Tema: Izgradnja mira i transformacija konflikta

Peace-less Reconcilation in BiH

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Iintroduction

The notion of reconciliation is an issue that is very often used, but also abused and misinterpreted in context of BIH postwar society. Although BIH yearns for reconciliation, there are a lot of obstacles on this path. One of the problems is that reconciliation is not interpreted as a process where different actors and issues are involved, but as an ideological notion that does not give (appropriate) homage to victims. As Wilkes et al warn it is often equated as a simple amnesty for perpetrators (Wilkes et al, 2013: 10). Statement of one Lebanon women, that reconciliation is a method, or an euphemism to offend victims (Mallay-Morisson et al, 2013: 73), is also present in BIH. Nevertheless, peace and reconciliation have specific meaning in BIH, and therefore it is better to interpret them in contextual way not without referring to some other examples and theoretical insights.

As for peace, it may be the result of reconciliation processes but we should bear in mind that there are different notions of peace and different interplay between peace and reconciliation. Peace e.g. can be "signed" without reconciliation process happening before. In BIH, we have peace under contract (Dayton Peace Agreement) where the peace is interpreted and equated with seize of fire (Whitakker, 2002: 7)[1]. Such notion is in accordance with idea of so called negative peace and opposed to idea of positive peace that involves more democratic participation, identity shift, openness, common initiatives and projects and not pure absence of armed conflict (Clagget-Borne, 2013: 16; ; Long & Brecke, 2003: 66). Perhaps, that is the reason while some intellectuals and activists as well reject such notion of peace but at the same time reject the very idea of reconciliation.

In order not to establish a new theory, nor to oppose to such trends, we claim that different reconciliation activities started before and during the war (e.g. in some grass-roots civic initiatives) in BIH, and that very notion should not be rejected easily. As prof. Nerzuk Ćurak noted, the very term can be filled in and contextualized in different ways[2]. Taking into account its complexity, it is a challenge for both researchers and different stakeholders. Brzinski in his work about so called peace-less reconciliation[3], started from Wittgenstein position claiming that all social phenomena must be contextualized. This is also the starting point of this paper, but also it is presumed that some strands can be used as a framework for BIH particularity. According to Brzinski, some aspects of reconciliation as a process can start before and during the conflict (Brzinski, 2013: 33), and such assumption has important meaning in context of former Yugoslavia and conflict in BiH where such activities started before and during the conflict.

It should be presumed as well that battle for the very term is won[4], especially in 90s when in scientific discourse, media, speeches of politicians and in everyday life words such as culture of remembrance etc. became very present (Assman, 2012: 56). And "mit neuem Wort kam auch eine neue Enstellung in die Welt" (ibid), taking into account that reconciliation stays in opposite to denial. The denial is not only the offence

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[1] Such interpretations are an object to different forms of public critics. One of the best is perhaps theatre-play „Samo da se ne puca" (Just that there is no shooting). This phrase can often be heard among ordinary people.
[2] Informal conversation with professor Nerzuk Ćurak during the conference at Catholic Faculty in Sarajevo *Evil of Violence in Ethnic Conflicts,* in September 2015.
[3] His notion of so called peace-less reconciliation is also used for the title of this paper. It is often claimed that in BIH we have peace without reconciliation, taking into account that reconciliation activities are frozen by so called peace under contract. In this paper it therefore claimed that we have reconciliation activities at different levels but no true peace, in its positive notion.
[4] Famous theologian Miroslav Volf claims that battle for remembering has been won (Volf, 2012: 37)

for victims, but also the obstacle for some aspects of reconciliation (such as forgiveness, identity shift, justice…).

II The Notion(s)

One of the starting points of this paper is that reconciliation is a complex process, not a state, and that it involves different aspects, some of them presented at the picture No.1. We also agree with Brzinski that this is not linear cycle although it can be. People in general and different groups or better to say stakeholders may be involved in one aspect of reconciliation and not in some others. Also, reconciliation has both horizontal and vertical dimensions. The first involves relations between populations and the last among the population's representatives (Wilkes at al, 2013: 10). Reconciliation is therefore multifaceted strategy (Clagget- Borne, 2013: 14). Yet, the problem is that elites in BIH, thriving at the ruins of multicultural and complex BIH society, strive to establish some sort of monocultural parallel communities and to erase BIH culture of difference of mutual recognition and co-existence. Such strategy is not suitable framework for reconciliation yet it can be challenged by different reconciliation activities. For, people may simply adjust to that, or can build own parallel stories and initiatives, in the terms of Havel's notion of ethical civic society living in truth. Therefore, it is more than useful to get deeper insights in the interplays between different stakeholders in BIH.
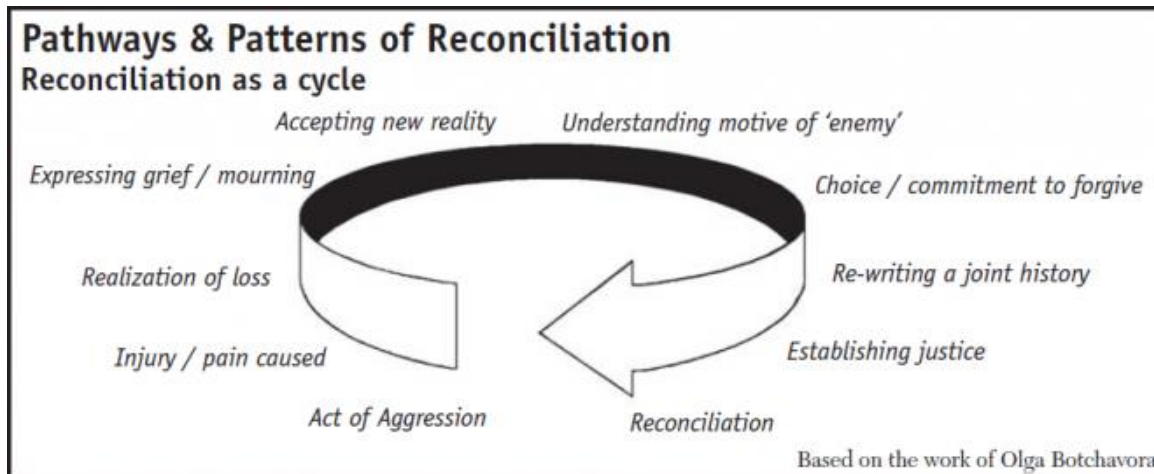
III.1 Institutions and/or Politicians

Political institutions in BiH are, according many authors, coopted by political elites. In BIH exist so called consensual model of democracy which always highlights the roles of elite in making political decision through negotiation and agreement. Also, BIH is to high extent non-functional state- the institutions are more developed at the level of entity[5] than at the state level, which put the country at odd position. "It cannot be the state authentically, but at the same time cannot stop to be the state" (Ćurak, 2016: 67). The researches

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[5] Although entities (Republic of Srpska and Federation of BIH) are not defined in constitution as federal units *de jure,* they function *de facto* as federal units.

prove that every second family in BIH in some way depends on political elites (Tolimir-Hölzl, 2014: 103), which in the Marxist sense and his critics of bureaucracy treat the state as the private property. Therefore, many people must follow blindly the political elites and taking this into account, it is more important for the purpose of this paper to address the role of politicians in reconciliation processes, without omitting some institutional aspects.

According to some authors, so called truth and/or public truth telling are very important for the reconciliation processes. Every part of reconciliation process presented at the graph no.1 is somehow connected with the notion of truth. The truth, according to de Gauchy does not have only forensic (objective), but also narrative (personal), dialogical (social) and restorative (healing) dimension (Kneževic, 2013: 111). In BIH, politicians lay stress at the first dimension but mostly highlight the "own" victims for the sake of staying in power and own legitimization- to be the one and true protectors of so called national interests. Politicians from so called Bosniak side insist that victims should be acknowledged and "collected", but the way this is taking place actually leads to the new dehumanization and instrumentalization of victims, despite the fact that forensic truth is important part of reconciliation process. Politicians from Republic of Srpska to some extent admit that Bosniaks were the most numerous victims in the last war, but avoid the word genocide (in case of Srebrenica) and in public speaking and mass gatherings pay tribute mostly to the own victims. They often claim that Bosniaks abuse the fact that they were the most numerous victims in the last war to legitimize own dominance and so called surplus of (moral) legitimacy. Although there are some variations depending on politicians from politicians- e.g. Sulejman Tihić, who used to be member of the Presidency used to stress that Bosniaks must step aside from own victimization. Former president of Republic of Srpska, Dragan Čavić used to send subtle messages of recognition. After that, rhetoric against became tight- e.g. in the period when Haris Silajdžić, known by his public statement that entire Republic of Srpska is mass grave yard, became Bosniak member of the Presidency and was in constant quarrel with Milorad Dodik, who became the president of RS after Čavic. Today, the rhetoric of Bosniac side is more polished, due to the Bakir Izetbegović, new Bosniak member of the Presidency, but it seems that Izetbegovic gave up to establish true dialogue with Serbian side in BIH, and turned more to Serbia and its prime minster Aleksandar Vučić. What is clear in this interplay is that Serbian political elite from BIH is not only the least flexible, e.g. in issues dealing with change of constitution and the most far- right (Gavrić, 2011: 263) but also in the issues dealing with reconciliation.

Although it is not quite clear how to remember wrongs rightly (Volf, 2012: 37) it is often stressed that, collectively, amnesia leads to the recurrence of the past and endless repetition of crimes. We may claim that politicians in BIH are stuck at the 4th phase of reconciliation cycle. They do not accept new reality- Bosniaks politicians mostly equate reconciliation with conciliation although very often use the term reconciliation, while Serbian politicians much less use this term and show no true interest to acknowledge the victims of other side(s). In such constellation, no wonder that all efforts to establish BIH Commission for Truth and Reconciliation at the state level failed. According to former member of Parliamentary Assembly in Federation of BIH Besima Borić[6], member of the working group for establishing of commission, there were no political will and honest support for such efforts although it was *de jure* created by Parliamentary Assembly of BIH. Therefore, the working group turned more to NGOs and other stakeholders but it was not

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[6] Informal conversation after the introductionary speech of Besima Borić at the so called public city meeting in Sarajevo, within the CEIR/Edinburgh project.

enough for work of commission which finally failed, together with the failure to change constitution within so called April package of constitutional reforms (2006). Abused by politicians, victims are being victimized again but they should remember wrongs "*as forgiven"* rather than to be avenged, as Volf highlighted (Volf, 2012: 40).

Therefore, no wonder that level of trust in politicians both in BIH and the region is very low (Galup Monitor). This is also the case for reconciliation processes, although people in BIH, regardless of their ethnical belonging, think that politicians are important for this process (Wilkes et al, 2013). According to some comparative researches, role of politicians is more important for inter-state conflicts (Whitakker, 2002) than inner-state conflicts. Yet, in BIH there is a dispute regarding the very nature of war. Bosniaks's side claims that war was aggression of neighboring Serbia, and to some extent of Croatia, while the Serbian side insists that it was a civil war. In such constellation role of politicians is not easily to be defined. Yet, some optimism regarding the politicians can be found e.g. in PRO Budućnost project, aiming to establish cooperation at local lever where politicians seem to be more positively involved in these processes in numerous BIH municipalities[7].

III.2 Grassroots Initiatives

In order to support the thesis of Peace-less Reconciliation[8], it should be noted that before and during the war many grassroots initiatives emerged as an opposition to the conflict, its numerous consequences as well as discourses that tried to legitimize the conflict. Although during the war, due to the fact that Bosnian activists tended to deal with current problems, and were exposed so called civic elaborations from EU and neighboring countries that were not struck to such extent to inter-ethnic violence (Helms, 2003: 80), they built own strategies to oppose to the political elites. This is also the case in the post-war period, although, due to the fact that international community indirectly acknowledged the "former" political elites[9] as important in process of peace-making obliged different initiatives to cooperate with politicians. Despite of that, civic initiatives started from the reasons of humanity and were in opposition to the "values" and goals of political elites. As one activist noted, "we, 'ordinary people', want to socialize with each other" (Thomasson, 2008: 27). Such initiatives provided space for identity-shift, and more holistic approach to the notion of reconciliation. Although elites try to impose so called fixed identities, different initiatives imposed to such trends, first of all civic and feminist groups.

One of the striking points is that e.g. war-veterans associations acknowledged their disagreement with politics of ethnic-national elites. Although it is often claimed that through the false notion of heroism culture of violence is still predominant in BIH (Ćurak, 2016: 188), many war-veterans opposed to such trends. Their work is some sort of "a crossroads between the demand for guarantees of the fundamental human rights, and the widely discussed question of the recognilion of particular (collective) rights of different groups" (Sekulić, 2005: 82). In one research, war-veterans were among the amost affirmative groups that were supporting different reconciliation activities, together with women and pensioners (Wilkes et al, 2013). Qualitative research of Sekulić showed that war-veterans and war- migrant association often oppose to ethno-nationalistic policies (Sekulić, 2005: 87). War- veterans also launched different activities among each

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[7] http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/drustvo/Potpisani-sporazumi-na-projektu-PRO-buducnost/238016
https://www.facebook.com/probuducnost.bih/
[88] Peace-less in the framework of idea of positive peace, considering, as already noted that peace in BIH is mostly equated with seize of fire.
[9] Without their leaders

other, despite of the fact that they used to fight at different sides in conflict[10]. Therefore, together with women organizations, they seem to have some aspects of identity shift in their work, which escapes imposed fixed identities. Identity shift transecent narrow roles and „understandings" of the conflict and offer a new relations (Long & Brecke, 2003: 36), important for reconciliation processes. Women groups/organizations, that during the war were the most concerned with humanitarian aid started to be more feminist oriented and to challenge ethnopolitcs from that perspective, and not only to build bridges among women in BIh whatever of their ethnicity but also to challenge (imposed) roles of women in both war and peace.

Such activities are not often acknowledged by institutions and are not given enough space in media, yet they remain at the frontline against distorting of our very humanity. What is for sure is that grass roots initiatives are involved at different aspects of reconciliation process presented at the picture No. 1. One of the problem is that such initiatives to high extent depends on foreign aid and support, considering that in country with unemployment rate of 50%, they cannot be sustainable on voluntary basis. Yet, the problem is that foreign support imposes agenda setting and in such constellation, no firm and stable framework for reconciliation can be defined. Yet, civil society operates to impose so called dangerous questions omitted by politicians' and other discourses, and as Verdeja notes to address fundamental issues and challenges (Verdeja, 2009: 136). It promotes, what is also the case in BIH, moral and mutual recognition among citizens (ibid, 137).

III.3. Peoples' Attitudes

As for peoples' attitudes, different researches show different results. This is the consequence of different methodology and very aim of the researches. But what is for sure is that researches regarding reconciliation are pretty rare in BIH, although some of them are connected to some extent with the very notion (e.g. research about social distance, stereotypes, and content analysis of media…). E.g. considering the importance of religion in public sphere in BIH, one longitudinal content analysis of religious media showed negligible space provided for reconciliation (Lasić), although it is often claimed that reconciliation as a very notion has religious dimension. Further on, numerous researches show high level of social distance among population from different ethnic background. Yet, what is encouraging is that people are ready to be e.g. friends with people from different ethnic background, but on the other hand are not affirmative in some other issues such as the head of the firm, state, and cousins' relations including marriage (Puhalo, 2013: 183).

In CEIR/Edinburg research people were affirmative regarding reconciliation processes, regardless of their ethnicity. They were more oriented toward the future (such as reforming of education) than toward the past (such as building memorials). Although there are some differences depending on age, gender, religiosity, employment status, people in general showed great approval for different reconciliation activities (Wilkes et al, 2013). The research shows that young people are the most ambivalent and that it should be more worked with them on this issue. Women, pensioners, war-veterans were more positive and this fact should be more elaborated with further researches and accompanying activities and public telling. Yet, such researches should not be taken for granted and have to be put in more complex analytic framework of post-war Bosnian society.

Also, in complicated BIH framework, and also taking into account that justice is important part of reconciliation, it is confirmed in different researchers that people respect the peace at high level and are satisfied with at least limited realization of justice (Long & Brecke, 2003: 70). In BIH unfortunately justice looks like a far ideal. But the fact that very population perceive justice in broader, non-ethnic way (such as

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[10] E.g. within the project „Djeca rata djeci mira" (Children of war to the chieldren of peace). Visit https://www.facebook.com/groups/498171257023498/?fref=ts

support for minorities, returnees) show sensibility of population and support of this important part of reconciliation processes (Wilkes et al, 2013), which transcendent narrow rhetoric of political elites.

IV Recommendations

As Carl Bildt noted, "Reconciliation will be possible when there is a common perception that justice for all will be created when the energies and efforts of the people of Bosnia-Herzogovina are concentrated less on the legacies of the bitter past than on the promise of a common future" (Whitakker, 2002: 106). Yet, this does not mean that we should leave the past behind, but that we should dedicate more energy on issues regarding common future and from that position, in different perspective reflect the very notion of the past. Taking into account that past is abused for the interests of political elites and that many of them almost every day refer to the past but in the way that affirm social divisions, activities and rhetoric oriented toward the future must be more present and visible in public at the same time addressing the past from the perspective of recognition and redifinition. Different activities of youth groups, women' organizations and war-veterans should be more supported, considering their attitudes and different initiatives that are not easily coopted by nationalistic rhetoric.

The activities of youth considering their ambivalent attitudes and marginal position in society, and women and war-veterans taking into account their more affirmative attitudes regarding reconciliation and their different initiatives. This can create more solid and firm basis for addressing the politicians in their activities and accompanying messages. Also, the very notion of reconciliation must be promoted in better way (in media, science etc.) for it seems that the very notion is contaminated with imposed meaning created from above. Political elites use the term *ad hoc,* but the people are aware of the importance of politicians in these processes. Considering that politicians at local level are dealing more with the very needs of populations, and are involved in different peace-activities, their work should be more supported and made more visible. In order not to have *only* negative peace, but to (re)build it on fruitful reconciliation activities and to escape from so called peace-less reconciliation., where reconciliation initiatives do not bring clear, *positive* result. Therefore, different interplay between the actors addressed in this paper should be promoted, based on lessons from the past and current activities and experiences from other countries.

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