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Sarajevo – A Border City Caught between Its Multicultural Past, the Bosnian War and a European Future

*Miruna TRONCOTĂ*¹

Abstract. *The analysis is devoted to the city of Sarajevo and its turbulent history as being an illustrative case for how political borders have been symbolically reconstructed on ethnic lines in the Balkans for the last five centuries. Key historical periods such as the Austro-Hungarian period, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and next the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Olympic Games, the war and the Dayton Peace Agreement including its aftermath shall be discussed in turn. Some of the most significant events that have shaped the history of the 20th century have directly marked the city of Sarajevo and they tackle some of the most intricate issues that dominate European history as a whole such as national belonging, political ideologies, and religious beliefs. Several milestones can be traced in this regard: the beginning of the first World War, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the second World War, Tito's political vision and the prosperous era of socialist Yugoslavia, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and violent ethnic war, the period of peace building and post-conflict reconstruction which is still ongoing. The aim of the study is to analyse the events and patterns which might have contributed to changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital city. The main argument that the analysis tries to put forward is that the post-conflict Sarajevo's governance structure has maintained and institutionalised the ethnic divisions and political differences in the country and city's reality.*

Key words: *Bosnia and Herzegovina, border city, identity, multi-ethnicity, Sarajevo*

Introduction

The Balkans are predominantly described as a crossroads of cultures and peoples. Their location in South East Europe between the large and powerful countries of the Western Europe, the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, and Russia brought many threats, as well as many opportunities to the region. As a consequence, major cultural boundaries pass through the Balkans, marking a fragmented territory which had repeatedly been in search of its identity. The city of Sarajevo is, in many ways, the core of the Balkans, a representative case for the troubled history of the so-called “powder keg” of Europe. Among the inhabitants of Sarajevo the majority are native Muslims, known today as Bosniaks. But there are also Serbs who practice the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity and there is also a sizeable population of Croatian Catholics, a significant minority of Jews, as well as small numbers of other minorities. This mosaic of cultures has made Sarajevo a fascinating city, as there have been long periods in which they coexisted peacefully, but this seemed rather an exception to the general rule of conflicts in the Balkans. However, the century-long history of changing rulers and forms of belonging to different empires/political structures also explains the country's numerous wars and endless civil unrest that have left visible scars on the city of Sarajevo. The most recent event that destroyed the city's heritage of peaceful cohabitation

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took place during the Bosnian war between 1992 and 1995 – also known as the Siege of Sarajevo – which resulted in many deaths, large scale destruction, and dramatic population shifts. As soon as the war ended with the Dayton Agreement of November 1995, the slow healing process for the entire ex-Yugoslav region started. But 20 years after, Sarajevo is still a city divided by invisible borders, in search of its lost multi-ethnic identity.

This was the starting point of the analysis – the commonly accepted observation that the city of Sarajevo has changed immensely over the past two centuries. The challenge would be to determine whether this change was internally or externally driven, comprising a reflection of the new course of European history. I decided to devote the following analysis to the history of Sarajevo due to its valuable political significance, that places the city at the intersection of a multicultural past, a persistent ethno-nationalist rhetoric and a European identity all at the same time. Moreover, the year 2015 is in itself charged with great historical significance for the city itself and for Bosnia as a whole. On July, 11th, 2015 the international community commemorated 20 years since the Srebrenica genocide, the biggest atrocity to happen in Europe since the World War II, but also 20 years since the end to the Bosnian War with the Dayton Peace Agreement. At the political level, this year holds another historic importance as it brought a ground-breaking shift in BiH's road to the European Union membership, and its future stability. On the 1st of June 2015, after 7 years of deadlock, stagnation and even deterioration of Bosnia's political situation, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU entered into force and new hopes are on the rise for the country's democratisation and stabilisation.

Based on my field work research and also on my personal experience in Sarajevo², I argued that the dominating element in the analysis of contemporary Sarajevo is still the memorialisation of war, with its diffuse sets of causes and consequences that are hard to track if one looks only in the period when the violence erupted. The analysis aims therefore at assessing the failed attempts for restoring the multi-ethnic tapestry of Sarajevo, being at the same time an invitation to reflect on the city's challenges and opportunities in the aftermath of Yugoslav socialism and the ethnic war that followed.

The article is structured as follows: The first section describes the main stages of the city's history, focusing on identifying several important milestones that profoundly redefined the city's landscape and political importance such as the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1914) and the World War I that followed, the inter-war period and the belonging to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the World War II, followed by Tito's regime and the glorious times of Yugoslavia (which started in 1946) and in the end Yugoslavia's disintegration and the ethnic war (1992-1995). The second section focuses on the current situation of the City and it analyses the political importance of Sarajevo in the last century and aims at outlining the characteristics of the main approaches to the analysis of Sarajevo as a sort of "Balkan melting pot". This section also presents the analytic focus chosen for the study, concentrating on the way its political identity, its ethno-national and confessional composition, foundations and dynamics have changed throughout the centuries. The last section aims at drawing a series of conclusions focusing on the heritage of the past in the present identity of the city's population, its impact on the everyday life and culture and Sarajevo's special status of borderland between the Western Balkans and the EU.

² For the PhD thesis, published as Miruna Troncota, *Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Critical Case Study of Europeanization* (Bucharest: Tritonic Publishing House, 2014).

The main stages in Sarajevo's modern history

Sarajevo is the largest city and the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a small-sized European country nestled within the greater Sarajevo valley of Bosnia, situated in the heart of South-eastern Europe, along the Miljacka River and surrounded by the Dinaric Alps. During the last centuries, Sarajevo was both blessed and cursed by history, ranging from the peaceful inclusion to the violent exclusion of its own inhabitants, and from prosperous times of development to times of destruction and death. Six main stages have been identified in the modern history of Sarajevo that will structure the analysis – from the Ottoman ruling to the Austria-Hungarian ruling which ended with the Assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1914), from the World War I to Tito's rule (1946) and from Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Civil War (1992) to the contemporary post-conflict reconstruction and regained vitality of the city (more in **Table 1**).

The present day site of Sarajevo has a long and rich history dating back to the Stone Age. One of the first historical relics found in the Sarajevo valley dates back to the Neolithic, when the region was the centre of the so called "Butmir culture", a Neolithic society named after the findings in the location called Butmir, nearby Sarajevo³. It is also known that after that period, the Illyrians, which were the indigenous tribes that lived on the Western part of the Balkan peninsula, had several settlements in the Sarajevo valley. They have been defeated by the Roman emperor Tiberius in 9 a.d. And this period was followed by the Roman rule in the region when Sarajevo became part of the province of Dalmatia⁴. Over the years numerous Roman artefacts had been found in the heart of Sarajevo that testify about the importance of the region as a connector between North and South. The biggest known settlement in the region was identified on top of Ilidža, one of today's suburbs of Sarajevo. After the Romans, the Goths settled in the area and after them in the 7th century the Slavs finally conquered the area. The Slavic citadel settled in the Sarajevo valley was named Vrh-Bosna and its history is traced back from 1263 until it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1429. During the Middle Ages the Bosnian Kingdom was one of the most powerful ones in the region⁵. As such, for the next four centuries, Bosnia as a province and Sarajevo as its capital city remained under the Ottoman rule and this period has left a significant footprint on the city and the culture of its inhabitants. The present analysis will start its focus on the city's history with the Ottoman period.

The Ottoman ruling

Historians argue that Sarajevo as we know it today was founded by the Ottoman Empire in the late 1450s upon conquering the region. But the year 1461 is most frequently used as the city's founding date⁶. The first Ottoman governor of Bosnia, Isa-Beg Išaković, transformed the cluster of villages from the Sarajevo valley into a city and state capital by building a number of key objectives, including a mosque, a closed marketplace, a public bath, a hostel, and the governor's castle, which is considered to have given the city its present name⁷. His successor, Gazi Husrev-beg, contributed even more to the city's

³ Michael Budja, "The Butmir Neolithic Culture," Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, 2003, accessed February 04, 2015, <http://dmc.ssst.edu.ba/ButmirNeolithicCulture/english/obre.html>.

⁴ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 12.

⁵ More in Robert J. Donia and John V.A. Fine Jr, *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed* (London: C Hurst & Co, 1997), 13-35.

⁶ Geoffrey Woodward, "The Great Impact of the Turks in the 16th Century," March 2001, accessed March 04, 2015, <http://www.historytoday.com/geoffrey-woodward/ottomans-europe>.

⁷ According to historians, Sarajevo is the slavified word based on the noun *saray*, the Turkish word for *palace*.

development and expansion. He was responsible for the construction of the famous Gazi Husrev-beg's Mosque, the Tsar's Mosque, and numerous other mosques throughout the city. He also constructed what is now known as the Old Town (*Baščaršija*), the first Sarajevo library, the school of Sufi philosophy (*madrassa*), and clock tower (*Sahat Kula*), along with numerous other important cultural structures⁸. In this period, Sarajevo quickly grew into the largest and most important city in the whole region. In the next two centuries that followed, the Ottoman Empire made Sarajevo an important administrative centre. It also became known for its large marketplace and numerous mosques, which by the middle of the 16th century were over a hundred in number⁹. According to some historians, Sarajevo even became known as one of the biggest and most important Ottoman city in the Balkans, after Istanbul itself. In this period, the city became an important market on the East–West trading routes, mostly used by Ragusan merchants (from present day Dubrovnik, Croatia)¹⁰. During this period many Slavs in the region converted to Islam. More precisely, “Sarajevo’s demographic picture changed from being about 73 percent Christian in and 27 percent Muslim in 1485 to about 97 percent Muslim in 1530”¹¹. An explanation for this phenomenon is that life under Ottoman regime was organised according to “the millet system” in which Muslims generally had more privileges than non-Muslims. This demographic and religious shift has shaped Bosnia in a different way than its neighbouring Balkan countries and became in the next century an increasingly more relevant factor for the changes that marked Sarajevo's urban identity. The Ottomans built some of the most remarkable landmarks of Sarajevo, such as the famous Tsar’s Mosque (*Careva Džamija*), as well as Europe’s first public toilet with running water and a functional sewage system, in 1529¹². There were numerous reforms and rebellions, such as the movement of Husein Bey Gradašević (1831-32), which finally defined the extent of Bosnian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. During the 1860s, the reforms undertaken brought Bosnia certain provincial autonomy¹³. By the time of the Crimean war against Russia in 1853, the Ottoman Empire had begun to lose power in the region, allowing Russia to gain influence in the Balkans, particularly within Serbia and Montenegro. Next, the year 1878 is the important milestone in the Sarajevo's transformation, as the Ottoman Empire was defeated and succeeded by the Habsburg rule.

The Habsburg ruling

As part of the Treaty of Berlin, Austria-Hungary's occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina came in 1878, but the complete annexation followed in 1908. Consequently, BiH became an autonomous administrative unit during the Austro-Hungarian regime. According to several historians, it was in this period that a truly urban society and modernised architecture had emerged in Sarajevo¹⁴. The Austria-Hungarian period was one of great development for the city as the Western power brought its new acquisition up to the standards of the Victorian age. One of the major changes was that, for the first time in history, Sarajevo’s population started writing in Latin script. During the forty years of their rule, the Habsburg authorities industrialised and modernised BiH and its capital city in a way which suited their strategic interests in the region¹⁵.

⁸ Woodward.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Donia and Fine Jr, 71-75.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Malcolm, 56.

¹⁴ Robert J. Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 62.

¹⁵ Ibid., 65.

It is considered that this period gave Sarajevo its specific European flavour in terms of architecture, as the main boulevards along the quay host some examples of Secession and Pseudo-Moorish styles¹⁶. A negative event also helped this aesthetic change in the city, as a fire burned down a large part of the central area and this has left more room for development and redesign. Those changes resulted in a unique blend of the remaining Ottoman city market and contemporary Western architecture. Beyond this progress, the political situation was tense, as the ethno-confessional groups progressively kept pushing for more autonomy and became more and more anti-Habsburg in their rhetoric. The nationalist movements and anti-Habsburg uprisings reached their peak on June 28, 1914 (which symbolically marked also the anniversary of the battle of “Kosovo Polje” in 1389), when the successor to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was murdered in Sarajevo. The assassin was a Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, a member of *the Black Hand*, a radical Serbian group whose goal was to detach Bosnia from Austria and give it to Serbia. After the assassination, Sarajevo became deeply divided along ethno-national lines¹⁷. Austria declared war on Serbia as a result of the Archduke’s assassination, thus triggering the beginning of the World War I.

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia ruling

In 1918, at the end of the World War I, as the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and its constituencies dissolved into independent states, BiH became part of the newly established independent Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes which was “a constitutional monarchy uniting all the South Slavs under domination of the Serbian royal house”¹⁸. BiH was not recognised as a separate administrative unit within the new kingdom, so Sarajevo became the capital of the Drina Province (*Drinska Banovina*) and thus lost its importance as a major urban hub of the region. Except the today's building of the National Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina, virtually no significant contributions to the city were made during this period in terms of architecture. According to the historians' accounts, the first major affirmation of a sort of “political Yugoslavism” started in 1929 when the Kingdom was renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia in an attempt to do away with particularistic/nationalist allegiances. Moreover, to that purpose, “all organizations based on a national or religious affiliation were banned in order to promote a unitary ideology”¹⁹. Soon after, the World War II broke out, but fascism did not reach Sarajevo until 1941. During the war the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's army was overrun by superior German and Italian forces. In 1941 the Nazi Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Sarajevo was bombarded. Many Sarajevans joined the Partisans and the Communist Party in their efforts to free their city of the aggressors. It is important to mention that on one hand the WWII had a major impact on Sarajevo’s plural coexistence and diversity as many Jews, Serbs and Roma were either killed or displaced during the Croat *Ustasha* regime which was closely affiliated with German Nazis and Italian Fascists. On the other hand, the resistance of Sarajevans against the violent oppressors is a remarkable feature which is continuously present throughout Sarajevo’s history²⁰. During the war there were two major oppositional movements, the *Chetniks* - a Serb rebellion movement against foreign occupation and - the *Partisan*

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ian Armour, “The Roots of Sarajevo,” *History Today* 38, 8 (August 1988), accessed March 04, 2015, <http://www.historytoday.com/ian-armour/roots-sarajevo-austria-hungary-and-serbia-1867-81>.

¹⁸ Aleksandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism and War in the Balkans* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 21.

¹⁹ Pavkovic, 29.

²⁰ Ibid.

movement (National Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia), a movement of Yugoslav patriots with no specific national affiliation, led by the Communist Party²¹. The Partisan resistance fighters, led by Josip Broz Tito, liberated Sarajevo on 6 April 1945 and the city became an important regional centre of the newly formed Yugoslavia.

The socialist federal ruling of Tito's Yugoslavia

The year 1946 is the other relevant milestone in the transformation of the city of Sarajevo, as it marked the launch of the second version of the Yugoslav state, operated under one overarching political culture and ideology of 'Yugoslavism', which was responsible to "stitch" together a country of multiple ethnic identities. As such, at the end of the Second World War, under the power of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was formed. The entity was renamed as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) by the 1964 constitution. In reality Josip Broz Tito's federal project lasted until his death in 1980, even if formally the regime remained in place until 1991 when the first armed conflicts for the dissolution of Yugoslavia started. This federal project comprised six republics: BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia (including the regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina) and Slovenia. A sort of "duo-nationality" was being created and endorsed by the central authorities, in which each person would have a federal Yugoslav and an ethnic identity at the same time. Holding together this immense ethnic diversity was this ideology of 'Yugoslavism' expressed through the slogan of 'brotherhood and unity' (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*), invoked to rise above old hatreds between different nationalities and make them stronger by being together in a common project. Tito's Yugoslavia was even compared to a sort of Balkan version of what was at the time the European Community (since 1992 named as the European Union). But in its essence SFRJ was a unique political entity, based on a mix of various ethnic and religious groups which were all united in one state by a common ideology: communism and led by a strong Communist party.

BiH was the most ethnically mixed of the six republics of the Yugoslav federation, as neither of the biggest three groups had a majority. Sarajevo grew rapidly in this period, as it became an important regional industrial centre in socialist Yugoslavia. Modern communist-city blocks were built in the Western part of the old city, adding new features to Sarajevo's architectural landscape. The Republic Government invested heavily in Sarajevo, building many new residential blocks in Novi Grad Municipality and Novo Sarajevo Municipality, while simultaneously developing the city's industry and transforming Sarajevo into one of the modern capital cities. Sarajevo was tremendously transformed during the socialist era also in demographic terms. From a post-war population of 115,000, there are estimations that by the end of Yugoslavia (before the war), Sarajevo had 600,000 people²². The city was impacted by both Tito's anti-nationalist policies and the modernisation processes. Sarajevo developed as an important transportation junction and trade and industrial centre of Yugoslavia. Also, Sarajevo was the head quarters of Yugoslavia's principal production and scientific electrical engineering association, *Energoinvest*, which designed and built electric power-plants, electric transmission lines, and other electric power facilities in Yugoslavia and abroad. The Academy of Science and Art of BiH was located in Sarajevo, as well as the university (established in 1946), other higher schools, research institutes in meteorology and hygiene, and a library.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Pavkovic, 39.

It is important to outline at this point also the fact that only in 1963 Muslims were recognised as a nationality, further to be confirmed in the 1974 Constitution²³. Sarajevo's urban development peaked in early 1980's and at the time was chosen to be the host for the 14th Winter Olympic Games in 1984. The Games were an amazing success for Sarajevo which became with this occasion a great tourist destination. Actually many argue that the Winter Olympic Games of 1984 had put Sarajevo on the world map. No previous event in the former Yugoslavia had aroused so much professional and emotional engagement. These years were the country's best decades in a long time. But that was not the case of the whole federation, for which the 80's represented a prelude of the black period of war that started in the 90's.

In 1974 the Yugoslav federation adopted a new constitution in which the key point was decentralisation, as the Communist leaders were anticipating on the outburst of nationalism and the republics' demand for more autonomy. In the last decade of socialism, Yugoslavia was hit by major economic stagnation, institutional problems and loss of legitimacy. Because of these decentralisation measures, which were implemented after the adoption of the new constitution, new local elites were given the possibility to effectively gain power and spread their nationalist rhetoric. After Tito's death in 1980, nationalism began to spread in most parts of the federation, including BiH and Sarajevo. This tendency culminated with what was further called "the beginning of the end" - the victory of the three national parties representing the three biggest ethnic groups in Bosnia at the first multiparty elections in November 1990 (Muslims, Croats and Serbs). The SFRY's concrete end took place on 25 June 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. By April 1992, Serbia and Montenegro were the only remaining entities in the Federation, as Macedonia and BiH also declared their independence. By Resolution 755 of the United Nations Security Council, on May 20, 1992, BiH was internationally recognised. But already on April 5, 1992, Slobodan Milosevic sent the Yugoslav National Army (YNA) along with Serb nationalist forces across the Drina River into Eastern BiH. It was the beginning of a three and half years long war. As such, the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia in Sarajevo one of its most visible battlegrounds.

The siege of Sarajevo - The biggest atrocity in Europe after the WW 2

An important milestone in the breakup of Yugoslavia and also in the contemporary history of Sarajevo begins with the declaration of independence of BiH from Yugoslavia in a referendum for independence on February 29, 1992. The city then became the capital of the new state, which was independent for the first time in its modern history (since 1461, when the Ottoman ruling started in the area). The ethnic violence escalated in a very short period of time, almost without any important triggering event. Several Serb participants of a wedding were shot just outside Sarajevo's old Serbian Orthodox Church on March 1²⁴. These shootings were considered the first spark of the future atrocities in Sarajevo and the beginning of the war, as Serb military forces started to transmit aggressive messages in the media, considering this event a direct provocation. Sarajevans however demonstrated massively against these violent events in their city. On April 5, 1992 almost 10,000 demonstrators demanded for the government to step down and asked for an international protectorate²⁵. One day later, on the celebration of Sarajevo's liberation of German and

²³ Guy M. Robinson et al., "Remaking Sarajevo: Bosnian Nationalism after the Dayton Accord," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 962.

²⁴ Donia, 278.

²⁵ Neven Andjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: The End of a Legacy* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 67.

Ustasha rule during WWII and the day the European Community recognised BiH's independence, the war in Sarajevo began with Serb militias attacking civilians who were engaged in peaceful protests²⁶. Serb snipers in the Holiday Inn hotel, right in the heart of Sarajevo, opened fire on the crowd killing six people and wounding several more. Suada Dilberović and an ethnic Croat woman Olga Sučić were in the first rows, protesting on the Vrbanja bridge at the time. They were considered the first victims of the Siege of Sarajevo²⁷. The bridge on which Sučić and Dilberović were killed was renamed in their honour. As such, after the war in Croatia, ethnic tensions exploded in Bosnia starting what became known as the Bosnian War for independence, which resulted in large-scale destruction and dramatic population shifts during the Siege of Sarajevo.

The Serb forces and the Yugoslav People's Army besieged Sarajevo from 5 April 1992 to 29 February 1996. It was the longest siege of a capital city in modern history, and produced the worst atrocities in Europe since World War II. The impact on the city was devastating. Serbian weaponry had severely damaged almost every part of the city and a wide array of buildings - media centres, skyscrapers, buildings of the government, mosques, residential areas, concert halls, synagogues, libraries, residential areas. The impact on its inhabitants was also extremely harsh as the city was held without electricity, heating, water, and medical supplies for the whole period of almost 4 years. An average of 329 shell impacts occurred per day, with a high of 3,777 shell impacts on July 22, 1993 (a period which was considered as the climax of the siege)²⁸. After the Spring of 1992 the Sarajevans of all three ethnicities, but mostly Muslims (which during the war started to be called as Bosniaks) remained helplessly blocked inside by the Siege. All roads leading in and out of Sarajevo were blocked, and the airport was shut down. Approximately 400,000 residents were trapped in the siege, and they were cut off from food, medicine, water, and supplies of electricity. During the siege, 11,541 people lost their lives, including over 1,500 children. An additional 56,000 people were wounded, including nearly 15,000 children.²⁹ In total, over three-and-a-half years of war, 100,000 people were killed, and half of Bosnia's population of 4.4 million — made up of a plurality of Muslims — fled their homes³⁰. Residents came very close to complete starvation, and their only chance for survival weighed in the balance on the success of UN airlifts from the Sarajevo airport that was opened in late June of 1992 through what was letter called “the tunnel of Hope”. The Bosnian government defence forces inside the besieged city were poorly equipped and unable to break the siege. Without resources and in an evident asymmetry, the Bosniak forces and Sarajevan civilians of all ethnicities heroically resisted inside the besieged city.

Aside from the economic and political structures that were destroyed, the besieger targeted numerous cultural sites. Thus, places such as the Gazi Husrev-beg's Mosque, Cathedral of Jesus' Heart, and the Jewish cemetery were damaged, while places like the old City Hall and the Olympic museum were completely destroyed. An event that defined the cultural objectives of the besiegers occurred during the night of August 25, 1992, the intentional shelling and utter destruction with incendiary shells of the Bosnian National and University Library, the central repository of Bosnian written culture, and a major cultural

²⁶ Donia, 282.

²⁷ Ivana Macek, *Sarajevo under Siege. Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁹ United Nations Multimedia, April 2014, accessed January 07, 2015, <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2012/04/siege-of-sarajevo-remembered/>.

³⁰ Macek, 96.

centre of whole Balkan region. Among the losses were about 700 manuscripts and a unique collection of Bosnian serial publications, some from the middle of the 19th century Bosnian cultural revival. Another horrific event occurred on August 28, 1995, when the Markale Market, the central marketplace in Sarajevo was shelled. This event came to be known as the ‘Markale massacre’ where 68 people were killed and over 100 wounded. It is considered that this massacre triggered external intervention that in the end led to the end of the conflict, alongside with the fall of UN safe area’s Srebrenica and Zepa in the Eastern part of the country. After these events in the summer of 1995 the international community decided to engage in a decisive effort to put an end to the atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO air strikes began on August 30 and were directed against Bosnian Serb positions surrounding Sarajevo. Four months after the US brokered Dayton Accords which ended the war, the Bosnian government declared the siege officially over on February 29, 1996.

The post-conflict reconstruction era

After the war the whole country BiH was reorganised according to the ‘Inter-Entity Boundary Line’ (IEBL) as established by the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). Sarajevo thus became the capital of the country BiH but also the capital of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) representing one of the two entities that form BiH, comprising a majority of Bosniaks and Croats. The DPA had an ambivalent impact on Sarajevo as it first has ended the war in BiH, but it also administratively divided the country and Sarajevo in two parts. One of the two parts of Sarajevo now has the official name of ‘East Sarajevo’ (*Istočno Sarajevo*). The IEBL separates the country in two and bisects the city’s differences and as such many argue that the DPA only ended the war but did not resolve the ethnic conflict. The DPA not only partitioned the territory of the country, but the people in BiH and its capital city have also been divided into three ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs that offered them access to power in a complex power sharing mechanism. In September 1997 the assembly of Sarajevo Canton adopted a new constitution for the city which ensured the multi-ethnic composition of the city³¹. The Sarajevo metropolitan area, including Sarajevo, East Sarajevo and surrounding municipalities, is for the moment home to 688,354 inhabitants³². The new constitution stated that the city of Sarajevo is comprised of four municipalities: Stari Grad, Centar, Novi Grad and Novo Sarajevo. Each of these municipalities is to send seven representatives to the city council and the seats were to be allocated by ethnic key, ensuring a balanced representation of Bosniacs and Croats as constituent peoples of FBiH as well as ‘others’³³. The executive branch (*Gradska Uprava*) consists of a mayor, with two deputies and a cabinet. The legislative branch consists of the City Council (*Gradsko Vijeće*). The council has 28 members. Councillors are elected by the municipality in numbers roughly proportional to their population. Sarajevo's Municipalities are further split into “local communities” (*Mjesne zajednice*). Local communities have a small role in city government and are intended as a way for ordinary citizens to get involved in city government. Sarajevo also became the political centre of BiH. It is home to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and

³¹ Andrea Teftedarija, *Who Killed Sarajevo Spirit? Structure, Agency, Nationalism and the Case of Sarajevo* (unpublished MA Thesis) (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, July 2007), 65, accessed March 09, 2015, <http://dare.uva.nl/cgi/arno/show.cgi?fid=54063>.

³² World Population Review, July 2015, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina-population/>.

³³ Donia, 341.

Herzegovina and the operational command of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In previous research we have shown the ambivalent role of the European Union in stabilising and helping the state-building process in Bosnia.³⁴

Table 1. *The main stages of Sarajevo's history.*

| The main stages | The period of time | The main characteristics |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Sarajevo in the Ottoman Empire | 1461-1878 | -the city became known as one of the biggest and most important Ottoman city in the Balkans, after Istanbul itself. - it was an important market on the East–West trading routes -numerous mosques were built and Ottoman cultural sites, as many Slavs in the region converted to Islam |
| 2. Sarajevo in Austria-Hungary | 1878–1918 | -massive modernisation and urbanisation in a more European style -shift to the Latin script - in 1914 the Austro-Hungarian archduke and his wife were assassinated during their visit to Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip and this triggered the beginning of the World War I. |
| 3. Sarajevo in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes | 1918-1945 | - lost its importance as a major urban hub of the region. - in 1929 renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia - in 1941 the Nazi Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Sarajevo was bombarded. |
| 4. Sarajevo in the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia | 1946-1992 | - it became an important regional industrial centre in socialist Yugoslavia. -many modern communist-city blocks were built in the Western part of the old city - it hosted the 14th Winter Olympic Games in 1984, an event which brought many tourists to Sarajevo and international attention |
| 5. Sarajevo during the Bosnian war (Siege) | 1992-1996 | -in April 1992 the city was besieged by armed Serbian paramilitary -in more than 3 years of terror, thousands of Sarajevans were murdered, wounded or forced to flee their homes. |
| 6. Sarajevo in the post-conflict reconstruction era | 1996-2015 | -massive humanitarian aid for reconstruction -lots of buildings remained with their scars from the bullet holes visible -international cultural events tries to put the city back on the tourist map of Europe (like Sarajevo Film Festival) |

Source: *compiled by the author.*

In terms of its architecture, the reconstruction of Sarajevo started as soon as the war ended, in 1996. During the siege, nearly every building in the city was damaged, but mainly,

³⁴ Jordan Bărbulescu and Miruna Troncotă, “EU’s “Laboratory” in the Western Balkans. Experimenting Europeanization without Democratization. The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 31 (Marzo 2013): 63-99; Jordan Bărbulescu and Miruna Troncotă, “The Ambivalent Role of the EU in the Western Balkans - “Limited Europeanisation” between Formal Promises and Practical Constraints. The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 12, 1 (March 2012): 5-26.

as previously mentioned, the cultural monuments and religious sites. As such the next several years after the siege were a period of heavy reconstruction. By 2003 most of the city was rebuilt, with only a few remaining visible ruins in the city centre. Various new modern buildings and skyscrapers have been built, most significantly the Bosmal City Centre, the BBI Centre and the Avaz Twist Tower, which is the tallest skyscraper in the Balkans. A new highway was completed in the late 2000s between Sarajevo and the city of Kakanj. Due to growth in population, tourism and airport traffic the service sector in the city is developing fast and welcoming new investors from various businesses. The business enclave Sarajevo City Centre is one of the largest and most modern shopping and business centres in the region. It was completed in early 2014.

Since 2000, massive international missions were sent to Sarajevo with the aim to coordinate the country's social, economic and political recovery. Hosting numerous international and regional organisations today Sarajevo is still very much a meeting place for different cultures. Even though its population decreased massively after the war, the city preserved its vivid atmosphere with specific coffee shops (*kafanas*) and cultural delights. International cultural events tried to put the city back on the tourist map of Europe (like Sarajevo Film Festival, which celebrated in 2014 its 20th edition).

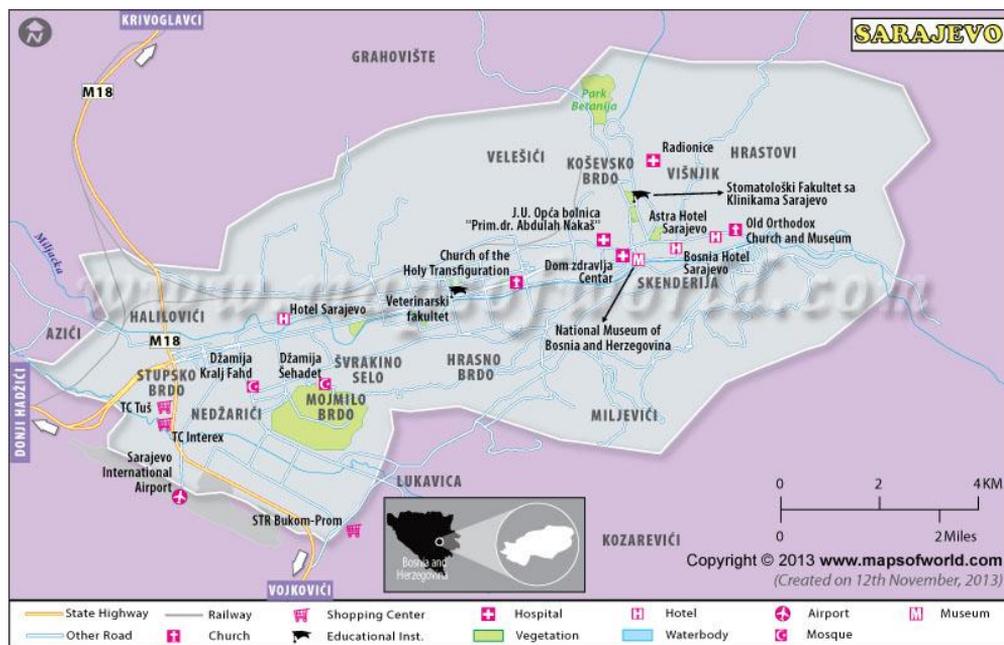
In order to sum up, each historic period and each external ruler left its mark on both people and buildings of Sarajevo. After the siege the city of Sarajevo has tried to recover, facing the devastating impact of the war. Lots of buildings remained with their scars from the bullet holes visible, making the siege a living memory for the younger generations of Sarajevans. But there are signs of hope that commemorating the 20th anniversary of the end of the war will revive international attention towards the city and stimulate efforts to build a more inclusive society.

Map 1. *The map of Sarajevo and the main locations of the Siege.*



Source: Combat Studies Institute, "Sarajevo Survival Map," accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2002/MOUTKingpix.htm>.

Map 2 – The city of Sarajevo and its main touristic attractions in 2013.



Source: “Sarajevo Map,” accessed March 07, 2015, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/bosnia/sarajevo.html>.

Sarajevo - the city divided by invisible borders

"Ovdje niko nije normalan" (t. Nobody here is normal").

(a graffiti on a wall in Sarajevo, dating from 1995, in Ivana Macek, *Sarajevo under Siege. Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 34)

After this historical overview, the next part aims to analyse the way Sarajevo's political identity changed, along with its ethno-national and confessional composition, foundations and dynamics throughout the last century. Also, this section focuses on the current situation of Sarajevo from the perspective of promoting multi-ethnic tolerance, on reconciliation and rebuilding trust in what remained still a deeply divided society. It analyses the political importance of Sarajevo in the last century and aims at outlining the characteristics of the main approaches to the analysis of Sarajevo as a sort of “Balkan melting pot”.

Every city changes over time, but the fascination of scholars of various specialities for the intriguing identity shifts that took place in the particular case of Sarajevo continues to remain on the rise. A strong reason for a more profound reflection upon the city's scars and narratives along the centuries is the fact that Sarajevo has always represented a cross roads of civilisations and a city with multiple layers which invite to multiple interpretations. In Sarajevo one can find the former Ottoman centre meeting a Hapsburg built quarter and neighbouring socialist Yugoslavia's big city grandeur. The city provides a mix of old and new, a combination of elements that have been around for thousands of years, and others that have only been recently created. Moreover, part of its uniqueness and heritage of a tolerant past lays in the fact that Sarajevo is the only city in Europe where a Mosque, a

Catholic Church, an Orthodox Church, and a Synagogue are within 100 meters of each other. The main argument of the analysis to be further presented rests on the idea that in the last 20 years that have passed since the end of the siege, Sarajevo remained a city divided by invisible borders. By compiling a series of explanations in the literature and some personal thoughts, the article tries to identify what are the mechanisms that enforce these borders and how do they maintain this ambiguous status of being visible and invisible at the same time.

Any visitor of Sarajevo can easily observe this particular “spirit” of religious coexistence, especially when looking at its visible marks like mosques, Orthodox and Catholic churches and synagogues which are built in close proximity in Sarajevo’s city centre. What was exactly the impact of these violent changes on the century-long perceived cosmopolitan character of the city and is the Spirit of Sarajevo completely lost? These are open questions that still invite to in-depth reflection. In their attempt to answer these questions, many authors concluded that there is a very visible heritage of the past in the present identity of Sarajevo, which remained a city defined by cosmopolitanism, a rare East-West blend, marked by diversity, secularity in combination with respect for religious communities, a special brand of humour and sarcasm, pluralism and open-mindedness, a typical coffee culture, ‘at ease’-mentality, survival, tolerance etc.³⁵ In contrast, other authors advanced the thesis that Sarajevo has changed from a non-nationalist, multi-ethnic, tolerant city that developed this identity in almost five centuries of modern history to an almost ethnically homogeneous and nationalistic place as a result of the Bosnian war.³⁶ A blend of these two perspectives will be further presented in the analysis of the impact of the war on the Sarajevo's identity.

The shift in ethno-national and confessional composition

As already mentioned, Sarajevo is not only associated with the siege, but also with its traditional cultural and religious diversity, with adherents of Islam, Orthodoxy, Judaism and Catholicism coexisting there for centuries. Due to its long and rich history of religious and cultural variety, Sarajevo was sometimes called the “Jerusalem of Europe” or “Jerusalem of the Balkans”. In this sense, there are authors who criticize the overwhelming presence of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and the significantly smaller numbers of Croats and Serbs inhabiting Sarajevo compared to the city’s pre-war ethnic make-up. Data show that an important consequence of the siege of Sarajevo was the fact that the demographic picture of the city has profoundly changed. In 1991 Sarajevo was a multi-ethnic city of 49 per cent Bosniaks, 30 per cent Serbs and 7 per cent Croats³⁷. The war affected Sarajevo's demography, as it had produced an evident alteration in the ethnic composition of the city. In this sense, Kroeger argued that “Cosmopolitanism was one of the first casualties of the war.”³⁸ Statistical data show that by 1994, half of Sarajevo's 600,000 pre-war residents had left the city. Another 150,000 “displaced persons” had arrived, mostly Muslims from villages and small towns in

³⁵ See for example in Fran Markowitz, *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Sarajevo Essays* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003); Steve Sachs, “Sarajevo: A Crossroads in History,” 1994, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.stevesachs.com/papers/paper_sarajevo.html; Cornelia Sorabji, “Managing Memories in Post-War Sarajevo: Individuals, Bad Memories, and New Wars,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, 1 (2006): 1-18.

³⁶ Teftedarja, 56.

³⁷ World Heritage Encyclopedia, “Census in Bosnia and Heregovina,” 1991, accessed February 12, 2015, http://community.worldheritage.org/articles/1991_population_census_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.

³⁸ Alexandra Kroeger, “Sarajevo’s Decade of War and Peace,” *BBC*, 9 April 2002, accessed March 07, 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1918998.stm>.

eastern Bosnia. So the population of Sarajevo in 1994 was 450,000, two-thirds of whom were pre-war Sarajevans, and one third of whom were newcomers. Moreover, a lot of Serb Sarajevans left in 1996 as well after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) in which Sarajevo was assigned to the Bosniac-Croat Federation³⁹. As such, the perceived loss of the cosmopolitan character of the city is frequently assigned to the fact that “much of the urban, native population of Sarajevo has left the city and has been replaced by refugees from more rural parts of the country who have different and more traditional values.”⁴⁰ As a consequence, the ethnic composition of the city has changed, which has resulted in a shift from a multi-ethnic city to an almost exclusively Bosniac (Muslim) one. Some authors went even further with their argument, and advanced the hypothesis of a Muslim reconstruction of Sarajevo which hinders its multi-ethnicity⁴¹. As such they focused on the actions that are reinforcing the identity of Sarajevo as a “Muslim city.”

Milorad Dodik the Prime Minister of RS made many statements accusing Sarajevo for its “Islamisation” - ‘Sarajevo is Teheran; I will only support Bosnia if it plays against Turkey’⁴².

Beyond these political statements, there is a need to have a closer look on this matter. Muslims in Sarajevo and across Bosnia have many reasons for becoming much closer to Islam than they had been historically in the last centuries. After the First World War, the creation of Yugoslavia was largely dominated by the Serb influence while Croat politicians called for a more federally based state structure to even their power. In the struggle for political capacity and recognition, the exclusion of the Muslim population was yet again reasserted and made pointedly evident by the first name given to the new Yugoslavia: the ‘Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes’⁴³. The result was a further weakening of the potential for Muslim Bosnians to become a constituent part of the nationalist project.

The 2013 national census – the first one carried out after the cessation of the conflict – reveals an ongoing attempt to make society legible by reading it through a lens of ethnic division. Although official authorities assure that an ‘open determination’ model has prevailed in the census⁴⁴, the ethnicity, faith and language of BiH citizens have been restricted according to Bosniak, Croat, or Serb delineations. “In the capital city of Sarajevo the geographies of division are actively engrained into the already complex map of memory in the city”⁴⁵. Ethnic cleavages are evident in Sarajevo as well Sarajevans, under communism largely secularised, nowadays keep re-emphasising their religions. Money is invested in building new mosques, churches and religious centres. One of the largest mosques in the Balkan region is built in one of the Sarajevo suburbs and was a gift of Saudi Arabia to Muslims in BiH⁴⁶.

³⁹ Scott. A. Bollens, *Cities, Nationalism, and Democratization* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 171.

⁴⁰ Teftedarija, 40.

⁴¹ Nenad Pejić, “The Suicide Of Multiethnic Sarajevo?,” *Radio Free Europe*, 25 April 2010, accessed March 02, 2015, http://www.rferl.org/content/The_Suicide_Of_Multiethnic_Sarajevo/2023847.html.

⁴² Nicholas Wood, “Fiery Campaign Imperils Bosnia's Progress,” *New York Times*, 27 August 2006, accessed February 23, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/27/world/europe/27bosnia.html?_r=0.

⁴³ Robinson et al., 975.

⁴⁴ Valery Perry, “The 2013 Census in Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Basic Review,” *DPC Policy notes Series 3* (October 2013), accessed March 11, 2015, <http://democratizationpolicy.org/uimages/pdf/dpcpolicynotebihnewseries3bihcensus.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Kotzen and Garcia, 7.

⁴⁶ According to “King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo - Bosnia and Herzegovina,” accessed March 07, 2015, <http://www.beautifulmosque.com/king-fahd-mosque-in-sarajevo-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

There are a series of factors that determined this situation. The vast majority of Serbs and Croats fled or were expelled in the early days of the siege or at the end of the war. The Serbs who left Sarajevo to live in Republika Srpska mostly did so in 1996 when the core of the city was assigned to FBiH. Teftedarija argues that large numbers of refugees from all parts of BiH fled to Sarajevo and moved into empty apartments of Serbs who have left the city⁴⁷. Thus the abandonment of the city by Serbs and Croats and the large influx of deported Bosniaks did indeed change the ethnic makeup of the city. Nevertheless, we need to underline the fact that the question of multi-ethnicity can be posed to any town in the Serb-administered part of Bosnia (the “Serb Republic”) whose Bosniak population has been decimated through ethnic cleansing. Banja Luka, Zvornik, Visegrad, Foca and Trebinje are just a few towns that had significant if not predominant Bosniak populations before the war, yet today they are ethnically homogeneous Serb towns.

IEBL - Sarajevo's invisible border

The city of Sarajevo most prominently sketches the fragmented geography of Bosnia’s divisive reality. As already mentioned, the DPA marked the end of military violence but it also divided BiH into two constituencies, separated by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). Sarajevo’s territory sits on both constituencies and is being divided by the IEBL. As a consequence, the Eastern part of Sarajevo is in the RS, whereas the other part is in FBiH. The main argument to be developed further on is that Sarajevo governance structure has maintained and institutionalised the ethnic divisions and political differences in the city’s reality. Anthropologist Stef Jansen’s ethnographic work on the IEBL in the neighbourhood of Dobrinja in Sarajevo illustrates these particular effects of memories held by different ethnic identities at the geographic fractures produced by the DPA. He mainly shows that the IEBL provided for the last two decades the main socio-spatial configuration of Sarajevo and it was determined by its governance structures and policies. The city became “a commemorative landscape composed of borders that provide spatial and temporal co-ordinates for remembering”⁴⁸. In other terms Sarajevo is divided by “invisible borders”, as Jansen asserts, there are “no fences, barriers, ‘welcome’ signs or uniformed officers, yet [there is] a deeply contested polity border, invested with considerable sovereignty claims, governmental logistics and affect”⁴⁹. The Dobrinja neighbourhood is a purposefully produced Serb canton, a place where the process of “persistent segregation” of Sarajevo takes place⁵⁰.

The rigidity of ethnic cleavages has been institutionalised by the Dayton political system of power sharing and ethnic representation public service is an example. One can for example only become a member of the Presidency if one declares to be a Bosniac, Croat or Serb. This causes big problems for many citizens who are non-BC-S citizens, from a mixed marriage, or ones who simply do not feel affiliated with each of the three categories and who refuse to be labelled as ‘Others’ in their own country⁵¹. The same changes can be observed

⁴⁷ Teftedarija, 98.

⁴⁸ Kotzen and Garcia, 9.

⁴⁹ Stef Jansen, “People and Things in the Ethnography of Borders: Materialising the Division of Sarajevo,” *Social Anthropology* 21, 1 (2013): 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵¹ In December 2009 the Grand Chamber of the ECHR issued a decision in the case of Sejdić and Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina. The judgement stipulated that the 2001 Election Act provisions in BiH Constitution was found to have been violating the ECHR. In other words, it functioned an imperative of ensuring equality and the full enjoyment of human rights in political and public life. In what was defined as “ground-breaking case” for international law practitioners,

also in the western part of Mostar (which is almost exclusively Croat) and in Banja Luka, the capital of the Serb parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina which has predominantly Serb inhabitants. Post war cities are confronted with a difficult choice for their reconstruction and in coming to terms with their past – the choice between hybrid identities or ethno-nationalist identities. Anthropologists have lately focused on people's experiences of the war-torn Sarajevo and how identity was dissolved and reconstructed in various domains of Sarajevoan life: material, psychological, social, ideological, and moral, and on the forces that were disrupting their lives and points to the contradictions that occurred in this process. In this context, special attention was given to the mobilisation of religion by ethno-nationalistic ideology and its increased importance in everyday life in Sarajevo.

Recent analyses show that Sarajevo is an illustrative case that shows how nationalism influences urban landscapes. Gruița Bădescu's research focuses on how architects and planners have addressed issues of coming to terms with the past in urban reconstruction in three contexts, differentiated by the perceived nature of war and political responsibility. All various forms of divisions and transformations in post-war Sarajevo raise the issue of the moral philosophy of 'coming to terms with the past, based on the idea that re-shaping places are determined by re-shaping memory: post-war reconstruction in Sarajevo. The case of Sarajevo's reconstruction illustrates the case of a sort of "unfinished war" with the main countries still struggling for transitional justice. The former Bosnian Serb army commander, Ratko Mladić was taken to Hague and prosecuted in 2011, and for the moment he is charged with terrorising the people of Sarajevo with a shelling and sniping campaign. He is also charged with genocide, persecution of non-Serbs and with taking UN peacekeepers hostage. The trial has brought intriguing results, being marked by denial and negation of war crimes⁵². Radovan Karadžić, the leader of Republika Srpska, is also on trial in a separate case for the same crimes. An observation to make in this context is that Sarajevo's reconstruction is obstructed by its lack of reconciliation, as the blame for the war is placed externally and reconstruction reasserts the idea of an exclusivist 'nation'. His work examines how different perceptions of conflict and responsibility influence architectural design and planning and can contribute to the understanding of urban post-war reconstruction. From this perspective, Bosnia's experience, compressed only in the evolution of its capital city Sarajevo suggests that ethno-federalism freezes existing ethnic divisions and promotes corruption, which stymies economic growth. Even if there existed no feasible alternative to Dayton in 1995, the system should have been designed to incentivize reform by including lower thresholds for decision-making and by linking aid to reform. Today the Dayton system has become engrained and Bosnia has become a cautionary tale demonstrating the pitfalls of overambitious, externally driven nation-building"⁵³. The city's eclectic lifestyle is reflected in the mixture of oriental and modern Western architecture alongside more local efforts of modern architecture, such as luxury hotels and shopping malls resembling those in the Western world. The city is rapidly improving its tourist ratings and building new attractions for the outside world. Although

Jakob Finci, who is Jewish, and Dervo Sejdić, of Roma ethnicity, successfully argued that Bosnia's constitution (DPA) is discriminatory in preventing them from running for the presidency or the upper house of the parliament.

⁵² The most recent testimony in the trial is a negation of the siege of Sarajevo at all. "Witness Claims Sarajevo Was Divided not under Siege," *Balkan Insight*, 17 July 2015, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/witness-claims-sarajevo-was-divided-not-under-siege>.

⁵³ Michael F. Harsch and Tyler Y. Headley, "Life after Genocide. Comparing Bosnia and Rwanda," *Foreign Affairs*, 2 July 2015, accessed July 02, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/rwanda/2015-07-02/life-after-genocide?cid=soc-fb-rdr>.

Sarajevo is now considered one of the fastest developing cities in the region, there is another side to the story. These grandiose modern buildings have been built on the grounds of war by war profiteers and nationalist politicians, often at the expense of regular citizens. Gruia Bădescu has studied in particular the process of '*coming to terms with this past*' in urban reconstruction. From this perspective, Sarajevo is like a puzzle formed by very distinct parts, within a juxtaposition of sacred objects, mosques, synagogues, Orthodox and Catholic churches. Furthermore, the city defies stereotypical characterisations of either a haven of multiculturalism or a Balkanising setting of perpetual antagonisms, of rural-urban clean cut cleavages⁵⁴. In this context Bădescu also underlines the fact that Sarajevo soon became a heaven for “ruin fetishists” and draws attention to the danger of trivialisation of the ruins. Sarajevo is characterised by many buildings which have not been restored yet, marked by cavities caused by mortar strikes everywhere in the city. Moreover, huge cemeteries throughout the city are a constant reminder of the war casualties⁵⁵.

Bronwyn Kotzen and Sofia Garcia focus on the process of memory management in post-conflict Sarajevo and they show that Sarajevo persists as a divided body along geographic and administrative ‘lines of memory’. Moreover, they stress that recognising a multiplicity of identities is of critical concern in the process of reconciliation between historically conflicting groups⁵⁶. This reminds us that Sarajevo's own urban, cultural and geopolitical formation draws from fragmented histories: from the Ottoman core and Habsburg centre to socialist and post-socialist extensions. Their core argument suggests that the way in which the territories of both the country of BiH and city of Sarajevo are currently governed –since the cessation of the war in 1995 - memorialises and perpetuates the very divisions that initially catalysed the nation to war in the first place⁵⁷.

This section aimed at showing that Sarajevo’s ethnic composition changed during the course of the war; however, more attention should to be given to the causes and not merely to the end results of the new ethnic composition. In conclusion, Sarajevo, once praised for its peaceful coexistence of various religions and peoples, has been affected by the siege at many levels in terms of its urban constructions, its ethnic and confessional compositional and its multi-faceted identity.

Conclusions: how to fix a “cracked” melting pot?

This last section aims at drawing a series of conclusions focusing on the heritage of the past in the present identity of the city’s population, its impact on the everyday life and culture and Sarajevo's special status of borderland between the Western Balkans and the EU. The overall aim of the analysis was to reveal the shift in Sarajevo’s identity from a Multicultural Past, an Ethnic War and a European Future.

⁵⁴ Gruia Bădescu, “City Makers, Urban Reconstruction and Coming to Terms with the Past in Sarajevo,” in *Reconstructing Sarajevo Report*, ed. Bronwyn Kotzen and Sofia Garcia (City Studio, London School of Economics & Political Science, Department of Sociology, July 2014), 15-21, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/LSECities/citiesProgramme/pdf/Reconstructing-Sarajevo.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Bronwyn Kotzen and Sofia Garcia, “Politics of Memory and Division in Post-Conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sarajevo,” in *Reconstructing Sarajevo Report*, ed. Bronwyn Kotzen and Sofia Garcia (City Studio, London School of Economics & Political Science, Department of Sociology, July 2014), accessed March 21, 2015, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsee/2014/11/26/lse-cities-reconstructing-sarajevo-report/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

The article relied on the idea that any reconstruction needs to engage with the past. At its conception by the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, Sarajevo was the biggest and the most developed city in the region. However, soon enough, the city's precarious position between the East and the West took its toll in the form of numerous wars, culminating in the Bosnian War for Independence. The historic overview showed that Sarajevo has long been a rich melting pot of Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish culture. This multicultural essence existed in what was always a province of some larger polity, whether Ottoman, Hapsburg, or Belgrade-centred Yugoslav. The first section showed that three historic events placed Sarajevo in the history books, marking the beginning and the end of a century of European horrors: the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the start of World War I, the winter Olympic games of 1984 (the only positive event in the recent history of the city), and the shelling of the city in the ethnic conflict of the Yugoslav war. This devastating war gave Sarajevo the unwanted record for the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. Ethnic violence had a deep impact on the city and the everyday lives of the Sarajevans. But the war transformed coexistence into division as a result of a form of nationalism which was never part of Sarajevo's heritage. The city offers to foreigners a post-traumatic landscape in its attempt of recovering its lost multicultural identity. Based on these facts and personal perceptions, the main aim of this article was to analyse the historic evolution of the city of Sarajevo as a border city between East and West and a melting pot of civilisations.

Next, the analysis showed that the war left a strong imprint on the city's identity. The territorial borders created by the Dayton Peace Accords have also created a series of symbolic/ invisible borders that bisect Sarajevo, making it hostage to its conflicted past. The article argued that in political and symbolic terms, Sarajevo is virtually a partitioned city: the IEBL, dividing the Muslim-Croat Federation from the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska, runs through the Sarajevo suburbs. Above all that, bullet holes and ruins became part of the city's identity. Nevertheless the recent development on the path of EU integration made Sarajevo a city patterned not only by disjunctures and divisions, but as well as the possibilities of recovery and opening new forms of cooperation and solidarity.

The present article focused on the mechanisms which have caused the shift in Sarajevo's identity. The article tried to look back at Sarajevo asking what has become of *Sarajevanness* today. 20 years after the siege, Sarajevo is still a city divided by invisible borders, in search of its lost multi-ethnic identity. The article has shown that Sarajevo is an illustrative case for how political borders have been symbolically reconstructed on ethnic lines in the Balkans for the last five centuries. This multiple layering of spaces and people makes Sarajevo a fascinating city to study the challenges posed by war and post-war reconstruction. As such, the article shows that Sarajevo is more than a border city. It is a symbol which bears testament in its urban structure of a wide array of shifting socio-political spaces, to be found also in the three major scripts to be found in the public space of Sarajevo: Latin, Cyrillic, and Arabic. The challenge at hand remains how best to stitch a post-conflict society together, to weave its fragmented collection of urban territories into a singular unified state and city while recognising its rich social heterogeneity. The analysis also tried to show that it is not only Sarajevo's architecture and the city's history which amazes outsiders, but also its struggle to overcome the devastation of war and build bridges toward the future. The challenging part would be for the city to build a European future respecting its multi-cultural past. In the end the conclusions are mixed - if Sarajevo remains as a symbol of a "cracked" melting pot, than Sarajevans themselves need to find ways in which to find their equilibrium.

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