

Abstracts

Marika Djolai

Whose Peace? – Rethinking Three Decades of Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), signed in 1995, brought an end to a conflict that horrified the world and dispelled the notion of a safe and stable Europe. Thirty years on, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still in a state of “stable unresolvedness”. This main focus seeks to analyse the period of 30 years of peace which is often interpreted as incomplete, contested and essentially epistemological. Rather than interpreting state-building and peace outcomes as simply successes or failures, this issue aims to analyse the different interpretations of the nature of the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasising the negotiated, multi-layered, and contested dynamics that have shaped the country’s post-war order. The scholarly contribution of this issue is threefold: firstly, it analyses consociational power sharing and its consequences by drawing upon interdisciplinary scholarship and experiential enquiry of experts who highlight competing views of the country’s peace process; secondly, it unpacks liberal peacebuilding through international involvement, articulating a critique that draws on the hybridity framework; and thirdly, it highlights the importance of lived experience and quotidian post-war life in any interpretation of current reality.

Soeren Keil

The Dayton Peace Agreement A Power-Sharing System Better than Its Reputation?

Much has been written about the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), which ended nearly four years of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Whilst its success in bringing an end to the bloodshed is generally acknowledged, many assessments of the peace agreement emphasize its inability to provide a proper framework for state reconstruction and democratization. Nevertheless, this contribution highlights how the DPA not only ended the violent conflict where other peace proposals had failed but also laid the foundations for regular and competitive elections in BiH. The DPA has many flaws and deficiencies, but BiH today is a country deeply embedded in the process of European integration, in which even the most recent political crisis around Serb leader Milorad Dodik has not sparked widespread fears of new violence and war. Whilst Dayton’s flaws cannot be ignored – and ultimately need to be addressed – its successful contribution to peace should not be underestimated.

Nedžma Džananović

Gatekeepers of Serbia's and Croatia's Influence in BiH The OHR and the Dayton Agreement

The article examines the Office of the High Representative (OHR) as a gatekeeper of neighbourly influence in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Drawing on sixty-seven OHR reports submitted to the United Nations Security Council between 1996 and 2025, it traces how the OHR has discursively regulated the involvement of Serbia and Croatia. The OHR's legitimacy has rested on its capacity to define the boundaries of acceptable cross-border engagement. The three phases are identified in the OHR's rhetorical evolution: from cooperation and oversight (1995–2006), to depoliticization and rhetorical gatekeeping (2006–2021), to crisis-oriented guardianship (2021–2025). As it transitioned from institution-building to boundary management, it increasingly relied on normative language to assert its relevance amid declining coercive power. The findings contribute to broader debates on post-liberal peacebuilding and the discursive practices through which international supervision sustains itself.

Nikolaos Tzifakis

Three Decades of International Peacebuilding Lessons Learned in BiH

The article argues that engagement of external actors with post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina has undergone three phases. In the initial phase (1996–2005), the international community appeared united and committed to the success of the peace process. However, it failed to hand ownership of the process over to the local decision-makers. A debate over the termination of external governance marked the second phase (2006–2014). The emergence of divergent approaches to the transition to local ownership encouraged BiH's political leaders to question the progress made to that point. Finally, the third phase (2014 onwards) has entangled the country in the great powers' confrontation. In this setting, while the international community's agreement on a new peacebuilding approach has been elusive, nationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been emboldened to escalate their divisive agendas. Crucially, neither the EU nor local decision-makers have demonstrated a strong commitment to BiH's EU membership, which is currently the sole strategy presented to the country to promote reconciliation, foster state-building, and consolidate democracy.

Christian Voß / Zuzana Finger

Coping with War Memories in Kosovo Today

This discussion examines “Memorie dhe Traumë. Kujtesa e Luftës 1998–1999 në letërsinë shqipe në Kosovë” (Memory and Trauma. Memory of the War 1998–1999 in Albanian Literature in Kosovo), a book that provides an overview of war literature in Kosovo. Written by Blerina Rogova Gaxha and published in 2023, it attempts to amplify voices that have been overlooked until now and highlights different stories beyond the traditional focus on heroes: those of the people who became refugees, the women who suffered sexual violence, the slaughtered children, or the murdered elderly – voices we do not usually encounter prominently in war literature.

Rogova Gaxha renarrates personal experiences from the perspective of eyewitnesses or direct participants in the war, as well as broader oral histories gathered from victims and sur-

vivors. Ultimately, she tries to identify unique features of (anti)war literature from Kosovo in comparison to other post-conflict societies all over the world.

Florian Kienzle

Die deutschsprachige Albanienwahrnehmung 1961–1985. Skepsis und Wohlwollen

This essay provides an overview of books and articles on Albania in the German-speaking area between 1961 (breakup of the Soviet-Albanian alliance) and 1985 (death of dictator Enver Hoxha). The article explores the various attitudes and approaches of German and Austrian writers during this period, guided by curiosity and empathy, but also by misunderstandings and stereotypes.

Katalin Kósza / Enej Lovrečić / Rebekah Manlove / Bilyana Valkova

Field Trip into the Memory of BiH Mapping and Interpreting Commemoration

The three contributions assembled here originate from the research excursion Multidirectional Memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina undertaken in May 2025 under the direction of Prof. Dr. Heike Karge and Dr. phil. Mag. Christian Promitzer (University of Graz). Conceived as an intensive field-based inquiry, the excursion examined how the legacies of the Second World War and the Bosnian War of the 1990s intersect within the contemporary mnemonic landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina – an issue of considerable scholarly and societal relevance in a region where practices of remembrance remain closely intertwined with debates on post-conflict governance, justice, and European integration.