for that matter in former Yugoslavia—was introduced in recognition of 'new demographic realities' (Pickering 2007). The protection of minority rights via an elaborate set of legal and institutional mechanisms was built into Bosnia-Herzegovina's institutions under the premise it would guarantee security. The fact that fear of becoming a minority was an important factor behind the mobilisation for conflict—and one only sharpened by the experience of war—was overlooked (Kostic 2007; Podunavac 2013). Of course, the implication of recognising minorities was that the majority group was given the right to control the state (Pickering 2007: 8). By opting for the constitutional arrangement of Bosnia-Herzegovina around a three-way ethnic division, essentialist ideas about ethnicity, which Caroline Hughes calls an 'ethnicised view of war', carried into an 'ethnicised view of peace' in 'which stability is achieved initially by the engineering of institutions to create particular ethnic balances; and in which stability subsequently gives way to "good governance" via a process of capacity building designed to help those institutions over the long term to elevate themselves from the ethnic fray' (Hughes 2011: 1493–1494). The General Framework Agreement's coupling of territorial separation and a multi-ethnic state— the latter to be recreated by the right to refugee return stipulated in the Agreement's Annex VII—was grounded in this logic. According to this logic, individual and collective security would eventually align and allow the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina to avoid discrimination regardless of their identity and be free to live and make their livelihoods wherever they chose. This would be the minimum requirement for individual safety in accordance with the liberal project of governing through freedom (Newman 2011).

In reality, neither the minority nor majority are free in a sense of enjoying the protection of a rule-governed state. In post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, the organisation of political life, economy, media, security structures, health, education and social interactions has moved along ethnic lines. The institutional frameworks in place have been conducive to a comprehensive separation of identities within imagined 'ethnic security zones' (Haynes 2008). In other words, international intervention has facilitated the development of institutional means to articulate the idea of ethnic security. In the critical scholarship on peace-building, both the external vision of security and the preoccupation with institutional performance salient in the liberal peace paradigm have been extensively debated (Newman 2011). The experience of Bosnia-Herzegovina as one of the first countries where this type of international intervention was deployed has bolstered many of the most ardent critiques of the liberal peace thesis (Berdal 2009; Gromes 2009; Richmond 2011; Chandler 2010; Cooper *et al.* 2011). A great deal of attention has focused on how the institutional architecture erected by the General Framework Agreement incentivised exclusive ethnic politics and 'ethnic outbidding.' In this tradition, the endurance of ethnic identity politics is primarily explained through the role of institutional incentives in shaping and hardening ethnic identities. While the preceding discussion clearly demonstrates the importance of institutional incentives to ethnic identity politics, it is not sufficient to account for the 'ethnic security paradox' in Bosnia-Herzegovina nor the link between instrumental uses of ethnic identity politics and the social acceptance that is behind it. Furthermore, it offers no pathway to understand why—although in peoples' perception ethnic fear is not a foremost concern—this form of manipulation by ethnic elites is possible. I suggest that the critical peace-building scholarship could be enriched by recognising security as an

institutionally, discursively and socially constituted practice and individual security as collectively produced (Bubant 2005; Kaldor & Selchow 2014). Inquiry should not focus solely, or even primarily, on institutions but rather on the interplay of these three dimensions in the context of international intervention. This will facilitate a better grasp of how international intervention helps produce a particular relationship between collective and individual security. The theoretical premise of this article is that in the context of an international intervention, security outcomes—including the relationship between collective and individual security—are not only defined by institutional designs but also by institutional interaction with elite discourse and practice; therefore, the everyday experience of security is decisive. The following two sections apply and develop this framework by using empirical evidence from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Politics of Security: Discourse and Political Action

Since 1995, the three ethno-national parties—the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ BiH) and the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), representing Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs respectively—have remained active and influential despite pluralisation which has diminished their popularity since the lead up to war and its immediate aftermath. Except for a brief period (2000–2002) when the Alliance for Change—a ten party coalition led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP)—formed the government, all three ethno-national parties have continued to exert political influence at various levels (**Figure 1**).

To interpret the above data, a further detail about the 2010 election results is important. While both the SDA and the HDZ BiH have split to create two distinct parties—the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH) and the HDZ1990 respectively—the SDS was challenged in 2006 by the Party of the Independent Social Democrats (SNSD),
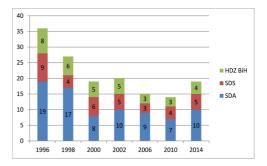

Figure 1: Elections to the Bosnia-Herzegovina House of Representatives, 1996–2014. Source: BHCEC 2015.

the strongest social democratic party in Republika Srpska (the Bosnian Serb entity). Since then, the SNSD has been a ruling political party in Republika Srpska. From 2010–2014, it enjoyed an absolute majority at the entity level and governed in coalition with the SDS at the state level. Although its popularity had declined, the SNSD won the mandate to form an entity government in the 2014 general election. Importantly, the SNSD removed the SDS from power on a radical nationalist platform, which has hardened over the years with respect to ethnic security claims. This was framed as punishment of the SDS for its alleged cooperation in building central state institutions with its non-Serb political counterparts from the Federation (Bosnia-Herzegovina's other entity) and the international community. The period 2000–2006 saw the implementation of key reforms—under strong international pressure—to strengthen both the central state and multi-level government system. In the lead up to the 2006 election, one of the most prominent items on the SNSD electoral agenda concerned the 2004 apology from the Republika Srpska SDS-led government to the victims of the Srebrenica massacre.

Since the SBiH and the HDZ1990 are both nationalist in their ideology, and the SNSD—despite its formal social democratic credentials—has become more radical than the SDS, politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina are overwhelmingly defined by parties that espouse an ethno-national political agenda. It is these

parties that speak in the name of security for their respective ethnic groups, unchallenged in any meaningful sense by weak political opposition and divided civil society, and propped up by an increasingly politically-controlled media.

The agency of ethno-national elites is the key to understanding the 'ethnic security paradox'. This can be credited to their engagement in what Nils Bubant calls the active manufacture of 'ontological uncertainty', defined as 'socially constructed anxiety that shapes pertinent kinds of danger, fears and concerns for a particular community at a particular time' (Bubant 2005: 277). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethno-national elites have been instrumental in maintaining the idea of ethnic security and its institutionalized exploitation in the context of a three-way ethnic division of power. These parties define the foremost security threat to be against ethnic identity and therefore focus primarily on the protection of this identity. This emphasis evokes the issue of territory as illustrated by the following comment from Milorad Dodik, the SNSD head:

> We should live in the same place and no one should eliminate the other…but they [Bosniaks] have to have theirs and we [Serbs] have ours [state] and only that is the way we can live normally, one beside the other (Kostovicova & Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2014: 199).

During the implementation of the General Framework Agreement, the political action of ethno-national parties has relied on ethnic identity as well as social and territorial borders. The evocation of ethnic differences and territorial control has been used to influence the execution of numerous reforms to build the central Bosnia-Herzegovina state. Analysing the strategy employed by ethno-nationalist elites, Dino Abazovic argues that political pluralism represents 'one party…one religion, one nation, and political and territorial exclusivity and hegemony on at least one part of Bosnia-Herzegovina' (Abazovic

et al. 2007: 10). Since the launch of international intervention, the main ethno-national parties have defied the logic of liberal peace-building and its promise of security through democratic institutions. They have worked actively to preserve the war-induced symbolic, institutional and territorial divisions of which they are the key beneficiaries. Moreover, they have been unintentionally endorsed by international actors despite their detrimental effect on citizen security in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Since war's end, the most inflammatory narratives of ethnic interest protection have emerged around elections and various deliberations over key reforms. Much of this controversy concerns the reallocation of power among different levels of government and its interference with the ethno-nationalist ideology of political self-rule. The discourse of ethnic interest protection—particularly among Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat political elites—has visibly radicalised since 2006, following the failed attempt to reform police forces and strengthen the central state through constitutional change. This shift occurred during the presidential campaigns of Dodik and Haris Silajdzic (leader of the pro-Bosniak SBiH). Silajdzic ran on a platform of '100% Bosnia-Herzegovina', i.e. a unified country without entities. His campaign was set against the decision of the International Criminal Court that the 1995 Srebrenica massacre was a genocide; a judgment which—according to Silajdzic's formulation—made Republika Srpska 'a genocide construction'. Meanwhile, Dodik's position was to call for secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is just one example of the aggressive and defensive nationalism present in the discourse of ethnic elites; a dynamic that is replicated in, and resonates with, everyday practice at the grassroots level. Bolstered by local trends, the radicalisation of political discourse has been caused by the disengagement of international actors from the implementation of the peace agreement. This reduction of international presence and leadership was justified by claims that

there should be greater local involvement in this process (Azinovic *et al.* 2011; Martin *et al.* 2012). Arguably, as the main source of fear underpinning uncertainty and its effect on the relationship between collective and individual security, these two dynamics have contributed to the perpetuation of post-war insecurity.

Following the 2009 European Court of Human Rights verdict that required Bosnia-Herzegovina to grant equal political representation to groups other than the three constitutive peoples (i.e. 'Sejdic-Finci' case), Bosnian Serb and the Bosnian Croat ethnonational elites have increasingly unified in their scepticism of state viability. The SNSD's main goal is to preserve the current territorial borders and powers of Republika Srpska under the General Framework Agreement. As a representative of the Bosnian Croat political body, the HDZ BiH aims to achieve more political and territorial autonomy within Federation territory via the establishment of a third Bosnian Croat entity. Despite its support for a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDA—as the strongest of the Bosnian ethno-national parties—harbours aspirations for Bosniak preeminence achieved through a programme of constitutional reform. This struggle for territorial and political reconfiguration has sent ripples across other levels of government and is manifest in repeated demands to redraw municipal borders along ethnic lines. At face value, this supports the claims of those scholars who cite ethnicity as one of the key factors causing the outbreak of war (Weidmann 2011).

Dodik and the SNSD have spearheaded the discourse of ethnic victimhood, threatened secession from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and thus rekindled post-war ethnic polarization. As recently as the October 2014 general election, this discourse has escalated to an open and continuous denigration of the state. In their analysis of hate speech during the 2010 general election, Vlado Azinovic and colleagues identified several prominent themes in this radicalized political discourse: the future of the state (its durability and desirability); state destruction and secession; and the prospect of another war (Azinovic *et al.* 2011: 14). All of these themes were present during the October 2014 election campaign, prompting comments that—as far as party rhetoric was concerned—Bosnia-Herzegovina is back to the start of the war (Kojovic 2014). Another prominent observer of Bosnian politics claims this rhetoric is a reflection of a deeper problem, which is that:

> …the leading nationalist parties have not succeeded to genuinely reform because they have never abandoned their war time ideology and goals. […] their attitude towards war crimes and ethnic cleansing, as the key instigators of a brutal annihilation of others' ethnic and religious identity has not changed to this day (Oslobodjenje 2013).

The following comment by Dodik is illustrative of anti-state rhetoric that frames demands for alternative political arrangements, on the grounds that Republika Srpska and the Bosnian Serbs are under collective threat, particularly from Bosniaks:

> It's about whether you respect one people, whether you strip them forcefully of their legitimate rights pushing them into a position of being an object rather than subject of political and all other social processes…there are quite serious intentions, which is less known, to steal and annul identities. Almost forcibly, be it publicly or in a concealed way, the story is being pushed through that we are all Bosnians (Azinovic *et al.* 2011: 19).

The prospect of ethnic identity protection through the establishment of a territory or ethnic state is also reflected in the claims of HDZ BiH leader Dragan Covic:

> Bosnia has a future exclusively as a country of three equal people…all

those that think to create it differently, on a civic concept and a concept of a unitary state will absolutely have condemned it to collapse (Azinovic *et al.* 2011:15).

The discourse of ethnic identity protection—i.e. the protection of the rights and privileges of a particular ethnic group, with the 'ethnic state' as its guarantor—is not limited to political elites but is also exploited by a range of other social actors. War veterans, for example, are among the most vocal advocates of ethnic homogenisation and political self-rule. The following extract from an interview with Miro Grabovac—founder and long-time president of the Bosnian Croat war veterans association—illustrates this:

> Bosnia and Herzegovina can be stable and sustainable only if her three constitutive people are sovereign, which means that (Bosnian) Croats must get their own republic. [...] Those Bosnian Croat politicians who would support the implementation of the 'Sejdic-Finci' verdict, and not settle the question of the Bosnian Croats as a constitutive people, would be the traitors (Grabovac 2013).

It is important to note that for most of the post-war period, war veterans have been the strongest electoral base for ethnic parties. The ideology of political self-rule necessitates a requisite set of institutions, which—as discussed in the previous section—were put in place by the General Framework Agreement (Gutierrez-Sanin & Wood 2014). Explaining ethnicity as a politicized social action, Sinisa Malesevic argues that ethnicity is about more than cultural and symbolic action, perspective, discourse or a way of understanding and interpreting. In his view, 'interpretations, discourses and perspectives do not float in the air but are linked to specific dynamics of political, economic and coercive power' for which the existing institutional context provides a fertile soil (Malesevic 2010: 78). The constant manufacture of ethnic threat and inter-ethnic difference by ethno-national elites is mirrored by political action that challenges any reform perceived as disruptive to existing politico-economic power, itself based on the ethno-national division of the country. Over time (and particularly since 2006), the lack of a defined and consistent international policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina has emboldened these forces and weakened some of the central state institutions erected under international oversight. This action includes attempts to change the army structure, which had been considered one of the most successful internationally sponsored reforms. Several examples taken from public discourse illustrate the political action underlying ethnic security in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Because the implementation of the aforementioned 'Sejdic-Finci' verdict has been blocked for several years, Bosnia-Herzegovina's progress towards European Union accession has been interrupted. The most immediate consequence of this inaction has been the political stalemate in the southern town of Mostar. Since 2010, the SDA and HDZ BiH disagreement over reorganisation has blocked the work of both municipal and cantonal governments as well as caused Mostar to miss municipal elections in 2012. The latest proposal calls for the establishment of three 'Bosniak' and one 'Bosnian Croat' municipalities within Mostar (Bjelica-Sagovnovic 2013). Moreover, a similar programme of ethnic reorganisation has been proposed in the central Bosnia municipality of Travnik (Gudelj 2013). Since 1995, numerous reforms have been deliberately blocked or delayed by the parties opposed to rebuilding a unified, multi-ethnic, rule-governed state using the very institutions the international intervention helped put into place. The victims of this political strategy are the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose lives and livelihoods have suffered because of the political and economic mismanagement

inherent to the politics of ethnic security. The next section examines the social practices and everyday experience of security at the grassroots level. It explores what makes the idea of ethnic security in Bosnia-Herzegovina socially acceptable: whether the notion of ethnic security—stimulated by concern for the protection of ethnic identity—has some grounding in the everyday experience of ordinary people.

Social Practices and the Everyday Experience of Security

Ethnic security discourse is sustainable only in so far as it operates in a supportive context shaped by the interplay between institutions and social practices. In the remainder of this section, three aspects of insecurity are explored in relation to the daily experience of citizens and their idea of individual and collective security: ethnically-motivated physical violence as well as institutional and symbolic aspects of insecurity. However, the everyday experience of (in)security in Bosnia-Herzegovina can only be understood in relation to the politics of insecurity discussed above.

In the immediate post-war period, direct ethnically-motivated violence—in the form of killings, arson attacks, destruction of property and religious sites, expulsions, verbal attacks, threats by weapons, stoning, and so on—aimed foremost at returning refugees and displaced persons was common throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although murder rates were small in absolute terms, several of these incidents were the subject of intense public debate due to the involvement of high-ranking local officials. Over time, instances of ethnically-motivated aggression subsided with spikes in violence mirroring the political situation. For example, the collapse of the 2006 talks on constitutional reform ushered in a period of intensified political tension which was reflected by increased incidences of ethnically-motivated violence from 2007–2009. These incidents were not systematically recorded but their

number increased from 7 per month in 2007, to 9 in 2008 and 13 in 2009 (Saferworld 2012: 14). Azinovic reports that 60 interethnic incidents were recorded in 2010 and 40 in the first three months of 2011 (Azinovic *et al.* 2011: 62). This data, while not comparable, suggest that the number of incidents appears to have escalated when the political situation deteriorates and ethnic security rhetoric is on the rise. Bosnia-Herzegovina has been in a permanent state of political crisis since the October 2010 general elections. The 2008 global recession degraded living standards, increased general uncertainty and ultimately contributed to an environment conducive to (inter-ethnic) violence. Since an important aspect of inter-ethnic dynamics is the propensity to attribute the cause of various grievances—e.g. access to certain services or job opportunities—to one's ethnic identity, a worsening economic environment is a potent source of discontent.

Compared with early post-war years, more recent incidents of direct violence have been aimed at individuals and subsequently received wide publicity. Inter-ethnic violence is most likely to occur during mass public events such as football games, public gatherings around religious sites and celebrations related to religious holidays. An unprecedented case of hooliganism motivated by ethnic prejudice occurred in 2009, when a Sarajevo football fan was killed during a match in the West Herzegovina town of Siroki Brijeg. In places where the political context is particularly acute (such as Mostar), sporadic inter-ethnic clashes are typical among the youth but occur less frequently than in the past.

Research conducted by Saferworld—which involved 240 focus group interviews organised in 46 localities—found that inter-ethnic violence is not a source of concern and that the public considers police response to be adequate (Saferworld 2012: 14). This could be interpreted as inter-ethnic relations no longer having the same weight in people's everyday lives because of improved

professional standards in the police force (as the logic of liberal peace intervention focusing on institutional performance would suggest). However, Azinovic has shown the police to be absent, inadequate or—oftentimes in the case of refugees—instigators of violence (Azinovic *et al.* 2011). Furthermore, the number of individuals involved in wartime violence—including mass atrocities—holding public office has undermined trust in the police force and ultimately proved to be a strong deterrent against the return of refugees.

Refugees and displaced people have also had their rights infringed as part of the strategy to preserve the ethno-territorial recomposition instituted during the war. Those who have returned to their pre-war residences—or desire to do so—have been denied due process in a blatant breach of existing legal entitlements (Haynes 2008; Jenne 2010). The authorities have also systematically obstructed the transfer of pension and welfare claims across jurisdictions. An ethnically organised—and in some cases openly segregated—education system has been another arena of discriminatory practice aimed at minorities. Underscoring the depth of inter-ethnic separation is the 'two schools under one roof' programme, in which students of different ethnicities follow different curricula, occupy different classrooms or attend school in different shifts. This system was introduced under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in an attempt to encourage refugee return by providing security for students of different ethnicities. There are some 54 schools still in existence, located mostly in the three ethnically mixed Federation cantons whose governments refuse to close them. Ethnic segregation is particularly pronounced among primary school children, where the right to a so-called 'national curriculum' (a set of subjects including language, history and geography) is frequently denied. In Autumn 2013, a high profile case attracted significant public attention. A group of parents and children from Konjevic

Polje in Republika Srpska organized a protest lasting several weeks outside the offices of the Federation government and High Representative in Sarajevo. Their demands included a national curriculum for Bosniak children and the right to participate in the school's governing board; both of which had been denied to them but permitted at schools attended by non-Serb children. The significance of this case is not only that such discrimination continues but also that it is unlikely to be resolved internally given the tacit approval of local authorities as well as a general belief in the necessity of international presence and intervention. Such practices coexist with other forms of inter-ethnic separation including the decision of parents to send their children to schools more geographically distant in order to avoid classmates of different ethnicities.

Job discrimination, particularly in public administration, is another prominent example that feeds into inter-ethnic tensions and perceptions on injustice on ethnic grounds. According to the 1991 census, employment in public administration is ostensibly based upon an ethnic proportional quota system. In reality, there are huge discrepancies in how this law is implemented. A breakdown of public administration employees in the Republika Srpska is illustrative (See **Table 1** below).

According to available Federation employment data for 2011, Bosnian Serbs accounted for only 4.2 per cent of the total and 17 institutions had no Bosnian Serb employees (Breberina & Popadic 2011).

The symbolic aspects of ethnic security politics are hugely important for explaining the social acceptance and continuing appeal of ethnic protection in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These aspects have been extensively discussed amongst scholars, particularly in the context of ethnic identity construction as a cause of war. Enmity amongst Bosnia-Herzegovina's ethnic groups is also one of the most prominent micro-explanations of wartime dynamics and was effectively recognised as such by the General Framework Agreement (Weidmann 2011). However, little

	Bosnian Serbs	Bosniaks	Bosnian Croats	Others	Total
Ministries	9,656	445	85	0	10,186
Municipalities	3,458	92	31	19	3,600

Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Public Servants in Republika Srpska, 2004. Source: Adzajlic-Davidovic & Haskovic 2014: 58.

attention has been paid to the use of symbolic instruments in rekindling ethnic stereotypes in the post-war era and how this affects relations in terms of security perceptions and attitudes to ethno-national politics. The production of insecurity through symbolic means takes a variety of forms and appeals to the respective identities of all three ethnic groups. This includes exclusion from public spaces by renaming streets, public buildings and even town names; the choice of public (national) holidays as well as the location and timing of memorial events; the prominent display of religious insignias signifying the dominance of one group over a certain territory; an insistence upon separate television channels due to linguistic distinctiveness; and so on. There are other more subtle and seemingly mundane forms in which the idea of the ethnic state is refashioned and kept present in daily life, such as the inclusion of the wartime Bosnian Croat state insignia on utility bills and the use of the Cyrillic alphabet to reaffirm ethnic identity in Republika Srpska. As a result, a ubiquitous dynamic of aggressive and defensive nationalism has rekindled awareness and fear of inter-ethnic differences. In reality, this affects wider understandings of social boundaries and territoriality that negates freedom of movement and discourages interaction among different ethnic groups. In many places, there is tacit acceptance among the youth of 'ours' and 'theirs' coffee shops and clubs.

Although the discussion above provides only a superficial glance of the social reality in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it captures the intricate and complex ways in which the ideas of individual and collective security mix with ethnic identity protection in the daily lives of citizens. While focus has been on illuminating the reality of fear amongst different ethnic groups and their perception of one another as plausible security threats, this should not eclipse the myriad forms of everyday interaction and coexistence that evidence a desire for normality (Eastmond 2010).

Explaining the Paradox of 'Ethnic Security'

The previous sections discussed the role of ethnic identity in shaping the relationship between collective and individual security and its subsequent contribution to ethnic security as social reality. These insights will now be expounded upon with available data on ethnic relations as well as a discussion of the broader socio-economic and institutional contexts in order to explain how collective and individual security are compromised by ethno-national rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina; i.e. the paradox of 'ethnic security'.

Data on various facets of inter-ethnic relations are rare given the difficulty involved in researching the subject (Dyrstad 2012). Data on social distance as well as ethnic tension, fear and trust are inconsistent and rarely cover sufficient time periods to capture the dynamic nature of inter-ethnic relations. The only available data on social distance—a measure of relation to other social groups—covering the general population ends in 2009 (Puhalo 2009). While this study finds that social distance increased between 2002 and 2009, disaggregation—over time and by ethnic group—reveals interesting inflections in social distance patterns that resonate with political dynamics during the same period. As discussed earlier, social distance narrowed between 2002 and 2006 but increased significantly thereafter as the political situation deteriorated (Puhalo 2009).

Another important finding is that the distance between Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs has reduced over time, which can be explained by respective political leaders unifying to better negotiate constitutional reforms. Concurrently, the social distance between Bosniaks and these two groups has increased. A more recent study of high school students reveals that social perceptions operate at two levels. At the collective level, there is a tendency to use ethnic stereotypes and refrain from inter-ethnic interaction while, on a personal level, ethnic factors appear less relevant (Puhalo 2013). Srdan Puhalo's explanation reinforces the observation that inter-ethnic relations are influenced primarily by relations among political elites and how they are represented in public discourse. Gallup Balkan Monitor data shows that trust among the three ethnic groups improved between 2006 and 2010 (GBM 2010). Given the ethnic enmity thesis, it is remarkable that interpersonal trust in Bosnia-Herzegovina appears to be greater than in other countries with no similar experience of war (Weidmann 2011). In research on ethnic tensions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 77.3 per cent of respondents reported no ethnic tension in their neighbourhood while 15 per cent reported only a small degree of tension (Efendic *et al.* 2014a). Whatever deficiencies the above data might possess, it suggests that the pervasive ethnic fear touted by ethno-national elites is simply not evident. Recent polling data found that 56 per cent of citizens favoured a society with no ethnic separation, which further resonates with qualitative research findings that ethnic issues are not the foremost security concern (Kostrebic 2014). The recurring view expressed is that employment, health, housing and other welfare issues are critical, and that a better socio-economic situation would improve inter-ethnic relations (Eastmond 2010: 12). For example, those who are currently employed show a greater tolerance towards other ethnic groups (Efendic *et al.* 2014b). According to Benjamin McClelland, the potential of ethnic voting and rule to

institute privileged access to opportunities and services is an important factor affecting both collective and individual security (McClelland 2013). Therefore, support for ethnic parties does not necessarily indicate ethnic tension. A more systematic analysis of voting patterns to establish the profile of the electoral base and party strategies would be a useful test of this claim.

In interpreting the evidence generally used to support the ethnic security argument, it is important to reflect upon the broader context. One relevant issue concerns repatriation as a key pillar of the General Framework Agreement. This is a multifaceted problem that cannot be reduced, as it is often argued, to concerns over ethnically-based discrimination. What is often downplayed is that the reluctance to go back is sometimes related more to strategic calculations, or what Erin Jenne calls 'the logic of spoils', than fear of being a minority (Jenne 2010). Issues related to jobs, housing, welfare and healthcare—which also the concern the majority population—need to be resolved before a return may be considered viable. Given the absence of these conditions, refugees who have started their lives elsewhere are reluctant to go back to their pre-war places of residence. Similarly, discrimination in public administration recruitment must be understood in the context of high unemployment. As the largest employer, the public sector has to reject a huge number of applicants for reasons that are not necessarily based upon ethnicity. Likewise, inadequate public services are routinely framed as ethnically-based discrimination by the minority population when, in reality, they are oftentimes attributable to a lack of financial and technical capacity on the part of relevant service providers. Although inter-ethnic cooperation over common problems is—for a variety of reasons—absent, cooperation nevertheless occurs when the public is sufficiently motivated. A recent example is the 2013–2014 mass protests over the proposal of a unique identification number for

all citizens after a tragic death of an infant (Oslobodjenje 2013).

Going back to the symbolic aspects of inter-ethnic relations, it is important to understand their deeper implications on local understandings of real threats and dangers. Public events designed to incite ethnic tensions often are condoned, or even sponsored by, political elites. For example, the municipal budget funded Orthodox holiday celebrations in Srebrenica and Bratunac (both sites of genocide) which turned into massive anti-Bosniak gatherings (Krajisnik 2013). Although police were present at both events, they failed to intervene. Such examples are relevant in terms of what they tell us about trust in government, particularly in the case of minority populations. Research shows that minorities have more trust in their own authorities due to the ideology of—and exclusionary practices instituted by—ethnically-based government (Efendic *et al.* 2011). Greater trust in political authority is further diminished by the public's awareness of ethnic security as a strategy implemented by elites to control access to power and resources (Azinovic *et al.* 2011). This recognition feeds into a general mistrust of government which is shared by all ethnic groups and seems at odds with the logic of ethnic security (UNDP 2009). According to Azinovic, institutional dysfunction is at the core of the insecurity among citizens irrespective of their ethnicity, a finding corroborated in broader scholarship (Azinovic *et al.* 2011). Respondents to Marita Eastmond characterised their view of security as 'precarious'; understood locally as encompassing vulnerability, fear of the future, disempowerment due to socio-economic deprivation and lack of opportunity attributable mostly to poor socio-economic conditions and governance (Eastmond 2010). According to Kostovicova & Bojicic-Dzelilovic, weak institutions and pervasive corruption inherent to ethno-national rule have turned the state into a source of insecurity for its own people, in contrast to the intentions of the international intervention (Kostovicova & Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2010). An arbitrary system of rule, which rests on informal arrangements and extra-institutional channels, generates inequities that feed into a general mistrust at the interpersonal, inter-group and institutional levels (Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013). It also inflames perceptions of discrimination and social injustice that, in the context of politicised ethnicity, can be easily interpreted as ethnically-motivated. If safety means the absence of conditions where individual life is at risk, then ethnic threat is no longer a real or perceived threat at the individual level. Local people consider the inherent uncertainties of post-war social, political and economic dynamics to be the greatest threat and source of insecurity. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, these forces have been amplified by complex governmental policy based upon an ethnic framework that has played into the hands of ethno-national parties as well as the ambiguous role of international actors in the peace-building process.

Conclusion

This article has explored how liberal peace intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina has produced a security gap, defined as a relation between collective and individual security. One of the key questions asked in this research is why—given the ambiguous evidence of ethnic threat as a source of insecurity in the post-war period and the existing, robust institutional mechanisms of minority rights protection—the notion of ethnic security prevails in international and local narratives as well as international intervention practices. In conceiving the security gap as a result of international intervention, I am not attempting to qualify the relationship between collective and individual security in terms of distance, direction or 'levels'. Instead, I want to highlight that, in the post-conflict context of politicised ethnicity, the two are linked in complex and dynamic ways. In some sense, one can speak of a certain hierarchy of security needs or

concerns that are shaped by contextual factors and produce an ambiguous and shifting relationship between the perceptions of collective and individual security. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, international intervention has enabled ethno-national elites to actively manufacture ethnic fear through institutional and symbolic means. The result is one in which an incline towards group security shapes how collective and individual security coalesce despite the fact that basic needs remain unmet. This conclusion was reflected by a comment from one respondent, who stated: 'We have to separate first so that we can come together again.'

The narrative of ethnic security remains ingrained in public consciousness despite wider awareness of its instrumental use and victimization by ethnically-based rule; a phenomenon I have called the 'ethnic security paradox'. However, as this research suggests, there are complex reasons for the continued endorsement of ethnic security. Above all, they concern uncertainty in regard to pending political settlement, daily economic hardship, expectations that the state will provide solutions, and the changing modality of international involvement in the country's long term viability. As Günther Pallaver shows convincingly in the case of South Tyrol, 'security concepts are only successful when a variety of different forms of threats become increasingly improbable' (Pallaver 2014: 8). In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, it appears that ethnic fear is an improbable justification for ethnic security discourse. Instead, policymakers should refocus their attention on what exactly is being secured through territorial demarcation in the context of post-war politicised ethnicity and where and how individuals find security therein.

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