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Factors of Socio-economic Uncertainty in the Bosnian War

MICROCON Research Working Paper 44
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March 2011

Correct citation: Demény, G., 2011. *Factors of Socio-economic Uncertainty in the Bosnian War*. MICROCON Research Working Paper 44, Brighton: MICROCON

First published in 2011

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ISBN 978 1 85864 991 9

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Factors of Socio-economic Uncertainty in the Bosnian War¹

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Abstract: It appears obvious that war, civil or otherwise, deeply damages confidence in the future. This paper examines socio-economic uncertainty and insecurity connected to violent conflicts on the basis of analysis of various reports and journal articles on the Bosnian war. The paper points to conditions of socio-economic uncertainty, and specifically socio-economic insecurity, during the conflict cycle and to their relation with the dynamic of the conflict. It also addresses questions concerning the effect of conflict on individuals, families, households, and their relations with their closer or broader social environment. It argues that socio-economic insecurity and lack of means for daily survival were not mere consequences of violence, they were also tools used as parts of the strategy to weaken the opponent. Decisions made on fleeing and returning demonstrate the dynamics of trust, risk-taking and perception of possibilities, both at individual and at community level, and in turn show the insurmountable difficulties of coping with insecure situations under conditions of violent conflict and its aftermath.

¹ This paper is a part of my PhD thesis on which I am still working. I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Michalis Lianos for his comments. I am grateful to the Open Society Archives for making their archives available to me and for their professional help in my archival research.

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Introduction

It appears obvious that war, civil or otherwise, deeply damages confidence in the future. The objective of this paper is to use extensive archive evidence in order to illustrate the ways in which this happens and the cumulative interaction between these ways. Our purpose is not to explain why violent conflicts produce uncertainty but via which avenues uncertainty and insecurity permeate all experience of material reality and conscience under conditions of violent conflict. In this sense, this is a log of uncertainty and insecurity factors in a violent conflict, namely the Bosnian war which took place between 1992 and 1994. We chose this conflict, not only because of its European interest but also because access to centralised, extended and reliable archives was possible. The paper points to conditions of socio-economic uncertainty, and specifically socio-economic insecurity, during the conflict cycle and to their relation with the dynamic of the conflict. It addresses questions concerning the effect of conflict on individuals, families, households, and their relations with their closer or broader social environment. In discussing these questions we have to take into consideration that during the violent conflict and also for a period after it³ the larger social, economic, political context, including norms, power relations, and the state of institutions and infrastructure is, expectedly, different when compared with peaceful conditions, and strongly affects the socio-economic situation of the civilian population.

Conflict as a social phenomenon is “a regular social process” (Lianos 2011: 3). Brück, Justino, Verwimp, and Avdeenko define violent mass conflict as “the systematic breakdown of the social contract resulting from and/or leading to changes in social norms, which involve violence instigated through collective action” (Brück, Justino, Verwimp, and Avdeenko 2010: 3) Uncertainty refers both to the perception and the feeling of uncertainty concerning future events. Under the conditions of violent conflict we can talk about a state of general uncertainty, with decreasing control of individuals over events as compared to the situation of peace (Lianos 2008: 1-3). A specific form of uncertainty is insecurity, “fear over a threat that may be imminent” (Lianos 2008: 3).

Violent mass conflicts, besides causing large scale fatalities, injuries and traumas for many people, are at the origin of a sense of uncertainty, lack of safety, insecurity, fear as well as of exposure to severe socio-economic uncertainty, to threats to people’s everyday survival,

³ Although a formal end to a conflict can be traced to the date of a peace agreement, moving from the state of violent conflict to peace is a continuous process.

to the risk of poverty and health deterioration. Due to the lack of sufficient knowledge and predictability, risk-taking and trust play an important role in responses given in uncertain situations, in the management of uncertainties. Defining risk under conditions of modernization “as one special rational strategy to transform unmanageable contingency into manageable complexity” (Bonss; Zinn in Zinn 2006: 281), has relevancy under conditions of violent conflict in situations characterized by uncertainty, when taking various risks might constitute different ways of managing situations of uncertainty. Due to its emotional basis, trust also has an important role in overcoming situations of uncertainty (Barbalet 2009: 379-380).

Under conditions of violent conflict people are frequently exposed to risk, and they have to take various risks in order to survive and to ensure the conditions, means for living for themselves and for their families. A recent study analyzing risk management of West Bank Palestinians under conditions of violent conflict has found that “risk management responds to household’s experiences and it is context-specific” (Jarauta Bernal 2011: 1).

This paper will analyse socio-economic uncertainty and insecurity connected to violent conflicts on the basis of various reports and journal articles,⁴ including records of The Open Media Research Institute, reports of the Human Rights Watch and of Amnesty International and reports of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement from the period of the war and the period immediately following the war. When analyzing journal articles or reports of human rights organizations we have to take into account the existence of a selection bias due to the tendency of focusing on sites of violence and giving less attention to other contexts (Kalyvas 2006: 32, 48). The content analysis of these documents aims to reveal the specificities of socio-economic uncertainty under conditions of violent conflict, how these uncertainties are connected to the dynamic of violent conflict, and their impact on the lives of victims of war.

The Bosnian War

Bosnia is an ethnically diverse state from historical times. In 1991 the population of Bosnia Herzegovina was approximately 4.4 million, including various ethnic groups, with the three largest ones being the Muslims (Bosnians) with 43.5 per cent of the population, Serbs

⁴ A large part of these articles were drawn from the Open Society Archives on the Bosnian war.

with 31.2 per cent and Croats with 17.4 per cent. 5.6 per cent of the population considered themselves as being Yugoslavs.⁵ Croats, Muslims and Serbs were considered as being Slav nations (“narod”) having as mother state only Yugoslavia (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994: 1543). There are differences among these ethnic groups in respect of their religious belonging, Bosnians being mainly Muslims, the Serbs being mainly of Orthodox religion and the Croats of Roman Catholic religion. Before its independence, Bosnia was a constituent republic of the former Yugoslavia.

The Bosnian War, a territorial and ethnic violent mass conflict, lasted from April 1992 to December 1995 in Bosnia Herzegovina. It broke out following the dissolution of the federal Yugoslavia at the beginning of 1990s and in a period when the country was undergoing economic and political transition. In the 1980s Yugoslavia was in economic crisis, the living standards decreased and with the aim to redress the situation there were taken steps both on economic and political level (Sekulić, Massey and Hodson 2006: 804). Due to decentralization each Communist party in its own republic enjoyed autonomy that made it possible to pay more attention to their national interests in bargaining with each other (Kourvetaris in Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994:1541), but this was under control by the center (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994: 1541). Nationalist ambitions and sentiments came to surface and strengthened. In 1991 Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia declared their independence from Yugoslavia and the Serbian minority in the Krajina region created the Republic of Serb Krajina.⁶ In Bosnia a referendum was held on February 29 – March 1 1992 on independence, in which 99.7 per cent of the voters, at a 63.4 per cent voter turnout, voted in favour of independence.⁷ The Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum.⁸ In April they established a Serbian state, Republika Srpska (Mrvić-Petrovic 2001:12). The Bosnian war broke out in April 1992. The fight was directed from Belgrade and violence was carried out against the non-Serb population in regions controlled by the Bosnian Serbian Democratic Party (Gagnon 1996)⁹. The leader of this party, Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic, the President of Serbia, advocated the creation of Greater Serbia (Swee 2009:5). Intense fights

⁵ Federal Office of Statistics of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina <http://www.fzs.ba/Dem/Popis/NacPopE.htm> Accessed on 10.01.2011

⁶ “Chronology of Events in the Former Yugoslavia” in *Monthly Review/October 2007: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 59(5): 60-62, p. 60-61

⁷ The Referendum on Independence in Bosnia Herzegovina February 29 – March 1, 1992 A Report Prepared by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe p. 19 http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=UserGroups.Home&ContentRecord_id=250&ContentType=G&ContentRecordType=G&UserGroup_id=5&Subaction=ByDate Accessed on 10.01.2011

⁸ “Chronology of Events in the Former Yugoslavia” in *Monthly Review/October 2007: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 59(5): 60-62, p. 61

⁹ Gagnon 1996 <http://www.ithaca.edu/gagnon/articles/demob/demob02.htm> Accessed on 10.01.2011

took place in north-western and north-eastern parts of Bosnia (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:217-218). Between 1992 and 1994 fights took place also between the Moslems and Croats, who were previously allied against the Serbs. Croats, with support from Croatia, were fighting for the region Herzeg-Bosna. In March 1994 Bosnian Croats and Muslims created the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mrvić-Petrovic 2001: 14-16).

According to Kalyvas and Sambanis “(t)he Bosnian war can be described as a “symmetric nonconventional” war (Kalyvas 2005), a type of war characterized by a mix of regular and irregular forces fighting in territory defined by clear frontlines and a political context shaped by state collapse” (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:212) .

The Bosnian war was characterized by the use of extreme violence, by carrying out purposeful policies of ethnic cleansing, mainly against civilians (Mrvić-Petrovic 2001:15). Characteristic to the war was ethnic cleansing, use of violence targeting ethnic communities with the aim to lead to their departure from areas over which the warring parties fought for control. In 1992 UN peace keeping forces were sent to Bosnia. They supported efforts of humanitarian relief delivery, controlled UN “no-fly zones” and protected areas around five towns and Sarajevo, which were declared as “safe areas”.¹⁰ In 1995 Serbs attacked safe areas. As a response to the continued Serb attacks and massacres NATO undertook intensive air strikes against the Serbs (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:193-194, Owen in Swee 2009:5).

The end of the war is marked by the acceptance of the Dayton Peace Agreement by the Parties of the conflict. The agreement was signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. The Republic of Bosnia was divided in two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republica Srpska, delineated by an “Inter-Entity Boundary Line”. A NATO-led multinational military force was charged with the implementation of the military aspects of the agreement and a High Representative was appointed with the mandate to oversee the implementation of the civilian aspects of the agreement.¹¹ The Bosnian war had devastating consequences. The Bosnian Book of the Dead published by the Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo in June 2007 included the names of 97207 victims of the war from Bosnia and Herzegovina who were killed or who disappeared.¹² According to ICRC 200000 people

¹⁰ Department of Public Information, United Nations 1996 Former Yugoslavia – UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_p.htm Accessed on 10.01.2011

¹¹ The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=379 Accessed on 10.01.2011

¹² Ahmetasevic, Nidzara Justice Report: Bosnia's Book of the Dead, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network 21 06 2007 Sarajevo <http://birm.eu.com/en/88/10/3377/> Accessed on 10.01.2011

were killed and 2.2 million people were displaced.¹³ Among further serious consequences are the health effects of the violent conflict leading to the destruction or deterioration of physical and mental health, destruction of families, communities, the inflicted poverty, destitution, economic difficulties, destruction of or serious damages caused to housing facilities, infrastructure, damages caused to economy.

The onset of the Bosnian war is attributed to various causes. Kardos, analyzing minority conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe, considers that ethnic conflicts are the result of a specific combination of various factors (Kardos 2007:15), a combination that we can see in the case of the Bosnian war too. One of the causes of violent internal conflicts is considered to be grievances that have at their roots relative deprivation (Gurr in Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2007: 3) between groups, horizontal inequalities (Stewart in Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2007: 4) (Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2007: 3, 4). According to Stewart, socio-economic and political factors are often at the origins of violent conflicts. Collective identities, ethnic and religious identities, play an important role both in mobilization, group formation, and in formulating the grievances (Stewart 2009:1-3). In respect of ethnic divisions Montalvo and Reynal-Querol have found that ethnic polarization is indicative for conflict risk (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol in Stewart 2009:27). In Bosnia ethnic polarization, already present before the onset of the war, became more accentuated as the war started, as an effect of the war, of the violence (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:214-17). Polarisation in times of peace before the conflict can be perceived as a precursory sign of what Lianos (2001) calls “a “closure” of the spectrum across which the social bond organises itself”, leading the conflicting parties to define group belonging principally on the basis of enmity (Lianos 2011: 7-8). Massey, Hodson and Sekulić have found that in the former Yugoslavia before its dissolution intolerance was most intense in the minority enclaves (Massey, Hodson and Sekulić 1999: 669,689) and much of the fights took place around these places (Massey, Hodson and Sekulić 1999: 670).¹⁴

In Murshed’s and Tadjoeddin’s view grievances, as well as greed, another phenomenon considered as being at the origins of violent conflicts, produce extensive violence when the ‘social contract’ (Addison and Murshed, Murshed in Murshed and

¹³ Statement by H. E. Dr Haris Silajdžić Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Head of Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the 63rd Session of the General Assembly, New York September 23, 2008, p.1 http://www.un.org/en/ga/63/generaldebate/pdf/bosniaherzegovina_en.pdf Accessed on 10.01.2011

¹⁴ Sekulić, Massey and Hodson analyzing data from Croatia from the years 1984-5, 1989-90, 1996 and 2003 have found an increase in intolerance in the period when the war took place. After the war the level of intolerance decreased, but still it was higher than before the war (Sekulić, Massey and Hodson 2006: 797, 809-811).

Tadjoeddin 2007:25) weakens, when the functioning of institutions in a state is weakened or failed (Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2007: 25, 33). According to Kardos from the causes of the conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe two are fundamental. One of them is the disintegration of the “Zwangsordnung” (“order of coercion”) formed among others by the federative states and the Soviet type regimes; this disintegration made possible the breaking out of conflicts. The other fundamental cause of conflicts concerns problems linked to the instability of states and to the effects system change, which set the stage for ethnic intolerance (Kardos 2007: 16).

In Bosnia the fight along ethnic lines aimed principally to gain control over specific territories which would become part of the ethnic group’s greater territory. The Serb nationalists’ advocated the creation of a Greater Serbia (Cigar in Oberschall 2000:983). The lack of sufficient attention paid to the opinions of minorities, that was common in many states of East and Central Europe (Kardos 2007: 17), as well as the collapse of a community’s sense of security (Salat in Kardos 2007:15) are also considered conducive factors to the breaking out of conflicts. In the case of Bosnia the secession of Bosnia from Yugoslavia and the creation of a Serb state within Bosnia point to the aspirations of ethnic groups for autonomy, and the refusal to be in a minority situation.

Violent acts committed during the war reflect territorial aspirations too. According to Kalyvas and Sambanis in the case of the Bosnian war “ethnic cleansing can be seen as the perverse effect of the process of “twin secession”, where “the Yugoslav state could not prevent the Bosnian Muslims and Croats from seceding from Yugoslavia, while the Bosnian Muslims and Croats could not prevent the Bosnian Serbs from seceding from Bosnia” (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005: 224). Weidmann has found that in the Bosnian war there was a tendency to have more fights between armed forces and more attacks on civilians in territories claimed by more than one ethnic group (Weidmann 2009:24).

In Bosnia the war broke out soon after the Bosnian declaration of independence in conditions of transition from Communism and under the strain of an economic crisis. Regimes in transitions, characterised by weaker state capacity, are considered to be more prone to violent conflict than either democracies or autocracies (Hegre et al. in Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2007: 29). In the case of the Bosnian war regime transition also affected the risk conflict, among other factors such as the war in Croatia (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:223), the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:210), and economic factors, such as the consequences of the economic crisis and of the programs aiming at the transition to a

market economy (Woodward in Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:208) (For a detailed analysis on the factors explaining the onset of the Bosnian war see Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005).

Suzan Olzak attributes ethnic conflicts to the heightening of ethnic competition by the processes of modernization (Zimmermann, Olzak in Kardos 2007:15). Hodson, Sekulić and Massey analyzing national tolerance in the former Yugoslavia before the outbreak of the war have found that modernization leads both to the increase of tolerance and to increased competition between groups and increased conflict risk¹⁵ (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994:1555). They found support also for the theory of competition between ethnic groups in the strong relation between unemployment and intolerance (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994:1553-1554).

There are authors who emphasise the role of elites in the outbreak of wars in former Yugoslavia, namely the fight for power between ex-Communist leaders (Sajo in Kardos 2007:16) and ethnic manipulation by the elites (Gagnon 1996, Oberschall 2000). Ethnicity often is used instrumentally by leaders to mobilize people (Stewart 2009:15). According to Gagnon (1996) in Serbia with the political and economic changes the elites in power felt threatened in their positions. They used a discourse on injustices faced by the Serbs with the aim to prevent criticism and mobilization against their regime (Gagnon 1996).¹⁶ In Oberschall's view in Yugoslavia the nationalist elite spread nationalism among the people by using ethnicity in a manipulative way. In his explanation he uses the concept of cognitive frame for approaching ethnic relations: in peace times a frame of cooperation prevailed but it existed also a latent crisis frame based on memories from the Balkan wars. The elite by spreading ethnic hatred, insecurity, fear of extinction and fear victimisation activated the crisis frame (Oberschall 2000: 989-995).

The media in Yugoslavia had an important role in spreading fear and intolerance toward the other ethnic group. The fact that before the war the level of intolerance was higher among those who were reading newspapers points to the elites' role in spreading intolerance, since the media was under their control (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994: 1554). Fear was spread, besides the media, through politics, history, literature and other means (Oberschall 2000: 990).

Already before the war, the larger, macro-level political, economic and social changes, transition from the socialism, the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia were inducing

¹⁵ They found the highest level of tolerance in Bosnia (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey 1994: 1554). They found that "the level of tolerance in the former Yugoslavia was highest in the most diverse republics and autonomous provinces (Hodson, Sekulić and Massey in Massey, Hodson and Sekulić 1999:689).

¹⁶ Gagnon 1996 <http://www.ithaca.edu/gagnon/articles/demob/demob05.htm> Accessed on 10.01.2011

changes in social cohesion. Under the changing circumstances, and with modernization, the importance accorded to belongingness to a common nation, also like a factor that contributes to the cohesion of society, increased. Before and during the war the spreading of fear, of intolerance was conducive rather to the weakening of social cohesion, especially between people belonging to different ethnic groups. Social cohesion might be dramatically impaired as an effect of war. The Bosnian war was characterized by many attacks on civilian population. While violence occurred between the civilians too, the most characteristic form of violence was violence carried out by “soldiers against civilians” (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:215). Selective violence, targeting community leaders, was also used with the specific aim of destroying the cohesion of a community (Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005:213-214). The threat of indiscriminate violence generates fear and causes atomization of the society (E. Walter, Thornton in Kalyvas 2006:143). Such threat of indiscriminate violence, used largely in the Bosnian war, is conducive to destroying community cohesion. Ethnic cleansing was carried out mainly by militias and military who targeted with violent actions the civilian population (Oberschall 2000: 982-983). Deterioration in ethnic relations started before the war,¹⁷ but even so, during the war, in spite of greatly polarized interethnic relations, there were also cases of cooperation and help given to persons from the opposite ethnic group (Maas, Cohen, Human Rights Watch, Sudetic in Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005: 215-216).

Socio-economic uncertainty, insecurity and the Bosnian war

A large part of the civilian population was affected by the Bosnian war. While during the war a general sense of uncertainty, insecurity and lack of safety prevailed, there were differences in exposure to various risks for depending for example on how intense was a fight in a specific place or on the target of violence. By analysing reports and journal articles from the years of the war and following the Bosnian war I would like to reveal specificities of socio-economic insecurity in the case of the civilian population affected by the war.

Many of the war’s impact on households and individuals, including its direct impact on household welfare with all its economic aspects, and through its effects on human capital, and through displacement (Justino 2007: 7-15), and its indirect impact through the households’ economic, social and institutional environment (Justino 2008: 10-13) might be at

¹⁷ “A few months before war broke out, people started separating. It was after Bosnia’s independence was recognized. Our neighbours avoided us.” Jeri Laber’s interview (Oberschall 2000:988)

the origins of increased levels of uncertainty and insecurity, including socio-economic insecurity. We can see this in the case of the Bosnian war too.

In respect of exposure to uncertainty and insecurity, war had both short term and long term consequences. For example conflict induced displacement had long term impacts that are relevant for the people's economic security. Kondylis (2008) has found that in the post-conflict period in Bosnia, the probability to be in work for the displaced people is lower than for those who stayed (Kondylis 2008: 25).

During the Bosnian war various forms of violence caused direct threats to the lives of people. In certain areas there were intense fights between the warring parties for gaining the control over these areas. However, also in such areas where there was no fight for control, intense institutionalized "ethnic cleansing", violence was carried out (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994b:2). Violence included arbitrary killings, arbitrary detention, burning of houses¹⁸, torture, murders, beatings, rape, deportation, forced labor, terrorization, harassment (Human Rights Watch /Helsinki 1994b), looting (Maas 1992), forcible deportations¹⁹, exchange of people, of prisoners (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994a), violence generating a sense of insecurity of the civilian population. For example in the Bosanska Krajina and Bijelina regions among non-Serbs there was a "general climate of terror" (Human Rights Watch 1994b:29). The reports and articles describe the existence of a "general lack of safety" for the civilian population and a "general state of fear" (Amnesty International 1994a:10). The use of violence led to creation of "an atmosphere of immense fear and insecurity that the victims seek to flee whenever possible."²⁰ Indiscriminate shelling, unexploded mines and shells on the ground posed threat to people's lives. What under peace is a normal activity, during the war exposed people to very high risks, including threats to their lives; for example in Sarajevo people were exposed to sniper fire on their way to get fresh water (Dahlburg 1993).

Detained people were exposed to threats to their lives. Civilians "were used as a 'living shields' or forced to dig trenches at the front" (Mrvić-Petrović 2001: 15). All three

¹⁸ United Nations Commission on Human Rights Exceptional Session, 30 November – 1 December 1992 Oral Statement Gross Human Rights Abuses in the Former Yugoslavia AI Index number: EUR 48/31/92, 1 December 1992 p.1 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR48/031/1992/en/a8923047-ed8c-11dd-95f6-0b268ecef84f/eur480311992en.pdf> Accessed on 10.01.2011

¹⁹ Amnesty International 1995 Forcible expulsions / Fear of hostage-taking Bosnia-Herzegovina Croats in the Bosnian-Serb controlled area of northwest Bosnia AI Index: EUR 63/09/95 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR63/009/1995/en/829aa935-0302-41df-b0b5-dfa5822c603f/eur630091995en.pdf> Accessed on 10.01.2011

²⁰ Bosnia-Herzegovina: Continued Human Rights Abuses Weekly Update NWS 11/41/93 EUR 63/WU 49/93 External 29 April 1993 p. 5 <http://www.amnesty.org/es/library/asset/NWS11/041/1993/es/74be6a2b-eed8-11dd-a08b-b3b1782331b8/nws110411993en.pdf> Accessed on 10.01.2011

warring factions used detainees for forced labor (Doyle 1993). In detention camps the conditions caused serious health problems and surviving could not be taken for granted.

Women and leaders of ethnic communities were specifically targeted by violence. Violence against women, including rape and other sexual abuse was frequently used during the war (Nikolić-Ristanović 2001). In Bosnia women were targeted by sexual violence as a means of ‘ethnic cleansing’ (Human Rights Watch in El Jack 2003:16). Women were exposed to rape, sexual slavery (Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović 2009: 10) and forced pregnancy (Nikolić-Ristanović 2001:76). Community leaders and intellectuals were also specifically targeted by violence. They could be killed or detained (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994: 36).

The safety of civilians and general security around their livelihood also depended in certain cases on strategies adopted by the warring parties. For example in Srebrenica local leaders opposed the evacuation of people in spite of the possibility of the imminent attack on the town by the Serbs (Lewis 1993b). Changing alliances also had an impact on insecurity. For example, Muslim refugees were exposed to harassment after the alliance between Croats and Muslims ended and a war broke out between them in Bosnia (Doyle 1993).

Situations of insecurity due to threats to the people’s lives, albeit at a smaller scale than during the war, also occurred in the period immediately following the end of the war. The presence of peace enforcement military forces (SFOR) in Bosnia Herzegovina had an important role in maintaining peace and ensuring security. There were still various threats to the security of persons, such as the continuation of arbitrary arrest, detentions of persons²¹, of exchange of detained persons²², the lack of full cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in handling over indicted war criminals.²³ Threats were posed also by the presence of landmines whose removal progressed slowly.²⁴ Harassment of ethnic minorities, their forced and illegal eviction and the destruction of minority owned houses²⁵ expectedly caused insecurity among these minorities.

²¹ 2nd Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 43, 4th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 60

²² 3rd Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 58

²³ 6th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 82

²⁴ 4th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 77

²⁵ 4th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 61

In addition to the general state of lack of safety, insecurity, threats to life and existential insecurity caused by the violence during the conflict, the lack or shortage of basic necessities for survival, such as food, water, heating, shelter and medicines, led to socio-economic insecurity with varying severity for different parts of the population. Its severity depended on factors related to the violence itself. It was a direct consequence of the fights, of the violence, and in certain situations it was specifically aimed by a warring party. During the Bosnian war the deterioration of the socio-economic situation led to humanitarian crises requiring international humanitarian relief. The violence used, such as shelling, destruction of houses, of property, looting, robbing as well as forced deportation of people from their homes, displacement, deportation and detention, put many people in very difficult situation, even endangering their daily survival. Such situations were characterized by food shortage, lack or disruption in supplies of fuel, water (Parrott 1993), heat, electricity or natural gas (Harden 1992), fear from winter due to the threats might pose because of the cold and hunger (Gordon 1992), deaths due to starvation and cold in winter (Lewis 1993a), damaged houses. Certain categories of people, and people living in certain war affected areas, were highly vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. For example refugees, displaced people, the elderly, children, sick people were very vulnerable to cold in winter. Poor people were in great difficulty, especially refugee families. Delivery of relief was hindered among other causes by holding up and harassing convoys, lack of fuel and attacks on truck drivers (Parrott 1993).

There were instances when providing utilities was dependent on bargaining between warring parties, for example in Sarajevo bargaining between Moslems and Serbs on opening natural gas lines and allowing electricity (Pomfret 1993). Cutting the supplies can be used to deprive the opposing warring party and weakening it. In the siege of Sarajevo beside indiscriminate sniping and shelling there was restricted access to sources of electricity, gas and diesel at the front lines (Acheson 1993).

The situation following the war was characterized on the one hand by improvement in living standards, and by the beginnings of an economic recovery, and on the other hand by poverty, high rate of unemployment, problems such as the integration of demobilized soldiers for whom jobs and housing had to be found (McKinsey 1996). In Bosnia Herzegovina 80 percent of the population was dependent on humanitarian food aid and during the war a strong decrease occurred in the annual per capita income and in industrial output.²⁶

²⁶ 1st Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 34

During the war, both the violence and the difficult conditions of living that threatened people's survival, had a strong negative impact on people's health. The violence led to large numbers of deaths and injuries. The widespread poverty and the lack of regular provision of supplies had a detrimental effect on people's health and caused difficulties in the provision of health care. In hospitals there were poor conditions due to the lack of basic supplies, affecting the possibilities of providing health care, as we can see in the case of Sarajevo's hospitals: "Doctors in Serb-besieged Sarajevo, coping with lack of electricity, heating, running water and medicine, say they could have saved many limbs if it were not for malnutrition and poor hospital conditions" (Schork 1993c). The lack of supplies, poor sanitary conditions have led to increased health risks. Due to the poor sanitary conditions the risk of outbreak of epidemic diseases increased (Heares 1992). Since hospitals functioned under difficult conditions, ill and wounded patients were evacuated abroad for further treatment.²⁷ Civilians showed the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders (Quinn-Judge 1993). The poor conditions in hospitals and the difficulties in provision of supplies, were also dependent upon negotiations between warring parties. This happened in the case of gas supply in Sarajevo, as Schork (1993c) describes: "The city's natural gas supply – the basic heating source for Sarajevo's main hospitals – is hostage to complicated negotiations among Moslem, Serb and Croat factions and their international allies" (Schork 1993c).

Children were very deeply exposed to the war and its violence and seriously affected by it (Battiata 1992, Sudetic 1994, Nusser 1992, Schork 1993a, Schork 1993b)²⁸. As Battiata (1992) reports, "the Bosnian war ... has exploded right on children's doorsteps. It is a modern war being fought in a medieval way – village against village, neighbor against neighbor, with heavy artillery turned on ordinary civilians, and their houses, churches and schools. More than half of the 2.1 million people displaced by the war in former Yugoslavia are children, according to the United Nations Children's Fund, and many of them are showing symptoms of extreme psychological trauma" Battiata (1992).

Displaced people and refugees also constitute a specific segment of the population that was highly exposed to socio-economic insecurity. More than 1.2 million people fled from Bosnia-Herzegovina and approximately 760,000 were displaced or refugees in Bosnia (Latal 1994). Many of them are victims of various forms of violent ethnic cleansing, including mass

²⁷ "Evacuation of Seriously Ill from Sarajevo begins" August 15, 1993

HU OSA 205-4-90 Records of the Open Media Research Institute, Information Services Department, 1952-1997, Bosnia Herzegovina Subject Files, 1992-1997, container no. 27

²⁸ 'Sarajevo's Siege Children No Longer Avoid Gunfire – Survey', February 1, 1994

HU OSA 205-4-90 Records of the Open Media Research Institute, Information Services Department, 1952-1997, Bosnia Herzegovina Subject Files, 1992-1997, container no. 28

deportation, forced deportation and other forms of violence causing fear and insecurity that led to their flight. There were also people who were evacuated because they were threatened, for example, mainly the elderly and children were evacuated from Srebrenica. However, the evacuation met with resistance by the defenders of the town (Lewis 1993b).

During the war many people left their homes. Both increased harassment as well as difficult economic conditions were among the reasons for people's flight.²⁹ However, while economic difficulties might have played a role in decision to leave, the fear caused by violent attacks and abuses strongly determined and prompted the people to leave (Amnesty International 1994b). Avoiding army conscription was among the reasons for flight.³⁰ There were cases when violence led people to fly from town to town (Heinrich 1993a). Following the end of the war, signing by the warring parties of the Dayton agreement that partitioned the territory of Bosnia Herzegovina along ethnic lines led to further flights of people belonging to ethnic groups who were in minority position. There were also such cases when people were forced to leave by violent means.

Displaced people, refugees generally faced poverty, deprivation (see for ex. Heinrich 1993b) as well as social exclusion. As a refugee, Envera Herenda, said: "The worst thing (when) being ... (a) refugee is that nobody takes you as a citizen, as a human being" ... "They turn their heads away from me on the street, like I am some sort of hillbilly or dirty animal." (Latal 1994)

Refugees flying abroad faced difficulties, for example Croatian authorities refused access for refugees with insufficient documents³¹. Refugees abroad did not always receive adequate protection. As the war broke out between Croats and Bosnians, Croatia could not be considered as a safe country of asylum for the Bosnian Muslim refugees (Amnesty International 1993: 1). The protection granted to refugees in foreign countries was mainly of temporary nature.

After the Dayton agreement was signed further population movements, displacements, deportations and flights took place. The return of refugees and displaced persons was slow,

²⁹ 'Moslems, Croats Trudge River Road as Refugees', September 13, 1993

HU OSA 205-4-90 Records of the Open Media Research Institute, Information Services Department, 1952-1997, Bosnia Herzegovina Subject Files, 1992-1997, container no. 29

³⁰ 'Moslems, Croats Trudge River Road as Refugees Reuter', September 13, 1993

HU OSA 205-4-90 Records of the Open Media Research Institute, Information Services Department, 1952-1997, Bosnia Herzegovina Subject Files, 1992-1997, container no. 29

³¹ United Nations Commission on Human Rights Exceptional Session, 30 November – 1 December 1992 Oral Statement Gross Human Rights Abuses in the Former Yugoslavia

AI Index number: EUR 48/31/92, 1 December 1992
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR48/031/1992/en/a8923047-ed8c-11dd-95f6-0b268ecef84f/eur480311992en.pdf>

and the majority of returns were to areas where the returning refugees belonged to the ethnic group that was in majority in the area. The transfer of territories between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska led to further displacements.³² With the transfer of authority to the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina over certain parts of Sarajevo many Serbs left the city³³ (Murphy 1996). There were refugees who were removed with NATO approval following attacks on departing Serbs (McDowall 1996). Returns after the war at the beginning were rather to areas where those who returned belonged to the ethnic group that was in majority, in dominant position in the area. However returns occurred in smaller numbers than respective displacements due to the territory transfers.³⁴ Large scale repatriations started in 1997 with the lifting of temporary protection for refugees in some European host countries.³⁵ Repatriated refugees and returning displaced persons went mainly to majority areas.³⁶ There were many obstacles to the return of refugees, principally the presence of threats to the security of returning persons as well as obstacles of political and administrative nature.³⁷

People who tried to return were harassed, intimidated, and their work on the houses where they later intended to return was destroyed (Nebhay 1996). Attacks, often committed by displaced people, as well as the prevention by authorities of the return of displaced persons and of refugees hindered return (Amnesty International 1997b: 4). Another obstacle was the risk of persecution of those who have served in military or had to serve in military. Changes in amnesty laws were needed for their safe return.³⁸ The lack of housing also posed a serious obstacle to return. During the war many houses were destroyed, damaged or occupied and over 60 percent of all housing units were damaged whilst 18 per cent of them were

³² “between 1996 and 1999, an additional 200,000 were displaced, among them 80,000 persons, most of them Serbs, following the transfer of territories between the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina” Brookings-Bern Project on International Displacement National and Regional Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement BOSNIA <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/Laws-and-Policies/bosnia.aspx> Accessed on March 4, 2011.

³³ 1st Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 32

³⁴ 2nd Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraphs 37, 76

³⁵ 5th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 74

³⁶ 7th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 62

³⁷ 7th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 62

³⁸ 1st Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 63, 2nd Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 31, 4th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 63

destroyed.³⁹ The property and housing legislation in force hindered the return as well.⁴⁰ Lack of employment and social services as well as the state of infrastructure posed additional obstacles to the people's return.⁴¹ The impunity of many persons suspected as perpetrators of war crimes as well as the large number of missing persons also constituted obstacles for the return of refugees and displaced persons (Amnesty International 1997a). Fear from various other threats, ranging from landmines to tensions between ethnic groups and ethnic discrimination also hindered the return of refugees and displaced persons (OSCE 1997: 2). Not only fear and insecurity but also generalized mistrust, which was widespread during the war, continued in the period following the end of the war.⁴²

War causes changes both in interpersonal relations and in relations and trust between communities, having a destructive effect on social cohesion and social capital (Woolcock, Putnam in Justino 2009:12). The documents and reports illustrate different aspects of relations between people from different ethnic groups, as well as changes in interpersonal relations and people's behavior during the war, such as sudden changes from previously having friendly relations to behaving as if they did not know each other, or people suddenly starting to commit violent acts (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994a: 3, 15). There were also cases when people tried to help people from other ethnic groups, for example tried to protect their neighbors (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994a: 5).

Conclusion

The violence during the Bosnian war led to the creation of an atmosphere of deep fear, uncertainty and existential insecurity. Such fears were at the origin of the flight of many people. The various forms of the violence used and the impact of violence on the means necessary for the daily subsistence, survival and on social relations all contributed to the strong socio-economic uncertainty and insecurity that existed during the conflict. Variations in vulnerability and exposure to socio-economic uncertainty and insecurity, as well as in possibilities for coping with such situations related to the conflict itself too, such as over

³⁹ 1st Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 72

⁴⁰ 8th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 67

⁴¹ 4th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraph 51

⁴² 2nd Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Bosnian Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations paragraphs 82, 31

which territories were conducted intense fights or to the changes in the relations between warring parties, their alliances or their fights against each other. Socio-economic insecurity and lack of indispensable means for daily survival were not mere consequences of violence, they were also tools used as parts of the strategy to weaken the opponent. Decisions made on fleeing and returning show how trust, risk-taking and perception of possibilities, both at individual and at community level, show the insurmountable difficulties of coping with insecure situations under conditions of violent conflict and in the period following violent conflict.

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