The Dayton Peace Agreement: Institutionalized Ethnic Divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina

IA 701

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“Bosnia is a complicated country: three religions, three nations and those 'others'. Nationalism is strong in all three nations; in two of them there is a lot of racism, chauvinism, separatism; and now we are supposed to make a state out of that.”

-Alija Izetbegović, First President of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

1925-2003
Background

- Population: ~4 million
  - 48% Bosniaks (Muslim)
  - 37% Serbs (Serbian Orthodox)
  - 14% Croats (Catholic)

- Former republic of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ)

- Independence March 1, 1992

- War and aggression 1992-1995

- Dayton Peace Agreement
Questions and Significance

Why and how has the Dayton Peace Agreement institutionalized ethnic divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

“… international community’s biggest success for 25 years...”
Hypothesis

The political structure designed along ethnic lines in the Dayton Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina has solidified ethnic divisions among the three “constituent nations”. The electoral system institutionalizes ethnic politics and violates the rights of many citizens to participate equally in public life.
Dayton Peace Agreement
The Dayton Agreement

The Dayton Agreement, in all its complex structure, also includes 11 annexes:
- Annex 1-A Agreement on Military Aspects of the Peace Settlement
- Annex 1-B Agreement on Regional Stabilization
- Annex 2 Agreement on Inter-Entity Boundary Line and Related Issues
- Annex 3 Agreement on Elections
- **Annex 4 Constitution**
- Annex 5 Agreement on Arbitration
- Annex 6 Agreement on Human Rights
- Annex 7 Agreement on Refugees and Displaced Persons
- Annex 8 Agreement on the Commission to Preserve National Monuments
- Annex 9 Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina Public Corporations
- Annex 10 Agreement on Civilian Implementation
- Annex 11 Agreement on International Police Task Force
Identified Mass Graves

BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA
Masovne grobnice u BiH za koje su odgovorne snage bosanskih srba i JNA
Administrative System

- Dayton Peace Agreement brought new Constitution and administrative framework
- Two entities: Republic of Srpska (49% of territory) and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (51%)
- 14 centers of executive authority: State, entities and cantons) – massive apparatus
Research Method

- A case study of political/institutional divisions along ethnic lines
- Analysis of academic literature, official government data, studies/publications conducted by international state actors, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, advocacy groups
- Historical context of peace agreements
Argument/Discussion

- Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs: ‘Constituent Peoples’
- Undefined status of ‘Others’
- This institutional framework has allowed nationalist parties to dominate the political scene and left very little room for moderate political options
- Weak central institutions
- Electoral System based on ethnic lines
- Institutional obstruction/separatism
Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency
Political Dominance of Nationalists

Serbian
- SNSD 8
- PDP 1
- DNS 1
- SDS 4

moderate
- Social Democrats (SDP) 8
- Party for Democratic Action (SDA) 6
- SBB 4
- Stranka Bosnia 2

Croat
- Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) 4
- Narodna 2
- HSP 2

Bosnian
Conclusion

• The Dayton Agreement solidified ethnic divisions
• Internal disagreement on allocation of government positions based on ethnicity
• Political stalemate
• Difficult for central state institutions to function
• Unable to enter EU and NATO
• Necessary revision of Dayton framework
Walk Away With This!

- Widespread ethno-religious conflicts around the world..
- How to establish lasting peace?
- Each case is unique
- Does the international community have a responsibility to intervene?
- Think about: Iraq, Syria, Occupied Palestine/Israel, Congo, Sudan, etc.