

Power-sharing in Post-war Divided Societies: The Failure of Consociationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

After three years of conflict, the end of the Bosnian War in 1995 saw the creation of a deeply divided country. Bosnia's multi-ethnic society was united under the Dayton Accords, a frail peace agreement which devised a political system based on the principle of consociation, the cooperation of different and antagonistic social groups on the basis of shared power. As this paper will illustrate, this agreement has failed to create a peaceful and stable country, as it not only failed to address grievances but reinforced them through an imposed segregationist system. Moreover, this system has repeatedly compromised political efficiency and transparency, and has proven vulnerable to international influence, further destabilising the country. The case of post-war BiH illustrates the pitfalls of implementing the consociational power-sharing model in deeply divided societies, where it is unlikely to succeed in creating a lasting, stable peace.

Keywords: civil war, ethnic conflict, post-war peace building, consociationalism, power-sharing, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Introduction

Previously a relatively obscure part of the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was catapulted into the international headlines in 1992 when war broke out between the three main ethnic groups composing its population: Bosnian Muslims (45%), Bosnian Serbs (35%), and Bosnian Croats (18%).¹ The breakup of Yugoslavia left behind an overwhelming preference for ethnonational categories of identity in the region, and the three pre-war political parties, the (Muslim) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union-BiH (HDZ-BiH), became in 1992 leaders of three respective armies with distinct visions for the future of the country.²

After three and a half years of war marked by ethnic cleansing, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aerial attacks on Bosnian Serb military targets brought the three warring parties to the negotiating table in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. There was no victor, no wilful stalemate, only international pressure for a peace agreement to be reached.³ The international community wanted to avoid separation, as they could not turn around their

¹ Sumantra Bose, "Bosnia", in *Contested lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 107.

² *Ibid*, 123.

³ Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff. "Bosnia and Herzegovina ten years after Dayton: Lessons for internationalized state building." *Ethnopolitics* 5, no. 1 (2006): 1-3.

recognition of Bosnia as a state.⁴ Since force was ruled out, accommodation seemed the only reasonable option.

Under the Dayton Agreement, the country was structured as a consociational confederation, a system shaped by the cooperation of different and antagonistic social groups on the basis of shared power. Powers of self-rule were given to three “constituent units” divided into two entities based on ethnonational boundaries: the Republika Srpska (RS, 49% of territory) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH, 51% of territory).⁵ At all levels of government, proportional representation was ensured through the allocation of public offices on the basis of ethnonational identity.⁶ A three-member Bosnian presidency was created, formed by one member of each of the three communities elected from their respective entity. This ensured mandatory grand coalition governments at both state and entity level, where ethnonational caucuses were also given the right to invoke a “vital interest veto” on what they deemed detrimental legislation.⁷

These post-war arrangements were inspired by Arend Lijphart’s consociational theory, which ensures accommodation through the implementation of a system based on four basic rules: ethnoterritorial autonomy, proportional representation, a guaranteed grand coalition government, and mutual veto rights.⁸ Irish scholars John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary built on Lijphart’s theory by distinguishing between two types of consociational society, based on either corporate or liberal arrangements. While corporate consociationalism is static, ensuring guaranteed representation in a grand coalition and allocation of resources on the basis of pre-determined identities, liberal consociationalism allocates power according to self-determined, variable and democratically legitimised identity groups.⁹ According to this distinction, the case of BiH represents corporate consociationalism, as representation is guaranteed in the grand coalition to members of the three main, pre-determined ethnic groups, excluding those who do not identify as part of any of these communities.

This paper will go through several issues in BiH’s post-war society that were unresolved, if not perpetuated, by the adoption of corporate consociationalism as a power-sharing model. While BiH does not benefit from Lijphart’s six identified favourable factors for the success of this system – multiple balance of power, small size of the country involved, overarching loyalties, segmental isolation, prior traditions of elite accommodation, and the presence of cross-cutting cleavages –,¹⁰ this is an important case that shows that the reality on the ground in deeply divided societies is more complex than Lijphart’s model. First, the paper will address the lack of political will to collaborate in BiH, which consociationalism was unable to overcome, noting how unresolved grievances have made the peace deeply unstable. Secondly, the paper will address corporate consociationalism’s segregationist nature, which in BiH has contributed to the perpetuation of ethnonational boundaries through the empowerment of its elites. Thirdly, it will analyse the difficulties of reforming the system and carrying out day-to-day politics in BiH – what Donald Horowitz defines as the ‘immobilism problem’ of consociationalism. As a final issue, the paper will examine the impact of external pressures on

⁴ Bose, “Bosnia”, 129.

⁵ Bose, “Bosnia”, 132.

⁶ Weller and Wolff, “Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years after Dayton”, 4.

⁷ Bose, “Bosnia”, 134.

⁸ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. (London: Yale University Press, 1977), 25.

⁹ John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, “Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland’s Conflict, and its Agreement. Part 2. What Critics of Consociation Can Learn from Northern Ireland.” *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 273.

¹⁰ Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, 54.

BiH, demonstrating how vulnerable consociationalism can be to both hostile and benign international influence.

This analysis concludes that the case of BiH challenges the corporate consociational power-sharing model due to the failure of the system to create a reconciled, peaceful, and stable society. The conflict in BiH is one of the most complex cases in which consociationalism has been applied as a solution and, as such, it is an important case for understanding the limitations and potential failures of power-sharing agreements based on this model. Moreover, BiH continues to suffer from instability that can only be explained by fully understanding the shortcomings of its political system, still shaped by the same ethnonational boundaries that split the country in 1992.

The Adoption Problem: Imposition and Lack of Political Will

Bosnia's troubled history of corporate consociationalism begins with its adoption, in the drafting of the Dayton Accords in 1995. Lacking a victor, the settlement denied all parties what they had fought for over three years of war, resulting in a widespread feeling of imposition of the agreement by the international community. The three main groups were pressed to negotiate until an agreement had been reached, and two of the fighting communities, the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, were not even direct parties to the negotiations, represented instead by the leaders of Croatia and Serbia, Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic. The agreement itself reflected significant input from international negotiators, as did the Bosnian Constitution. The lack of domestic legitimacy caused widespread scepticism of the settlement.¹¹

However, the external imposition of the agreement was arguably necessary because of what Donald Horowitz, well-known for his critiques of consociationalism, describes as the 'adoption problem' of this power-sharing system. Consociational agreements are difficult to reach in deeply divided post-war societies because conflicting communities often have no desire to collaborate, and majorities or relatively stronger communities will likely accept a regime of minority guarantees only when they are weak.¹² In BiH, several attempts by the international community to end hostilities, such as the Vance-Owen Plan of 1993, were rejected by parties who believed the continuation of violence was a better alternative. It was only when the Bosnian Serbs, who had been the strongest party for most of the conflict, faced a military crisis triggered by NATO attacks that they agreed to start negotiations in 1995.¹³

This adoption problem also affects the chances of maintaining a lasting peace, as a settlement imposed on any party translates into a long-term lack of political will to collaborate. Accommodation is unlikely when groups believe that victory is achievable at an acceptable cost.¹⁴ The imposed nature of the agreement in BiH meant that grievances were never fully addressed and have not disappeared. In 1997, 91% of Bosnian Serbs and 84% of Bosnian Croats continued to oppose the legitimacy of BiH's status as a sovereign state.¹⁵ Furthermore, as noted by Michael Kerr, in times of crisis, major disagreements between parties over a single

¹¹ Weller and Wolff, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years after Dayton", 1.

¹² Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic power-sharing: Three big problems." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 2 (April 2014): 8.

¹³ Bose, "Bosnia", 128-130.

¹⁴ Brian Barry, "The Consociational Model and its Dangers." *European Journal of Political Research* 3 (1975): 411.

¹⁵ Bose, "Bosnia", 126.

issue has the potential to shatter the pact.¹⁶ In October 2018, after inconclusive general elections, disagreements over BiH's potential NATO membership left the country without a government for fourteen months.¹⁷ Serb leader Milorad Dodik, part of the (Bosnian Serb) Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, opposed the country's eventual NATO membership and took advantage of this issue to steadily move the Republika Srpska 'from autonomy toward sovereignty', raising 'the prospect of separation and unification with Serbia'.¹⁸ Following numerous threats of secession, Dodik 'threatened to torpedo a number of state-wide reforms...while questioning other competencies transferred from the two entities to state-level'.¹⁹ Where dissatisfaction with the agreement persists, any single issue may be used to further claims of secession.

The case of BiH demonstrates how consociationalism can be unsuccessful in creating a stable, peacefully coexisting society in divided post-war states where there is no political will to collaborate, and how dissatisfaction with an imposed agreement can later lead to increased claims of secession.

The Segregation Problem: Perpetuation of Cleavages and Empowerment of Elites

The consociational model established by the Dayton Accords also shows how grievances can systematically persist from the structure of the agreement itself. By legitimising and institutionalising segmental parties, corporate consociationalism is inherently segregationist, which can perpetuate ethnonational boundaries rather than disseminate them. Segregationism is a core principle of corporate consociational theory. Lijphart proposes overlapping, cross-cutting cleavages as a factor conducive to successful cooperation under a consociational system.²⁰ Where cleavages reinforce each other, however, he openly admits that it may be desirable to keep transactions among antagonistic subcultures in a divided society to a minimum, as 'Good fences make good neighbours'.²¹ As such, in BiH, where cleavages reinforce each other rather than crosscut, the Dayton Accords and the Bosnian Constitution designated clear powers of self-rule to three 'constituent peoples' reflected in institutions at the state, entity and canton level.²²

While Lijphart's argument is compelling, especially in the case of societies consumed by war, it does not offer a strong enough basis for making segregation a long-term solution to ethnonational conflict. It seems contradictory to promote segregation as part of a system which, in theory, aims to avoid partition and unite several ethnonational communities under a single state. As a questionable middle ground between partition and proper accommodation, this arrangement can exacerbate divisions in the long-term. In the case of post-war BiH, the segregationist nature of consociationalism has created three major problems. First, political segregation through consociationalism legitimises and institutionalises segmental parties, which empowers ethnonational elites and purposefully perpetuates divisions. Lijphart argues that segregation is beneficial because it improves elite-mass relations by creating subcultures that are cohesive political blocs. Elites are more likely to articulate the interests of their bloc,

¹⁶ Michael Kerr. "Sunningdale", in *Imposing Power-Sharing: Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 70.

¹⁷ Anonymous. "Bosnian Parliament Breaks 14-Month Impasse, OKs Government." *Radio Free Europe*, 23 December 2019.

¹⁸ Danijel Kovacevic, "Senate Hearing Blames Dodik for Bosnia's Stalemate." *Balkan Insight*, 24 October 2019.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics* 21, no. 2 (Jan. 1969): 218.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

²² *The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

which makes popular support for them more stable.²³ While this may be true in some contexts, in BiH, this system disincentivises change, as elites see their ethnonationalism rewarded by the system through its institutionalisation and have no incentives to moderate their stance or promote a more integrationist culture.

Today, the three main political parties in BiH remain split across ethnonational lines, reinforcing ethnonationalism in social life, culture and education. The key example of this is BiH's 'two schools under one roof' system, which segregates children of a single school on the basis of ethnicity.²⁴ This arrangement was introduced after the war as a temporary measure to encourage the return of refugees.²⁵ However, lack of political will on the part of the empowered ethnonational elites to encourage integrated education has turned it into a permanent arrangement, despite repeated protests by students themselves.²⁶

A second issue brought about by consociationalism's segregationist nature is that it structurally impedes the creation of political associations which do not identify with any of the main ethnonational groups in the country. A system which guarantees representation to pre-determined parties in order to ensure the people's support for them limits the political choices available in the country, leading to a passive and demobilised population. While justified as stabilising the country, these measures are ultimately undemocratic as they take away the people's right to elect candidates beyond ethnonational boundaries. The voting system of proportional representation (PR), as proposed by Lijphart and adopted in BiH, contributes to this limitation of choices. The PR system attempts to ensure that the ratio of seats includes and represents all ethnic groups, giving elites more power over their party by giving them control over the selection of candidates.²⁷ However, as noted by Benjamin Reilly, 'the surest route to electoral victory under PR is to play the ethnic card', ensuring support from their own ethnic group.²⁸ By strictly reflecting divisions in society, PR does not provide incentives for cross-community voting. In BiH, it rather gave democratic legitimacy to the ethnonationalist parties who had conducted the war, who took advantage of the system right from BiH's first elections in 2002, using the electoral process to further their own agendas.²⁹

Consociationalism in BiH has disincentivised public debate and significant opposition to scrutinise the executive, leading to state capture by elites that 'claim to care about their group but actually enrich themselves in a country where the official unemployment rate is almost at twenty per cent'.³⁰ Corruption is rife, as the political elites in BiH maintain a tight grip over public enterprises: 'You can't even get a job as a policeman, firefighter, or trash picker if you're not in a political party' says Mr Iljazovic, a member of the People and Justice political party that split from the SDA, the party which has dominated Bosnian Muslim politics since the war.³¹ The segregationist system has not succeeded in building a viable economy, and many in BiH emigrate to the European Union (EU) in hopes of finding a better future.³² While some hope to solve this issue by incorporating BiH into the EU, the process to acquire membership

²³ Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy", 221.

²⁴ OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Two Schools under One Roof: The Most Visible Example of Discrimination in Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2018.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Guy Delauney, "Bosnian children fight back against segregation in schools." *BBC News Bosnia*, 2 July 2019.

²⁷ Paul Dixon, "Why the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland is not Consociational." *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2005): 359.

²⁸ Roberto Belloni, "Peacebuilding and consociational electoral engineering in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Peacekeeping* 11, no. 2 (2004): 338.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 334-335.

³⁰ Valerie Hopkins, "Old tensions still alive in Bosnia 25 Years after Dayton." *Financial Times*, 4 January 2021.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Bose, "Bosnia", 151.

has been slowed by a combination of corruption and lack of political will on the part of elites to enforce the 14 points of recommendations proposed by the EU Commission's Opinion on BiH's application for membership, which stresses the need for 'de-politicising and restructuring public enterprises and ensuring transparency of privatisation processes'.³³

Finally, a third issue engendered by segregationism in BiH is that, by creating obstacles to the creation of parties which do not align with ethnonational boundaries, corporate consociationalism actively discriminates against those who do not feel part of any of the protected communities. Politicians are required to identify themselves with a group, and citizens who refuse to do so are prohibited from standing for election to the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Presidency, which are composed only of persons belonging to the three constituent peoples, as established by the Bosnian Constitution.³⁴ In 2009, two Bosnian citizens, of Jewish and Roma ethnicities respectively, complained to the European Court of Human Rights that, 'they were prevented by the Constitution' from standing for election 'solely on the ground of their ethnic origins'.³⁵ In 2005, Ms Azra Zornić also complained of her ineligibility to stand for election because she does not declare affiliation with any of the 'constituent people'.³⁶ Both of these cases were found to violate several articles of the European Convention of Human Rights, including the prohibition of discrimination and the right to free elections.³⁷ The discrimination of 'others' in BiH is recognised as constitutional. The EU Opinion includes this issue as one of its 14 points,³⁸ and, as stated by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR, this problem 'can only be addressed by amending both the Constitution and the Election Law'.³⁹ Thus, discrimination is recognised as a direct result of the Constitutional arrangements brought about by the segregationist nature of consociationalism.

The case of BiH challenges the corporate consociational power-sharing model in that it illustrates the dangers of its segregationist nature, which has limited effectiveness in promoting long-term stability through cooperation. At the time of the peace agreement in 1995, this constitutional framework appeared to many as the only workable model for BiH, as a state based on a common, civic conception of national identity was simply unfeasible. In 2003, only 52% of Bosnian Muslims, 17% of Bosnian Croats and 9% of Bosnian Serbs favoured the agreement.⁴⁰ However, segregation is not a long-term solution, but rather a lid on Pandora's box, vulnerable to breaking at any time. Since the implementation of the Dayton Accords, BiH has suffered from constant tension among groups which could escalate to another ethnic conflict.

The Immobilism Problem: Lack of Change and Political Stalemates

Consociationalism's lack of long-term vision leads to a third identified issue which relates to the structural obstacles to reform the system, described by Horowitz as the

³³ European Union Commission, Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union, SWD(2019) 222. Brussels, Belgium: 29 May 2019, 15.

³⁴ Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³⁵ European Court of Human Rights. *Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*. App nos. 27996/06 and 34836/06. Strasbourg, France: 2009.

³⁶ European Court of Human Rights, *Zornić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* App. no. 3681/06. Strasbourg, France: 2014.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Commission of the European Union, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership, 15

³⁹ Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, Joint Opinion on Amendments to the election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, CDL-AD(2008)012. Council for Democratic Elections, Strasbourg, France: 15 March 2008, 3.

⁴⁰ Bose, "Bosnia", 140.

‘immobilism problem’.⁴¹ Due to the strict nature of corporate consociational arrangements, reforms are incredibly difficult to achieve,⁴² even though structural inadequacies and majority dissatisfaction with the inclusive government and the minority veto often inspire calls to modify the system. Corporate consociationalism, supported by consociationalists as a temporary measure to bring an end to violent ethnic conflict, thus becomes a permanent arrangement that, for the above-mentioned reasons, falls short of a long-term solution to the underlying problems of deeply divided societies.

Moreover, the strict nature of consociational arrangements, together with the veto rights, brings about a different type of immobilism – political stalemates. Day-to-day politics in corporate consociational systems, such as that of BiH, are difficult to implement due to structural constraints. As explained above, disagreements over BiH’s potential NATO membership stopped the country from forming a government for 14 months. This meant that, during 2019, BiH’s state-level parliament did not hold a single session.⁴³ Separately, the city of Mostar had not held elections for 12 years, until December of last year, due to disagreements over electoral rules.⁴⁴ Political stalemates such as these may lead to restlessness which, combined with the difficulties of modifying the system, might present secession as the only way out for disenfranchised groups. As noted above, Bosnian Serb threats of secession intensified during the 2019 stalemate, with Dodik taking advantage of this ‘climate of paralysis’ to further Bosnian Serb ethnonationalist claims.⁴⁵ Arguably, the only reason these threats have not materialised is that in reality, secession for the RS would be difficult in practice.⁴⁶ The strict nature of the consociational system in BiH, put in place specifically to stabilise relations between the three groups, has instead destabilised the settlement by structurally creating political impasses with no prospects of resolution beyond partition.

The Exposure Problem: Vulnerability to External Pressures

In order to counter these destabilising factors – lack of political will, segregation and immobilism – the international community involved itself in the implementation of the Dayton Accords as they did in its drafting. However, by extending their presence and influence in the country, the international community created a fourth issue by making peace both vulnerable to external threats and dependent on external support.

McGarry and O’Leary highlight the failure of traditional consociational theory to address the role of external actors in creating and maintaining peace.⁴⁷ Lijphart lists the existence of external threats to the country, common to all subcultures, as a favourable variable for the success of consociationalism.⁴⁸ However, he did not consider that outside forces can also be positive by facilitating mediation and providing incentives for peace.⁴⁹ In contrast, Michael Kerr has also identified benign external influence as a key factor in determining the

⁴¹ Horowitz, “Ethnic power-sharing: Three big problems”, 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Hopkins, “Old tensions still alive in Bosnia”.

⁴⁴ Anonymous. “EU welcomes the adoption of Election Law in BiH allowing Mostar municipal election.” *European Western Balkans*, 1 July 2020.

⁴⁵ Kovacevic, “Senate Hearing Blames Dodik for Bosnia’s Stalemate”.

⁴⁶ Hopkins, “Old tensions still alive in Bosnia”.

⁴⁷ John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary. “Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland’s Conflict, and its Agreement. Part 1: What Consociationalists Can Learn from Northern Ireland.” *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 48.

⁴⁸ Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, 101.

⁴⁹ McGarry and O’Leary, “What Consociationalists Can Learn from Northern Ireland”, 48.

success or failure of consociationalism, arguing that implementation of consociation in the long-term can only be successful if exogenous environments allow and encourage it.⁵⁰

The case of BiH illustrates why the system's vulnerability to external pressures challenges the consociational power-sharing model. First, BiH's vulnerability to external threats has exacerbated divisions and instability rather than unifying the subcultures against a common danger, as external threats are not common to all communities. The broader 'East vs West' conflict has a detrimental effect on BiH, where the Bosnian Serbs, contrary to Bosnian Croats and Muslims, favour Russia over the West, exemplified by the issue over BiH's application to NATO.⁵¹ Moreover, the relevant kin states to BiH, Croatia and Serbia, encourage separatism rather than reconciliation.⁵²

Benign international involvement on the part of the West, mainly the US and the EU, has made the country extremely reliant on external support. In addition to ending the war, benign exogenous action has facilitated power-sharing in the past two decades, to the point that McGarry and O'Leary note that it is difficult to imagine the implementation of Dayton without outside intervention.⁵³ Sumantra Bose argues that this was both necessary and beneficial, as security forces enforced peace and political agencies ensured a transition to democracy, as well as contributing in humanitarian efforts.⁵⁴ While this may be true, such significant international involvement has created a lack of domestic ownership over the peace processes, raising several issues. International involvement has led to a lack of accountability in the political system, particularly in institutions staffed, if not led, by international actors. Most notably, Bosnian elites exploit the Office of the High Representative (OHR), headed by an international actor and equipped with far-reaching powers of intervention, by forcing it to make decisions to distance themselves from them publicly.⁵⁵

Furthermore, external engagement has created a problem of lack of legitimacy, worsening the already problematic feeling of imposition. External representation in several of BiH's institutions, combined with the OHR's use of Bonn powers that allow them to pass binding laws and remove locally elected officials, has stirred a debate on whether the international peacebuilding operation has become a colonial-style civilising mission in BiH.⁵⁶ As a result, these institutions suffer from a lack of legitimacy and respect from the Bosnian people. This is especially worrying in the case of the Constitutional Court, which includes three international judges, and where its lack of legitimacy has translated into a weak Rule of Law unprepared to tackle corruption and organised crime in the country. The EU Opinion recognises that this issue may only be solved by reforming the Constitutional Court.⁵⁷

Additionally, the extended external presence in the country also exacerbates the issue of the ethnonationalist elites' empowerment and BiH's demobilised population. Today, civil society in BiH remains very weak, partly due to a lack of an enabling environment,⁵⁸ but also due to the international community's presence which encourages BiH's pre-existing culture of popular passivity, a legacy of President Tito's dictatorship. Innovations in BiH are generally

⁵⁰ Michael Kerr, "Imposing power-sharing," in *Imposing power-sharing: conflict and coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 179.

⁵¹ Maxim Edwards, "The President Who Wants to Break Up His Own Country." *The Atlantic*, 2 January 2019.

⁵² Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff. "Power-Sharing", in *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, edited by Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff. (Routledge: London, 2011), 291.

⁵³ McGarry and O'Leary, "What Consociationalists Can Learn from Northern Ireland", 52.

⁵⁴ Bose, "Bosnia", 146.

⁵⁵ Weller and Wolff, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years after Dayton", 5.

⁵⁶ Bose, "Bosnia", 145.

⁵⁷ Commission of the European Union, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership, 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

the result of international action, which disincentivise the people to take an active role in the running of their country and could potentially damage the long-term development of Bosnian capacities to emerge as active agents of their own future.⁵⁹

Finally, this level of external involvement has made BiH highly vulnerable to change. Settlements reached under external pressure have shallow internal foundations.⁶⁰ The question remains as to what might happen if international agencies do fully withdraw from the country – something they have not been able to do 25 years after Dayton. The international community's long-term commitment has been crucial for the forging of peace in the country.⁶¹ However, this transition is far from completed – were the EU to give up or relax its commitment, BiH could still splinter and relapse into conflict.

The BiH's vulnerability to both negative and positive external pressures accounts for a further challenge of consociationalism's power-sharing model. Moreover, the fact that this level of international involvement, despite the issues it creates, has been and continues to be crucial for ensuring the peace exacerbates the issue. Without a foreseeable end to international involvement, the imposed power-sharing system cannot be deemed successful until the country is properly run by its own citizens.

Conclusion

The conflict in BiH is one of the most complex cases in which consociationalism has been applied as a solution. The country's regional environment, the diversity of its people, and the brutality of an unresolved three-year war marked by ethnic cleansing made peace extremely difficult to reach. It is an accomplishment that the Dayton Accords were able not only to stop the violence, but to create a country peaceful enough to endure 25 years later.

This paper argued that there is not enough evidence to consider the case of BiH as one that vindicates the power-sharing model it exemplifies, corporate consociationalism. Despite their success in ending hostilities, the Dayton Accords have failed to correct several vital issues in Bosnian society, as well as contribute to the creation of several others. Firstly, the case of BiH illustrates consociationalism's failure to create a stable peace in a post-war society where its main actors lack enough political will to collaborate. Secondly, the system's segregationist nature perpetuates the same grievances that justified the war by empowering its ethnonational elites, which also breeds corruption and discrimination of other groups. Thirdly, institutional arrangements in BiH's consociational system structurally disincentivise change, making modifications extremely difficult, and creating a political system prone to stalemates which further destabilise the peace. Finally, consociationalism in BiH has made its peace vulnerable to hostile external influence, as well as highly dependent on benign international intervention, which in turn has exacerbated the issue of lack of local ownership.

All these issues show that, as much as BiH's power-sharing model has maintained the peace, it has worked as a plaster which covers the wound without fully closing it. Grievances are buried rather than addressed, with no long-term plan to resolve them, and structural shortcomings make the peace deeply unstable, to the point that it is difficult to know for sure whether the country is truly safe from a return to violent conflict. While the lack of alternatives at the time of the agreement might justify the adoption of corporate consociationalism, this does not excuse Dayton's failures to properly encourage reconciliation in the long term. Any peace agreement should strive to create a peaceful, stable society, as against merely ending the

⁵⁹ Weller and Wolff, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years after Dayton", 5.

⁶⁰ McGarry and O'Leary, "What Consociationalists Can Learn from Northern Ireland", 53.

⁶¹ Bose, "Bosnia", 152.

conflict at all costs. Despite any conceptual objections, the case of post-war BiH illustrates the pitfalls of implementing the consociational power-sharing model in deeply divided societies, where it is unlikely to succeed in creating a lasting peace.