

# Peace Order and the Biopolitical Logic of Nationalism in the Western Balkans: A Study of the Reproduction of Nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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## Abstract

The peace-building endeavors in the Western Balkans led by the international community as a means of spreading the neoliberal international order to post-conflict societies have since the end of the Cold War been seen as a significant practice. However, almost 30 years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Western Balkan countries, whose interests are represented by Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth referred to as BiH), have not yet accomplished national integration. In order to explain this phenomenon, existing research has focused on the perspectives of institutional design, international intervention, and identity construction, but has not addressed the issue of why nationalism can be continually reproduced in times of peace and why it continues to define the post-conflict order. In this paper, the author presents a biopolitical view, where nationalism is viewed as a set of governance practices that organize themselves along the borders of the community, and develops a three-tier analytical model: Institutional structure-Social identity-International governance. Research has shown that the Dayton Peace Agreement incorporated ethnicities into the institutional structure of the state by utilizing mechanisms of power sharing, and other elements like educational systems, history and memory, language, and religion have continued to strengthen the boundaries of identity at the societal level. Through the relationship between institutional structure and social identity, nationalism has eventually gained the ability to reproduce itself constantly, and it has often brought state reforms, government, and institutional integration and returned them to a framework of ethno-national security. Consequently, there has developed a constant tension between the logic of national integration advocated by the international community and the logic of nationalist governance that has been one of the reasons behind the stagnation of peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The example of Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that post-conflict peacebuilding is not solely the process of institutional restoration but also the process of the restoration of the political community; peace institutions may put an end to violent conflict but do not necessarily erase the logic of ethno-national politics, or create a cross-ethnic identity.

## Keywords

Bosnia and Herzegovina, biopolitics, nationalism, Dayton Peace Agreement, peacebuilding

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## 1. Introduction

Following the conclusion of the Cold War, the international community began to implement institutional practices on a mass scale with regard to post-war state reconstruction and the formation of peace orders. They

include Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter referred to as BiH), which is considered one of the most representative laboratories of international peacebuilding. With the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, the more than three-year-long Bosnian War came to an end, and, under the control of the United States, a post-war government structure based on power distribution, entities' autonomy, and international oversight was formed. Since these first three decades, the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) have consistently inserted themselves into the political reconstruction process in BiH, trying to mold BiH into a steady, united, modern state that can be integrated into the European order, through such steps as democratization reform, rule-of-law construction, military integration, and European integration.

In relation to the scale and length of the international involvement, BiH can definitely be considered one of the post-conflict societies with the biggest investment and deepest international intervention by the international community since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, quite contrary to the original expectations of the international community, BiH has not been developing a stable civic community over time as institutional construction has gone forward. To the contrary, even almost thirty years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, BiH continues to experience weaknesses in state identity, lack of cohesive political institutions, and ineffective governance [1]. The issue of the limit of central government power, the level of entity autonomy, and the electoral system reform has continued to linger on for many years; the political declarations by the leaders of Republika Srpska of increased autonomy, self-determination, and even separatism have come up several times; various reform agendas supported by the EU have been advancing slowly; and there has been no fundamental change in political confidence between various ethnic groups. That is to say that even though BiH has managed to attain negative peace- an end to large-scale violent conflict, it was never able to achieve positive peace grounded on shared political identity and efficient state administration [2].

This fact is an inherent paradox of post-Cold War studies on international peacebuilding: why did one of the cases with the most significant international participation and the best-developed institutions of all fail to be the most successful instance of peacebuilding? To be more precise, why, despite the prolonged involvement of international institutions and the long-term development of the idea of European integration, has nationalism been the major political player in BiH and one of the main forces that have changed the political system of this country?

The current research has come up with rather detailed accounts of the problem. The works of institutionalist research highlight the fact that the power-sharing mechanism adopted by the Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war, but at the same time entrenched the ethnic political framework, which led to the institutionalization of ethnic identities and thus restricted the potential of state integration. The peacebuilding literature of liberal studies looks at the very logic of international intervention, stating that Western-imposed democratization and state construction efforts are prone to transplanting institutions and ignoring the historical backgrounds and societal identities of the country, making it harder to actually create a legitimate political community based on endogenous factors. Nationalism research is also more likely to be based on historical memory, ethnic mobilization, and identity politics, highlighting the ongoing role of war trauma and ethnic identity in the post-war political evolution. Furthermore, in the recent past, some researchers have used the angle of geopolitical rivalry to discuss the problem, noting that the decline of the EU expansion drive, the growing power of Russia, and the shift in the relations between regional powers have all contributed to increased political uncertainty in BiH.

These aforementioned papers have enriched knowledge regarding the peacebuilding dilemma in BiH in various aspects, however, there is still room to discuss the issue further. All in all, the current literature emphasizes questions such as whether institutional design is justifiable, whether international intervention is useful, and why nationalism remains, but it does not provide much of a coherent explanation of how nationalism is being constantly recreated in the post-war social context. To put it differently, the factual question of whether nationalism still exists has already been addressed by the available literature quite successfully, but the question of why, given that the war is over, the international community has involved itself in this process over a long period of time and institutional reform has been consistently encouraged, nationalism has succeeded in breaking down institutional barriers and continues to influence BiH's political order? has not been thoroughly investigated.

The issue is significant as it affects the explanation of the BiH case but also a broad topic in the research of international peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding theory has mostly believed over a long period that through the creation of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and developing the economy of the markets, it will be feasible to erode the social support of ethnic conflicts over time and eventually create a stable political community. Nevertheless, the BiH experience demonstrates that institution-building and identity reconstruction do not always occur simultaneously. Despite the fact that state institutions are being continuously refined, the process of social governance may still incorporate a form of nationalism in different ways and remain a factor in the peace order. Thus, the assessment of the success or failure of peacebuilding purely based on the institutional perspective might not be enough to entirely disclose the underlying logic behind the development of political order in post-conflict societies.

Based on this reasonable hypothesis, this paper will take place: the long-term peacebuilding deadlock in BiH is not only caused by the institutional flaws of the Dayton Peace Agreement or by the historically inherited ethnic hostilities, but by the reality that nationalism, by way of constant boundary-making and identity reproduction, always turns the question of social governance into an issue of ethnic security, thus creating a structural obstacle to international institutional reform.

## **2. Literature Review**

The problem of peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a significant aspect of international relations, comparative politics, and area studies for a very long time. The development, implementation, and challenges of the post-war order in BiH have a large literature in both domestic and international contexts. The existing research can be divided into three main analytical strategies: institutionalist explanation, liberal explanation of peacebuilding, and nationalism and identity politics explanation. These works offer useful information about BiH's political development, however, there are still gaps in the study of the issue of how nationalism can be perpetuated in post-conflict societies and what role it plays in the creation of political order.

### **2.1 Institutionalism: Institutions Leading Peace**

Institutionalism research is one of the most impactful analytical frameworks in the research of peacebuilding in BiH. This relevant literature mostly addresses the institutional design created by the Dayton Peace Agreement and its role in the process of post-war political development. The theory of consociational democracy, proposed by Arend Lijphart, suggests that, in deeply divided societies by ethnicity, power-sharing, proportional representation, minority veto, and elite cooperation are effective tools to reduce ethnic conflict and ensure political stability [3]. Following the same theory, the Dayton Agreement created a political system that rested on the idea of ethnic balance in order to avoid another occurrence of the war through institutionalized collaboration. Most researchers have confirmed the significance of this institutional arrangement in stopping armed conflict. Florian Bieber notes that despite the fact that the Dayton Agreement was not able to address all political contradictions of BiH, it was able to create a minimal political agreement after the war and offer a fundamental basis to rebuild the country after the war [4]. Sumantra Bose also suggests that the most significant achievement of the Dayton system is the ability to actually end the state of war and to establish institutionalized avenues to represent the interests of various ethnic groups [5].

However, many other researchers have noted the clear shortcomings of the Dayton system. To David Chandler, the Dayton Agreement was a way of ending the war, but at the same time, it established the ethnic divisions that existed in the country in the institutions of the state, which made ethnic identity become a dominant factor of political engagement [6]. Roberto Belloni notes that even though the power-sharing device minimizes the chances of conflicts, it also increases the political stance of nationalist groups because they are able to constantly gain political resources by mobilizing people on the basis of their ethnicity [7]. This problem has also been widely observed by Chinese scholars. Other works claim that the state structure of BiH demonstrates the common characteristic of the so-called dual legitimacy, which implies the fact that state legitimacy is achieved through the compromise of ethnic groups but not a single civic identity. Such institutional logic dictates the existence of a structural contradiction between state-building and ethnic politics over a long period.

The institutionalist research has fairly well explained why the Dayton system could end the war and why it is unable to create state integration. Nevertheless, this strategy is mostly concerned with how formal

institutional designs can shape political behavior and less often addresses the issue of how nationalism may preserve its social basis in the long-term and the processes of identity reproduction beyond the institutions.

## **2.2 Liberal Peacebuilding: Intervention Consolidating Stability**

The concept of liberal peacebuilding slowly entered the sphere of international relations research after the fall of the USSR. Many consider BiH to be a useful case study of liberal peacebuilding theory. Roland Paris notes that the international community is usually convinced that democratization, marketization, and rule-of-law construction are conducive to stability in post-conflict countries, but this is frequently accompanied by a mismatch between the establishment of institutions and the social environment [8]. According to Michael Barnett and others, the process of peacebuilding is not simply an issue of technical governance, but a holistic initiative that includes reconstruction of security, shaping of political order, and restructuring of social relationships [9]. Not only does international intervention impact the construction of state institutions, but it also changes the balance of power and political awareness of the local population. Consequently, the outcome of peacebuilding does not depend solely on the design of institutions but also on the ability of these institutions to receive long-term acceptance by local society. Oliver P. Richmond also suggests that the liberal peace paradigm is basically a projection of the West's normative imagination of state-building and political order, and in practice, it has a tendency to ignore the historical experience and cultural structure of local society [10]. In the case of BiH, there is extensive literature on the role of international organizations in post-war governance. The European Union, the United Nations, NATO, and the Office of the High Representative have engaged in BiH's political reconstruction for a long time, through constitutional reform, administrative integration, military unification, and judicial reform. Other researchers claim that international intervention was beneficial to regional stability. As an illustration, military integration reform effectively created united armed forces, Central tax system reform increased the state's fiscal capacity, and the EU integration process offered significant external encouragement to BiH reforms.

Nevertheless, there has been a growing body of research that is beginning to discuss the drawbacks of the international governance framework. Chandler contends that BiH has instead become something of a protectorate state whereby a big part of the critical political choices are made by outside organisations and local political players have lost their autonomy. Richmond notes that liberal peacebuilding overemphasizes the concept of institutional transplantation without actually addressing the identity divides in local society.

The most recent studies of the concept of hybrid peace have also highlighted the role of interplay between international norms and local customs. According to the available literature, the institutional reforms suggested by the international society do not necessarily replace the local political logic, but may be needed to adapt to the indigenous social organization in a complicated manner [11]. At this stage, local nationalism is not just an inactive observer, but can make active use of the international institutional structure to defend its own interests.

One significant contribution of the liberal peacebuilding research is that it shows how international intervention and local society interact with each other. Nevertheless, its main emphasis is on assessing the consequences of international state management, and it pays less attention to the question of how nationalism reproduces itself in the process of routine governance.

## **2.3 Nationalism: Cognition Producing Division**

In contrast to institutionalist and international intervention research, nationalism studies focus more on the development and change of identity structures in BiH society. Rogers Brubaker notes that nationalism is not a set social institution but a political process that is continuously being built and mobilized [12]. In his analysis of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, V. P. Gagnon states that ethnic conflict is not the outcome of the natural growth of ethnic differences but a result actively mobilized and fashioned by political elites [13]. Siniša Malešević further observes that one major reason for the persistence of modern nationalism is due to the fact that it is deeply rooted in educational, administrative, and social organizational systems [14]. Concerning the BiH problem, many papers discuss the memory of the war, identity, and the formation of ethnic boundaries. The relevant studies point to the fact that the Srebrenica events, the issue of responsibility in the Bosnian War, and the history of the breakdown of Yugoslavia have long been significant aspects of the identity politics of various ethnic communities [15]. These historical stories are constantly reproduced through commemoration, schooling, and media, and influence the way various groups perceive both themselves and

other people [16]. Meanwhile, language, religion, and cultural symbols are also considered to be important parts of ethnic boundaries.

Most research works indicate that educational segregation, religious spatial differentiation, and fragmentation of the media system that was developed in post-war BiH have mostly remained and strengthened the social boundaries created by the war. A valuable insight of this research strategy is its ability to expose the social underpinnings of nationalism and its sustainability. Nevertheless, most of the available literature approaches nationalism as an identity, as a political mobilization resource, and it has been rarely considered in Chinese academic circles how nationalism is incorporated into the state governance procedures and how it is constantly reproduced through institutional and policy actions.

## **2.4 Comprehensive Theoretical Analysis**

The present literature has shown the difficulties of peacebuilding in BiH in various aspects, such as institutional design, international intervention, and identity politics. Nonetheless, the two aforementioned studies have two shortcomings. To begin with, even though available literature might explain the nature of nationalism, it rarely addresses the reason behind nationalism maintaining its political presence during a long era of peace. Most of them stop at the factual level of the presence of nationalism, regardless of whether they are part of the institutionalist examination of power-sharing mechanisms or the identity politics study of historical memory, and only a few go beyond to disclose the precise workings of its continuous reproduction. Secondly, current research tends to treat both institutional structures and ethnicity as separate and independent objects of investigation. There are some studies that claim that state integration failure is caused by institutional flaws, whereas others argue that state integration failure results in the division of ethnic identity; yet, there is not enough discussion of how institutions and identity mutually define each other and together affect the development of the post-conflict order. Actually, in post-war BiH political practice, nationalism is a phenomenon that is no longer an ideology or a lever of electoral mobilization, but rather is increasingly becoming a form of governance. Ethnic community boundaries are constantly being formed and reformulated by the education system, the history of memory, the distribution of public resources, and local administrative practices, and the problems that originally belong to the sphere of social governance are transformed into the issues of ethnic security. Hence, by demonstrating the mechanisms of nationalism reproduction in the peace order, one does not only get rid of conventional explanations of nationalism as a factor of conflict mobilization, but also contributes to the expansion of the knowledge of the relationships between institutions, identity, and governance in the context of the research on post-conflict society peacebuilding. Moreover, a consideration of such mechanisms allows for reconsidering the contradictions within the internal processes of international intervention and state reconstruction, offering a novel theoretical framework for explaining the peacebuilding dilemma in BiH as well as the political integration problems of other multi-ethnic countries.

## **2.5 Research Innovation**

In light of these premises, this paper will attempt to present a biopolitical approach to the re-interpretation of the problem of peacebuilding in BiH. As this paper claims, nationalism is no longer simply an instrument of political mobilization in the old way, but has over time been transformed into a biopolitical logic of governance based on the notions of ethnic security, demographic limits, and communal survival. Nationalist elites keep reproducing their security concerns through social processes like education, historical memory, language, religion, and distribution of public resources, which initially belong to the sphere of social control, and continually rewrite the identity lines dividing various ethnic groups [17]. The power-sharing mechanism introduced by the Dayton Agreement has not weakened nationalism but strengthened the ethnic political structure at the institutional level, whereby the civic-minded reforms initiated by the international community continue facing the obstacle of the logic of ethnic security.

## **3. The Biopolitical Theoretical Framework of Nationalist Reproduction**

The question of why nationalism can still be used as a state political order even after the end of the conflict is a significant theoretical issue to consider the dilemma of peacebuilding in post-conflict states. The conventional study of nationalism has primarily studied the process of the development of national communities and the transformation of national identity into resources of political mobilization, with fewer

studies discussing how nationalism persists once peace institutions have been created. Ethnic political logic was not withdrawn at the end of the war for BiH. To the contrary, in the context of the international community encouraging state reconstruction, the construction of institutions, and social integration, ethnic identity remains strongly influential in political competition, social relationships, and the governance of the state. It is a sign of the fact that nationalism cannot be seen as just a mobilizing instrument of the time of conflict, but can turn into a long-term political instrument of the peace order.

The given chapter begins with the theory of nationalist reproduction and goes on to discuss how nationalism transcends particular historical periods and political environments, allowing its persistence; it is followed by the introduction of a biopolitical viewpoint in order to clarify how nationalism is converted as an identity into governance reasoning; and lastly, develops an analytical structure of nationalist reproduction-governance mechanisms-peacebuilding predicament.

### **3.1 Nationalist Reproduction: From Identity Construction to the Continuation of Political Order**

Nationalist reproduction theory derives its foundation on the concept of constructedness of national identity. As early studies on nationalism have already indicated, the nation is not a natural grouping bound by borders but rather a set of identities that are continually being created in the context of the modern political and social world. The classic definition of the “imagined community” by Anderson indicates that the national community relies on common history, cultural symbols, and communication networks to remain constructed and sustained continually [18]. This theory undermines the conventional assumption, which regards the nation as a natural phenomenon, and reveals the social construction of national identity. Nevertheless, the creation of a national community is not always synonymous with the emergence of the political impact of nationalism. Constructivist studies additionally indicate that national identity itself is not a direct cause of political conflict; it is important to note that political actors activate the process of ethnic classification and group categorization and turn it into political action. Nationness, according to Brubaker, is not a fixed feature of groups but a classification schema that is used in political life all the time [12]. It is clear that the political importance of nationalism cannot be attributed to ethnic differences themselves, but to the manner in which national identity enters into the contestation of power and the distribution of resources. On such a foundation, Malešević also states that nationalism has organizational features and may spread over a long period through the state apparatus, political organizations, and other social institutions [14]. Nationalism is therefore not just a form of political mobilization in times of war, it has become a socio-political mechanism with the ability to continue exerting its influence in times of peace.

Nevertheless, the available literature on the nationalist reproduction problem is primarily focused on the issue of why nationalism is possible, whereas the mechanism of how nationalism is integrated into the processes of governance and turns into a political order is not well explored. To put it differently, classical theory shows the correlation between national identity and ethnic politics, but its focus is not as much on the manner in which nationalism works in contemporary governance structures.

The theoretical gap is especially visible in post-conflict societies. In general, the conclusion of war, the conclusion of a peace treaty, and the restoration of institutions must move the society out of the framework of conflict into the framework of cooperation. Nevertheless, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina suggests that at the end of the war, nationalism did not leave the political arena, but rather found new space to thrive in by means of state institutions, social identity, and mechanisms of international governance. Thus, it is hard to explain this phenomenon completely based on the viewpoint of national identity construction or political mobilization, and it is required to explore more deeply what mechanism allows nationalism to enter the peace governance process.

### **3.2 The Biopolitical Perspective: The Governmentalizing Logic of Nationalist Reproduction**

In order to elucidate the existence of nationalism in a peaceful setting, the present chapter offers a biopolitical approach. The theory of biopolitics by Foucault indicates that one significant aspect of modern governance is the fact that the implementation of power progressively shifts away from direct influence on people to the regulation of population, security, and social order. Contemporary power does not govern through repression alone, but creates social reality through the categorization of knowledge, the identification of risks,

and the technologies of governance. The essence of modern governance, as Foucault states, is the power to live and let die, and the emphasis is on the life processes of the population, such as birth rates, death rates, health, and hygiene. Extending this viewpoint to the study of nationalism indicates that nationalism does not only employ cultural artifacts but builds the idea of the national community as a population entity having a life cycle. According to this reasoning, ethnic security is no longer just a military or territorial problem but also rises to a biopolitical problem of the survival of the ethnic population, the purity of cultural genes, and the security of intergenerational transmission. The nationalist elite can therefore integrate educational systems, language policies, and, in some cases, reproductive rights within the governance of the concept of ethnic security. This securitization process turns the defense of ethnic boundaries into an uncontested matter of government responsibility in regard to the continuation of the community [19].

The value of this theory to the study of nationalism is that it can help to explain how nationalism as an identity gets transformed into a form of government. Conventional nationalism studies mostly deal with how national identity is formed and how it affects political action, and the biopolitical approach additionally seeks to understand how national identity has become a critical platform of population division, security definition, and organization of political order. In this view, nationalism not just generates the identity cognition of who we are but also the governance logic of who belongs to the community, the threats to the community, and the management of various groups. Thus, nationalist reproduction cannot merely be considered as a replication of national consciousness, but a process whereby the ethnic classification logic remains consistently re-enforced through institutional arrangements, social practices, and processes of governance. The addition of the biopolitical perspective does not substitute the existing theories of nationalism, but adds the complexity of nationalist reproduction mechanisms, which moves the concept of how identity survives to the question of how identity turns into a foundation of governance.

According to this theoretical view, nationalist reproduction occurs in three major dimensions: institutional structure, social identity, and international governance. The three are not independent analytical variables but significant mechanisms of transforming nationalism as a social identity into a political order.

The political underpinning of nationalist reproduction is in institutional structures. Institution building has traditionally been seen as an integral part of achieving peace in post-conflict societies, but institutions are not necessarily neutral designs. Once ethnic identity is politicized in terms of political representation, power distribution, and state governance, ethnic classification is given a measure of institutional legitimacy. Here, ethnic identity is no longer just a social reality but rather an important element in political engagement and distribution of resources. Institutions thus have two-fold impacts, where on the one hand they can diminish the likelihood of group conflict, and on the other hand they can also strengthen the significant role of ethnic identity in the political sphere.

Nationalist reproduction is based on social identity as its social groundwork. Nationalism does not just depend on political institutions but also on the constant perception of ethnic frontiers by people in society. The education system, historical memory, language and culture, and public narratives constantly form the feeling of group belonging, which makes ethnic identity a valuable paradigm that the population uses to comprehend political relationships. Through this procedure, ethnic borders become the everyday practice of society, rather than the discursive construction of political elites, gaining their foundations for further existence.

International governance is an important external factor in the reproduction of nationalism. Post-conflict societies typically depend on the involvement of the international community in order to accomplish peacebuilding, however, international governance is also a form of categorization and regulation. In the interest of conflict mediation, international actors would often have to determine various groups, establish political subjects, and create power-sharing systems. Though such a system of governance could be used to minimize the possibility of violent conflict, it has the potential to enhance the status of ethnic identity as the organizing principle of politics. Hence, in the name of peace, international governance can also lead to the unintended effect of institutionalizing ethnic politics.

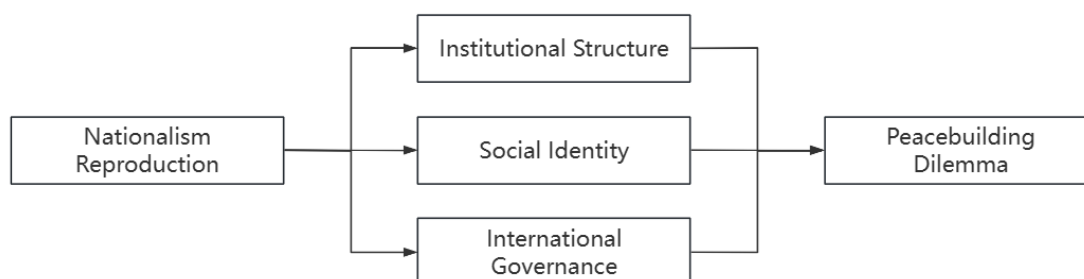
### **3.3 An Analytical Framework for Nationalist Reproduction**

The aforementioned theoretical discussion suggests that this chapter will claim that nationalist reproduction is not necessarily associated with the failure of peacebuilding but rather contributes to the state integration

process through three mediating mechanisms including institutional structures, social identity and international governance.

Namely, nationalist reproduction is an explanatory variable that can decide if ethnicity is able to continually engage in political processes; institutional structures, social identity and international governance support the institutionalization, socialization and governmentalization of ethnicity at three levels: political institutions, social foundations and external governance, and finally they lead to challenges in the political integration of states and restrictions on peacebuilding.

*Figure 1: The Three Paths through which Nationalism Reproduction Affects Peacebuilding*



*Source: Compiled by the author.*

It should be noted that the three levels are not acting independently, instead they comprise an interactional feedback loop with self-reinforcing properties. The Dayton institutions receive external legitimacy and resources through international governance, whereas the institutional structure politicizes ethnic identity and provides institutional incentives to reproduce social identity. In turn, social identity, stabilized by education and memory, forms the deep social substrate of institutional activity, which highly restricts the possibility of reforming international governance, so any attempt to change the distribution of power would be seen as a direct challenge to the survival safety of a particular ethnic community. This self-closed loop gives the governance of nationalism a high level of resilience in times of peace. This model does not claim that nationalism is necessarily destructive; it rather highlights the fact that nationalism can develop sustained reproductive capability when it is embedded into a governance system within particular post-conflict contexts. Peace-building can be limited because the state integration process, which is based on ethnic identity, social identity and international governance structures, is embedded at the same time in state institutions.

### 3.4 Applicability of the Theoretical Framework and the Bosnia Case

The case of Bosnia may be used as an example of the described theoretical mechanisms. In contrast to conventional ethnic conflict examples, Bosnia is not at war but has a peace dilemma of peace deepening due to ongoing international engagement and institution-building. The Dayton Peace Accords concluded violent conflict and created power-sharing structures, however, ethnic identity also became an equally significant pillar of the functioning of political institutions. Simultaneously, there are historical memories and social boundaries in Bosnian society that are still based on ethnic identity. Various ethnic groups have different views on the experience of war, their national identity, and their political future, and ethnic identity remains an enduring element of social organization. Moreover, the international community has been a critical stakeholder in the peacebuilding efforts of Bosnia, though international governance has also influenced the nature of ethnic political conduct. With the help of power-sharing mechanisms, political representation structures, and ethnic balance principles, international governance has maintained peace and at the same time guaranteed the long-term significance of ethnic identity in the political context. Hence, Bosnia is not a mere demonstration of the fact that the legacy of ethnic conflict results in the failure of peace, but a theoretically more meaningful question: how come the international community could end ethnic violence, but struggle to eliminate the logic of ethnic politics?

#### **4. The Mechanism Analysis of BiH's Peacebuilding Predicament from the Biopolitical Perspective**

The main challenge to peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not how or even if ethnic contradictions persist beyond the conclusion of the war, but why nationalism may remain a powerful determinant of the political order when peace structures have already been created. The available literature tends to treat nationalism as a hindrance to post-conflict states because it is believed that ethnic fragmentation, exploitation by political rulers, and flaws in the institutional framework act as inhibitors to state integration. Nonetheless, these explanations are more concerned with the process of how nationalism destroys peace than with what makes nationalism capable of breaking through the limitations imposed by the end of war and reforms of institutions, and still be able to perform a political function in a peaceful setting.

In the context of the biopolitical analysis presented in this paper, the solution to the peacebuilding problem in BiH does not lie in the straightforward extension of nationalism, but in the conversion of nationalism into the logic of governance instead of the logic of conflict mobilization. To put it differently, ethnic identity is no longer secured primarily by war mobilization and the friend-enemy divide, but by continuous entrenchment in institutional frameworks, social identity, and international governance, which have succeeded in reproducing it in times of peace.

##### **4.1 Institutional Structures: The Institutionalization of Identity and the Consolidation of Political Order**

The institutional structures are an important element of the transition of nationalism as a social identity to a political identity. Conventional institutionalist scholarship frequently argues that power-sharing institutions in post-conflict societies can mitigate the chances of violent conflict by including the interests of various groups. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated in the case of BiH that despite the fact that power-sharing can contribute to the control of conflicts, it can also promote the role of ethnic identity as the basis of political organization.

The Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the Bosnian War, and formed a state institutional system that focuses on ethnic balance. The Agreement also created a power-sharing system between the three largest ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) in the state politics through the rotation of the Presidency, ethnic quotas in parliament, and entity autonomy frameworks. The notion of ethnic balance is one of the key aspects of the Dayton Agreement since it is deeply rooted in state institutions. It was originally intended to adhere to a model of governance of stability-first, integration-later approach - ensuring that no conflict would be repeated as the political rights of every ethnic group were secured. Nevertheless, the deep-seated issue of ethnic division is reinforced by this institutional setup, and ethnic identity has become the fundamental structure of state governance.

According to the nationalist reproduction viewpoint, the question then is not whether the power-sharing regime is functional or not; it is that the logic behind its working process relies on ethnicity-based division. The institutional structure changes the concept of ethnic identity from one of social membership to the concept of ethnic identity as the foundation of political representation, turning ethnic identity into a formal classification of the state governance mechanism. In times of war, ethnic identity was essentially used in the role of separating enemy and friend and in the process of political mobilization, whereas in the post-war institutional framework it has been reshaped as a significant factor of political eligibility, resource distribution, and power allocation. Ethnic diversity is no longer a mere social reality to be eliminated, but a political reality that state governance needs to acknowledge and regulate. Ethnic groups are not only targets of institutional protection, but they have also turned into the fundamental units of institutional functioning.

Such a consolidating effect is especially noticeable in the operation of the mechanism of the so-called ethnic veto. According to the Dayton Constitution, a decision on the state level should be supported by the unanimous consent of representatives of three people constituting the state. It was initially designed to ensure that the majority would not dominate, but over time it has become one of the central mechanisms of ethnic nationalism. In the biopolitical aspect, regular use of the veto is not just the protection of particular policy interests, but also a recurring political statement and ceremonial reconfirmation of the so-called ethnic borders. The message it gives to the ethnic voters is: Without our representatives advocating ethnic interests, external dangers will continue to limit our living space. Thus, any use of the veto interferes with the integration agenda of the state,

and on the socio-psychological level enhances the cognitive divide between the two concepts, self and other, and turns into a political breeding ground of the institution's operation to reproduce ethnic limits.

This could be seen as a reflection of the reliance of modern governance on the classification and management of populations using the biopolitical point of view. Governance does not simply annihilate difference but instead, keeps order by classifying, identifying, and organizing difference. Ethnic security and ethnic survival have become potent tools of political mobilization, and BiH has remained in a long-standing state of exception that is: the war is over, but the anxiety has remained [20]. Nationalism is no longer just an element of political mobilization during extraordinary times, but it has been incorporated into the governance framework of the state. The interstices of ethnic community groups are therefore strengthened by institutional processes and social talk. Integration reforms themselves undermine the institutional base on which nationalist party governance depends, so they are constantly thwarted by ethnic political elites.

#### **4.2 Social Identity: Social Basis of Ethnic Identity and Reproduction of Ethnic Boundaries**

The institutional frameworks can help to elucidate the manner in which nationalism is incorporated into the state governance framework, however, institutions can not sufficiently account for the reasons behind the endurance of ethnic identity as a social platform in the long run. The continuity of nationalism is also reliant on the ongoing awareness of ethnic limits of members of society, and it is achieved largely by historical memory, the education system, and cultural practices.

After the conclusion of the Bosnian War, the war memory did not become a common history, but it became one of the most significant foundations upon which various ethnic groups built their identities. Various ethnic communities have developed self-oriented historical stories, as they hold different interpretations regarding the causes of the war, blame or fault, and victimization, and sometimes have even created competing narrative systems [21]. War memory is not simply a retrospection of previous occurrences among the members of different ethnic groups, but has become an essential cognitive scheme for perceiving contemporary political interactions. Such memory politics allow ethnic identity to surpass mere cultural characteristics and be an influential means of representing political interests and the sense of security. The various positions of ethnic political parties on state structure, central authority, and local autonomy are often grounded in different historical experiences and identity assumptions, e.g.

Along with that, the education system is further encouraging the socialization of ethnic boundaries. Educational segregation has existed in post-war BiH for a long time, and an example of this is the common practice of the two schools under one roof campus setup. In the biopolitical view, political elites have attained control of life management across generations using education - competing on who controls the development of children and adolescents, social organization, and the reinterpretation and interpretation of the past and the future [22]. The elite-managed "life management" culminates in the framework of the two schools under one roof. Different ethnic groups of children enter the building and go to classes at different times and study different histories and languages within the same school building. This is no longer just about passing on knowledge, but rather as a double discipline of the body and mind. It is a systematic production of two (or even three) ontologically different cognitions of the same historical fact. As these children grow older, they are not only members of different ethnicities but also inhabit different historical timelines and political worlds. This educational segregation-induced cognitive gap does not merely lack the fundamental epistemological base of cross-ethnic civic society construction but has much deeper and more lasting effects than any political propaganda.

Also, various locations vary in history books, language, and cultural instruction. As an illustration, the very similar Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian languages have over time since the end of the war become less a means of communication and are associated with distinct ethnic symbolic meanings. It implies that the concept of ethnic identity does not only arise at the level of political leadership, but it is constantly reproduced by means of socialization. The processes of religion, commemoration, etc. are slowly turning into the key elements of nationalist governance.

The ethnic communities are not held only by the means of political propaganda, but they are being constantly formed and built up by the institutions and social activities of daily life in the sense of how the members of a group perceive the concepts of the self and other. Consequently, the survival of nationalism in BiH is not an effect of the war legacy, but rather an implication of the existence of ethnic boundaries in the

fabric of social life. Ethnic identity may be reproduced despite an absence of large-scale political conflict via routine governance processes, and the contours of ethnic communities remain open to additional social bases due to the cumulative effect of historical memory, the educational process, and culture.

### **4.3 International Governance: The Internal Tension Between Ethnic Categorization and Peacebuilding**

Insofar as institutional structures and social identity serve as the internal reproduction mechanisms of nationalism, international governance demonstrates how nationalism gets the conditions under which it can be reproduced continuously as an external intervention occurs.

The concept of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies is generally founded on an underlying premise: that institution-building, democratization, and state capacity building can move society out of conflict into integration. Nevertheless, the BiH experience demonstrates that the international governance process itself can also bolster the rationale behind ethnic grouping. The international community has contributed significantly to BiH state-building since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. Be it the United Nations agencies, the European Union, or the Office of the High Representative, their primary aim has been to preserve peace, support reforms, and integrate states. But the very existence of international governance implies the presence of conflict actors. In order to keep the peace, international actors need to determine the political position of the various ethnic groups and align their interests by setting up institutional frameworks. Even though the Dayton system has successfully stopped the outbreak of large-scale violence, it has not really helped to foster state integration. It implies that international governance is unable to completely overcome ethnic politics but, instead, in the act of governing ethnic difference, it constantly reiterates the significance of ethnic identity. International governance consequently encounters a dilemma in BiH: the international community focuses on the integration of the Bosnian state, whereas ethnic nationalist politics focuses on the protection of communities; the former aims at weakening ethnic borders, whereas the latter constantly strengthens them. Should central reform prove too aggressive, the local nationalist powers will regard their current political space as under threat; should the status quo continue, though, the power of the state to govern cannot be really enhanced. The most significant contradiction is that the high level of international governance has unexpectedly created a dual opportunity of the so-called responsibility exemption and legitimized rebellion to local nationalist elites. On the one hand, entities like the Office of the High Representative often interfere with legislation and administration, with local elites getting used to the idea that the challenge of reform is an outcome of coercion by external actors and acting as the “speakers of damaged ethnic interests” and consolidating their role as the protectors of ethnic groups in the biopolitical narrative. At the same time, long-term international guardianship has reduced the desire and ability of local political figures to establish cross-ethnic agreements by means of consultation, making it a kind of institutionalized dependence. Therefore, once international pressure weakens, the political vacuum is quickly filled by nationalist discourses of “securitization.” International governance has thus fallen into a predicament of “the more intervention, the more dependence; the more reform, the more backlash,” and has itself become a functional link in the cycle of nationalist governance logic.

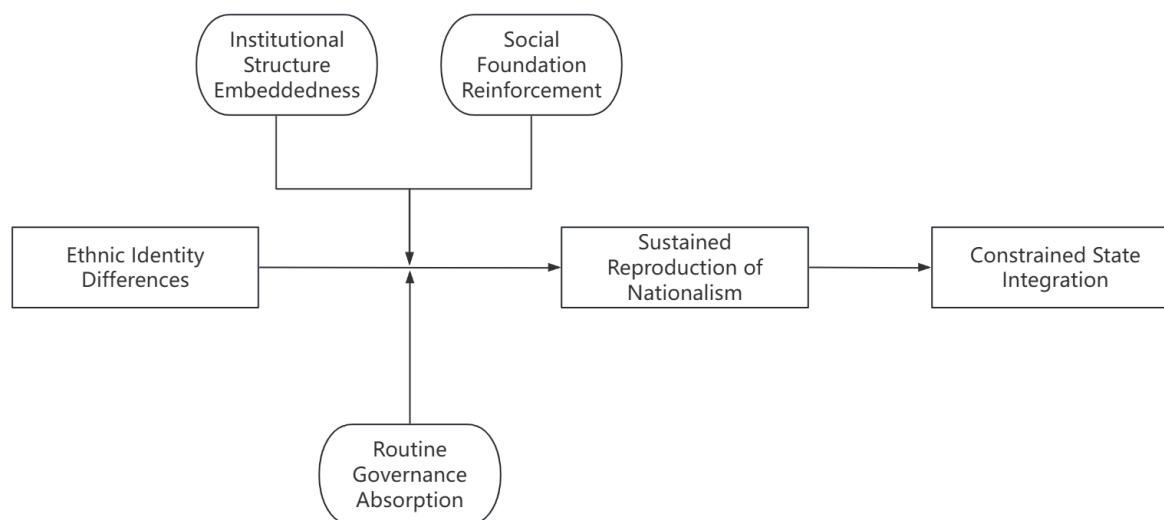
The situation in BiH is an example of a paradox in the administration of post-conflict countries: the integration of institutions does not always lead to the integration of communities. It is possible to facilitate the rehabilitation of state institutions by intervening externally, but not so easy to adjust people feeling part of a political community to this idea in the near future. Liberal peacebuilding studies have been oriented toward institutional building as the main route to peace and stability over a long period. The experience of BiH, in turn, suggests that the stability of the peace order depends not just on the extent of institutional construction but also on whether there could be the formation of a political community. Institutions do not necessarily forge a sense of community. Instead, when nationalism is thoroughly entrenched within institutional frameworks and in the social identity system, new institutional designs tend to be reintegrated into the current political reasoning. Hence, international governance is not an exogenous factor of nationalist reproduction but one of the significant elements of its process of governmentalization.

#### 4.4 Mechanisms of Nationalist Reproduction and the Peacebuilding Predicament in BiH

The predicament of peacebuilding in BiH is not a consequence of nationalism being an impediment to the peace process but a result of nationalism having completed its institutionalization, socialization and governmentalization in the post-war governance context.

Institutional frameworks provide ethnic identity with political credibility and ensure that ethnic classification is a significant source of the functioning of state power; social identity introduces ethnic borders into daily life and turns ethnic identity into a constant component of social cognition; international management also integrates ethnic classification into the process of peacebuilding and turns ethnic identity into the central target of international governance.

Figure 2: The Logic from Ethnic Identity Differences to Constrained State Integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Source: Compiled by the author.

Accordingly, the case of Bosnia demonstrates that nationalism is not necessarily a conflict. Nationalism could be transformed into new forms of existence in post-conflict societies due to the existence of peace institutions and governance structures, and play a significant role in limiting the integration of a state. It shatters the linear perception of the term “conflict-peace” - peace is not always seen as the weakening of nationalist logic in politics; conversely, in specific conditions of governance, the very peace order can turn out to be a new stage of the reproduction of nationalism.

## 5. Conclusion

The almost 30-year peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrate a vicious circle that has been largely ignored in the current literature: international state-building focuses on increasing state capacity, promoting institutional integration, and creating a single political community, as it aims at the erosion of ethnic borders and state identity construction; whereas nationalist rule remains focused on societal protection and border security, continually bolstering the sense of group distinction and division of identities via securitization discourse. Although the two logics are running simultaneously in the post-war political environment in Bosnia, they are pointing at different and occasionally contradictory political goals. It is exactly in this procedure where numerous challenges that were initially part of the sphere of technical governance and institutional reform have been consistently re-securitized and re-ethnicized, eventually ending up in protracted political deadlock. The crux of the Bosnian problem is not the mere institutional weakness or the heritage of ethnic enmity, but the fact that nationalism was successfully turned over into a logic of conflict mobilization into a logic of peace governance.

This article shows the particular ways in which this change has been implemented by introducing a biopolitical viewpoint. Institutionally speaking, the Dayton Agreement is based on ethnic groups instead of

citizens as political entities, incorporating ethnicity as a part of the fundamental structure of state authority, which turns the concept of ethnic security into the principle of the government. On the societal plane, the history of educational segregation, conflicting historical accounts, and cultural discipline keep the ethnic lines of division “naturalised” and “generationized”, giving this form of governance a strong social grounding. In the international context, despite the fact that external governance is exercised in the name of state integration, it keeps confirming and using ethnic categories in practice, directly providing nationalist governance with legitimacy and room to maneuver. The combination of all three levels creates a self-reinforcing cycle in which any attempt to integrate the state might effortlessly turn into a security concern of ethnic survival and so become a stalemate.

The theoretical novelty of the article is the fact that the author does not define nationalism as an identity or mobilization instrument, but as a form of governmentality that, under certain conditions, could create and support a particular political order. The international community has often seen state-building after a conflict as an exercise in institutional engineering, with the focus on constitutional design, electoral systems, and administrative unity, and the conviction that institution-building would slowly erase the foundations of conflict. Nevertheless, the Bosnian case shows that institutions are not necessarily identity-producing. Power-sharing processes, state-capacity development, and European integration itself have the potential to be re-radicalized as ethnic security problems when nationalism has been strongly rooted in the governance structure and system of identities. This is a problem for conventional peacebuilding theory: it is not only an institutional engineering program, but also a reconstruction of the identity of the political community. In case institution-building does not touch and remodel the underlying ethnic cognitive structures, it can potentially become a reinforcement of the current ethnic political order.

In a broader sense, Bosnia is not just a Western Balkan challenge but rather a shared concern of various societies within the post-Cold War world order. Although war can end with the help of institutional arrangements, a political community cannot be established directly by institutional design. The process of stabilizing a peaceful order will encounter significantly more complicated obstacles when nationalism has become an integral part of the institutional framework and social life. Can this vicious circle of nationalist governance logic be severed, and in what form can a political imagination of a civic community of shared destiny be constructed that lies outside of the ethnic community? This is the most challenging aspect of peacebuilding and the ultimate challenge that must be met.

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