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The experience of internally displaced women during
the Bosnian war

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Riepilogo

Dopo lo scioglimento della Repubblica Socialista Federale di Jugoslavia nel 1990s, sul territorio della penisola balcanica si sono verificati diversi conflitti. Tra questi, la guerra in Bosnia è stata un conflitto armato internazionale durato dal 1992 al 1995. Per raggiungere l'indipendenza, il paese ha dovuto affrontare un gran numero di crisi interne che hanno provocato una miriade di vittime.

Il corso degli eventi di questa guerra è stato fortemente influenzato dalle idee nazionalistiche imposte dagli aggressori. Ciò ha provocato un'eccezionale instabilità economica e politica nel paese, influenzando anche la migrazione degli sfollati interni.

Il campo degli studi sulla migrazione spesso affronta sfide nell'analisi di casi di studio specifici. Poiché la situazione è complessa a causa della presenza di una popolazione multi-etnica, l'analisi dell'accuratezza e della disponibilità delle statistiche registrate presenta notevoli difficoltà.

Quando si parla della guerra in Bosnia, gli stereotipi e i valori tradizionali sono stati tra i principali fattori che hanno influenzato le indagini sugli sfollati interni, in particolare sulle donne. Negli studi sulla migrazione, è noto che le donne sono classificate come uno dei gruppi più vulnerabili. Di solito, l'incapacità di proteggerli deriva dalla mancanza di risorse che avrebbero potuto essere fornite dalla comunità internazionale e dai governi nazionali. Ciononostante, l'analisi dei trasferimenti interni delle donne durante una guerra si è rivelata significativa non solo per gli studi sulla migrazione ma anche sui diritti umani. Vulnerabilità e trauma sono due chiavi importanti che devono essere prese in considerazione nell'esame dei diversi percorsi che le donne hanno intrapreso per sfuggire a situazioni di pericolo di vita. In un contesto del genere, sono state costrette a sacrificare la stabilità e la sicurezza, esponendosi involontariamente ai rischi.

La Bosnia ed Erzegovina è un paese noto per avere una struttura demografica diversificata. Tre grandi gruppi etnici hanno convissuto in relativa unità durante l'esistenza della Repubblica di Jugoslavia. Nel dopoguerra, però, la situazione è mutata drasticamente, determinando instabilità, insicurezza e incapacità di ristabilire gli equilibri precedenti.

Il senso di appartenenza ad una società è profondamente connesso alla nozione di identità, causando diverse percezioni individuali. Per prolungare il conflitto e l'odio, diversi concetti di appartenenza etnica e di religione sono stati utilizzati come strumenti per creare maggiore contrasto tra i gruppi etnici, diventando un fattore determinante negli eventi disastrosi che hanno avuto luogo. Uno di questi eventi è stato il genocidio di Srebrenica. Le donne di quella comunità hanno affrontato eventi e perdite inimmaginabili, con conseguenze che si percepiscono ancora oggi.

Il dopoguerra ha causato elevati livelli di incertezze e fluttuazioni nella costituzione della Bosnia ed Erzegovina. Anche se i negoziati di pace del 1995 hanno portato alla stesura dell'accordo di Dayton, le conseguenze si sono presentate con un numero ancora maggiore di sfide. Le tensioni politiche continuarono ad essere la forza trainante di tutte le questioni che si verificano nel paese. Queste tensioni stanno intensificando i fallimenti delle leggi giurisdizionali e nazionali e le donne sopravvissute alla guerra si trovano ancora ad affrontare problemi specifici per la violazione dei loro diritti. Sono sottorappresentate e si registrano scarsi progressi nel miglioramento della loro inclusione in politica. Il governo continua a non riuscire a risolvere i casi di stupro, violenza psicologica, tortura e simili. Inoltre, non volendo vivere sotto il peso degli errori del passato, le donne hanno avviato numerose proteste e creato organizzazioni per continuare a lottare per i propri diritti. Anche se si registrano risultati positivi in questo ambito, restano necessari numerosi miglioramenti e riforme.

Il focus di questa tesi è sul flusso migratorio delle donne all'interno del territorio della Bosnia ed Erzegovina, nonché sugli effetti psicologici e fisici che hanno subito durante il conflitto. Il capitolo 1 tratta il quadro teorico e la panoramica della letteratura utilizzata per l'analisi. Per comprendere le origini della guerra in Bosnia verrà presentato un breve contesto storico

della Repubblica di Jugoslavia. Ciò consentirà una comprensione più chiara dei cambiamenti politici e socioeconomici in Bosnia ed Erzegovina. La tesi prosegue con il Capitolo 2 che inizia con una panoramica degli sfollati interni e delle conseguenze della migrazione. Per acquisire familiarità con il contesto, l'ulteriore struttura dell'argomentazione si restringerà alla riflessione sulla vita delle donne. Verranno presentati esempi di casi di studio distinti relativi alle loro torture e ai loro traumi. Attraverso fonti basate su libri, interviste, testimonianze e dati statistici, si discuterà come diverse prospettive siano state punti decisivi nei fattori *pull e push* durante il processo di sfollamento interno. Con elementi politici, la tesi avrà un approccio multidimensionale su questo argomento ampliando l'analisi alla considerazione di molteplici punti di vista. A scopo comparativo verranno analizzate interviste a donne di anni specifici del dopoguerra. Si potrà notare il peso di elementi particolari che sono stati enfatizzati nelle loro risposte e atteggiamenti. Poiché provengono da contesti diversi, verrà spiegato come sia avvenuto un cambiamento drastico per il loro status economico e politico. Il capitolo 3 fornirà un contesto internazionale, proseguendo con la discussione del ruolo delle organizzazioni internazionali e non governative che sono state attive durante gli anni della guerra in Bosnia. Partendo da una panoramica generale del tipo di governance multilivello, si discuterà come le organizzazioni internazionali abbiano un impatto significativo sui movimenti interni delle persone. Successivamente, l'analisi si concentrerà sulle donne e sui loro diritti nei conflitti armati. In quanto tale, la creazione di zone sicure mostra il livello di "successo" che le organizzazioni internazionali hanno raggiunto durante la guerra in Bosnia. Soprattutto in quelle regioni, le donne sono state esposte a violenza fisica, sessuale e psicologica. Il capitolo si concluderà con la riflessione sui movimenti delle donne e sulle lotte per i diritti umani in Bosnia ed Erzegovina. Verrà inoltre presentata una breve riflessione sulla situazione odierna. La tesi proseguirà con la panoramica dei dati statistici e le spiegazioni delle attuali leggi nazionali attive nel paese che proteggono le donne. Questo darà un'idea dei progressi avvenuti dalla fine della guerra. In termini pratici sussistono ancora notevoli complessità. Dal punto di vista teorico, l'istituzione di tali leggi ha richiesto lunghe creazioni e alternanze. Tali inefficienze hanno continuato a causare fallimenti nelle prestazioni del governo e l'incapacità di mantenere le crisi. Alla fine,

la conclusione fornirà una panoramica della ricerca e delle sfide future che ci attendono. Sintetizzeranno i punti principali emersi da questa indagine e verranno presentati casi di studio. Verranno evidenziate specifiche raccomandazioni per il miglioramento delle attività che riguardano la tutela dei diritti umani. Ciò riguarda soprattutto le donne sopravvissute alla guerra in Bosnia.

Questa tesi affronta aspetti importanti degli studi sulla migrazione prendendo in considerazione i movimenti individuali e il comportamento delle donne che decidono di lasciare le proprie case. Ciò dimostra l'importanza delle dinamiche delle diversità che derivano da diversi tipi di mobilità. Quando si tratta di studi come questi, testimoni diretti di violenze psicologiche e fisiche possono fornire una migliore comprensione dell'intensità degli eventi bellici. Ciò può produrre una visione più dettagliata e previsioni migliori dei settori della vita sociale che necessitano di riforme e miglioramenti urgenti.

Abstract

Bosnian war is one of the most specific type of conflict that is hard to define and classify it as belonging to one category. Since the Second World war it has brought one of the greatest human sufferings in history and continues to be analyzed and talked about even today. Despite the enormous number of civil casualties, migration domain is often a topic that gets slightly overlooked and not so in-depth analyzed. If so, it is mostly focused on the general deduction of data and available sources. However at that time, there was a certain difficulty in collection of information and even availability of sources to record the most important data. Having this in mind, migration specifically of internally displaced women remains to be a topic that requires better methods of analysis and research. This is due to the versatility of such investigation that tackles important domains of human rights and migration studies. This thesis focuses on not only the migration flow of women inside the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina but also the torture and psychological effects that they had to endure under these circumstances. Chapter 1 will present the theoretical framework and an overview of historical background which will give detailed explanation of the context of the circumstances in the country. Chapter 2 proceeds with a general approach; firstly it will be talked about the internally displaced people on worldwide basis and then narrowing it down to the one of the most vulnerable groups, women. Life of women who had to fight for survival and the trauma during the war and in postwar period will be presented as well. An insight of testimonies would give further interpretation for understanding what problems they have faced. With this, it will be analyzed how migration flows not only show a natural phenomena of people moving to other places because of certain reasons but also the nature of elements that affect them the most in pull push factors and decisions to leave their homes. With political elements added to it, the thesis will have a multi dimensional approach to this topic, hence giving different perspectives which enhances the interpretation from different points of view. As such, Chapter 3 will focus on the international organizations and their work for the protection of most vulnerable groups in the process of migrations. This will be followed up with the context of the case study of Bosnian war and women as one of the most actors.

The work is based on the use of literature ranging from books that present the lives of women to interviews with direct questions about the violence and torture they have experienced. Following this, some video material adds to the understanding of the environment in which women lived during that time. Data and recorded reports from the international organizations give a statistical data on the migration flow during the Bosnian war. In the end a deep reflection to the situation today has been taken into consideration as well, which helps in deducing conclusions of what can be done in the future for the prevention of these type of events. The thesis aims on presenting a study of the most important elements on sociological, political, international and migration studies level.

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Chapter 1

Women and the Bosnian war

1.1 Introduction to the study, research questions and limitations of the thesis

An armed conflict is described as a war between two or more States, who found themselves in circumstances of different reasons for its objectives and magnitude (UNDRR, n.d.). In international law two types of armed conflicts were identified; international armed conflicts and non international armed conflicts. The latter one is specifically pointing out the nature of a clash between non governmental forces and armed groups inside the territory of one country (ICRC, n.d.). This is particularly characteristic for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that lasted from 1992-1995. The war has brought one of the biggest civil casualties in the history since the World War II, specifically the Srebrenica genocide (Roick, 2020). More than 8000 people have lost their lives and reports show over 1 million people being internally displaced and forced to leave the borders of their homeland (Franz, n.d.). In general terms, various records of exact number of refugees has been released in various Balkan countries that geographically are close to the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia have received large number of people in their shelters and asylums. This was one of the largest emigrations that took place in the early 1990s on these territories, leaving almost half of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina relocated in another country. However, large percentage of people did not find the means for leaving the borders. In that sense, they were forced to leave their homes and change the places of their residencies. Their migration routes consisted to either going to the nearest safest location or moving across the country to reach the established “safe areas” by the United Nations (Lampe, n.d.). In the state of a war such as Bosnian one, those regions war far from the condition of being “safe” with basic living conditions. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is

on the migration flow of internally displaced people and consequences that this war brought to them. In order to reflect on the nature of the most vulnerable groups, the analysis will be gradually narrowed down on women and the consequences that they suffered during these years of the armed conflict. It will be examined of how the circumstances and events led them to such state of being a target of further objectives that the war has brought. It will be taken into consideration of what kind of consequences, physically and mentally they had to endure in order to survive. The discussion will further focus on the failures of adequate protection of women alongside the deprived rights even in the postwar period. It will be discussed how work of international and non-governmental organizations focus further activities and performance for women's activism as well.

When it comes to the nature of the study cases, the thesis in itself has opened up specific research questions. For instance, *what were the consequences of the migration flow of internally displaced women during the war?* points out the analysis of major physical and psychological challenges. *How did the safe areas on the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina help women in a wartime zone?* On the other side, pointing out other problems, it is suffice to investigate what are the other issues that needed to be solved, or more specifically what were the reasons that have limited the migration route of women only to the relocation to another city or across country in order to seek safer places for survival. *How did the international organizations fail in protection of basic human rights concerning the situation of women in a war?* Dealing with the crisis, a country in the state of an armed conflict is not able to properly secure protection for the civilians. So, it is inevitable to take into consideration that the international organizations usually have extended ability to become the major source of aid in these situations. One of the examples that will be further elaborated is UNHCR, IOM and similar, which are created with the aim of protection of refugee and IDPs rights.

Another question that arises from this type of discussion concerns *the psychological and physical consequences that women have dealt with and are still suffering from even today after more than 25 years since the war ended.* As these kind of events can have great

influence on the decision making process, it is important to know that internal displacements come from individual choices under various circumstances. Considering it on micro level, different elements impact their choices of staying in the country or moving to another. This significantly determines the further flows of migrations. That is why examining the psychological and physical aspect is important when it is talked about this type of movements.

Who or what is the most efficient actor and protector of human rights in the wartime period?

As this case study shows that most of the actors failed in their attempts to provide security, the question is left on what effective results can be achieved and what is important to do in order to prevent outcomes as these ones. Can actually affected people rely completely on subjects such as institutions or international organizations may appear to be just another weak chain during an armed conflict.

The goal of this type of work is on analysis of the migration flows under the circumstance of a war where women are the primary focus. In order to produce an efficient analysis of this topic, the framework is reduced on the internally displaced people. This is to give a closer look to the type of migration flow that is largely affecting the economy and social dimension of a country. Additionally to this, an immersion of political dimension and human rights will be presented with this topic which will give wider approach in the analysis and formation of further arguments.

Women are usually one of the most sensitive groups of society that are suffering large consequences for a very long period of time. While combining their social statuses and memories of specific events in their testimonies, it is possible to include a sociological and psychological feature as well. With this, the work will have a multi-dimensional approach that tackles migration studies through international relations with the reflection on main sociological characteristics that are coming with the events of a war. This topic with multiple perspectives can give effective conclusions for future research studies. The subject of

internally displaced women gives a narrower framework also on the timeline of events and specific regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Limitations of the thesis

As every topic itself can have specific difficulties in research process, this theme is very specific in its nature. Even though, the focus on the sources is based on the qualitative methodology, there are many limitations that need to be taken into the account. In this work my aim is to fully understand the position in which women found themselves during the war as well as the living conditions that they have faced. This will be presented through the comparison to the life before, during and after the conflict for which I believe had a huge impact on the psychological side of an individual. This is to explain, physical and emotional pain they have endured. In that case, data collection from interviews, observations, surveys, analysis of the documents and autobiographical books can be excellent sources for reaching the main objectives of the thesis. However, it may be argued that some specific authors of books have given the weight to the subjective side in their writings of a story about a woman who endured physical violence in the war. In another case, the availability of data might give some issues, considering that the records of exact number of internally displaced women was not successfully registered for a very long time. This lack of comprehensive information may affect the models of movements to a large extent. The choice of surveys may be classified as *traditional data* (UCL Open Environ, 2017). This implies that such methods could still be relying on techniques of collection and creation of information that could potentially result in lesser up to date quality. When comparing, some data may be slightly different from the latest releases. As such, it is inevitable that certain range of uncertainties is present, but not necessarily with a significant number of deviations. The interviews might contain some questions that are likely to be classified as biased. That would lead to predictable answers from the interviewee. However, in this case accuracy is something flexible; when

interviewing a woman who has been through psychological torture in that time, it does not directly entail that the arguments of the conversation are biased in its essence.

Internally displaced people do have different views on their decision making processes than refugees. That's why in the investigation, there might have been a lack of all the conditions that affect one person on deciding to not push themselves in completely leaving the homeland like the others. Different conclusions might be drawn in this case and that could affect the way of how various research studies are conducted and under which circumstances. Video materials that are taken into the consideration for this thesis can have specific modifications in their montage of materials that is shown to the public. Moreover, even the lack of understanding the language in which people are speaking can not necessarily reduce the information about the facts and events that took place, but they could significantly scale down the impression of how serious the effects on women were and how the war brought difficulties on much larger intensity. This may partially explain the reason of the consequences to still be present for a long time during the postwar period. Limitations as these are imminent for a consideration. It does not diminish the fact that these kind of resources could give a better insight on the access to the type of information international community had during the Bosnian conflict. In that specific way, the lack of a medium of communication for the civilians in Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented as well.

1.2 Theoretical framework, literature overview and structure of the thesis

For a very long time researchers, sociologists and international organizations have tried to constitute a definition of a migrant and migration that would be a common reference used for further guidance in research and similar (JRC, 2018). One of the examples is from the United Nations, "Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration", 1998, where it states that

An international migrant is defined as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. A person's country of usual residence is that in which the person lives. It refers to the country in which the person has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not entail a change in the country of usual residence.

However, there is no final consensus in this definition, because circumstances of a migrant change depending on the environment in which they live. There is a difference in terms such as *migrant*, *immigrant* and *internally displaced people*. In the different literature, these terms are used interchangeably and frequently could refer to different group of people. This sometimes imposes difficulties in understanding the main issues discussed. Some scholars use the term migrants also for people who move inside the borders of their country. This is the situation in most of case studies that are presented in Bosnian language and which are also used for this thesis. Although it can impose different interpretations in the further analysis, the deduction of main points were the same in all literature. For this, a reference to the definition of specific terms that will be used in the writing will be highlighted. Therefore,

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border are called the internally displaced people or IDP (UNHCR, n.d.).

International organizations (IOs) and NGOs are institutions or actors who have the responsibility of providing knowledge and expertise in this domain. Moreover, if the nature of their establishment is meant to meet such objectives, they are responsible for securing international protection for people who are subject to migration flows or process of migration. In the event of an armed conflict they are taking the role of the state. This is granted in the situation where the country is not able to provide such circumstances or is prevented to ensure similar conditions. The IOs have the capacity to fully control

establishment and manage the functions of refugee or camps for humanitarian aid. In this case they are providing also funding and are intermediaries during an armed conflict. So, in some way they are presenting the multilevel of global migration governance. One such examples are UNHCR, IOM, European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

Forced migration is in this case a major feature of the migration flow of internally displaced people. Based on its characteristics and under which circumstances is developed, it can be certainly taken as the push and pull factor theory. The only reason for IDPs leaving their homes and moving to other cities was due to the lack of security and basic resources for living conditions. The factor that made them return to their initial residencies was only when the cities were freed and giving sufficient conditions for living. On the other hand, the reasons might be related to the strong ties that an individual creates in the first place. This is related to the sense of belonging, family and going back to its own roots.

Literature that has been used in this case is focused on the documents and sources that explain first the definition of migration and flows as well as differences between internally displaced people and refugees. Furthermore, the sources about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and explanations of the circumstances under which the conflict expanded to greater levels in terms of casualties provide details for the elaboration of historical events. Books that describe the nature of war give an insight of the nature of environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. This gives explanations to how civilians found themselves in a complete state of vulnerability due to the magnitude of the Bosnian war. Additionally, for the main purpose of the thesis, different interviews, surveys and books are analyzed which specifically talk about women and their lives before, during and after the war. The interviews that represent their testimonies are with no doubt one of the best ways of getting a comprehensive analysis of their psychological sufferings. This gives an overview from a sociological perspectives which ensures a more critical approach on what crucial reforms were needed to take place. Further collection of data focused on the failure of international organizations to act on time and secure efficient outcomes. In this case, the primary sources are based on the books, reports, interviews and

statistics from international organizations. Secondary sources are mainly scholarly articles and other data that is not directly focused on the topic of thesis but give an examination of other conditions that need to be taken into consideration.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the objectives, structure and theoretical framework of the thesis. It was analyzed how the literature will be used in the work. In the end the timeline of historical events is presented as well. The range dates from the period of the existence of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia to the dissolution, events of Bosnian war and postwar period.

Chapter 2 dwells into the topic of women in the conflict and their position during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina war. It will focus on case studies in specific towns that were heavily affected by the effects of the war. It will be seen how the physical violence and mental issues that women had to endure and continue to live with, remain a burden for further improvements even for the society as a whole. This will reflect to their state of living under constant vulnerability and how they had to bring their decisions to relocate to other regions of the country, while their homes were getting destroyed.

Chapter 3 focuses on international organizations and their failures to protect women especially during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is also to mention their little influence even in the postwar period. Under extremely poor political and economic situation in the country, they still remain powerless to improve the situations where constant neglect and violation of basic human rights is widely present. Additionally, the discussion will proceed to focus on women movements, activism and efforts to improve their social statuses.

The conclusion summarizes the presented chain of reasonings and gives also a brief picture of how the situation is today, especially about the women who have been the victims of violence and how they continued to live in “normal conditions”. In the end a critical review

was given alongside the possible solutions for the improvements and answers for the previously mentioned research questions.

1.3 Historical overview of the Bosnian war

The Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia or short for SFRY was a federation of six republics located in Southeast and Central Europe (Weller, 1992, p. 1). It was created in the year 1945. The country lasted with a strong political and economical stability under the government of Josip Broz Tito and the communist government regime until 1991. Countries that constituted the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia at that time were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Two autonomous provinces were established on the territory of Serbian republic; Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija (Baker, 2015, p.18). The demographic structure of the country was constituted of diverse ethnic groups, living all together governed by a specifically customized policy (Bertsch, 1977, p. 89). In demographic sense, the country was known to have high magnitude of present multi ethnic population. One of the largest percentages of ethnic groups were those who identified themselves as Serbs, Croats, ethnic Muslims, Yugoslavs as well as wide range of minorities (Weller, 1992, p.1). Specifically, when it comes to the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country was seen as the only federation in the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia where three ethnicities were living together; Muslims, Croats and Serbs. (Baker, 2015, p. 28). Even under those circumstances, it was inevitable to take into the account that certain type of rules and regulations existed and were implemented in order for the domestic affairs to exist in a moderately peaceful flow.

Over the years, the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia has changed four times its constitution. In many cases the necessity for such reforms took place because of the increased changes among the constitutive republics. In such circumstances, the challenges of political structure were of utmost importance for its adjustments (Dragnich, 1946, p. 420). The provinces of Serbia have enjoyed increased autonomy. This had a strong reflection on the

Serbian parliament attitude and power in the representation of Serbian people. The constitution itself was focused on the elements of republicanism and federalism. This was characteristic for the constitution that was established in 1946. Major difference with the previous ones was that in the year 1974 the wide extent of socio economics features were included (Ibid.). The President of the SFRY, Josip Broz Tito had many challenges when he came at the position. Even as possessing the aspects of a status of the de facto monarch, Tito was one of the most loved presidents at that time. Significant is to mention his policies and the management of countries affairs. He focused on the importance of maintaining independence of the federation despite existent pressures. With external factors, the intensities of domestic tensions were based on differences between ethnic groups. He worked on building strong grounds of communism as a political party that will enhance the freedom or self management of each republic. This all should have been achieved in the limits of avoiding causing further adversities or other form of potential instability (Campbell, 1980, p. 1049). Each specific policy had great influence to various extents on the national identity. According to Mcgoldrick (1999, p. 8): “..The things that divided the state seem overwhelming by comparison with the things that united it.”

The popular doctrine in Tito’s time was *Brotherhood and unity*. This slogan has regulated inter ethnic relations on a relatively stable level (Baker, 2015, p. 24). In this way, the dominant mindset was based on the belief that Republics are only able to function if they are united or together. This point of view and way of leading a country has greatly affected political decisions in long term. As Tito once said, *We have split an ocean of blood for the brotherhood and unity of our peoples and we shall not allow anyone to touch or destroy it from within. None of our Republics would be anything if we weren’t together; but we have to create our own history – history of United Yugoslavia, also in the future.* With this kind of policy the controlling effect of stability was more promised than jeopardized. Interestingly, because of its demographic structure, Bosnia and Herzegovina was often considered as “Small Yugoslavia.” Having this demographic composition inside a country was not an easy task to control. This is particularly challenging when the present changing nature of elites

and political leaders who wanted to adjust to their own goals and policies is taken into account.

The political problems such as minor inter state conflicts did take place. Despite that, Josip Broz Tito was a respected leader and the smallest cases of movements of oppositions did not alter any main dominant communist policy of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. The military and police structure of the country were highly organized, which was embodied through the efficient and fast responses in the events of any irregularities. Equality among the ethnic groups had achieved its strong roots which produced more or less a peaceful coexistence among the society. Interdependence and similarities were not omitted, but encouraged in forms of promotions. This gave the possibility of national conflicts being controlled to a somewhat larger extent.

Yugoslav People's Army or short for JNA was the military of Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia and a signature of Tito's "helpmeet in attaining power" and " a model institution devoted to its commander, Marshal Tito." (Niebuhr, 2018, p. 131) The military presented technically an enormous significance in terms of protection of country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. During its existence, JNA was among the five most strongest militaries in the world (Panić, 2015). The main headquarters were in Belgrade, in the region of today's Republic of Serbia. This adds to the important feature of the idea of so-called Great Serbia, that will be explained in the following pages more in detail. Moreover, this concept elaborates further on the circumstances of specific events that have taken place after the dissolution of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The internal structure of the military of the SFRY was highly organized in the framework of the previously mentioned doctrine. In this perspective, interdependence was an element that was given priority to in its practice. This was one of the ways to influence the mindset of soldiers and their awareness that they need to follow the government and rules imposed under one leader, the president of the state. Other regions of the republics of the SFRY had their

own specifically tailored defense systems. Another doctrine that was practiced in Yugoslav's defense system was the *Total People's Defense* or *Opštenarodna odbrana* (Campbell, 1980, p. 1046). Since the process of mobilization was very successful, the JNA had a very stable and strong basis in its practice.

In the eyes of ordinary citizens, the army was seen as a serious and highly respected aspect of the federation. Any opposition to the army that had potential to significantly render the existent peace or even the smallest disturbances would lead to severe disciplined sanctions. Indeed, people had less motivations and intentions of suppressing the orders coming from the army or higher officials. Even if these circumstances seemed at first less favorable of giving the grounds for the existence of any forms of protests or similar, certain type of opposition was present. They can be taken as forms of passive effects which would have long term consequences on the events followed after the dissolution of the SFRY.

Despite all the existent conditions in which the country enjoyed more stability than major political problems, there were still radical individuals who were constantly imposing threats or challenges to the Brotherhood and unity policy. In this case, as an example is the activity of the Serbian radical Vojislav Šešelj. Being a founder of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), he was arrested couple of times for publicly criticizing the political figures and communist regime (Muslimović, 2018).

During the great international oil crisis that took place in 1973, Yugoslavia's economic situation was facing major setbacks. Foreign debt and borrowing rapidly increased, which caused further political and social instability. Very soon, de facto bankruptcy was reached and unemployment rates were dominant to a great extent. The costs that came with industrialization faced a slow down in its development, making the federation in a state of inability to provide or secure the materials for industry productions. Inflation slowed down the Communist regime to put the main focus on the development in general. This had caused less favorable conditions for the future recovery to be easier and efficient (Baker, 2015, p. 25). There are different debates on whether economic crisis as this one has directly caused

the dissolution of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. Many scholars argue that the credibility gap that was created affected the self – management that the communist regime was practicing (Baker, 2015, p. 26). If different perspective is taken, it can be said that not only pure economic difficulties led to the break-up. Causes lie in the combination of such circumstances with the oligarchic political system that affected the society and slowed down the possibility for growth. Protests started to take place, firstly in Kosovo in the 1980s and soon after, such demonstrations were also in other republics (Baker, 2015, p. 27).

An aspect that is important to take into consideration lies in understanding the type of mindsets that people had during the existence of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. In this way, the context of Bosnian war can be comprehended entirely and more accurately.

The ability to use certain situations as means of successful practice of political manipulation and exploitation of a generation for specific goals was the explanation of the course of events that took place during the breakup of the SFRY. After the death of the president Tito, tensions among the ethnic groups were gradually increasing. Together with the already present protests, nationalism, economic difficulties and bureaucratic gaps in managing simple issues, remained to be main elements that lead to the dissolution of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. The Republics wanted to separate themselves and each seek their own independence. Only one country wanted to continue the idea of the existence of a state such as the SFRY. It was the Republic of Serbia which due to the location of JNA headquarters and bringing back the idea of “Great Serbia” wanted to lead the new Yugoslavia and govern other states.

This ideology was based on the creation of a great Serb state that would include all regions of the Balkan and ethnic groups. Historically, it originates from the idea of Pan-Serbism, which foundations were based on the belief for bringing back under its authority all territories that had the feeling of “belonging” to the Serbian nation. This included also those regions which were in a certain historical timeline populated by the Serbs but taken by others with

or without force. To be precise, these aspirations were coming from the medieval Serbian empire in 14th century, ahead of the Ottoman empire domination in Balkans (Cohen, 1997, p. 370). This policy is acutely contrasting the doctrine and practices of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia in the first place; that Tito heavily endorsed and maintained. In the history, the Serbs as a nation were facing various domestic struggles and divisions. Under the existence of the SFRY, followers who would practice such ideas were exiled or declared as people who are betrayers of the nation and unity. This belief of making the new Yugoslavia much more centralized did not live very long and soon wars have taken place bringing long term consequences for the whole Balkan region.

Besides having major control over JNA, if the idea of “Great Serbia” continued, the name “Yugoslavia” would have been changed into “Great Serbia”. The regime would eventually form a government to which every Republic should adhere to without any opposition. This nationalistic idea did not seem as promising of establishing peace under same conditions as the SFRY managed to control. So, to survive the crisis of the transition of the breakup of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia was to either support the new system or that the each country fights for its own independence. This included also the formation of new constitutions specifically tailored to the needs of each state in question (Milošević, 2021).

Many countries rejected the idea of the new Yugoslavia even with the pressured endorsement of the pretext that the concept lies in practicing the unity and strength of diversity characteristic for the present ethnic groups. Destabilization took fast pace between the Republics such as Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. Minorities were divided into two different political sides which enhanced the instabilities even more. The first civil conflict started in Slovenia in the year 1991 from which the war continued to significantly spread on other territories (Baker, 2015, p. 50). After that, the Republic of Croatia took the same path and soon enough it was expected that the war will start in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Considering all the previously described characteristics, it was inevitable that Bosnia and Herzegovina will have long term struggles in reaching a status of a Republic. Even so, its constitution needed to be formed in such way that is ensuring unique requirements. After

each country managed to achieve independence, Bosnia and Herzegovina has taken the same path. Despite the determination, it is very specific why out of all conflicts that took place, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has created effects that are severely felt even today and continue to be main determinants of every domestic and foreign affair.

As it is hard to define the form of the armed conflict that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina to a specific nature, many scholars have agreed on classifying it as ethnic, religious, inter-state, civil, international and protracted armed conflict (Kalyvas, Sambanis, 2005, p. 191-194). This is due to the nature of all the actors that were involved in the conflict and what the International Criminal Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia in the Hague has declared in the postwar period. Important is to mention that despite the idea of “Great Serbia” facing significant reduction in its popularity, it did not cease to exist in the region of Republika Srpska, a self proclaimed entity by Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992.

After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina has sought for the declaration of independence. These series of events came as natural, following the status of independence and recognition by the European Union and United Nations of the neighboring countries. It was registered that 44% of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time were ethnic Muslims, 31% Serbs and 17% Croats (Lampe, 2024). This is an indicator how even after the dissolution of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia the country struggled in the definite determination of demographic status, especially about the question of which ethnic group constituted the majority. It was inaccurate to declare that Muslim population was the dominant one, because numerically it did not reach even half of the population in percentages. Other groups could not take the same stance, as in this case even with their percentages combined they are not reaching half of the required number. So, it was inevitable to work on the creation of better set of rules and regulations that will help to maintain the country with mixed nationalities. This is with the predisposition that each ethnic group has the right to demand the respect of their own rights and demands. Nonetheless, such circumstances are a challenge for any type of government yet alone the one that just needed its new establishment.

In order to ensure the creation of first steps of the authority, during the 1990s Bosnian politician Alija Izetbegović with other Bosniak activists formed a political party called, *Party of Democratic Union or SDA*. The term *Bosniaks* referred to the people who identified themselves as Muslims. Other ethnic groups also formed their own parties. The Serbs formed a party called *Serb Democratic Party or SDS* which was led by Radovan Karadžić. Croats formed their own as well, under the title *Croatian Democratic Union or HDZ* (Baker, 2015, p. 60). During the elections, the SDA has earned large number of votes and taken the majority of the seats of representatives in the government. This implied that Alija Izetbegović received the status of a new president of the country.

What followed after this was an assembly meeting that took place in 1991. This event was one of the crucial historical moments that not only have shown the example of the doctrine “Great Serbia” but also indicated the potential course of events of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Probably the most significant prediction was the genocide and plans of activities such as ethnic cleansing. It presented also a decisive moment for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the country’s fight for independence.

During the meeting which gathered all the leading politicians of the parties, the aim was to discuss and resolve current tensions that are slowing down the formation of the government. However, during his speech, the leader of SDS Radovan Karadžić said something very concerning. Given his dissatisfaction of the voting results, he declared himself as a president of an entity called Republika Srpska. This region of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not recognized by any state or even the Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. This type of behavior was actually the result of the political manipulation he has practiced through the long lasting idea of Great Serbia (Baker, 2015, p. 57). His main vision was that the entity will eventually divide itself from the state and join the Republic of Serbia. In another words, all the leaders in the Balkan region were expecting Bosnia and Herzegovina to divide itself to the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia in the terms of how its population was distributed initially during the existence of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. As for Muslim people, they would be forced to live in the regions that were given to those countries.

To continue, during the assembly, Karadžić among other things has said: "...Do not think that you won't lead Bosnia and Herzegovina into hell and possibly the Muslim nation to disappear, for the Muslim people will not be able to defend themselves if it comes to war here!" (Suljagić, 2019). From here it was obvious that the only ethnic group of people that he is pointing out to be a "threat" to the peaceful establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina were actually Muslims. To put it more precisely, he has seen them as the only ones who are actually significantly slowing down his idea of pursuing the plan of Great Serbia. To this, the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, answered that "I solemnly state that the Muslims will not attack anyone.... The Muslims will defend themselves with great determination and survive. They will not disappear as Karadžić said. They cannot disappear." (Anadolu Agency, 2012). The president, Alija Izetbegović had a firm attitude that Muslim people will not disappear and that the country itself will continue to be independent no matter what kind of obstacles are ahead. Suffice to say, he did not also expect that a conflict of large scale would emerge. It was important to him to find resolution of the domestic tensions and move with the independence of the country in a peaceful way.

This was a very important discourse to analyze because it represented a huge influence on the society and their mindsets as they followed the progression of this meeting. This exploitation of political ideas will also reflect on the further events of migration of people as well as women who suffered huge distress in physical and psychological sense. In the year 1991, no one has actually expected that a war might start, especially considering in what kind of environment they all were living. No one was fearing a sudden conflict with their own neighbor because as it was already presented, they were continuing the legacy that existed during the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia; it is about living together in unity and peace. They all have seen each other as a society which is sharing common goals for improvements and growth. It were the political leaders who were using the religion and religious symbols for spreading hate among the already relatively mixed ethnic groups, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To better explain the mindset of people at that time; they were completely unaware and unprepared for future events which will force them to

unwillingly leave their country or migrate to another region in the seek for safety (Greenberg Research, ICRC, 1999).

Interestingly, the Croats were pursuing an idea similar to Serbian one. They focused on creation of an entity called Herzeg - Bosnia in which they wanted to claim specific part of territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina under their influence. The justification of such activities lied in the predisposition that the majority of population such as southern part of the country was actually populated by Croats. This is far from being a reason for internal division of territories. It was just adding oil to the fuel causing more protests and divided opinions in the society. Some claimed that such classification is absurd and needs to be suppressed. However, the support from Franjo Tuđman, the president of the Republic of Croatia at that time, prevailed in the outbreak of the war from Croatian side in 1992. He actually thought that the borders between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were unfair from political point of view. He did not strictly put pressure in making a separate Croatian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina but he wanted to redirect the attention on making a de facto Croat entity through which the Croats will be connected to the Republic of Croatia alongside the informal ties. Politically this seemed very complex in its implementation but it had a huge significance in the fight during the armed conflict (Agić, 2021).

The declaration of sovereignty has been achieved after the referendum for independence on 29 February and 1 March in 1992. The Serbian members of the parliament heavily refused the path that Bosnia and Herzegovina kept following. This resulted in large resentment of majority of Bosnian Serbs causing fast mobilization processes in different areas of the state. With the combination of Croatian protests, these became the triggers for the beginning of the war. The leader of Serbian party, Radovan Karadžić continued to use hate speech as an instrument for spreading his strong nationalistic ideas. The president of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, trusted that in case of an eruption of larger conflict, the international community will intervene.

Besides the imposed diplomatic pressures on the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) the tensions escalated into a three year long war that started on 6 and 7 April 1992 with the attack of the capital city Sarajevo by Bosnian Serbs (Lampe, 2024). Bosnian Muslims found themselves fighting on both sides, the Serbs on one and Croats on the other.

The Serbs were supported by the JNA or Yugoslav National Army while Croats had the Croatian Defense Council or HVO. So, it can be said that the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in its complexity had two wars in itself taking place at the same time in different regions of the country. For its defense the Bosniaks have organized the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In essence it was poorly equipped with weapons and faced immense struggles in keeping territories under their control (Marijan, 2000, p. 164).

The civilian casualties at the beginning led the West to establish some measures. They managed to impose certain sanctions through United Nations Security Council Resolutions 757¹. Even though the sanctions demanded the forces of JNA and HVO army to leave certain cities, those rules were not respected and the war continued to expand causing high numbers of civil casualties and especially migration flows. On 31st March 1993, United Nations Security Council intervened through the issuance of the Resolution 816², which aimed at establishing no-fly zones over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite of this strong measures to reduce the amount of losses, the United Nations reported that there were "465 violations of the no-fly zone."³ The military of the aggressor sides completely violated all regulations that the United Nations or Security Council have put into force.

¹ *Security Council Resolution 757 - UNSCR*. (n.d.). <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/757>

² *Security Council Resolution 816 – UNSCR (1993)*
<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n93/470/46/pdf/n9347046.pdf?token=nhb32tneYreBzMdSPj&fe=true>

³ *UNPROFOR*. (n.d.). https://peacekeeping.un.org/es/mission/past/unprof_b.htm

These attempts to impose a control over the conflict were extremely weak and insufficient. Of course, in international law not implementing measures like these will have consequences later on, but the main problem was them not implementing or respecting the resolutions during the wartime period. The UNPROFOR or United Nations Protection Force established in Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other cities were not completely protected even with their status of authority. The last resort of protection of the no-fly zone areas was in calling on NATO for air strikes especially since the safety for the civilians reached absolute minimum levels. The Serbian side was also jeopardizing the safety of the UN troops and killing their soldiers without any warnings which caused casualties also on international level (Baker, 2015, p. 71).

This resulted in the participation of NATO into the conflict, through the establishment of strict decisions in order to prevent the war of spreading outside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and taking longer years of its finalization. In other words, this meant prolongation and increased number of refugees, deaths and internally displaced people (Glenny, 2012, p.650).

It is significant to mention the Srebrenica genocide which was the ethnic cleansing of Muslims, that took place in July in 1995. More than 8000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed (Baker, 2015, p. 110), 20 000 – 50 000 Bosniak women were raped by Bosnian Serb soldiers (Smith, 2024) and 2.7 million people became refugees (Flemming, 2023, UNHCR). In total between the years 1992 and 1995, 215 000 people were killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Srebrenica was a town that was proclaimed as a “safe zone”, meaning it was under the UN protection. Even so, they were unable to demobilize the Serbian army and prevent the massacre that took place. The town was largely populated by Bosnian Muslims which was one of the reasons why the massacre was planned specifically in Srebrenica. In the beginning, in 1992 and 1993 the city was subject to constant military attacks, violence and bombing by the aircraft. In particular, the Serb soldiers would surround the town and call everyone who has been hiding to come out and surrender. Otherwise, they would use force and were determinant in finding everyone who managed to escape in the short term.

The war with the Croatian side ended with the signing of the Washington agreement on 23rd February 1994. With this agreement the territory between Bosniaks and Croats was divided into the region called Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The next year, the whole conflict reached its through the signing of the Dayton agreement, in November 1995 (Baker, 2015, p.77).

With this, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina ended up being composed of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that takes 51% of territory, entity of Republika Srpska whose 41% is taking the northern and southeastern part of the country and neutral district, Brčko. Three main constitutive ethnic groups were officially determined as well. This has solved the question of who takes the majority of the population. The constitutional system of the country has today a bicameral practice in terms of legislative procedure and three member presidency presenting each of the nationalities. The results of the Dayton agreement were the end of the war and at the same time a highly decentralized system that is politically and economically unstable in present day.

How that situation is extremely visible shows the ongoing persistence by the president of Republika Srpska for the secession of the entity. The goal is to make the region into a status of a country. To put it simply, the current situation is under the constant pressures of strong political tensions in which the international community had to intervene and even deploy NATO troops around the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. This mission focuses on controlling the peace and preventing any kind of serious threats and actions that could cause the disturbance in Dayton agreement and its function (Hoxhaj, 2024).

It is another debate of whether this agreement was fair in its distribution of the territory but it can be argued that it stopped one of the most important conflicts after the breakup of Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. The fact stands that the consequences of this conflict were not reduced and the feeling of hostility is felt even today. In the end, it was inevitable to expect a model in which the country would struggle to dwell but yet somehow find a way to exist.

Term internally displaced people in the Bosnian literature of sources that are used to specifically analyze occurrences like these is often overlooked and not used in its right context. In most of the cases, the expressed terminology influenced the implication of the explanations for certain events that have taken place. The other term that was frequently used was *immigrant*. Since that occurrence is related to a different topic and situation, internally displaced people have faced distinct conditions and reasons that are characteristic only for their movement inside a country. It is also the way of how migration studies are able to distinguish different topics of research based on the given range of case studies. Rights of IDPs are often not fully met which makes them face various consequences. The basis for their process of migration forms and entails according to the development of particular conditions in unpredictable environment. As such, a method of classification into various sections can help in better analysis of the situations and scenarios. International organizations have a huge impact in these case, which is why they are additional factors to be considered when it is discussed about IDPs. Statistical numbers would be one of the best representation of quantifiable nature. Thus, the following chapter will present that path of analysis; starting with the approach from a broad to a narrow perspective. It will first give a general overview of the internally displaced people. After that, the framework will be put in the context of Bosnian war. Narrowing down on the vulnerable groups such as women, further analysis will be based on statistical data and recorded information that was managed to be collected during the armed conflict. While putting a psychological element in the further interpretation it will be possible in this way to have a better presentation of the effects of the war and how it is perceived both by citizens and organizations that were one of the lead present actors during that time.

Chapter 2

Displacement, women and war

2.1 Internally displaced people and consequences of migration

As already stated in the first chapter, internally displaced people are facing situations of a great vulnerability, making them part of a migration flow that includes leaving their homes and going to nearest locations that are safe for living (UN, n.d.). Generally speaking, IDPs do not leave their homes just in the events of conflicts such as wars but also due to other specific reasons. That includes situations of violence, natural catastrophes, violations of human rights and other hazardous instances that take place within the country during a certain timeframe. Records have shown that in one year worldwide, millions of people find themselves leaving their residences within the borders of their countries (Ibid). It needs to be taken into account that sometimes the reasons come voluntarily, which means that most of the migration flows of IDPs were not necessarily caused from unexpected conditions. The topic of IDPs is very broad and can be studied from different perspectives. National governments are the ones who have the largest level of authority when it comes to the protection of IDPs. The way of how they implement different solutions and humanitarian aid depends on the situation in which the country is alongside the available amount of resources that can be distributed. In the case of an armed conflict, the power of authority is very limited which makes it difficult to control current state of affairs in long term. In that way, governments fail in the protection of basic rights of IDPs. Even though international organizations are able to intervene and contribute in providing types of aid that are necessary,

they are lacking in providing guarantees for the safety of the IDPs. In most cases the reason comes from international and non governmental organizations not possessing the permission to intervene in wars, especially if the events are escalating rapidly causing unpredicted casualties. This usually proceeds with a judgement that as international actors they have failed in the protection of peace and ensuring protection of human rights. Looking at the statistical data, the number of internally displaced people worldwide has been growing in relatively fast pace. According to the *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*, total number of IDPs in millions in the year 2013 was 33.3, whereas in year 2016 it rose to 39.9 million. The year 2019 was marked as being the *first year disaster*, in which the number reached 50 million while in the year 2022 it was recorded that 71 million were classified as being internally displaced. The research is conducted based on over 110 countries. The Center also points out that the result of such movements is mostly because of the ongoing conflicts and violence. To narrow it down by the categories, in the year 2013, 8.2 million people worldwide have been part of internally displaced migration due to the long lasting conflict and violence. Fast forward to the year 2022, the number was significantly higher; 28.3 million (Ibid.). On the other side, if it is discussed about the movement caused by natural disasters then the numbers are significantly different. Investigations indicate total of 22.1 million people for the year 2013 whereas in the year 2022 the disaster displacement was 41% higher than in the past 10 years combined (Ibid.). If only the data of internal displacement caused by armed conflicts is monitored, the Center reports that the highest figure was in year 2022; which makes it three times higher in total than in the past ten years. This shows the severity of the issues in migration flows and how such occurrences have grown in the intensity of their frequencies. The exponential increase of numbers over the years also give an indication that certain social and political reforms designed to maintain such situations did not meet efficient objectives. As a matter of fact, even more problems have been created. This urges to the necessity of making new types of guidelines and norms that would reduce such consequences as much as it is possible. In some cases it is hard to predict whether a natural disaster might take place. Even so, certain measurements can be implemented in order to reach a somewhat level of readiness for the situation of large numbers of IDPs. Many studies have shown that

less income based countries are the ones which will face challenges the most because of the consequences that are characteristic for movements such as internal displacements. That is why in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina it was very much important to understand the historical background. In essence it is very complex, but the war has influenced the migration routes of IDPs to a large extent.

The UN Commission on Human Rights 1998 has presented a framework that tackles the most important needs of IDPs. The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*⁴ lists out the most important regulations that cover the needs of IDPs. The importance of these type of documents especially when it comes to migration studies is valuable as it brings attention to the most important human rights for which the protection needs to be provided and further developed. As international organizations may be taken as third party subjects that are involved in the process of internal movements, they need specific form of guides that will help them in efficient functioning to reach desired outcomes. Non state actors will have higher probability to act on a territory that is in dispute or has various issues that reduced the accessibility. In this way, IOs and NGOs can work in better conditions when the state government of the country in question is not able to perform such duties. The Guide in itself is based on the binding laws such as human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law. This is significant as it shows that the document was drafted and put into force according to the movements and problems similar to internal displacement. Since the major focus most of the time goes to another type of migration flows, in this way IDPs have their own designed set of rules that needs to be followed. According to the guidelines, the IDPs have rights to

seek safety in another part of the country, the right to leave their country, the right to seek asylum in another country and the right to be protected against forcible return to or resettlement in any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk (Annex I, Principle 15).

⁴ UNHCR (2004), <https://www.unhcr.org/media/guiding-principles-internal-displacement>

There is a fine line between IDPs transiting into the category of refugees. Geographical element such as the act of leaving the borders of their own country, can immediately qualify them as belonging to a different type of migrant. Most importantly, a transition can be noticed from initially being internally displaced person to a refugee. This is where the migration studies take careful step of analysis in order not to put additional confusion on the definition of these types of phenomena.

Looking at the handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced People, it can be noticed that the rights of a person were not only limited to the country in which they are moving. As already explained how the guidelines were crafted, they have a broader scope of focus and “track” the movement of people who even were forced to leave the country in order to find more secure and affordable living conditions. To determine the extent to which such rights were ensured depends on the nature of the armed conflict in question. For example, section IV, Principle 24 of the handbook, regarding the humanitarian aid distribution, forbids any kind of discrimination towards people. Any diversion of the providence of such aid is not allowed as well. However, such norms find frequent difficulties in its implementation especially during the events that come from a war. Such conditions were created also from the Bosnian conflict which is the main case study of the thesis as well.

Essentials for life such as place of living or a shelter, food, water, medical needs and similar necessities are usually provided to internally displaced people. Besides that, other rights need to be met, which take the range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Cohen, 2001). Any human rights abuse, sexual violence, attacks, keeping people as hostages or being forcibly relocated that will endanger the safety of their lives is directly prohibited and is violating even the Declaration of Human Rights. The previously mentioned set of principles are not legally binding but are always recalled for examination and practice when it comes to the issues related to internal displacement. The role of the international and non governmental organizations in these situation will be evaluated more in the next chapter. It

will be focused first on general track of events and then specifically on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and position of Bosnian women.

Consequences of internally displaced people are very wide and tackle every sphere of society. In that case in order to understand the general framework of internal displacement, different categories of effects will be considered. Following that, focus will be only on Bosnia and Herzegovina during the armed conflict and how such situations were in that country during the war.

The consequence such as lack of contribution to the local economy, creates a so to say chain reaction by IDPs. Socioeconomic degradation is causing the country to hit levels of stagnation during those years of crisis, jeopardizing further potential for improvements (IDMC, n.d.). Reduced quality of living environment and security affects the stance of livelihood and investment, leading the state to lose high levels of financial resources. In most cases, lack of data in this sense can lead to even more difficulties in calculations and prediction for future practical models. This is a natural element, related especially to an occurrence such as the armed conflict. Record of such data is often partially registered or lost which makes it difficult to reach conclusions and create initiative that will aim in prevention of future loses. The internal displacement causes large extent of a financial burdens for the government. If the country initially was a low-income one, IDPs are creating impact by default and usually reach the role of an indicator of the intensity of severity for the conflict. As such, loss of income has an impact of providing necessary medications for health, causing even shortages in food supplies. The prices of present supplies in the country are usually sold with high prices, which caused financial struggles for people to ensure necessary items for proper living conditions. Vulnerable parts of the population such as children, are forced to leave schools because of the life threats in specific regions and low quality environment that is unsuitable to meet requirements of proper activity. That decreases the quality of education and loss of years of society's improvements. Even in the postwar period, families might be suffering consequences of less income households which deprives them of reaching better

livelihood. Support in accommodation was very much limited with periods of extreme crisis. This has created even more problems considering how crucial this type of need was for IDPs. In some instances, there are difficulties created from overcrowding which forces IDPs to move further or even leave the country.

National governments as such are not able to effectively put economic crisis into balance. Sometimes the collaboration between local authorities and municipalities can provide help in short time. This is concerning mostly the safe areas of the state that happen not to struggle under the effects of the conflict. As the armed conflict reaches new stages of development, the country is facing a state of complete powerlessness. Under those circumstances, international organizations find it particularly challenging not only to intervene but also monitor the data that is collected or delivered. This widely affects the statistics, making it hard to implement future resolutions that could work efficiently in the events of specific disasters.

If the country is very diverse in the ethnic and demographic sense, the variations of the population size and internal displacement can create drastic changes. Depending also on the nature of the war, some ethnic groups of people find themselves being “pushed” or forced to flee their homes. The biggest change takes place when the internal displacement transitions to the migration across the borders of the state and never coming back. Demographically speaking, death rates reach high levels whereas birth rates hit lower levels or even levels of stagnation. In terms of the nationalities some ethnic groups might encounter increase in percentages, while others register significant decline. This is how changes in the number of dominant ethnic groups in a specific country alternate over time, which shows the extent to which diversity in this sense is possible to preserve itself in one region or country. Displacement that is conflict-driven heavily influences the levels of fertility and the household structure. Women can become caregiver or those who provide financial support in family and have the chance to enhance their economic situations. However, in extreme cases, they often become victims of war crimes and sexual violence.

Psychological problems that are dominant mental health problems of IDPs are post traumatic disorder, depression and anxiety. Traumas related to the internal displacement process, social discrimination, threats and events of a conflict heavily affect someone's life decisions. If the focus is put on a specific group of the population, for example children; their deprivation from education decreases their social, intellectual and emotional growth. Internally displaced families frequently become separated which increases the existence of challenges for their mental health. Studies show that in the armed conflict situations, female children end up having stronger levels of PTSD than male ones (Ahmad, Hussain, Shaheen, 2020). Mental disorders ruin the social life providing difficulties even in the postwar period. Such consequences present big burdens that need to be carried on. In some cases, suicide becomes a serious problem for the whole society. When it comes to women, those who have been victims of sexual violence and abuse struggle with daily tasks and lives. They find it difficult to have motivation to work on improvements and looking for new opportunities. Very frequently, they are facing health problems that influences the fertility rates. They develop strong mental disorders that deprive them of going back to the social lives they had in first place. Grief and disappointment converts into depression that can lead to fatal effects.

2.2. The influence of the armed conflict on internally displaced women in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Provided by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2.2 million people have been recorded as part of internal displacement between 1992 until 1995 during the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Dayton Agreement included also the fulfillment of necessary requirements of protection of IDPs and their rights of returning back to their original residencies. Considering the composition of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia and during the war, ethnic groups have undertaken different routes of movement across the country. This impacted the concentration of specific groups in the regions where the situation was much more different before the conflict has taken place. By the year 1992, there were 588,000 IDPs. Their route was often comprised of

leaving their homes and relocating to the nearest safest city. In some cases, they would continue to relocate even to another region, north, west or south. In 1993, the United Nations has declared Sarajevo, Goražde, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Žepa and Bihać the “safe havens” (UN, n.d.). A lot of families decided to take the routes to reach such locations. However, those cities were not the safest one, as the aggressors continued to intensely attack those regions and misuse any assigned resolutions. In that case, the “safe havens” did not live up to their meaning and did not provide full safety and humanitarian aid for IDPs. In most situations, they would divide males from the families and put them in concentration camps. Inevitably, the violence by the officers of the camps was heavily widespread.

The Trnopolje camp located and created by the military of Republika Srpska during the first months of the war, had collected Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats composed mainly of women, children and elderly men. This shows how the most vulnerable groups of IDPs have been forced to relocate and deport to another parts of the country. In such environment there is no ability to ensure their protection and most of them are left to suffer unimaginable consequences of rape, torture and killing.

Continuing with a more general approach, the following pages will put the case study of IDPs during the Bosnian conflict and their impact on economic, psychological perspective and social life. After that, the argumentation will follow the evaluation of the situation of only women and how they were treated under such circumstances. In order to better understand how they were one of the most important part of population that was hit by these consequences, it is necessary to reflect on the internal displacement movements in general.

IDPs have influenced the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina to a large extent causing damages worth over 200 million euros. Being vulnerable by the fluctuations that lasted from 1992 until 1995 the country has experienced several damages in income, investments and privatization. Men were taken as soldiers to defend the country in the war, while women were left to move across the country to protect their families. This significantly impacted the postwar period as well, leaving great number of injured people and those who have left the

country with no intention of return. Women in many cases were struggling to provide essential needs for their well being. This often led them to work under such low conditions with very low income. Those who have found accommodation in other cities were obliged to pay the host in forms of help in the fields and agriculture. In many instances, the payment would take a form of exchange of resources such as: bread, flour, meat and similar.

International organizations have sent large amounts of humanitarian aid to the regions that were permissible to be reached. However, the products were expired or of a very poor quality which has caused major health problems. Health conditions in those cases were of a disastrous nature and improvements in those domains were almost impossible. Furthermore, some aid transported never reached the final destinations, being often prevented, forbidden or stolen by the aggressors. So, Bosnia and Herzegovina was economically very challenged and movement of IDPs has brought more disadvantages year by year as the war advanced.

Under the conditions of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, civil registrations were almost impossible to be recorded. In some regions the databases did not function properly for the whole duration of the war. According to the Republic Institute of Statistics of Serbia, these type of information about Bosnia and Herzegovina before the beginning of war were recorded in the Federal Statistical Office in the SFRY. Dealing with this inability of access of data is very challenging which means that most of the results and analysis were in the end based on predictions. The little amount of data that was available were of a limited range and often lacked accuracies and other important features (Kovačević, 2005). The UN yearbook 1997 has declared a de jure population in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ibid.). Given this, it is more likely that international organizations took an approach for hypothetical calculations, but making sure to take into account all the conditions and migration flows.

Demographic losses are evaluated by three scholars: Murat Praso, Bošnjović Ilijas and Helge Brunborg. All the investigations were based on estimations, hence the need to take into consideration the level of accuracy of the results. Their calculations range from 20 000 to over 300 000, which does prove the enormous loss and one of the biggest catastrophes that

have taken place since the Second World War in Europe. UNHCR has stated similar number of killed people as to what President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović (at that time) has pointed out as well. Due to the departure of women and internal displacement from 1992-1995, the fertility and birth rates had alarmingly decreased. Based on different events that the women have experienced, most of them do not report their full nature of movements across the country. This explains why even in postwar period it was challenging to collect enough information to reach more accuracy as well. As stated before, in many documents the misuse of the term “refugee” and “internally displaced person” in Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian language has also influenced the work of UNHCR, making it difficult for them to ensure efficient results from investigations. Another factor such as distribution based on age influenced the process of drawing certain conclusions as well. In this way it appeared that adding more elements to the demographic structure is just worsening the research, leading it to be rather incomplete and unsatisfactory.

The largest ethnic group that was facing the systematic “ethnic cleansing” were those who identified themselves as Muslims (Lampe, n.d.). Internally displaced women who were Muslims were target of many types of abuses just because of their religious orientation, especially in the regions where those ethnic groups of people have been considered as majority of the population. In most cases their internal displacement would be “dictated” and regulated by the aggressor during the conflict, making it sure that they are reaching the exact locations according to the military plans. In that way, their movement was more forced and already designed while completely omitting their right for decisions and individual choice of whether they would like to go somewhere more safe. This turn of events has taken place due to the life threats and intimidation through physical violence, sexual, verbal abuse and torture. Their decision was not voluntarily designed, which of course is not an element of internal displacement process in general, but was heavily controlled which has worsened the conflict and eventually led to the one of the biggest disaster in human history, genocide.

Social life and conditions for better livelihood were extremely reduced and women were the most vulnerable ones. Environment for living was downgraded to the means of survival through the process of fleeing cities that were occupied by the aggressors. Deprived from opportunity of education and protection of basic human rights, women's well-beings were reaching levels of intolerable circumstances. Their mental health was facing a tool of challenges making it difficult for them to continue with daily life. This is especially known in the postwar period in which women were facing psychological problems and were receiving professional help. The issues are present even today, especially considering the political situation which is not anyhow better than it was before the outbreak of the war. This poses obstacles to the country to be able to protect citizens from any type of crises that might lie ahead.

In order to understand what type of difficulties women have been going through during the Bosnian war, many organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the collaboration of international associations have worked on the research and interviews with the victims who survived the conflict. During those projects they have asked different questions through which they managed to gather data based on the answers they were given and then compared to the available statistics. Internal displacements of women are showing particular vulnerabilities and inequalities that are constantly growing even worldwide. Depending on the reasons and conditions of such movement within borders of a country, the IDPs such as women have always encountered difficulties in enjoying first basic human rights. During a war, they are struggling and entering a vicious cycle of inability to satisfy needs which often resulted in reaching a state of uncertain survival. Sexual and gender based violences are predominantly present, which makes them according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, "twice as disadvantaged". In particular, focusing on gender differences in a migration flow such as internal displacement is, can be very much limited. This is why access to data that will show such behaviors is not so rich in information. Despite that, research can be conducted based on the data that is recorded, available and relevant. Reflecting on such topic is of great importance as it will help in further understanding of how

women in war are always facing lack of support and end up being completely unprotected, how from their own governments but also international organizations. It can be argued that under specific circumstance internally displaced women find themselves to be in worse and life threatening conditions than those who leave completely the country and do not return back. If one manages to reach asylum outside the country, it is more likely that their basic needs will be guaranteed. There is even a higher chance for international organizations to protect refugees and be able to intervene without any omissions. Internally displaced women leave their hometowns by force, but their guarantee of security is of a short term nature. This implies that moment the aggressor is approaching the city, they have to move again in search for better places. As previously discussed, even the safe havens that the UN has declared in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not the part of their routes anymore. Women would live there for couple of months with children, but soon enough they end up being forced to leave and eventually be admitted to concentration camps. Their routes were through woods or open fields, which imposed great danger to lives. One of the reasons why some internally displaced women were not able to leave the country in the most extreme situations were the difficulties in reaching determination in the decisions to completely leave their families behind. This emotional connection was slowing down their specific push and pull factors of migration flows. On the other hand, it could be the hope of the situation getting better and that the war will soon reach its end. However, as it lasted for 4 years, many of them have sacrificed themselves or have lost large number of family members. Moreover, physical strength was another feature that has slowed down the ability to start cross – border travels or anything similar.

The topic of internally displaced women is often overshadowed especially in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the years 1992-1995. The following part of Chapter 2 will focus on the psychological and physical effects of the Bosnian war on women. It will be discussed what type of abuse and violence women had to experience during their movement across regions of the country. Some analysis will focus on routes that lasted differently depending on the circumstances. While analyzing answers in interviews that women have

given, a lot of them have refused to mention specific details of events as it has caused rather uncomfortable situations for them. On the other hand, importance in investigations like these lies in the opportunities to conduct statistical information according to the features of fields such as gender studies.

2.3. Psychological and psychical effect of Bosnian war on women

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment for Punishment (CAT)⁵ has been created for the promotion and protection of women rights. Its entry into the force was the year 1987 with the creation of a Committee Against Torture, that has the duty of carrying out a mandate of receiving complaints and monitor the events. Based on the Convention, the committee takes into consideration the violence done against women, sexual abuse, trafficking and gender based activities of torture. Non governmental organizations have been encouraged by the committee to take their activity in submitting reports that track these type of issues, making them participate in the monitoring process of various cases. The Committee itself has released also set of guidelines that will help associations in such procedures.

According to this UN committee against Torture and sexual violence in war, there were 50.000 women who have been raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The locations that have mostly been hit by such cases were East of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region called Bosanska Krajina (UN, n.d.) Women have suffered many consequences and as such have been taken as “rejected” and the society have judged them to a large extent, instead of providing adequate help. In many interviews conducted with these women, they have said that the ones who have raped them or committed physical violence against them are freely walking on the streets even today after so many years. Despite the fact that they have filled in individual complaints, the procedure of the judgement for such acts is very long

⁵ United Nations, adopted in 1984; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

and emotionally draining. As such, most of the cases proceed to be overlooked and forgotten, making it harder for the victims to receive the needed justice. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, specific reparation laws for women in these type of situations are not created. In this domain, no particular activity has been conducted neither any plans of development of such legislation.

Most of the internally displaced women find it extremely difficult to think about the situation that they have gone through during the war. With that, large percentage of them refuse to talk about it as it is considered as something to be embarrassed about and their fault of not being able to protect themselves on time. In that situation, most of the cases proceed to be hidden and institutions how in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also international organizations need to take into account that they deal with great number of cases of sexual violence that are not reported. This is because either the victims that were internally displaced have decided to move from the country after the war has taken place and never come back or did not endure mentally the consequences of such crimes.

However, a lot of women have been aware of the importance of finding and fighting for their own voice and be ready to share the truth. Such painful events need to be heard and known, which is essential for the protection of women rights. If more stories are shared, conventions that reach binding characteristics and eventually become the basis for further legislations can improve the institutional strength of bodies specifically created for women. In the future, it will be possible to avoid development of such instances and work on improvement of existing tools of protection and insurance of women rights.

Radio Slobodna Evropa, a media organization that broadcasts reports, news and analysis of different topics with the focus on Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Caucasus, has conducted several investigations through direct interviews with women who were suffering unimaginable consequences during the Bosnian war. One such story reports a case of women who has been assaulted, wounded and tortured in August of 1992 in the city of Foča (Arnautović, 2010). She explains that the soldier who attacked her came into the house of the

family killing all the women who were hiding there. She managed to escape even though being seriously wounded. She proceeds to mention that she was internally displaced to the nearest concentration camp with her children in Foča. She was there for fifteen months and despite her being pregnant, she continued to be raped and tortured. Perhaps the shocking realization was finding out that the soldier who has committed such crimes was no other than their neighbor with whom they were friends for a very long time before the war started.

Similar cases as this one report that the ones who have attacked women were actually people who used to be close to them, friends or neighbors. This explains how the situation before the conflict that started in Bosnia and Herzegovina was very different in the country. There are a lot of examples of cities in which two or even three ethnic groups were living in peace and harmony. They continued the legacy of mutual respect and unity even after the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia ended. However, things have drastically changed as soon as the conflict started, making it difficult to trust anyone who once was a reliable friend, neighbor or relative. Political exploitation and hatred of one ethnic group towards the other can be so strong that they are ready to commit crimes like these without thinking about consequences. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, impunity for war crimes is present to a large extent and the victims continue to feel helpless. As long as such disadvantage exists, the system will create more unjustifiable resolutions and failure in the works of courts or any other higher official authority.

Another story of sexual abuse during the Bosnian war shows that the perpetrators were not selective about the age of women. One such case is with a nine year old girl who was brutally raped and killed in 1992 in Ilijaš, place near the capital city, Sarajevo. The mother of the child was not able to speak about that for thirteen years as she has witnessed what happened and managed to rescue herself. However, the things that she had to go through while the violence has taken place are very disturbing. Three soldiers entered their house and continued to harm every woman who has been there. The mother continues today to live in the country which

did not give her any help or justice by punishing those criminals for their acts. As she states, there are no organizations who will help her today in financial sense (Aljazeera, 2010).

Psychological challenges that affect women makes it difficult for them to continue to live normally and seek for other opportunities of self improvement. If you live in a country that does not undertake legal proceedings against such acts, it is difficult to be heard and be able to fight for your own rights. In the situation of legal proceedings, most of the perpetrators continue to lie about not committing such acts. In some instances, despite the available evidence they remain unpunished while women who start such complaints are receiving letters of death threats or intimidation. Finding themselves unprotected in those cases, women remain silent and stop engaging in further legal proceedings. This explains how much the violations of their rights did not end the moment the war concluded, but the fight and same mental torture continued to exist even more than 25 years later.

Some activities by IOs have experienced progressive changes in its nature. For example, the mission of OSCE in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has referred to the sexual violence does not concern anymore only women or representing a matter of private nature. It reached stages in which their advocacy is focused on classifying those acts as part of the worst crimes committed during aggressive type of conflict such as war. That is why it is important for the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be fully aware of such acts so that the justice system takes its efficient development. As long as such crimes are underestimated, the corruption will continue to be present which leads to failures of institutions to ensure what is especially needed; protection of basic human rights.

One must consider that topics such as these are somewhat “taboo” in the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This means that for some regions, especially the population in rural areas pursue a specific practice of avoiding to talk about these topics openly. Even though certain acknowledgment exists that various crimes have taken place during the conflict, they still prefer to take such experiences as events that created huge “humiliation”. For example, they prefer to hide details about war rape because it is believed that it puts the pride and reputation

of the whole family in question. The importance is not on individual but the collective consequences that may come from giving spotlight to certain issues. This entails rather a conservative view of society towards these topics, which creates nothing more than difficult positions for the victims. To some extent, being an internally displaced person was presenting a huge element of disappointment as well. Such feeling is related to the fact that they had to leave their hometowns in which they grew up. This shows how deeply one can be connected with their roots, often leading them to refuse to be engaged in internal displacement, even in cases where such migration process would save their lives.

Depression and trauma are the most frequent mental challenges that women have to face after the end of the Bosnian conflict. This significantly impacts their normal lives, making it difficult to continue with daily activities without being constantly reminded of disasters that have taken place. Whenever they talk about their route of internal displacement it is often described as unpredictable, dangerous and something that they had to do because they simply did not have the luxury of picking another option. Majority of the decisions that made women internally displaced were tailored based on one element; the need for survival. They would lose their homes and often find it difficult to even return to the places they used to live. Being left completely alone, they had to be on a constant move and seek shelters. Some would not stay permanently in one place, which would cause them to be on a constant move. It was one of the ways to avoid going through yet another form of physical, psychological or other type of abuse.

Another example of what kind of events have taken place was a story where a woman with other villagers managed to escape into the woods as the Serbian paramilitaries were entering the village near the city of Zvornik. In January 1993 they were walking towards Tuzla in search for shelter and food. As she was pregnant at that time, she found herself being exhausted which made her collapse. After that, she was surrounded by Serb soldiers in a hospital. They continued to torture her until she eventually lost her child. After that, she was transferred to other concentration camps where she was raped several times. She got reunited

with her husband in Tuzla, but the recovery from these painful memories is far from being over.

Internally displaced women who remained pregnant after these type of events, sometimes out of the embarrassment and the pride, have abandoned their children. They did not want to provide any type of care for them since they keep being reminded of the vents of abuse and other attacks they had to endure. On other side, some women become disowned by their families. Left financially in a difficult position, they had to find the means to take care of themselves on their own during the pregnancy. They usually end up not receiving a lot of support and due to the harsh conditions in most cases do not survive or go missing. Children who got raised under such conditions continue to be judged by the society. This is how the events through which women had to go caused long term effects, passing it onto their children and making them face violation and protection of the rights of children.

Significant improvement in the judgmental system regarding the cases of children who were born under these circumstances did take place. They have received the status of the “civilian victims of the war” by the law (Aljazeera, 2024). An association called “Zaboravljena djeca rata” (Forgotten children of war) have reported that the number of such children is between 3000 and 5000. As they are now adults, the Ministry of the country has requested from the victims to register in centers so that they can receive benefits of health care, job opportunities and other necessary needs.

One of the examples of written collection about women’s experiences during the Bosnian war was the book “This was not our war” by academic and activist, Swanee Hunt. She was an United States ambassador to Austria who met 26 Bosnian women in the 1990s. She worked on many interviews with them in order to gather all the information of the life conditions that were present during the conflict. Women who were presented in her book have different professions and found themselves in various situations of survival. Tackling different topics, a very interesting subject that was pointed in the book was how every form of negotiations were done only by men. During the meetings like these there was not a single

woman who could represent and negotiate also for the protection of women rights. In terms of policy decisions, women did not have a say which shows the greatest example of gender inequality. The reason for such behavior comes from the need of establishing peaceful resolutions so that the war will come to the end. Topic of protection of injured females never reached any point of discussion and it was inevitable to predict that future reforms might not tackle this domain of issues as well. As Hunt argues (Preface, page 20), maybe the exclusion of women in peace negotiation process was due to them being more emotional and subjective. This would eventually lead to them favoring peace over nationalistic aims. This imposed significant flow in policy making, as it is unreasonable to exclude the largest part of the population in the process such as reaching a compromise between the countries. Underestimating women for being overly subjective did not bring any advantages but rather continued to create large number of deaths.

It must be noted that gathering data from interviews who have been conducted immediately after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and those that took place 20 years later, differ largely in how certain things are highlighted. As Hunt perfectly described, postwar period especially year 1996 was full of people being angry, bitter and tend to be more motivated into fighting justice. This has been recognized by many international political figures who were determined to help, so that the people, but especially women find opportunity to heighten their voices and in such way bring their homeland to growth as it was in the beginning. Encouraging women in this case has increased the way of their motivation to improve their social life and wellbeing. This is how opportunities for various associations or organizations to be formed arise as well.

Hunt provides detailed descriptions of the events of the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina but through the eyes of women (page 9). Most of them were living peacefully, economically more or less stable with their families. As things changed basically over night, they found themselves witnessing situations that they could have never imagined. Their hopes of having better condition or even be protected was in the United Nations. However,

they have failed to a large extent. What is interesting to see is that interviewed women have a critical stance towards those who were formed to specifically help them but couldn't do so. In such chaos of events, when they suddenly found themselves struggling to even secure basic needs for living, women had to bring rash decisions of fleeing their homes or stay.

This type of "madness" women faced was a basis for them to convert it into the fighting for their stories to be known to the world. Despite the physical and psychological wounds they have received, they managed to find the courage to fight the consequences of violence even after the end of war. So, one can argue that range of years after 1995 have caused women to be more vocal and motivated to talk about these issues and show that they are capable on coming back on their feet alone. Comparing it to the interviews of recent years, women are more inclined on emotional side and highlight the importance of their feelings of suffering and how much difficult it was for them. They are more subjective and less openly critical because the topic is reaching the levels of being almost "forgotten". Since they see less chance of fighting the consequences in the same way as they did in 1996 or 1997, they give up on explaining what could have been done differently or who is to blame. Now it is more important to them to share their stories with someone to feel at ease and finally find the courage to talk about something that was completely traumatic and horrifying.

In Hunt's interviews women were pointing out the importance of how every ethnic group actually lived peacefully and respected each other. Hatred was almost non existent and one did not fear their neighbor, friend or similar. But with the start of the war, it was as if a switch turned off and people stopped putting values on human relationships. Those women gradually lost trust and the ability to recognize when a certain aid is sincere or it is just another form of betrayal coming on their way. Even today, things are very much different. With that it can be said that Tito's legacy of harmony among people during the existence of SFRY was completely lost without the ability to ever come back in the form as it was.

Some women in Hunt's book had more involvement in the political side of happenings, giving them the abilities to have earlier access to information about the events of the war.

Disbelief was dominant among people, so even when Bosnian Serbs have attacked city of Sarajevo, most of the civilians did not immediately leave their hometowns. Instead, they were waiting on what will happen next. This is why most women found themselves in the doubt to migrate to another region of the country or completely leave the borders. In this way internal displacement was a choice that ended up being more emotionally connected to a person. They based their own protection on instincts. However, the panic was scaring people around more than the explosions and shelling. Women were cautious of every noise they heard. In such circumstances, they recall feeling unsure of determining how serious some situations were and how much their lives were put at danger.

One of the interesting things that each woman has mentioned during the interviews were their connections with families who lived in different cities. In most cases, their parents lived in Sarajevo. Women's first instincts as the war started were the worries about them and what will happen next. It was not important to decide whether to leave the country or move across the territory, but rather knowing in what position are their relatives. For them, entering a city that was under a great attack by aggressors for the cost of knowing about the safety of their parents was not a challenge at all. This strong emotional connection is also one of the reasons of why internally displaced women were not much objectively inclined into making decisions of engaging into complete migration from one country to other. As Hunt points out, "the cost of confusion was added to the toll of wartime loss" (page 23). Women had to adjust themselves that new and unpredictable things will take place. In those circumstances, they had to act quickly and accept the fact that next events might bring various types of consequences.

Hunt's interviews take into consideration women from different backgrounds. There are part of different ethnic groups, which gives it more space for better interpretation and understanding of how internally displaced women were suffering the same violations of their own rights, just under distinct series of events. One of the interviewees pointed out the element of *patriotism* (Hunt, page 28). If we take again into consideration the legacy during

the SFRY, it is understandable why patriotism was dominant in the society at the very beginning of the war. Not only men, but also women had the feeling of duty to protect what is their own, especially the homeland in which they were born and raised. Even they point out that it was a struggle to understand what to do next, especially in those situations when it is unknown how the war will escalate.

Women in Hunt's book described the routes back to their homes as being life threatening and dangerous. They were guarded by soldiers from every side and whoever decided to come back once they left, would just gamble their lives. In these cases, the feeling of being a family caregiver had been a decisive factor for women to take the risk of undertaking unsafe trips. As an example, one of the women in the interviews was a doctor, a profession that for her was the major decisive element in these situations. She relied on the reasonings that the cause of her movements from one area to another was to save a life and provide care for those in need. This role of family caregiver in women sometimes gives a strong effect of "discouragement" to leave the country and stay within the borders of an internally displaced person.

"Losing your country is losing your core" (Hunt, page 32) were the words of one of the women who perhaps, lived in the most diverse ethnic surrounding among the interviewees. Living in that kind of environment, for her nationality was a term of belonging that gave the richness of diversity to her identity. One might argue that, people who have strong sense of belonging to a society makes them less likely to migrate despite the costs of social networks facing challenges. Multiculturalism was not seen as a vulnerability or weakness, especially among the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead, it was believed that it represents a stability which made the country how it is for all those years. So, being this a type of a religious war was something incomprehensible specifically for women. For people who are strongly attached to the society in which they are born and raised is very hard to adjust to particular changes that would force them to suddenly bring life changing decisions. Diversity was seen as something that needs to be cherished and further developed because it was a way

of survival. As for some, patriotism was the determining point that kept them against the idea of crossing the borders. For some women the essence of tolerance towards other nationalities was something that kept them within the territory of the country. Still, it did cause them to be part of internal displacement, but at least they did not leave their homeland. Even though Hunt's book focuses on women who lived around the city of Sarajevo, it is fascinating to see that different type of events for each of them has taken place as well as reasons for their movements as part of relocation process.

Cross cultural experiences, different professions and values that were pursued, were indirect reasons for those women to take various routes of migration from one city to another. It is important to note that such elements were strengthening their vulnerability and fear that eventually led to traumas. As previously noted, it is very important to take into account the time frame of the interviews that have taken place. Here it can be seen how women were possessing more emotion of anger and disappointment of not getting the justice they deserve, so the emphasis was put on the features that were taken away from them; sense of tolerance and unity. They felt powerless for not being able to protect something that they have cultivated for generations. The type of exploitation that was presented from politicians and those who started the war, made them also aware that identity can be fragile and lead to instability of society to a large extent. The intensity of adaptation to new circumstances for women was very difficult. Thus, living like that has caused more uncertainty and unreadiness to overcome any crisis, especially a war.

One of the women had to take a longer route from a town called Šipovo to Banja Luka, located in the central and northern part of the country. The woman fled with her daughter with a car, where they reached the town in which an association helped them in providing guidance and advices to relocate in areas that are less life threatening. However, as they had to stop in some small places before, they have encountered lack of proper accommodation and needs such as food, clothes and water. They had to witness different ways of how people were finding means of survival. In one of her answers, she is emphasizing the word "refugee"

(Hunt, page 33) wanting to highlight the severity of the situation. She wanted to point out that their rights were taken completely away and no protection was present. Besides being uncertain of what to do next, they had to live day by day without enough food or clean water. “My whole body was in shock” (Hunt, page 33) is a statement that shows the physical but mostly psychological trauma that was developing and dominating her mindset. Additionally, they happened to be in middle of the bombing, which made her live through a most disastrous period. They had to move forward, otherwise staying in one place would bring more risk for the survival. Surrounded by panic and fear, they have reached a more safer spot and managed to escape what perhaps had the potential to be one of the most traumatic situations. “There wasn’t much of a life as a refugee” (Hunt, page 33) implied that women were losing hope of any improvements. The previous expectation that the war will end very soon, started to be just another unrealized dream. This sudden type of transformation had to be done very fast and finding any source of encouragement was not that easy. Yet, internally displaced women during the Bosnian armed conflict were on constant alert and movement.

Staying in one place even when accommodation was provided, was not the long term option. Constant change of places was inevitable and that was the tempo to which women had to adjust in the following years until the war finally reached the end. Ethnic differences did not matter anymore, meaning that the challenges that came from internal displacement has affected everyone. This continued to impact the unity that existed before in the society and destroyed the networks of families that were seen as “deeply rooted”. In these cases, women mostly emphasize the guilt on the enemy who has taken the right of destruction of ones homeland and families.

Interestingly, some women have taken more decisions of objective and practical nature (Hunt page 38). Deciding to not rely on the emotional side, they have recognized that for them feelings of ties to their hometowns should not be into the focus. They have thought that financial security might give them ability to at least “freely move” inside the territory. So, their focus was more on the way of how to save the outcomes that they have build from their

careers and success. It is not to downgrade the serious life threatening conditions that they have experienced, but also to take into the account that economic situation was also at stake. It did not take a long time to show that such material security did not give any advantage. It was rather a short term comfort that a community status might give benefits and escape of further complications. Lost of property is heavily connected with the emotional attachment to the belonging to society. Despite the psychological consequences that have taken place, the financial losses were causing instability and further challenges in long term recovery. Even though the solutions have been temporarily, the period of coming back to initial situation would take longer time. However, considering such conditions of the conflict, the tolerance between people has been reduced making it harder to be achieved again.

Women point out that it was not only them who have been affected during their movement across the country. Their families, children and friends have been facing even harder conditions. It changed the relationship between each other, making it difficult for women to express the desires to aid those in need. During the war their image of a family caregiver has been challenged to the point that they sometimes have completely lost such role which led to disappointment and helplessness.

While some had more time in collecting all of their belongings, others fled their hometowns with the things that they have had in the moment the enemy attacks have started. In comparison with the previous example, another woman was carrying only an album of pictures. For her presented that presented everything that she actually needed; "But I have nothing from my home." (Hunt, page 42). The weight of material connection for people in the events of an armed conflict can be of great impact as it is the driving force for their survival. Despite the mental challenges that they have to endure, these represent some sort of ways for moving forward and escape from the harsh reality. Moreover, the intensity of such importance vary significantly depending on the circumstances.

Internally displaced women did not have an end goal of the routes. For them, whatever place was the safest and that represented form of survival was an escape. Being selective was not

something that they can allow to happen. In such situations of constant shocks and traumas, people returned to the same habits of looking after each other while sharing the paths that are known to be safe for escapes. However, they were aware of the fact that it is not always the case of blindly trusting a person that gives some sort of help. Most of them in situation of extreme indecisiveness, would betray or give information about locations of civilians to the aggressors.

Hunt in her book points out the severity of how women did not only fight the means of survival, but had to endure and witness atrocities such as rape and other form of psychical violence. In the difference with other sources, these interviews did not have direct purpose of collecting information of what type of psychical consequences women endured. Moreover, the priority is given to the choice of those who were interviewed of whether they want to speak about such things. This is important to highlight because not all of them feel the sense of comfort and freedom to get in touch again with those stories. Even years after, some still refuse to share details of certain events as they continue to be the dominant traumas and psychological challenges from which they are still healing.

Post traumatic disorder is one of the most frequent mental illnesses that people suffer from experiences such as war or similar conflicts. In one of the interviews when the topic of torture and physical violence was brought, most of them have shown signs of stress and anxiety. So, making records of such experiences is to some extent difficult also for the ones who are conducting the interviews and collecting information.

One of the examples of how some were able to avoid specific situations were actually the ways of how they escaped. They would usually recall by saying “We were hiding like mice” and “...thinking we were somehow safe by doing that.” (page 46). One of the women described how the soldiers would aggressively come into the buildings and demand everyone to come out. This happened in Sarajevo, in a village in Dobrinja. The aggressors would continue to separate males and females. As they would promise to leave women alone, men and boys would end up being taken by them. Even in such circumstances of gambling their

own safety, women were ready to hide their children and protect everyone else they could instead of themselves. In situations like these, protecting the younger was the most important thing. After that event, the soldiers killed all the men that they have found. It was known as the Aerodrome massacre, called in that way because of the location of where these crimes were committed. “It didn’t matter who they were – Bosniaks, or Serbs... they were killed indiscriminately” (page 48). This horror was something that was following everyone for the whole duration of the war. Their safety was short term based and not single day did pass without expectations of patrols of soldiers.

Sarajevo is the capital city of the country so a lot of events have taken place during the years of war. Even though it is known that different ethnicities live on the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, specific parts were “densely” populated by ethnically mixed population. This means, people with various ethnic backgrounds lived from one house to another. Hunt in her book reports a small town called Odžak which is also one of the best examples of such mixed population. In this case, the territory was under the forces of Croats. Situations of an extreme level have taken place there, where women were physically assaulted or raped in front of their children. In large number of cases young girls suffered the same events that have great consequences even today in their daily lives. Hunt pointed out with their answers that large number of crimes have taken place in the same day.

One of the worst consequences and direction of events is that those type of horrors women would experience for more than one time. They were sexually and physically abused repeatedly for months and years. Hunt argues that these type of actions are also part of the ethnic cleansing agenda (page 49). Serb soldiers would continue to mentally torture and verbally assault women. They will call them names and taunt them while meeting the goals of the agenda for spreading hatred and calling out the ethnicities being the problem of why the war has taken place. Women out of humiliation would remain in physical pain and give birth to children. This implied that such events were presenting rape as a symbolism of the whole mindset that Serb and Croat soldiers have promoted under the command of their

superiors. Husbands of those women would in most of the cases feel ashamed that they were not holding enough power to protect them. In both cases, they would think it was their fault of not protecting and preventing situations like these, even if it was impossible to do so. Women in such conditions do not find motivation to bring decisions for their own future and end up staying in such places. Some of them would move again in order to seek humanitarian help or some sort of safety, even if it meant just for a very short period of time.

Fear was the driving “force” for their decisions to move and undertake different routes. Besides that, it was something as a default setting, an emotion that is following them every day despite the things they face. In every explanation of their own experiences, women would always mention fear as something that became a constant to them. Days without it would not be normal and it just meant that they had to take more caution and be prepared that nothing is safe as it seems. This is also an example of how that trust and unity among people gradually faded away. As mentioned in the overview of the historical background, that harmony that lived in the SFRY now did not mean anything and lost its significance in such a fast way. This shows how political agendas can change the course of actions and events drastically if people are constantly exposed to propaganda and manipulation. Most of the stories that women have shared with Hunt and that she has presented in her book, came from those who were living their lives as mothers, mostly unemployed or just graduated. Another point of view was from a woman in Sarajevo who has used her profession to help other women that found themselves in difficult situations. During the war, she would gather information from other women who were victims of rape. She would witness how women were feeling helpless and could not bear to speak about the horrors that they have been through. Eastern part of the country was the origin from which such information came. One of the most surprising details were the facts that schools have been turned into rape camps (page 50). One of the most difficult stories to listen to was the experience of an eleven year old girl from the same camp who has been raped. It is not possible to describe well enough with words the amount of psychological distress she has gone through as the time of the interview with her was shortly after she was assaulted.

Besides the gender based violence women faced during the Bosnian war, those who “escaped” torture were not saved from all other situations. Most of them in their stories mention how they were witnessing the soldiers assaulting their mothers, sisters and family. In crisis like these, the enemy side was not selective of their victims. They would pursue their goals and what is aligned to the objectives of their political leaders. Most of the women in their interviews would mention the United Nations and how they behaved in situations like these. Although they would provide some help, their aid was extremely limited which resulted in a large number of women going through traumatic events like these. The safe zones declared in specific areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina were actually the most dangerous ones and the rules for such protection were not followed (Hunt, page 56).

Women were facing severe lack of normal life necessities. Food supplies and medicine were almost non existent. The only way they could secure minimum quantities was through the humanitarian aid coming from parachutes. Under such circumstances, they would usually relocate to the closest village or place. These routes did not provide guarantee that they will not be caught or taken to concentration camps. However hunger was the driving force to take risks like those. In circumstances such as severe lack of food during the war are frequent scenarios. One of the routes mentioned in Hunt’s book was the one from Srebrenica to the headquarters of the UN located in Potočari. Since the distance between those two places is around 10 kilometers, people would gather in groups and walk by foot to reach the city. As one may expect that the location where the United Nations troops are stationed is somehow safe, in this case the scenario was everything but far from intact or protected from life threats. Women found out from the UN troops that the Serb soldiers would visit Potočari to gather more information. During the nights they would hear screams and gunshots. The aggressors would threaten the UN soldiers and wear their clothes to cover their identities. The witnesses specifically pointed out that “...we knew those men – they were our neighbors” (page 57) They would approach people and convince them that they will help. In the interview the woman mentioned how she lost her son in that way and continued to see more bodies night

by night. While not being able to leave such place, they are forced to stay and accept whatever may happen to them.

In a lot of cases the military would arrange the transportation of the civilians to another city. In this way women were also forced to enter the buses and go to other towns. The routes were not random but it was specifically adjusted to the military plans. For example, one of the targeted transportation route was located towards the town known as Tuzla. At that time it was under the control of Bosniaks, who managed to provide shelter for civilians. As military plans were developing, relocation of IDPs was huge part of it. Women did not stay long in one place, which forced them to adjust to new environment quickly and efficiently. They had to change perspective on certain things and put trivial things aside. Their habits had to take a new route and priorities varied from time to time. Worrying was seen as a luxury (Hunt, page 59) and a factor that was slowing them down in decision making process. They had to accept the situation as it is and live with new roles in the society. Most of them always emphasized the importance of being mothers who need to be ready for sacrifices for their children. It is not anymore their own lives but of the next generations and how they can be protected. Commitment to others now became the only reason and force for the internal movements across the country. Considering that the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the conflict heavily relied on relationships and unity, during the war most of those relations quickly faced disintegration.

The concept of belonging to a community has a strong impact on individuals. War in its nature challenges this concept to a large extent as it is downgrading and weakening ties between families and friends. For women, the biggest alternation from situations like these are losses of their loved ones. This shift in life is something that alternates their perceptions to a large extent making them question future decisions, especially those of staying in the country in which they are born. In most of the stories that women would talk about when it comes to the topics like these, they would describe or compare their survival to animals. This is one of the ways of how they wanted to emphasize the importance of dehumanization and

agony they had to go through. Even though this vulnerability is present in everyone who is trying to live through war, yet women are the ones who are the greatest target of violation of such state. As much as they are physically suffering, psychologically they had to be stronger even if it will have consequences later. So, not only challenged for the survival of own lives, they still looked on fulfilling their roles as mothers and daughters. Nothing should have been settled on individual fear; it is about the situations that could have been prevented or avoided. If they decided to do nothing or give up on others, it would cause regret and feeling of failure in their roles in the community.

Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country has very dominant concepts of stereotypes and prejudice. In some cases talking about topics like these was not allowed or looked as embarrassment that needs to be endured in silence. However, the society as such would have a judgmental stance towards individuals and humiliate them. On the other side, there are number of situations in which they would receive support from their families and find a way to rebuild the life they had once lived. It is one of the reasons why it is believed that not all stories and experiences of women have been recorded. Most of them would remain unspoken or hidden. Women would help each other during the conflict and made them feel comfortable enough to share the events that they lived through. Sensitivity in this matter is constantly present and challenges collection of statistical data.

Women who had to raise children in situations like these faced one of the biggest difficulties. Shortage of food and nutrition can cause serious medical issues and in situations like armed conflict, such supplies are hard to provide. Even the camps that provided humanitarian aid were not covering all the necessary needs. These constant uncertainties have created more difficulties for women, in particular those who have lost their husbands or families. Additional trauma was caused because women did not know how to protect their daughters; “She’s here and depending on me right now. I just kept repeating, mechanically: ‘Don’t be afraid....We’re going to be okay....I am going to take care of it’ ” (Hunt, page 67) Given that they wanted to fight for the future of their children, the course of the war forced the mothers

to take the role of the foundation of the family. They had to perform double of the duties, as they were not only mothers but the only protectors for their children. Trust in other people was still debatable and not to be taken for granted.

As Hunt mentions in the book, humanitarian aid was also limiting the role of the providers that mothers had practiced (page 70). Life was difficult and relying on such aid was necessary and inevitable. The fact that this factor made them think that they are not doing enough for the protection of their own families so that they had to rely on humanitarian organizations made them even more desperate in proving that they are the right caregiver. This is another example of how specific events that should actually be seen as something positive, turn out to be a challenge to the idea of identity.

Social life and identity are the big factors in internal movements and migrations of people. Coping mechanisms that they develop turn out to be their ways of survival. What was common among all women was exactly this desire of being the right protector and provider for their families. Status before the armed conflict did not matter anymore. As it was mentioned at the beginning, some of them talked about the importance of economic status but authority during the war meant nothing. “In Sarajevo, more than ten thousand people died. More civilians than soldiers were killed by snipers and shelling” (Hunt, page 70) were the words of a woman who was a minister and professor, living in Sarajevo and trying to find a route to escape the city even though they were not able to move from the place they stayed.

As much as women were losing their long term social relationships, there are times in the war when they will reach new relations with others who suffered similar consequences. All those who helped to each other were actually the same victims who went through cases of rape or suffered other physical injuries. People would establish strong bonds and connections in this way which helped them more in their coping mechanisms. Being in a group of people with the same goal was one of the ways of how the survival of internal displacement looked somehow easier. It was a sort of comfort; for some also a way of feeling at ease and satisfaction that they are doing the right things while others were still at caution. Moving

alone as an individual was additionally discouraging, unsafe and vulnerable to attacks. Living while being surrounded by small number of people wasn't only a card of an escape but also a way of reaching food supplies, medical necessities and information of what was happening outside and how the military is proceeding.

Access to information and world outside Bosnia and Herzegovina was to a large extent impossible. The domestic TV and radio stations provided extremely biased news. Women recall hearing reports of civil casualties from Bosniaks and Serb sides. Both of them developed a self evident propaganda in order to steer nationalism and hatred. Another challenge is posed on internally displaced women; being aware of how much disorientation, false and manipulative media play can create. For them it was easier to not believe in such reports as they were witnessing first hand different events. It was a way of how the discouragement produced like this did not stand in their ways of bringing fear as a decisive factor in everything. Deceiving one like this may have impact in other domains of an armed conflict. Some news from the outside world could have been heard from the UN troops. On the other side, finding such source for informing was not always the easiest task. When asked what they thought the reason for starting the war is, women emphasized the imbalance in the ethnical composition of towns and villages. One argues, "Towns had more mixed marriages, so we were shocked by the war. Villages are more homogenous; their population is more or less one ethnic composition" (Hunt, page 74) which proves how propaganda and political pressure can cause conflicts to a large extent. Aside from the lack of providence of education of certain issues for the people in villages, they were vulnerable more to the changes in mindsets. In questions like these women would provide answers based on their experiences and the stories they have heard from the others. So, taking one reason and cause for an outbreak of war was not something they would take as the definite argument. They would always emphasize how people changed drastically because of the political leaders and how they were manipulated by the amount of hate speech that was projected. Highlight would be put on the soldiers who decided to enter the war even when they were not prepared or ever trained in holding a weapon. Using core social values and stability of ethnical structure that

came from the time of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia to political purposes inevitably had the potential to lead to a war. How much and what kind of other things could have been done is another topic to be discussed about.

The reason why not a single woman during the interviews in Hunt's book was pointing out that religion or ethnic differences are the main cause of the war, is particularly interesting. As many scholars argue that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is caused because of such matter (Popović, 2019), women pointed out more of a different perspective to it. This is mainly coming from their own experiences and ways in which they lived. They knew living in a community of three and more ethnically different people is possible and did not produce any threats of instability. They lived among their neighbors and friends who did not share the same faith or culture and still formed strong relationships. It was like that during the SFRY, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. That is why, change of authorities and different political strategy led to the situation as it was from 1992 until 1995. As much as they blamed the people who turned their mindset amidst the outbreak, higher weight of responsibility was put on the political leaders.

Soon enough, religion was misused by the political leaders as well. This element was also a part of coping mechanisms for many internally displaced women. As much as it has helped in dealing with the new environment and adjusting to drastic changes, religion now became an element that is "against" their favors. For the ones who identified themselves as Bosniaks, it meant only one thing for the aggressor side. Under the influence of the political leaders and course of the war, they would relate Bosniaks to the religion of Muslims, Islam. This further deepened the division among people and aided to the systematic ethnic cleansing; genocide in Srebrenica being one of such examples. In the course of war, women now needed to take into consideration that part of identity is blended into one. Religion and ethnicity were understood as one and would eventually determine the future course of the conflict. In essence putting these two terms together is not accurate and would create misunderstandings and complications. They are technically in tight connection with each other, but taking it in

the context of a country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnicity did not strictly determine religion or vice versa. Bosniaks were not only people who follow the beliefs of Islam. Historically, political representation of Bosnian Muslims was under the name Bosniaks. This was established by Josip Broz Tito (Hunt, page 78) but a major difference was that religion was not the determinative factor in expressing oneself as belonging to that group. During the Bosnian war, this took an extreme change. That is why misinterpretations and misjudgment of one belonging to certain ethnicity is pre-determined by religion. Nevertheless, one needs to take into consideration that citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are free to identify themselves either as Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. It does not have connection with certain set of beliefs. This should have been held as a condition during the war as well. To put it simply, those who follow Christianity are free to identify themselves as Bosniaks or Croats. Evidently, it is a very confusing matter to understand which is why women have emphasized that political leaders took this fragility of situation in their advantage and influenced people who were unsure of what is the best thing to follow. Some women in their interviews do not particularly blame people of holding responsibility for their crimes, but that the authority had extreme pressure and fraudulent visions of how a country should be established and led. This way of taking neutral side may balance out the reasons and causes of internal movements of women and the armed conflict in general. Women in their argumentation wanted to give a more generalist view of these type of things. They are still aware of how sensitive situations were and how reasoning might be interpreted wrong, if they are looked from a different perspective.

Women were aware of the present superiority of one ethnic group over the other. The government had the large power in determination of their economic statuses and the year 1992 was full of examples of disrespect towards ethnicities. Minorities faced discrimination on every level. As one of the women in Hunt's book pointed out, "Those kinds of attitudes came only after Tito died" (page 87). Giving them the right channels to elevate such mindset meant to face downgrading of the others. In a country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, keeping a balance is important. It was a way of how things survived in their stability.

Multiculturalism was a richness to ordinary people but a problem to political leaders. It was an element which marked the whole country in becoming a tool of potential destruction and collapse of the system.

Political representation of women during the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was barely present. International organizations were the one who would take some consideration in providing the necessary needs specifically for them. However, none of the women in their interviews or stories mentioned that they were protected in any way by the authorities. Self evidently are the traumas and violence they had endured but even during the peace negotiations, women were not put in any spotlight. Even though some of them have worked in the government, that role lost its significance and weight during the conflict. Even during the Dayton agreement, there were no representatives for women involved (Forton, 2021). Not omitting the few percentage of those who were at the administrative roles, a more effective and important participation was not present. This shows how women did not have any say and were completely cornered from their values and capabilities. It cannot be argued that it is a passive type of exclusion and gender marginalization. It is known that during an armed conflict maintaining a gender balance is very difficult. Despite of that, the situation of Bosnian women was that they were fully discriminated and not even given the courage to stand up for their own. The abuse of power authorities have taken did not only greatly influence the course of the war, but also the largest part of population. Women were “shut down” and their voices were completely buried under the weight of the war. The internalized patriarchy had the ability to determine all the aspects of state organization and society. This is one of the reasons why women were having hard time to protect their lives during the war. If the protection was non existent during the most difficult times, the question was how such situations may be frequent when things are ended. That is why most of the women relied on their own strength as long as it was giving them the ability to move forward.

It is not possible to find one domain of life in which women were protected even to the minimum. Cutting off an individual like this meant that consequences will be felt for a very

long time. But, such things were uncertain as well, because none of the women were sure that they were able to bring back what was once lost. Material possessions are tangible and can be secured again, either in the same or improved form. On the other side, human relationships and families once broken cannot be formed again. The mindset of the Bosnian society before and during the war took a great shift and in a direction that no one really expected. Women did not have time to mourn about the losses because things were moving quickly and they had to act accordingly.

Testimonies by women

It is known that victims who are speaking about their experiences give huge advantage to the emotional side (Leydesdorff, 2011). It is accurate that subjectivity is present but taking this as the only reason for not giving women the ability to share the torture that war has brought is utterly meaningless. As Leydesdorff argues in her book *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica speak*, giving a platform and conducting interviews for the survivors of one of the biggest massacres in the history of humanity, it is possible to reach a different perspective on an armed conflict. First hand witnesses would not deliberately give false accusations that certain people have done war crimes if they are not known as a fact. It is extremely difficult for the survivors to testify about the sacrifices that have been done. The same level of challenge lies for the researchers who are listening and recording such information. So, history can be interpreted through this type of evidence as well. Inevitably, more work needs to be done in order to filter out the subjectivity so that the historical facts are objective to the fullest as they should be.

In order to understand the positions of morality of one ethnicity or society in a country, one needs to address these emotional sides of the testimonies. In early 2000s, researchers who would work on interviews or publishing books on these topics were heavily rejected and criticized in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because it was still a sensitive topic and some women were still dealing with the humiliation that they are receiving from the society. This was particularly highlighted in small cities and communities living in the area of Srebrenica. Only

in the years later after some things have changed in the mindsets, women have found the courage into bringing out their stories again. Specific difference in their storytelling from those women who have participated in the interviews lies in subtle distinction and perspective of events and the aggressor side which has been attacking them. Naturally, they would emphasize more on the reasons of grief and losses being their utmost alternation point. Emotional survival in this case was very challenging. It is not to weight down who had the more courage or who did the right thing for sharing stories at what time. The matter is about different factors in question. Women who survived the genocide in Srebrenica were waiting for their children or husbands to come back from concentration camps. Some waited even for years which made them emotionally buried into the Bosnian war even when it officially ended. Only when they would find some remains or evidence of their family members, they would try to move forward. One of the women in Leydesdorff book talks about how she was hoping that her son is alive until 2004 when she received the death certificate. The description women would give themselves was that “..they simply exist. Because they live in poverty, making plans for the future is impossible” (Leydesdorff, 2021). Women who gave interviews in the years such as 2006 were living in poverty and fighting their battles mostly emotionally. Distress caused by memories of the cases of rape and torture had caused further pressure for the victims. “But please don’t ask too much about that” is the sentence that women who are still traumatized would repeat all the time (Leydesdorff, 2021).

Their expectations for the war to start were non existent. “I felt nothing. What can I say? The war broke out all of a sudden... A couple of days before it started, people began to talk.” (Leydesdorff, page 50). People were concerned about specific questions such as “...suddenly people talked openly about the war. One main said, ‘Good people, why war?... do we really have to destroy all that, kill each other and mutilate a lot of people?... What’s wrong with you, are you crazy?’” (Ibid.). These type of rumors have spread among people very fast. The denial that events as war would happen took an extreme change; “They have weapons. The war is coming. What war? That’s nonsense.” (Ibid.) The fact that they were always surprised when a person who was their neighbor suddenly became the aggressor. Even so they would

point out the significance of the relationships they have, “One of my neighbors, who was armed, asked to see our identification cards...But I said, ‘Hey neighbor, we know each other!’” (Leydesdorff, page 51).

One of the women recall the way of how the aggressors would treat the civilians that they caught. She was taken to the school in Bratunac, again being known as the location for camps. She recalls, “One officer, whom I did not know, ordered all those on the floor to get up and to line up in front of the wall with their hands up. At that moment I noticed they had sustained severe beatings. The Serbs began to beat them again. The gymnasium was so packed that we felt like sardines.... And people were beaten so severely that the beating was lethal.” (Leydesdorff, page 57).

Robbery of civilians was a dominant act by the military who would capture people and bring them into concentration camps. Amidst those circumstances, women were particularly unprotected in this cases. Even so, “a member of the Serb crisis team visited the family ‘in hiding’, and wanted to rape her in exchange or keeping silent.” (Leydesdorff, 59) Being captive by the soldiers created additional type of uncertainty and fear that is not easy to explain. Women had no choice but to follow the orders that were given to them. If they did not, they would have been killed or tortured in inhumane ways. “We said nothing and bowed our heads. The captors agreed among themselves who would take whom to a room. She was ordered to undress; she refused and he tore off her clothes.” (Leydesdorff, page 60).

Nowadays, women keep being reminded of the events they have experienced on a daily basis. It could be just them doing their normal routines, where they would “re – watch” the same movie of tortures all over again. “And that movie is horrible and it really happened. There is no pill that can stop that” (Janković, 2022) What is important for women is not to forget what happened no matter what. They remain living in “the city in which they have lost everything but they are coming back so that these places are never forgotten” (Ibid.). On the other side, women who suffered physical injuries would point out the severity of how the treatment of patients was in the hospitals. This is all due to the lack of resources and high number of

wounded people getting admitted to these facilities in a growing pace. “The night I was injured there were many people like me and I was lying on a bed in a corridor of the hospital as there was no place in the rooms. Later I was transferred to a room with 48 other wounded people.” (Amnesty International, 2008).

Women found the way of sharing their burden with others as well. In this case they would work together on finding solutions and improving the situation on their own. Some decided to devote themselves into teaching next generations about events that have taken place. They dedicated themselves to ensuring education to their children and creating future for them. In such cases they would see themselves as robots that are just functioning and living emotionless (Leydesdorff, 2021). However, driving force of relocating again to their initial residency and re-taking the role of the caregiver in the family was stronger. If not for themselves, they were dedicated for the family members and children. Some women started their own businesses. Even as entrepreneurs they were able to earn low amount of income. Truth was, even the minimum was appreciated because the economic situation of postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina was creating large number of challenges that were difficult to overcome. Women couldn't rely on the government and authorities at all. They had to start working on their own and be up to date.

Given the tensions that were present from the Dayton peace agreements, women belonging to different ethnic groups had faced even more the challenge of being called with disrespectful expressions. Just based on names, women were discredited and received hate because they would belong to an ethnic group. It did not matter whether it was ethnicity of Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs. So to say marking a person based on the events of war was another difficulty to overcome in order to bring the social life in balance. According to one of the women interviewed in Hunts book, children in different areas of the country were taught differently depending on demographic composition of the area. “The books in different areas had the same stories, just with different names... I read some analyses of schoolbooks sponsored by different political groups” were on the examples of how history was being

changed and especially in institutions that were providing education (Hunt, 2001). Continuing with such mindset does not guarantee any peace yet successful way of living together while respecting the differences. It was important to spread the knowledge of what kind of events have taken place during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One cannot simply afford to be ignorant about important historical changes of their own state as this one was.

No matter how difficult it was for them to go back to their previous jobs, women took the opportunity to volunteer and still help in for example, hospitals, humanitarian organizations and similar. “I can forgive, but I can’t forget. They have a right to their memories, but we don’t have to emphasize the negative” (Hunt, 2021). Even in circumstances of endured suffering and torture, women chose not to live in their past and accept the fact that these type of things have happened to them. Although not something taken for granted, they still highlight that nothing will be forgotten that easily. Record of all the events would not go into shadows as long as women’s organizations, centers and associations work on the protection of their rights.

Seeking justice would bring relief for women and ease their psychological battles. At the end of each testimony and their stories they always wanted for the justice to come to the light. They wanted to reach the ability to end their stories by saying that the justice has prevailed and was done in the right way. “Now justice prevails – although sometimes slowly” (Hunt, 2021). Some women would argue that it was partially their responsibility to live and fight for moments like these in the postwar period. They did not want to let go of the memories and their losses. No matter how traumatizing it is, they accepted it as something that is part of them and they would carry it as long as they live. It was a duty to at least make sure that crimes as these do not pass without some sort of punishment. On the other hand, putting on trial war criminals was something that was needed in order to keep the importance of human rights and let the victims know that they are heard. If such events did not take place then what

kind of message is given to the next generations and their understanding of history of their people and country.

“I am not ashamed. It did not happen from my will, and everybody knows it. It was like having a knife under your cheek and a gun to your heard.” (SKJELSBÆK, 2006). Similar statements are among women who have seen that awareness of such events is important in their way of improving mental health. They do not give up on chasing the justice but they are also not letting such events slowing them down in future activities. Support did come also from other family members and their husbands would rather show that they are aware of what is happening than being overly judgmental (Ibid.). Perhaps the weight of the words can be felt in a specific question asked in one of the interviews conducted by a Norwegian gender studies scholar, Inger Skjelsbæk, about how difficult for them is to talk about rape. The woman answered: “I think so, but it is a new situation now because before nobody talked about these crimes, and now in the Hague they talk about it as a very specific crime. It is like killing in my opinion. You know, I think sometimes that it would have been better for me if they had killed me instead of raping me.” (page 385)

“History is the teacher of life. We’ve got to learn the truth so this horror won’t be repeated” (Hunt, 2021). No matter how painful it is to talk about the event and kept reminding oneself of this type of pain it is important for knowing the truth behind the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Insistence of taking testimonies from victims was present not only domestically but also on international level. Women as internally displaced people and relocation paths need to be studied in order to deepen the knowledge and work on models that would prevent disasters. Truth may have different dimension but information shared can make big differences in the allocation of people who have disappeared during the war. This was one of the biggest consequences that the war has brought and search for the remains of such victims continues to be among active projects in the postwar period.

2.4. Postwar period and situation today

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of the historical background, the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina has ended with Dayton peace negotiations and agreement. Signed in 1995, the whole country had a new so to say structure. The distribution of the land among the ethnicities was not accepted by the people to the full extent. However, major outcome was that the armed conflict has found its final end. First years after the end of the conflict, the country was facing high economic instability. Large percentage of the population was unemployed which produced difficulties in living costs and income. Reconstruction of the infrastructure was important as well, which was financed with the help of World Bank (Malcolm, Lampe, Britannica). IMF and international donations have heavily influenced the path of the recovery of Bosnian economy. However, in the year 2001 the economy was at serious stakes of restoration. The foreign trade deficit had influence on the GDP of the state, remaining it difficult to maintain further outcomes. Unemployment rates were still reaching 40-50 percent (Pugh, 2002). Very often, demonstrations and protests regarding the low payments and instability were still present. This produced additional pressure to the ability to control the situation but it was more or less normal considering the casualties that came with the war. The World Bank's Emergency Fund was established specifically in the aid for the country. Particularly, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was in the primary focus for such financing. The entity of Republika Srpska did not receive such support, which has influenced the workers rights to a large extent. Even those who were recruited for jobs, received low pays making it difficult to cover properly the living costs. Presence of entrepreneurs was influencing development of corporatism and nationalism through private acquisition. As an example were projects of individual investors in specific industries that faced a decline in advancement. There are some critics in terms of number of people taking the advantage of the economy which led mostly to the interruption of peace building operations. Division was present in terms of local and municipality based businesses. Diversification of economy in this way soon enough ensured the development of political economies that were heavily based on nationalism (Ibid). On the other side, there were businessmen who with their

performances have established one of the strongest foundations for industries before the war started. However, during the conflict they would turn to different sides and join the aggressors in their objectives. One of the example was the situation of Fikret Abdić who developed the biggest agricultural business in Velika Kladuša, north-eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recognizable for his products throughout the whole country, his participation in certain war crimes has caused the business to collapse after the war ended. This also brought huge losses of jobs, income and stability in gross domestic production. His socialist and capitalist tactics were supported and recognized to a large extent by people even during the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. Moreover, due to certain acts committed, that foundation was easily taken away and a new economy was set to build again on those grounds. So, it is to say that the economy was closely connected to the political orientation as well, which gave rise to the national parties that will later on have significant role in the establishment and structure of the government in each entity. With an environment as this one, the economy had to build itself in some way despite present significant deviations. Manufacturing and metal industries were developed to a large extent. This is because even during the existence of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia, the president Josip Broz Tito had given emphasis on the development of the country. Since the dissolution, it was less likely to be back at such high levels of employment. Such possibilities were completely diminished after the end of war and especially nowadays. Although the path of Bosnian economy in postwar period might not have followed the standards of market economy in general, privatization processes did also take place. It was inevitable that some parts of the elites would work on manipulation methods for achieving higher funding or similar (Pugh, 2002).

Certainly, specific parts of the entities were able to cooperate with each other ensuring the redistribution of assets and revenues. For example, Croatian part of the city of Mostar or the southern region of Bosnia and Herzegovina cooperated with the businesses in the entity of Republika Srpska. Naturally, this cooperation started with the aim of helping each other in the stabilization of workforce and continued to be in such position even today. Once the

political dimension was involved things started to diverge in terms of authority and power. For example, the management of the production of aluminum was averted under the influence of the Croatian party HDZ (Croatian democratic union). Important is to mention also the international participation in the building up of the Bosnian economy. Even though international organizations would establish ties with domestic factories, the alliance would be overthrown by the nationalist parties. All those events took either an imbalanced route producing oscillations in cohesion of economic competitiveness.

Fast forward to the year 2008 when one of the greatest international economic crisis took place, it affected Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Recession had a significant impact in 2009, causing the country to enter into such state as well. On the other side, some argue that the effects were not of a big significance (Malcolm, Lampe, Britannica) and in 2010 the economy hit positive results. Although not ideal, it still was operating according to the European standards. This year was often marked as a moderate growth (IMF, 2010). With technological change and foreign investments, the reforms were able to take place in the structure of economy. One of the aspects that are causing difficulties in the economy today was the focus on the public sector. Private sector is not so greatly emphasized. Imports are much higher than exports, making the domestic production weak in revenues (World Bank Group, 2022). These dynamics of the imbalances make the model vulnerable to instability in the whole country. The statistical reports show that unemployment may have gradually reduced from 2015 onwards, but still they manage to meet high numbers in percentages (ERBD, 2022). In economic terms, situation today in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very unstable. Even in reports from the European Council on the progress of economy and social life, the country still lacks development of efficient policies and strategies.

The political situation in the postwar period is presented through the essence of Dayton agreement. The formation of the government has taken a longer time. This is mainly due to its complexity and ethnic groups still being divided in their opinions. Most of the political parties have taken the Dayton accords as dysfunctional and not providing fair representation

in terms of land percentages for the entities (Britannica, n.d.). Challenge was also to adjust to the role and importance of appointed international Higher Representative. To establish a constitution was the most difficult part as the Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs could not agree on bringing mutual decisions (Ibid.). In 2010 some progress did take place in the election of the presidency for Bosniaks and Bosnian Serb sides. The Croatian side did elect their representative but the voting procedures have taken long time in their administration and final collection. Not having a proper central government did not promise any step forward in either economy or social life. Organizing ministries and authorities was important but with a deadlock like this one, it was inevitable to face a stagnation. The former politicians were taken to trials in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). They were judged for the war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica.

Inability to put the government into its full function was directly the outcome of the Bosnian war and Dayton peace negotiations. Although self contradicting, the agreement did not put pressure for the rules being completely put into practice. Officials did not give enough effort into reaching a certain peace settlement. Even though war was stopped, the instability was yet to severely influence further course of events.

Led by the lack of political representation and constant disagreements, people initiated number of protests among the different regions of the country in the postwar period. Media has played a great role in the spread of information regarding the situation domestically and on international level. Citizens were not satisfied with the economic situation and demanded reforms. Every ethnic group wanted the officials and political parties to exclude the ongoing discrimination and start building effective authority that would lead the country. In 2014 massive protests and demonstrations have taken place. It started in 2014 and rapidly spread to the major cities such as Sarajevo, Zenica and other regions (The Guardian, 2014). Main goals were the calling of the government to resign due to the inefficiencies they have caused for years. The demand was for the authority to either immediately implement changes or reconstruct in terms of the structure. Living standards needed major improvements and

political corruption needed to be eliminated. Nepotism was destroying and slowing down any progress. People did not want to accept the situation going into the direction of what might potentially repeat the years 1991 and 1992. Even after years since the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, people were paralyzed by the outcomes of the war. The riot was of a large scale in terms of the activities that took place. Their dissatisfaction was presented through civil resistances and attacks on the buildings in which the authorities of the government were located. High number of people were injured or arrested (BBC, 2014). The police had difficulties in maintaining the control. Eventually, peaceful negotiations have taken place and ministers of each canton have resigned from their positions or promised to fill the demands imposed by the protestors.

Most of civilians who participated in this turmoil were internally displaced people. 90,000 of them did not receive deserved support and aid in order to recover from the conflict that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Authorities abused their power and the international funding slowly lost its traces of its initial purpose (Hunt, 2001).

This type of socio-economic vulnerability did not bypass women and their participation in labor market. Women in general are contributing to the society to a greater extent. This ranges from the participation in social lives to the economic domain of the state. Historically, largest number of workforce in the industries were actually women. The tradition even after the Second World War was women's participation in communal work and other fields in which they had produced financial contribution to the households. This explains why some of the stories and interviews of women started to a large extent with them talking about their professions.

As previously described, the environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been full of instability and consequences from the aftermath of the war. One may argue that upon the ending of the conflict women may have found themselves more secure from the war crimes and physical violations. Although it is right in that context; they have seen the ending of the agony and tortures they have endured. However, the psychological and physical

consequences and losses were felt even greater. Taken from their own roles in the households, most women found themselves living in families where their husbands did not survive the war. This made them transition into the role of a person who is source of hope and guarantee of a future for their children. Women had to start from scratch, given that they have completely lost their basis even from the period of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia that was known to be politically driven in favor of the patriarchy (Helfrich, 2021). Based on experiences and events, they had to overcome the humiliation and health complications that came from the systematic rape as part of the armed conflict. The biggest number of female victims and stories of first hand witnesses did come following the genocide in Srebrenica.

The most difficult topic to discuss about when it comes to the civil casualties and situations of facing rape, sexual abuse and psychological torture is the ethnic cleansing that has taken place on the territories of the safe zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Srebrenica was proclaimed as a protected city and the United Nations have demanded the troops of the aggressors to retreat and stop further actions in that area. Densely populated by the Muslim population, the town was completely shelled and bombarded, leaving great number of civil casualties. Forcibly displacing people, the soldiers of the Bosnian Serb side have not followed such rules. It can be argued that even the safe zones during the war were bringing the opposite of what the UN Resolution 819 initially aimed for in its drafts.

The survivors of the genocide of Srebrenica did not stop demanding their rights and justice after the war ended (Barton-Hronešová, 2020). Media has struggled in the first years of postwar period to address these topics as they thought that talking about such events would create more sensitive and vulnerable situations. However, nothing was stopping the victims for finding their own channels through which they wanted to share the stories and let everyone know the agony they have went through. Some women understood it as their duty to not let crimes as these ones be forgotten. This is an extremely important part of the history and the collection of such stories needed to take place. Many researches and analysts have

conducted interviews and used their own platforms for women who were victims of these cruelties. It was also for those who felt the need to express their own experiences because it was a different perspective of war in question. This was also the opportunity for the researchers to reflect on the Bosnian armed conflict through the lenses of gender discrimination and inequalities. In this way, women rights were taken into consideration which gave more spotlight to the failures of protection of women who faced the greatest vulnerability. All that while being internally displaced, women were not able to get “back to their feet” fast enough even years after the war ended. During the internal movement and switching their place of residence, women have lost their family properties in the bombing processes. Most of them relied significantly on the humanitarian aid in the postwar period as well. Women who have lost their husbands and largest part of the family were left in the economic difficulties in which the country itself was struggling. They did not have stable income in the households, giving them challenging time to find jobs even with part – time availability.

Accepting any type of financial income was crucial form of yet another survival. The Organization for Security and Corporation in Europe has conducted a research that has estimated that 48 percent of women were not able to find a stable job. Two thirds of them in the whole population were coming from the families in which males have participated in the fighting during the war or were not present in their households during the whole duration of the armed conflict. Women were basically almost completely excluded in the fair representation of workforce even in the process of reconstruction of economy in the years after the Bosnian war. How much did the situation improve shows the participation of women in the protests and their dedication in activism of projects that demanded the establishment of their rights according to the universal standards.

In tradition women were seen as those who are providing peace and anti-nationalistic perspective (Helfrich, 2021). Inevitable is to say that women continued in their traditional roles in the postwar period, making sure that they are still in the same position as it was in

the patriarchal world. This mostly came from the mindset and prejudice that was long present in the country even before the outbreak. In circumstances of difficulties of ensuring wages, women were careful of not bringing themselves into the situation where they would overweight their position in households over the man's. They continue balance the domestic roles they already had (Heilfrich, 2021). This type of stereotype is present even today. In particular, such mindset is able to slow down the organizations and activities who are created specifically for the fight for women and gender rights.

Women's participation in politics was overshadowed to a large extent. The inefficiency of equal representation of gender was present even in the selection of house representatives during the Dayton peace negotiations. As already said, official spokespersons for women in the city of Dayton were not present at all. This has been one of the main factors that have driven women to activate themselves more in the postwar period and demand their rights. They were aware that given the circumstances they would not have other solution but to cooperate and accept what politicians suggested.

From a gender role perspective, Dayton agreement did not put great focus on the NGOs and civil organizations with missions specifically dedicated to women's rights. Exclusion in the peace negotiations can produce discouragement for women who plan to be involved in politics. This is greatly a democratic problem. However, women empowerment is crucial and instead of being only focused on the reconciliation process, they were determined in making themselves more "visible, whereby women activists resisted marginalization in political and public life." (Mulalić, Karić, 2020).

Generally speaking, one of the most important event that has taken place in 1995 was the Beijing declaration adopted by the United Nations. During this Fourth World Conference on Women, major principles were taken into consideration which have greatly influenced the topic of gender equality or equality of men and women. The declaration had mentioned the purposes of respecting rights among genders according to the Charter of United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other tools that were used as the instruments for

international human rights. The commitment to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women has ensured significant changes in the path of women's rights. This type of progress has improved worldwide position of genders. International community has followed the declaration to a large extent making it relevant even today. Empowerment of women in this way was able to foster democracies and rebuild the political regime in the countries who have faced greater instability due to armed conflict or similar cases. Setting agenda in which everyone is benefiting from the equality was the right type of platform that needed to be used in a long term sense. Additionally, the declaration as itself does not stand alone but is followed by the regional reports on the progress of situations in different regions of the world. This is done by the United Nations regional commissions. The Beijing conference has presented twelve important areas in which the women need to find their voice back and rebuild what was taken from them. The declaration itself has given the activists ability to promote and protect gender rights. It was giving women a platform and ability to speak up. Changes like these were crucial and they started to give positive outcomes in many fields.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution was made with the Dayton agreement ensuring that the fundamental human rights and freedom are respected and ensured. The Constitution of human rights has direct connection as a legal system which resulted in the establishment of a jurisdictional court in the country itself (UN Women, 2020). Several reforms did take place and it all was over the years of the aftermath of the Bosnian armed conflict. In order to establish the constitution itself in 2006, some initiatives were taken about the gender equality. This meant that the inclusion of civil organizations in the negotiation processes was still unsuccessful.

Law of Gender Equality was developed and adopted in 2003 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With it being amended in 2009 it reached a dual function. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or short for CEDAW, has been the basis of such Law which ensured the citizens the ability to live in secure and gender fair environment.

Specifically, the Article 20 urges on the importance of state to include fair representation of gender in all aspects of political life. This included public authorities, bodies of state control and all those who are functioning with processes of managing and decision-making.

It was important to litigate case scenarios which would fail to reach the consensus of the threshold of presented women and men no less than 40 percent. Given the constitutional complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was inevitable that separate set of systems and laws will be established as well. This law has been taken into the consideration to a large extent especially when one reflects on the election system in the country. In 2017 as an example, women have taken up to 23.4% of the participation in parliaments (Ibid.) Comparing to the European average and given the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this number was giving some improvements in the field of gender equality.

Temporary type of measurements were introduced all over the world in order to deal with the problem of underrepresentation of women. The so called quotas were specifically designed for the question of elections, which was also one of the ways to foster the motivation of women's participation in politics. So, the gender quotas were determined based on different factors designed specifically in various areas. The target percentage of the quotas depended on the country that is in the question. In order to reach for example 25 percent, candidates for the parliamentary elections needed to fulfill those number of quotas in order to be considered as fairly presented. In case the quotas were not respected, a sanction in form of financial obligation is introduced. If the quotas are legislated, they are proved to ensure more success in its efficiency than those that are initiated as voluntary acts. In an event where a specific demand is imposed to the country and it is a non binding, it is less likely that it would be accepted and practiced. That is why in order to avoid the financial deficit of the regulations as these, quotas were filled in as much as it was possible.

Looking at the report of the *Baseline study on barriers to political participation of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, the graph shows the timeline of the percentages of women in the House of the Representatives of Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and

Parliament Assembly. The National Assembly of Republika Srpska was also taken into statistical overview. The year 1998 was the highest in terms of women's participation in the House of Representatives of the Parliament Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was 30 percent whereas for the Parliament of the Federation of BiH was 14 percent. For the National Assembly of the entity of Republika Srpska it was 22.9 percent. Drastic change was seen just two years after, in 2000 where the participation was for 70 percent less. For the House of Representatives of Parliament of FBiH and the National Assembly of RS, the decrease was not significantly greater. Over the next years the percentages were gradually increasing. Overall, the quota limitations that were introduced in 1998 had a significant positive impact on the political participation of women. The present changes in the election law of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013 had caused slight variations in the percentages of women's presentation through the quotas.

Electoral system had a direct impact on the representation of women and their likelihood to be part of the political parties or eventually be candidates for higher positions. Depending on the region, different voting bullets and rules were implemented. So, going into specific regions of for example the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina meant going into the structure of the voting systems and establishment of ministries of each canton and municipality. Keeping in mind that the presidency was facing difficulties in their formation in the postwar period, every other region of the country was in the same position. Everything started from the constitution since it is naturally the basis of a country. If it was not well established at the beginning then nothing had the potential to reach a consensus. In 2010 things were going to their pace and the election designs were tailored depending to the area in question.

For the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, the candidate who would reach such position was based on the highest number of votes. So, it was not in favor of the gender based system. It was more on how much support candidates would receive upon their elections. Such example is that since the establishment of the first government, the

members of the Presidency presenting the three ethnic groups were always men. The only exemption may be the current composition of the three system presidency in which the representative of the Serbian side is a woman. This is active since the year 2022, but there are present various critics in the terms of how the representatives have reached such positions.

A critical analysis was conducted in the years 2012-2013 that would explain to what extent the quotas have influenced women's participation in the politics and their own desires to sign up as candidates for elections. With the statistics, 42 percent of voters have expressed that men make up better role as political figures and are more likely to be elected than women (UN Women, 2022). The traditional settings, lack of support given to women and the disadvantages of the electorate systems to provide women with better chances for winning continued to be the main factors that are preventing them to continue to participate in political domain. The chance of them changing their roles in the social life was not widely accepted and was rather judged. As long as the weight was given to the stereotypes and traditions, mindsets are less likely to change and women would face less progress in terms of improvements. On local levels perhaps that is the most visible and such hard way of achieving power was still a problem to gender equality. If discrimination and minimization of someone's right to participate in political world is present and especially promoted by those who are taking advantage of, then fight for gender equality in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely challenging.

Changes in terms of limitations of gender biased electoral system were introduced in 2016. This had slight positive impact which increased the percentage of women in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The amendments in 2016 Election law resulted in for example, 35 percent of elections won by women in the region of West Herzegovina. On the other side, Central Bosnia had the figures of 40 percent of won elections as well as the region of Zenica-Doboj (UN Women, 2022). Even though there is an expectation between what law is prescribing and the actually implementation, the Election Law and quotas are in an interchangeable relationship. Both of those elements working together have the potential

of reducing the gender bias and limitations for women. From the reports and practices, cantons were showing high percentages in positive results. Different types of predictions can be made and the scenario of reaching a balance was very much possible. Opposition of political parties needed to be taken into consideration so bringing any sort of proposal even if it had large elements to be played in favor of everyone was not quite definitive.

So, it is to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina has worked and implemented legal obligations and systems tailored to meet the standards which determine equal representation of women and men. It needs to be taken into consideration that significant improvement has taken place in the domain of women's rights in general. The activities in most of cases have been led in accordance to the international human rights agreements. However, the electoral system still remains a problem as it gives preferences to men over women. More initiatives need to be done which would give greater encouragement and sign that women rights matter and that they will not be left to the traditional roots.

As there are changes in technological and economic domain, social life is prone to the changes as well. Modernization and new environment coming from the armed conflict had created all the signals that the role of women will be changed as well. That meant that relying on stereotypes will soon enough always be the case. Naturally, as major things change so do the little things.

Educational, professional and social status of women had a very huge significance in their activities. This all influenced women and their understanding of politics. Almost always subject to political manipulation, it was of great importance of how much they are supported from the domestic NGOs and international organizations. These type of laws and amendments were impacting the course of women's rights to a large extent. Perhaps another element that was against their fair representation was also the media which for a long time did not express huge interest in building a public image for female participation and gender representation. The Gender Action Plan in Bosnia and Herzegovina has specifically reflected on such role and demanded the changes of media for eliminating gender inequality (Mulalić,

Karić). Women who have been politically active for a long time and have acquired professional experiences were often left out in terms of promotion of their abilities. This was one of the many reasons of why values of women in politics were overshadowed.

In psychological terms women were still dealing with the consequences of torture. Understandably, for some victims it was hard to open up or share their stories for years because the memories of events would give them high levels of anxiety and panic attacks. Only after some time they have decided that the importance lies in sharing and letting the world know how women were treated. Some historians criticize this point of view and emphasize that historiography as such needs to be recorded in full objective and statistical terms.

Until today the number of victims of the genocide in Srebrenica did not meet a definitive number. According to the reports of the British charity initiative called *Remembering Srebrenica*, the number of victims from the ethnic cleansing that took place in this town was 8732. The International Commission on Missing Person have given their own assistance to the teams who would organize search activities in order to find remains of victims. So, even today the research continues and every year challenges in this field are growing. That is why testimonies of women and understanding their experiences while being internally displaced can help also in the recognition of the pattern of locations where people were seen the last time during the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The informational side of the stories should not be excluded and the collection of details related to the places that were the escape routes or most known relocations of their residencies is crucial. Their stories are carrying the legacy of the conflict and are actually emphasizing the need of avoiding the same mistakes. Women in their interviews in Hunt's book for example, highlight that the revenge was not something that was desired. In that extreme sense of vulnerability none of them pointed out that they want to resolve things through another form of aggressive revenge. They do not want another propaganda scheme and judgment that would steer another sort of tension and conflict. If another form of "payback" has taken place then what would be left

was just a circular motion of the same problems and consequences that armed conflict brought. Aware that peace that existed in the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia now is impossible to return, they urged on taking into consideration the next generations and what would be their approach to the problems that may appear and reach dynamics of larger scale. Concerning the torture and violence women have faced, the only thing that they demanded was justice.

In general, after a war has ended tribunals and courts have the mission of bringing up jurisdiction over war crimes and arrest the criminals. That is why the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was established in 1993. The purpose was to prosecute the war crimes and other criminal activities during the war. Being an ad hoc court in the Hague the institution ended in its operation in 2017, after all the concluded jurisdiction procedures. With the UN Security Council resolution 808⁶ it was intended to form a jurisdictional body which would examine the accountability for the breach of humanitarian international law taken place during the Bosnian armed conflict. In the line of established legal framework, specific rules and procedures were followed in the collection of evidence and trials for the war criminals. This activity was quite a challenge in the domain of international criminal justice given the length of the trial and the very existence of the court itself. Some cases were transferred to the domestic courts in countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia giving their specific nature (ICTY, n.d.)

One of the most known war criminals and those responsible for the genocide in Srebrenica were prosecuted with life long sentence in prison. The former president of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadžić was sentenced with the charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Srebrenica, Prijedor, Ključ and other regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ICTY, n.d.) During the years of his trials, Bosnian women specifically the members of the organization in Srebrenica called “Majke Srebrenice” have followed the

⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution (1993),
https://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/Statute/statute_808_1993_en.pdf

outcomes of the jurisdiction and always demanded that the justice needs to be fulfilled. They were afraid that under some circumstances a different outcome would take place. They would insist on reminding people of their experiences and losses they have dealt with. As a matter of fact, their testimonies were also recognized by the advocates for women's rights across the world. The final trial was conducted in 2017 for the former military officer of the Army of Republika Srpska, Ratko Mladić. Alongside ten other charges, he was proclaimed as responsible for the Srebrenica massacre and the siege of the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo (ICTY, n.d.)

As much as some trials were successful in recognizing the crimes and genocide that has taken place during the Bosnian war, some women have faced difficulties in their own demands for their rights. Domestically, there are instances of court trials that women would bring up with evidences and testimonies against individuals who have committed crime such as rape or physical violence. The attempt for the rightful prosecution would end up not successful and the victim would bear larger consequences. One such story is of a woman who had participated in such trial against the abuser. However, due to the present problems of corruption in the legal system, the accused side was encouraged to send death threats to the woman in order to make her give up on the lawsuit. The woman decided on stopping the procedure due to the fear of being murdered or losing another member of her family.

To summarize, women have dealt with consequences of psychological and physical violence, economic, political and social instability in various ways and on different magnitudes. All of this is distinct in its nature because of the various circumstances that they have faced. The way in which they give answers in their testimonies always starts with specific details and descriptions of their surroundings. Even if they may seem to be not necessarily important, they understand it as a chance to reach wider audience and be understood as much as it is possible. They all have been looking for support from their communities, family and friends rather than judgments. Postwar period has rather brought to them more of various reactions and course of events when it comes to the judgments and restoring what was once lost. They

continue to hope for better times even today, since some consequences are still influencing the majority of their lives.

International organizations and work of NGOs have been particularly studied in events such as armed conflicts. Their contribution and participation roles have a wide range depending on the nature of their mission and objectives. In migration studies and movements of people, various associations have produced a specific perspective and research. On field investigation and collection of information have given a more detailed overview of the aspects of a war. The following chapter will examine the roles of international organizations and NGOs during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be discussed how the role of the United Nations has contributed to the event of the war. It will be seen how much IOs were limited in their work and how successful they were in managing different types of situations. Firstly, it will be discussed more in general terms their roles, as well as circumstances in which they are established. A critique will be presented regarding the failures that had inevitably taken place. Narrowing down and putting it into the context of Bosnian war, it will be possible to see how much associations were active and how the international community was reacting towards specific events. It will be taken into consideration how much women's rights were respected and what were the critical moments that sparked the need for urgent improvement in their works of IOs and NGOs. Playing one of the key roles in the research of internal displacement of people and movements of refugees, IOs were often able to conduct a sort of multilevel governance. This is of course, depending on the amount of available resources and cooperation with the region that is going through conflicts of larger scale. Additionally, it will be taken into consideration also the organizations that have been established upon the ending of the war. Finally, a brief overview of the situation today would give an insight of how women's rights have progressed. It will be seen to what extent were the international organizations and NGOs contributing to such an environment.

Chapter 3

Women's rights in an armed conflict

3.1 Establishment of IOs and internally displaced people

When a country is facing internal conflicts it is inevitable to expect for various disruptions to create long term consequences. The neighboring countries can suffer such effects to perhaps smaller extents, but still important enough to be a trigger for further forms of instability. In this case, the capacity to prevent the enlargement of a domestic conflict to international one can be provided by the establishment of specific international organizations and NGOs. In a large number of cases the government of the country that is going through war turns for the help of the international community. Although the odds of limitations are characteristic in these situations, the international organizations frequently find themselves in harder position to act adequately. As such, their responses to emergencies can take longer time for execution due to the complexity of the situation in which they need to take active participation.

Awareness and sense of responsibility by the IOs influence the process of the formation of cohesive decisions to a large extent. This is strongly connected to the binding laws and regulations established by international law. Depending on the geographic area in question, IOs are usually successful in reaching cooperations with the regional institutions. Historically, the Organization of American states, Organization of African Unity and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have faced massive challenges when it comes to the internal displacement of people and their movements. They have been lacking some organizational functions such as the ability to interfere in wartime situations,

having enough resources and possessing official allowances to act in specific area. Generally speaking, despite some disadvantages they have played an important role in international affairs and in the process of cooperation among states.

One of the leading intergovernmental organizations in terms of migration studies is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Its foundation took place in 1951 with the mission of supporting migrants across the world, especially those that are part of movements such as internal displacement.

Being part of the United Nations, this organization produces important elements of advices and practices of migration policies. Its activities are especially dominant during emergency situations. It has the ability to produce resilience among the migrants and their process of movements across the country. As such, ensuring that there is a possibility to create a capacity for the governments, IOM works also on providing the assistance in the management of impacts of mobility. Important element in its works is also the Charter of the United Nations which is a baseline of their operations. In this way, human rights are respected to the fullest and well-being of internally displaced people always remain to be the top priorities (IOM, n.d.).

IOM reports that more than 59 million of people worldwide are displaced within their own countries (n.d.). In all of the statistical report it has been seen that the living conditions of people have been downgraded to the minimum, which produces hazards to health and other issues regarding security. In the year 2019, IOM has given assistance to more than 21 million IDPs. This active role is important on a global level, which means that the rights of IDPs are always in the focus of improvement and constant awareness of the challenges that come with it. Even if there is present ad hoc responsibility from the governmental organizations to protect their civilians, these duties are often unable to fulfill its full objectives. The factors of reasons for such behaviors massively depend on the circumstances. Governments no matter how opposing they may appear to the idea of working with certain IOs, the environment eventually gives them no choice but to cooperate.

It is widely argued that the consideration of internally displaced people should not be anything different from the status of refugees (Cohen, 2022). This is mostly because IDPs are forced to relocate within the borders of their countries while facing the lack of protection in any sense. In that case they are in need for international protection. The difference lies in the criteria that actually determines the status of a refugee. Once crossing the border of the country, the refugee has been automatically entitled to the protection of international organizations. This is related to the UNHCR, a global organization established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees has been established upon the end of the Second World War. Its mission is on providing protection and assistance to the millions of people who are forced to abandon their homes because of the inability to have secure life conditions. Historically, the providence was in terms of the shelter, food, water and other medical care. With this type of assistance and monitoring, human rights are made sure to be respected and upheld (UNHCR, n.d.).

Organizations as these have an important say in the international community. In the process of decision-making and establishing binding acts, their reports and statistics have been used. They are among the direct resources of information that are significant for the future course of events. In international law, UNHCR is conducting their operations based on the guidance of 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.

However, for internally displaced people the first international standards were proposed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1998. The proposal entailed the principles that needed to be followed by the governments before the internal displacement takes place, during and after the end of a war or any type of conflict in question. The reintegration phase was as much as important as other processes that come with IDPs. Protection against arbitrary displacement was crucial and in that way it was possible to maintain the consequences of larger scale. How much historically this type of guidance was successful depends on the conflict in question. This proposal is not legally binding which

means that the countries are able to voluntarily decide whether to follow such propositions or not. Important thing to note is that these type of documents are always created based on the international human rights and humanitarian law. This type of guidance is especially significant for the international and non governmental organizations. For them this is an important tool on which they base and tailor their advocacy work so that they can reach as much efficient results is possible (United Nations, 1991).

The need for this type of proposals often emerge from the fact that governments besides being unable to control, sometimes overlook the consequences of internal displacement and tolerate issues that come with it. Not willing to meet the needs of IDPs meant also a certain degree of failure for the international law to protect internally displaced people. Questions about the stability of international community then arise, making it seem as if the failures like these show how much stability is present in international law. Not to put on the scale which events or challenges have more weight or not, but internal displacement of people during a conflict has a sort of a chain effect on future events. In the formation of these proposals, the international lawyers have found so-called "gaps" (Cohen, 1998) in the way of how international law succeeds in covering the basic needs. The approach was that international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law are efficient in the same amount as the performance of the IOs and NGOs in general. As previously said, most of them advocate their work based on these laws. Even though the laws have been proved to be largely successful in terms of internally displaced people, specific omissions existed.

First criticism of limitation was the lack of the response to the lost material property that IDPs face. During an internal or international armed conflict, there is no certain undertake regarding the solutions for these types of economic reparations. Second oversight is concerning the application of certain laws in question. There is a lack of accurate application of the mentioned laws which is heavily dependent on the type of situation. To be precise, in some situations humanitarian rights law does not seem applicable so the implementation of human rights law. With some factors even this type of application does not seem to fulfill its

objectives as well. In all scenarios, internally displaced people are more likely to be left out in the coverage of their basic needs. The refugee law itself sometimes is not applicable in its essence to IDPs even when their circumstances are technically very similar to each other. (Ibid.)

Third omissions are concerning the consensus for internally displaced people to return back to their initial residencies. The critics impose that if there is an existence of general norm that severely prohibits the inhumane treatment and torture of IDPs then based on which grounds forcible returns of them to the danger places is allowed. Even if it might be secure under some conditions, still the potential extent of danger exists and IDPs are still vulnerable no matter the outcomes. This type of situation was not reflected and imposed challenges to the system of law and migration studies.

The final gap or omission that was noticed is the question of ratifications. Some countries did not participate or express the acceptance for ratification of human rights treaties. This makes it difficult for Geneva conventions and its Protocols to ensure full capacity if states have not decided to be part of important human rights treaties. The countries eventually can solve such situations relying on the customary law and still follow the principles of these laws.

It was important that the principles take better reflection on the protection of women and children. Specific provisions needed to be done in order to make the laws more efficient and "complete". Based on historical events it was important to have the ability to make a model that would cover the most important groups of the IDPs. Such gaps will always pose critics on inability for models to be more flexible and accurate in their guidance concerning internal displacement.

Positive effects of such regulations were present to a large extent. Protection during displacement meant also the legal obligations of providing the IDP to reunite with their families as quickly as possible. It is a matter of humans before the law principle. General

norms such as giving the freedom to the IDPs to decide where they want to live while being internally displaced needs to be ensured. They need to enjoy the right to move to the areas that are more secure of living as well as being protected from the consequences of the war. It was specifically highlighted that women and children need to be rightfully taken into consideration for the allocation of food supplies, medical and assistance and similar needs. So, it was crucial that the governments are cooperating with humanitarian assistance as much as possible.

These Guiding principles are significant which also shows that migration studies and systems of law are heavily dependent on each other. In order to understand why specific models are implemented, one must be aware of present regulations and laws based on which the IOs and NGOs are fulfilling their duties. By identifying the rights of internally displaced people, the responsibility of authorities was put at the same time. If the failures have taken place, the accountability would be imposed on those who did not comply with their obligations. As such, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees have published a framework strategy for the implementation of the instruments of the Istanbul Convention for the period 2015 – 2018.

In order to reach solutions that are durable for IDPs, international organizations very often engage in meetings through which they would conduct thorough analysis of case studies (IASC, 2010). Facilitation of such solutions do not always seem to be an easy process. That is why collaboration with different stakeholders and all parties involved is constantly maintained. In many cases, depending on the types of strategies that get to be decided for its implementation, IOs can continue to establish their own settlements in specific regions even after the conflict or other type of disaster ends. This integration on local level may seem as the advantage in long term sense. If the IOs or NGOs were just created for the only purpose of providing humanitarian aid then such registration of its headquarters would not be longer in function. In that situation, it is a matter of temporary organizations that last for a limited amount of time (Ruhs, 2005).

International organizations during an armed conflict face major challenges in their developments. In cases where their branches are stationed in the areas of the country that is in war, certain challenges in their performance arise. If they reach a state of vulnerability as well, the only way to reconstruct is through the re-establishment of authority. That is why based on the rule of law IOs are able to regain what was lost. However, time management and other factors remain to impose more difficulties for continuing to practice any durable solutions (IASC, 2010).

One example of a durable solution for IDPs are instances such as the decisions of establishing international organizations that aim in fostering and maintaining peace keeping operations. In this way they have to face number of preparations in the early process of establishment. Among other requirements, it entails a detailed strategy of inclusion of women to give them the ability to participate in any peace negotiation process that may take place. In this form, many women civil society organizations emerge and IOs remain to deal with one of the most important humanitarian crises. Addressing women's needs in this way is one of the strategies of how to support establishment for empowerment and insurance of the needs of IDPs.

3.2 IOs and Bosnian women in armed conflict

International organizations for years have been fighting the issues that come with internally displaced people, especially women. They have been conducting research and monitoring activities in order to find the best possible solutions and proposals that could elevate women's rights and their needs during the war. Most of this would go through the humanitarian aid to the country who is facing the armed conflict. For example Women's Refugee Committee is a non governmental organization (NGO) with the commitment of improving the life conditions and environment for women, children and young people who have been internally displaced or relocated to another country.

In terms of the internal displacement, this NGO has recorded number of practices, solutions and proposals for the development of humanitarian assistance during an armed conflict. Promotion of full inclusion of vulnerable groups and protection of women's rights during a war was highly emphasized. Justice was practiced through the accountability of those who have been conducted war crimes and similar. The NGO also works on preventing gender based violence through the insurance of education, work opportunities, health care and other needs for IDPs.

So, it can be seen that most of the NGOs and international organization formed after important armed conflicts have taken place. It is not to misunderstand that law on the protection of women rights did not exists before that, but that creation of specific NGOs and IOs came from the need to develop an association that could be redirected specifically to a particular domain of migration studies.

Putting all of the previous explanation of the work of international community for the internally displaced people in the context of Bosnian armed conflict, particular failures in the protection of women rights were noticeable. Just the fact that there is a great number of testimonies of Bosnian women in which they would explain in distress the torture and violence they have endured shows that international organizations did not have possibility to access the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the armed conflict. In Hunt's book it was mentioned that the Medica Centre in Tuzla would provide medical assistance and health check ups for Bosnian women during the war. The Center has recorded 28,000 women between 1993 and 1997 of being the victims of rape and other sexual abuse (Hunt, 2001). The Bosnian government calculated much higher number; 50,000. This shows that the exact number of victims was hard to determine. It has hindered the activity of international organizations making it difficult for them to continue their work on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another international organization that has given a global support to the Bosnian women is Women for Women International's (WfWI). Such association has been formed in Sarajevo which thrives in providing assistance to the Bosnian women through

social and economic support. Women survivors of the war had the ability to “live” through these type of organizations.

Very important non governmental organization that was formed after the end of Bosnian armed conflict is The Mothers of Srebrenica or Majke Srebrenice. It was founded in 2002 and primary aim was the advocacy of justice for the victims of war and the survivors of the siege of Srebrenica. This activist group represents 6000 people and is bringing up civil lawsuits against the United Nations and other individuals who have been conducting breach or violations of their rights during the conflict. The need for such organization came from the traumas that have taken place during the Srebrenica massacre as well as the need to make sure that the search for disappeared individuals continues. They are following the policy of gender equality and empowerment of women. This had a huge impact in the domain of women’s rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It shows that domestically the country had developed organizations who would promote such advocacy work and create progress on the field of inclusion of women. Majke Srebrenice are highly respected human rights activist group in the whole region. They have succeeded to bring the proceedings on the court in the Netherlands against the Dutch battalion that was formed under the United Nations. The main reason for such trial was the calling out for the responsibility of overseeing the failures of protection of Srebrenica even when it was declared as the safe haven during the war (Majke Srebrenice, n.d.) The activist group is actively advocating the prevention of genocide and continues to create projects about human rights and women’s inclusion.

The International Committee of the Red Cross was one of the most active organizations on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war. Moreover, it has established its headquarters also years following the end of the conflict, having its main headquarters in the capital city, Sarajevo. In May 1992, a convoy has entered the town in order to provide supply in food and medicine. Even though protected under the protocols of Geneva convention, they were severely destroyed (ICRC, 2017). Their performance was recorded through the visits of 54 000 detainees over 520 places (Ibid.). When it comes to the whole region of Balkan

countries, the members of ICRC have achieved moderately successful agenda during the present conflicts. This is through the distribution over 100 000 tons of food and even reuniting large number of families (Ibid.). As of the situation today, the ICRC is focusing on giving the biggest support and engagement in projects that aim to find missing people from the war. They continue to provide necessary aid for people who have suffered psychological or physical injuries.

ICRC has also redirected its performance into the investigation of the temporary displacement of people and effects the Bosnian armed conflict has caused. Through strategic tools for the collection of data they have conducted interviews and surveys to reach a statistical viewpoint of the intensity of situation. Advantage of international organizations which are directly present on the territories of the armed conflict produce significant and highly reliable sources than other activities. They are dealing with large number of information while providing the necessary aid for civilians. This approach adds to the importance that the ICRC has and continues to become leading factor when it comes to the creation of different modules and case studies. One such activity is summarized in Country report by the ICRC in 1999. Considering that it was just three years after the war ended, it has shown the capability of IOs to create versatility in its activities during a specific armed conflict.

According to the Human Rights Watch publication (Vol. 7, 1995) the international community failed in providing support to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the conflict. This has impacted the prevention on further events and casualties that have taken place. Specific demand was published for the immediate action in intervention in the city of Srebrenica. The appeal was directed on the support and protection for civilians and their well being (Ibid.). Need for better systems and strategies of monitoring was crucial from the external resources. For the whereabouts of the disappeared citizens, the international community should have provided the aid in the research activities. Calling to such actions was crucial and inevitable

due to the serious breach of the Declaration of Human Rights that have taken place but no visible activity was performed to prevent those situations.

However during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, women heavily relied on the humanitarian aid and assistance that was reaching the most vulnerable regions of the country. The only effective source in terms of food supplies, health care and similar was through the United Nations peacekeeping forces called UNPROFOR. Their mandate has taken place from 1992 until the very end of the war in 1995. There are many critics which are reflecting on the number of disadvantages the United Nations have shown on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ineffectiveness was seen through the failures of ending the bloodshed, especially in the safe haven zones that were exactly declared by the United Nations themselves. This came mostly from domestic factors, meaning that the UN structure in essence was following their own rules and procedures. The presence of the United Nations has significantly influenced the political stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the postwar period but during the war, nothing but failures have come to the light (Zekri, 2016)

The poor leadership has caused the inability to stop the Bosnian Serbs from targeting the ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks. Systematic rape and torture was all conducted under the eyes of the UNPROFOR and nothing more could have been done. Explanations for the failures are still debatable and different types of factors can be taken into the consideration. One of the reasons was also the Serbs attitude towards the UN troops and the way of how they were treating the soldiers. The Dutch troops had to be considered as neutral, meaning that they should not be taken as hostages or being exposed to any life threatening dangers for the means of negotiations or similar cases. However, these things exactly happened and most of the UN soldiers were killed as well. The regulation and practices order minimal use of force only in extreme instance of self defense. However, the UN humanitarian relief headquarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina were bombarded by the Bosnian Serbs which made it difficult for internally displaced women to reach such places.

Overall, the UNHCR was the most successful one in displacing food supplies, medical and health necessities for the wounded, victims and IDPs. The UN in general was going through all difficult methods to find a way to reach the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and provide assistance. Certain negotiations have taken place with the Bosnian Serbs who were actually sort of blackmailing their demands in return of permission to help victims of the war. UNHCR as such could not provide protection for the all IDPs but certain aid was present (Zekri, 2016).

Another form of preventions of Bosnian armed conflict war was through sanctions such as economic embargo imposed on Republic of Serbia for supporting the Bosnian Serb military forces in the war (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Another type of intervention were NATO actions firstly as political and gradually to being a large scale intervention in order to stop the Bosnian armed conflict for spreading on international level (NATO, n.d.).

3.3 Women's movements for human rights

For decades women have been fighting for their rights in every part of the world. The activities ranged from peaceful protests to the demands for reforms for gender equality. There was a long road for women achieving their rights in political affairs, voting rights and all those domains that were overshadowed by the traditional values and perspectives. Women found the patriarchal world and such circumstances the biggest challenge that they need to win in order to secure more justice for human rights in general. Problems like these need to be solved as soon as it is possible but if women themselves are discouraged to partake in activities like those, then it is inevitable to face slow pace of the progress and dominated violations of basic human rights.

Considering the case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina which demographically has very complex structure, women rights were completely overlooked and minimized. One must note that in a country that is rich in the diversity of ethnicities, there are equal number of violations

of human rights coming with it. That is why specific activities and movements need to take place to ensure the foundation for future generations or at least ease their battles for more justice. Women who survived the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had to emphasize gender activism and empowerment of females to a great extent. As previously mentioned, the Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁷, titled “Women, Peace and Security” for the period 2018 – 2022 had faced some gaps in its implementation. Still being dominantly patriarchal, the country has disproportionately more represented men in social and political life than women. This has produced large number of criticism and more actions from women organizations and initiatives. They would focus on projects that would be demanding the revisions of certain Action Plans. It is still a work in progress and although some things are facing a sort of stagnation in its outcome, reforms did take place. Amendments were introduced and strategical approach is more implemented. This includes work of women’s groups and associations across the country and their mission to include rights of all women; those with disabilities, single mothers, war survivors and those who are suffering from medical conditions. The Agency for Gender equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina has established itself in the actions for women and gender equality in public affairs. This has enormous influence on the constitutional formation of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, contributing to the implementation of basic human rights that even the Dayton agreement has imposed upon its drawing (Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees B&H, 2017).

One of the examples that show an important work related to combination of research of non governmental organizations and women’s inclusion in the postwar period of Bosnia and Herzegovina was done by the scholar for gender studies, Elisa Helms. She examines women’s activism in postwar period through three important aspects. With different ethnographic approaches she takes into the account their participation in the work of NGOs and positions

⁷ *United Nations Security Council (2000);*
https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity_SRES1325%282000%29%28English_0.pdf

as victims. In this context, it is very interesting to talk about the concept of victimization which was examined through more of an analytical distance (Croegaert, 2015). It is taken into account how women face different frameworks of evaluation of morality through the linkage of victimhood. In other words, it was explained that women face challenges in the involvement in political world and work in NGOs due to the certain events that have taken place during the Bosnian armed conflict. It is pointed out how victims are often related to different gender connotations. In some cases, the relationship between these concepts describe the survivors of physical and sexual violence to the extent that they are given a new dimension of identity (Ibid.).

Transnational feminist advocacy is a practice that is developed to analyze social positions of women that have faced various events, ranging from armed conflicts to dramatic changes in experiences of IDPs. As such, the concept is able to bring into one umbrella the interdisciplinary work of social activism, justice and inequalities between women (Enns, Diaz, Bryant-Davis, 2020). When it comes to the topics of war rape, the case study of Bosnian conflict has been particularly used for comparison of specific elements. With that, it was possible to explain how interconnectedness between factors such as nationalist ideologies, armed conflict and patriarchy is extremely dominant (Engle, 2005). Numbers of such cases are endless and they provide more in-depth research of the dynamics of such occurrences all happening in the same place during a specific time period. This is one of the ways how mass rapes that have taken place during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina provide improvements in the advocacy work and studies of gender-based violence.

Women activists in the postwar period and today have been continuing the legacy of those who were participating in the peace building operations. With their voices and stories they are urging for the rightful education of the Bosnian society in order to make it more democratic and gender equal. With the preservation of the memories of past events and war, it is possible for them to reach new opportunities and work on using the platforms provided for the strengthening of the future generations. They are emphasizing the importance of

keeping the women's movements and demands always relevant. Foundations such as CURE was created in Bosnia and Herzegovina to contribute to the United Nations and other international organizations activities and projects. Bosnian women activist support different plans and works that would maintain stronger grounds for female rights and needs. So, it is to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina is slowly breaking out of the shell of stereotypes and traditional norms that have brought nothing but decline of any form of advancement for stability.

In that way, feminist activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have found new ways of being active through mechanisms and models that are connecting women who were victims of the human rights violations during the Bosnian armed conflict. Important element was that changes in certain domains of social and restorative justice do not come easily. Even so, activists participate and initiate number of projects that bring improvements even if it end up reaching success in a slow paced way. Dedication and effort may be the key for political changes. For women this represents the opportunity to heal and create more efficient models of peace (Divković, Kaqinari, Pavlović, 2023).

As psychological and physical effects of Bosnian conflict keep being present, a new problem that women are facing is the issue of femicide. Although it is a domestic type of an issue, there are many challenges that have led to the presence of such major violation of women's rights. The repeated failures in the prevention of minor irregularities have led to the increased "freedom" of the events like these. Inaccurate and inadequate actions have caused increased number of femicide cases that have influenced the country in every domain as well. In essence, these occurrences brought a serious breach of the rules and regulations presented by the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dayton agreement as such was challenged as well which adds to the critics of how much it is projecting stability in the regulation of basic human rights. Even though it did not ensure complete absence of tensions, it still significantly failed in this domain. Women rights are once again left in complete vulnerability.

Given the nature of the longevity that it takes for certain reforms to be implemented, it is inevitable to predict that certain provisions about this topic are going to take longer time. Besides the corruption that is significantly reducing the progress, there is still a problem in the distinction of what is the priority of problems that need to be solved. Even if some topics are promised to be addressed first by the government, that decision does not come immediately into the force. What precedes are large number of protests and demonstrations. In cities like Sarajevo, Mostar and other regions major gatherings by citizens have been formed in order to call on the actions for the governments and urging the authorities to prevent these type of situations. So far most of the activities have been held through peaceful walks and under the surveillance of the police system.

The question is always posed on how long women need to fight for their own rights and reach solutions in this way. Narrowing down, the intimate partner violence is the most frequent type of case that is taking place and with which the country has major difficulties to solve. Not enough number of regulations have been introduced that could regulate further outcomes. This in some way creates a sort of advantages for the perpetrators. Although the circumstances are much different, it can be taken as analogy of another failure of protection of women during the Bosnian armed conflict. The importance is in the continuous failing pattern to act on time and with strategic approaches.

One of the most important progress in the field of the protection of women's rights is the Istanbul Convention that was drafted in 2011 and started to be effective in 2014. Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the countries who have ratified this treaty as well. The key element of such document points out the opposition to violence against women and domestic violence. This came into its formation after the Council of Europe has initiated and organized activities for women's rights alongside the proposal of recommendations. Combating violence against women has been an inevitable and long lasting issue worldwide. The convention itself is legally binding and gives a framework through which it is important to take efficient steps in combating the violence against women. Offences as psychological violence, physical

violence, rape and similar need to be undertaken through the process of criminalization in every country that has joined the ratification of the document (the Council of Europe, n.d.). In this case, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a legal obligation to create and provide frameworks that will fulfill institutional, organizational and practical requirements of the binding instruments in order to effectively fight the violence against women.

The implementation of policies for the protection of women's rights as well as the Istanbul convention is a process that has rather a slower pace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although significant effort has been made in the drafting of documents and the official preparation of laws, there is a huge absence of practicality. Important is to understand the difficulties that exist separately in entities. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is composed of a specific number of cantons depending on the regions. As such it was significant for each municipality of such compositions to adapt rules and procedures specifically designed by the governments. The implementations aim on having a joint, balanced and well coordinated activity. In order to avoid further complications, this design of the framework for implementation of the Istanbul Convention comes also through the inclusion of the Laws that have been discussed in 3.3 and 3.2 of this Chapter. Each entity has these regulations and laws designed that are taken into account as well. Additional ones are also Family law and Strategies on Combating domestic violence of the entity of Republika Srpska (Delbyck, n.d.). Even though, technically this is based particularly on the intimate partner violence, it is still a gender based issue that evolved from years long discriminations and inequalities. Undermining problems like these have eventually led to the issues of larger extent.

In the context of legislation of such norms, a great role plays the jurisdiction and criminal courts. In events like these, having an efficiently established system would contribute to the further strategies. However, a certain lack of trust and strength of the institutions is present. This means that information collected is facing rather selective difficulties and organizational dimension of details that could help in further statistical investigations. In some cases, prevalent problems arise from the weakness of institutions and their inability to further

reconstruct the strengths. Data and research is one of the key leading components in such situations. If they are not conducted in an accessible way, then the critics can be posed on the relevance of the available material. Inevitably, there are still major obstacles that are increasing their possibility of being implausible.

Solving challenges like these lies in the direct communication with the victims who have experienced the violations of women's rights. A total necessity is in the methods of providing secure channels for easier usage of research tools and educating the population to recognize different acts of violence. Lack of developed mechanism as this one can enhance the disadvantages and present omissions. It was shown that in a large number of cases, to be precise 84 percent of the court trials ended up with a type of sentence for perpetrators such as a suspension (Delbyck, Analytical Report). Criminal courts usually end the jurisdiction with fines to be paid and for the victims to continue to live in the same area as the ones who committed the violence. This is very similar to how certain local trials have been concluded regarding the traumas and cases of rape internally displaced Bosnian women have experienced during the war, as discussed in previous chapters.

It is mostly in the nature of penalties that are bringing out the factor of stereotypical nature that such issues are a private matter of the family. So to say, the courts with these types of decisions are further contributing to the traditional values and bringing out old views and beliefs that were suppressed to some extent. Furthermore, the Protection Law continues to lack its practice and security of the victims is non-existent (Delbyck, n.d.). Continuing like this, the outcomes would potentially remain to be underwhelming and without a promising room for improvements.

How future dealing with this type of issue will take place depends on the law and governments actions. Case studies continue to take place and will eventually influence the way of how future decisions in terms of jurisdiction and other regulations will be organized. Women will continue to initiate activities that will determine the path of the demonstrations and movements in the fight against violence against women and their basic human rights. It

is starting to be very challenging more and more but demands like these need to be always in focus. It is a way in which the country itself has the opportunity to grow and develop.

Very interesting is the way in which women have similar approaches to how certain activities or responses develop. With the end of Bosnian armed conflict, a lot of women found themselves having different emotions and priorities in how to react to the things they have lost. While discussing their various ways of which things have been presented with a great emphasis, most of them have felt anger and the need to act immediately and demand their rights. As more years have past, women would be buried under their own traumas and try to put more emphasis on the security that was taken away from them and how difficult it was to survive all the years. Now with a different problem and circumstances they try to convey messages of how the fear has been developed into anger and demands for concrete actions and decision. The way of how they have been treated for years has been a prevailing point for them to finally reach a progress in this domain (Curic, 2022).

It can be said that with the new developments and especially suppressing the stereotypical attitudes, women's approach to the issues that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become much more organized and immediate. They would not let to the fear or similar to overtake their own values as it is time for them to act better and faster. It is also partially due to the fact that international organizations and external factors are much more present, making it easier to have support from the non governmental organizations and similar. This is important because involvement of various associations as these can help in better tools of research and other needs of interventions. In cases where the government has not been able to produce specific methods to approach certain issue, externalities as these can elevate the disadvantages and influence future strategies. Even though it meant that instabilities would be present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a very long time, it shows that a lot of challenges are possible to be faced and should not be left unattended. As long as there are certain reactions from the needed sides when a problem arises, then there is a solution that can be found.

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to deal with the challenges ahead more in different perspectives. If a specific issue has caused psychological distress or other types of consequences, they are always felt in economic and political domain of life as well. It impacts women's representation and equality and can easily downgrade the progress where there has been made. So, lack of prevention not only means that certain systems are not well structured in its performances. It also implies that the progress made has been now challenged into the need for reflection on the disadvantages that might be present.

Conclusion

Bosnian war had a huge impact on the whole region of the Balkans. A high number of civil casualties, refugees and internally displaced people have changed the country from its roots. New mindsets were created while some old narratives became stronger at the same time. The period of reconstruction lasted for years and even today some topics are still not left behind. The armed conflict had caused even more tensions that are felt stronger every day. Instead of learning from the mistakes and finding the peace again, ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still facing difficulties to move forward from what happened more than 25 years ago. There are different approaches to this armed conflict especially in educational terms. While in school systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina it is taught about the events of the armed conflict, some regions of the country have banned mentioning specific details. This is related to the politicians in the entity of Republika Srpska who refuse to implement historical facts about the genocide in Srebrenica (Aljazeera, 2023). In the interviews that were the main sources for the thesis, women would mention how in some regions textbooks would be tailored in the way that will make the children understand which ethnic group is “bad” or “good” (Hunt, 2001) This type of things should not be allowed in any way. It is a way of passively continuing the legacy that started in the 1990s.

Still, propaganda and political manipulation remain one of the biggest problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The former member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and now the president of the entity of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik is practicing the hate speech and the desire to initiate the process of disintegration of the entity of Republika Srpska. This has enlarged violations of many articles of Dayton Peace Agreement and put pressure on the effectiveness of the constitution of the country. Today, in Sarajevo the UN and the NATO troops remain to continue their practice of organizing peacekeeping projects and activities in order to monitor the situation and eventually prevent any further escalations. On the other

side, high number of young people decide to leave the country in the desire to find more stability and better job opportunities. Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina seems very challenging and difficult for those who are coming from poor financial situations. They have difficult time in searching for opportunities of improvement due to the present corruption of the government system.

Based on the all data and statistics, internally displaced people have suffered in every domain of life. Their recovery in economic terms still today is difficult and 17 percent of the former IDPs live in poverty (OECD, 2019). Rural populations are mostly hit with this disproportionality, which causes other issues such as low education levels and unemployment. In terms of infrastructure, some areas are still under reconstruction. This is due to the lack of funding or limitations of investors in financial terms. This situation comes directly from the status of the country and how well it has dealt with the economic and political crisis. Although in many fields extremely unsuccessful, it has still recorded some progress making it easier for the prediction to be at least for some time more positive.

While navigating through statistical reports and direct records of interviews, it was possible to get a comprehensive pictures of the experiences that internally displaced individuals have faced. Although subjectivity and emotions are highly pointed out, it still remains to be an approach that gives space to address some topics from different perspectives. Internally displaced people have reached variety of decisions during the armed conflict. Some of them were not able to completely leave the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For them such an act would end up being a form of betrayal. They could not bear the thought of sacrifices and fear that their families would have while being on constant movements across the country (Leydesdorff, 2021).

Their experiences and life in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war continue to be challenged on a daily basis. With the present tensions they are always put through some kind of difficulties. There are cases where they continued to move to another places in order to find

a better place to settle down. This meant that most of them started with life from scratch, trying to find opportunities for growth and bring back what was lost back then.

As it is affecting them individually to a great extent, it is also imposing effects on the younger generations that are coming as well. It gives them more difficulties than opportunities to fight for their rights and demand changes. It can be argued that this type of situation is solely connected to the ongoing chain of corruption in the government system and authorities. This issue is specifically characteristic when the composition and structure of the country is taken into the account. High pressure is imposed on the authorities in every region of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is because of the existent structure of the cantons and municipalities. The pattern that governs each region while practicing various legislations show that each system no matter the size, needs time and long decision making process to establish itself. Such formations are often regulated and tailored according to the demographic structure of the area which shows how ethnicities can play one of the major roles.

The entity of Republika Srpska in its establishment upon the Dayton agreement is in little difference from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are organized separately in order to fulfill the needs of each sides. This was the pre-requisition in order to successfully end the Bosnian armed conflict as well. Dayton peace negotiations have brought number of disadvantages. Fear of escalation on bigger extent was one of the driving forces for politicians to work on this agreement as much as it was possible. The creation of the District Brčko has created a balance in the neutrality, but still making it dependent on the budge of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Karnavas, 2003).

The “acceptance” of the Higher Representative established by the Dayton agreement perhaps imposes one of the important setbacks in the progress that Bosnia and Herzegovina makes. Being recognized by only two representatives of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it significantly changes a lot of reforms and law making process. This as the chain reaction has then effects on the whole country and the citizens. The Serbian representative of the

country during the previous mandate has been neglecting the decisions that the Higher Representative would bring. This has hindered future political and economic solutions. Even though the person in charge of this position acts only in situations for having the final say, this is not entirely respected. So, the imbalance is not only heavily present domestically, but it seems that it has been expressed more across the borders as well. Naturally, sanctions usually take place for those who go against certain provisions and particular “punishments” in this sense did not take place. In other words, suppressing behaviors of political figures to cause passive instability in the country remains to be unsuccessful.

Women suffered in every aspect, whether it was social, political or economic domain. In psychological terms this is especially present. Traumas and disorders such as anxiety, depression and panic attacks are still conditions that are creating great consequences on their lives. Even if they seek medical help, it is still difficult to completely recover from the memories of which they cannot simply “let go”. This is especially dominant with the topics of genocide in Srebrenica and systematic rape that came with the ethnic cleansing. Internal displacement and the escape routes were in some circumstances causing even more danger than potential survival. In situations like these, it is not accurate to argue which solutions for their movements were the best, because not even the safe zones declared by the United Nations were protected. Their positions were always leading to a number of different problems, making it more and more difficult to effectively address unless big changes did not take place. This in an event of war was extremely needed but given the very unique situation, the heavy type of consequences were inevitable to happen.

Despite all of the weight they are carrying from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, women continue to be active in many movements and projects that are strengthening and giving chance for empowerment. Their voices are more and more presented which gives them the ability to talk about painful memories so that nothing remains unspoken or hidden. Women are successfully breaking the gender stereotypes and are finally deciding to move from traditional roles in their families. They are still fulfilling their roles as mothers and family

members. When it comes to the women rights, they are taking a new perspective and emphasizing the importance to be rightly presented. It is important to highlight this type of shift. Although it is true that the rural areas may not produce the same results as well, large number of areas in the country have been building itself on these new foundations.

Gender equality and representation of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing more progress than stagnation. Even though certain gaps are present that are hindering the advancement, it is not a factor that is entirely producing discouragement and women continue to work despite the circumstances. They are determined to not let things get repeated again and injustice should not be tolerated no matter what happens. The judgement of women being inclined to a more subjective side when it comes to peace negotiation needs to be downgraded to the minimum. This is important as it is improving the democracy of the country and resolving tensions in a matter that is bringing more positive than negative sides.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing another problem for women's rights that is gradually increasing. The cases of femicide have caused serious challenges for the whole society. According to the statistics, the area of the city of Tuzla has recorded over 11 cases of femicide (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2023). Strong factor that is part of these occurrences is related to the stereotypes regarding the traditional views of the domestic violence against women as previously discussed. However, across the whole country these type of events have triggered protests and demonstrations which urge the governments for immediate action and reforms in the laws. Different campaigns for ensuring the safety of women's environment have been taking place, recording high number of participation. An example was the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" organized under the watch of the United Nations Secretary-General. In the collaboration with other civil society organizations and associations, the aim was to ensure the possibility of building the trust into the institutions and educating women to recognize the form of violence they are facing.

It is important to maintain and develop these type of activities who would influence the awareness of gender based violence to a great extent. In this way, further issues may be

prevented or controlled efficiently. This type of violence is significant problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After all the past events, cases like these should not be overlooked. The government should forbid these types of situations strongly with law and jurisdiction. The quality of reforms is the reflection on how much the position of women in the country is valued and protected. Keeping relevance of such topics may not cause immediate change in outlooks and perspectives but it is a way of taking a path that will certainly lead to some sort of progress. As long as the advancement is balancing out the negative sides, it is important to find the best implementation strategies that would satisfy as much sides as it can. Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to live as a country with a very complex ethnical composition but still able to bring out justice in some parts of the social life. As long as past mistakes such as complete neglect of women's rights is not taking place again, then possibility for progress will always have place. Although in a very slow pace, it is still a form of development. These type of new steps should not be taken for granted and researchers need to be especially active and up to the date of the happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As one problem is able to open up and give the spotlight to a great number of other issues, it is also how much the familiarity of the existent problems is present. Investigation and monitoring processes remain to be the key for all the future norms and laws. Women are still in the need for their own better protection and insurance of basic human rights. As long as corruption is present, they will have the shortage in their values. That is why any type of contributions need to be considered important and necessary. Because of all the consequences they have endured, they deserve to be treated well and receive protection from the whole country to the fullest and in the most efficient way. Any other excuses that are trying to prove that priority should be put on other issues remain to be inaccurate and disadvantageous in every sense.

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