

Formation of Collective Identity as an Experimental rabbit or a possibility

An analysis of deeply divided society of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BORA BESGÜL, KATALIN NÁDAS-NAGY, MELEK-AYLIN ÖZOFLU *

(Abstract)

This paper analyzes the formation of 'collective identity' in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from the perspective of Social Identity Theory (SIT). It appears that building a larger collective identity at the State level of BiH, which is the concrete example of ethnically and deeply fragmented community, presents a unique challenge. To this end, the main inquiry of this paper is to reveal the role of the existent ethnic conflicts as an impeding factor of such formation. Accordingly, by creating ingroup/outgroup differentiation between different ethnicities in BiH, ethnic conflicts are seen to be the main reason of failure towards building an upper level of shared collective identity. Thus, this paper investigates main sources of cleavages and ongoing ethnic tensions in the State in the light of the main assumptions of the SIT which would provide the necessary background for analyzing the fundamentals of the intergroup behavior, discrimination, and bias.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), ethnically and deeply fragmented community, Social Identity Theory (SIT), ingroup/outgroup differentiation.

*

Introduction

The Balkan area has always had a colorful ethnic picture. As this peninsula is a transfer zone between Europe and the Middle-East, it has been always the venue of numberless battles of civilizations. At the same time, none of the ethnic groups had a real chance to become strong and build a stable and powerful country in itself. This weakness caused the area served and serves a platform for world powers to clash there. And obviously, the other powerful actors in the region use this flexibility of Balkan and make many indirect and direct effort to manipulate the countries' policies according to their demands. In this light, it is of critical importance to reveal the main approaches formulated from the era where the nationality and identity concept was prevalent. Caused by historical circumstances, three Hungarian governors of the country created their own vision on ethnic conflicts and political strategies in order to manage peacefully integrated society of Bosnia in Herzegovina.

Accordingly, Béni Kállay, as the first governor of the country supported the Muslim minority in order to keep ethnic harmony in the country. Kállay's strategy over Bosnia goes back to the early 1860s. Initially, he tried to build a paternalistic relationship with Serbia which had been expected to create a counterbalance for internal Serb or Croat threats to Hungary's position. In order to make it happen, he has initiated his "Grand Plan; sponsoring Serbia's acquisition of Bosnia which aims to isolate Hungarian Serb Radicals, divide Serbs and Croats. However, when it became obvious that Hungary could not compete with Russia's magnetism over Serbia and the Monarchy postured no threat to Hungary anymore, he had to shift his strategy and has created a new doctrine for Balkan states. The new strategy has included; Hungarian control of the foreign ministry in the Empire, Hungarian economic and cultural help for Balkan states in their self-assertion, and through Hungary's great power stance in the East its ability to play the leading role among the Monarchy's peoples without letting Slavic countries unite in one entity (Okey, 2002). To this end, Bosnia had to be

* The Author(s): PhD Students, Department of the International Relations, Corvinus University of Budapest.

isolated from neighboring countries as well as external religious authorities and accommodate western norms of civil society. In order to press Serb and Croat nationalisms, he has designed the idea of Bosnianism and it was expected to unite all different ethnic groups into one created collective identity of Bosnia. Nevertheless, nationalism in Bosnia between two communities aggravated. They started to move against administrative authorities which enhanced the source of conflicts for later political nationalism in Bosnia.

The succeeding governor i.e Istvan Burian de Rajecz's administration period has started with the cultural autonomy of Serbs and Muslims. Burian prioritized conciliation rather than oppression in Bosnia (Okey, 2002). He has initiated the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and left Bosnianism strategy of Kallay. Since the Serbs were the majority of the population, he encouraged to work with Serbs in Monarch controlled Bosnia. Burian also believed that the occupied provinces' integration into the Monarch had to be finalized in a quick manner in order to prevent treatment of Bosnians as a second class citizens of the Empire because of the new constitutional framework exclude Bosnia from the Dualist system.

Based on his observations of Kallay, Lajos Thalloczy has stated in his report with regard to Bosnian education, Kallay's faith of reinforcing a Bosnian identity originated from feudal statehood was misplaced. According to his view, the Bosnians as the constitutive people of BiH had been unable to reach unity. The corresponding identity of Bosnia had been irrevocably destroyed by Ottoman rule (Okey, 2002). Unlike Kallay's views, he has pointed out that Bosnians could not be isolated from nationalist features and especially educated part of the society multiplied their impact in the social and political domains. The issue of reaching to the upper level of collective identity at the State level of BiH has been ever going since then. The persistent cleavages within the society were just temporarily covered under the peaceful and integrative administration of Tito's Yugoslavia. However, After the the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) dramatically turned into a civil war between three different ethnic and religious clans namely as; Orthodox Christian Serbs, Roman Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosniaks.¹ The conflict, which witnessed ethnic cleansing and caused unforgettable humanitarian and economic loss, could be resolved only with signing Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 in the leadership of the international actors after the international intervention. The Dayton based on the idea that Bosnia, by achieving liberal democracy and market economy, would finally preserve peace and its multi-ethnic structure. However, there has been still ongoing debate over the functionality of the state which was foreseen by the Accords. In this sense, Dayton Peace Accords is a unique example of the debate over the reconstruction of a functional state with its particular challenge to international actors. Thus, the related studies within the literature put its emphasis usually on the issue and possibilities of 'peaceful state-building' in Bosnia over 20 years after signing the Dayton. However, this paper would rather put its focus on the notion of 'collective identity' which is almost lacking in Bosnia divided along ethnically homogenous regions; Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inquiry of building 'collective identity' in Bosnia as an ethnically and deeply fragmented society presents us a unique example. Accordingly, an analysis of an example which is usually regarded as a failed attempt of collective identity building would have clear implications for the formulation of a broader vision of what makes collective identity successful. Besides, this paper aims to contribute reevaluation of constructing a shared collective identity through the analysis of a political environment where three different and conflicting memories and three different perspectives for the country with no common vision for present and future exist. To this end, firstly the notion of 'collective identity' would be analyzed through utilization of 'social identity theory' which was proposed by Tajfel in 1974. After drawing concrete lines between theoretical debate and its association with the possibilities in highly divided societies, the paper will shift its focus on BiH example as a multinational case in which the formation of collective identity seemed challenging. While doing this, different factors for the achievement of peaceful and successful collective identity formation would be considered. In this light, the final part of the paper would aim to answer the question whether BiH could formulate any embracing prescription of shared collective identity as a healing for the existent cleavages within the society.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how individuals' sense of belonging to a particular society is shaped by identifying themselves as 'us' in the national context, this paper would utilize social identity theory (SIT) which was proposed by Tajfel in 1974. Investigating the impact and insights of individuals' identification of their

¹ The term of Bosniak was initially used in the first Census 2013s of BiH after Dayton Peace Agreement in 2013 in order to hinder the confusion between religion and ethnicity since Bosniak refers to Bosnian Muslims.

belonging to a particular group in the nation-state is of critical importance before applying the SIT to the case study of Bosnian example. However, the debate over the meaning of the 'identity' is far beyond the scope of this paper which aims to draw a concrete picture of the intergroup conflicts in the Bosnian case. That is why this paper would focus on certain social groupings of individuals within a nation-state which presents a unique example of ethno religious fragmentation. Applying SIT to the Bosnian case seems to be appropriate since it would provide us the necessary background for analyzing the fundamentals of the intergroup behavior, discrimination, and bias. SIT is applied previously in many academic types of research focused on political, cultural or social spheres that might utilize the idea of categorization of groups. In fact, applying social identity to ethnic and religious identities which is totally self-evident within the Bosnian case as a whole is expected to be even more convenient. On the one hand, this is because they present more collectivity in nature than other sorts of social identities (Huddy, 2001, p. 131). On the other hand, as it is seen in the Bosnian example, the prevalence of ethnic identities as different 'ingroups' is appearing as an obstruction to the formation of the larger collective identity that would end up with the formation of citizenship identity as a whole. As a result, prospective forming of shared identity based on cultural, sentimental and ethical commonalities remain very low and limited. In other words, it presents a challenge to the formation of shared identity with political characteristics that can lead to a potential existence of a political entity. This political entity can be then imagined as distinct from the other communities by that 'particular community'. This is of critical importance since the sense of community gives suitable ground for drawing on a shared feeling of loyalty and potential contribution to the political institutions of the State (Herrmann, et al, 2004, p. 4). That gives us the necessary implication to reach a general assumption with regard to the failures of forming a collective identity at the State level.

SIT provides also a bridge between the representation of the 'self' and the process of embeddedness of the 'self' to social groups (Brewer 2001). Moreover, it puts its emphasis on intergroup processes which would be prominently traced in the case study of this paper in the following part. Accordingly, social identity means individuals' self-concept originating from their awareness of their membership of a social group or groups to which emotional significance and value attached (Tajfel, 2010). This is a psychological link established by the individuals' cognitive process. Brewer (2001: 117) argues that individual's self-concept is acquired from social groups of which he or she is part. In this sense, social identity is constructed through the process of individual's identification his/herself with other members of a certain group. According to Brewer's categorization, there are four different concepts of the social identity which is respectively; person-based social identities, relational social identities, group-based social identities and collective identities (Brewer, 2001, p. 117). This paper gives its priority to collective identity and group-based social identity because person-based and relational social identity is mostly believed to belong to the level of personal identity (Çoyamak, 2009, p. 6). In addition, a social identity whose focus on the intergroup relations deals rather with the question of how group self-representations are formed.

Group-based social identities and collective identity are defined as collective representations of the group based on shared values, norms, interests, and experiences. Forming of the group can be also constructed based on individual's ethnic and religious identities. In this sense, there appears coexistence of multiple identities which represent individuals prominently in different contexts because of their attained different roles including nationality, religion, gender, professional, and ethnic. It indicates identity configurations of the individuals as if they are formed in the shape of Russian Matroska dolls (Herrmann, et al, 2004, p. 8). Thus, everyone belonging a smaller community is also a member of a larger community at the same time (Herrmann, et al, 2004, p. 8). It is expected that local identities representing the smaller in-groupings are subsumed in larger national identities(Herrmann, et al, 2004, p. 8). The functionality of the approach which should manifest itself as a larger collective identity of citizenship identity, however, is deemed to be challenging in our case study example of BiH.

Such grouping includes also collective efforts to construct an image which would be viewed by others. In fact, here the process of forming social identity begins. That leads us SIT's 'minimal group paradigm' which originally implies basic conditions for the occurrence of intergroup comparison. According to Tajfel and Turner, there are three phases of forming this ingroup/outgroup mentality (Tajfel & Turner ,2004). The first is called a process of social categorization which manifests itself as a differentiation between 'ingroup' as 'us' and 'outgroup' as 'them' (Ford & Tonander, 1998, p. 373). Once the categorization is established, there appears sense of connectedness/ of membership among group members within the ingroup. At this juncture, the second phase which is 'social identification' leads us to the individuals' actions which would be in parallel with the actions of other members of the ingroup. In other words, it creates self-evaluation of individuals within the group implying a guide for social action of individuals belonging to that 'specific ingroup (Ongur, 2010, p. 135). As a result, they begin to act in conformity with the expectations deriving

from their membership to that particular group (Ongur, 2010, p. 134). In parallel to this, Turner later proposed ‘self-categorization’ theory which deals with the depersonalization of the ‘self’ resulting in ingroup prototyping in terms of bringing self-perception, behavior, and action into line with the ingroup prototype (Hogg, et al, 1995, p. 261). That is because they perceive common fate with other members. In this way, such grouping becomes a key in individuals’ self-representations for the sake of differentiating themselves from the other people especially when the group identity is salient (Çoymak, 2009, p. 5). The exact context of where salience of the group identity is prevailing mostly would be proven in the following part by our case study. This differentiation is called as ‘social comparison’ which is the last phase of cognitive process of creating ingroup/outgroups. In fact, development of ingroup and outgroup comparison is the source of intergroup discrimination. Because, once the group boundaries are defined, tendency to compare oneself from others once his/her own identification with a certain group is set. There are mainly two prominent reasons for such comparison. Firstly, it is to verify collective identity of the existence of the group. That is because the existence of the ingroup is highly hinged on the existence of the outgroup which has diverging attributes or motives from the ingroup (Ongur, 2010, p. 135). Secondly, through such comparison members of the ingroup would find to enhance their individual self-esteem. In other words, thanks to the existing distinctiveness of the ingroup, members would enhance their self-esteem through being a member of the ingroup. Moreover, as people are inclined to evaluate others based on their group memberships, it would end up with the formation of stereotyping for others (outgroup). Being highlighted by its differentiating attribute dimensions, the ingroup formation begins to display so-called ‘ingroup bias’. Ingroup bias which covers stereotyping with regard to outgroups indeed occurs even though there exist no negative feelings against outgroups. In this respect, activation of negative feelings or aggression against outgroups by means of social comparison are not always expected to occur. To what extent these feelings are existent in the BiH as a deeply divided society would be analysed in the next section of this paper.

The social comparison is for the sake of ascribing positive attributes of the ingroup which seeks to enhance the group’s positive image, its uniqueness, and status (Huddy, 2001, p. 132). Then, it would also mean decrease on intergroup similarities. In this way, the positive social identity of the ingroup is realized. That is why the whole process which began with the social categorization sharpens the intergroup boundaries. In this sense, the group identity would be both inclusive in the sense of forming collectivity and exclusive in the sense of outlining distinctiveness of that collectivity (Brewer, 1999). Therefore, it is appropriate to argue that ingroup bias and thus intergroup behavior are constructed by the recognition of equilibrium between ingroup distinctiveness and inclusiveness. How ingroup bias plays a key role in the formation of the intergroup relations is a remaining question which would be answered in the next part through applying social identity theory to the deeply divided society of BiH, where clear boundaries between ingroup/outgroup cleavage existent.

Thinking SIT in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

After a brief analysis of the main focal points of the SIT, this section moves its focus to the utilization of the theory within the BiH political setting which appears as a deeply divided political regime. Even though the divisions and disagreements are old as humankind, both the terms of “deeply divided”, “deeply divided societies” and their characteristics are contested in the existing literature. The definition of “deeply divided,” first originated in the book of Eric Nordlinger in which he states that the term can be used with the meaning of “vertically segmented” and “communally divided”. Subsequent authors have paid close attention to the term of “deeply divided societies”. Lustick argues that a divided society is a product of “boundaries between rival groups” and these are sharp enough so that membership is clear, and with a few exceptions, unchangeable” and Lederach (1997, 11) defines deeply divided societies by giving reference to Wallenstein and Axell; “societies experiencing armed conflict at one of the three levels.” (Lederach, 1997, p. 11). Wallenstein and Axell have had categorized the armed conflict in three levels; minor, intermediate armed conflicts and war (Lederach, 1997, p. 11). Finally, the definition of Guelke has been accepted in literature as the most concise definition since it covers all of the former definitions as well as the political and social aspects; “where ‘conflict exists along a well-entrenched fault line that is recurrent and endemic and that contains the potential for violence between the segments.” (Guelke, 2012, p.30)

Most of the conflict/ tension in deeply divided societies have a tendency to shape from two contending groups but not three or more². However, investigating the Bosnian case seems to be an exceptionally

² Another example to the three-fold division is the case of Iraq. The country’s division is based on the conflict

contrary to the general assumption of other cases around the world in which assumes that the existence of more than two groups tends to militate against polarization as Guelke (2012, 13) claimed in "Politics in Deeply Divided Societies". In this respect, our case study presents a unique example of polarization within the particular society.

Relatively common sources of division in societies around the world which are counted as a criterion to define ingroup/outgroup formation have been known as class, caste, religion, language, race, ethnicity, and clan. However, religion and ethnicity present stronger collectivity in nature³. Especially, in the country of Lebanon that has long seen as a prime example of deeply divided societies based on religion and sectarianism (Lederach, 1997). The country has been significantly affected by the conflict between Christians and Muslims, especially during the civil war between 1975 and 1990. On the other hand, even though Cyprus and Sri Lanka cases are given as religion-based deeply divided societies, both cases religion is not the primary source of the division but more as a communal division.

In fact, investigating the source of conflict in Bosnia leads us to find that the ethnicity based on religious differences plays a prime role to generate conflict in its boundaries although the ethnic differences seem to be the reasons of conflict. As BiH one of the most divided countries in Europe includes three different religious sentiments in which Bosniacs are Muslims, Croats are Catholic Christians and Serbs are Orthodox Christians. Moreover, all of these communities consider the religion as a tool in order to shape and preserve the ethnic/religious culture and tradition. In other words, ethnic/religious differences in Bosnia perpetuates the conflict since contending groups use religion as a tool to manipulate their societies into hate and hostility. As a result, it maintains the deeply rooted conflict and hinders the possible integration of these different groups into a political collective identity of BiH.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords have finally ended the devastating war in Bosnia by finalizing the divisions of BiH into ethnically populated areas. Moreover, it has created a federation in which consists of three constituent people in the state. Rob Aitken states that; the political system designed at Dayton was based on the representation of three groups recognized as the "constituent peoples" of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats (Aitken, R. 2010). The three-person Presidency consists of a Bosniak and a Croat elected from the Federation (FBiH) and a Serb from Republika Srpska (RS). The House of Peoples consists of 15 delegates "two-thirds from the Federation (five Croats and five Bosniacs) and one-third from the Republika Srpska (five Serbs)" [Annex 4, Article 1, paragraph 1 of Dayton Peace Agreement]. Moreover, what makes the Bosnian System more confusing is the majority of delegates from any constituent groups have the power to veto over parliamentary decisions in order to protect the ethnic-based national interests.

The Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) was the earliest of its kind known in the history of international relations. It was not only a peace treaty, but included sectional settlements, a new constitution, and several mechanisms for the protection of human rights, the reconstruction of the economy, and a strategy for the deployment of an international army under NATO authority. Accordingly, rather than a one-off act, the Dayton agreement can be characterized as a peace process (Magaš, 1998). Moreover, the DPA was not only a classic peace contract but also a manuscript for a new state created in the agreement (Torsti., 2003), a new functional state with three constituent ethnicities. For this purpose, the political structure of DPA has created a very complex multi-layered structure that incorporates four layers of administrative units in partly autonomous entities; FBiH and RS in order to satisfy all of the contending groups in the principle of power-sharing in politics and intended to build a nation in Bosnia based on the principle of one state and one nation to which all three nationalities should owe allegiance. There was supposed to be a one-year 'transitional' international administration in Bosnia. This one year, however, had been "indefinitely extended" and by the late 1990s the democratization process in Bosnia seemed a major international experiment and, finally, Peace Implementation Council (PIC), which in charge to implement the DPA in the name of International Community, stated that the PIC will last in Bosnia until the country is deemed politically and democratically stable and self-sustainable.

As we mentioned in the theoretical background section of this paper, group-based social identity and collective identity give us a better understanding to locate our discussion in the context of SITs. The

among Shi'a and Sunni Arabs and Kurds.

³ The term of Bosniak was initially used in the first Census 2013s of BiH after Dayton Peace Agreement in 2013

in order to hinder the confusion between religion and ethnicity since Bosniaks refers to Bosnian Muslims.

corresponding group identities strongly linked to the shared values, norms, beliefs, myths, interests and experiences of the in-groups. These value attached group attitudes can occur both naturally in a collectivity of religion, ethnicity, language, clan and so forth and arbitrary as a result of constructive efforts aimed to create an image (a state).

In this context, citizenship, which constitutes larger collective identity in respect to the existent smaller identities within the society, assumes a highly abstract form, which connects it to the notion of collective identity (Hacking, 2004). This citizenship identity may construct a connectedness, which would make the citizens believe that they belong to the same group as other citizens. In other words, Applying the general theoretical and methodological approach of Tajfel and Turner seems to be appropriate - even though the identity is arbitrary – since the constructed citizenship leads groups to identify themselves as “us” (in-group) and identify others as “them” (out-group) like a larger group categorization in group forming process. One of the aims of Dayton peace agreement by creating a nation-state was using the citizenship as an integrative device, which bridges the differences of contending groups. “Such shared citizenship is expected to generate a collective identity that supersedes rival identities – ethnic\religious identities - induced by cultural diversity and differences in social status.” (Karolewski, 2009, p. 21). Accordingly, the concept of citizenship based collective identity shifts the focus of collective identity from social to the political domain in which political collective identity (Simon, & Klandermans, 2001, 319). According to Karolewski (2009, 169); “Collective identity pertains to the core of citizenship as delineating a community of which individuals define themselves as members, in which they participate, and towards which they feel a sense of obligation.”. Nevertheless, the essence of the political collective identity often remains dubious, as many scholars argue that the bonds between citizens without explaining the source of this feeling and its implications. It is more likely to happen in the countries established as an ethnically and deeply fragmented society such as BiH. In order to understand why the larger collective identity seems to be failed initiation in BiH, this paper in next chapters will facilitate the discussion of how ethnic in-group bias plays a key role in the formation of the intergroup relations and how this prevents to reach a larger shared collective identity.

According to Hutkinson and Smith (1994), ethnic community should have a proper name, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place, shared memories of a common past or pasts, One or more elements of common culture – religion, language, and customs, and a sense of solidarity based on ethnicity. Investigating the all of the constituent communities; Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, we can notice that these characteristics of the ethnic community have been used in political rhetoric and an educational system that facilitates the integration of the younger generations in the logic of desired thinking and action of the politics of ethnicity. That is highly connected with the argument of the SIT foreseeing individuals’ adopting of actions in conformity with the expectations of the ingroup they belong. As a result, it reproduces the ethnic\religious cleavage between communities and increases the social distance among them.

Since Dayton has constituted three de-facto mono-ethnic entities in Bosnia, it has given a motivation for nationalist parties to focus on their ethnic/national entities rather than BiH as a whole state. Accordingly, once the ethnic cleavages set, tendency to lead people to a political conflict is common since politicized identity is prone to let politicians/elites make use of influence over society to construct new concepts, beliefs, theories, myths in the name of ethnonationalism. That is the reason, linking our topic to the SIT, ethnicity\religion oriented parties have attempted to control and create desired thinking and action to canalize the society into a much more hostile in-group. As a result, in order to claim political credit, nationalist actors both have applied to use of ethnic politics and reconstructed hostility thereby increasing the feeling of hate between communities. SIT states that the in-group will discriminate against out-group to enhance their self-image. In this sense, ethnic policies tend to use, especially, the utilized interpretations of the conflict of devastating Bosnian wars by portraying other groups (out groups) as murders, rapists, barbaric, or as intruders. This provides the patterns of conflict and increases the in-group/ out-group cleavages.

Forming an arbitrary constructive image of BiH identity is a starting point to understand shared collective identity building process on a larger scale. Thinking together with SIT, the rival identities (in-groups) have much more collectivity (Religion\Ethnicity) than the weak collective identity of BiH (as an another in-group) that can offer only a citizenship connectedness. Moreover, what makes this shared collective identity, even weaker is the state’s central administration only in charge of foreign policies since other important policies about education, health, security is left to the entity administrations or cantons in which political parties tend to follow their own ethnic politics.

Confronted problems of BiH as a challenge to the formation of the Collective Identity

According to the well-known fact, the Balkan Peninsula is deeply divided by many different ethnic groups. But during the history, the ethnic map of the region changed a lot in terms of territorial borders of the groups, especially in the last few decades. Concerning the theoretical findings and statements about differing

ethnics' co-existence and mechanisms behind collective identity, the Balkan region is a really complex issue. Focusing on our current case study, we can say that BiH seems a special and non-typical Balkan country. Namely, the other countries in the region were established as a nation-state, where an ethnic group means the majority against many other smaller ethnic communities (Pavković & Kelen, 2016). However, BiH doesn't provide a salient characteristic existent in the other states which have achieved to form a larger collective identity at the State level, because of the multi-religious/ethnic reality of the country. That is why this section will move its focus to the existent cleavages and problems that the BiH would have to face as a challenge to the formation of the larger collective identity as a citizenship and/or national identity (Sánchez, 2017).

After the Dayton Accords, the newly created country began to exist as a federation of two member states despite a nation-state. This kind of version of a state is really non-familiar in the region. The people of the Balkan region had no personal, cultural or everyday experiences about living in a federal political system. Although the aim of peacebuilding by forming larger collective identity would be familiar for these ethnic groups from the era of Yugoslavia. They lived in the same country during the Yugoslav period in a relatively peaceful atmosphere. As a society, after the Collapse of Yugoslavia, (with its heritage in terms of political culture, national identities, social framework etc) the former identities were deeply destroyed, as it is a general consequence of the communist paradigm (Belcells, 2015). Generations were socialized in war, so they transferred their experiences for next generations about wars and military conflicts. Practically people have no living memory about peaceful co-existing. Regarding the current identity crisis and tensions within the country, it seems, that Bosnia in Herzegovina, as a country is not able to offer this comparing higher/larger collective identity what was more or less successful during the communist regime. Accordingly, ethnic and territorial conflicts are evolving until our days. The Bosnian political system designed by the Dayton is not functioning properly (Önsoy, 2011, p. 129). In order to clarify the stalemates of the political situation, it is of critical importance to describe the political system of BiH envisaged by the DPA. As it is already implied, the aim of the agreement was establishing a buffer-country between other less friendly powers on the Balkan. The founder international actors had foreseen that some years of helping the Bosnian Parliament from outside will be enough to create a stable and operable political system for managing the country. The failure of this strategy, which was caused mostly by the missing political experiences, motivation, and knowledge of the local politicians, showed that decision-makers of international interests ignored the real needs and demands of the different ethnic groups. There is a whole constitution in the accords, which shows a federal model for co-existence of the mentioned ethnicities. As Glassner (1994) argues that, the state form of the federation is "the most geographically expressive of all political systems". Although politically, the two member states have to co-exist, their special interests (within ingroup) are much more important than the country's demands. Reaching the political and administration level of the issue, the fact is that the different ethnic interests have enough place and opportunity to thrive. As a consequence, RS is acting as an independent nation-state, cooperating with other nation-states from the world avoiding the state of BiH. The two entities have more authority than the central government (Klemencic, 2001, p. 64).

They are able to do that because the common federal political system is not strong enough to obstacle them on this strategy. The Entity Veto and its use is a good example of how the concept of "Bosnian" doesn't exist in the people's and their representatives' mind as a notion, as a community (Önsoy, 2011, p.129). As in the first years of BiH was an artificial state under international control, without inner intentions has been kept alive and the situation has not changed anything until now. In this sense, the choice could be effective in peacekeeping from the military perspective, but not from the aspect of the society as a community.

"The foremost reason for contemporary problems is the weak BiH state." (Önsoy, 2011, p.129). The 19 cantons have 19 different office of police. The country needs to launch a reform in this field. Without a unified police system, the state administration won't be able to find and get in the illegal guns and other military instruments from the civil society. The administration started a program, titled Accumulation of arms (Önsoy, 2011, p.129). The huge number of illegal guns is held by every nationality which brings in itself the possibility of a civil war - there is no trust between the groups. All, there is no country-wide radio system, neither criminal record system. This nonsense situation clearly shows the total absence of trust between the communities and the lacking of the motivation to manage their common life together and reach a peaceful.

Looking details about the country, the most solid information about the society is the division by ethnicities. Officially the citizens of Bosnia in Herzegovina are named as Bosnians. This term is practically an official name of citizenship, but at the practical level it does not mean anything. This community, as a category has no real and shared message for the ethnicities, inhabitants. The majority of the society identifies

itself as Bosniak Muslim. This group has long historical roots from the past on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and they feel attachment strongly to the current state much more strongly from the other two distinct ethnicities. As a result, they are in favour of centralization of the State. On the other hand the Bosniak group is an exception in terms of religiosity on the Peninsula. As a Muslim community, they are surrounded by the Christian neighbouring countries in the region. The logic and values through which they manage and organize their life are totally different from the other groups' values and interests. The second biggest ethnic group in BiH is the Orthodox Serbs. They own also a relatively expanding territory where they manage every part of their life as an independent country. They were having strong support from Serbia - until the EU warned Serbia if they continue to support the independent efforts of Republika Srpska, the EU will use certain sanction against Serbia. The third significant ethnic community of the country is the Catholic Croats having also a supportive background from Croatia. They are not as strong as the previous two ethnic groups, but Croats have also different political party, education system and opinion in the Bosnian Parliament, they are particularly strong in Croats concentrated Cantons of FBiH. There are around 130,000 people from the 3,530,000 Bosnians. The number of population by national/ethnic affiliation along with the people who belong other nationality or didn't want to answer the question (Klemencic, 2001, pp. 67-69)- is presented by the chart above.

At a point, Muslims changed their ethnic name from Muslims to Bosniaks, as a radical opinion expression acting, in order to gain the support of Western countries - lose the religious meaning of their name (Klemencic, 2001, p. 69). In case of the other relevant ethnic communities, the same tendency can be pointed out. They need a collective identity as a framework of their life, their personal identity, and the created country is not able to offer a comparative or higher identity against the ethnic ones.

The important point in social categorization process of Tajfel and Turner is in-groups' differentiation from out-groups. BiH is a political identity and emerged as an external intervention of the international community. Therefore, it has been surrounded by unnatural country borders since the neighboring countries don't differentiate from the segments of society in BiH. Serbia contains more similarity to Bosnian Serbs rather than any other constituent nations and Croatia features same characteristics as Bosnian Croats. One of the significant reason why BiH cannot provide a stronger collective identity is that of the constituent ethnic groups' ties with rival shared identities in a citizenship point of view with these countries. To illustrate, Bosnian Serbs tend to threat the central government of BiH to be independent and to join to Serbia. In this respect, they are in favor of decentralization.

In addition, there are also other reasons worthwhile to be considered as the potential reasons and roots of the ethnic conflicts in the country. In this respect, the multifactorial approach should be adopted in order to fully understand the situation which impedes the formation of the larger collective identity. The general growth of tension between political and ethnic groups (the un-solid and weak political context encourage groups to act individually follow their own interests) is comparing with another big challenge. The weak and fluid economic system is appearing as one of the prominent reasons. First of all, the financial situation of the country is distressingly ill-conditioned. Besides, the extremely high percentage of unemployment among young people, the development and economic power differences between the regions and cantons are often concurring with differences between ethnic groups. It means that the economic setback is also added to the quagmire of the current situation, with its all dimensions and complexity of the factors (Önsoy, 2011, p.134). People, in general, have no strong economic situation, nor purposes and vision. Almost the half of the young generations have no chance to find work. This factor makes the society frustrated and lost in every single ethnic group. That is the way how the religiosity and another dimension of the personal and collective identity have much more relevance in the Bosnians' life.

The geographical situation also seems very complex. They have demographically mixed cantons which accommodate Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs together. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, DPA has separated the country (51:49) to two main entities; RS and FBiH - most of the Croat population live in FBiH together with Bosniak majority. On the other hand, the Accords designed an *Inter-entity boundary line* (IEBL), (Klemencic, 2001, p. 66), which has established entity borders. The same line also used to divide two armies until 2005 when finally entities have reached to an agreement to claim defense ministry and unified defense forces. However, still, the two sub-state are able to separate themselves from each other and defend their own territory from the other and in some sense from the common federal administration as well which seems another problem adopt the collective identity of Bosnia in a state level.

Last but not least, as an essence of the whole ethnic motivation behind the actings, the education system shows up in the clearest way the core of the conflict. It also implies the ongoing cleavages are maintained within the development of the younger generations as a challenge to the future formation of the shared identity. It is to consider the education system and entity and cantons choice of curriculum and its

implications, which includes three different ethnic/national curriculums in the elementary and secondary level of education with different history textbooks, different biased teacher presentations about history. Groups of Bosnia, today, still find their collective identity - and try to preserve in this way – in ethnicity or religion as a smaller ingroup unit. Eventually, all of these elements of the ethnic community prevents the reach to the larger collective identity of BiH as a citizenship identity. Every different ethnic community is allowed to teach its own interpretation of its collective memory and culture. The system and the content are obviously the sources of the ethnic tensions and conflicts (Önsoy, 2011, pp. 136-137).

Briefly, BiH shared collective identity would be a decent in-group only if other ethnic identities (in-groups) lost their power and popularity. As the above-mentioned topics can illustrate the complexity of the conflict, the multiple dimension of the concept of identity is recognizable. From the perspective of collective identity, we can argue that the lacking of the larger collective identity in the country is the real basis and sources of the ethnic conflicts. There is no Bosnian common identity in terms of economy, culture, education or society. However, without these elements of the peacebuilding process, the country as a community, as a larger entity has deemed to follow only one way. Namely, the inner group identities will become more important and the country as a whole will fail.

Table: Population by ethnic/ national affiliation and sex, level BiH, FBiH, RS and BD.

Area	Sex	Total	Ethnicity/Nationality					
			Bosniak	Croat	Serb	Not declared	Other	No answer
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Total	3.531.159	1.769.592	544.780	1.086.733	27.055	96.539	6.460
	M	1.732.270	867.492	267.789	534.030	11.503	48.294	3.162
	F	1.798.889	902.100	276.991	552.703	15.552	48.245	3.298
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Total	2.219.220	1.562.372	497.883	56.550	18.344	79.838	4.233
	M	1.087.993	765.523	246.360	25.999	7.962	40.011	2.138
	F	1.131.227	796.849	251.523	30.551	10.382	39.827	2.095
Republika Srpska	Total	1.228.423	171.839	29.645	1.001.299	8.189	15.324	2.127
	M	603.027	84.558	12.570	494.008	3.328	7.588	975
	F	625.396	87.281	17.075	507.291	4.861	7.736	1.152
BRCKO District Bosnia and Herzegovina	Total	83.516	35.381	17.252	28.884	522	1.377	100
	M	41.250	17.411	8.859	14.023	213	695	49
	F	42.266	17.970	8.393	14.861	309	682	51

Source: <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/southeasturope/the-political-statistics-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina/?fbclid=IwAR1zrOM7IbU2o6G93MnnpP5-jHNhKY8VgBf1Y8jAiVewKmFpIZL12NvFkDE>
(Accessed on 19.02.2019)

Conclusion

As concluding remarks, one can see that building a ‘collective identity’ in Bosnia as an ethnically and deeply fragmented community presents a challenging attempt. The existing literature puts its emphasis on the issue and possibilities of “peaceful state building” and disregards the importance of shared collective identity at a state level. However, we claim that applying social categorisation process to BiH shared collective identity - in order to decrease social distance among groups - provides a unique way to rethink and examine BiH by highlighting ingroup in a larger manner since we assume that even if the identity is arbitrary, constructed shared collective identity leads groups to identify themselves as “us” (in-group) and identify others as “them” (out-group). Nevertheless, the paper finds out that the existent cleavages (in groups) based on different aspects strongly hinder to reach a potential shared collective identity in BiH. Therefore, created artificial state seems to be not enough to close cleavages in BiH case since it does not supersede the existing rival identities (ethnic\religious).

The study points out the reasons and roots of conflict in the country that prevents communities to reach a larger collective identity, to unite together in BiH as a created in-group. First of all, as SITs also claim, ethnic community have been used in political rhetoric and an educational system that facilitates the integration of the younger generations in the logic of desired thinking and action of the politics of ethnicity. Contending groups which focusing their own ethnic\national de-facto entities utilize interpretations of conflict by portraying other groups as murders, rapists, intruders and this, eventually, manipulates societies into hate and hostility. Also, the weak power of central government and strong entities motivates ethnic politics to dominate the communities agenda without giving attention to the BiH problems as a state.

Moreover, the nature of rival identities seems to be another obstacle to reach a shared collective identity. Ethnicity and religion provide more collectivity than state citizenship can provide. On the other hand, according to the SIT, in-groups need salient characteristics in order to differentiate from other groups. However, BiH identity does not accommodate any strong salient features. The notion of being Bosnian does not exist in the people’s and representatives mind but to being Bosniak (Muslim), Serb or Croat. This becomes prominent when we analyzed the larger collective identity.

In addition to mentioned reasons, there are some other factors have been pointed; the lack of living memory of communities in a peaceful co-existing environment in Yugoslavia seems like a forgotten past. Generations learn the feeling of hate and discrimination from their family’s immediate past experiences. Furthermore, the absence of unified police service and criminal record system, artificial country borders with strong affiliations with neighboring countries, low socio-economic situations also play significant obstacles to reach a shared collectivity in Bosnian boundaries. In this sense, while the existent challenges standing in front of the formation of collective identity in BiH are clear enough to be revealed, the puzzle whether there would be ever a possibility of forming such identity at the State level still remains to be answered.

References

- Aitken, R. (2010). Consociational peace processes and ethnicity: The implications of the Dayton and Good Friday Agreements for ethnic identities and politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. In *The Challenges of Ethno-Nationalism*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Balcells, M. (2015). Left behind? Cultural destruction, the role of the International Criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in deterring it and cultural heritage prevention policies in the aftermath of the Balkan wars. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 21(1), 1-13.
- Brewer, M. B. (2001). The many faces of social identity: Implications for political psychology. *Political psychology*, 22(1), 115-125.
- Çoymak, A. (2009). Associations of religious identification, secular identification, perceived discrimination, and political trust with ethnic and societal (national) identification. Middle East Technical University.
- Ford, T. E., & Tonander, G. R. (1998). The role of differentiation between groups and social identity in stereotype formation. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 372-384.
- Guelke, A. (2012). Politics in deeply divided societies. *Polity*.
- Hacking, I. (2004). Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: Between discourse in the abstract and face-to-face interaction. *Economy and Society*, 33(3), p. 277-302.
- Herrmann, R. K., Risse-Kappen, T., & Brewer, M. B. (Eds.). (2004). *Transnational identities: Becoming*

European in the EU. Rowman & Littlefield.

Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 255-269.

Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political psychology*, 22(1), 127-156.

Hutchinson, J., & Smith, A. D. (Eds.). (2000). *Nationalism: critical concepts in political science* (Vol. 1). Psychology Press.

Karolewski, I. P. (2009). *Citizenship and collective identity in Europe*. Routledge.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington, DC: USIP.

Lijphart, A. (1977). *Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration*. Yale University Press.

Lynch, J. (2014). *Peace journalism*. Hawthorn Press.

Okey, R. (2002). A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists: Béni Kállay, István Burián and Lajos Thallóczy in the Age of High Nationalism. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 234-266.

Ongur, H. O. (2010). Towards a social identity for Europe? A social psychological approach to European identity studies. *Review of European Studies*, 2(2), 133.

Önsoy, M. (2011). Coping with Bosnia-Herzegovina's critical problems: Reconsidering the international community's role. *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, 7(25), 121.

Pavković, A., & Kelen, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Anthems and the making of nation states: identity and nationalism in the Balkans*. IB Tauris.

Simon, B., & Klandermans, B. (2001). Politicized collective identity: A social psychological analysis. *American psychologist*, 56(4), p 319-331.

Tajfel, H. (Ed.). (2010). *The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. In J. T. Jost & J. Sidanius (Eds.), *Key readings in social psychology*. Political psychology: Key readings (pp. 276-293). New York, NY, US: Psychology Press.

Torsti, P. (2003). Divergent stories, convergent attitudes: Study on the presence of history, history textbooks, and the thinking of youth in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.

© DKE 2018

dke[at]southeast-europe.org

<http://www.southeast-europe.org>

Note: *Respected Researchers*, if you make a reference to this article or quote part of it, please send us an email at [dke\(at\)southeast-europe.org](mailto:dke(at)southeast-europe.org) to let us know that. *Please cite the article as follows:*

Bora Besgül - Katalin Nádás-Nagy – Melek-Aylin-Özoflu: Formation of Collective Identity as an Experimental rabbit or a possibility. An analysis of deeply divided society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *International Relations Quarterly*, ISSN 2062-1973, Vol. 9. No.3-4. (2018) 11 p. Thank you for your kind collaboration. *Editor-in-Chief*