

Building Civil Societies To Build Peace:

International Frameworks At Work In Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dragica Mikavica

The New School

“Utopian and dystopian views of peace, relating to contemporary and future threats calculated from the point of view of states and officials, often delineate the intellectual extremes of a linear typology of war and peace inherent in mainstream international thought. The peace inferred in this typology is concerned with a balance of power between states rather than the everyday life of people in post-conflict environments.” – Oliver Richmond, in *Peace in International Relations*

“It is a shame funding never makes it here [to Banja Luka, Republika Srpska]. It always goes to Sarajevo.” – Djurdjica Bjelosevic, a young art teacher with a Fine Arts degree from the University of Banja Luka’s Fine Arts Academy involved with the local/grassroots youth initiatives in arts, music, and peace education

## **Introduction**

This paper draws upon others' firsthand observations of the socio-political and organizational dynamics on the ground in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia). While not permitting the view of its own beholden eye, it nevertheless presents a noteworthy exploration of interactions between the international peacebuilding/state-building frameworks, and the local contexts where they are being adopted. Particularly drawing upon the literature on liberal peacebuilding critique, the European Union's civil society building project as part of the greater Peacebuilding Framework (EUPF) in Bosnia, and some critical security studies literature, the paper aims to uncover the implications the above interactions have on building sustainable and secure peace in the country, and thus the region and the world. In this paper, I wish to answer the question of whether these models as they are currently constructed and implemented by the international actors in Bosnia (and other post-conflict or so-called 'fragile states' in need of assistance and intervention), are a sustainable path towards consolidation of peace, societal reconciliation, and long-lasting security. The case of Bosnia demonstrates that they are not, as the local actors resist the framework implementation process bumping against the external technocratic agendas, co-opting them in lieu of the want to steer peacebuilding in directions that are more resonant with the local context, or by outright rejecting them due to their alien nature.

In my view, the mere idea of 'constructing' a civil society seems unnatural, as intuitively, this should be something that is formed and exists naturally from within, being composed of the community organizations, church groups and other grassroots organizations, whatever shape they may take. In post-conflict Bosnia, however, the execution of the task of civil society 'building' has fallen into the hands of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the

“largest regional security organization in the world”<sup>1</sup>. OSCE is a part of what Volker Boege et al quote as a ‘booming international state-building industry’ (Boege et al, 2009, p. 611).

In a similar vein to what Berit Bliesemann de Guevara does in his chapter on *Material Reproduction and Stateness in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, I use the above mentioned literature to examine the dynamics between the concepts and their practical application – liberal peace, liberal peacebuilding, state-building, local ownership, and civil society – under the conditions of the international intervention, to identify that which is lost in the process (de Guevara, 2008). Building on his thesis that the concepts of global governance positively and negatively shape the conditions in the highly internationalized contexts where the external presence is intense (ibid), as in post-conflict Bosnia, I further explore the structures and relationships that form under the principal guidance of these norms to see the response of the local conditions. I now turn to outlining these principal concepts guiding Bosnian intervention, and thereby the creation and implementation of the peacebuilding/state-building frameworks, to then conduct my analysis of their practical application and implications through this case. The question I seek to answer is why is a regional security organization in Europe constructing a civil society in Bosnia?

### **The Liberal Peacebuilding/State-Building: Context and Concepts**

The field of international relations has been traditionally state-centric, since we bought into Thomas Hobbes’ idea that life in the state of nature is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short,” and that we need a social contract to exit this state of nature (Hobbes, 1985, p. 186). This state-centrism reflects thinking that the sovereign state is the key organizing unit of the international social life, forming the basis of the system of international relations, and its protection warrants the fight against the threats to its security. As Mohammed Ayoob states

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.osce.org/activities](http://www.osce.org/activities), 2010

when outlining the “Western” definition of security in his chapter *Concepts and Definitions: “Third World” and “Security”* (1995, p. 5), threats that arise from outside of its borders, and are primarily, but not exclusively, military in nature, require a military response, if the security of the target state is to be preserved. This traditionally realist way of thinking about security as ‘national security’ persevered even in the post-World War II system of the ‘united nations,’ and continues to persist in the globalized world where the system has been reformulated in light of ‘collective security.’

I take the position in this paper that states are not so seemingly passé, in spite of the many emerging voices that have called for revised thinking about the state as being the referent point in security studies, in light of the manifold threats that undermine the very notion of its sovereignty. The 2004 United Nations Secretary General’s report *The More Secure World* that established the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office, expounds a broader notion of what constitutes a threat, as reflected in their six clusters of threats to international security:

- 1) Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation;
- 2) Inter-state conflict;
- 3) Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide, and other large-scale atrocities;
- 4) Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons;
- 5) Terrorism;
- and 6) Transnational organized crime (UN, 2004, p. 3).

These threats capture Michael Sheehan’s emergent realities of the contemporary world that need to be encompassed within the updated notions of, and broadened approach to, security embedded in an inherent concern with others (Sheehan, 2005, pp. 62-63). ‘Collective security’ as outlined in *The More Secure World* consciously diverges from the preoccupation of the United Nations (UN) founders with state security in a traditional military sense (“a system in which States join together and pledge that aggression against one is aggression against all” (UN, 2004, p. 9)). The UN makes a call for ‘collective security’ predicated on the fact that no matter how powerful a single state may be, it cannot by its own efforts face the threats of today, that by their

nature recognize no national boundaries, are interconnected, and must be addressed at the national, regional and global levels (UN, 2004, p. 1). However, even when talking about the notion of human, or individual and group security, the state is still the intended provider; it is the ‘securitizer’ of threats, and the collaborator in the efforts to preserve the collective international security of the still state-centered system.

### *‘Peacebuilding as State-Building’ and Fragility*

The notions at the universal level are translated and acted upon at the national level, and securitizing peacebuilding is the act of preserving the state unit, and the system it is a part of, while addressing broad threats to collective or international security. Thus, when a state is unwilling or unable to meet the responsibility to protect its own citizens and neighbors, other members may intervene. Such a state, oft-termed ‘fragile’ due to its inability to function and provide security within its borders, poses a risk not only to its internal situation, but the regional and international peace and security as well. Chris van der Borgh (2008, p. 8) sums up well the relationship between fragility, security and intervention in his essay *A Fragile Concept: Donors And the Fragile States agenda*, in that:

- 1) “unstable, underdeveloped countries are not only a problem for their citizens, but they also present a global security risk”;
- 2) “strengthening weak states contributes to local stability and development, as well as international security”; and
- 3) “international intervention in these areas is difficult but necessary.”

Returning to Mohammed Ayoob, this type of collective or systemic security as defined in relation to internal and external vulnerabilities, and threats to state institutions and governance, forms the extension of the state-building project in the Third World countries since decolonization (Ayoob, 1995, p. 8). As will be referenced later, his critique of the emphasis on political realm in the definition of security is particularly useful in this paper, that the political

realm should not be isolated from the human and social activity realms when dealing with security issues, but must be informed by them (ibid).

Premised on the above thinking, in policy and practice terms today, ‘peacebuilding’ is conflated with the process of building strong states free from internal conflict, with strong governance institutions, and a capacity to thrive within their own boundaries, with their own capital. In other words, states that can deter threats, provide security to their citizens, and participate in the international system fulfilling their assigned responsibilities. State-building, as a response oriented towards state fragility, is the central pillar of peacebuilding operations (Boege et al, 2009, p. 599). The working definition of peacebuilding approved by the UN Policy Committee in 2007 states that (de Coning, 2010, pp. 14-15):

“Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, *based on national ownership*, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.” [Italics added for emphasis]

In spite of the vague and broad definitions such as this one, peacebuilding still has no single agreed-upon definition by the international community, but its approach and model have come to be widely accepted through many common characteristics that emerged since its inception fifteen years ago (de Coning, 2010, p. 6). Peacebuilding emerged in the context of an interdependent international system for managing conflict, and is primarily concerned with securing and consolidating peace by addressing factors that exacerbate conflict in the short and medium-term, and by addressing the root causes of the conflict that threaten long-term peace that may threaten consolidation (ibid). In addition to the conflict-prevention aspect of peacebuilding, this multi-dimensional and system-wide enterprise is varied in its approaches/models, but all

programming spans over the key areas of security, governance and development (de Coning, 2010, p. 7). In order to plan and coordinate the processes and elements of the UN family within one country mission during complex peacebuilding missions, the UN has developed an Integrated Approach as a specific type of operational process and design (de Coning, 2009, p. 1).

Cedric de Coning<sup>2</sup> writes in his report *Implications of a Comprehensive or Integrated Approach for Training in United Nations and African Union Peace Operations*, that the Integrated Approach is a response to “[t]he mixed findings of a number of recent peacekeeping, humanitarian and peacebuilding evaluation reports and related research, and the poor sustainability of peacebuilding activities undertaken to date” (de Coning, 2009, p. 1). To combat this perceived failure, the Integrated Approach is meant to serve as guidance for myriad of internal and external actors (governments, civil society, the private sector and international agencies) to work together in a coordinated fashion across their programs with regards to politics, security, development, governance, and reconciliation (ibid). This coordination is imperative to ending the peacebuilding process with a society that has developed its own capacity to manage and sustain the peace process without any external support (ibid) (for summary of core dimensions in peacebuilding, please see Appendix). On this point, I will underline some normative underpinnings of these complex missions, and the liberal peacebuilding critique that seeks to explain the above failings of a decade or so long pursuit for peace by the United Nations and other participating non-state actors. This normative background and its critique are important for understanding the driving factors behind the international peacebuilding/state-building framework that will later translate into my Bosnia case.

### *Peacebuilding as ‘Liberal Peace’*

---

<sup>2</sup> Cedric de Coning is a Research Fellow at the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).

International approach to peacebuilding is normatively rooted in Western liberal theory and the concept of ‘liberal peace’ that connotes political and economic liberalization as the indirect solutions to ending violent conflict (Tschirgi, 2004, p. 5). Promotion of human rights, democracy, rule of law, good governance, property rights, and neoliberal economics stand at the forefront of the international peacebuilding strategy (ibid). However, this forms a normative agenda that gets promoted beyond helping countries exit the state of war, making liberal internationalism an interventionist enterprise, which as purported as such, contradicts the principle of peacebuilding to establish a non-violent political authority that can “guide a country’s post-conflict reconstruction on its own terms” (ibid). Critics of the liberal peacebuilding framework base the core of their critique on the universal validity of the ‘liberal peace thesis’ that goes undisputed in the operationalization of the programs and packages for reform in pursuance of liberal democracy and economic liberalization ideals (Stamnes, 2010, p. 4). They point out the intrusive nature of this framework and agenda that excludes the local societies’ vision of what the problems are, and the solutions should be.

In fact, the central and most contentious topic in the field of peacebuilding today surrounds the question of whether ‘liberal peace’ actually contributes to building true peace in post-conflict societies. More and more scholars, particularly in Africa, Latin America and Asia, argue that it actually takes away from the goal of peace consolidation and sustainability, and some of these criticisms have been validated by empirical studies that show how concepts such as ‘peace’ and ‘rule of law’ are far from being self-evident and universal, but are products of particular historical developments, and expressions of particular worldviews and social relations (Peacebuilding Initiative, 2010). However, these so-called attempts at ‘socio-political

engineering' by Western actors, have actually sought to recreate their political and economic systems in post-conflict societies (ibid).

One can argue that the European Union in Bosnia, and other Western powers heavily engaged in peace operations, are reproducing the vision of themselves and their interests (in geostrategic and institutional terms). The project of the Western socio-political engineering seeks to ameliorate the problems of Mohammed Ayoob's (1995, p. 15) 'prototypical Third World state' that:

“lack[s] internal cohesion, in terms of both great economic and social disparities and major ethnic and regional fissures; lack of unconditional legitimacy of state boundaries, state institutions and governing elites; easy susceptibility to internal and interstate conflicts; distorted and dependent development, both economically and socially; marginalization, especially in relation to the dominant international security and economic concerns; and easy permeability by external actors, be they more developed states, international institutions, or transnational corporations.”

Ayoob's Third World state described as such fits within the discourse on 'fragility' and the image of the 'fragile' state that requires international intervention, as it is weak, vulnerable and insecure (ibid), and poses a greater risk to regional and collective/global security. Extending this to the state-building discourse, state fragility engenders violent conflict that signifies the breakdown of internal system of security, and learning to become better at state-building thus becomes an effective response to fragility that can be cured through peacebuilding operations.

Ayoob's divided countries of the developed, industrialized democracies of Europe and the North, and the characteristically insecure and underdeveloped states of the Third World/Global South, are the very members of the UN who are largely divided in their perception of peacebuilding. Some in the North (the G8+) view peacebuilding as a tool for managing failed or failing states, and assisting them with establishing the values and structures that typify liberal-market democracies, viewed synonymously with responsible and stable sovereignty (Roland

Paris as cited in de Coning, 2010, p. 13). However, some in the South who are leading the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77, are skeptically viewing peacebuilding as having the potential to harbor a new form of colonialism, that can result in the neo-imperialist and capitalist exploitation of vulnerable post-conflict societies (Paris and Sisk as cited in de Coning, 2010, p. 13). These criticisms reveal an uneven power distribution and dynamics between the ‘interventionist’ North, and the ‘recipient’ South, solidifying the fact that the more powerful Western countries are dictating the global security agendas.

Notwithstanding the normative differences, the application of these norms/concepts through programming by the international actors further aggravates – and has the greater potential for aggravating – the local beneficiaries during peacebuilding interventions. Aside from the North-South dynamic that arises from fragility discourse as seen in the paragraph before, this is the most dangerous risk for achieving peace consolidation through facilitation of genuine civil peace, and thus long-lasting security for the country (region, and the world). This is best seen through the operationalization of the concept of ‘local ownership’ that has been mentioned in the before-stated peacebuilding definition by the UN, as well it continues to grace policy documents produced by international agencies. ‘Local ownership’ is articulated as a guiding principle in conceptual framework of peacebuilding, but the term has remained vague and undefined in the conflict transformation literature and projects (Reich, 2006, pp. 5-6).

### *Local Ownership in Peacebuilding*

Since the mid-1990s, international peacebuilding actors have increasingly acknowledged the importance and the need for engaging local actors, and rooting the peacebuilding measures within societies where the conflicts took place (Miall et al as cited in Reich, 2006, p. 5). This has

taken away from thinking about the process of peacebuilding as top-down, to becoming an effort that an entire society partakes in. Hannah Reich of the Bergdorf Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management states that the simple tenet of “strengthening, fostering and supporting local actors with an active interest in building peace as a key principle of conflict management” has more complex consequences for the conceptualization of activities and intervention by third parties (Reich, 2006, p. 6). She stipulates that from experience, such activities are unsustainable if they are conceptualized entirely by the external actors and merely implemented locally (ibid). This hypothesis resonates well with two among the core critiques of the liberal peacebuilding framework.

First, the external framework requires integration into the design of the process for it to work in the first place. As any model, this framework requires standardization of knowledge and use of templates that are replicated through in contexts that are vastly different. Due to heavy focus of donors on institution-building, this framework deals with governments and elites rather than local societies, lacking broad consultation to begin with, and inadvertently privileging those in central power (and in New York and the UN headquarters). It does not focus enough on redistribution and social justice, which is necessary for building sustainable peace (Stamnes, 2010). In spite of the talk of ‘local ownership,’ in practice, external actors assume the role of teaching local politicians and people in fragile, post-conflict states how to efficiently adopt Western-style institutions, on presumption that local people need to know what peacebuilding is about and what they should require from it (ibid). In effect, the locals are meant to ‘own’ that which the external actors tell them to, as Astri Suhrke states about state-building in Afghanistan: “local ownership clearly means “their” ownership of our ideas” (Suhrke, 2007, p. 1292).

The very terminology applied by the critics of ‘socio-political engineering’ implies a functionalist understanding of the state as a product that can be delivered through a set of institutions using certain principles of institutional design, such as through the external package of reforms that includes Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR), rule of law programming, human rights promotion and monitoring etc. (Boege et al, 2009, p. 611). In line with this way of thinking, the external actors prefer to focus on issues that lend themselves more easily to implementation, and this is done through application of technocratic practices that are supposed to build state capacities in security, justice, and law to deliver Western-style police, courts and penal systems (ibid).

However, the project of state-building is more than a technocratic exercise with an administrative view of the state, and has serious political and social implications for shifting power balances in society that can exacerbate conflict. Ignoring the political and social character of the state has implications for addressing the root causes of the conflict, while merely focusing on enhancing the capacities of state institutions. We see here that normatively, the international peacebuilding actors are teaching people what peace is or should look like, and require buy-in into their ideas. We see that practically, they are intentionally or unintentionally excluding entire groups of society through their technocratic exercise. This latter point is best illuminated through the concept of ‘civil society,’ and is the last point that will be addressed in this literature review before moving onto my case study.

### *Civil Society (or Civil Peace)*

Through the example of building liberal peace in Iraq, Oliver P. Richmond, an avid critic at the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews in the UK, illustrates the

above points regarding the clashes of external agendas against the local context, at the expense of local preferences, and in the name of a certain paradigm and ideology (Richmond, 2009a, p. 150). He writes that the market economy was introduced in Iraq in spite of the clear preference by civil society, local communities and trade unions to have a welfare-oriented model (Herring as cited in Richmond, 2009a, p. 149). Richmond points out the recent focus on the issue of creating a self-sustaining civil peace by the international relations theorists, development and peace and conflict communities (including practitioners and policymakers in peacebuilding/state-building), which signifies a shift to a local level analysis of the civil society (ibid). He states that (2009a, p. 150):

“where peacebuilding occurs, it is widely accepted that it must both create and promote a vibrant civil society [and] that it will receive much of its support and legitimacy on the ground from civil society and local actors, so the notion of a civil society also acts as a crucial validation of liberal peacebuilding strategies and objectives.”

The notion of civil peace is intuitively rooted in the local culture and traditional social frameworks. However, the concept of ‘civil society’ within the peacebuilding framework is viewed as a network of non-governmental actors, citizens, individuals, subjects, workers, consumers and institutions – a Western view (ibid). They are empowered externally and from the top to represent themselves, and exercise their own agency through advocacy within the confines of political liberalism (ibid). However, the Bosnia case will show that the sense of agency cannot emerge through the process and relationships formed out of the peacebuilding framework as it is currently constructed and implemented.

Instead of politicizing and promoting true self-determination in the local actors (civil society), the peacebuilding practice actually has a reverse effect of de-politicizing them, because the “empowerment [is] carried out in the shadow of security and political rights, and institutions are preeminent over human needs and structural problems within the neoliberal

conceptualization of statebuilding [that favors] individualism, economic freedom and independence, and access to politically representative institutions” (Richmond, 2009a, 151). The liberal critics such as Richmond point out the gulf that exists between indigenous actors in post-conflict zones, and the socially engineered, and artificially promoted, civil society in lieu of the dichotomy between indigenous ‘civil peace’ and civil society as envisioned by pluralist thinkers. This dichotomy reaffirms the serious danger of failing to address the causes of war by way of slippage that occurs in inflexible and inconsistent implementation of the Western vision of civil society that refuses to deal with anything touching on sensitive issues (i.e. religion, ethnic identity). I will now demonstrate the concepts and debates at play discussed in the preceding pages through the case of peacebuilding in Bosnia, with a particular focus on the construction of ‘Bosnian civil society.’

### **Building Civil Society to Build Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

A country need not be located in the ‘Global South’ to be subsumed under the discourse of state fragility, thus warranting the same ‘Third World’ treatment by the international actors represented by the more powerful and developed North. Bosnia, a South-Eastern appendix of Europe, finds itself numbered at 60 out of 177 world states ranked on the 2010 Failed States Index<sup>3</sup> compiled by the Fund for Peace – a rank that places it into the ‘warning’ zone.<sup>4</sup> Bosnia represents a perfect example of the Western state-building project through the European Union Peacebuilding Framework (EUPF) that is based on the liberal peace model, and Europe’s greater agenda for regional security. Critics of liberal peacebuilding term Bosnia as Europe’s “pet

---

<sup>3</sup> Countries are ranked on the basis of the following 12 indicators: *social* (Mounting Demographic Pressures, Massive Movement of Refugees or Internally Displaced Persons creating Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, Legacy of Vengeance-Seeking Group Grievance or Group Paranoia, Chronic and Sustained Human Flight); *political* (Criminalization and/or Delegitimization of the State, Progressive Deterioration of Public Services, Suspension or Arbitrary Application of the Rule of Law and Widespread Violation of Human Rights, Security Apparatus Operates as a "State Within a State", Rise of Factionalized Elites, Intervention of Other States or External Political Actors); and *economic* (Uneven Economic Development along Group Lines, Sharp and/or Severe Economic Decline).

<sup>4</sup> www.fundforpeace.org, 2010

project,” and a manifestation of EU’s peacebuilding ambitions). International community’s ‘civil society building’ is a part of this post-conflict reconstruction project. The project is premised upon the idea that civil society can play a positive role in this divided social climate (Hampson as cited in Belloni, 2001, p. 163) by providing space for enhanced participation, diversity and pluralism (Peck as cited in Belloni, 2001, p. 163); is indispensable to the sustainable peace process; and is a crucial agent for influencing the political system, and solidifying democratization, rule of law and respect for human rights (Belloni, 2001, p. 163). Civil society is meant to promote peace, and heal the societal war wounds.

Roberto Belloni of the Queen’s University in Belfast writing extensively on Bosnian intervention and civil society, states that the mounting foreign aid (monetary, human and symbolic) is being met with disappointing results, as the “international community’s idealized conception of civil society differs dramatically from the actual conditions in which Bosnian civic groups and organizations function” (2001). He further claims that:

“By viewing civil society building as a technical task, as a matter of allocating resources and delivering services, the international community misunderstands the struggle to overcome nationalist fragmentation. As a result, it miscomprehends the nature of its involvement and retards the transition towards more substantive levels of democratization” (ibid).

The greater literature on Bosnian civil society building project and EUPF reveals that this retardation of sorts can be attributed to the technical execution of the task of creating the structure based on non-governmental organizations model (I will term this NGOization) that does not resonate with the local civil society context, and the slippage of culture and politics due to imposed ideology in more normative terms. Let us explore these two avenues for understanding the interactions between the context and the framework/process next. This will be

helpful towards answering the question about what it is that the civil society in Bosnia is resisting posed by this paper.

*Bosnian Civil Society through NGOization and Foreign Aid: Focus on Blueprints and Norms*

The EU's externalized notion of civil society reflects in the problems with building a prescriptive peacebuilding framework without detailed knowledge of the local agencies due to their one-sided liberal peace vision. In line with the liberal-pluralist principles outlined in the above vision of civil society, the international community is focused on the quantifiable growth of NGOs in Bosnia that have become a measure of civil society's growth and quality, and has focused its technical capacity-building exercise onto supporting local organizations (Belloni, 2001, p. 169). NGOs in this framework represent: a) an expression of liberal values, such as pluralist democracy, justice and equity; b) lend themselves more easily to financial support and inclusion into the international projects; and c) are less politically sensitive, and easier to define and measure than social movements, religious groups, trade unions etc. (ibid). Over 400 NGOs operate across Bosnia today funded by international organizations, embassies and foundations, yet Bosnian citizens view the rapid NGOization and civil society programs as bizarre, leaving out Bosnian history and culture (ibid).

The climate in which the international community began to operate is tinged with a lack of democratic practice due to country's history of socialism, and non-existence of an NGO market with more dynamic grassroots forms of organization that are less professionalized and structured than the NGOs. However, with donor help, it is presumed that the gradual adoption of EU's values and standards will make Bosnian society more European, and the NGO market creation is due. Here the slippage occurs between thinking that the adoption of standards through

a blueprint procedure will produce a new social contract in Bosnia rather than a true sense of local agency (Richmond, 2010, p. 5). Richmond cites many useful examples in his ethnography *Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance and Emancipation* (2010) that illustrate this slippage well, and show how misplaced accountability to the donors by the NGOs, rather than to their social bases, squelches participation and empowerment, while being meant to politicize groups in society.

The mentioned accountability results in conditionality that seems to exist due to the pursuit of liberal rights and market economy agenda/framework, which results in pre-selection of local groups and organizations in Bosnia that are to be funded and supported by donors and other international actors. The pre-selection process determines who gets to play a role in the international peacebuilding effort, and whoever is not selected to partake in the ‘civil society framework’ is thus marginalized and excluded. The exclusion occurs due to refusal of local actors to accept or try to modify the EU’s peacebuilding agenda, and for plain untrustworthiness (Richmond, 2010, p. 7). Oddly, groups working on areas that deal with sensitive cultural and ethno-political issues are excluded – actors working on transitional justice, identity and inter-religious work, in churches and sports organizations, dialogue forums, neighborhood, writers’/artists’ organizations, temporary social movements (ibid). Unfortunately, these groups are closest to the true reality on the ground and the situation of the Bosnian citizens, and have the greatest potential for facilitating peace and reconciliation. Following are some organizational examples cited in Richmond’s study that best illustrate this point.

Notably, larger organizations that have more visibility are more likely to be funded than smaller organizations and groups that are closer to the community. Mozaik Community Development Foundation is one example of a large organization that complies with the EU’s

peacebuilding agenda and guidelines in thematic terms. A glance at their funding sources reveals donor names such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), USAID, and the World Bank among others, and their website (from mission statement to programming) is a replica of any familiar Western NGO (www.mozaik.ba, 2010). This type of organization per Richmond is a convenient partner to the EU because it operates within the visible ‘civil society’ realm, being locally staffed and directly responsive to the interests of donors (Richmond, 2010, p. 7). Nansen Dialogue Center in Mostar is also directly operating within the donors’ peacebuilding framework (ibid).

However, much smaller Cultural Association Ambrosia founded in Sarajevo in 1995, is working on its own terms and budget composed of member contributions, thereby consciously preserving their approach and flexibility from any donor agendas (ibid). Their work encompasses identity and needs-related issues. Similarly, Duplex Gallery of Sarajevo refuses to accept donor funding, promoting itself as the space for resistance where artists can express themselves freely from any policymakers or donors, thus clearly and consciously resisting the agenda of European peacebuilding (Richmond, 2010, p. 9).

An interesting point mentioned about Bosnian cinema directors that resonates with someone who grew up in Bosnia, myself, is that they use image and storyline to indiscriminately shock their audiences in order to face their traumas (such as trauma related to the experience of war). This blatantly goes against the international community’s ‘proper’ conflict resolution methods, but to a native Bosnian who understands firsthand the nuances of the culture, and the history of its artistic expression in this form (film, performance), this makes perfect sense contextually and personally. I recognize the benefit of such expression in a culture that mostly satirizes its tragedy to reduce its intensity, or to conceal it, but whose people have the innate

ability to reflect in their common, human suffering in spite of the constructed and real divisions. Threading further on this point, it is far less natural for a native Bosnian to imagine herself in a human rights training or a workshop by an NGO as a method for confronting anything of substance, with a reconciliatory effect, when growing up, there were no such organizations to be spoken of, but merely raw art and community organizing.

This powerful inner image and reflection makes the dichotomy between external approaches, and those that are more nuanced and native, believable, along with the claim by the critics that culture, and a true social condition get lost in the technocratic peacebuilding process that pushes for a specific normative/ideological agenda. Especially when reading that donors are willing to support Pravo Ljudski's film festival addressing human rights issues, and refusing to support small religious groups close to the communities that have their trust, and are not even related to major religious institutions. The discussion of culture within this critique puts a human face on the discussion of peacebuilding, and Ayoob's human and social activity realms. In a place like post-conflict Bosnia, culture is a tool for reconciliation, not something to be treated with exception. In my view, this undermines the creation of civil peace rooted in the local community practice, thus truncating the peacebuilding process.

Through these examples, we see the local resistance to the agenda of liberal norms and frameworks in form of cooptation, where groups or organizations act as intermediaries between institutional frameworks/donors and local constituencies (i.e. Mozaik, Nansen), or by outright resistance to succumb to the frameworks and donor demands by refusing foreign funding that comes with conditions. I hope to have shown here the unnatural 'fit' of the increasingly 'one-size-fits-all' exogenous framework for building civil society and thus peace in Bosnia (and by extension, other post-conflict countries).

“International civil servants working in civil society programs are often ill-equipped to comprehend the political, social, and cultural contexts within which power relations are expressed when society becomes uncivil and citizens are disempowered and excluded,” writes Roberto Belloni, confirming the lack of understanding of the social and political situation in Bosnia by the international community (Belloni, 2001, p. 170). In order to become agents of socio-political change, the local actors need to interact with the state and its institutions. However, in Bosnia, the society-state space is also collapsed and perverted through the intervention by the international actors.

The liberal peacebuilding framework implies that an individual is concerned with their political rights over other priorities, experiences, and expectations that are related to identity, culture, and plain economics of survival. The EU’s project of peacebuilding makes it so that the immediacy of the human and political rights and needs supersedes the cultural and welfare rights. In Bosnia, many people are still plagued by the basic subsistence problems; therefore, their political rights are not the first point on their priority list. People need social protection, a functioning health and education systems, but the free market does not provide welfare, and the EU’s project does not get involved with these complex elements of the state; rather, they remain within the realm of building central political governance institutions, which has two implications.

On an individual level, this is a precarious social and economic security situation that individuals need to ameliorate by (typically) turning to black markets, militias and other ways of subsistence as a matter of economic survival. On the state level, these activities that the individuals turn to then undermine state’s capacity to collect taxes that would contribute to the welfare fund for the citizens. The alternative actors, such as (I)NGOs, then begin to perform actions that the state should but cannot provide. The critics argue that it is in the interest of the

EU powers to have a strong central government in Bosnia to negotiate the terms of peace and security with. This inevitably results in a triangular relationship formed between the international peacebuilding actors and the governing authorities (elite politicians and businessmen), and the international actors and civil society. In turn, this leaves Bosnians dependent upon the international leadership and resources in an externally led process, and not engaging in the needed discussion about what local peace should look like, in a space that should exist between the people and the political elites (in the civil society sense), but is missing.

In the meantime, the local elites co-opt the peacebuilding process adopting reforms that best suit their constituencies' interests, and they tend to be based on the nationalist discourse, as legacy of the post-Dayton structures has locked in voting rights based on ethnicity. Without the sufficient political space between state and society, no new social contract can emerge. However, as Richmond hopefully concludes, it is through reassertion of local actors trying to connect international peacebuilding with basic needs and cultural empowerment that the new social contract is emerging in Bosnia. It is the space of resistance that is shaping and reaffirming the already-existent civil society in Bosnia, and it represents the space of much hope. Reflecting on the concepts and the case study discussion, I use the lens of 'local ownership' for my final analysis in the below pages to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

### **Discussion and Final Thoughts**

How has the international community arrived at socio-economic engineering from peacekeeping and security? The UN and the international community seem to have persuaded the world that liberal peacebuilding is the only, and the best way, to build peace and stability in

the environments shaken by internal conflict. However, the conflation of the greater project of state-building with peacebuilding carries with it its own nuances.

It is with this technocratic model that I take issue, joining the choir of emerging voices in the field of peacebuilding and development, who are critiquing the failing interventions. As I witnessed in Nepal firsthand this year, the NGOization is all too common a phenomenon, and as in Bosnia, perceptibly foreign to the local context. In Nepal, conflict victims who have been organically organizing since the Maoist war, are now being pulled into formal transitional justice programming as part of the greater peacebuilding agenda by the local and international NGOs and donors (a subject of my Master's thesis). This is creating new dynamics that are dividing conflict victims in their battle for justice, who recognize that operating outside of the organizational structures already formed under the auspices of the international community, they cannot take a proper seat at the negotiating table. For this, the NGOs encouraged the groups that organically formed as part of the grassroots movement to register formally as a non-profit organization, so that they could apply for funding, and generate some sense of accountability for the international donors who are unwilling to support their efforts otherwise.

I mention this example in Nepal as a parallel to Bosnia to show the 'model' at work; a very real model that is being replicated in multiple countries exiting political turmoil, but that by its own imposition creates negative consequences that were not there before the intervention. As a closer examination of the Bosnian case shows, these consequences arise from the interaction and clashes between the exogenous and endogenous processes at work. The first issue with the model is that it assumes a certain state, or a civil society within a state, can be formed in a linear fashion or a process. In fact, the expectation is that the functionalist, liberal state, and thus peace, will emerge as a final product of implementation of 'one-size-fits-all' institutions and programs.

The model nature of these programs homogenizes post-conflict environments, yet Bosnia is very different from another ‘fragile state,’ for instance, somewhere in Africa. The presumption that the one-size-fits all model will result in the same product across vastly different and heterogeneous contexts is erroneous, as the local contexts will receive or resist reforms very differently. In Bosnia’s instance, the international community has presumed that Bosnian society is somehow ‘uncivil,’ and this is the notion that is shared by embittered Bosnians who have been paralyzed to run their own country fifteen years after the war, under the suffocating presence of the European and international community.

Prior to the war, Bosnia was a Republic in a thriving ‘civilized’ country of Former Yugoslavia, with its own intellectual community and vibrant culture, but the external model of ‘civil society building’ discounts the existence of civil society in Bosnia, only because it does not resemble the ‘civil society’ as they conceive. However, Bosnia *does* have a resilient culture and its own civil(ized) society, organized in ways that are more organic and localized, and this is the resource that the blindsideness of the focused Western vision fails to tap into for building and securing societal peace.

Through their refusal to work in the realms that deal with sensitive issues such as religion and politics at the community level, the peacebuilding actors are exhibiting the fear that this dialogue will somehow stir the ethno-nationalist notions that started the conflict in the first place. However, I perceive this to be the exact thing that needs to be confronted for true reconciliation to occur. A small community-based group that is facilitating inter-religious dialogue has more capacity to facilitate reconciliation, and build inter-group peace, than a large NGO would have through its human rights trainings. The social and human dynamics, in reality, do not occur in linear fashion. The process of peacebuilding is edgy, sporadic, long-term, and tenuous. The

unwillingness of the international actors to think outside the box of their own ideology and structure posits ingenuity of their intention to truly help local communities build peace, and attain a sense of agency necessary to hold their politicians responsible, thus generating a real political community.

Meanwhile, the greater global community, headed by the most powerful countries of the Global North, are acting very politically in the pursuit of its collective security agenda, persistently keeping other countries under control, by intervening to reduce their fragility. The critique here is not whether we should have a state or not, but whether it is okay to perceive that there is one model state, or one model of building peace. The international community seems to face so much criticism by the academics and practitioners in our international relations field, or through resistance by the local voices in the operating environments, yet it remains so visibly entrenched in its ‘models thinking.’

With their resources and human capacity, the international community has so much potential to effectively contribute to peacebuilding in post-conflict environments, if it could only let go of their frameworks, that the above criticisms and resistance point out have become highly problematic. The inflexible and entrenched models thinking inadvertently delegitimizes this potential and work of the international community in places such as Bosnia and Nepal. If it only moved in the direction of greater and genuine ‘local ownership,’ allowing the local communities to steer their peace process, and create their own peacebuilding agendas *with their help*, the international community would have a much more successful impact in stabilizing ‘unstable’ environments that it perceives threaten regional and global security. However, the maniacal control over the peacebuilding processes implies the unwillingness to let go of their own interests and ideas about statehood. Building peace *can* imply building states, but it could also imply

building hybrid political orders if that is what should arise from the internally led process with the help of international community.

It seems in the end that the frameworks (models) as such have themselves become a security threat in post-conflict societies, by inadvertently perpetuating or manufacturing unstable environments. I conclude that in light of the crying call of critics and people in post-conflict societies today, the international models thinking is unsustainable as an approach to peacebuilding and requires re-visioning. Greater reflexivity of international agents of peace would ensure greater potential for building sustainable long-lasting peace and ultimately security, with states and peace taking whatever shape the indigenous environments allow.

Appendix

**Table 1: The Dimensions of Peacebuilding**

Security & Rule of Law	Providing a Safe and Secure Environment
	Protection of Civilians
	Mine Action
	Security Sector Reform
	Disarmament & Demobilisation
	Police, Corrections & Judicial Reform (Rule of Law)
Political & Governance	Support the Peace Process & Oversee the Political Transition
	Political Participation, National Dialogue & Reconciliation
	Electoral Capacity Building and Oversight (Observation)
	State and Government Institutions, Public Administration & Civil Service Capacity Building (Governance)
	Extend State Authority throughout the Territory
	Conflict Management Capacity
Socio-economic Recovery	Physical Infrastructure: Roads, Ports, Airports, Electricity, Telecommunications
	Social Services: Health, Education, Social Welfare, Population Registration
	Stimulating and Facilitating Economic Growth and Employment
	Strengthening Civil Society
Human Rights	Human Rights Education, Advocacy and Monitoring
Humanitarian Assistance	Emergency and Early Recovery Services in the Areas of Food, Water & Sanitation, Shelter, Health, Protection and Returns of Refugees/IDPs

## References

- Ayoob, Mohammed. (1995). *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Belloni, R. (2001). Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Peace Research, Volume 38* (Number 2), pp. 163-180.
- Boege, V., Brown, A., Clements K., & Nolan A. (2009). Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders. *International Peacekeeping, volume 16* (Number 5), pp. 599-615.
- de Coning, C. (2010). *Clarity, Coherence and Context: Three Priorities for Sustainable Peacebuilding*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa.
- de Coning, C. (2009). *Implications of a Comprehensive or Integrated Approach for Training in United Nations and African Union Peace Operations*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.
- de Guevara, B. B. (2008). "Material Reproduction and Stateness in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in Michael Pugh et al (eds.), *Whose Peace?*
- Fund for Peace. (2010, December 11). *Failed States Index Scores 2010*. Retrieved from [http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=452&Itemid=900](http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=452&Itemid=900)
- Hampson, F.O. (1996). *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Processes Succeed or Fail*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Herring, E. (2008). "Neoliberalism Versus Peacebuilding in Iraq" in Michael Pugh et al (eds.), *Whose Peace?*
- Hobbes, Thomas. (1985). "Leviathan." London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- The International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research. (2010, December 9). *Introduction to Peacebuilding: Debates*. Retrieved from <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index.cfm?pageId=1766#six>
- Mozaik – Fondacija za Razvoj Zajednica. (2010, December 11). *Donatori i Partneri*. Retrieved from <http://www.mozaik.ba/index.php?id=don>
- Miall, H., Ramsbotham, O., & Woodhouse, T.. (1999). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Co.
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2010, December 11). *Activities*. Retrieved

from <http://www.osce.org/item/13253.html>

- Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paris, R. & T.S. Sisk. (2007). *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar State-building*. New York: International Peace Academy.
- Peck, C. (1998). *Sustainable Peace: The Role of the UN and Regional Organizations in Preventing Conflict*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Reich, H. (2006). "Local Ownership" in *Conflict Transformation Projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?* Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
- Richmond, O. & Franks, J.. (2009b). Between partition and pluralism: the Bosnian jigsaw and an 'ambivalent peace', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Volume 9* (Numbers 1-2), pp. 17-38.
- Richmond, O. (2009a). The Romanticisation of the Local: Welfare, Culture and Peacebuilding. *The International Spectator, Volume 44* (Number 1), pp. 149-169.
- Richmond, O. (2010). *Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or Emancipation*. Paper draft courtesy of the author, personal e-mail correspondence on November 10.
- Sheehan, Michael. (2005). *International Security: An Analytical Survey*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Stamnes, E. (2010). *Values, Context and Hybridity: How can the insights from the liberal peace critique literature be brought to bear on the practices of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture?* Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa.
- Suhrke, Astri. (2007). Reconstruction as Modernization: "The Post-Conflict" Project in Afghanistan. *Third World Quarterly, Volume 28* (Number 7), pp. 1291-308.
- Tschirgi, N. (2004). *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, and Challenges*, paper prepared for the WSP International/IPA Peacebuilding Forum Conference in New York, October 2004.
- United Nations. (2004). *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (Report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change). New York, NY.
- van der Borgh, Chris. (2008). A Fragile Concept: Donors And the Fragile State Agenda. *The Broker*, Issue 9.