

**Statebuilding and peace formation:  
a study on war veterans in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

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## Abstract

In post-conflict settings, a hybrid and negative form of peace has developed where structural violence, elite power dynamics and externally-oriented policies are relevant. However, local population and individuals are not passive recipients of top-down externalised peacebuilding interventions and often find ways to uphold local peace actions. Peace formation, a concept theorised by Richmond (2014), represents a new approach to interpret these everyday peace activities. Peace formation dynamics challenge the traditional understanding of the “local”, embodied by traditional civil society organisations oriented to promote projects in line with the liberal international agenda, because they focus on those everyday peace dynamics which promote alternative narratives and debates. This is the case for instance of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA), operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in other ex-Yugoslav countries. Bosnia-Herzegovina witnessed peacebuilding and statebuilding operations in 1995 after a three-year conflict, which shaped the political structure of the country considerably. After the conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina became broadly based on ethno-nationalistic power-dynamics, also perpetuated through mono-ethnic narratives which keep the population divided. Against this background, war veterans are often recalled in nationalistic discourse as either heroes or perpetrators, labels that shape their identities and influence the local population’s perception about them. However, while the majority of civil society prefers not to deal with this group, CNA engages with war veterans and through reconciliation activities it tries to transform them from spoilers of peace to, as CNA calls them, multipliers of peace. Therefore, CNA challenges the official ethno-nationalistic narratives that foster a condition of negative hybrid peace and tries to enhance reconciliation within the society channelling hybrid peace toward a more positive form.

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## Introduction

‘Most of war veterans in Bosnia are still in some way soldiers, they are still fighting, although not with weapons’<sup>1</sup>

The quote above indicates the persistence of unresolved conflicts among the social group of war veterans. War veterans are all those former combatants who fought in the early 90s in the three-year Bosnian conflict that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This social group has been particularly vulnerable to post-conflict divisions brought forth by the internationally supported peace accord, the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). The DPA, which laid the foundations for international peacebuilding and statebuilding operations, shaped the new Bosnian state by establishing a power-sharing dynamic that allowed local nationalistic elite to remain in power (Oberschall, 2007). To ensure themselves electoral support, these nationalist politicians continue to use ethno-nationalistic war narratives that depict war veterans as either perpetrators or heroes (Bougarel, 2007; Richmond, 2014). These power dynamics based on ethnic fear and division indicates that the peacebuilding operation in Bosnia has created a condition of negative hybrid peace, instead of positive peace (Richmond, 2014). The concept of hybridity has emerged in peace and conflict studies to better describe post-conflict settings, in which a multiplicity of hybridised actors often operates (Mac Ginty, 2010). Among the criticisms moved against international peacebuilding, the more critical ones question its top-down feature and accuse internationals of promoting pre-settled, locally bound peace operations which keep maintaining some elements of the conflict (Richmond, 2014). In this context, the “local” is often ignored and even local civil society organisations, which frequently rely upon international agencies’ funding, promote donor-driven projects and follow a liberal agenda (Paffenholz, 2013). In these contexts of hybrid negative peace, however, the local population find ways to enhance bottom-up informed peace activities, which Richmond (2014) has called peace formation dynamics.

This work is an attempt to give an example of peace formation in a specific post-conflict setting, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The analysis will untangle several intertwined dynamics that

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewee 1, CNA, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

led Bosnia into a condition of negative hybrid peace, such as the statebuilding operation, the rise of internationally oriented civil society and the relevance of ethno-nationalistic discourses. In particular, the role of war veterans in this situation is at the core of this study. The issue of war veterans is interlinked with another important dynamic derived from the peacebuilding operation in Bosnia, the process of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process (DDR). The analysis of how this process evolved is important in order to understand the growth of veterans' associations, which are considered one of the most powerful lobbies in Bosnia and spoilers of peace. This analysis of the context makes it possible to understand the peace formation dynamics in Bosnia, and in particular the work of a peace organisation operating in the Balkan region, the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA)<sup>2</sup>, which engages with war veterans in peace activities to deconstruct stereotyped images of the enemy and enhance reconciliation from a bottom-up perspective.

This work is composed by four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter includes a literature review around peacebuilding. It will discuss the evolution of peacebuilding and the increasing role statebuilding is acquiring within international interventions. Next, it will examine the criticisms surrounding these international interventions and, in particular, those related to the need of a more bottom-up dimension in peacebuilding operations. It will then consider the recent debate around the concepts of peace formation and hybrid peace, how these notions are linked and their implications. Finally, it will discuss the methodology of this research.

The second chapter will give a contextual overview of the case study, i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina. After a brief history of the conflict, the analysis will investigate the provisions of the DPA and how the accord shaped the structure of the Bosnian state. It will then examine the reasons underlying the massive funding toward Bosnian civil society. Finally, it will explain why today Bosnia is considered to be in a condition of negative hybrid peace.

The third chapter will focus on war veterans. The first two sections will deal with the dynamics that involved war veterans in the aftermath of the conflict, such as the DDR process. The first section will then give a theoretical overview of these activities, while the second section will examine the dynamics surrounding the DDR specifically implemented in Bosnia. This analysis will allow the understanding of the increase in the number of war veterans' associations, which will be further analysed in the third section. The fourth section

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<sup>2</sup> Centar Za Nenasilnu Akciju

will question the perception of war veterans as spoilers of war, introducing the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA).

The fourth chapter will analyse the work of the CNA. This analysis will rely upon primary sources, such as the insights from an interview conducted by the author, and upon secondary sources, such as research conducted by scholars in the past years. The first section will give an overview of the organisation and its motivations to work with veterans. The second and third section will explain CNA's approach to reconciliation and the activities it promotes. The fourth section will explain how CNA's members assess their work and the main challenges that they encounter. The final section will attempt to read the work of CNA through the lenses of peace formation.

The conclusion will summarise the key findings of the research and point out how CNA and peace formation activities in general can bring to a positive hybrid form of peace.



# 1 Literature review

## 1.1 Introduction

This first chapter aims to provide a review of the academic literature around peacebuilding and to lay the theoretical foundations for a thorough understanding of peace operations. Starting from the concept of peacebuilding, the analysis will examine one of the most important peacebuilding practices, statebuilding, and its links with the theories of state formation. It will then discuss the main critique against peacebuilding as a top down-practice lacking local understanding and it will explain the so-called ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2015) and the emphasis international actors are now putting on civil society. Finally, the latest approach of peace formation and hybridity theorised by Richmond will be analysed.

The last section will discuss the contribution of this work to the literature and explain the methodology used to conduct this research.

## 1.2 Peacebuilding

After the end of the Cold War, as the United States and the Soviet Union were no longer interested in maintaining control on their spheres of influence, the United Nations were increasingly involved in solving conflicts across the world (Sisk and Chandler, 2013). The United Nations involvement in conflicts was not new since, during the Cold War, it provided international assistance during conflicts in countries such as Egypt or Lebanon (Paris, 2004). Those operations, called *peacekeeping operations*, included the deployment of military personnel to control ceasefires or neutral zones (Paris and Sisk, 2009). After 1989, a shift from peacekeeping missions to more complex ‘multi-layered, multi-operation and multi-functional’ (Cubitt, 2013: 91) peace operations took place in countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Timor Leste (Mac Ginty, 2015). These missions fell under the term *peacebuilding*, a concept introduced in the international framework by the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali in *An Agenda for Peace* (1992).

The concept of peacebuilding was conceived by Galtung (Ryan, 2013), who defines it as a process capable of enhancing positive peace through the creation ‘of structures and institutions of peace based on justice, equity and cooperation’ (Galtung, 1975: 297-304 quoted in Paffenholz, 2013: 348). Positive peace is intended as a condition where not only is physical or direct violence absent, called negative peace, but also where structural violence

is not present (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence is embedded into the structure of societies and ‘shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’ (Galtung, 1969: 171). In *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali evoked Galtung’s notion of peacebuilding and defined it as an ‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’ (Boutros-Ghali, 1992)<sup>3</sup>.

Peacebuilding aims to create a condition of positive peace in post-conflict countries (Barnett *et al.*, 2007) by eradicating the root causes of the conflicts (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). It includes activities in multiple spheres, such as statebuilding activities i.e. the reconstruction of the state institutions, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and the promotion of neoliberal economic policies (Richmond, 2008). These activities have been strongly influenced by the liberal thinking, which assumes that the Westphalian state, the promotion of democracy and human rights, together with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies are ‘key condition[s] for sustainable peace in societies affected by civil war’ (Zaum, 2013: 107-108). Therefore, peacebuilding operations are said to implement the so-called *liberal peace* (see Mac Ginty, 2010), an externally-driven peace based on the liberal Western values of ‘good governance, democratic elections, human rights, the rule of law and market relations’ (Chandler, 2010: 22). International peacebuilders have tried to conform conflict-affected countries to the dominant international domestic governance, driven by the assumptions that democracy and neoliberal economy (Paris, 2002; Richmond, 2014), characteristics of the European states, are more likely to be in peace (see Collier, 2003). Paris refers to liberal peacebuilding as ‘*mission civilisatrice*’ (2002: 638), recalling the colonial period idea of the European powers’ moral duty to bring civilisation to the uncivilised populations (Paris, 2002). Similarly, liberal peacebuilding dictates what the features of a state should be (Paris, 2002). Throughout the years, peacebuilding has increasingly turned into statebuilding (Campbell and Peterson, 2013; Eriksen, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2015) and the state has become the ‘central pillar around which peace could be constructed’ (Mac Ginty, 2015: 844). The following section will analyse statebuilding and its linkages with state formation theories.

### **1.3 Statebuilding and state formation**

Statebuilding is ‘the international policy of creating effective state institutions’ (Eriksen, 2017: 772). Liberal peacebuilders aim to reconstruct the Weberian state, in which a

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<sup>3</sup> Peace operations and peacebuilding have been further defined in the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* and in the *Brahimi Report*.

centralised authority is in control of a specific territory, detains the monopoly of violence and is able to offer security and resources to its citizens (Barnett *et al.*, 2007; Eriksen, 2017; Salmon and Anderson, 2013). Statebuilding has linkages with the theories of state formation, which focus on the dynamics by which a state is formed (Campbell and Peterson, 2013; Richmond, 2014; Sisk and Chandler, 2013). In state formation theories, the legitimacy of the state derives from its local-driven aspect and a ‘local compromise between elites and subjects within an epistemic context’ (Richmond, 2014: 45).

Among other versions of state formation models, Tilly’s ‘*bellicist theory of state making*’ (Spruyt, 2017: 72) is considered particularly influential in peacebuilding practice (Richmond, 2014). Tilly (1985) argues that before the XVI century, Europe was a Hobbesian and fragmented system, in which actors fought to survive and conquered each other. With the development of artillery in the XVI century, the European entities needed more powerful armies to survive, and, to pay for those armies, they started to extract resources from the population in exchange for the provision of security (Tilly, 1985). This led to the creation of an increasingly efficient institutional and bureaucratic apparatus, the state. In this framework, the state’s capacity to be competitive during a war is essential to its survival: in Tilly’s words, ‘states make war and wars make states’ (1975: 42).

Tilly’s version of state formation has ‘strongly influenced the statebuilding and peacebuilding literatures and policies’ (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016: 13). Two key factors of this theory are particular relevant to peacebuilding practice. First, the state formation process is considered inherently and inevitably violent (Campbell and Peterson, 2013): local actors achieve power violently and establish a Weberian state (Richmond, 2014). This violence can have a spill-over effect, since it can bring to ambitions of regional expansionism and to a broader conflict (Richmond, 2014). Second, the elite that get into power will necessarily extract resources from the population to perpetuate the power dynamics: this leads to the creation of a predatory state (Richmond, 2014).

These elements have influenced statebuilding in three ways. Firstly, the instability and the violence that state formation processes imply are no longer acceptable in international relations (Campbell and Peterson, 2013). Secondly, statebuilding operations want to create a state based on a ‘liberal social contract in contrast to the predatory state’ (Richmond, 2014: 519). Finally, peacebuilding are oriented towards the establishment of positive peace, while the Tillian version of state formation would bring to negative peace, a peace of the winner

‘mainly maintained through power-sharing and balance-of-power arrangements’ (Richmond, 2013a: 132). Therefore, to avoid the violence that a process of state formation – in its Tillian version – implies and to create a state that is not predatory, international peacebuilders have assumed that post-conflict countries ‘need a deliberate hand in becoming strong and functional political entities’ (Campbell and Peterson, 2013: 340) through Western assistance in the form of statebuilding. Statebuilding aims to create a type of state that is the result of a long process lasting centuries and which has in some cases led to violent power consolidation dynamics (Sisk and Chandler, 2013). Instead, in the process of statebuilding international actors try to promote pre-settled templates to create institutions that would bring to an ideal – and Western – form of state, the liberal state (Paris, 2002; Richmond, 2008). This ‘rationale’ (Richmond, 2014: 32) has shaped the understanding of conflict of the international community as well as that of donors, of the international non-governmental organisations and of the Bretton Woods institution, i.e. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although Tillian theory was originally thought to explain European states formation theory it has been used to interpret the dynamics of conflicts and therefore to legitimate peacebuilding interventions (Richmond, 2014).

#### **1.4 Criticisms to peacebuilding and statebuilding**

As Chandler (2010) reports, several scholars have raised criticisms against peacebuilding and statebuilding. These criticisms, grounded on the empirical evidence of the failures of several peacebuilding operations, suggest that peacebuilding does not necessarily create positive peace and in most cases, the result is a condition of negative peace, where structural violence remains and the root causes of the conflict are not addressed (Barnett *et al.*, 2017; Newman, 2013).

Scholars are divided upon what should change in peacebuilding intervention. Paris (2004) suggests that in post-conflict settings the strengthening of the state institutions should precede liberalisation and the creation of democracy. More critical scholars, instead, criticise peacebuilding in its foundational assumptions. This critique, called power-based critiques by Chandler (2010), and foundational critique by Pugh (2013), focuses on the tendency of the liberal peace to universalise traditional Western principles, such as democracy, human rights and a liberal market economy (Chandler, 2010). Peacebuilding and statebuilding tend to create ‘states that are politically oriented towards the global North, respect international boundaries and place emphasis on the security aspects of peace’ (Mac Ginty, 2015: 845). This often reduces statebuilding and peacebuilding to technical, bureaucratic practices, which

ignore the ‘reality on the ground and fail to create conditions conducive to durable stability’ (Newman, 2013: 321). Richmond argues that states that developed from statebuilding are ‘failed by design’ (Richmond, 2013a). First, they would collapse without the external support of the international community. Second, instead of representing a compromise struck by the people of the state, they only mirror the interests of the international community and of the ruling elites. Third and consequently, they lack an emancipatory, contextual epistemology of peace (Richmond, 2013a). Similarly, Lederach argues that international interventions ‘lack appropriate and adequate concepts, approaches and modalities for intervention’ (1997: 16). He calls instead for an approach that allows not to ‘primarily see the setting and the people in it as the *problem* and the outsiders as the *answer*’ (Lederach, 1995: 212 quoted in Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2005: 220). By assuming that local actors are direct observers and hold deeper knowledge of the hatred within the population, Lederach affirms that ‘the local level is a microcosm of the bigger picture’ (1997: 42) and therefore to understand the macro-dynamics of hostilities and hatred it is necessary to look at the micro-realities. A bottom-up perspective is particularly important also to enhance reconciliation within the society. Reconciliation deals with the profound wounds that a conflict create within a society (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013) and it is a key feature for re-shaping the present since it is a space of encounter for healing the wounds and re-imagining the future (Lederach, 1997). Reconciliation is therefore fundamental for a society to recover from the hatred and the violence of the conflict and has to be traced in levels that the internationals have not considered a priority, such as the socio-psychological one (Lederach, 1997).

This growing academic critique has influenced the international actors and official documents have increasingly included concepts such as ‘local governance, local capacity and local ownership’ (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015: 827), a trend that has been identified as the ‘local turn in peacebuilding’ (Mac Ginty, 2015: 846). As a result, peacebuilders have increasingly looked at civil society, considered expression of local population, as an essential actor in peacebuilding, able to enhance political change (Paffenholz, 2013). Civil society includes all those actors that ‘stand between the private sphere of the family and market economy and the public sphere of the state and the government’ (Chandler, 1998: 79), therefore acting independently from the state (Chandler, 2000)<sup>4</sup>. In post-conflict countries, civil society is the product of multifaceted interactions amid bottom-up demands, national

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<sup>4</sup> The term civil society includes several types of actors, such as non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, youth associations, human rights organisations, labour unions (Scholte, 2002). This work will use the umbrella term of civil society to identify all these actors.

institutions' interests and international policies to enhance peace and development (Stephenson and Zanotti, 2012). While the international civil society has been criticised as defender of traditional Western values such as human rights or democracy (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006; Paris, 1997; Verkoren and Van Leeuwen, 2013), local civil society organisations (CSOs) 'can help to sustain peace agreements by working at the grassroots level to legitimize peace and make it more than an elite concern' (Stedman, 2008: 155-156).

Concerns have been raised also regarding civil society. Mac Ginty argues that talking about the *local turn* in peacebuilding needs caution since it has to be understood starting from the question 'where does power lie?' (2015: 846) i.e. where does the money for local projects come from? Local CSOs are often funded by external donors and their projects are frequently donors-driven (Mac Ginty, 2015; Paffenholz, 2013). Commonly, donors prefer not to fund politically oriented projects, which could endanger civil society neutrality and donors' relationships with the host state (Verkoren and Van Leeuwen, 2013). Consequently, civil society activities are often depoliticized and their local agency is shaped by their funding (Verkoren and Van Leeuwen, 2013). As Paffenholz (2013: 535) states, 'civil society has by and large lost its ability to advocate for radical social change'.

The more recent critical approach to peacebuilding goes beyond civil society organisations and focuses on informal everyday peace activities (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015). Critical scholars such as Mac Ginty (2015) have started to focus on those informal and everyday peace activities that work as 'social glue' to prevent conflicts. Everyday peace are 'the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society' (Mac Ginty, 2015: 2). Everyday peace is not a 'mundane conception of peace' (Richmond and Mitchell, 2012: 1), but it represents the interactions among people 'that make every form of peace unique, dynamic, contextualized and contested' (2012: 1-2). The notion of everyday peace can be inserted in a broader understanding of localised peace activities, a concept that Richmond called *peace formation* (Mac Ginty, 2014).

### **1.5 Peace formation and hybrid peace**

According to Richmond (2014), peace formation represents the 'missing link' between state formation, statebuilding and peacebuilding. While the use of the term *building* assumes that peace is top-down and externally constructed, the use of the term *formation* delineates a more emancipatory process embedded in the historical and socio-political context (Richmond,

2014). Peace formation goes further than the ‘formalised and official ambit’ (Mac Ginty, 2014: 560) and catches the micro-reality in the form of solidarity and negotiation. It includes all the actors, both individuals and groups, who Richmond calls *ordinary peacemakers* or *peace formers*, which enhance peace in their everyday lives (Richmond, 2014). By acting at the grassroots level, peace formers understand the challenges such as the hatred and the hostilities involved in upholding peace among the population and show a bottom-up understanding that Lederach (1997) suggested as key for reconciliation. Peace formers have ‘subaltern agency’ (Richmond, 2014: 209), a mixture of legitimacy that derives both from the local comprehension of peace and conflict and from their understanding of the positive and negative features of the liberal peace.

The concept of peace formation can be analysed in relation to a ‘broader, interdisciplinary reading of peace’ (Richmond, 2016: 61) emerging within the academic literature, the notion of hybrid peace, also called post-liberal peace (Richmond 2009). The concept of hybridity has only in recent times been utilised in peace and conflict studies (see Mac Ginty, 2010) and it is acquiring increasing importance since it can better explain the condition of today’s post-conflict settings, where a multiplicity of intertwined dynamics takes place (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2014).

Hybrid peace is a concept that makes it possible to identify ‘the multiple interactions between the various international and local actors’ (Mac Ginty, 2010: 392) and move beyond an oversimplified comprehension of post-conflict settings and of the different agents acting within them (Mac Ginty, 2010). In this understanding, these actors are ‘composites, or amalgamations resulting from long-term processes of social negotiation and adaptation’ (Mac Ginty, 2010: 398) i.e. they are hybridized actors. Hybridity is therefore a space of ‘tension between local, state and international loyalties and preferences’ (Richmond, 2014: 12).

Hybrid peace can be negative or positive (Richmond, 2014). Negative hybrid peace is the condition created by externally driven and elite-oriented peacebuilding and statebuilding, in which structural violence is still present (Richmond, 2014). Negative hybrid peace is present when, for instance, within the international and nation systems there are ‘unmitigated conflict structures’ (Richmond, 2014: 12) and the power is in the hands of the same local elite. These situations bring ‘to exclusion, discrimination, inequality and other forms of structural violence’ (2014: 12). Positive hybrid peace would instead imply a mutual agreement between

local population and external stakeholders upon ‘norms, values, institutions, law and rights in progressive terms resonant across the local and international scales’ (Richmond, 2014: 205). In a condition of hybrid peace, local and international interests would connect, creating wider legitimacy (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016).

In this framework, the role played by peace formation dynamics is key to channel hybrid peace toward its positive version (Richmond, 2014). As Richmond argues, peace formation offers a new approach that would ‘significantly improve’ (2014: 26) peacebuilding and statebuilding. International peacebuilders, embodying the interests of international and local elite, fail to gain local legitimate ‘and so becomes authoritarian or even neo-colonial in the view from beneath’ (Richmond, 2014: 79). In short, they have failed to engage with ‘a contextual, critical, and emancipatory epistemology of peace’ (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016: 2). Instead, peace formation dynamics offer an opportunity to get involved in local everyday peace actions. Peace formers can be defined ‘a current of social discourse and agency about what needs to be addressed and reformed if a positive, hybrid framework for peace and security is to be attained’ (Richmond, 2014: 158). They offer an exit from everyday life conflicts and violence and signals to international and national institutions, such as ‘critiques of, demands about, or resistance to certain strategies, in local acceptance or attempts to modify them’ (Richmond, 2014: 165-166). Therefore, the engagement of international actors with these local peace formation dynamics could provide them with a thorough understanding not only of the local conflict dynamics but also of those everyday activities that modify those conflicts (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016).

## **1.6 Contribution of the study and methodology**

According to Richmond (2014), some of the civil society organisations operating in post-conflict settings can be considered actors of peace formation provided that these organisations overcome traditional notions of civil societies, generally not related with the reality on the ground. Richmond calls these entities ‘free standing, rather than externally prompted, peace actors in local-local contexts’ (2014: 139). The present study proposes an example of peace formation activity in the form of a civil society organisation operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA).

After having explored the literature around peacebuilding and statebuilding and laid the theoretical foundations upon which the analysis will refer, a more focused study of peace formation dynamics in the context of hybrid negative peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be



carried out. The study will first analyse the peacebuilding operation implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina, focusing on the statebuilding practice, the resulting political system and the emergence of a large amount of civil society organisations. The second chapter will analyse how statebuilding was implemented in Bosnia, the resulting national political structure and how this impacts the whole society. In the third chapter, a parallel peacebuilding operation will be investigated, the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process and how this activity is linked to statebuilding and impacted on a particular social group, former combatants. The fourth chapter will further narrow the focus on the CNA, a peace organisation engaging with war veterans in Bosnia, in order to investigate their work and the reason why it can be considered an example of peace formation.

Besides recalling the issues analysed in the literature review, the analysis will be based partly on secondary sources, such as academic literature on the case study, and partly on primary sources, i.e. the insights of a fieldwork research conducted by the author of this work in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in April 2017.

The fieldwork research took place as part of a fieldtrip research in Bosnia-Herzegovina organised within the context of the course ‘Practical Approaches to Studying Conflict-Affected Societies’ held by the MA in Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Manchester. The research was based on one hour and a half interview with three members of the CNA. The CNA was contacted in March 2017 via email to explain the theme and purpose of the research. The research was conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview supported by an Interview Guide<sup>5</sup> consisting of central questions related to the topic. The form of a semi-structured interview was chosen because it is characterised by a certain flexibility that allows addressing several topics, and most importantly, those issues that are particularly important to the participants in the research (Fylan, 2005). This was a key element in this research, since it focuses on a bottom-up perspective of peace, and therefore it was particularly important to grasp the local understanding of peace related issues.

Ethical issues were taken into consideration before and during the research. Firstly, the participants in the research were asked informed consent before starting the interview. The three interviewees authorised the author to use their names and the notes taken during the interview in this work. Secondly, the research was conducted by considering the so-called ‘ethical golden rule [...] to do no harm’ (Brounéus, 2011: 141), which implies that the

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<sup>5</sup> The Interview Guide can be found in the Appendix.

participation in the research should not cause any risk to the participants (Wood, 2006 cited in Brounéus, 2011). Conducting research in post-conflict situations about sensitive topics can cause psychological harm to the participants or retrieval of traumatic memories (Bell, 2001), since ‘speaking of traumatic events is difficult and may in the worst cases lead to retraumatization’ (Brounéus, 2011: 142). Although the focus of the research was not directly on traumatic events, interviewing veterans about their experiences as local peace agents, could have involved the risk of causing that kind of harm. Therefore, the target group chosen for interviews consisted of members of an organisation working with veterans, instead of veterans themselves. Nevertheless, one of interviewees was a war veteran. Although the questions posed during the interviews never directly referred to his war experience, he shared some memories on his own free will, a feature that gave a benefit to the interview.

## **2 Peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Throughout an analysis of the academic literature around peacebuilding and statebuilding, the previous chapter was functional to lay the foundations for a better understanding of international interventions in response to conflicts around the world and how these operations ended up creating conditions of hybrid negative peace. This chapter will investigate more specifically the peacebuilding intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It will first give an overview of the conflict that occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 90s and then it will investigate the provisions of the DPA, which established an extensive statebuilding operation that shaped the national institutions toward power sharing mechanisms. It will then focus on the dynamics around a massive wave of funding toward civil society and finally it will discuss the reasons why the peace in Bosnia is considered a negative hybrid form of peace.

### **2.2 The conflict**

The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina (henceforth Bosnia) followed a broader escalation of tension within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After the death of the President of Yugoslavia Tito in 1980, a collective but unstable presidency detained the power over the six republics of Yugoslavia, i.e. Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia and Bosnia (Kalyvas and Sambanis, 2005). While during Tito's presidency feelings of nationalism were suppressed, after his death they re-emerged and were particularly significant in Serbia under the government of Milošević, who aimed to restore the 'unity of Serbia' (Meier, 1999). The conflict broke out after Slovenia and Croatia voted a referendum for independence from Yugoslavia (Kalyvas and Sambanis, 2005), then in 1992 also Bosnia voted for independence. Bosnia was the more multi-ethnic country among the Yugoslavian republics, since its population consisted of three major ethnic groups alongside other minorities and people who considered themselves 'Yugoslavs' (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2006). The three major groups were: the Bosniaks (43.7 per cent of the population), i.e. the Bosnian Muslims, politically represented by the Party of Democratic Action; the Bosnian Serbs (31.3 per cent), followers of the Orthodox Church and represented by the Serb Democratic Party; and the Bosnian Croats (17.3 per cent), Roman Catholics, represented by the Croatian Democratic Community (Barany, 2014; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009;).

The referendum for independence was approved mainly thanks to the Bosniaks (Kalyvas and Sambanis, 2005), who were the majority and ‘had the strongest feeling of Bosnianness’ (Meier, 1999: 189). The Bosnian-Serbs and their party, with the feeblest Bosnian identity and more oriented to Serbia’s aspiration of unity (Meier, 1999), rejected the results of the referendum and, militarily supported by the Yugoslav National Army, controlled by Serbia and Montenegro, proclaimed the Republika Srpska (RS) in half of the Bosnian territory (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). The RS included a Bosnian-Serb Parliament, as well as its own forces, the RS police and the RS Army (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Similarly, the Bosnian-Croats, supported by Croatia, self-proclaimed the so-called Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia in the south-west part of Bosnia, aiming to ultimately join Croatia (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). In 1992, the armed conflict broke out within Bosnia between the Bosniak Army i.e. the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian-Croat Army, and the Bosnian-Serb Army.

The international community established in 1993 safe areas in six cities of Bosnia, including Sarajevo and Srebrenica (Kalyvas and Sambanis, 2005). Nevertheless, mass killings conducted by the Bosnian-Serbs against the Bosniaks occurred in Srebrenica, with the execution of around 8,000 people (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). The massacre of Srebrenica represented only one of the violent episodes perpetuated by all sides that occurred during the conflict, characterised by ethnic violence, ethnic cleansing and war crimes (Burg and Shoup, 1999; Richmond, 2009). Estimates show that in the three years of the conflict, around 100,000 people died, 40 percent of them being civilians (Berdal *et al.*, 2012).

In 1994, a US-led cease-fire signed between the Croat side and the Bosniak side created the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth Federation), composed by two constituent groups, the Bosniaks and the Bosnian-Croats, and set up an alliance between the Bosniak Army and the Bosnian-Croat Army against the RS Army (Barany, 2014; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). This joint effort changed the balance of forces and brought the Bosnian-Serbs to negotiate peace (Barany, 2014), leading to the signature in 1995 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), which officially ended the conflict. External actors such as the United States, the United Nations and other European countries, participated and supported the negotiations (Richmond and Franks, 2009).

### **2.3 Statebuilding**

The DPA, consisting of a main text and eleven Annexes, provided the political and geographical design of the Bosnian state and the draft of its Constitution (Barany, 2014). Chandler describes the DPA as a top-down ‘political project of statebuilding’ (2005: 339), since not only did it shape the political structure and the national institutions of Bosnia, but it also laid the ‘legal foundations for the international community to intervene in practically every sphere of Bosnian affairs’ (Belloni, 2001: 164).

As regards the organisation of the national political structure, the DPA established a power-sharing mechanism as a ‘tool of post-conflict accommodation’ (Bieber and Keil, 2009: 338), i.e. as a way of managing the conflict (Richmond and Franks, 2009). This division of power was based on the principles of consociational power sharing<sup>6</sup> (Bieber and Keil, 2009; Jarstad, 2008; Oberschall, 2007; Pearson, 2015). The DPA established that the Bosnian state would comprise three constituent peoples, the Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs, and two entities, the Federation and the RS (DPA, 1995). These two entities have the features of a state, since they both have administrative apparatus, diverse citizenships and the right to establish relationships with neighbouring countries (Caplan, 2004). The three different groups are represented in parliament through a proportional electoral system. Each ethnic group has the possibility of legislative veto in case its vital interests are threatened. There is rotating presidency among the three ethnically different presidents, and the so-called ‘entity voting’, which requires the approval of at least one-third of each entity’ members together with an overall majority for a law to pass (Pearson, 2015).

The role of the international community was fundamental during the drafting and the DPA and still remains preponderant in the socio-political system of Bosnia. During the negotiations, the United States and the Europeans widely influenced the content of the document (see Chandler, 2005). This can be seen for instance in the establishment of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), which consists of fifty-five member states and which has several powers on Bosnia-Herzegovina (Chandler, 2005). In particular, in the Bonn Summit of 1997, the PIC expanded the powers of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), an international institution with the status of diplomatic mission (Chandler, 2005) created to act on behalf of the international community (Richmond and Franks, 2009) and to guarantee the implementation of the DPA (Mac Ginty, 2011). After 1997, the OHR became

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<sup>6</sup> Consociational power sharing finds its theoretical origin in Arend Lijphart’s theory (Oberschall, 2007). According to Lijphart, ethnic identities are strong enough to survive within the governmental apparatus of a multi-ethnic democracy, and it is therefore necessary to orient those ethnic differences towards dialogue and cooperation (Lijphart, 1990 cited in Oberschall, 2007).

‘the de facto executive and legislative [power] of Bosnia’ (Richmond and Franks, 2009: 59). Currently, the OHR is in charge of dealing with national issues, such as promoting and implementing laws. Its powers are often used to endorse the international will and bypass political stalemates between the three groups, ‘reliev[ing] [politicians] of the responsibility for difficult political decisions’ (Cox, 2001: 14). Hence, the OHR ‘overrode the state where it was perceived to be obstructing the liberal internationalist agenda’ (Mac Ginty, 2011: 140). Alongside the OHR, another international institution is considered particularly important, i.e. the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in charge of human rights issues, democratic implementation, elections, and the military agenda (Richmond and Franks, 2009), whose role will be better analysed in the next section. Against this background, the Bosnian state, whose power is fragmented and decentralised, has jurisdiction in few political fields, such as trade and foreign policy (Oberschall, 2007).

The attempts of democratisation and dismantling of ethnic divisions, provided in the DPA, soon proved inefficient, when, in 1996, in the first post-war elections the nationalistic parties triumphed, highlighting the persistence of ethnical divisions within Bosnia (Fischer, 2011). The result of the elections clearly showed the ‘structural contradictions of the DPA’ (Belloni, 2013: 279) i.e. a weak divided state with fragmented and decentralised power structures, inefficient institutions prone to nationalist manipulation, and ethnic polarisation (Belloni, 2013). Given this result, and ‘to challenge this segmentation’ (Chandler, 2017: 95) the international community strategy oriented towards local peace initiatives, and in particular to the financial and economic support and development of civil society organisations.

## **2.4 Civil society**

As explained in the first chapter, civil society is increasingly acquiring importance among peacebuilders as a way ‘to balance the top-down influence of the international community by stimulating local political activity’ (Fagan, 2005: 407). Civil society is now regarded as necessary in peacebuilding operation to endorse democratic transitions and local participation, promoting tolerance, justice and compromise (Belloni, 2001; Chandler, 1998). According to, the participation of civil society in peace negotiation and in drafting peace agreement can raise important, local-related topics to include in the accord (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006)

In Bosnia, the civil society was excluded during the negotiations of the DPA, since other issues, such as ending the war, were privileged (Belloni, 2008; Jarstad, 2008). After the first

election, whose results showed a deep ethnical fragmentation of the Bosnian society, international peacebuilders considered building a civil society particularly urgent to encourage a local multi-ethnic culture (Chandler, 2017). Throughout the years, a massive wave of funding was conveyed towards civil society organisations (CSOs) (Chandler, 2017) and this international investment resulted in their dramatic increase (UNDP, 2003): around 12,000 were listed in 2013 (Belloni, 2013). Civil society projects included humanitarian and psychosocial support for vulnerable categories, such as refugees and youth empowerment, and education to peace activities (Fischer, 2011). Among other international actors involved in financing civil society building, the OSCE played a particularly important role. In 1997, the OSCE mission established a Democratisation Branch, in charge of the creation and strengthening of civil society in Bosnia (Chandler, 2017). As Chandler (2017) explains, the OSCE Democratisation Branch was in charge of finding local actors oriented towards getting international funding, training them to create a civil society agenda, and stimulating the political agency of local CSOs. The local participation and involvement in these CSOs was scarce, since the tendency of politicising these cross-ethnic initiatives resulted in problematizing them (Chandler, 2017): in Chandler's words, 'the people whose lives involved cross-entity cooperation did not necessarily want to turn everyday survival into a political movement' (2017: 107). Besides, the majority of the participants in civil society activities come from the middle-class, therefore they cannot be considered representatives of the whole population (Belloni, 2008; Chandler, 2017).

The lack of participation reflects the actual perception of local people on Bosnian civil society. As Belloni asserts, the local people frequently prefer not to join these organisations 'because they do not feel [they] reflect their needs and priorities' (2008: 204). Other issues explain the lack of participation in civil society. First, the strong dependency of local CSOs on international funding allows them not to look for local support and therefore they do not need to create wider network within the society (Chandler 1998; Donais, 2009). Second, local civil societies projects are often donors' driven (Belloni 2001; Evans-Kent and Bleiker, 2003), which means that some organisations 'have designed their aims and activities according to donors' interest rather than social needs' (Fischer, 2011: 301). Therefore, these projects are top-down and follow a technocratic agenda (Belloni, 2013). Additionally, the large number of donors and aid agencies lacked coordination (Chandler 1998; Fagan, 2006; Fischer, 2011) and often ended up financing similar projects (Fagan, 2006). They prefer 'almost exclusively to work with [those local organisations] which are ready to implement

the pre-assigned agendas' (Ramović, 2016: 426). Third, there is a huge gap in terms of resources between international and local CSOs. While in the aftermath of the war the funding for civil society was massive, this tendency is decreasing and there is a strong competition to get funds (Fagan, 2005). In this scenario, international CSOs are more likely to be funded (Evans-Kent and Bleiker, 2003). This is partly due to the phenomenon called 'projectomania' (Sejfića, 2007 cited in Fischer, 2011), a term which explains the current trend of getting funds based on the ability of writing proposals (Fagan, 2005; Fischer, 2011;). International and more experienced CSOs, which mostly lack local support and legitimacy, are generally more skilled in writing a funding application capable to catch donors' attention, while smaller ones, despite their deeper understating of the context, are frequently 'underfunded or underexplored' (Evans-Kent and Bleiker, 2003: 108). As a result, alongside international context-blind civil society organisations, the resulting lack of local capacity brought several civil society organisations to be still ethnically affiliated, such as veterans' associations or religious groups (Belloni, 2013; Fischer, 2011), although there are also multi-ethnic CSOs which try to 'seek political and social alternatives' (Fischer, 2011: 301).

In general, donors have tended to focus on the growth of the number of CSOs, instead of 'engaging with the complexities of the social, political and economic context and the constraints and opportunities it could offer to civil society development' (Belloni, 2013: 286). CSOs, both international and local, are perceived as neglecting the history of Bosnia and therefore not able to understand the local needs (Belloni, 2001). The civil society *built* by international actors 'allows the state, élites and donors alike to ignore the immediacy of the plight of the poor, inequality and human needs, more generally in favour of their structural and institutional reform processes' (Ramović, 2016: 426).

## **2.5 Bosnia today: negative hybrid peace**

The DPA has been described in several ways. Richmond for instance asserts that it is 'less a peace settlement and more a ceasefire' (2014: 56), which did manage to end the violence but failed to enhance positive peace in the country. Oberschall called it a 'rapid peace deal *looking good*' (2007: 116), since negotiations were widely influenced by the necessity of quickly ending the war and stop the violence, together with the difficulty to make different stakeholders agree on compromise (Belloni, 2013; Fischer, 2011; Oberschall, 2007;). Beside the various definitions, there is a general agreement among scholars upon the lack of local legitimacy, since Bosnian citizens were not asked for their approval (Chandler, 2005; Mac Ginty, 2011; Oberschall, 2007). As Chandler argues, the resultant state 'was not a product of



popular consensus or popular involvement and was seen by many Bosnians as an external imposition' (2005: 339).

Beside the lack of legitimacy, the DPA has been criticised also for having kept certain elements of the conflict, 'because it was driven by a mainstream state formation understanding of a power struggle between ethnic groups' (Richmond, 2014: 88). As seen previously, liberal peacebuilders have implemented statebuilding starting from the assumption that the European states formation theory conceived by Tilly, which implies that a state would form violently without an external intervention, has a universal application. By reading the events in Yugoslavia from this state formation perspective, it could be claimed that the conflict was driven by the Serb aspiration to a 'Greater Serbia', a state formation project that brought to the self-declared Serb Republic (Richmond, 2013b)<sup>7</sup>. Richmond argues that this perspective, 'a stereotype of populist ethnic identity and its supposed territorialism' (Richmond, 2014: 88), was 'used [by peacebuilders] to legitimate the construction of a neoliberal state with no regard for pre-war structures' (2014: 57). The resultant DPA 'mitigated this power struggle but also maintained it, and the model of state it has supplied – the neoliberal one – has been unable to induce pluralism in either identity or material terms' (Richmond, 2014: 88). In this situation, the root causes of the war remained unsolved, power-sharing is instead power-seeking (Richmond, 2014) and 'nationalism, predatory elites, poverty and cultural obstacles prevail over the liberal project' (2014: 87).

Therefore, the political structure created by the DPA is an impediment to positive peace (Jarstad, 2008). Beside the administrative divisions in two entities – Federation and RS –, politicians keep implementing nationalist and ethnically-oriented policies (Jarstad, 2008), preventing the 'development of an inclusive, pluralistic state' (Caplan, 2004: 58). A fundamental role is played by ethno-nationalistic narratives, which Lederach describes as the discourses that compose the 'formative story of who we are as a people and a place' (2005: 142). As Belloni states, 'everything from greetings to soccer shirts is utilised to identify one's ethnic belonging and religious persuasion' (2013: 284). In this respect, ethno-nationalistic narratives are fundamental for strengthening the group identity. These narratives are strongly based on different truths about the war (Franović, 2008). As Tint explains, in certain cases, groups 'develop conflict-driven memories and narratives as integral dimensions to their individual and collective identities' (2010: 245). Therefore, the practice of commemoration,

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<sup>7</sup> Bojicic-Dzelilovic more generally asserts that the three ethnic groups' 'pursuit of their own vision of Bosnia's political and territorial (re)organisation' (2006: 200) drove the conflict.

described as ‘the process of acknowledging, honouring and recycling certain events of the past’ (Tint, 2010: 242), is fundamental for developing a group memories, transmit a distorted version of history and keep emotions of the conflict alive in the population (Tint, 2010).

The persistence of ethno-nationalist feelings supported by mono-ethnic narratives within Bosnia indicates a condition of structural violence (Richmond, 2013b). Given all these elements, the peacebuilding and statebuilding implemented in Bosnia have not led to a condition of positive peace but have brought to negative hybrid peace, where structural violence is deeply rooted, elite interests are privileged and local agency is ignored (Richmond, 2014).

Against this background, it is possible to further examine the situation in Bosnia, focusing on the role of certain actors. In particular, it is interesting to examine the role that war veterans play in this situation. According to several scholars, war veterans and veterans’ associations play a particular important role in post-conflict Bosnia (Berdak, 2013; Bougarel, 2007; Obradovic, 2016) and they are seen as obstructing the peace process (Bougarel, 2007; Simic, 2009). The following section, starting from an analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process implemented in Bosnia as part of the peacebuilding operation, will examine the development of the war veterans’ identities and the issues surrounding this particular social group.

## 3 War veterans in Bosnia-Herzegovina

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has given a contextual overview of the peacebuilding operation in Bosnia and of the resulting condition of negative hybrid peace. This chapter will narrow down the focus on a particularly social group that has emerged from the conflict, war veterans. To do so, it is necessary to first investigate the Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process implemented following the DPA. This will help understand the dynamics surrounding the creation of veterans' associations and the role they play in contemporary Bosnia. At the same time, the analysis will examine the perception around war veterans and the role of ethno-nationalistic narratives in shaping them.

### 3.2 Theoretical overview of DDR processes

In the aftermath of a conflict, the presence of conflict-related weapons and the lack of disarming and reintegration programs for former combatants represent a risk for sustainable peace, since the availability of these weapons and the lack of educational and working skills of former soldiers could lead to relapsing into conflict (UNDPKO, 2000). Collier (1994, cited in Özerdem, 2013: 227) addresses the issue from a security perspective and distinguishes between a micro and a macro level of insecurity related to former combatants. Micro-insecurity is given by the risk of an increase in personal violence or stealing after a conflict, either because of the absence of other forms of income or because former combatants can lack other skills besides being able to use a gun. Macro-insecurity is instead related to the possibility of relapsing into conflict if 'grievances and frustration continue to be neglected' (Fitz-Gerald and Mason, 2005 cited in Özerdem, 2013: 227). Özerdem (2013: 227) argues that other authors such as Berdal (1996), Nubler (1997) or Colletta *et al.* (1996) approach the topic from a development angle. In this approach, the reintegration of former soldiers 'into productive activities can certainly contribute to economic development' (Colletta *et al.*, 1996 cited in Özerdem, 2013: 227). Often, the transition of these individuals from military to civilian life is not easy: for instance, they could suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because of the war, they can develop alcohol or drug addiction; or, since they frequently lack educational and working skills, they can encounter difficulties in finding jobs other than the military one (Banholzer, 2014; UN, 2006) and, they can become a *lost generation* (UN, 2006). To tackle these issues, ad hoc programs have been promoted as part of peacebuilding operations, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programs

(DDR) (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007). These three stages are considered as part of a 'continuum of events that move from active conflict to peace' (UNDPKO, 2010: 10). *Disarmament* refers to 'the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and [...] of the civilians' (UNDPKO, 2000: 15). *Demobilisation* is identified as the 'process by which armed forces (government and/or opposition or factional forces) either downsize or completely disband, as part of a broader transformation from war to peace' (UNDPKO, 2000: 15). *Reintegration*, the third stage, includes all those 'assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for them and their families' (UNDPKO, 2000: 15).

Traditionally, the focus of reintegration programs has mainly been the economic side. Kingma describes economic reintegration as the 'process through which the ex-combatant's household builds up its livelihood, through production and/or other types of gainful employment' (Kingma, 1997: 6). More recently, an attention to other aspects of reintegration has emerged. Özerdem, for instance, stresses the need of social and political reintegration processes, 'through which the ex-combatant and his or her family feel part of, and are accepted by, the community' (2012: 67). Özerdem (2012) calls for the need for *bridging* the gap between ex-combatants and the community they are returning to. According to Özerdem, establishing new ties between ex-combatants and their communities 'would probably be the main guarantee for the sustainability of reintegration experiences' (2012: 60). This is particularly important since the more the violence during the conflict impacted on social relationships, the more social reintegration is needed to heal the wounds (Özerdem, 2012). In this perspective, reconciliation would be included in reintegration programs and local reconciliatory processes between former combatants and the communities would support the upholding of peace within the whole society (Özerdem, 2013; on social reintegration see also Kaplan and Nussio, 2015). As a matter of fact, an increasing acknowledgement of the need of including reconciliation programs in social reintegration process can now be seen in international official documents (see UN, 2006).

Bosnia is one the countries to have experienced processes of DDR. However, Bosnia's case is different from others. First, because an initial DDR process had already started in certain areas before the DPA, when the United Nations established, first in Croatia and then Bosnia, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), a peacekeeping operation whose mandate was to monitor the safe areas of the country, to demilitarise them and to demobilise their personnel (Cox, 1996). Second, because the DPA did not include comprehensive DDR

provisions (King *et al.*, 2002; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). In the following section, an analysis of the dynamics surrounding DDR in Bosnia will be conducted.

### **3.3 DDR in Bosnia**

As said in the previous chapter, the DPA came after a particularly violent conflict, characterised by ethnic cleansing and crime against humanity (Berdal *et al.*, 2012; Oberschall, 2007). Among the parties, mistrust and hatred were deeply grounded (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009; Oberschall, 2007). Given these tensions, negotiations were particularly difficult and the internationals privileged the end of violence as the overriding purpose of the DPA, setting aside more delicate security-related issues, such as the downsizing of the armies (Alexander *et al.*, 2004; King *et al.*, 2002; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Therefore, although there are some provisions regarding Disarmament and Demobilisation in the first Annex of the DPA, it does not further explain how this process would work. Instead, there are no provisions regarding Reintegration.

As regards Disarmament, the DPA required the withdrawal of only heavy weapons, ignoring provisions for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), which remained in large quantity in Bosnia (King *et al.*, 2002). To address the issue, the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) intensively and often coercively looked for SALW amongst Bosnian people, practices ‘that often resulted in increased tension with community members’ (King *et al.*, 2002: 35). Given the dubiousness of these practices, an amnesty to collect the weapons was promoted by IFOR and the European Union Force (Hadzovic *et al.*, 2010). This amnesty was successful and it was followed by the declaration of other amnesties in 1999, 2000 and 2001 (King *et al.*, 2002), alongside two weapons control programs implemented by the UNDP (Hadzovic *et al.*, 2010). However, a UNDP report (Hadzovic *et al.*, 2010) showed how this issue is still far from being fully addressed. According to the report, in 2010, more than one million weapons were still circulating among civilians. Around 750,000 of them were illegally possessed. A more recent report, the 2014 Small Arms Survey (Carapic, 2014), appraised the numbers of illegally owned SALW amid 150,000 and 750,000, numbers that also show the problem in obtaining precise data.

As regards Demobilisation and Reintegration, the DPA ignored the latter and addressed the former only superficially, identifying it as the removal of all the arms from the individual combatants’ hands and the release of combatants from services (DPA, 1995). Lacking specific provisions, the majority of the combatants, around 300,000 of the total 400,000 to

450,000 soldiers estimated, voluntarily left the army (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Özerdem (2012) calls this phenomenon *self-demobilisation*, a process in which combatants decide to leave the armed forces without passing through a DDR program<sup>8</sup>. The absence of provision for reintegration programs meant that the large part of ex-combatants did not get any skills training or psychological support after their demobilisation (Alexander et al., 2004; Pietz, 2004).

“Official” DDR processes were fostered by the World Bank (WB) in the 90s and by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the 2000s (Pietz, 2004). Between 1996 and 1999, the WB pursued the Emergency Demobilisation and Reintegration Project (EDRP) ‘to assist economic reintegration of displaced workers into the civilian workforce’ (World Bank Technical Annex EDRP, 1996: 3 quoted in Pietz, 2004: 34). Among other projects, it launched a program to match the ex-combatants’ skills and the jobs available in the labour market and a counselling service for post-traumatic stress diseases (PTSD) (King et al., 2002; Pietz, 2004). Although 74 per cent of the almost 23,500 beneficiaries of the EDRP got employed and the WB considered the EDRP a successful project, it had some shortcomings (Pietz, 2004; King et al., 2002). Among others, it did not efficiently address PTSD issues and it mainly favoured labour intensive short-term employment solutions (King et al., 2002).

The second WB project, the Pilot Emergency Labour Redeployment Project (PELRP), followed the Madrid Agreement, which established a 30 percent cut of the RS army and the Federation army (Pietz, 2004), a measure implemented following the difficulties of Bosnian economy to maintain such a huge army (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). The PELRP started in 2000 and was addressed to this new wave of demobilised soldiers (Heinemann-Grüder et al., 2003). Among other provisions, the PELRP, similar to the EDRP, included on-the-job-training, self-employment in agriculture and small-scale enterprises, and analogous criticisms, as short-term solutions of jobs in agriculture, were raised (Heinemann-Grüder et al., 2003; Pietz, 2004).

The third program, the Transitional assistance to Former Soldiers (TAFS), was promoted in 2002 by the IOM following a new wave of demobilised soldiers. The TAFS included inter alia a database of demobilized combatants, civic education courses, training and job placement according to the skills of each former soldier (Heinemann-Grüder et al., 2003;

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<sup>8</sup> The Ministries of Defence of the Federation and of the RS encouraged self-demobilisation promising KM 10,000 to each person who would withdraw from the military forces (Heinemann-Grüder *et al.*, 2003).

Alexander *et al.*, 2004). The IOM is considered the most effective of the three DDR both in terms of poverty alleviation of ex-combatant and in the starting up of small-scale business (Alexander *et al.*, 2004). However, it was often short of funding which prevented a broader cover of the program (Alexander *et al.*, 2004; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). On the one hand, as seen in the second chapter, international donors preferred to fund projects involving other groups, such as refugees, and, on the other, during the TAFS, the international funding to Bosnia started decreasing, privileging other post-conflict countries such as Kosovo or Afghanistan, ‘creating a sense of abandonment and a financial vacuum in Bosnia’ (Alexander *et al.*, 2004: 9).

Several scholars, as Bougarel (2007), Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess (2009) and Obradović (2016), considered the DDR process in Bosnia inefficient and confused. The lack of initial provisions included in the DPA brought to a huge self-demobilisation process and fragmented demobilisation and reintegration processes throughout the years. More precisely, reintegration was underemphasised: the lack of long-term economic solutions for reintegration and the absence of social and political reintegration programs, which would also include reconciliation projects, concurred to shape the identities of former combatants, who tended to join veterans’ associations, which ‘offer[ed] continuous support to the war veterans’ (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009: 29).

The issues surrounding war veterans’ associations, highly nationalistic entities which are often considered an obstacle to peace (Bougarel, 2007; King et al., 2002; Obradović, 2016; Wils, 2004) will be further analysed in the next section.

### **3.4 Veterans and veterans’ associations**

Veterans’ associations developed during the war and their importance grew increasingly after the conflict (Bougarel, 2007), when the lack of efficient DDR program able to economically, politically and socially reintegrate veterans together with the ethno-nationalistic policies brought a high number of veterans to look for actors able to preserve their rights. According to Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, the lack of DDR provision produced ‘an institutional vacuum’ (2009: 32) that veterans’ associations filled by providing support to ex-soldiers and which led them ‘to play a dominant role within their own ethnic groups (2009: 32). Since their rise, they have been highly nationalistic actors, whose membership is based on ethnic criteria. For instance, the Organisation of Combatants of the RS<sup>9</sup> represents the veterans of

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<sup>9</sup> Boracka Organizacija Republike Srpske

the RS Army, the Association of Croat Disabled Soldiers of the patriotic War<sup>10</sup> represents the veterans of the Croatian Army and the Alliance of Demobilised Combatants<sup>11</sup> the veterans of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bougarel, 2007). Besides the large ones, local veterans' associations are widespread and can be found in almost every community<sup>12</sup>.

Veterans' associations are very powerful political pressure groups with strong linkages with the political parties (Keil, 2011; Obradović, 2016). As seen in the previous chapter, international, top-down statebuilding in Bosnia has reinforced those political structures which 'allow competing war narratives to co-exist' (Berdak, 2013: 14) and has allowed nationalist parties, whose main goals are keeping their powers and privileging their own ethnic group, to keep the power by fostering ethno-nationalistic discourses and policies (Keil, 2011). Hence, political parties try to establish privileged relations with 'those segments of their national group that help them remain in power' (Keil, 2011: 49). Political parties look for veterans' associations' approval for two main reasons, a political one and a symbolic one.

From the political viewpoint, war veterans are important because they represent a large part of the population and therefore a huge portion of the electorate (Wils, 2004; Gregson, 2000)<sup>13</sup> and therefore 'ad hoc arrangements [are settled] to secure elections support' (Obradović, 2016: 103). Therefore, they are accredited by the Bosnian state as 'official partners' (Bougarel, 2007: 482). This means that not only are they granted with huge financial assistance (Bougarel, 2007; Obradović, 2016) but they are also entitled to identify the beneficiaries of pensions for widows and disabled people and of 'allocating jobs, housing, and the various type of material aid reserved for the combatant population' (Bougarel, 2007: 483). At the same time, veterans are granted with several economic and non-economic benefits, i.e. privileged pensions, healthcare preferential treatments or tax relieves (Berdak, 2013), privileges that are preserved by veterans' associations. Bartlett (2013), for instance, estimates that the three quarters of the total amount of GDP allocated to social assistance (4.6 per cent in 2013), is addressed to veterans and their families. Veterans' benefits are said to 'dominate the social protection systems in both entities' (Obradović, 2016: 96). These rights are not granted to satisfy individuals' actual material needs, but they are rewards for their

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<sup>10</sup> Hrvatski vojni invalidi Domovinskog rata

<sup>11</sup> Savez demobilisanih boraca

<sup>12</sup> Interviewee 2, CNA, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>13</sup> Although it is hard to identify how many people fought during the war, the number is estimated around 400,000 and 450,000 (Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). As emerged from an interview conducted by Berdak (2013), war veterans corresponded, at the time of the interview in 2013, to 80 percent of male individuals over 37 years old.



participation in the war (Obradović, 2016), a feature which stresses ‘their ethnic rather than civic belonging [...], undermin[ing] the Bosnian state’ (Berdak, 2013: 14). They are a compensation for their ‘wartime losses and sacrifices’ (Berdak, 2013: 14), and the commitment shown to their ethnic group (Berdak, 2013; Gregson, 2000; Obradović, 2016).

As regards as their symbolic status, veterans are, especially during elections, used in ethno-nationalistic discourses to gain the support of the population of a certain ethnic group, recalling the role they play in the war as defenders and saviours of their own ethnic group (Berdak, 2013; Gregson, 2000). However, these ethno-nationalistic narratives, which depict them as heroes, victims or perpetrators against other parties, have produced a multifaceted perception around them (Berdak, 2013; Obradović, 2016). Nationalistic narratives distort the images of the enemy and dehumanise the opposing sides. As stated by Franović ‘dominant narratives on all sides claim: we were defending ourselves, the war was imposed upon us and we are the greatest victims in this war’ (2015: 3). Victimisation is described as the tendency of societies ‘to label whole groups (nations) as either victims or perpetrators of violence’ (Vukosavljević, 2007: 4). In this respect, the same narrative that pictures war veterans as heroes, having defended their ethnic groups and gives them a considerable social authority within their communities, depicts them as *villains* for another groups, being identified as perpetrators<sup>14</sup>.

### **3.5 Spoilers of peace?**

Veterans and veterans’ associations are considered an obstacle to sustainable peace (Bougarel, 2007; King *et al.*, 2002; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Bojicic-Dzelilović describes veterans’ associations as ‘one particular type of non-state actors engaged in undermining peace settlement’ (2006: 200) in Bosnia. According to Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, ‘their rhetoric and stance are regularly in line with those of the nationalist political parties’ (2009: 29). For instance, veterans associations have opposed, even physically, the return of refugees or displaced persons belonging to the opposite ethnicities (Bojicic-Dzelilović, 2006; Moratti and Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Bojicic-Dzelilović (2006) also reports that some veterans’ associations hindered the investigations into war crimes also with direct threats and intimidations. For all these reasons, war veterans are a specific and ‘distinct social group’ (Bougarel, 2007: 479) acting in Bosnia and they are considered spoilers of

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<sup>14</sup> Interviewee 2.

sustainable peace and therefore actors that concur to perpetuate a condition of negative hybrid peace.

Considering war veterans as only agents of negative hybrid peace is however ‘over-simplistic’ (Bougarel, 2007: 487). Several studies (Beara and Miljanović, 2007; Franović, 2008; Wils, 2004) claim the importance of including veterans in peace initiatives and considering them not only as spoilers. Civil society organisations in Bosnia tended to ignore this social group and their funding has been directed to other target groups, such as returnees or youths. In this respect, although many attempts and efforts for enhancing reconciliation are underway, only a few are directed to veterans (Fisher, 2013). According to Franović, civil society ‘should be open to approaching those individuals that have huge acceptance and credibility in society and can take on important functions as multipliers and ambassadors for peace’ (2008: 43).

In the following chapter, an example of a regional peace organisation working with veterans, the Centre for Nonviolent Action, will be analysed through the lenses of peace formation.

## **4 Multipliers of peace: The Centre for Nonviolent Action**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The DDR processes failed to include the large part of former combatants and provide long-term reintegration opportunities and reconciliation activities. Besides, the majority of civil society organisations did not supply alternative socio-psychological support, since they mainly focused on other categories of social groups. Against this background, the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA), a regional peace organisation, has stood out from the majority of the civil society organisations operating in Bosnia by involving war veterans in peace activities. The chapter will investigate the work of CNA. It will examine its approach and its activities, and it will try to assess its impact and point out the main challenges it faces. Finally, it will try to understand CNA through the lenses of peace formation.

The analysis will be based partly on secondary sources, e.g. research conducted in the past years by scholars such as Wils and Fischer, and partly on primary sources, e.g. publications by members of the CNA, such as Vukosavljević and Franović and the insights of an interview conducted by the author of this work in April 2017 in Sarajevo with three members of the CNA.

### **4.2 Background and target group**

The Centre for Nonviolent Action is a peace organisation committed to enhance ‘sustainable peace in the region of former Yugoslavia through the promotion of nonviolence and dialogue, and through the trust building among individuals and groups, as well as constructive dealing with the past’ (CNA, n.d.). It was founded in Sarajevo in 1997 by Nenad Vukosavljević and in 2001 another branch opened in Belgrade, Serbia. CNA adheres to nonviolence as a values, and it ‘objects to injustice and violence wherever it occurs, independent of the context’ (Vukosavljević, 2007: 3). Its work is cross-border, i.e. it involves people from different ex-Yugoslav states<sup>15</sup>. CNA’s members also come from different Balkan countries and at the time of the writing, they are eleven (CNA, n.d.). Given its cross-bordering work, throughout the years CNA has developed a large network of local organisations, such as non-governmental

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<sup>15</sup> Interviewee 2, CNA, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

organisations and veterans' associations, and individuals, such as teachers or politicians<sup>16</sup>. It also has a sister organisation in Germany<sup>17</sup>.

During the first years of its work, CNA mainly organised educational trainings for young adults (Wils, 2004). In 2001, CNA's activists realized the urgency of engaging with veterans to enhance sustainable peace in the Balkan region<sup>18</sup>. During these trainings, several participants talked about their involvement in the conflict and how strongly this affected their lives (Fischer, 2006). CNA's activists realised that a huge number of those people who joined their trainings were ex-combatants, demonstrating a willingness and a need to talk about their war experience and move on with their lives<sup>19</sup>. This was in contrast with the prevalent narratives around war veterans in ex-Yugoslav states, which, as the previous chapter has explained, pictured them as controversial individuals, as heroes or victims, as perpetrators or spoilers<sup>20</sup>.

### **4.3 The Dealing with the Past approach**

CNA's activities with veterans are inspired by the 'Dealing with the Past' approach (Vukosavljević, 2014). Austin defines Dealing with the Past a comprehensive concept identifying those practices 'aimed at re-connecting the social fabric after mass violence' (2017: 5). According to Božičević, Dealing with the Past implies those actions 'unveiling the unknown facts that are opposed to the so called "truths" proclaimed by the state and introducing these hidden facts to the public attention' (2007: 128).

A number of top-down strategies for Dealing with the Past took place in the Balkan region (Wils, 2004; Zupan, 2006). For instance, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established in 1993, was in charge of providing 'a public record of what happened to counter the lies, propaganda, and misinformation spread about them' (Oberschall, 2007: 224) and for identifying the responsibilities of individuals in perpetuating war crimes. The ICTY and other top-down approaches of dealing with the past mainly focused on persecuting perpetrators of war crimes.

CNA's activists, instead, embrace another version of Dealing with the Past. As Wils (2004) and Fischer (2006) explain, CNA's activists acknowledged the need to go beyond the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> The sister organisation is the Bildungs-und Begegnungsstätte – KURVE Wustrow, oriented to the promotion of the principles of non-violence through trainings and roundtables (Wils, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Interviewee 3, CNA, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>19</sup> Interviewee 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

judgment of war crimes and consider these top-down initiatives inadequate not only for their limited goal, but also because they do not encourage public debates about the past within society (Fisher, 2006; Wils, 2004). Additionally, they tend to strengthen the prevalent perception of victimhood, ‘with no one being prepared to claim individual responsibility for past events’ (Wils, 2004: 4). Therefore, CNA’s activists consider dealing with the past necessary to overcome the competition in victimhood and hence acknowledging the sufferance of everybody, and deconstruct nationalistic narratives and enemy images<sup>21</sup>. Dealing with the Past has to be considered a first step toward reconciliation, because, since the wounds left from the war are still open, it is not possible to ‘merely turn a new page and say: Let us start peacebuilding now, let us all advocate reconciliation’ (Franović, 2014: 29). In this perspective, reconciliation does not automatically involve forgiveness. According to one of the interviewee (2017), “it is possible to reconcile even if we do not forgive. Not forgiving doesn’t mean that they will hate each other forever”. Similarly, CNA does not aim to seek revenge, since, as explained by the interviewee (2017), it would just hurt people. Instead, CNA’s activists see reconciliation as “establishing the conditions for the future, for our children”<sup>22</sup>, a definition of reconciliation very similar to Lederach’s, who describes reconciliation as ‘a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet’ (1997: 27).

#### 4.4 Activities

CNA’s activities engaging with war veterans started in the early 2000s. To involve veterans, CNA’s members visit local veterans’ associations, introduce them to the organisation projects and explain its purpose<sup>23</sup>. Vukosavljević (2007) reports that although some veterans may have extremist visions, a large number of them are very interested in meeting people from the other sides. Amer Delić (2017) for instance, a war veteran who now works for the CNA, explained that he decided to join the public forums because, when the war stopped he had ‘a big wish’ to talk to the enemies.

CNA’s first activity with war veterans were public forums (Wils, 2004). From 2002 to 2003 several public forums, called *Four Views – From the Past: How I found myself in war, Towards the Future: How to reach sustainable peace?*, took place in Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro<sup>24</sup>. During the public forums, ex-combatants from Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and

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<sup>21</sup> Interviewee 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Interviewee 3.

<sup>24</sup> For an extensive report on the public forums, see CNA, 2004.

Montenegro gathered in front of an audience to answer questions such as ‘What was your motive to go to war? What are your motives to join this activity and work on peace building?’ (CNA, 2004). These initiatives represented spaces for an open dialogue, places where “people could just come and share their stories about the war, their motivations, how they feel now”<sup>25</sup>. Besides, the audience could also ask the veterans questions, express their thoughts or share their own experiences (Wils, 2004).

Although the public forums represented a successful initiative, they did not allow for a thorough share of experiences and thoughts (CNA, 2003) and CNA’s members initiated specific trainings for war veterans<sup>26</sup>. These trainings aimed mainly to dismantle the stereotypes around the images of the enemies and discuss sensitive issues such as violence and what it involves<sup>27</sup>. They were useful to establish a safe space for everyone to express exactly what they feel<sup>28</sup> and ‘to open a sincere dialogue as a means of developing empathy’ (Šmidling, 2014: 38).

During the trainings, a number of war veterans demonstrated interest in visiting “memorials, graveyards, monuments; places where people suffered”<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, the CNA started organising visits of mixed groups of veterans to these sites and, in 2008, the first visits took place in three cities of Bosnia<sup>30</sup>. These visits often involve also local veterans associations, which are asked to join the visit and to organise its schedule (Franović, 2015). After the tour, the CNA activists and the veterans, both from the local associations and from the mixed group, join together to share their thoughts and feelings. Franović (2015) explains that during these talks, people could share their thoughts about contrasting narratives and better understand each other’s point of view. Given the success of this project, the more recent initiative CNA has embraced is participating in official commemorations.

#### **4.5 Assessment and challenges**

A first assessment of CNA’s work regards its impact on war veterans. A research conducted by Beara and Miljanović (2007) about the emotions felt by veterans in ex-Yugoslavia showed that they frequently experience feelings of guilt, depressions, hatred, humiliation or anxiety. As seen in the previous chapter the majority of the people who fought in the war did not

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<sup>25</sup> Interviewee 2.

<sup>26</sup> For examples of training’s activities, see Franović *et al.*, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Interviewee 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> For a CNA research on memorial sites, see Tanović *et al.*, 2016.

receive psychological support (Beara and Miljanović, 2007) and therefore most of them are still traumatised<sup>31</sup>. This influences not only their lives, e.g. increasing the likelihood of falling into drugs or alcohol addictions, but also impacts on their social environment (Beara and Miljanović, 2007) by, for instance, transferring the traumas to their children<sup>32</sup>. CNA tries to establish a safe space in which veterans can face these feelings and at the same time deconstruct the images of their enemies. The impact of CNA's activities on war veterans can be mainly assessed based on their feedbacks, which have been generally positive. Previous research (Wils, 2004) showed that war veterans assessed that participating in the trainings represented 'a very encouraging and positive experience' (Wils, 2004: 18), where they felt heard and they managed to create emotional bonds with their former enemies. Similarly, participating in public forums was unanimously considered as an activity that 'brought changes to their personal lives' (Wils, 2004: 20). Besides, most of the veterans keep collaborating with CNA after participating in one of their initiatives and currently CNA has established a "growing network of veterans who are very dedicated to uphold peace"<sup>33</sup>.

Alongside the impact on war veterans, the reactions of both ordinary people, veterans' associations and politicised actors, like local administrations, to CNA's public initiatives, such as public forums or official commemorations, can help assess its work. During these events, the consequence of the official ethno-nationalistic narrative is particularly perceptible<sup>34</sup>: for instance, Franović explains that during some public forums, there were people who purposely came to criticise or called the participating veterans traitors and once even blocked the entrance to prevent the forum (Franović, 2015). Together with the reactions of local communities, CNA's initiatives can create concern to local administrations. This is the case for instance of official commemorations, which are very nationalistic and mono-ethnic (Franović, 2015) since they are useful tool for politicians to cultivate group emotions, memories and perceptions (Tint, 2010). During these events, usually attended by many politicians, veterans' associations and victims' associations of the same ethnic group<sup>35</sup>, selected historical events with 'chosen traumas and chosen glories' (Volkan, 1996 quoted in Tint, 2010: 243) are promoted. For this reason, the CNA's project of bringing a mixed group of veterans to these official commemorations is an attempt to interfere with this cultivation

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<sup>31</sup> Interviewee 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

of mono-ethnic identity. In these occasions, the presence of a mixed group of veterans is perceived as uncommon and if sometimes arouse positive surprise some other times is not appreciated. Delić (2017) reports a huge commemoration organised in 2015 in the RS to pay respect to the Serbian victims in which CNA was invited: “during the commemoration, sponsored by the RS government, we listened to very nationalistic speeches. When we asked for the permission to put flowers on the monuments during the event, the chief of protocol told us *“you can do what you want only after the official protocol”* and, after the ceremony, we did what we wanted”.

Despite these difficulties, there are also positive outcomes. Firstly, the broad and active participation of local communities in CNA public initiatives support the positive assessment of those activities. As Franović (2015) reports, during the public forums a large number of people, both youths and adults, came to assist and listen to the stories. Not only were they interested in war veterans’ stories, but they also actively participated in sharing their own experiences. The interested reaction of the local communities in listening to veterans’ stories is particularly important in deconstructing the images around war veterans as both spoilers and heroes. As spoilers because not only not all of them wanted the war, and some may have been obliged to join the armies, but also some of them can be very committed to peace not to make their children experience the same thing<sup>36</sup>. As heroes because, as Delić (2017) commented, to avoid another conflict it is important that the new generations think and “talk about the war as something destructive, and not as something sacred or honourable to participate in”.

When assessing CNA’s work it is also important to take into consideration that often the results are not visible in the short period<sup>37</sup>. However, in some cases it can happen that the outcomes become visible, although not where it was initially thought. For instance, although during the official commemoration in RS CNA was prevented to put flowers during the official commemorations, when several months later CNA itself organised a visit to Bosniak victims in the very same city, some of the Serbian veterans’ associations present during that commemoration joined the mixed group of veterans from CNA<sup>38</sup>.

#### **4.6 CNA as peace formation**

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> Interviewee 3.



CNA, whose work has been analysed in this study partially based on the author's interview and partially on secondary sources, can be considered a peace formation actor. As Richmond argues, peace formation activities can develop in different forms. Peace formers can be individuals, communities or civil society organisations able to 'move beyond the traditional concepts of civil society' (Richmond, 2014: 139). As seen previously, civil society in Bosnia is very much present, but the majority of these organisations are internationally funded and promote donors-driven projects. Instead, civil society oriented to peace formation operates at the grass-root level promoting alternative projects driven by a local understanding of the society. Their activities are not driven by the liberal peace project, but instead are informed by what peace or reconciliation are perceived at the local level to be and a contextual knowledge of the challenges. Peace formation activities are able to catch a closer understanding of the conflict and of 'the problems that undermine the possibilities for progressive politics to emerge (Richmond, 2014: 140).

CNA has several aspects of a peace formation activity. It is different from other civil society organisations since it chose to involve in peace activities a social group, war veterans, often considered by other organizations or by internationals as spoilers<sup>39</sup>. As one of the interviewee (2017) commented, civil society operating in Bosnia "thinks that war veterans are bad people and the majority of them preferred not to deal with them". The choice to engage with this target group was informed by a local understanding of the challenges to peace in Bosnia, which is another element which can lead to assess CNA as a peace formation activity. The local understanding of the context can help address those issues which other actors, for instance the state or the international organisations, tend to ignore (Richmond, 2014). CNA has a deep understanding of local dynamics because of the structure of the organisation itself. The member of the teams, beside being all local, also come from different states of ex-Yugoslavia which allows a deeper understanding of the challenges to reconciliation in the whole region. This also benefits the final goal of CNA, reconciliation among veterans, since the mutual trust and respect between the multi-ethnic teams can serve as an example for them and it facilitates 'the opening of doors and creat[es] space for dealing with difficult issues' (Franović, 2014: 32).

The very same local understanding of challenges to peace, which led CNA's activists to engage with war veterans and considering them not only as spoilers or either heroes or

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<sup>39</sup> Interviewee 2.

perpetuators, but also as multipliers of peace, also led to the trans-regional character of their work. Although the CNA was founded in Bosnia, Vukosavljević affirmed that it was clear from the beginning that given that the negative feelings and the distorted images of the enemies were cross-bordering, ‘the region would need initiatives that include people from various sides in order to bridge the gaps along the former frontlines’ (2007: 2). For this reason, the organisation developed a trans-regional approach, instead of only a national one.

Similarly, CNA’s local understanding and knowledge, led them to choose a certain approach to reconciliation rather than another. As previously seen, CNA’s activities are inspired by the Dealing with the Past approach, which they consider as appropriate to uphold reconciliation in Bosnia because of how the conflict and post-conflict dynamics in Bosnia evolved. Given the distorted images of the enemies that the ethno-nationalistic narratives created, CNA recognized as fundamental to dismantle them through the encounter among veterans. As Lederach wrote, ‘reconciliation is not pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups’ affiliations, but instead is built on mechanisms that engage the sides of a conflict with each other as humans-in-relationship’ (Lederach, 1997: 26).

Perhaps the most important feature of CNA that leads to think it as a peace formation activity is its capacity of interfere with the ethno-national narrative which derived first from the conflict and after from the post-conflict socio-political structure enclosed in the DPA and enhanced by international peacebuilders. As Richmond argues, peace formation activities ‘seek to find ways of establishing peace processes and the dynamics of local forms of peace in everyday conflict settings, in their social and historical context’ (2014: 181). Everyday conflict settings in Bosnia, are, for instance, official commemorations, since they are saturated of nationalistic discourse and keep perpetuating feelings of hatred and discord. After the war, ‘commemorative practices linked to the fallen soldiers developed and were used by nationalist parties to mark symbolically the territories they controlled and to perpetuate their own accounts of the war’ (Bougarel, 2007: 482). Monuments and official commemorations are also “places where nationalist narrative appears and politicians often misuse the victims and the war veterans to keep the people divided”<sup>40</sup>. CNA, by bringing mixed group of veterans to join them, challenges the common official mono-ethnic commemoration. These activities, as the visits to each side’s victims’ memorials, are very powerful intervention in the official narratives<sup>41</sup>. They try to establish, in Richmond’s words,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

‘alternative discourse and debates’ (2014: 139). As one of the interviewee (2017) explains, CNA’s “actions are counter-nationalist actions”, and aim to deconstruct the images of the enemy and lay the foundation to enhance reconciliation. During these events, ‘the presence of this “enemy” can very much influence the regular rhetoric’ (Franović, 2015: 10). On the one hand, seeing someone from the other side pay respect to a different community is very unusual hence impactful. On the other hand, it can influence official speeches, since nationalistic discourses of guilt and victimhood can sound harsh for the speaker, who finds himself in front of people from other ethnic groups ‘who came to pay their respects with pure hearts’ (Franović, 2015: 10).

Although CNA’s range of work is limited and it does not reach a large public<sup>42</sup>, by trying to transforming war veterans into multipliers of peace, it (CAN) tries to shape the whole society. By establishing new, alternative narratives around war and war veterans, these peace formation dynamics try to deconstruct the structural violence present in society in the form of distorted enemy images and to reshape the present to improve the future. In this respect, CNA’s work, alongside other many others, is trying to move society toward a more positive hybrid form of peace.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

## Conclusion

‘The mystery of peace is located in the nature  
and quality of relationships developed with those most feared’  
(Lederach, 2005: 63)

Although peacebuilding and statebuilding operations were aimed to enhance positive peace in post-conflict countries, now most scholars agree that they eventually created what has been called a negative hybrid peace. Assuming that local aspiration of state formation would inevitably be violent, international peacebuilders promoted top-down interventions to end conflicts around the world, operations that ended up lacking local legitimacy and a social contract. Even the agenda of the majority of civil society organisations, which are thought to be expressions of the local needs, is increasingly internationally directed, given the high reliance of the organisations on international agencies’ funds.

In Bosnia, the top-down peacebuilding operation, following a peace accord that managed to keep ‘the state [only] formally together’ (Jarstad, 2013: 251), has led to a condition of negative hybrid peace. In particular, statebuilding in Bosnia has created a political structure based on ethno-nationalistic rivalries, in which the elite perpetuate nationalistic discourses and policies to keep the population divided and remain in power. In this context, nationalistic politicians have used the resources of the Bosnian state to strengthen their powers instead of promoting reconciliation projects and engaging with everyday conflicts (Richmond, 2014). Nationalistic discourses have played an important role in shaping the socio-political dynamics and have dragged into these ethnic dynamics in particular those people that, in the aftermath of the conflict, did not receive any or partial assistance, i.e. former combatants.

However, local population is never a passive recipient of external impositions, injustice and conflict. Instead, people find ways to enhance peace in their everyday life settings. These actions can be called peace formation dynamics (Richmond, 2014) and are ways to channel positive hybrid peace. The peace formation actions and activities are perhaps the most powerful catalysts of change in post conflict settings, since they are based on a local knowledge of peace and conflict dynamics. In Bosnia, as in other countries around the world, it is possible to identify peace formation activities in everyday life. In particular, this work has provided an example of peace formation through the action of a civil society organisation,

which is trying to change the perspective about war veterans in Bosnia, to enhance reconciliation amongst them and, perhaps most importantly, to transform them in multipliers of peace. In this direction, the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA) operating in the Balkan region cultivates the seeds of peace in those people which are commonly considered not only spoilers of peace, but also bad or warmonger. Perhaps, using Richmond's terminology, these individuals, by joining CNA activities, like the public forums, the trainings or the visits to official commemorations, become themselves *peace formers* in their everyday life. This is for instance the case of Amer Delić, a war veteran who, before participating in CNA's forum, was a member of a veterans' association and, after the forum, decided to become a member of CNA's team.

Thanks to local understanding and legitimacy, peace formation activities tackle those challenges that prevent social change and perpetuate negative hybrid peace. Through a peace formation perspective, war veterans change from spoilers of peace to multipliers of peace, by interfering with official ethno-nationalistic narratives. Not only do they operate in the very same sphere in which these narratives are promoted, such as in official commemorations, but also in more hidden local spaces, such as small communities, by organizing for instance public forums. A local knowledge of the conflict allows tackling the everyday challenges to peace from the bottom-up, challenges that in Bosnia are for example the distorted images of the enemy that ethno-national discourse keep presenting. CNA tries to enhance peace through the meeting of different sides, and in particular through the meeting with 'those most feared' (Lederach, 2005: 63), opening the door for provision of 'a meaningful space of participation and interchange' (Lederach, 2005: 56-57). It is through these localised peace formation actions, based on real-life relations and relying on both local and international forms of legitimacy (Richmond, 2014), that hybrid peace can become positive, and reconciliation and change can develop. As Lederach (2005: 56) asserted, 'authenticity of social change is ultimately tested in real-life relationships at the level where people have the greatest access and where they perceive they are most directly affected: in their respective communities'.

# Appendix

## Interview Guide

### 1. General questions

Which do you think are the main challenges for Bosnia?

How do projects involving veterans fit in this general situation?

What inspired your work with veterans?

Why projects involving veterans are still going on after the conflict? What is their political relevance?

When was the organisation created and why?

### 2. Questions related to the veterans

How do you approach themes such as reconciliation?

How do you involve veterans in your projects?

Have the projects for veterans changed over time? How important the issue still is?

How does the state approach the issue? Which top-down projects is the state pursuing and how do your projects relate to the state's approach?

Since there are so many civil society organisations involved in reconciliation, how do you get funding and who are you main donors?

### 3. Questions related to the projects

How long have they been implemented?

Which are their main aims?

Which results do you think you managed to achieve?

What kind of cultural/religious/ethnic challenges do you face?

### 4. Questions related to the local community

What is the level of your involvement in the local community?

How does the local community see you?

## **Interviews**

Interviewee 1, Centre for Nonviolent Action, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Interviewee 2, Centre for Nonviolent Action, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Interviewee 3, Centre for Nonviolent Action, April 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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