

*Women and Political
Life in Post-Dayton
Bosnia and Herzegovina*

1995-2015:

Women and Political Life in Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo, 2015.

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Bosni i Hercegovini

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Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| ACRONYMS | 6 |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | 8 |
| FOREWORD | 12 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 14 |
| 2. 1992-1995: FROM THE ROAD TO WAR TO THE ROAD TO PEACE | 16 |
| 2.1 The road to war | 17 |
| 2.2 The period of war | 19 |
| 2.2.1 Women in politics | 19 |
| 2.2.2. Women in activism | 23 |
| 2.3. Beijing conference | 27 |
| 2.4 The Dayton peace accords | 30 |
| 2.5 Concluding remarks | 36 |
| 3. 1995-2003: POST-DAYTON STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY | 37 |
| 3.1 Women in BiH after the Dayton peace accords | 38 |
| 3.2 1996 - First elections after the war | 40 |
| 3.3 There is more of us and the introduction of the 'Women's quota' in 1998 | 42 |
| 3.4 Open lists and the 2000 election | 51 |
| 3.5 Adoption of the electoral law in 2001 and the 2002 elections | 54 |
| 3.6 The Gender centres - establishing the institutional mechanisms | 55 |
| 4. 2003-2015: THE ERA OF GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISMS | 59 |
| 4.1 The Gender equality law 2003 | 60 |
| 4.2 40% women on the electoral lists | 63 |
| 4.3 The Club of women parliamentarians FBiH | 66 |
| 4.4 Women in the executive branch in BiH | 72 |
| 4.5 Political parties on women politicians; women on political parties | 79 |
| 4.6 Women's political activism | 89 |
| 4.7 The future of women in BiH politics, the future of women's politics | 92 |
| 5. CONCLUSION | 96 |
| ABOUT THE AUTHORS | 98 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 99 |

Acronyms

| | |
|------------|---|
| ARS BiH | The Gender Equality Agency BiH |
| AIASN | The Association for Intercultural Activities and the Preservation of Heritage |
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| BOSS | Bosanska stranka (Bosnian Party) |
| CEDAW | UN Convention on Eliminating all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CIK | Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CSW | UN Commission on the Status of Women |
| DF | Demokratska fronta (Democratic Front) |
| DMS/Dayton | Dayton Peace Accords/General Framework for Peace in BiH |
| DNZ | Demokratska narodna zajednica BiH (People's democratic Union BiH) |
| ECOSOC | Economic and Social Council of the UN |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| EU | European Union |
| FBIH | Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| GAP BiH | Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| GC FBiH | Gender Center of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| GC RS | Gender Center of Republika Srpska |
| GDS | Gradanska demokratska stranka (Citizen's Democratic Party) |
| GEEP | Gender Equality and Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina (project) |
| GEL | Gender Equality Law |
| HDZ | Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union) |
| HVO | Croatian Defense Council |
| IPU | Inter-Parliamentary Union |
| IRI | International Republican Institute |
| LS | Liberalna stranka (The Liberal Party) |
| MAK | The Muslim Academic Women's Club |

| | |
|------------|--|
| NAP | National Action Plan |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSRS | National Assembly of Republika Srpska |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OHR | Office of the High Representative |
| OOUR | Elementary Organization for Organized Work |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| PD PFBiH | House of Representatives of the Parliament of Federation of BiH |
| PD PSBiH | House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH |
| PFBiH | Parliament of the Federation of BiH |
| PSBiH | Parliamentary Assembly of BiH |
| PACE | Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe |
| RBiH | Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| RS | Republika Srpska |
| RTV | Radio-television |
| SBB | Savez za bolju budućnost Bosne i Hercegovine (Alliance for a Better Future of BiH) |
| SBiH | Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (Party for BiH) |
| SBK | Srednjobosanski Canton |
| SDA | Stranka demokratske akcije (Party for Democratic Action) |
| SDP BiH | Socijaldemokratska partija Bosne i Hercegovine (Social Democrat Party BiH) |
| SDS | Srpska demokratska stranka (Serb Democratic Party) |
| NSND | Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (Alliance of Independent Social-Democrats) |
| SRBiH | Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| UMC | University Medical Center |
| UNDP | UN Development Program |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| UNSCR 1325 | UNSCR Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WUCWO | World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations |

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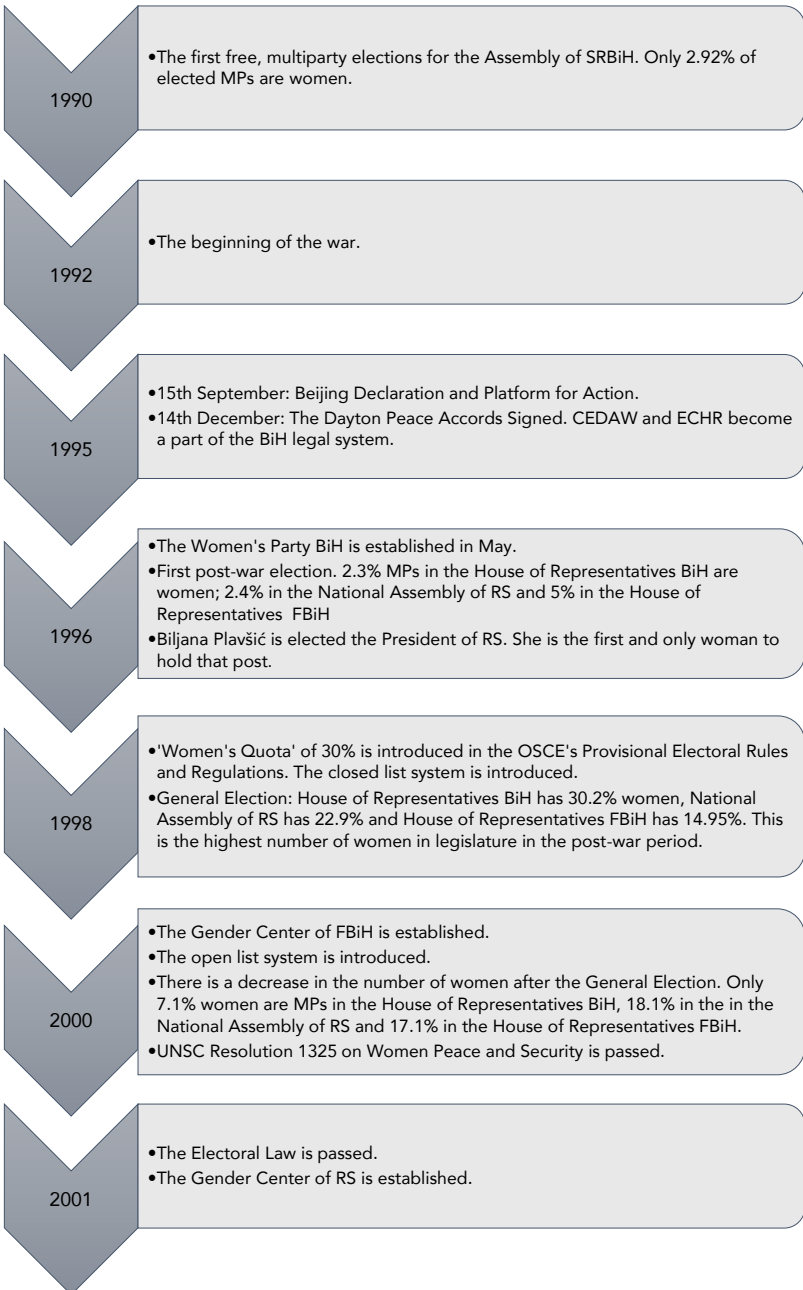
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authors, September 2015.

¹ Hafeza Sabljaković passed away before the publication of this book. We extend our deepest sympathies to her family and friends, and thank her for her dedicated work.

Chronology of events: 1990-2014.



2002

- General Election: The number of women MPs increases to 14.3% in the House of Representatives BiH, 21.4% in the House of Representatives FBiH, and decreases to 16.9% in National Assembly of RS.

2003

- Gender Equality Law is passed. It sets the minimum quota of at least 40% of the less represented sex in the legislature, the executive government and the judiciary.

2004

- The Gender Equality agency is founded.

2006

- The first Gender Action Plan for BiH (2006-2011) is adopted.
- General Election: The number of women MPs falls to 11.9% in the House of Representatives BiH, and rises to 23% in the National Assembly of RS and 25.5% in the House of Representatives FBiH.
- Borjana Krišto is elected the president of FBiH. She is the only woman to hold this post in the post-war period.

2010

- The first National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 is passed, for the period 2010-2013. It is the first NAP in Southeastern Europe.
- General Election: The number of women MPs rises to 21.4% in the House of representatives BiH, and falls in the National Assembly of RS to 21.68% and to 17.35% in the House of Representatives FBiH

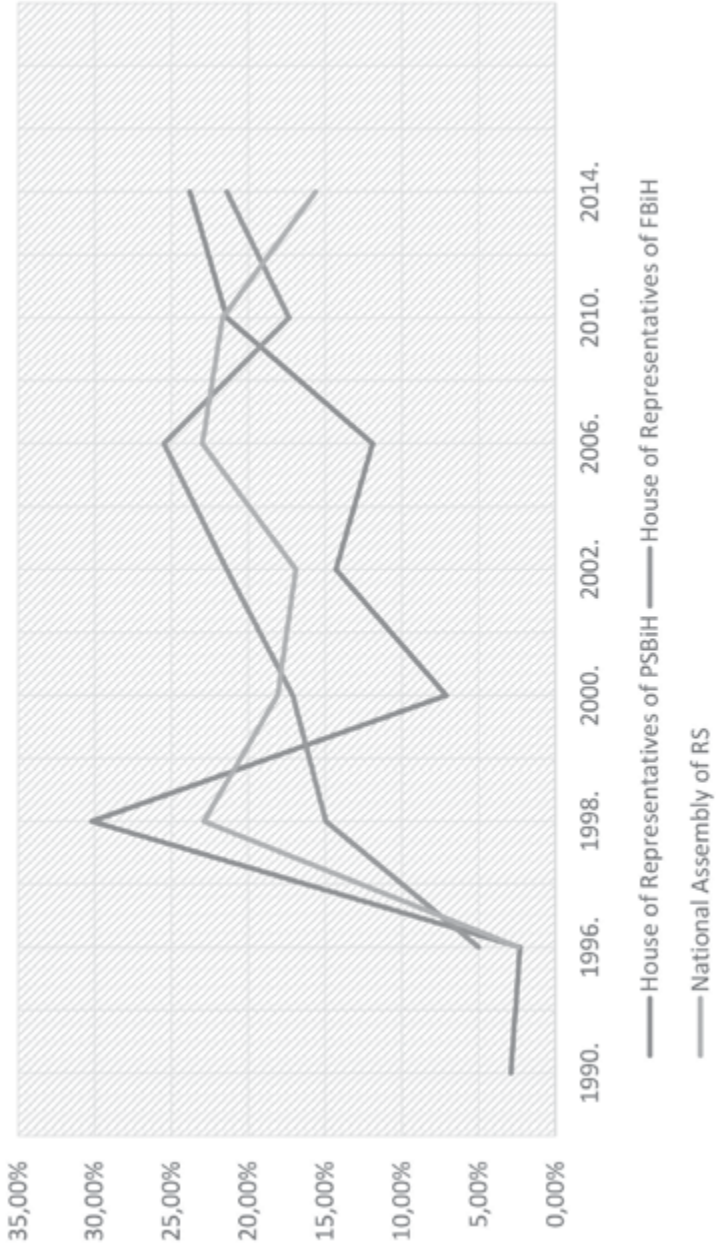
2013

- The second Gender Action Plan is adopted for the period 2013-2017.
- Željka Cvijanović becomes the first President of a Government in BiH.
- The Club of Women Parliamentarians is founded.
- Changes and Amendments to the Electoral Law BiH are accepted: 40% gender quota is introduced to the electoral lists.

2014

- The second Nation Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 is passed, for the period 2014-2017.
- General Election: The number of women MPs decreases in the National Assembly of RS to 15.6%, and increases in the House of Representatives BiH to 23.8% and to 21.4% in the House of Representatives FBiH.

Chart: women in legislative authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1990 to 2014.



FOREWORD

While working on improving our program and portfolio on women's human rights we quickly realized the absence of a detailed and visible account of "women's" history in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although there are a significant number of publications and several activist initiatives that address certain fragments of history and explore events, periods of time, and regions, there is currently no exhaustive institutional account of women in Bosnia, nor are attempts being made to create one. The academic community has unfortunately failed in this area. The history of women and their contribution to public life remains at the margins of academic inquiry.

The Sarajevo Open Centre published the book *Women Documented: Women and Public Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 20th Century*. The book was edited by Jasmina Čaušević, a program coordinator at the Sarajevo Open Centre, in cooperation with ten authors. Through publishing this book, the Sarajevo Open Centre and our partner organizations wanted to celebrate the centenary of the First World War in a different way. It was precisely the work on *Women Documented* that revealed to us the need for further work exploring women's history in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that our (virtual) museum of women's history in Bosnia will eventually be institutionalized in Bosnian society.

In November and December 2015, we will commemorate the 20-year anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords – the international agreement that brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina and laid the foundations for the long and grueling process of peace-making and trust-building. The Dayton Peace Process was, as this book will demonstrate, a classic example of male politics. The commemoration will, again, be dominated by men – Bosnian and Herzegovinian and world leaders.

We decided to conduct this research and publish this book to challenge the male-dominated approach to memory. This publication aims to offer systematic insight into the role played by women in political life. Our goal is to offer a better understanding and a concise overview of political life over the past 20 years, based on the stories of a number of women - activists, politicians and institutional leaders - with the hope that it will inspire other authors to explore BiH political history during this period of time.

Since this aspect of history is particularly under-researched, the very process of gathering information was challenging and so we welcome constructive criticism, comments, and suggestions for improvement and enrichment of this text.

I would like to thank Marina, Arijana and Edita, who accepted to work with the Sarajevo Open Centre on this project. I would also like to thank my colleague Maida Zagorac, who has helped me immensely with her excellent oversight of both the technical and the substantive aspects of this text.

I also owe thanks to the Embassy of Swiss Confederation in Bosnia and Herzegovina for supporting our work and the research of women's history in Bosnia and Herzegovinian.

Saša Gavrić,
editor, Executive Director of the Sarajevo Open Centre
Sarajevo, October 2015.

1. INTRODUCTION

14th December 2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA, Dayton, or the Accords). This book analyses the period of war in Bosnia which shaped the Dayton Peace Accords, and subsequently the period of peace in Bosnia which was shaped by the Accords, through the prism of gender equality. The central theme of the book is the role of women in political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war and during the period of peace that followed. Fifteen women who contributed to political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina through their work and activism during this period were interviewed in July 2015. Their experience, knowledge, and perseverance are what made progress in the field of Bosnian female politics possible.

The first chapter by Marina Veličković covers the period between 1990 and 1995. It presents stories about women in government institutions and activists in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). From this narrative emerges an image of an alternative politics during wartime; politics that is humanitarian and somewhat idealistic, but equally daring and brave. The chapter also reconstructs an image of women's politics as invisible and removed from official state discourse. It is precisely for this reason that not a single woman delegate participated in the negotiations that took place during this period (two women in BiH delegation were present as translators). The chapter ends with the conclusion that the invisibility of gender was one of the key characteristics of the Accords that shaped the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the next 20 years.

The second chapter by Arijana Aganović covers the period between 1996 and 2003 – the period between signature of the Accords and the adoption of the Gender Equality Law (GEL). Although Bosnia and Herzegovina included in its Constitution the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as well as an Article 4 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender, women were still marginalized in public and political life after the war. The period between 1996 and 2003 is marked by a resistance against this marginalization and a struggle by women for more active participation in politics. Thus, the Women's Party BiH was formed in 1996. A 'women's quota' was introduced in 1998 with the aim of increasing the number of women in the legislature. The quota system was effective in increasing the number of women in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (PSBiH), but the Presidency remained without a single female member. Open electoral lists were introduced in 2000 and the Electoral Law was passed in 2001. In 2002, after the first election held under the complete purview of local authorities, women made up 21% of MPs in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 14.3% in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The third chapter by Edita Miftari offers an insight into the period between the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2003 and 2015. Gender quotas of 40% were introduced by the Gender Equality Law, which was based on the provisions of the CEDAW Convention, ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993 and included in the Constitution following the Dayton Peace Accords. The quota for members of the less represented sex on electoral lists was increased to 40% in 2013, when the Electoral Law was amended to reflect the provisions of the Gender Equality Law. The Club of Women Parliamentarians FBiH was created in the same year. This period has also been marked by work of the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARS BiH) and the Gender Centers of RS and FBiH, as well as by the ratification and implementation of several international treaties in the field of gender equality and the ever-increasing participation of women in Executive Government.

20 years after the Dayton Peace Accords, a new generation of women is emerging on the BiH political scene. Thanks to the work and perseverance of the women mentioned in this book, as well as that of many others, a space for women in politics has been created. A challenge for the new generation is to create space for women's politics.

2. 1992-1995: FROM THE ROAD TO WAR TO THE ROAD TO PEACE

Marina Veličković

The focus of this chapter will be on the period of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Wartime events will be reconstructed from the stories of the women interviewed for this book, newspaper articles from the period between 1992 and 1995, NGO reports, and other publications from this time. The chapter aims to present war from a different and, until now, invisible perspective in which women are the main actors. The first half of the chapter will cover the war itself; the period between 1992 and 1995; and the female members of government, political parties, and the armed forces, and women activists. The second half of the chapter will offer an insight into two key events of 1995 – the Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, and the Dayton Peace Accords.

While women were the main actors during the Conference – they were the main organizers and the main participants - they were almost completely invisible during the negotiation and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. It is precisely this difference between political activism and institutionalized political processes that marked and framed the next 20 years of the political life of Bosnian and Herzegovinian women.

This chapter tells the stories of women who have, in some way, shaped the politics of Bosnian wartime. However, it is important to stress that these are just a few of many stories; there were far more activists and politicians than space in this book, and their overall contribution cannot be summarized without the inadvertent exclusion of some women and, necessarily, some stories. This book is geographically limited to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but activists and feminists from other parts of the same region also deserve a mention. The book is also limited to the field of political life, but it is important to recognize that women in art, literature, and sport also contributed significantly to peacemaking and post-war reconstruction. The book *Women Documented* (Čaušević, 2014) offers an insight into many of their stories, and so it can (and it should) serve as inspiration for further research and the popularization of women's history.

2.1 THE ROAD TO WAR

The position and role of women in public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina changed significantly between the time the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was formed and the beginning of the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. In 1945, straight after the end of the Second World War, women obtained the right to vote; illiteracy fell from 80% in the 1950s to 16% in 1991; and women actively participated in the economic development of the country, comprising over 40% of the workforce (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000: 17). The percentage of women in the Republic and Federal governments rose to around 30% (ibid: 17). In the period between 1982 and 1986, the head of the country was the Prime Minister **Milka Planinc** (Obrenić, 2012). Planinc was a member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists Croatia from 1971, until she was named President of the Executive Committee in 1982 (Đokić, 2010). She was in favor of a unified Yugoslavia and resigned as Prime Minister in 1986 following a conflict with the Federal and the Republican governments (Đokić, 2010). Milka Planinc is proof that women played an important role in the political life of Yugoslavia, but she is also a very rare example of a woman in a leadership position. Women's roles were often secondary.

Besima Borić is the former Minister for Work, Social Policy, IDPs, and Refugees in Canton Sarajevo. She is also a former member of the House of Representatives FBiH during two terms (in 1998 and 2010), a representative in the Assembly of Canton Sarajevo in 2002 and 2006, a current member of the Executive Board of SDP, and one of the most prominent women in Bosnian and Herzegovinian political life. She remembers her participation in politics before the war: [...] *the Communists always made sure that there was at least one woman among the 5-6 men. Sometimes there were two. But mostly one. So, in a way, that was satisfied. One woman amongst 5-6 men does not signal equality, but the fact that there always had to be at least one indicates a certain level of awareness that women can and should contribute to the political life of their communities.*

Nada Golubović, the president of the Executive Board of the Organization *United Women* from Banja Luka recounts, *Before the war, and I can vouch for this, we did not really think about our rights; those rights were recognized in the Constitution and most men and women were employed; most of the citizens of BiH.* **Nada Tešanović**, the president of the House of Peoples RS and the vice-president of SNSD, considers that there was a greater plurality of voices and perspectives before the war:

In that period - the period of a certain form of workers' self-government - you could hear the opinions of the cleaning lady as well as the supervisor during collective meetings. Today, only a few govern and they create the life for the rest, and that is what is truly disappointing.

The ethno-nationalist parties won the 1990 election and the number of women in government dropped significantly. After the 1990 election, there were only seven women in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (PSBiH) out of the 240 electoral seats – women made up 2.92% of MPs (Miftari, 2015:17). At the beginning of the war, women were almost completely invisible in BiH political life. This invisibility can be partially explained by the fact that militarist masculinity is made hyper-visible and even more dominant in wartime, while femininity is linked to home and motherhood - a private and a less visible sphere. The role of women in war is traditionally not that of politicians: women are seen as wives, mothers, and daughters – homemakers. The women interviewed in this book demonstrate that this sort of gendered division is wholly socially constructed and essentially baseless.

2.2 THE PERIOD OF WAR

2.2.1 Women in politics

Hafeza Sabljaković, a doctor who was the president of the Club of Women Parliamentarians of the FBiH during its first mandate and a member of the House of Representatives of the FBiH between 1998 and 2014, remembers her first year in Politics in 1990 when she was one of the three women on the SDA's electoral list:

The worst thing is to be undecided, because then you can't have a say in the important decisions. For a young person it's important to have a job, but also to be able to keep that job, and if you are a doctor to have the resources to give your patients at least the bare minimum.

She recalls how she put her name forward on the suggestion of her friends:

I entered Politics almost accidentally. I worked as a medical doctor and, following a push from friends who worked with me, I entered the shortlist for the position of the leader of the SDA in Cazin, in the borough of Cazin.

Dr. Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, who was a member of the war Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RBiH), also recalls how the support she received from her friends was essential to her candidacy, and later, to her assuming her role in the wartime Presidency:

At the time, and that was the beginning of 1991, I was a university professor of landscape design - really not political in any meaning of the term. Even today I don't see politics as a life choice. In truth, everyone got involved in Politics when the war started - people at universities, everywhere. My friends put my name on the list and I obtained a high number of votes. It was a little bit funny, naive, and amateurish.

Following the election, Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović was named the Serb member of the Presidency in 1993 after Biljana Plavšić, Nikola Koljević, and Nenad Kecmanović had left. At the time, the Presidency had seven members (two members for each ethnicity and one member for 'others'), and Tatjana Ljujić Mijatović was the only woman.

As a professor of landscape design at the University of Sarajevo, Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović did not have previous experience in Politics, but she recalls how she was raised in a family that always fought for the rights of others, and that she felt a moral obligation to help. She arrived at the Presidency suddenly, unprepared and inexperienced, but with clear goals and unwavering in her vision of a unified multiethnic state. Looking around the Sarajevo Hotel

Europa, where we are conducting the interview, she remembers the chaotic circumstances in which she was sworn in, as well as her reasons for having stayed in SDP until today:

They took me to the Presidency and positioned me to swear in (...) I was the only woman in the Presidency. (...) I was not in SDP for Zlatko Lagumdžija, or anyone else, but for my own belief that people of all nations can live together with their traditions, cultures, and ways of life. And that is what I truly fought for.

At the very beginning, Ljujić-Mijatović was a member of the team that created the Platform for Action of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a document that lays the foundations for the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and unified democratic state (Kurtović, 1995: 5). Ljujić-Mijatović describes the platform as politically relevant even today:

That platform could be a platform for the survival of the State today, even for its future. It is extremely well-crafted, a single sheet of paper that shows everything – a group of people, intellectuals, politicians, everyone who considers this country their own.

However, political interest for the platform was limited even in 1995 and after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, it had almost completely waned. Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović is one of the few people who still see the Platform as a potential tool for fighting ethnic divisions.

Nada Tešanović also remembers her attitude at the beginning of the war that it is important to offer young people alternative narratives to ethno-nationalism as one's primary prism for seeing the world: *My main motive was to give young people something else to listen to, different to what they were hearing at the time.*

The idea that women are more peace-loving and therefore less nationalistically oriented is something like an urban myth – well-known, but an essentially unproved theory. **Biljana Plavšić's** wartime politics provide an extreme example of the inadequacy of this sort of essentialism. A Fulbright scholar and professor (and eventually the dean) of biology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Sarajevo, Biljana Plavšić joined the SDS in 1990 when it was formed (Power, 1996: 18). She was elected a member of the seven-member Presidency of SRBiH at the same time as Nikola Koljević and she left the position in April 1992. She spent the war in Pale as the Vice President of Republika Srpska (Power, 1996: 18). During the war, Plavšić became well-known for her belief in the biological supremacy of Serbs, who she claimed had "developed and sharpened their ability to sense danger to the nation and developed a defense mechanism" (Čolović, 1995: 9). It is thought that it was precisely this radicalism that distanced her from Radovan Karadžić, the President of Republika Srpska at the time. Plavšić was uncompromising and

tactlessly direct in her ideas; she was an extreme nationalist who prioritized solidarity among Serbs over solidarity amongst women (for example, she was against the naming of Klara Mandić as Karadžić's aid, because of her non-Serb name; Čolović, 1995: 9). Interestingly, despite her extreme nationalist attitudes, Plavšić has continuously been perceived by both the international community and the men at the head of the State as less threatening to the unified Bosnia and Herzegovina than her male counterparts (Power, 1996: 18; Soloway, 1997: 40). As a result of the deep-rooted gender stereotypes, the volatility of Plavšić's nationalism has continuously been underplayed. From her participation in the post-war politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to her trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, her actions and ideas have been viewed through the prism of gender stereotypes, according to which it is inconceivable that a woman can stand behind a policy of ethnic cleansing rather than performing the role of a caring mother and wife.

Depicting Biljana Plavšić's politics as somehow imposed on her, or in the other extreme as a product of a pathological personality, frees her from responsibility for her own actions. Gender stereotypes thus paradoxically free women of responsibility for their choices by narrowing the specter of choices available to them in the first place. Any action outside of the expected and the 'natural' for women is considered to be imposed or pathological – a mutation in female nature.

Assumptions about the essential female nature are so deeply rooted that they limit what is conceivable in a society, and not merely what women can achieve. **Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović** remembers her early days in the Presidency during which she encountered obstacles purely because she was a woman:

The President told me – Tatjana you cannot go, you are a woman, do you know what Jarčedol is, where you will be sleeping? That is terrible. Later, when I went, I realized that he was right. But I still said I wanted to go, and since he wouldn't let me I got ready at midnight and went on my own initiative. Whenever I felt resistance I broke through it.

Hafeza Sabljaković thinks that it is difficult for women to assume positions not just in government, but also within the political parties themselves:

In Politics here women are usually second – vice- presidents. No woman is the head of a party and it is usually the heads of the party that participate in the negotiations. I do not know when the time will arrive for women to be the leaders of their parties, and those parties will be rare. Especially rare will be the big parties with female leaders.

Nada Tešanović said that although she is aware that other women have been met with resistance from their male colleagues, she never has. She believes this is a result of her long political career and extensive experience.

Amila Omersoftić has been a member of the SDA since its establishment in 1990 and was the founder of the Women's Party in May 1996. Since the very beginning of her political career she has faced opposition as a result of her gender. She remembers her work in the Directorate for Refugees at the beginning of the war. At her own initiative and with help from the head of the Government Hakija Turajlić, Amila Omersoftić founded the Directorate for Refugees with the aim of developing programmes for the return and better integration of displaced persons. She remembers the time as being very productive; the Directorate envisaged, amongst other measures, short-term accommodation in trailers and the reconstruction of housing, as well as developing software for the registration of displaced persons. However, she encountered continuous opposition from members of the international community as well as members of her own party. In October 1993 while on a trip to Paris, Amila Omersoftić found out that the Directorate had been disbanded and a Ministry for Refugees established in its place. She still believes that the Directorate had potential and that the project on which she was working could have made the return of displaced persons significantly easier.

One afternoon in 1994, Amila Omersoftić received a phone call from President Alija Izatbegović:

Izatbegović said – write your biography; the Presidency will name you as the Director of the Radio Television Service. I said - Mr. President - I don't want that, I mean yesterday you made me leave [the Directorate for Refugees]. Silajdžić became the Prime Minister at the time, I wondered what I could do there; we needed to cooperate, to do everything. But that was it.

She characterizes her work in the Radio Television (RTV) as difficult and challenging, but also successful. She refused to become involved in the debate on inter-ethnic marriages that was ongoing at the time and so lost the support of the higher ranks of the SDA (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 222). She remembers the meeting at which her removal was discussed:

It was a very difficult meeting and I realized that I as a woman had no standing. You know, all the men, about 50% of them - had been promised things, many things – ministerial and ambassadorial posts – and suddenly, all of them sided with Silajdžić. It was very unpleasant and all I could do was stand at the sidelines and watch. I mean, what can you do... I realized that it is all one long battle and that it comes down to male vs. female solidarity and to a moment when you cannot say a thing.

It is also important to mention **Bisera Turković** in this section. She was an early member of the SDA and the first Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Turković became the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Zagreb in 1993, and in 1994 she transferred to the same post in Hungary. Following the end of the war she continued her career in diplomacy. Her diplomatic missions included Vienna, the United States of America, Mexico, and Brazil (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 223-4). She is currently the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Belgium.

2.2.2. Women in Activism

Sabiha Husić is a psychotherapist, an Islamic theologian, a Director of *Medica Zenica*, and a winner of the prestigious award **Woman of the World** for 2014, awarded by *Women for Women International*. She describes the beginning of her work with women who have survived trauma as almost accidental. As a refugee from Vitez, Sabiha Husić organized group therapy for women who were staying in the same refugee center as her in Zenica. She recalls the very beginning:

So, you have more than 60, 70 people in one room. Very few are talking, everyone is just very pensive. I told myself – we can't do this. If we stay like this, silent and pensive and focused solely on when we can return home, we will become dead socially. Then, one day, I decided to invite women, girls, and my colleagues to start doing something, because we all knew each other pretty well. And then they asked – what can we do? And I said – well, let's get some space in this school - one classroom - we can ask the director to give it to us and we will talk, learn from each other, we will pray to God to help us, we'll see, we will spend time with each other, but we cannot stay like this.

The group became popular and the women responded very well. The representatives of *Medica*, which was founded in Zenica by the doctor Monika Hauser in 1993, visited the center. They were interested in Sabiha's work – particularly in her treatment of trauma (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 201). Still, she remembers that at the time, her main guide was her instinct – *I did not even know what psychological trauma was, even less how to deal with it, nor was I familiar with its consequences; I was simply guided by my intuition and that is how I started.*

She was invited to *Medica*:

When I arrived at Medica, the atmosphere itself, the fact that women decided to stay together regardless of their names, religions; that they decided to try and contribute – I was inspired by that. It gave me fresh hope that regardless of how difficult it gets and regardless of the fact that we were constantly hearing bad news – of deaths, injuries and displacements, somehow I believed that there would come a day when all of that would be in the past, and that good people will come to be recognized, and that those good people will be able to help the most vulnerable people.

Inspired by *Medica's* work Sabiha Husić started to volunteer for the organization. She contacted the women she knew had survived trauma and informed them of the help that was available through *Medica*. She used her profession as a teacher of Islam to approach the communities and women who needed help. After six months of volunteer work she became an associate at *Medica*. She is now the Director. *Medica Zenica* has provided over 400,000 services for its users since its inception – from psychological counseling, to safe houses and witness support for those testifying in war crimes cases (Medica, 2013). Sabiha Husić remembers the numerous training sessions she attended over the years, ranging from psychological counseling to gender-responsible budgeting. It is precisely because of this mix of ambition and eagerness to help others that Sabiha Husić is one of the main Bosnian and Herzegovinian peacemakers and *Medica Zenica* one of the most prominent NGO providers of support to victims of wartime and peacetime sexual and gender-based violence. The organization encountered financial difficulties in 2007 but managed to recover despite donor withdrawal and reduced resources. Sabiha Husić remembers this period as difficult, but integral for the development of *Medica*. She thinks that the organization is the strongest it has ever been today, in its 23rd year:

I am really happy and content in a way. I could leave Medica now, feeling sure that Medica will go on and that it will not return to the place it was in in 2007.

In addition to *Medica*, *MAK Bosanka* (the Muslim Academic Women's Club), which was founded in Sarajevo by **Tatjana Najdhart**, **Mevlida Sardarević** and **Edina Vlašić**, the international initiative *Biser*, and the Swedish organization *Kvinna till Kvinna* also provided significant support for female survivors of wartime rape (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 203). In 1994 *MAK Bosanka* focused its cultural and educational work on the de-stigmatization of women survivors of rape and children born after forced pregnancies. The members organized lectures and art shows (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 202-3). The theme of the first show, which was curated in the MAK gallery, was the suffering of women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together with *AIASN* (the Association for Intercultural Activities and the Preservation of Heritage), *MAK Bosanka* was the first organization to organize lectures in mosques (Lačević, 2008: 209). During the same period, **Galina Marjanović** started the organization *Duga* (Rainbow) in Banja Luka, which offered support to female survivors of trauma (Hunt, 2004: 215). In 1994 the organization *Vive Žene* was founded in Tuzla upon the initiative of a group of women from Germany. *Vive Žene* has been providing psychosocial support for women and children to this day.

Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, a doctor of legal science, remembers the very beginning of *MAK Bosanka's* work. She recalls how women used it as a platform for articulating their perspectives:

That was the initiative – Muslim Academic Women’s Club – Muslim, because Bosniak was not yet a term at the time; intellectuals, because they worked in the organization despite their world views and beliefs, in order to become politically active and voice their opinions on political and wartime events, especially crimes against women. That was my first motive. So, that was the starting point. The more the time passed and the more apparent it became that there were exclusively male delegations in which women were only translators or secretaries, the more it gave us the incentive to work. There was an attack on women’s rights, reproductive rights – there was an initiative to ban abortion, and we were against that. We also started to talk about wartime rape, about gender-sensitive politics, and policies. So in a way, this was the first organization in the field of human rights.

At the initiative of MAK Bosanka and Medica, the women’s organizations formed ŽAR – The Union of Women’s Organizations of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which aimed to connect women’s organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The President, Alija Izatbegović, sent a telegram to the Union to congratulate them on their first meeting in Tuzla, in October of 1994: *“Our Dear Bosnian Women, I have been informed of your meeting and I regret not being able to attend it. The Bosnian woman bravely bears the burden of the cruel aggression on our country and she endures all difficulties graciously. Such courage and dignity have gained us our people’s admiration and the world’s respect. There is a long road before us all. I wish you great success in achieving your goals.”* (Oslobođenje, 09.10.1994).

The content of this telegram is a good example of the general attitude towards women in Politics during the war. Recognition of their activism is usually reduced to mere acknowledgement of how they bear the burden of suffering (placed in the wider narrative of the ethno-nationalist struggle), but it is rarely recognition of their work, initiatives, or activism. Women-as-victims are made hyper-visible, while women-as-activists are made almost entirely invisible.

A good example of this is the status of the female fighters of the Army of BiH. Thirteen women received the Golden Lily for their military achievements in the Army of BiH according to *Women Documented* (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 191), a book that chronologically presents women in public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 20th century. However, these women were the first to be demobilized after the war, and they were excluded from public life without any kind of institutional help (Aganović and Delić, 2014: 192). One can only assume that the situation is not much better when it comes to HVO and the Army of RS.

The accounts of other women interviewed for this book reveal that it is not only Sabiha Husić who considered her work to be humanitarian in nature and not political. **Nada Golubović**, who was providing aid to the Serb refugees from Croatia expressed this sentiment succinctly:

At the time I saw this as a kind of humanitarian project and only realized later that at that particular time the work was political, because if you work against the official politics during hard times, that is the purest expression of a political idea.

The very perception of something as humanitarian and not political; the act of excluding the female public discourse from the purview of politics, is a political act – defining what is political and what is inherent and natural is a political act, and the fact is: traditionally, men have been the ones with the institutional power to define the sphere of politics in a way that does not recognize the majority of female activism.

Nurdžihana Dozić is a Sarajevo journalist who founded journals *Koridor*, and later *Žena 21* (Woman 21) in Dobrinja. *Koridor* covered mental health issues, or as Dozić described it during an interview (a video recording is available in the ‘Famacollection’ archive): *It was helping people trapped in an abnormal situation to stay normal* (Fama International, 1993). A psychological counseling service was established at the same time. Dozić remembers the skepticism and mistrust she encountered at first. A total of seven counseling centers were formed. These were contacted by 130,000 people within the first six months of their existence (Fama International, 1993). Less than a year later, Nurdžihana Dozić started another journal – *Žena 21*, this time focused specifically on addressing the challenges faced by women. She describes this period (Fama International, 1993):

To start a journal in war, print it, and give it to people for free – it was hardly imaginable. Within less than a year from publication of the first issue of Koridor and around the time when the seventh counseling center for the protection of mental health (offering first aid counseling) was opened, the first issue of Žena 21 came out as well. At the time, Žena 21 and Koridor were basically two distinct ideas belonging to a single organization. Two ideas conceived by the same group of people, mostly women, but there were also a few men in our midst.

Around 5,000 copies of the journal *Žena 21* were published and distributed free of charge and ‘hand to hand’ (Hunt, 2004: 162). The Club *Žena 21* was founded in 1995. It was conceived of as a “greenhouse, a hub for exchange of ideas” between the women’s organizations in Sarajevo (Oslobodenje, 18.1.1995:6). The Club was also a place to learn foreign languages and how to use a computer – skills that were essential for obtaining employment in the postwar period.

2.3. BEIJING CONFERENCE

The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing between 4th and 15th September 1995 under the purview of the ECOSOC Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Yugoslavia participated in the previous three conferences in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985. The goal of these conferences was to improve the position of women worldwide in areas ranging from education and healthcare to the position of women in particular crisis zones (for an example in South Africa during apartheid and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories). The goal of the 1995 Conference was to develop a platform that would aid the implementation of goals established during the Nairobi Conference and the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights. The end of the Cold War changed the balance of powers and so in 1995 the focus of the Conference was on democratization and empowerment of women in developing countries.

Twelve focus areas were selected, most of which were also relevant to women in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1) Women and Poverty, 2) Education and Training of Women, 3) Women and Health, 4) Violence against Women, 5) Women and Armed Conflict, 6) Women and the Economy, 7) Women in Power and Decision-making, 8) Institutional Mechanisms, 9) Human Rights of Women, 10) Women and the Media, 11) Women and the Environment, 12) Persistent Discrimination against the Girl Child (UN Women, 2015).

Professors from the Sarajevo University **Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović**, **Emina Kečo**, and **Ajnija Omanić** attended the preparatory conference in Vienna, and **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić** and **Amela Šapčanin** formed the Bosnian and Herzegovinian delegation at the Beijing Conference. **Vesna Ferković**, a doctor from Tuzla, went as a representative of the NGO sector (Lačević, 2008: 209).

Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, a human rights lawyer who was also member of the MAK Bosanka organization at the time, had a particular interest in the rights of wartime sexual violence survivors. She went to the Conference unofficially and informally:

We and the delegation from the Virgin Islands were the smallest delegations at the conference – we had only two members. I was the President and Amela Šapčanin had arrived from New York where she worked for the UN (...) I covered the Plenary Sessions and Working Group II for human rights which focused on the definition of suffering, specific crimes, and women in conflict. That is what we were focused on. What I found really interesting at the time was that we entered a wide feminist network, we had strong support from female feminist organizations (...) We arrived at the time when they were lobbying for visibility of violence against women, for its international recognition.

During the wars in the Former Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s, feminists from Western Europe became increasingly interested in the suffering of Balkan women. Their interest and support were essential for the recognition of wartime rape as a crime against humanity and for the processing of those crimes at the Hague Tribunal (Engle, 2005). On the other hand, Western feminists focused on the Bosnian woman as a victim of violence, which made the activism and political engagement of Bosnian women invisible to the West, while making their victimhood hyper-visible (Žarkov, 1997 and 2007). In order to achieve recognition of the suffering of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, activists were forced to accept their identity as victims and employ this as a form of activism. This choice was strategic and political, but it was not recognized as such by the Western feminists nor by the local politicians. A good example of this is the process of negotiation, as described by Jasna Bakšić-Muftić:

Unfortunately we were a case study, and we helped to make ourselves visible and to make our experiences both seen and heard. And the Declaration was adopted based on our experience and lobbying and immense international support.

The end product of the conference was *The Platform for Action*, which lists 20 priorities on which 189 participating governments should focus in future work towards gender equality. Provision 13 states: “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”

The fact that **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić** had not signed the Declaration on behalf of the State made little difference to the practical application of the Declaration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Declaration is, first and foremost, a morally and not legally binding document. It is an aspirational document that states should aim to respect, but a failure to do so triggers no legal consequences. Women did not gain a right to participate in all spheres of public life through the Beijing Platform; instead, they gained a vocabulary through which they could articulate their demands in a way that would guarantee recognition. Jasna Bakšić-Muftić remembers the disappointment that followed the conference. From an environment dominated by women’s voices and political activism she returned to the war-struck Sarajevo:

At the time, the institutions saw no relevance in it [the Platform]. They did not care that I had signed the Declaration. In the wider context of war, of the State, survival, constitutional order – this was something that was seen as less important.

Two months later, the negotiations for the Dayton Peace Accords began. Only two women were present in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian delegation, both as translators, and not a single woman as a negotiator. The first peace negotiations signed after the Beijing conference did not follow the Platform's main provisions. In terms of gender equality, the Dayton Peace Accords were the Platform's first failure.

2.4 THE DAYTON PEACE ACCORDS

The Dayton Peace Accords were signed on 14th December 1995 in Paris. It was the last of a series of attempts to establish peace, of which the Washington Agreement from 1994 establishing the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is perhaps the most worthy of a mention. The negotiations lasted from 1st until 21st November 1995 in the Dayton, Ohio military base, in the United States. The main participants were Presidents Alija Izetbegović, of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Franjo Tuđman of Croatia, Slobodan Milošević of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and a number of representatives of the international community. Marina Kavaz-Siručić argues in her master's thesis *The Gender Dimension of the Peace Process for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-2007)* (2009, 28:9) that the negotiations were extremely 'masculine' in nature from the very beginning; the participants used their time at the military base to play sports, throw dinner parties, and attend the local nightclubs. Their performance of heteronormative masculinity could thus serve as a way to unite the negotiators despite their different ethno-nationalist goals.

The Accords consist of the General Framework for Peace and 11 Annexes. The Agreement divided Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities and established the Office of the High Commissioner (OHR). Annex IV of the Peace Agreement is also the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The goal of the Accords was primarily to end the war and to establish a democratic state based on human rights values, but it was also to prevent the possibility of future conflict (Chandler, 2006).

The signing of a peace agreement is the moment at which a new society is formed. If women are excluded, as both actors and subjects, from both the negotiations and signature, then it is difficult to imagine that their voices will be fully represented in the emerging society. If women are completely absent from the formation of the new order, how can it be expected that that same order will recognize them as equal and will encourage their participation in public life?

In the introduction to her book *This is not Our War*, Swannee Hunt (2004: xix) remembers the process of signing one of the documents in the White House – there were only five women in the room, all five American, alongside 99 men. Although a greater proportion of women were university-educated than men, women were absent from the high-level meetings. Hunt (2004: xix) explains: *The US hosts did not think to invite them and the Bosnian leaders did not think to bring them.* That is precisely the issue with the lack of women in executive power – their participation and roles are decided by men who can choose whether or not to include them.

Besima Borić reflects on the role of women in political life: *Women are used to doing things, to promoting the ideas of others, whether these be the party's or the leader's, but they are rarely the creators of ideas in public and political spaces. And that is a problem, the relationship of the leaders towards them –*

they are seen as someone to be counted on to do, to finish a job.

There was only one woman in the Croatian delegation - the chief of the Defense Minister's Cabinet - but as she was not a member of the smaller delegation that attended the preliminary negotiation sessions, she was absent during the actual negotiations (Kavaz-Siručić, 2009: 32). There were no women on the BiH negotiation team, but **Amira Kapetanović** and **Sabina Berberović** did attend the negotiations as translators. After the war, Amira Kapetanović became the BiH Ambassador to Hungary, and later on the Ambassador to the UN in Vienna. The negotiations were, in a way, the beginning of her political career (she worked as an official translator for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina before Dayton and so attended all the peace negotiations between 1992 and 1996); however, both her and Sabina Berberović's participation consisted of conveying and interpreting political ideas and not of creating them (Banham, 2006; McLeod, n.d.). Men led the negotiations; women translated them.

Kati Marton, the wife of late Richard Holbrook, who spearheaded the negotiations on behalf of the US Government, had perhaps the greatest access to the negotiating table and the actors around it. She recalls that as Holbrook's wife, she had the task of lobbying participants. She was not seen as a threat due to her gender, and it was precisely for this reason that she could present her husband's ideas and not have them immediately rejected (Marton, 2013).

Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović, a member of the war Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and one of the few high-ranking women in government in BiH at the time, explains how the biggest issue during the negotiation process was the inequality of power between parties:

Our relationship in the negotiations was not equal. It is easier for someone to negotiate and draw on maps if their people aren't dying. If you are in a position where your people are dying every day then it is less simple. And in the Presidency, as everywhere else, there are always people who have different opinions. So the negotiations were very long and difficult, they had a tough time.

Ljujić-Mijatović remembers how she left the earlier negotiations:

When I saw how Milošević was rearranging the country, drawing borders in pencil, I just stood up and left. Although that might have been rude, I just couldn't stay there.

From the beginning of the war and her stepping up to her position, **Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović** lobbied for a unified, multiethnic state and so the negotiations on dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina were completely against her beliefs:

I told [President] Clinton when I was in the White House – please, if you divide Bosnia, you will get nothing. The outcome will be terrible. And was this true? They went ahead and divided it during Dayton and what did they get? A quasi-state - nothing.

Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović's refusal to negotiate may indicate that she lacked the stomach for politics – or alternatively that, like most male politicians, she stuck by her ideas and goals and was not ready to compromise. Marina Kavaz-Siručić (2009: 25) posits that women are perceived as more flexible, less nationalistic, and more willing to compromise. However, this line of argument could be the reason for why women are absent from negotiations; it may be feared that their perceived tameness will compromise the achievement of political goals. On the other hand, when women remain loyal to their principles, as Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović did, their lack of flexibility is perceived as brash and shortsighted and is, for that reason, valued less. A woman leaving the negotiating table is seen as rude, while a man behaving in the same way would be considered strong. The perception of Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović was just as described when she refused to compromise her ideals during negotiations: *I was [at the negotiations] perhaps three to four times and I said – I think this is a waste of time and I can't do it, but if you think otherwise, go ahead. I wouldn't let him [Milošević] keep drawing, but then they'd tell me – you are too stubborn, you are not the right person for negotiations.*

The greatest achievement of the Dayton Peace Accords was the end of the war, but the inadequacy of the newly founded order has become acutely apparent only in the postwar period. Women are less represented in both the legislative and the executive branches of government, despite the existence of a quota system. Bosnia is suffering not merely from a deficit of women in politics, but rather, as **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić** aptly said during her interview: *There needs to be a clear difference made between women in politics and women's politics, because I think there are women in politics, but there is a lack of women's politics.*

The truth is that there has been progress in the fight for gender equality in the 20 years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. The past two decades has seen, amongst other measures, the introduction of and eventual increase in electoral quotas, the establishment of The Club of Women Parliamentarians FBiH, and a legislative reform that included the adoption of laws on Gender Equality, Prohibition of Discrimination, Protection against Domestic Violence and the latest Employment Rights Law, which provides for the possibility of establishing a fund for the protection of expectant mothers and harmonizes the rights of expectant mothers employed in the private and public bodies in the FBiH. Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) was also ratified and has served as a basis for two National Action Plans (for the periods of 2010 - 2013 and 2014 - 2017) which develop a strategy for increasing the number of women in the Legislature, the Executive, and the security sector. Bosnia and Herzegovina is also a signatory to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been a part of the Constitution since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. The State also submitted a Compiled fourth and fifth report to the CEDAW Committee in 2011.

However, 20 years after the Dayton Peace Accords, women are absent from the negotiating table on constitutional reform; since Dayton until today, ethnicity has been the single most recognized means of identification.

We asked women who had shaped the BiH political scene in the last 20 years whether the Dayton Peace Accords lacked a gender dimension. Most consider that the absence of women was understandable at the time, because the primary aim of the negotiations was to end the war. However, their answers reveal a plurality of perspectives and opinions about women, politics, activism, progress, and the future. Contrary to most academic works in this area, in which the absence of women during the peace negotiations is linked to later discrimination during peacetime, the experiences of our interviewees reveal a complex reality in which the absence of women at the negotiating table is just one part of the problem. Another, equally relevant aspect is the failure to recognize women's work and activism as political, inevitably leading to their exclusion from peace processes.

Besima Borić considers that the fact that women did not attend the formal part of the negotiations did not diminish their role in postwar, post-Dayton reconstruction:

I am not really convinced that women would have done something better during the peace negotiations - I'm really not. There was a very specific set of circumstances and at the time, whether a person was male or female was perhaps less important than the content and the context of events. On the other hand there was an indication that women can truly contribute in the practical sense of re-establishing everyday life. Who were the first people to cross the Entity lines right after the war, after the Peace Accords? Women. Women were the ones who moved first; displaced women went to see their old land and houses in the other Entity, in both entities. Women went first – they were explorers in a sense, the ones who communicated first.

Hafeza Sabljaković considers that women would not have been able to contribute significantly to the negotiations because the scope of available solutions was so limited that there was no satisfactory solution. On the other hand, **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić** considers that the limited nature of the contribution that could potentially have been made by women was grounded in the fact that women who were active in politics at the time were not sufficiently aware of gender equality issues to focus on the gendered aspect of the negotiations:

Even if [women] had been there, I am not sure how much impact they would have had. They simply did not have the [gender] sensibility and the feminist approach, just as most women today lack those things. Would they have acted differently to men? The time [before] was shaped by an ideological vacuum, a kind of gender blindness – there was a perception that all gender issues were resolved, that gender was a non-issue. You had women who were nationalists, just like men – and you can see that in Politics today – women who are just not sensitized to certain issues.

Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović had a similar experience. Her disappointment with the Dayton Peace Accords is based on the fact that the Agreement made ethnicity hyper-visible, rather than on the fact that it made gender invisible. **Sabiha Husić**, on the other hand, considers that women could have been an effective counter-force to nationalist politics:

I believe that women would have contributed in practice, in effect. Those who signed Dayton and who were in charge of that process, I don't know to what extent they were in touch with the citizens of BiH and to what extent that was a reflection of the will of citizens of BiH, or whether it might be more reflective of a body [politics], a certain tier of government. In that sense I think that women could have given a contribution. I don't know, but I think that then the process wouldn't have resulted in this much division, because Dayton has, quite literally, divided us.

Marina Pendeš, the current Minister of Defense considers that women could not have been present at the peace negotiations, because there was a general lack of women in politics. On the one hand this kind of reasoning seems logical, but on the other it reduces the peace processes to mere formalism and institutionalism. Perhaps the issue with the Dayton Peace Accords was precisely the fact that they completely excluded civil society, while creating an order in which only ethnicity was recognized. Although Women's Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have a unified voice – both **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić** and **Sabiha Husić** recognize that Women's NGOs are too focused on individual projects and are too disjointed, while the Women's Network lacks clear vision – their voices cannot be ignored. **Sabiha Husić** considers the progress made in raising women's awareness in the period since the signing of the Accords (progress that may not be readily apparent in the field of activism):

In our attempt to fight for others, to help, to offer all we had, we weren't [politically] active, nor sufficiently informed. And I think that that is an image of the NGOs that were generally focused on helping, on offering help – they were more focused on providing social services. We weren't taught these things, but we learned them. Today we can already speak of inadequacies that we see, but there still remains a question of whether we are sufficiently active. What I keep noticing is that there is a lack of continuity in lobbying. Even when you talk about the Dayton, there are periods when everyone is loud, and we all want to and think we can, and then the project comes to an end and that's it.

Ismeta Dervoz, a former MP in the State Parliament between 2010 and 2014 considers that the absence of women is one of the weaknesses of the Agreement. However, she also argues that the International Documents and Conventions that became a part of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Constitution through the Dayton Peace Accords serve to alleviate this weakness:

I always perceived Dayton as a beginning of a process that was supposed to lead to certain substantive changes and improvements in the country we live in. That is what I hoped and what I still hope for. Of course, I consider the fact that there were no women in the negotiations a flaw, because clearly there was no gender angle, but we do have all of these international conventions and acts regarding equality and discrimination in our constitution. So in a way, the gender aspect is covered – there is enough to serve as a basis for future work. But if there had been the added perspectives of women, perhaps things could have been seen from a different angle, set up in a way that would have made these further changes easier.

Dervoz also considers that women made great progress in the international arena with Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, which adjusted some of the ideas formed at the Beijing Conference to the 21st century:

Women made great progress when it comes to [UNSCR] 1325. Wherever you had women who were involved in its application and implementation, the end results were better.

Dervoz also highlights that there is a greater presence of women today in the negotiations for EU integration: *In just the last few years, the work of Ms. Merkel, Ms. Mogherini, and Vesna Pusić relating to BiH has contributed to the development of a new image and shaped the relationship between BiH and the international community. Those are the facts.*

Although she recognizes the contribution of Resolution 1325, **Nada Golubović** is more cautious:

[UNSCR] 1325 and CEDAW undoubtedly help women. But, unfortunately, like many other things in BiH, I think that our politicians are not sufficiently aware that they should be following the CEDAW recommendations.

Focus on women during peace processes is welcome, but it is important to preserve a level of skepticism. The Dayton Peace Accords were signed just three months after the Beijing Platform for Action, yet the negotiations completely failed to address women and the gendered aspects of both the war and the peace process. It is difficult to imagine that international standards on gender equality can be implemented in their entirety in post-war and transitional societies without better integration of civil society and institutions and a more open dialogue and better means of communication. After all, the very project of protecting and promoting human rights has come to increasingly depend on the willingness of civil society to counterbalance governments.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In her text *Gender Ghosts* (n.d.) on the participation of women in the Dayton Peace Accords, Laura McLeod argues that the gender ghosts formed during the Dayton Peace Process still shape contemporary politics and activism. McLeod asks the question – how is it possible to think about the gender aspect of the Peace Process, if gender was completely absent? By employing the idea of ‘Haunting’, developed by Avery Gordon to explain the impact of past events on current social developments, McLeod depicts gender as an invisible wall continuously faced by women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in their political activism since Dayton; we only perceive its existence once we encounter the obstacles.

It is for this reason that it is important to recognize women’s experiences and open public discourse to women’s historiographies. The only way to make significant improvements in gender equality over the next 20 years is to make gender visible in all aspects of public life. Only then, after the recognition that social roles are constructed in a way that limits and confines, can we begin to combat the effects of this type of socialization.

3. 1995-2003: POST-DAYTON STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Arijana Aganović

This chapter covers women's participation in the political processes and public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords and the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2003. These two events will offer a temporal framework for the following chapter. The signing of the Accords marked the future of political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina while the adoption of the Gender Equality Law marked a turning point in the process of establishment of institutional mechanisms for combating gender inequality.

3.1 WOMEN IN BIH AFTER THE DAYTON PEACE ACCORDS

The absence of women at one of the most significant events in the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina – one that shaped the country's contemporary political landscape (and which was addressed in detail in the previous chapter) - indicates a lack of sensitivity towards the role women can play in public and political life, but also inattentiveness to all contexts other than the ethno-national. Since the ethno-national lens discriminates against women as well as other marginalized social groups it makes inclusive politics difficult, particularly in a post-conflict society.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a state obligation to prohibit discrimination based on gender, including discrimination in Politics, according to the Dayton Peace Accords, BiH Constitution and international conventions (e.g. ECHR and CEDAW), which are a part of the Accords. The constitutions of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the RS also proscribe a right to establish and join political parties, and the right for citizens to vote and be elected.

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina played a significant role during the war, from their activism, to taking care of their families, and joining the army and serving other aspects of the war effort. The role of women in war and their stories from this period have been explored in *Women Documented* (Čaušević, 2014). After the end of the war women were once again left at the margins of society, not unlike the fate of their predecessors at the end of the World War II. But women activists nevertheless started the process of reconciliation through NGO work.

One of the most active women was **Nada Golubović**, who describes the initial crossings of Entity lines in her interview:

I went with Lidija Živanović, my colleague from the Helsinki Committee of Banja Luka, to the 'Space for Discussion' in Zenica, which was organized by the Helsinki Citizen's Parliament from Banja Luka and Tuzla as a meet-up for women, as early as 1996. I was helping my colleague Lidija to find women in Banja Luka who would attend this conference. I have to say that I was impressed with what was being done in the Federation. At the time, Republika Srpska lacked the means to properly establish an NGO sector, because of the sanctions. So we were in almost complete isolation in Banja Luka. I knew what was happening in the city where I lived; outside of that, I knew second-hand accounts, but I had no information – we had no electricity, we had no newspapers, no news – we lived in complete darkness.

In June 1996, a conference, 'Women Transform Themselves and the Society', was held in Sarajevo, and a workshop, 'Women and Politics' was organized to discuss the need for greater participation by women in political life and the need for a female participation rate of at least 30% in the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary (Taljanović, 2010: 74-5). It is interesting that Alija Izatbegović, the presiding member of the BiH Presidency, greeted participants and honored Bosnian women for the role they played in the war: "Bosnian women and their pride were only one of the factors that helped the defense of BiH, and women were both the fighters during the war, and teachers to their children; they actively opposed evil with their defiance and pride" (ONASA, 28.06.1996). Although this statement from the Head of the State serves to recognize women, this recognition is purely symbolic, because women remained invisible in public and political life.

Some of the participants of the conference were **Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović**, a member of the war Presidency of BiH, and **Sabira Hadžović**, the President of Canton Sarajevo at the time (ONASA, 28.06.1996). **Amila Omersoftić** was a member of the Professional and Organizational Board of the Conference and stated that: "[t]he terrors of newly-formed peace place the greatest burden on women who are the pillar of family life and it is therefore essential to develop a program of social protection for the vulnerable families in BiH" (ONASA, 28.06.1996). **Jasna Bakšić-Muftić**, a member of the organization MAK Bosanka at the time and a participant at the Conference stated that: "[the person] who wants a truly democratic BiH has to consider the participation of women in all aspects of life, because there are very few women who are engaged in politics at the moment" (ONASA, 28.06.1996). **Munira Hadžić**, the President of the *Bosnian Families* Organization from Tuzla spoke at the Conference on the issue of refugees from Srebrenica; **Merdžana Škaljić** spoke about issues relating to the economic and legal position of women in the post-war period, and **Nermina Trajlić** spoke about child protection regimes (ONASA, 28.06.1996).

3.2 1996 - FIRST ELECTIONS AFTER THE WAR

Ethno-nationalist parties came to power during the first multi-party democratic elections in the 1990 and shaped the following period with the creation of a quota system premised on ethnicity. Following the election, women held only 2.92% of seats in the Parliamentary Assembly - the lowest recorded percentage of female participation in legislative bodies in Bosnia since 1946 - and only 5% of seats at local level (Taljanović, 2010:73).

The 1996 General Election did not significantly alter the percentage of women in political life and the representatives of the three ethnic parties (SDA, HDZ and SDS) came to power once again. In accordance with Annex III of the Dayton Peace Accords, the Provisional Election Commission formed by the OSCE Mission to BiH supervised the elections. The results demonstrated that women were insufficiently represented and had lost the political power they had (Borić, 2004: 2).

In the House of Representatives PSBiH, only one seat of 42 (2.4%) was won by a woman – **Mediha Filipović** (Stranka za BiH) - while women made up only 9.4% of candidates on the electoral lists. In the House of Representatives of the Parliament FBiH, women occupied only seven of 140 positions (5%), selected from an electoral list on which a mere 10.5% of candidates were women, and in the National Assembly of RS (NSRS), women held only two of 106 seats (1.9%) and only 7.6% of the candidates on the electoral list were women (Borić, 2004: 2).

Women won 6.4% of seats at the Cantonal level. The Zeničko-Dobojski Canton had the highest number of women – 9 out of 59, while none of the fifteen seats in Canton 10 were won by a woman. Similar results followed the 1997 local elections, when the representation of women in municipalities in FBiH was 6.15% and 2.4% in RS (Bakšić-Muftić, 2003: 52; Taljanović, 2004: 80).

One of the particularly interesting moments in politics was the establishment of the **BiH Women's Party** (Stranka Žena) in May 1996 by **Amila Omersoftić**, whose role in public and political life was mentioned in the previous chapter. Amila Omersoftić remembers forming the Party:

And then I went to Izatbegović in 1995 and said that I would start the BiH Women's Party. He laughed and I said that that was the only way for me to survive, politically, but also in a very existential sense. Women were very loyal during war; we held key posts in the government and we were all connected, we knew each other. So I suggested a Women's Party and we formed it, and some truly excellent women were in it. For example, Nada Rahimić, a lawyer who was the Director of the Post Office in Mostar, and Alma Suljević,

who was a working artist and produced the Centaurus, Pandora's Box, Bloody Grass, etc. There was also Azra Krajšek, a brilliant economist who was in charge of marketing for Energoinvest; and Emira Ruždić who was a judge before the war and then a lawyer, an excellent lawyer. So we made a really great party. We also had Hatidža Hren from Srebrenica - she got us Tuzla, so we only needed Krajina. But we had a well-connected Mostar.

The following pages will further recount the development and dissolution of the Women's Party.

3.3 THERE IS MORE OF US AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 'WOMEN'S QUOTA' IN 1998

The unsatisfactory situation that forced women to the margins of political life motivated women's non-governmental organizations to work towards reform and towards creating a situation that would make women more visible in political life and enable them to participate in decision-making. The campaign began as a cooperation of NGOs coordinated by the OSCE Mission in BiH with the financial support of USAID, with the aim of introducing a women's quota to the Provisional Electoral Rules and Regulations, which had been developed by the Provisional Election Commission after the local elections in 1997 (Borić, 2004:2). A *League of Women Voters* was formed and after gathering 13 women's NGOs, they started the *There is more of us* campaign. The aim of the campaign was to educate and raise awareness amongst the electoral body about the need to include more women in political life, through lobbying, introducing a quota system, and encouraging individuals to vote on the basis of political programs and not party allegiance (Borić, 2004:2). The campaign reached around 14,000 women in the whole of BiH, including both entities, towns, and villages (Borić, 2004:3).

The Department for Democratization of the OSCE Mission to BiH organized a conference in February 1998 during which they introduced their 'Women in Politics' program. The twelve female politicians who attended the meeting agreed to cooperate for the purpose of the program, which aimed to increase women's participation in politics, and they demanded better access to the media and especially to the public TV service (ONASA, 14.2.1998). **Biljana Plavšić**, the president of Republika Srpska at the time, also attended the Conference, as did representatives of political parties from both the RS and the Federation of BiH and representatives of the OSCE (ONASA, 14.2.1998).

In March 1998, **Swanee Hunt**, the former US Ambassador to Vienna with strong ties to BiH, attended a conference on the improvement of the role of women in political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina entitled 'Woman – a New Political Future' in Sarajevo (ONASA, 26.03.1998). She spoke of women who came from all over BiH and who managed to overcome their political and ethnic differences through dialogue (ONASA, 26.03.1998). **Mediha Filipović**, a member of the State Parliament at the time stated that she saw no reason why Politics could not be a woman's vocation, and that it was necessary to believe in women whose task it was to enable other women to recognize female leaders and convince men to recognize them as such (ONASA, 26.03.1998). **Gordana Vidović**, the president of the Serb Farmer's Party in RS was also one of the participants at the Conference. She discussed the issue of underrepresentation of women in politics and argued that political parties

needed to put more women on the electoral lists and change the electoral rules and regulations to include a 30% quota for women: "This Conference is important, above all, because female representatives from different political parties in RS and Federation BiH have gathered in one place, since our goal is to encourage women to put their names forward and so make an improved democracy a real possibility for men and women" (ONASA, 26.03.1998).

In addition to women politicians, **Branka Raguž**, the Ombudsman for Human Rights at the time, also participated in the Conference. She spoke about her work and about the importance of the Institution of the Ombudsman for Human Rights itself, for the democratization of BiH. She said that one of the main reasons for her participation was the fact that many people had contacted the Institution with complaints about human rights abuses, and that many of the complainants were women (ONASA, 26.03.1998).

Nada Golubović remembers the beginning of the NGO lobbying to introduce the quota system:

The first real political action was when our Organization, together with other NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OSCE Mission to BiH, worked on amending the Provisional Rules and Regulations, and I think that that was the moment we realized that we were actually 'doing' politics. The Provisional Rules and Regulations were changed and the women's quota in the elections was essentially introduced in 1998.

Nada Golubović emphasizes that the success of this undertaking was the result of the work of NGOs supported by the OSCE:

The gender quota, I have to say that it wasn't the OSCE's quota, it was based on the initiative by Women's NGOs that were active at the time. The quota was pushed through by Senka Nožica, who was a member of the Commission at the time, and when the male members resisted the 30% quota, she demanded that there be 3 women within the first 10 names – and she demanded exact positions. And we got the quota thanks to a woman. In principle, that quota only means that in the patriarchal society in which we live, we have a right to elect at most 30% women on the open lists. And during the elections in 1998, which were run according to the Provisional Rules and Regulations, there was a possibility that there would be less than 30% of women, and the OSCE was ready to intervene. I think that was the time when we had the most women on all levels of government.

Klelija Balta, a dedicated activist and an expert on women's human rights, also emphasizes the crucial role women themselves played in the introduction of the quota system:

Everything that the OSCE initiated and supported, including the introduction of the quota system, they were receiving the information from women themselves and the only reason the OSCE was involved in pushing it through was because that was the [electoral] system at the time.

Therefore, the *There is more of us* campaign made it possible to introduce the quota system and the closed list system to the Provisional Rules and Regulations in time for the 1998 General Election, which resulted in more women being elected.

During her presentation on the introduction of the quota system in the Electoral Law of BiH which was held in Budapest in 2004, **Besima Borić**, one of the main proponents of the change, posited that although the Provisional Rules and Regulations had an impact on the number of women elected, there was resistance to the introduction of the quota system into the new Electoral Law from both the political parties and the international and local experts who worked on the Law and who offered a number of arguments against the quota (Borić, 2004:3). Besima Borić recalls this period and the first term she was elected to serve in the Parliamentary Assembly:

There was an OSCE project 'Women in Politics', but the women from BiH had already before that, in 1997 and 1998, worked to introduce the 30% quota in the Provisional Rules and Regulations, and I was heavily involved in that. A lot of women were elected to the Federal Parliament in 1998 - I think we made up around 26% of the Parliament, as compared to the previous 2-3%. And at the time, most of us actively participated in the OSCE program I mentioned - 'Women in Politics' and we really achieved a lot. We started lobbying for the introduction of different mechanisms - commissions for gender equality, gender centers. All those things were achieved then. We worked on these issues a lot. And we wanted to create a Club of Women Parliamentarians, that was an idea that we had, to have a club where we, women, could gather. We even tried to do something in terms of that, but we failed.

Azra Hadžiahmetović was elected to the Federal Parliament in 1998, although she was not the top candidate on the electoral list. She mentions that this was a time when the quota system was introduced and recalls that she found this very unnerving at the beginning of her term. She was questioning herself:

Was I elected because I am who I am, or because of the quota? But I stopped thinking that way very quickly, because I realized that without the quota there would not have been any women in politics, and for that reason we were lucky to have the quota system, despite my initial insecurity.

Another argument against the quota system is that women are often put on the electoral lists to fulfill a legal requirement, and not because they are truly qualified. This argument would be valid only if all the candidates on the electoral lists were positioned in order of professional qualification. Considering the fact that the main qualification for such a role is often political same-mindedness, the quotas are a legitimate way of securing the right of women to participation. **Besima Borić**, one of the most prominent advocates of the quota system, considers that women's quotas are a safe way to ensure that women are able to participate in political campaigns (Čauš-Suljić, 2013:18).

In this context, **Azra Hadžiahmetović** says how she never lobbied for gender equality in the same way some of her colleagues had and so she had not encountered the same kind of resistance they had faced, although she dealt with many gendered issues during her political career:

I always thought that women are exceptionally hardworking and qualified and that there are more and less competent women, just like men. I also thought that women should be given an opportunity in this male world, but then it is up to them to use their abilities to create a framework for themselves, create a role for themselves and demonstrate that they are good at what they do.

Azra Hadžiahmetović claims that her political career was never "marked by gender":

I used to speak as an economist, as a professor, as a doctor of economics – if it was about finance, or privatization – I always used the language of the profession. I still think that it is essential to use arguments based on professional knowledge, because those arguments are the strongest, and I am sorry that the discourse of arguments has not taken over, that it hasn't been valued, especially in those years after the war. If it had, I think we would be much better off now.

Azra Hadžiahmetović won 3,567 votes in the 2000 Election and a seat in the Federal Parliament, but she resigned her post a year later after she was elected the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH. She was at the same time also the Governess of BiH at the World Bank in Washington DC.

Azra Hadžiahmetović speaks of this experience:

I am not sure that I was selected because I am a woman, but I know that the political parties and the Alliance considered gender balance as one of the criteria, although not the primary criterion. But I think it was primarily competence based.

Azra Hadžiahmetović was one of the co-founders of Stranka za BiH in 1996 and a member of their executive board. Today she is an MP in the House of Representatives of FBiH. In 1996 and 1997 she was the Dean of Academics of the Faculty of Economics at the Sarajevo University and a member of the University's Governing Board. She has been teaching at postgraduate level at the Faculty of Political Science since 2007. She became the Rapporteur on Economic Questions at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in 2003 and she still holds the post today. She was a member of the Education, Science, Culture and the Media Committee, a member of the Economics Committee at PACE, and a member of the Advisory Committee for the Nobel Prize. At the local elections in 2002 and 2006, she was elected an MP to the House of Representatives of PSBiH. She is currently the Vice-President of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, a member of the Joint Commission for European Integration, and a member of the Joint Commission for Economic Reform and Development. She was a member of the Provisional Commission for drafting of the Census Law of 2011. She has been the Alternative Governor at the International Monetary Fund and the President of the Council of Experts of the Foreign Trade Chamber BiH since 2006. She is a member of the Committee of the Economic Science at the Academy of Arts and Science BiH and a member of the Council of Economists BiH.

She places her involvement with Stranka za BiH in the context of her displeasure at the political situation after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords:

The key motivation for my involvement with the party in 1996 was the situation back then. I spent the war in Sarajevo, and like many, I was a careful observer; I, like other citizens, had not directly participated in events relating to the conflict. I also followed the aftermath of the Dayton Peace Accords and just wasn't satisfied with the existing ruling political parties. They were supposed to help this country, which was completely devastated at the time – socially, demographically, in every other sense, to become normal again, European, with goals and ambitions to join the EU, the NATO, and so on. And the political project I joined offered a vision of a unified country from its very inception, and the focus was on an integrated Europe, on EU integrations, instead of on the disintegration of a small country like Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have a single female member after the war, nor was there a female Prime Minister at any of the levels of the Government. **Biljana Plavšić** had been the only woman President of one of the Entities (Republika Srpska), until 2007 when **Borjana Krišto** was elected the President of FBiH.

Madeline Albright visited Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998 before the General Election and spoke to the female candidates, including **Senka Nožica**, who was competing to become the Bosnian Member of the Presidency. In a

statement she gave to the press, Senka Nožica said that the most important message of the meeting was that Madeline Albright supported the inclusion of women in Politics: "As far as I understood her visit, it had two trajectories – to either support democratic and good practices, or to give a lesson to those who were not honoring Dayton. Doubtlessly she gave her support to women. She had various thoughts about political opportunities, but when it comes to our vision of political participation, our vision is unified. BiH has a new future with women. Women happened to BiH and we will not let this opportunity go lightly." (ONASA, 31.08.1998).

Senka Nožica, who is a lawyer, has also been one of the most influential women in the postwar period. She was a member of the Constitutional Commission of FBiH and a member of the Provisional Election Commission, which played a crucial role in the adoption of the quota system, as **Nada Golubović** also recalled. Senka Nožica was a Republican Party's candidate for the Croat Member of the Presidency at the 1998 General Election. **Hajrija Rahmanović** from the Bosnian Party (BOSS) was also a candidate for the post of the Bosniak Member of the Presidency the same year.

Besima Borić argued that the International Monitoring Mission noticed irregularities in the work of the political parties, which ranged from ignoring the rules, to replacing experienced women on the electoral lists with candidates who were younger and less experienced and who could be more easily persuaded to step down for the benefit of their male colleagues once the elections were over (Borić, 2004: 3). The so-called alibi-candidates - candidates who were wives or daughters of established politicians - were also frequent (Borić, 2004: 3).

Amila Omersoftić also recalls instances of putting pressure on women candidates and intimidating them when the Women's Party (Stranka Žena) appeared during the 1998 election:

HDZ and SDA were bickering and so we made the best list possible and it forward during the election. And then, I swear to God, difficulties started – all the women were taken to police stations, questioned about who they were and what they were trying to achieve. Strong pressure was put on them and I realized then that it would be a difficult fight, especially considering all the unscrupulous male fighting I had witnessed.

Amila Omersoftić adds that this political party had attracted wide public attention and had a positive impact on breaking the stereotypes of women in Politics:

Look, we were a small party, but what I found interesting – I was working at the [Bh] Television at the time and everyone would come to see Woman BiH perform, to see who these women were, and they would have a really negative attitude. But these were highly

professional women, and suddenly there was a change in attitude to – “Oh, wow, look.” In a way, women got their place; a positive idea about women in Politics was formed. And we got more votes in those first elections than other small parties did, even for example Spahić's party [the GDS], but we still did not make it in.

As a result of NGO lobbying, which was supported by the OSCE, the Provisional Election Commission introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists in 1998. Article 7.50 was introduced in the Provisional Rules and Regulations, obliging parties to have at least three women placed equitably among the top ten candidates (Borić, 2004: 3).

The quota system, in combination with the closed list system, was used during the General Election in 1998 and led to an increase in the number of women in the Legislature and the Executive. 26% of women were elected to the House of Representatives of PSBiH, 15% to the House of Representatives of FBiH, and 22.8% to the National Assembly of RS (Taljanović, 2010: 80). The presence of women at Cantonal level rose to 18.46% (Čauš-Suljić, 2013: 22).

It is interesting to note that the Women's Party did not fulfill the 30% quota requirement in 1997 as they did not have the required proportion of male candidates on their electoral lists. They were banned by the OSCE from participating in the election as a result. In response, the members of the Women's Party decided to form the Student's Party and participated in the election using a joint list. In our interview with **Amila Omersoftić**, she emphasized that not a single man wanted to be a member of the Women's Party and that this was the reason they had had no choice but to join forces with students. Amila Omersoftić recalls how, paradoxically, the provision that was intended to increase the number of women in politics had precisely the opposite effect:

That was so unfair to women. We could have gained seats [in the election], but once we had to include the men, it came down to – which men, where to find them – no one wanted to do it. Our politics wasn't – let's just get anyone – we wanted to have a really strong party, and to slowly build it up.

The rules of the Provisional Election Commission allowed more women to appear on electoral lists, but the general practice of ignoring women still continued in executive government. The Council of Ministers BiH did not have a single woman in their midst; of the 67 individuals appointed by the Council of Ministers, only four were women (5.9%). The Government of the Federation did not have a single woman minister. **Mirsada Čurčić-Selimović** became a Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Trade in April of 1999, when she replaced Amir Zukić (for the duration of the 1999/2000 term). Of 200 persons who were appointed to different functions by the Government of the Federation, only 34 (17%) were women (Seksan, 2002). In the 21 Ministries in the Government of RS, there was not a single woman minister (Dani, 2002).

Amila Omersoftić remembers some successes of the Women's Party. **Rasema Magazinović** was elected to the Parliament BiH in 1998 and the Party had representatives in the Cantonal Government in Goražde. In the Assembly of Zeničko-Dobojski Canton, the Women's Party, in coalition with the Students' Party, won two seats:

Rasema Magazinović in Zenica was exceptional; she just dominated her environment. And then I gathered some students and founded a Students' Party and we made a coalition, but it was all... Look - to start a political party you have to have a million Convertible Marks, and we went in without anything. We got 40,000 from the OSCE for our first election campaign.

Amila Omersoftić also remembers the pressures to which the Party was subjected and its dissolution after they could not survive on the BiH political scene:

I think that the greatest harm was done to us by not letting us start off as a purely female political party. Women entered Politics in 1998 as a necessary evil. And they are perceived as a necessary evil even today. I think the key issue is that women are only voting machines now – they've never agreed, never formed a united political front – they are just spokespeople for their parties, as loud as they sometimes can be. The idea that women can be a relevant contributing force to Politics was extinguished at the same time as the Women's Party.

She also explained the political context in which the smaller parties had no chance of success:

Considering the terrible pressure that was created in 1998, not even the SDP had a chance. And we decided that we had no more money to spend; we could not risk the women who were in the Party and we shut the Party down in 2000. We said it no longer made any sense and we dissolved it.

In an interview for the Radio Sarajevo news portal published in August 2015, Amila Omersoftić told the interviewing female journalist that she was the first journalist to contact her regarding the **Women's Party**. She also highlighted just how unfair the media is on women, and especially on women in politics. The article on the Radio Sarajevo news portal was published following the initiative by the Sarajevo Open Centre, shortly after we interviewed **Amila Omersoftić**, further demonstrating the lack of media interest in women in Politics. The indifference shown to facts of such significance for the political life of BiH demonstrates the systemic nature of the invisibility and underrepresentation of women in Politics and poses an important challenge for political activism in the field of gender equality.

Besima Borić also considered the role of the media in our interview and spoke of her own experiences with the media during her political career. Borić said that she was consistently present in the media, that there *wasn't too much of anything*, and that the topics were usually related to the issues on which she was working. However, she also said that she was not happy with the entirety of media representation, but that she has never *insisted on and created relationships through which [she] could use the media*, which she sees as a mistake. Besima Borić elaborates:

The thing that I used to do, and I still sometimes do is – I write a piece with my own personal reflection on something and I send that in. I will probably start doing that more in this upcoming period. A while back, when there was still the “Readers’ Comments” section in Oslobođenje, I used to write about events and things, and I would publish it on the news portal. I had that kind of self-initiative, but only if I had really achieved something.

She says she never used to put too much effort into election campaigns, during which most public appearances were reserved for men:

I had an occasional opportunity to participate in the early years, mostly if the topics were specifically related to women, but that was never in a manner that would have allowed me to establish myself, to show off, that's for sure.

She says, she is no longer of interest to the media today:

I am no longer in the Parliament and unless I achieve something on my own, I can hardly be in the media. In my experience, the media is generally focused on people performing certain functions – if you do not hold the post you will only be present in the media to the extent to which your party points the media in your direction, or if it occurs to somebody that maybe it would be a good idea to include you.

3.4 OPEN LISTS AND THE 2000 ELECTION

The electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on Annex III (Elections) and Annex IV (The Constitution) of the General Framework Agreement and the Electoral Law of BiH. In the period between 1996 and 2000, the OSCE had jurisdiction over the organization and conduct of elections in BiH, based on the Provisional Rules and Regulations established by the Provisional Election Commission.

Open electoral lists were introduced during the elections in 2000. The lists legally obliged political parties to include within those on the electoral list a proportion of at least 30% of the less represented sex. One of the first two candidates had to be a member of the underrepresented sex, two amongst the first five candidates, and three amongst the top seven. Two elections were held in 2000 – the local elections took place in April and the General Election followed in November. The 30% quota was applied to all electoral lists.

Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, who is an activist and professor at the Law Faculty of the University of Sarajevo, fully supports the quota system in a written analysis of the elections and the Electoral Law. She argues that these provisions can be beneficial to women in BiH: “Women have been given an opportunity to show their political abilities, to gain their own political physiognomy. The voters re-elected the women with whom they were familiar, who were the party representatives. They demonstrated their trust by electing them from the open lists. This proves that the quota system needs to stay in use, not only in the Legislature, but also in the Executive Government.” (Bakšić-Muftić, 2000: 157).

In the interview we conducted with Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, she confirms this analysis of the quota system, although she recognizes that an increase in the number of women might not necessarily mean more gender-sensitive politics:

I support the quota system, although the quota system alone cannot achieve some of the goals of the feminist movement. The number of women in Politics does not guarantee that the condition of women will improve. But feminist activism is a parallel process and you can't expect women who are politicians to also be feminists. That would be unrealistic.

Besima Borić is a proponent of the quota system, but also of the closed list system and claimed that: “Open lists are in favor of the more popular and recognizable candidates who are usually men” (Borić, 2004: 3). During the General Election in 2000, fourteen MPs from Republika Srpska were elected directly to the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (which has a total of 42 seats) and none were women, and only two of the representatives elected from FBiH were women, which meant that the overall representation of women was 5% (Buka portal, 06.11.2005).

Nada Golubović also spoke about the negative impact of introducing the open list system:

Later, with the introduction of the open lists there was almost a counter-attack from men who organized only their own campaigns and ordered the women in their parties to make them sandwiches while they occupied the public space. The whole of BiH, not just the area where I live, is very patriarchal, as is essentially the most of the world (in my humble opinion), and so women are losing more and more frequently. There is an increasing presence of women in different parliaments at different times, but then there is a sharp fall when men remember that they need to campaign against women. Men primarily campaign in a way that makes them hyper-visible in the media and they work against the female candidates [from their own parties]. Women don't do that – women don't have dirty campaigns, at least, not in my experience of working with women politicians.

On the other hand **Klelija Balta**, who is an activist, was a fierce proponent of the open lists because of the well-known criticism that closed lists are prone to manipulation by political parties. She argues that open lists give less power to political leaders. Balta provides support for her argument that manipulation is inherent in the closed list system: *The closed lists were not working because women were given papers to sign stating that they did not want to be in the Parliament, or anywhere else.* Yet, although she supports open lists, Balta recognizes that there has been a significant gap in the implementation of this idea:

When open lists were introduced, we - women, activists, and the OSCE- failed to work on the empowerment of women politicians, we failed to demand that there be at least 30% of women politicians in the media, and also in CIK – to give them as much power as we can and to give them a platform. We didn't do that and then it was too late; everyone had moved on and focused on something else.

Klelija Balta is an activist and an expert on women's human rights who gained her professional experience in various organizations, of which her decade-long work as a gender advisor for the UNDP stands out. Balta was also a pioneer of feminist activism in Tuzla where she helped form one of the first NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina – *Vive Žene* - in 1994. The goal of this organization was to offer quick and efficient, yet continuous psychosocial help to women and children who were facing various form of trauma and torture (psychological, physical, and sexual). In addition to her work in activism, Klelija Balta also has experience of working in Politics. She was a member of the Liberal Party (LS) for years and she was elected to the Municipal Council of Tuzla during the first elections in 1990. At the beginning of the war, Balta started working as the Tuzla Dubrava Airport Commander's Officer for Communications. She left the Liberal Party in 1998 when the party decided to enter into a coalition with SDA:

That kind of political environment offered me no possibilities to work. Things were being arranged outside of the regular meetings and assemblies – decisions were made at private meetings, football games and similar male socials.

Upon leaving the Liberal Party in 1998, Klelija Balta participated in the creation of the Women's Economic Network, which aimed to convince the Prime Ministers of both entities to sign an agreement to establish institutional gender mechanisms, including the future Gender Centers of FBiH and RS, which will be further discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

3.5 ADOPTION OF THE ELECTORAL LAW IN 2001 AND THE 2002 ELECTIONS

The Electoral Law of BiH was adopted on 28th September 2001. It was passed during a session of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH held on 21st August and during a session in the House of Peoples held on 23rd August, and came into force once the Provisional Election Commission had been dismantled (Centralna izborna komisija BiH, 2011). The Electoral Law of BiH envisioned the establishment of a permanent Election Commission BiH as a supervisory body for its implementation and a coordinating body for the organization and conduct of all future elections in BiH.

One of the first members of the Commission, and also its only female member, was **Lidija Korać**. Lidija Korać was elected to the post of President of the Commission during its second sitting, on 27th November 2001 (Centralna Izborna Komisija, 2011). The Law was amended in 2006 in order to transfer the jurisdiction for the organization of elections from the OSCE to the Central Election Commission of BiH, thus giving the Commission the status of the state supervisory body in charge of organization and conduct of elections in BiH.

The General Election in 2002 was the first after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords to be entirely under domestic jurisdiction. It included both the quota system and the open list system. The number of women increased in the cantonal assemblies, the Federal Parliament, and the House of Representatives PSBiH, but diminished in the National Assembly of RS. A total of 63 women (21.9%) were elected to the cantonal assemblies, 21 women (21%) to the House of Representatives PFBiH, and 6 women (14.3%) to the House of Representatives PSBiH (Borić, 2004: 4).

After the 2002 election, no women were elected into the Presidency of BiH, nor as the Prime Ministers or Presidents of Entities.

3.6 THE GENDER CENTRES – ESTABLISHING THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

An important step towards achieving systemic equality is the establishment of institutional mechanisms to ensure gender equality at different levels of government. The Agency for Gender Equality operates within the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees BiH (ARS BiH). It was preceded by the Gender Center of the Federation BiH (GC FBiH) and the Gender Center of Republika Srpska (GC RS). Parliamentary commissions for gender equality at state, entity, and cantonal levels have also been formed.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić is a lawyer who has been the Director of the Agency for Gender Equality for almost 12 years. She started her career as a legal Advisor in the Human Rights Department at the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the period between 1998-2000, she was an advisor to the Office of the President of FBiH, where she worked on implementation of the project *Improving the Status of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. She deserves credit for the establishment of the Gender Center of the Federation BiH and for initializing gender-mainstreaming activities. She was the Director of the Gender Center FBiH from 2000-2004, when she became the Director of the Agency for Gender Equality.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić remembers this period:

While I was working for the Office of the President, in addition of my advisory responsibilities I also supervised a project I really liked which was of particular importance to the President [Ejup Ganić], on improving the status of women in BiH. The Professor wanted to gather all women, regardless of their ethnicity and political orientation, to jointly discuss topics of interest to women. It worked similarly to The Club of Women Parliamentarians, which operates now. And to my great pleasure, I spearheaded that successfully, and we had a group of women from various political parties, who I could tell really wanted this initiative to work.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić further explained that the project was based on the Beijing Declaration and aimed to enable women to undertake a number of activities, funded by donors through the Office of the President. They organized visits to various cities in BiH, during which women organized conferences with the aim of producing working conclusions and platforms that could enable participants to conduct their activities in the parliaments. Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić recalls President Ejup Ganić's visit to Finland, where he was promised support for the project by the Finnish President.

An expert from Finland worked with Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić between 1998 and 1999. According to Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, the pilot project was supposed to include both the RS and the FBiH, and the three pilot municipalities were supposed to be Livno, Prijedor and Travnik:

And then we included gender mainstreaming in that gender concept within the project – we designated contact persons in the ministries – even Finland hadn't had gender mainstreaming at the time. We introduced it first, and they followed. And we demanded there be a man and a woman from each ministry, and the same was for municipalities. And then we ran trainings in gender sensitization, on what gender is, what gender roles are, what reproductive rights are, a sort of basic training on gender.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić deserves the credit for the establishment of the Gender Center of the Federation BiH and for initializing gender mainstreaming activities. She also explained why the term *gender* remained in use in its English language form; as part of the activities relating to the Gender Equity and Equality Project (GEEP), there were a number of exercises which used the term 'gender', but which never appropriately translated this term.

Klelija Balta also reflected on GEEP and its success in terms of the establishment of the Gender Centers of FBiH and RS. She recalls that the project was initially supervised by Lejla Somun Krupalija on behalf of the NGO *Initiative for Better and Humane Inclusion*, until it was taken over by the Gender Centers.

Balta considers that Filipović-Hadžiabdić deserves the most credit for the establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in BiH:

Samra is the person with an incredible God-given ability to think strategically. She has made some great proposals. She has this power; she's a true lioness.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić also reflected on her activities relating to GEEP and the support she had from the President of FBiH Ejup Ganić. Once an informal body was established in the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić was offered the responsibility of running it:

He [Ejup Ganić] offered me to supervise this body. However, I was already running the GEEP project, which was similar to it. I knew I could help with international relations, in terms of international correspondence. So I offered to be the coordinator for international affairs, instead of the coordinator of that body, because I saw that as an opportunity to contribute. There were people who couldn't speak English in that organization - that was not their primary job, and so they were waiting for someone else to take it on. I

made proposals, translated, did the research. We conducted an analysis to determine what we were, because we didn't know what we were exactly, what we wanted, what we needed, and how to best incorporate gender in the institutional mechanisms and the institutions themselves.

Filipović-Hadžiabdić recalls that the idea to establish the FBiH Gender Center was formed in the final stage of the project and so she suggested it to the President of the Federation: *He did not like that I didn't want to run the other body [for social affairs]; I mean he did not dislike it, but he commented on it.*

After GEEP ended, Filipović-Hadžiabdić says she focused on finding institutional grounding for the future Gender Center:

Nedjeljko Despotović, the Minister without a portfolio, helped me during consultations with both specific advice and advice on who to contact for further advice. He helped me strategically, and I also discussed where to establish the Gender Center with my colleagues from other Offices. We had an idea to make a Bureau, which was a great idea, but bureaus are the first to get cut when there are budget cuts. They are also too removed from the government so there is less influence.

She further recalls how the Constitutional Court judge **Valerija Galić** helped her with registering the Gender Center as a professional government body:

It wasn't easy, but there was an order, and then the order was passed and then came the naming. In the meantime I was finishing GEEP project, which passed the final audit without any objections. The audit was performed by KGM, the famous audit company, which wasn't the general practice in 2000. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was thrilled by the audit and so they promised to support the establishment of the Gender Center.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić remembers how the change in government in 2000 and the arrival of the Alliance (Democratic Alliance for Change – a coalition of parties) lead to a systematization of posts, and later to the decision of the Ministry of Justice to dissolve the Gender Center on the basis that it was not necessary given the existence of the Gender Equality Commission in the Federal Parliament.

I had to explain to the Minister that the Commission is a part of the Legislature and that the Gender Center is within the Executive branch, and that our accession to the Beijing Declaration obliges us to establish gender mechanisms at all levels of government. He had to understand that the Commission and the Gender Center were not one and the same and how surprised I was that he, as a lawyer, could confuse the executive and the legislative branches.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić recalls the establishment of the Gender Center RS:

In the meantime, since we received a very good evaluation, Finland decided to support the establishment of the Gender Center. While we were working in the Federation, Finland asked that RS also be included in the process. We had one joint Executive Board and everything that was done in the Federation was done in RS. I was trying to get the funds from Finland and the Finns decided to really support the establishment of the Gender Centers.

After the establishment of the Gender Center of the Federation, there followed support for the establishment of the Gender Center of RS:

Through GEEP we had an executive board and the directors of GC FBiH and GC RS worked together. We developed the programs together; we worked together. One GC would make a program for school directors and psychologists and the other would make a program for the Democracy and Human Rights subject, and then we would exchange them and discuss our ideas.

4. 2003-2015: THE ERA OF GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISMS

Edita Miftari

This chapter covers women's politics and activism in the period between the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2003 and 2015, when this chapter was written. The Gender Equality Law is seen as a turning point for the political participation of women in BiH, primarily because it demanded the harmonization of other laws, including the Electoral Law, with the 40% gender quota it introduced. Another key moment for women's organizations was the formation of The Club of Women Parliamentarians FBiH in 2013. This chapter will elaborate on the challenges and obstacles the women in the Federal Parliament faced during the implementation of this initiative. The chapter will also discuss the role of women in the Executive since recent years have seen an increase in the number of posts held by women at all levels of the BiH government. The internal organization of political parties will also be discussed, specifically – the role women play in the decision-making bodies of their chosen political parties. In its conclusion, this chapter will present the emerging female politicians who represent the future of women's politics in BiH.

4.1 THE GENDER EQUALITY LAW 2003

The Gender Equality Law was adopted in 2003. It is perhaps the most noteworthy tool used by women in their struggle to achieve gender equality given its introduction of gender equality to public policy. The Law is based on the provisions of the CEDAW, though certain terms, definitions, and Articles appearing in the Law have been amended over the years to ensure better implementation.

The Law addresses the question of gender equality in both the private and the public sphere, promotes and protects the principles of gender equality, and guarantees equal opportunity to all BiH citizens. It also obliges public bodies at all levels of government, as well as the local self-government bodies in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and the political parties and organizations performing public functions, or which are owned or controlled by the State, Entity, Canton, City, Municipality, to secure equal gender representation in governance and representation (Art. 20 of the Gender Equality Law).

The director of the Gender Equality Agency BiH **Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić**, recalls the drafting and passing of the Gender Equality Law, in which she participated as the director of the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH:

I have to say it passed [through the Parliament] quickly and easily. During the drafting process, we were all learning how to implement international standards and sometimes we agreed on things, but we also disagreed. Of course there was resistance as well, because this was something completely new and it was challenging certain stereotypes completely. But I wouldn't say it was particularly difficult. It was passed pretty easily.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić also argues that a distinction must be made between political correctness and politicians' true belief in gender equality values, because most of them don't really believe this, but they are making politically correct statements. We can disagree, but the law is the law. And for them, the Gender Equality Law does not have the same weight as any other law. Why not?

The Gender Equality Agency was established the following year under the purview of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees in order to monitor the implementation of the Gender Equality Law. It is a supervisory body that coordinates various gender equality initiatives. Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić recalls this period and the initial obstacles that the Agency encountered:

It was a new kind of a challenge. It was a new institution, newly established, and it started working and analyzing legislation. They wouldn't send us laws from the government and the responsible Ministries refused to send us drafts, which they were obliged to do. Then I formed a relationship with the Parliamentary Gender Equality

Commission and asked them to send us the laws for analysis as soon as they received them, so that we could suggest amendments. Not all of the amendments were accepted, but people started talking and that was important.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić remembers the initial experience of working with the Council of Ministers:

First they made fun of us in the Government – they thought it was something girls were doing, something forced on us by the international community. We were seen as girls; there were a lot of things wrapped in that.

The adoption of the Gender Equality Law and the establishment of the Gender Equality Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina were also significant at the time as indicators of the state's willingness to implement the eight Millennium Development Goals (one of which included gender equality and women's empowerment) from the Millennium Summit. In October 2000, shortly after the Summit, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* – the first Security Council resolution to focus on the impact of war on women and girls and on the contribution women can make to conflict resolution. The Resolution also requires an increase in the number of women in decision-making processes, conflict-prevention and post-conflict processes, peace negotiations, and peace operations. It recognizes the specific needs of girls and women in conflict situations and demands the punishment of sexual and other kinds of violence against women; provisions which were further elaborated in Resolution 1820 on *Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* (2008), Resolution 1888 on the *Protection of Women and Girls from Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict* (2009), and Resolution 1889 on the *Protection of Women and Girls in Post-Conflict Situations* (2009). These resolutions were followed by Resolution 1960 (2010), Resolution 2106 (2013), and Resolution 2122 (2013).

The first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted in July 2010, for the period 2010-2013, by a Council of Ministers Decision. It is the first National Action Plan for the implementation of 1325 in Southeastern Europe and as such has been used as an example in the creation of other NAPs in neighboring countries. The Council of Ministers BiH made a decision during its 154th session held in June 2011 to establish a coordinating body to supervise the implementation of the NAP. Members of the body included representatives from the security sector institutions that had participated in drafting the NAP and individuals from the *United Women Organization* who represented the NGO sector. The Council of Ministers BiH adopted its first Annual Report on the Implementation of the NAP in September 2011 and the House of Representatives PSBiH followed in November 2011. The second Report was adopted by the Council of Ministers in December 2012. In 2013 at the end of the three-year implementation period,

an independent evaluation of the implementation of the NAP was conducted. The recommendations made in this evaluation then served as the basis of the new National Action Plan for the 2014 – 17 period. This Action Plan was made by the Gender Equality Agency in cooperation with the institutions in the coordinating body and in consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations. The Institute for Inclusive Security and UN Women BiH provided professional and technical support as a part of the *Resolution to Act* program (Gender Equality Agency, n.d.).

The implementation of Resolution 1325 in BiH was monitored by *Women for Women* in coordination with UNIFEM in 2007, in order to secure successful lobbying for this resolution at state level. *Women for Women* worked with nine other women's organizations, The Gender Equality Agency BiH, and the Entity Gender Centers during the planning stages of the monitoring strategy (Žene Ženama, 2007: 7). The report is based on the preliminary research on the implementation of Resolution 1325 conducted by *Women for Women* in 2005 – 2006. Additional interviews and further research was conducted in 2007.

4.2 40% WOMEN ON THE ELECTORAL LISTS

Although the 'women's quota' requiring three women among the top ten candidates of the electoral list was introduced in 1998 and the Electoral Law establishing the Central Election Commission was adopted in 2001, little has been done to actually involve women in political processes in BiH. Even after the Gender Equality Law was passed in 2003, the State failed to harmonize the Electoral Law with the Gender Equality Law requirement that members of the less represented sex must be represented to a proportion of at least 40% of all public bodies. It took ten years for the amendments to be included in the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.

Ismeta Dervoz proposed the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Electoral Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2012. It was passed in the House of Representatives on 22nd November 2012 during its 36th session, and in the House of Peoples on 26th February 2013 during its 27th session. The Law amended the provisions regulating the functioning of the bodies in charge of conducting elections, the certification and placement of candidates for the election, and the obligation to ensure that at least 40% of candidates on the electoral lists are members of the less represented sex. The current Article 3 of the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Electoral Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina reads: "equal gender representation exists if one of the genders is represented by at least 40% of the candidates on the electoral list." This is an increase by 10% of the previous quota requirement of 30%.

Ismeta Dervoz was halfway through her first and only term in the House of Representatives PSBiH when she proposed the draft Law. After a productive career as a freelance artist, music editor, editor, and a producer of programs at RTV BiH and RTV FBiH, Ismeta Dervoz ran as an SBB Candidate for the House of Representatives during the 2010 General Election. She was directly elected to the State Parliament with 11,300 votes despite her position as number two on the electoral list. She remembers the months before the final race in the 2010 Election:

Towards the end of August when the electoral lists were already finalized, I was offered the second spot on the list for the State Parliament. This was underpinned by a desire to present our party as a better political option. From the conversations and the information I had had, I thought this would only entail candidacy, because up until then, nobody had been elected directly to the Parliament from being second on the list. But then, that is exactly what happened. I was the first person to be elected from that position – the second place, the position always reserved for women.

During her four-year term in the House of Representatives PSBiH, Ismeta Dervoz was the Deputy President of the Commission for Gender Equality and a member of the Joint Commission (of both Houses) for European Integration. She was also a member of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and a member of the PSBiH Delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). While a member of the Permanent Delegation of PSBiH in the PACE in Strasbourg, she was elected the first vice-president of the Committee for Equality and Non-Discrimination. This marked the first time a member of the Permanent Delegation of PSBiH was elected to a committee post in the PACE. Ismeta Dervoz was also given an award by the International League of Humanists for her activism in the 1992 – 1996 period. Further, many still know Ismeta Dervoz as the person who began the project campaigning for BiH participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1992.

The draft laws proposed by Ismeta Dervoz in the Parliament mostly had the support of her colleagues, although some - for example, the Law on Revision of Institutions of BiH - were not passed in both Houses. Still, **Ismeta Dervoz** remembers her achievements in the Parliament fondly:

The changes to the Electoral Law and its harmonization with the Gender Equality Law were adopted. A policy I cared deeply about on the issue of gender-sensitive language was also adopted and it is finally now being used in the PSBiH after all these years. The Istanbul Convention, for which I lobbied, and which I promoted regionally was ratified, and we were one of the first countries to do that.

In 2014, the Parliamentary Assembly BiH published a manual on the *Use of Gender-Sensitive Language in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH* on the initiative of and in cooperation with Ismeta Dervoz, who was also the Deputy President of the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of PSBiH at the time. In the Introduction to the Manual, Ismeta Dervoz stated: *We have made the first step. Join us. Use gender-sensitive language in the institutions in which you work and in communication on all fields. It is unacceptable that the work and the presence of women is assumed.*

On 7th November 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina became the sixth member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the Istanbul Convention – the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Through this, BiH became legally obligated to ensure that legislative and other steps are taken to guarantee the establishment of a legal, institutional, and organizational framework for the prevention of violence against women, the protection of victims of violence, and the punishment of perpetrators.

Despite her various achievements both domestically and internationally, Ismeta Dervoz decided not to run in the 2014 General Election. The primary reason for this was her disappointment in some of her colleagues in Parliament, who exhibit exceptional effort to slow down initiatives proposed for general benefit, or to render impossible their realization, but she was also disappointed by the situation in her political party (SBB):

After all the successes I achieved during my term and despite the support and the recognition I had from the voters, I was still being offered the second place then it was absolutely clear that... It might sound pretentious, but I was absolutely certain that I could once again, but that would have created discord in the Party. I said that to the Party leader and the members. If I was going to turn half the Party against me because they wanted to support the male candidate who was chosen to carry the list, and if they were going to lobby against me as a candidate, because only one of us was going to be elected – for me it would have been an undignified fight, and it would also have been undignified for the Party.

Although her political career was short-lived, Ismeta Dervoz had a big impact on women's politics, which was a running thread throughout her political engagements, but also set a standard for women who are currently in the Parliamentary Assembly, or who plan to run for it. The increase of the gender quota in the Electoral Law to 40% meant that 40.96% of the candidates who ran for the House of Representatives of PSBiH in 2014 were women, as were 43.60% of those who ran for the Parliament of the Federation, and 41.45% of individuals running for the National Assembly of RS (Miftari, 2015). The results of the General Election 2014 demonstrated that more women were elected than in the previous years – an average of 19.90% at all levels of government. Unfortunately, this is still below the 20.15% record that was achieved in 2002, and 40% still seems unachievable. However, it is something of a consolation that there is an upward trend; there has been an increase in the proportion of women from 17.21% in 2006 and 17.37% in 2010 (Miftari, 2015).

4.3 THE CLUB OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS FBiH

A few months after the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Electoral Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted, a long-term initiative was implemented in the Parliament of Federation of BiH – The Club of Women Parliamentarians was established, allowing women to join forces in a Parliamentary Club and to benefit from the rights and duties associated with the existence of such a body. After it was established in early February 2013, The Club of Women Parliamentarians operated as an informal group under the guidance of the International Republican Institute (IRI) in BiH. The aim was to help women MPs act together through lobbying their own political parties and the different levels of government. Initially, the Club operated informally, because the Rulebook on the Working of the Parliament only recognized clubs formed by political parties. The Parliament FBiH accepted the initiative for the Club to be recognized as a working body within the House of Representatives and the Club was officially recognized on 13th April 2013. The Club of Women Parliamentarians FBiH is the first multi-party club in the political history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and was formed with the aim of “overcoming partisan differences and working on improving the everyday lives of citizens and particularly of women” (Klub Parlamentarki Federacije BiH, n.d.).

Twenty-two members of the Parliament FBiH joined to form the first Club of Women Parliamentarians with the aim of ensuring that the issues relating to gender equality are mainstreamed into the work of the Parliament. The members of the Club during its first term were: **Marija Antić** (NSRzB), **Besima Borić** (SDP BiH), **Željka Bošnjak** (SDP BiH), **Aida Brčić** (SDP BiH), **Selma Jakupović** (SDP BiH), **Fatima Lendo** (SDP BiH), **Melika Mahmutbegović** (SDA BiH), **Ljiljana Sakić** (SDA BiH), **Belkisa Vehabović** (SDP BiH), **Tanja Vučić** (HDZ BiH), **Alma Zildžić** (SDP BiH), **Ljilja Zovko** (HDZ BiH), **Jasmina Zubić** (SDP BiH), and supporting them were also **Hafeza Sabljaković** (DNZ and HSP), **Mira Grgić** (SDP BiH), **Alma Čardžić** (NSRzB), **Jasminka Durić** (A SDA), **Aida Čikić** (SBB BiH), **Amela Mešić** (SDA BiH), **Katica Čerkez** (HDZ BiH), **Slavica Josipović** (HDZ 1990) i **Spomenka Mičić** (SBiH), who were also members of the Club’s board (Klub parlamentarki Federacije BiH, n.d.).

Hafeza Sabljaković, from the category of ‘others’, was elected the first President of the Club of Women Parliamentarians. She is a doctor from Cazin, a member of the DNZ, and was continuously elected as an MP between 1998 and 2014. She was ultimately not re-elected in the 2014 election. Hafeza Sabljaković proudly remembers the establishment of the Club of Women Parliamentarians:

The [2010 - 2014] mandate was pretty dysfunctional and the Parliament was not working to its full capacity – we always had some crises and we wanted to show that we could work together as MPs. Everyone wanted to form the Club, but the issue was that all of the commitments made were informal, until and unless they were institutionalized. So we decided to ask the Parliament to recognize the Club and through the changes to the Rulebook, the Club became a permanent working body with rights and duties grounded in the Rulebook.

The Club, made up of MPs belonging to different political parties, has made a significant contribution to the organizational development of the Parliament. Up until now, the Club has worked with NGOs on draft amendments to increase the severity of sanctions on perpetrators of domestic violence and other crimes committed against women and girls (including incest, rape of minors, and misdemeanors relating to child support), to change the age for classifying children as minors, and to harmonize compensation schemes for maternity and paternity leave) (Franisoli, n.d: 11). Hafeza Sabljaković reflects on the issue of cooperation within the Club:

It was wonderful working with my female colleagues because there were no party divisions. We cooperated as if we belonged to a single party; it was all about the best interest of the citizens. Everyone's suggestions were valued equally and we proposed amendments for changes in laws. We asked to change an Article through the Program of Operations for the Employment Bureau so that single parents (mothers and fathers) would have privileged status in employment. And that initiative had wide support from our fellow MPs. We also managed to secure 80,000 KM to build a house for parents living outside of Sarajevo whose children are receiving cancer treatment in Sarajevo. There were also many roundtables and conferences where we outlined our objections to the existing laws.

Hafeza Sabljaković also recalls some technical issues faced by the Club in its first term, which mostly resulted from a lack of funds for the organization of events, education workshops, and meetings. She points out that education workshops are especially important for women politicians, because many of them do not have any previous political experience:

We have to understand that she [a newly elected MP] does not know that the first step after being elected to any assembly or a legislative body is reading the Rulebook – you have to read all of the rules if you want participate in any kind of discussion and perform well, because the President will constantly be reminding you that something you have done is against the Rules.

The idea for The Club of Women Parliamentarians was born many years prior to its establishment. **Besima Borić**, who was an MP at the House of Representatives FBiH at the time, remembers a failed attempt to form a Club soon after the war had ended, and other such initiatives by women MPs:

The idea to form The Club of Women Parliamentarians is old. It goes as far back as 1998 - actually 1999 – that is when we actively worked towards it. We failed, but we, the women MPs, were the first to make parliamentary visits after the war to Slovenia and Montenegro. These were visits to Parliaments and women MPs in those countries. That is how we gained experience and that is where the initiative to start the Gender Centers comes from, and that is when we started working on the Gender Equality Law.

Hafeza Sabljaković also remembers a more recent failed attempt to establish The Club of Women Parliamentarians, but prefers to reflect on the improved lobbying and preparation that followed and which finally won over the support of Hafeza's fellow MPs:

We had already tried to form a Club of Women Parliamentarians once before and we had failed. The second time, we went in with that knowledge and everything was better prepared and organized. We had the support of all of our colleagues then; I think only one of them had some reserves. Mr. Fehim Škaljić was very supportive of us – he was the Presiding MP and I think he played a key role. He was a great source of support.

Besima Borić points out that none of this would have been possible if Danuta Moon, the wife of the US Ambassador to BiH at the time, had not started the initiative, and had the International Republican Institute (IRI) not supported it. The first attempt failed due to a lack of support. Besima Borić remembers how several months later, the activities regarding the establishment of the Club had intensified, mostly as a result of the IRI's effort to secure funding:

It was actually envisaged by someone else. And it was accepted at the House of Representatives session because the Americans, either Moon, or someone else, had spoken to the Presiding MP, Fehim Škaljić. It was apparent that they had prompted, if not outright forced, them to accept. And so it was accepted. And suddenly, everyone supported it.

By the end of its first term in 2010–2014, The Club of Women Parliamentarians implemented a number of activities. Besima Borić also recalls that they gained significant amount of public attention:

The Club garnered attention as an organization, which I think is a good thing. We showed that women MPs from different political parties – 22 MPs, which is more than a few and cannot be easily dismissed – are showing the public and everyone else that there are issues that we can tackle together, despite the fact that we come from different political parties, from the Leadership and from the Opposition. That is something I am conscious of. I think this country needs more messages like that – more instances of showing that we can act despite our differences, and that we can always find some common basis, issues on which we can unite.

Hafeza Sabljaković recalls successful cooperation with the media, but she also remembers a negative experience relating to the statement of the Mayor of Novi Grad municipality regarding the newly-formed Club of Women Parliamentarians FBiH:

In all honesty, the media was very supportive. Whenever we organized something, the media would respond to our invitation and cover the event in a dignified way. We never organized anything that was not presented to the public. (...) In the beginning the mayor, Semir Efendić, made a very inconsiderate statement about women – something about how the Gender Commissions were brainwashing them, something along those lines – I can't remember the details. What was important was that a mayor had said it and then the media and NGOs came after him, and it created a terrible situation. We wanted to react, one of my colleagues even suggested we send him flowers, because if he had not made such a reckless remark we would not have gotten as much media attention.

At the beginning of 2015, as part of the events marking the 2015 Week of Gender Equality in BiH, Hafeza Sabljaković was announced the winner of a Special Award for Outstanding Contribution to Gender Equality in BiH in 2014. She was nominated by nine domestic and international institutions for gender equality and the fight against discrimination and the decision was made unanimously by more than fifty institutions - non-governmental and international organizations - that participated in nominating and electing the recipient of the Award.

Besima Borić spoke on the future of the Club of Women Parliamentarians of FBiH:

I was present when they gathered the new female Federal MPs. IRI was there as well and they asked me to give a presentation on our achievements during the last term. I saw that they were well informed and that they had elected a president – Kenela Zuko from SDA. Other than that, I really can't say what they have decided to do considering the current political situation in FBiH, or how successful they've been, whether they're meeting, and what priorities they have – that is something I really don't know.

Kenela Zuko is a doctor of pedagogy. She worked as a school psychologist in three elementary schools in Canton Sarajevo and was also a chemistry teacher for 13 years. She has given multiple talks on family, childrearing, education, and politics. She has published six works in the fields of education and pedagogy in the local publications. Kenela Zuko is also the president of the FATMA Association, a member of the Borough Assembly of SDA and a member of the Executive Board of the Municipal Assembly of SDA in Vogošća. She is an MP in the House of Representatives FBiH and the vice-president of the Commission for Gender Equality of the House.

Women MPs usually have nothing but praise for the Club of Women Parliamentarians. **Ismeta Dervoz** considers herself an outside member:

I wholeheartedly support the idea of the Club of Women Parliamentarians in the Parliament of FBiH and I consider myself an outside member. The Federal Parliament demonstrated that we can overcome difference. They have done a remarkable thing, a very important thing, and I think it [the process] was well guided and supported.

She adds that there was a similar initiative at State level, but that she has encountered resistance from other female MPs:

We tried to do this in the State Parliament, but we couldn't because we encountered resistance from our colleagues from the other Entity. For example, our colleagues from RS told us that they do not need this kind of club, because they are completely equal to their male counterparts and have the freedom and the ability to act in any political sphere they choose. But what I was proposing was to discuss the possibility of creating a club that would focus on tackling issues in a more [gender] sensitive manner.

The goal of the Club of Women Parliamentarians is the opening of space for non-partisan action on specific issues. This is what Ismeta Dervoz had also envisioned. However, she goes a step further and sees this idea as a zenith of parliamentary action in general:

I find it fascinating how we find it difficult to act in a non-partisan way, which is one of the greatest things about having a parliament. There are so many things we can achieve as people who are educated and willing to participate politically – we can join forces in a non-partisan way, we can act jointly. We had a few examples of those kinds of joint actions and I thought that was brilliant – to me that is what the Parliament is all about.

However, at the time of writing, there is a political crisis in the Federation and in the Federal Parliament, and so the Club of Women Parliamentarians has not been active this term following initial consultations with the Parliament of FBiH after the 2014 General Election. The fact that the website of the Club still has not been updated and that it contains the information about the last term is testament to this. Although the Club was defined by an ideology of non-partisan cooperation, the Club is clearly not strong enough to overcome the specific problems faced by the Federation and the general issues stemming from a political system that has been privileging ethnic identity since the Dayton Peace Accords.

4.4 WOMEN IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN BiH

The gender quota has existed in the Electoral Law of BiH for most of the country's history, but it only covers the percentage and the order of women on electoral lists. This leaves the fate of women in politics and women's politics in the hands of patriarchal voters. The percentage of women in the House of Representatives of PSBiH dropped from 26% to 4.76% in 2000 after the introduction of open electoral lists. On the other hand, it increased from 15% to 17.4% in the House of Representatives of FBiH, while it dropped only slightly from 18.46% to 14.86% in the National Assembly of RS. This indicates that BiH citizens trust women to hold positions of all levels of importance in the Legislature.

However, there remain a number of problems in the Executive regarding female participation; women are still either underrepresented or unrepresented. The Council of Ministers BiH, the highest executive office in the land, had only four women ministers (**Bisera Turković** was a two-term Minister for European Integration, **Azra Hadžiahmetović** and **Mila Gadžić** were both ministers of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, and **Ljerka Marić** was the Minister of Finance) in its 11 sessions and six terms in the 1997 – 2014 period. Not a single woman has been the President, nor the Vice President of the Council of Ministers BiH, since its inception.

As well as holding the position of Minister of Finance between 2003 - 2007, **Ljerka Marić** also worked as an advisor to the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Prime Minister of FBiH for the Economy. She has been the Minister of Finance in Sednjobosanski Canton since 1996 and an Advisor to the Federal Minister of Finance for the Economy, Accounting Systems, and Reform of Payment Operations, Accounting and Audit. She has been a member of the Oversight Committee of the Banking Agency FBiH. She was named the Director of the Directorate for Economic Planning after her term as the Minister of Finance in the Council of Ministers BiH, a position she still holds.

Mila Gadžić, who was the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations BiH, resigned several months into her mandate and was replaced by Dragan Doko. Currently, she is working as the first female dean of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Mostar.

Azra Hadžiahmetović remembers the beginning of her term in the Council of Ministers BiH, when she made it clear that there would be no space for prejudice:

A law defined that a decision of the Council of Ministers could not be made without the presence of at least one minister from each of the constituent peoples. It so happened that the other minister from the same national (ethnic) corpus was absent and so I voted against one decision. I think that that was the first time my male colleagues really saw me as their equal. Luckily, it was at the beginning of my term.

My hand was worth the same as their hand, and my voice was worth as much as their voice. I was no longer the woman in the Council of Ministers; instead I became their equal, their colleague with same power as them. That is something I want to emphasize, because I think that that is how women need to work – not by cloaking themselves in victimhood and inequality and trying to force equality. I think that is a more difficult road, and far less effective.

Azra Hadžiahmetović also had an opportunity to vote on the composition of the Council of Ministers BiH since she was elected as an MP to the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH in the General Elections in 2002 and 2006. She recalls her unwillingness to support a proposal for a Council of Ministers without a single woman, and the lack of understanding from her Party colleagues regarding this decision:

One time I stood up and pointed out that there was not a single woman amongst the proposed members of the Council of Ministers. I felt it was my obligation to do so, but the members of my party could not understand that. I just couldn't support that call. I felt the need to say something in that setting – just how incredible I found it that not a single capable woman could be found, out of so many women in the various political parties who were in government at the time and yet we had an entirely male Council of Ministers.

In the same period from 1997 – 2014, ten women were named deputy ministers (**Fatima Leho** for two sessions, **Lidija Topić** for three sessions, **Gordana Ković** for three sessions, **Zora Marjanović** for three sessions, **Marina Pendeš** for four sessions, **Ana Trišić-Babić** for three sessions, **Denisa Sarajlić-Maglić** for one session, **Radmila Mitrović** for one session, **Ermina Salkičević** for one session, and **Edita Đapo** for one session). The Council of Ministers currently in session has two female ministers and not a single woman deputy minister. It is the first time the Council has not had a female deputy minister since 1999.

After she was named the deputy Minister of Defense four times (in 2004, 2007, 2008, and 2012), **Marina Pendeš** was named the Minister of Defense in March 2015. This was the first time in history of Bosnia and Herzegovina that a woman was to hold this function. Marina Pendeš speaks of her current experience in this post:

I have never felt resistance [related to the fact that she is a woman holding the position of Minister of Defense of BiH] because we are equal partners. Of course we don't always agree on everything, but we resolve the disagreements with civility. As far as the post itself is concerned – there are seven female Ministers of Defense in Europe. There might be more, but I am only aware of seven. This means that certain things are changing and the stereotypes that some posts are or are not for women were overcome a long time ago, in my opinion.

Marina Pendeš has spent most of her professional and political career in the security sector. She graduated from the Faculty of Military and Technology at the University in Zagreb and served as an HVO officer during the war. She joined HDZ in BiH in 1995. She was the head of the Municipal Board of her party in Vitez from 1996 - 2013 and was elected to the Presidency of HDZ in 2011 for a four-year term. She was elected a member of the Party Board in 2015. She was also an elected representative in the Municipal Assembly Vitez from 1997 - 2002. In the 2002 General Election, she was elected into the Assembly of Srednjobosanski Canton, where she stayed until March 2003 when she was named the Cantonal Minister of Urban Planning, Reconstruction, and Return. The following year, she was named the Deputy Minister of Defense BiH. Marina Pendeš has nothing but praise for her municipality in the way that it has addressed women's political participation:

It is important to emphasize that I come from a municipality that has recognized, unlike many other municipalities in BiH, the role that women can play. One of the first mayors of the Municipality was Katica Čerkez, a colleague from my party. The people also recognized me as someone who could represent their interests.

However, Marina Pendeš did not get an opportunity to represent citizens at state level. Despite her experience in the Municipal Assembly and the Cantonal Assembly, Marina Pendeš unsuccessfully ran for the House of Representatives PSBiH in the General Elections of 2006, 2010, and 2014.

Although she comes from a 'people's party', Marina Pendeš is open to certain feminist values. She has participated in a number of professional training sessions and conferences on women's participation in public and political life, and particularly in the security sector. She participated in, among other things, the *Women Can* seminars in 1999, 2000, and 2002, the world and regional conferences of the *World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO)* in Rome in 2001 and London in 2003, and in the following conferences relating to gender and security: 'Understanding the Advantages of Including Women in Security' (OSCE, Vienna, 2010) and 'Gender Perspectives Training in the Context of Mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 into NATO-led Operations and Missions' (Rome, 2011). Marina Pendeš spoke about gender equality in her political party: *HDZ proudly addresses issues of gender equality, because everyone at HDZ considers that women and men have roles of equal significance, starting from the family as the basic unit of the society.*

She also elaborated on the crucial role the family plays in helping women to achieve their ambitions; a role whose effect is felt as early on as in elementary school:

The situation in BiH changed when it comes to support that families give to women in terms of education. I consider that it is essential to have the support of one's family in order to pursue an education. I think it shows if you are able to participate equally with boys in

the class, from an early age. It helps to form different relationships, and you are also shaped into a different person when you have an opportunity to hear different opinions and share ideas. Honestly, I've never felt in my professional life – as both the Deputy Minister of Defense, and now the Minister of Defense – I never had a sense of a difference, a sense of disapproval from my male colleagues.

Marina Pendeš has been awarded a First Order for 'National Defense' by the Republic of Hungary in 2009, and the Crest of the Municipality of Vitez.

Semiha Borovac, the Minister for Human Rights and Refugees BiH, is the other Minister currently in the Council of Ministers. She has a long political and professional career behind her and she held posts at almost all levels of government before reaching the Council of Ministers BiH. Since 2000, she has been an MP in the Cantonal Assembly of Sarajevo (2000-2005), the first and only female Mayor of Sarajevo (2005-2009), the Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Federation BiH (2010), and the Coordinator for Public Sector Reform in BiH (2010-2015). She is a member of the SDA Party, and has been the Secretary of the Sarajevo Cantonal Board from 2000 - 2004, and a member of the Executive Board since 2005. She is also a lawyer, having passed her Bar exam in 2000.

Women are not significantly better represented at the Entity level. There were a mere six women ministers in the Federal Government sessions between 1998 – 2015. Not a single woman was present in the first session from 1998 – 2000, but there were two in the session between 2001 – 2004. **Behija Hadžihajdarević** was the Minister for Agriculture, Water-Management, and Forestry and **Suada Hadžović** was the Minister for the Issues of Veterans and Disabled Veterans of the Defensive-Liberation War. In the 2003 - 2006 session, **Borjana Krišto** was named the Minister of Justice, and towards the end of her term a party colleague, **Katica Čerkez**, joined her as the Minister of Environment and Tourism. **Meliha Alić** was the only female minister in the 2007 - 2011 period to hold the post of Minister of Education and Science and **Branka Đurić**, the Minister of Environment and Tourism, was the only woman in the 2010 - 2014 session. The current (2014 - 2018) session has four women ministers: **Jelka Miličević** is the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Prime Minister of FBiH; **Elvira Dilberović** is the Minister of Education and Science; **Zora Dujmović** is the Minister of Culture and Sport, and **Snežana Soldar** is the Minister of Environment and Tourism. Out of the ten presidents of FBiH between 1994 and 2015, only one was a woman. **Borjana Kišto** from HDZ was the President in the period from 2007 - 2011. **Melika Mahmutbegović** has been the Vice-President of FBiH since February 2015. Melika Mahmutbegović is a medical doctor who specialized and worked in general surgery. Her political career began with the 1998 General Election, when she was elected as an MP in the Assembly of Srednjobosanski Canton. The following two terms, she was elected to the House of Representatives FBiH. She was elected the President of the Municipal Board of SDA Bugojno

in 2014 and was the top of the SDA electoral list for the Assembly of Srednjobosanski Canton during the 2014 General Election.

Between 1998 and 2015, there were twelve Ministers in the Republika Srpska Government. **Biljana Marić** was appointed in 2001, **Svetlana Cenić** and **Zdenka Abazagić** were appointed in 2005, and **Snežana Božić** was appointed shortly after. **Fatima Fatibegović** and **Jasna Brkić** were appointed in 2006 and **Željka Cvijanović**, **Srebrenka Golić**, **Gorana Zlatković**, **Nada Tešanović**, and **Lejla Ristić** were appointed in 2010.

Željka Cvijanović is the only woman to ever have been the head of the Entity Government. She was educated at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo, the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka, and the Faculty of Law in Banja Luka, where she obtained a postgraduate degree in Diplomatic and Consular Law. She worked as an English teacher, lecturer, translator and assistant to the Mission of the European Union to BiH, advisor to the President of the Government for European Integration and Cooperation with International Organizations, and was the Chief of Staff to the President of Republika Srpska. She also ran the Unit for the Coordination of EU Integration.

Nada Tešanović reflects on her work as the Minister of Families, Youth and Sport during the period in which the RS Government welcomed its highest number of female ministerial representatives:

We worked a lot on affirming family values, youth, and sport because I truly believed that was one of the key ministries, despite the fact that it was one of the ones with the lowest budget. The work we did was mostly youth-related. We passed the Law on Volunteering and the Strategy on Volunteering. Everyone inside the Ministry helped with the youth organizations during the floods. We also drafted the Law on Sport. A lot was achieved.

Nada Tešanović was also the Vice-President of the NSRS from 2006 until 2010, when she took on her ministerial post until 2014. She assumed the function of Vice-President of the Government in 2012. She was elected the Vice-President of the Independent Social Democrats twice and still holds this post today. The President of RS, Rajko Kuzmanović, ordained her with the Second Order Medal of Njegoš for her work. She did not run in the 2014 election. She was appointed to the House of Peoples of RS where she is currently the President of the House.

She remembers her beginnings and her reasons for entering politics:

I worked with young people for years as an educator during the time with the most widespread folly. I had an obligation to them to try and give them something that would keep them away from the sweeping nationalism. My main motive was to give young people

something else to listen to – something different to what they were hearing at the time. That is how I joined the Party - Professor Živanović's Socio-Liberal Party, a really small party that attracted me with the way they did things, their ideas, and their program.

Nada Tešanović still regrets the fact that this political party no longer exists; it was a place where her work and activism were appreciated. She was the only woman, besides **Biljana Plavšić**, to be the top candidate on the electoral list in the 1998 General Election. Professor Živanović decided to leave politics because of the current political climate, and Nada Tešanović remembers how one faction of the party decided to join the Social Democrats, thinking that their program was similar enough in ideology:

The Social Democrats were everywhere in Europe and so that was the best option for me. I joined them. In 2000, I was voted into the Town Assembly [of Banja Luka] and was an MP in the NSRS from 2002 - 2012.

Nada Tešanović's political activism did not stay unnoticed for long, especially because she tried to involve more and more women over the years:

As the President of the Women's Association of RS, actually of BiH, I had an opportunity to meet many women and many NGOs. And I can tell you that I was a lot closer to the NGO sector at that time than I was to the Government.

Nada Golubović, an activist with over 20 years' experience confirms this as she reflects on the relationships she established with female politicians in Republika Srpska:

Our renowned female politicians usually represent the interests of their political parties. There are a few exceptions - for example in RS Nada Tešanović has always had her own attitude regardless of the conviction of her political party. She was always with the Women's Movement and she lobbied for women's issues (...) Nada Tešanović has done a lot for the Law on the Protection from Domestic Violence; she lobbied constantly. She has done great things for women who are victims of domestic violence.

There has not been a single female President in the Presidency of BiH since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. **Biljana Plavšić** was elected to the Presidency of SRBiH in 1990. She was later convicted for the war crimes she committed as one of the members of the self-proclaimed Serb government during the war. **Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović** was elected to the Presidency of RBiH in 1992 and served as a Serb member of the Presidency until 1996. She was a strong advocate of the unified and multiethnic state. Seven election cycles have come and gone after Tatjana Ljujić-Mijatović was elected, yet not a single woman has been elected to the Presidency in two decades.

During the General Election in 2014, only one woman – **Željka Cvijanović** – ran for the position of Serb Member of the Presidency of BiH. She was the Prime Minister of RS at the time - a post that she still holds. Željka Cvijanović had the wide support of voters during the General Election (she had 47.63% of the votes), though this support was still less than for Mladen Ivanić, who was elected by 48.69% of voters. Demokratska Fronta declared **Zora Terzić-Seramet**, a newcomer of sorts, to be their candidate for the Croat position in the Presidency in the lead-up to the 2014 General Election. However, after she was allegedly threatened, she dropped out of the race and left Bosnia and Herzegovina (Patria – bh. novinska agencija, 16.07.2014). Research did not reveal any significant information about this candidate and so she remains fairly unknown to the wider public.

Two women ran in the 2010 General Election; **Aida Jusić** was an independent candidate running to be the Bosniak Member of the Presidency and received only 0.50% of votes, while **Borjana Krišto**, a HDZ representative running to be the Croat Member of the Presidency, obtained 19.74% of votes (she lost to Željko Komšić, who won with 60.61% of votes). At the time of her candidacy, Borjana Krišto was the President of FBiH. She was the Minister of Justice and Public Administration in Canton 10 from 1999 - 2000 and has been the Government Secretary for Canton 10 since 2002. She was elected to the House of Representatives FBiH in the 2002 General Election but never took the post because she was named the Minister of Justice in the FBiH Government. She was elected MP to the House of Representatives PSBiH in the 2006 General Election. In April 2007, she was named the President of the BiH Federation and she has been a delegate in the House of the Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH since 2011. She won a seat in the House of Representatives BiH in the 2014 General Election and has been the President of the House since August 2015. Borjana Krišto is a lawyer. She has been a member of the HDZ BiH since 1995 and the Deputy President of the Party since 2015.

Three women ran in the 2006 General Election, all of whom were independent candidates. **Irena Javor-Korjenić** ran to be the Croat member of the Presidency and won 0.73% of votes, **Svjetlana Udovčić** to be the Serb member of the Presidency and won 0.53% of votes, and **Snežana Avdalović** ran for this same post, gaining 0.51% of votes.

Only one woman - **Karmela Osmanović** from the Građanska Demokratska Stranka BiH – ran to be the Croat member of the Presidency in the 2002 General Election. She won 0.52% of the votes.

Borjana Krišto in 2010 and Željka Cvijanović in 2014 were the only women to have ever come close to being elected to the Presidency. The rest of the candidates each gained less than 3% of votes, as a result of which they were erased from the political history of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.5 POLITICAL PARTIES ON WOMEN POLITICIANS; WOMEN ON POLITICAL PARTIES

“Political parties are the ones that create politics and through their activities; they can change traditional attitudes, promote empowerment, and make women more visible and better educated”.

Ismeta Dervoz (In Alađuz, 2015:27)

Upon analyzing the work of the majority of political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their publications, it is clear that the parties accept the idea of gender equality, even if only in principle. This holds true for parties on both ends of the political spectrum - from the Liberals, the Social Democrats and the other left-wing parties, to the Conservatives, the Nationalists and the other right-wing parties. Usually, there are no obvious obstacles mounted to female membership of political parties, nor to their participation in the parties' activities. However, such obstacles nonetheless exist. These frequently stem from the traditional perceptions of women within society; women are perceived as mothers, wives and homemakers, while their ambitions, wants, and needs to be politically active are ignored. In addition to this, political parties are frequently not gender-sensitized and rarely specifically address women's issues. In this context, there is almost no difference between the political parties on the left and those on the right.

For women who want to participate in politics in BiH, the road is ridden with hindrances, the source of which may be their families, environment, society, or the political parties themselves. It is also common for the women's associations within political parties to have little or no impact on the party's political agenda; their members are often perceived as nothing more than a number to cite in answering public questions on women's political participation. This limits the impact women can have on creating both the party politics and the electoral lists.

According to a recent analysis of the leading political parties' program documents by Dženana Alađuz, very few of these documents satisfy the minimum standards of gender equality. For example, neither women nor gender equality are mentioned in the SNSD political program, while other general equality principles are listed in Article 2 as:

“The principles of the constitutional order of Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina which guarantee human rights and freedoms in accordance with international standards, national equality, social justice, the rule of law, the market economy and the multi-party system of parliamentary democracy, represent the basic values of SNSD.”

However, in the Statute of the Party, there is a provision concerning the representation of the less represented sex in party bodies – Article 20 states: “[a]t least 30% of the members of [party] bodies must be women and persons younger than 30 years of age” (Aladžuz, 2015: 37). **Nada Tešanović** reflects on these provisions and the position of women in SNSD:

The Statute was amended so that women are required to constitute 30% of the members of all party bodies. At SNSD, we have always had a lot of women take part in the election. We were the party with the highest number of women, both in the local community in Banja Luka, where over 35% of our representatives were women, and in the National Assembly.

Although the amendment incorporates the outdated 30% quota, instead of the new 40% requirement, this Article can be seen as a step forward. It provides the women of SNSD with the opportunity to secure equal treatment within the party via a formal forum. However, as even Nada Tešanović recognizes, the quota alone is insufficient to achieve gender equality:

The last election was really a fiasco when it comes to women, and that isn't the fault of women. The fault lies with the Electoral Law proscribing the 40% women's quota on electoral lists, but then the men seem far more 'capable' of actually being elected, so the entire process has had the consequence of bringing less women into parliaments and local communities. There is only one woman in the Banja Luka Assembly, and she is from SNSD. That is appalling; that has never happened before.

As regards decision-making positions within the Party, only one woman is near the very top – Nada Tešanović who is the Vice-President of SNSD. The Executive Board of SNSD has only seven women amongst its 37 members. In addition to Nada Tešanović, there is **Tatjana Inčić**, **Vesna Jelača**, **Dušanka Majkić**, **Jovana Simić**, **Ana Trišić Babić** and **Željka Cvijanović**. Of the 216 members of the Governing Board, only 47 are women - a mere 21% and well below the 30% quota proscribed by the SNSD Statute and only half of the quota proscribed by the Gender Equality Law. The Statutory Commission of SNSD does not have a single woman in its midst and the Supervisory Board has only one woman out of its five members – **Nevenka Pušara** (Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata, n.d.).

Dušanka Majkić, an MP in the BiH Parliament, graduated from the Professional Economics-Commerce School in 1973 and from the Faculty of Business Economics in Banja Luka 33 years later. She joined SNSD in 1998 and has been a member of the Executive and Governing Boards ever since. She ran in the 2000 General Election for a seat in the National Assembly of RS, but she was not elected. Two years later, she again failed to win enough votes for a term in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH. In December 2004, Dušanka Majkić entered the House instead of a party colleague who was appointed to a different post. Despite this, she again failed

to be elected to the House of Representatives PSBiH during the 2006 General Election. However, the Party elected her as a delegate to the House of the Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and later to the Leadership of the House. She finally won a seat in the House of Representatives PSBiH in 2010 and was elected again in 2014 (Centar za istraživačko novinarstvo, n.d.).

Nada Tešanović recalls both good and bad memories from her work at the Party. The biggest difference between the two was often the support she had (or did not have) from the Party Leadership, but also from other women:

There were good things too, but I always said I had to have the support, because I could speak only if there were like-minded women standing behind me. If you don't have the support, you can't do that. And I looked mostly to women for this support, but I also tried to help them in a way. As the President of the Women's Association, they were always behind me. If they weren't, I wouldn't have accepted the post (...) When it comes to a place on the electoral list, women hold the power. And so I would go to the President, since he has the final word and thankfully I held some influence with him, and he would accept my suggestion. And I always said – you can't know this woman I've been working with better than I know her. She is better than someone who just showed up and is working out of personal interest, trying to just get appointed. And that's been known to happen.

Nada Tešanović also faced disapproval when she voiced strong ideas and attitudes. She recalls:

I've felt restricted by the Party, of course I have. You decide what you can handle and what is too much, and then at one point, you just step back, because why be exposed to attacks and criticism, and the rest of it? For example, consider the relationship between the State and the Church. For me, it was always logical that the two should be separate, the way it was in the old system; I was opposed to this collusion of Church and State. Why do we need that? But try saying that today, and you will instantly be attacked from all sides, for being against this and that, when everyone is essentially running populist politics. Half of them have never been in a church until the war, or after the war.

From the second largest political party in Republika Srpska, also the second largest party in terms of MPs in the House of Representatives PSBiH, **Aleksandra Pandurević** stands out. She started her career in journalism in 1998 and has worked for the *Srpsko Oslobođenje*, the *Belgrade News*, and the weekly magazine, *Pečat*. She was elected to the House of Representatives PSBiH in 2010 and again in 2014. She has been a member of the Governing Board of Srpska Demokratska Stranka since 2010. In a statement given to Depo Portal, Aleksandra Pandurević reflected on her beginnings in Politics: "I got actively

involved in Politics when the new President, Mr. Bosić, took over the Party. I knew him from my work in journalism and then he offered me to be a part of his team during a very difficult time when the Party was fraught with internal discord, when they were isolated and unappealing. We have managed to return the Party to the center in the past five years – it is again a people’s party, a democratic party. We have freed it from its legacy of corruption and crime and opened it up to new people and cooperation with other parties.”

However, the limited extent to which SDS opened its doors to women is revealed by the fact that there is not a single woman among the nine vice-presidents of the Party. The Presidency of SDS has another five members, and only one woman – Aleksandra Pandurević, who is a member “from the category of women” according to the Party’s official website. These power relationships are also reflected in the Party’s membership in the National Assembly of RS, where only two of the 20 MPs are women – **Sonja Karadžić-Jovičević** and **Sladana Nikolić**. The National Assembly of RS currently has 16 women MPs of the 83 available seats.

SBB is one of the younger and more prominent political parties, yet the analysis showed that women are not perceived as initiators of changes, but rather as a social ‘at risk’ category; they are not guarantors of the success and economic growth on which SBB’s program is premised (Aladžuz, 2015). Although the same could be said of other political parties in BiH, it is particularly disappointing that this is the case for a Party who used to proudly distinguish itself for its majority female-membership. **Ismeta Dervoz** recalls 2010, when she was asked to join the new political party emerging on the scene of BiH politics. At the time, she thought that she would be taking a significant step forward for society:

We were the first political party that advocated women’s rights. We were constantly boasting that we had a female membership rate of 52%, which was true. But, we had one female vice-president, Ms. Ferović, who disappeared very quietly – no one spoke of it, she was just gone from the [party] Presidency and from all the activities. We campaigned on equal rights and equal opportunities for all. That was one of our slogans – “equal opportunities, equal possibilities.” I thought it was great. But I no longer hear it mentioned frequently.

Even if SBB used to be favorable for women, it certainly is not any longer. Ismeta Dervoz points out that the Party lost its focus in the last electoral cycle by becoming involved in arguments with its opponents:

Then everything went downhill. There were no women later on – they were not recommended for the ministerial posts, for the top of the electoral lists, nor were they suggested as the members of the Presidency. There isn’t a single woman vice-president among the five men, there isn’t a woman in the Presidency of the Governing

Board. The focus they had in the beginning is gone, and I am really sorry about that.

As some earlier studies have shown, political parties are the biggest hindrance to the advancement of women in the political life of BiH.² At the same time, political parties are the only means of electing women into legislative bodies in BiH given the unintelligent behavior of the electorate, the existence of a political climate that fosters the development of individual ideologies by imposing a cult of personality, and the reservation of logistic and other support to party leaders and top candidates, all the while ignoring all facets of identity other than ethnicity. As a result, the main responsibility for achieving gender equality and equality of opportunity falls to political parties. Ismeta Dervoz agrees that women are discriminated against and that political parties have a key role to play:

You can tell that something's not working by the fact that so few women are being elected despite the fact that the political parties are acting in accordance with the Gender Equality Law and applying the quota. You can tell. And you can see that the women who are on the lists just come out of nowhere – they are not activists, nor are they recognizable for their previous public service. Young people from the party, hard workers are on the lists, although they know they won't be elected, because they don't even have the support of their own political party and they cannot run their own campaign – campaigns are expensive. Political parties don't invest in women.

In addition to facing financial difficulties, women politicians are at a disadvantage because of their lack of experience in running and participating in electoral campaigns. Political parties are not investing in their own politicians, and they are not working on improving the position of women in BiH in general terms. Further, instances of foul play against some important women in BiH politics are not uncommon.

2 Miftari, Edita (2015) Politička participacija žena u Bosni i Hercegovini: Analiza učešća žena na stranačkim listama i konačnih rezultata općih izbora 2014. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE i Sarajevski otvoreni centar; Aladžuz, Dženana (2015) Analiza programskih dokumenata parlamentarnih stranaka u BiH iz rodne perspektive. Sarajevo: INFOHOUSE; Osmanović, Anesa (2015) Zastupljenost žena u politici – Istraživanje – Hrvatska, Srbija, Crna Gora, Makedonija i BiH. Sarajevo: INFOHOUSE; Bečić, Emina, i Aladžuz, Dženana (2015) Žene u politici – Da li je veličina važna? Analiza načina izvještavanja štampanih medija o kandidatkinjama na Općim izborima 2014. godine u Bosni i Hercegovini tokom predizborne kampanje. Sarajevo: INFOHOUSE; Sarajevski otvoreni centar (2015) Gdje su žene u vladama? Zastupljenost i reprezentativnost žena i muškaraca u izvršnoj vlasti u BiH. Human Rights Papers, Paper 11. Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar; Veličković, Marina (2014) Stranke, izbori, parlamenti: Žene u politici u Bosni i Hercegovini. Priča u brojkama. Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar; Mirović, Dalila, Hadžić, Inela, i Miftari, Edita (2015) Godišnji izvještaj o stanju ljudskih prava žena u Bosni i Hercegovini u 2014. godini. Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar, Fondacija CURE; itd.

Ismeta Dervoz spoke about her reasons for leaving SBB, the scandal of staying on official payroll for two months after the end of her term, and the hypocrisy of the Leadership of her former political party:

I am no longer at SBB because I was disappointed by how they just couldn't accept my decision not to run in a dignified manner. At first it was accepted (...) And then it turned out that the public was surprised that I was not on the list and this caused discord at different levels. And instead of communicating the truth, SBB said something awful – that Mr. Bašić and I were still being paid after our terms had ended, against an SBB policy decision prohibiting this. Firstly, this policy decision was never adopted. It was a populist, awful attempt to discredit certain people (...) It was an absolute farce, but they had to mention two names that would raise SBB's credibility (...) I received two paychecks after my term ended, in accordance with the law, because I was entitled to start receiving my pension after that. I am retired now. So what was I supposed to do – go to the unemployment bureau for two months, after I was done being an MP? I mean if there had been a party decision... but there wasn't one. I was deeply disappointed by that kind of reaction from the Party and I said I couldn't consider myself a member anymore. So I am no longer a member of SBB. But I also don't have any bad blood, not with my colleagues or the leader, or anyone. I just thought there should be principles. I am a person with principles and with a certain attitude, but these things are not always considered virtues in politics.

The Social Democrat Party was, until recently, one of the most influential political parties in Bosnia. The Party was unsuccessful in the 2014 General Election, especially in the context of female participation. Only four of the 43 seats won by SDP – that is, less than 10% - were won by women (Miftari, 2015). While this was a consequence of bad governance during the Party's last term, which lost voter support, it was also the result of insufficient efforts to make women candidates visible, which in turn led to the complete marginalization of women during the election campaign. When she speaks of SDP, **Besima Borić** mostly has only praise, emphasizing that the Party has a number of well-known women and a significant number of activists, and that they have pioneered a number of gender equality policies:

When we were amending the Statute and the Program in 2005, we were the first political party to introduce the 35% of women, or actually - the less represented sex - quota in our Statute. We managed to do that, and that was progress. That is something in which I can see my contribution. We put an entire chapter on 'Gender Equality and Women in Politics' in the Program. We are currently working on the program for the new Congress in October and we will have a chapter on 'Gender Equality' (...) Since we have introduced the quota in the Statute, there has been a strict policy

that that percentage has to be satisfied – on the electoral lists, in the Party bodies, and in leadership positions. When we were amending the Statute we added, also on my insistence, that at least one of the five vice-presidents of the party must be a member of the less represented sex. I wanted two, but at least there is one.

It is true that the SDP has one woman vice-president – a 21-year-old **Lana Prlić** from Mostar.³ In a statement for *Oslobođenje* (04.01.2015), Lana opened up about her reasons for entering Politics: “I entered Politics in the summer of 2010, when I was only 17. SDP was the closest to my political beliefs, and I wanted to become politically active because I really disliked the nationalism in my town. I also worked for the NGO sector and as an activist in international organizations. I realized I loved Politics, which is why I decided to study International Relations in Sarajevo. I am currently in my fourth year at university.”

Lana Prlić has graduated since this interview and has accomplished significant achievements in her further education and political activism. It is clear that she has a bright political future ahead. However, it remains to be seen how much support she will receive for her leadership and political activism from her Party colleagues and leaders.

Although there are 43 women members of the 135-member Governing Board, there are only three other women, in addition to Lana Prlić, in the Party Presidency: **Dajana Bakić**, **Željka Bošnjak**, and **Mira Grgić**. The situation is somewhat better in the Presidency of the Governing Board of SDP, where half of the vice-presidents are women: **Meliha Lekić** and **Segmedina Srna Bajramović** (Socijaldemokratska partija BiH, n.d.).

Meliha Lekić is a doctor of chemistry. She worked at several faculties of the Sarajevo University (Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Health Studies, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science) and was also a deputy director of the OOUR Institute for Pharmacy and Medicinal Chemistry, UMC Sarajevo and a member of multiple commissions and boards. She retired in 2012. She has published 108 scientific and professional works and four textbooks. She is not in public office at the moment.

Segmedina Srna Bajramović is a journalist with over 19 years of experience working on different RTV projects. She worked as an editor and journalist at TVBiH and RTVFBiH. She is currently in her second term as an MP at the Sarajevo Cantonal Assembly. She is also a delegate in the House of the Peoples FBiH in the ‘others’ category.

³ At the time of writing, SDP BiH was holding intra-party elections, and there have also been changes to the Party’s Statute and Program. It remains to be seen how many women will be in leadership positions once this process has finished.

Besima Borić attests to the fact that SDP could be further along in terms of gender equality – the Party could have had a female President. She ran for the post of President at the Early SDP Congress in 2014. She reflects on the experience:

I knew that I could not be elected, but I wanted to show that we have women in SDP who are ready and willing to fight, which hadn't happened before. That was one thing. I wanted to show how one must prepare for one's presidential candidacy, because I was extremely well prepared – I was better prepared than other candidates. (...) And I wanted to see how women would react. It was disappointing. Very disappointing. For me that was the experience that dotted the Is and crossed the Ts in terms of not expecting support and solidarity from women in Politics. The whole story that there are a lot of us – it is all for the donors, a narrative for an audience. When faced with an opportunity to support women – they don't. (...) It was a test of sorts. I have been seeing the way women who have established themselves in Politics, who have built a reputation for themselves, who are recognizable – I've been seeing the way they were being treated by both men and women, how they are getting by and how the whole thing is not really working. And my candidacy, experiencing all this, was a way to get a confirmation of everything that I've been thinking. I am disillusioned now. I will always fight for women's rights and equality, but that story needs a new form.

Despite this, Besima Borić considers that SDP is still superior in its attitudes to, agenda for, and treatment of women and she says she has never encountered open hostility from her colleagues and Party leaders. However, she also considers that men in SDP are not doing enough to promote gender equality and equal opportunities:

I couldn't get the men in our Party Leadership to speak. Why should I speak about maternity leave, Zlatko – you could do it instead. It will be more interesting if you speak about it. But of course, he never did that (...) and that is something I regret. Although I can tell that our younger members, young politicians are more sensitized to that and I expect that they will focus on these issues and speak about them publicly in the future. I think that's very important. Unless men talk about gender equality and some specific women's issues, we will stay stuck here.

Azra Hadžiahmetović, the only female member of the 20-member Party Presidency of Stranka za BiH, has only praise when it comes to the position of women in her Party:

I have to say that one of the priorities since the establishment of Stranka za BiH, in the Program Platform and other documents has been this question, and I think it's been addressed in the right

manner. (...) I want to remind you that Stranka za BiH has had many women representatives during the periods when it was in power, or one of the parties in power, over the course of its short history.

However, the fact that women are only represented when the Party is in power speaks volumes about the priorities of this Party. It is common in BiH that women leave Politics entirely if their political parties fail to win significant gains. The same issue has been highlighted in discussions of the SDP. This proves the theory that the main culprits for the underrepresentation (or the total lack) of women in Politics are political parties. Azra Hadžiahmetović astutely illustrates the position of women in parties, especially in terms of candidacy:

If you have a legal provision that one of the three posts has to be reserved for the less represented sex, the men interpret that as a requirement that women need to be in the second or the third position. Very few women are number one. That understanding is the basis of the rest of it.

There are only a few women in the rest of the Party bodies in Stranka za BiH. **Nusreta Sivac** is on the Supervisory Board, **Enisa Pašalić** is the Deputy President of the Governing Board SBiH, and there are eight women on the Governing Board of the Board's total 66 members (Stranka za BiH, n.d.).

The Croatian Democratic Union BiH (HDZ BiH) has made significant progress in terms of women's participation in political processes and women in decision-making positions, both within their Party and in Government. **Marija Zelenika**, the President of the Women's Union HDZ BiH *Kraljica Katarina Kosača*, reflects on this:

***Ms. Borjana Krišto** is the Deputy President [of the Party] at the moment and she was the President of the Federation. She is in the House of Representatives at state level at the moment. There are women who are state ministers from our Party, for example **Marina Pendeš**; there are also ministers at the federal level, like **Jelka Miličević**, who is the Deputy Prime Minister. **Ms. Zora Dujmović** is also a minister. There are ministers at cantonal level, and there are also presidents of cantonal organizations. **Ms. Lidija Bradara** is the President of the House of Peoples of FBiH. They are all strong women. But there are also a lot of women who work incredibly hard and whose names are rarely mentioned because they do not hold high-profile posts.*

Of the remaining 18 members of the HDZ BiH Presidency, there are six women: **Delfa Dejanović**, **Marija Rapo**, **Lidija Bradara**, **Marija Zelenika**, **Darijana Katić** i **Jelka Miličević**. And of the 30 members of the Board of HDZ BiH, who are elected at the party assembly, there are eight women: **Tihana Krželj**, **Josipa Kusić**, **Jadranka Pavlić**, **Ankica Gudeljević**, **Marijana Pešikan**, **Anita Paurić**,

Marina Pendeš i **Helena Lončar**. There is only one woman sitting on the Supervisory Board **Mirjana Plavčič**. Some of the other women with functions at HDZ BiH are **Borjana Krišto**, the President of the House of Representatives PSBiH; **Monika Tomić**, the Deputy President of the Club of Croats in the same House; and **Ljilja Zovko**, President of the Club of Croats, and her Deputy **Zdenka Džambas**, both of whom sit in the House of the Peoples PSBiH.

However, **Diana Zelenika** attests to the fact that not everything is perfect in HDZ BiH. During a public discussion on women in Politics, she described the challenges she faced in her political career, when she transferred from HDZ to HDZ 1990. As the author of the article claims, one of the instances described was a suggestion by the members of the HDZ that she vote in the same way her male colleagues with longer terms had done. Diana Zelenika recalls: "I was defiant enough to ask – "Dear Gentlemen, can those of you better educated than me please raise your hands, because I am a Doctor of Science." No one raised their hand. What do you expect? To think for me and I am the most educated one here? Gentleman, that won't work. And I left the Party and proclaimed myself an independent MP. I will pay the price, and I have, but I will not just obediently nod my head, because someone has decided that that is what I should do." (Durkalić, 2014).

4.6 WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Opinions on the impact of women's associations, forums, and collectives within political parties are divided. On the one hand there is the argument that it is useful and beneficial for women to mobilize within their parties in order to better articulate and lobby for their interests, goals, and needs, while on the other hand this kind of unionizing can distance women from the real political and decision-making powers that allow them to gain ground on issues of importance. Either way, these organizations have contributed a great number of political activists and pioneers of women's politics with the aim of improving the position of all women in BiH.

One of these women is **Nermina Zaimović-Uzunović**, who has been the President of SDP BiH's Women's Forum for the past 10 years. Before this, she was the President of the local and cantonal SDP Women's Forum in Zenica – or in fact - Zeničko-Dobojski Canton. She was a member of the Presidency of SDP BiH from 2002 - 2006 and has been a member of the Governing Board until now. She was an MP in the House of Representatives PSBiH from 2010 - 2014 and was also an active member of the Gender Equality Commission during this time. Nermina Zaimović-Uzunović has continuously supported women's human rights and advocated gender equality during her political career. In addition to a successful career in Politics, she has also had an impressive academic and a professional career. She works as a lecturer at the University of Zenica and is a guest lecturer at the University of Sarajevo and the Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany). She is a member of several scientific boards. She is the author of fourteen books, 80 academic publications, and 22 research projects, and during her academic career she has supervised over 70 dissertations, Master's, and PhD theses. She is the recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship, and she has cooperated with institutions in United States of America, Great Britain, Austria and Slovenia. In one public discussion on the topic of women's participation in Politics, she said: "From the time I took over the Association, it was my goal to involve as many new faces as I could. I think that women's associations within political parties are a great opportunity to mobilize young, educated, and impressive women who can really bring about change through their youth, interests, knowledge of foreign languages, and communication skills. We shouldn't vote for women just because they're women. We should vote for her, if she has a vision, a plan, a program, and if she can realize them." (Durkalić, 2014)

Marija Zelenika is the President of the Women's Union HDZ BiH *Kraljica Katarina Kosača* and the current Advisor to the Minister of Defense **Marina Pendeš**. She is a machine engineer with a specialization in thermo-energy. She has been actively involved in Politics since 2008, when she was elected the first President of the Women's Union HDZ BiH. Her account of obstacles faced by women in Politics runs contrary to the notion of the glass ceiling, according to which women face increased resistance the higher up they get:

As you reach higher levels, the resistance gets smaller, at least in HDZ BiH – I am only speaking about HDZ BiH. There is still resistance on the lower levels, at the grassroots, municipal organizations – “What is she going to do? She’s a woman!” Some colleagues still think that women belong at home, making dinners and raising children. But what matters is that the decisions are made at the top, in the Presidency, and you can see how many of us women there are now. A lot of young women also got involved through the HDZ BiH Youth Organization and they have now been elected to the Municipal Assemblies and they are MPs at federal level. There is a young woman from Stolac, Darijana Katić, she is an MP in the Federal Parliament. So there are a lot of young people and women who are coming through and that’s good.

Nada Tešanović is the President of the SNSD’s Women’s Association. She says that the goal of the Women’s Association is to empower women and recommend the strongest candidates for positions of power – to be MPs:

Associations are formed in local communities and organizations. There is also the municipal Women’s Association in Banja Luka, and we have those in the whole of Republika [Srpska]. Each community is specific and women within the local community and in those bodies start different initiatives – from schools and education to wanting to create conditions for a better tomorrow for these kids, because a woman is always a woman – she is a mother, and above anything else, she always thinks of her children and their future. There are always humanitarian actions and importantly, I always thought they should meet even when there wasn’t an important task, to support each other in their communities.

Although the goal of women’s organizations within political parties may be the empowerment of women, it is symptomatic of women’s associations to cement women’s gender roles by focusing their activities on social issues, humanitarian actions, family, and children. They only rarely collectively participate in party decision-making. A statement by the President of the Women’s Association of Town Assembly of SNSD Banja Luka **Gordana Lihović** best illustrates this: “It is important that we engage with the family, so that women can have an equal status in the family and the society.”

Besima Borić, who never joined the Women’s Forum SDP BiH but who nonetheless significantly contributed to the Party’s gender-sensitive political agenda, also reflected on this:

The Women’s Forum that we have in SDP does not have a lot of power as an organization of women within the party. It is enclosed within its own structures and it rarely comes up with demands when it comes to creating policy, Party priorities – and I am speaking of organized demands. That is a big flaw. I think it’s a similar story in other political parties – start a women’s forum, or whatever

everyone else is calling them, and go and do something there. And then women engage with humanitarian and educational issues, preparing for campaigns, because it's easier for them amongst other women, in their own organizations. As I like to simplify it – they don't do Politics. I am against it, against such approach.

Azra Hadžiahmetović also considers that there is need for caution when it comes to these types of associations and that it is essential for men to be involved in conversations about gender:

Regarding women's association in different parties – I have to say I think it's a double-edged sword. In our understanding of how the political system works, political parties and so on, I think that these associations are unfortunately more pro form. I think that the associations (...) if they were to be focused on gender issues, need to have men and women and need to focus on gender, and not sex - not biological sex. So primarily, I'm thinking of gender.

Maja Gasal-Vražalica, an MP in the House of Representatives PSBiH, considers that the decision not to have a women's association in the recently established Demokratska Fronta [Democratic Front] (DF) is the right move⁴ as these organizations only serve to distract attention away from the important issues:

We don't have a group of women within the Party. I think, as a woman and as someone in Politics, that these [groups] are the wrong kind of solution. I don't see the forums and associations within the party as something that is beneficial for women. Moreover, they are an acceptance of this position that you need some sort of gathering so that you – women, can listen to and discuss some women's issues. And then I always ask the question – what is a women's issue, because I don't see a single women's issue, they are social issues and that needs to be understood by all government bodies, and you know – that's a problem as well. This way, it needs to be addressed first by the association, and then who is the president of the forum, who is at this post, how do we fill it, who are the deputies, vice-presidents – we need to establish a hierarchy before we can even approach the Presidency. And while we are discussing some social issues in the association, they're making the electoral lists, they're making the budget, and splitting the cake without consulting us. And the only person they will consult is the president of the forum or the association.

Can we claim that women have outgrown the organizations within their political parties, or are these organizations still essential?

4 At the time of writing the first Congress of Demokratska Fronta was held and a new Statute has been adopted, which envisages the establishment of the Women's Forum. The Forum hasn't been formed yet.

4.7 THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN BiH POLITICS, THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S POLITICS

The fact is that a woman does not need to be a self-proclaimed feminist or a supporter of women's rights to be elected or delegated as an official, but it is also true that women in Politics cannot survive without feminist women's politics, despite their belief that all they require to be equal to their male colleagues are opinions articulated in the language of arguments. Sexism, misogyny, discrimination, mobbing, and other forms of excluding women do not use the language of arguments – if they did, they definitely would not survive. There remain many challenges for women in Politics, particularly for those who are just starting out. As a significant number of well-known women politicians who have been active for years have started retiring from BiH Politics, a new, younger group of leaders, full of energy and ready for change, has started to emerge.

One of them is **Maja Gasal-Vražalica**, a professor of German language and literature, who was born in 1983. She is a member of DF and is currently an MP in the House of Representatives PSBiH and a member of the Gender Equality Commission in the House. Maja Gasal-Vražalica is also the youngest woman MP in the history of the Parliamentary Assembly BiH:

They say I'm the youngest woman MP in the history of the Parliamentary Assembly. I didn't know that, I hadn't done the research. (...) I can see this attitude of – Oh, you're still young, or – Oh, well that's not what you think it is – which really irks me. Sometimes I reply along the lines of – Well I don't want to be the same way you've been for the past twenty years. That is not the way I want to be working and acting.

Nada Tešanović spoke of her experience as a woman politician and the pressures that have made many other women leave Politics behind:

I personally didn't have negative experiences from the male Leadership as a woman and as a politician. I think that I've just been in Politics for so long that they did not have any arguments to prove me wrong. But many women have been faced with that. And many have given up fighting. We lost a number of women because they considered that they were contributing to the Party and the general situation through their work, and yet no one was seeing that. It was fighting the windmills. And so they gave up. But there are still those few stubborn ones.

Another young and persistent female politician **Lana Prlić** publicly criticized on her Facebook profile the recent scandal regarding the degrading questionnaires on the Centralni.ba portal, in which she and her female colleagues had been humiliated: "An article/questionnaire was published today on one of the

news portals claiming that the question of 'Who is the sexiest SDP woman?' is harmless campaign fun. There were names of five of my colleagues next to my name. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but I know most of them believe that this is as offensive for them as it is for me. As a girl/woman I am proving myself through my intellect and not my looks. Each of us is well-educated. (...) As a girl/woman I am offended by the fact that things like this are done and that they are used to get clicks and 'likes' for these sexist articles and questionnaires. I have never achieved anything because of my looks; I have built myself up through education and social activism. Each of these girls has a long list of qualities for which they have worked and fought (...) It is dispiriting that we find this amusing when it is in fact offensive, at least to me personally. What kind of message is being sent to young, educated women full of ideas, who want to get involved in Politics? If the same news portal had called each of these girls, they would have gotten fantastic stories and not this. Through my political activism I want to encourage young people to enter Politics and to use their potential and ideas to create a better atmosphere and a better BiH, but I most definitely do not want to do that through my photos, but through my work and education."

Following the strong reaction of the Canton Sarajevo SDP Women's Forum, the questionnaire was swiftly removed from the news portal website. However, this is not the first time that this kind of degrading material has appeared in the media. Only a few years ago, before the 2012 local elections, the daily paper *Press* organized a pre-election election that shocked the public. It was the Miss Local Election in RS, which aimed to elect the prettiest candidate. Photos of candidates running in the 2012 local elections were sent in for this 'contest' and subsequently published on the newspaper's portal. Civil society responded critically to this initiative. One of the loudest critics was **Aleksandra Petrić**, a program coordinator of *United Women*, an NGO, from Banja Luka. In a statement for *Buka*, she highlighted that *Press's* actions turned the entire process of electoral campaigns and the elections in RS into an absurdity: "It is demeaning for women in Politics and demeaning to all women and men who see elections as a serious political process. I know a lot of women who are running in this election and I know how much effort, knowledge, and enthusiasm have to be put in to the process, to reach citizens and hear their needs. I am sure that citizens will recognize their qualities and support them on October 7th at the polling booths. That is where we cast our votes." (Isović, 2012).

In one of her op-eds, Aleksandra Petrić (2012) explained the main problem with this kind of irresponsible behavior: "The candidates were smiling silently from the photos, telling the citizens to take their cell phones into their hands and send an SMS before midnight on 7th October. They were not inviting them to vote at the polling booths on that same day, until 7 p.m. They were saying that they were pretty, and if given the chance the three pretties would receive valuable awards. And they did. Weekends for two at resorts on the Jahorina and Zaltibor mountains and in Igalo."

On the other hand, there were also some excellent initiatives for reaching the wider public during this period. One of these was academic and educative. **Azra Hadžiahmetović** became the co-author of the first textbook for universities on gender-responsible budgeting with the support of the UNDP. The textbook was published in November 2013. It was aimed at students and university workers in this area, but also served as a starting point for further research:

In countries like BiH (...) one of the key aspects of infrastructure for improvement in terms of gender equality is gender-responsible budgeting. Despite the fact that we talk about it a lot and that people are being educated about it (...) we unfortunately do not have people who truly understand what it is really about. (...) When I speak to first-year students at the Faculty of Economics about budgeting, I mention gender budgeting as something they should be aware of, when we are doing the very basics. If they want to specialize later on, they need to know that there is a basis for that. (...) When I came to the realization that there isn't a single academic textbook, a university textbook on this topic, with the support of the UNDP, the four of us from the wider region – one colleague from Austria, one from Serbia, and one from Macedonia who had just recently finished her PhD at a British University – decided to get involved and write this textbook.

Sabina Ćudić, the Vice-President of Naša Stranka, is another academic who is also active in the political life of BiH. She was a candidate for the Mayor of Novi Grad municipality in the 2012 local election and lost to Nedžad Koldža and Dželaludin Muharemović. Although her career in Politics has not been very long, it has nonetheless been very impressive. She started F5, the first lobbying group in BiH, and she received an award from UN Women for a campaign promoting the involvement of women in Politics. She has been a member of the Political Advisory Board of Naša Stranka since 2008. She had been elected to the Sarajevo Cantonal Assembly for the 2014-2018 term and she is on the Cantonal Commission on Justice, Human Rights and Civil Liberties.

These individuals give us hope for the future of women in Politics, both through their professionalism and integrity and through their commitment to fixed principles. **Ismeta Dervoz** is also optimistic when it comes to women in Politics and social change:

Women are the key to change here. Because women find it easier to negotiate, they reach agreements easier, they don't quit as easily, and they are used to pushing themselves to the forefront of action. And we are reaching a time when a lot will need to be done. I am certain that women will emerge through their work, knowledge, competencies and skills, but also their commitment to the law. We have the laws - let's follow them.

However, women's politics is still facing challenges even 20 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords and it seems that BiH society still has a long way to go before it can reach truly gender-equal participation in decision-

making. One of the greatest challenges for women's politics is the unequal representation of women in all government bodies and levels of government in BiH. It is essential to have enough women in equal numbers in Politics in order to achieve progress and in order for women's politics to survive.

According to an analysis of women's participation in the 2014 General Election, an average of 19.03% women were elected to all levels of government. Despite various attempts to increase the representation of women in power, the record of 20.15% from 2002 has not been reached, and 40% still seems unreachable. However, it is comforting that we can speak of an upward trend considering that the percentage of women was as low as 17.21% in 2006 and 17.37% in 2010 (Miftari, 2015). Seventeen women ran for the Presidency BiH, of which only one was for the Serb member of the Presidency and who was ultimately not elected – unsurprising, considering the membership of the Presidency up until now. Women made up 40.96% of candidates for the House of Representatives of PSBiH and only 10 women were elected (23.81%) – six directly, and four through the system of compensatory seats. Only 10.57% of electoral lists had women in the top position. 43.60% of the total candidates for the Parliament of FBiH were women, and only 16.04% of electoral lists had women in the top position. 21 women (21.43%) were elected to Parliament FBiH, of which twelve women were elected directly, and nine as a result of the compensatory seats procedure. Women made up 42.42% of the total candidates for the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, with only 10.30% of electoral lists giving women the top position. Only thirteen (15.66%) women were elected to the Assembly. Five were elected directly, and seven are holding compensatory seats, while one obtained her seat through a redistribution of votes. As for the cantonal assemblies, the Assembly of Zapadnohercegovački Canton has the highest percentage of women – seven out of 23 (30.43%) - and the Assembly of Canton 10 has the lowest rate of women's participation – just one in 25 MPs (4%) (Miftari, 2015).

Women politicians in BiH have travelled a long and difficult road towards integration into a predominantly male sphere of public life and have achieved things that would have been unimaginable 20 years prior, during the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. Their perseverance and advocacy overpowered the status quo and the total marginalization they experienced from their gender-insensitive colleagues. They have created a political space in which conducting women's gender-sensitive politics is less of a challenge than 20 years ago. This can be partly explained by the inevitability of democratic changes in a transitional society such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, but even inevitable progress can only be realized upon the commitment of individuals who roll up their sleeves and do the necessary work. It is therefore essential to give these women politicians credit for preparing the field for stronger women's politics, a stronger women's movement, and a more gender-sensitive society in general.

One has to wonder how successful the gender equality initiatives in public and political life have been, but also to what extent one can even speak of *achieving* success. These questions could be answered in the future by better advocacy for women's politics, but we will certainly recognize true success when we see it.

5. CONCLUSION

Saša Gavrić

Looking at the developments over the last 25 years, one can reasonably ask the question: have we achieved gender equality in political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

The glass-half-empty crowd could simply declare the last 25 years an absolute debacle. A woman was never the President of BiH, nor was a woman ever the Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers BiH, nor was there a single woman president of a major political party. Politics has stayed the male domain.

On the other hand, the glass-half-full group could point out the progress we made. The 3% rate of representation in the early 1990s climbed to over 20%. Women are slowly but surely winning posts and they are ever more present in political life, the Government, and the parties.

The reality of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not black and white. Women were not only ignored at the beginning of the war and during the negotiation and signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, they are still regularly excluded from the political life and the decision-making processes. The Governments of the Zeničko-Dobojski Canton and Hercegovačko-Neretvanski Canton, which were formed in 2015 without a single female minister in their midst, confirm this. Women are still frequently excluded from the executive branch; they are kept out of the key negotiations, such as the negotiations for the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci judgment, in 2013 and 2014. However, we must remember the progress achieved in the last 20 years. As this book demonstrates, we are surrounded by women leaders, some of whom lead honest and consistent Politics, frequently challenging what is permissible and expected of them, and suffering consequences as a result. Strong foundations have been set for gender equality through the adoption of the Gender Equality Law, the establishment of gender institutional mechanisms at State and Entity levels, and the introduction of the gender quota in the electoral system of BiH.

In order to ensure that we do not greet the year 2035 – 20 years from now – trying to defend what has already been achieved or the small successes, it is essential that we undertake several key steps together:

- Leaders and members of political parties must understand that change has to start from within. Achieving gender equality cannot any longer be a matter of promises given to women's political organizations; it must be included in all party bodies and all party politics. Political parties must define themselves in terms of creating and implementing gender equality policies. Women and men must actively participate in

all bodies. Women's participation in parties has to be understood as a potential to be nurtured before, during and after the election, and not as a mere means of fulfilling a quota.

- Men must become better allies in the struggle for equality, understanding that this is a fundamental constitutional value and the basis of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and something that will benefit both men and women in the long term, but women must also be louder and engage with key issues more. Women must step up and overcome the limits they have imposed upon themselves, and which the patriarchal society in which they live has imposed upon them. Female politicians must have faith in themselves and embrace a vision of themselves as game-changers.
- In addition to making social changes, it is essential to further improve electoral legislation. The Electoral Law must be changed so as to ensure that more women are elected to legislative bodies, and not merely put onto electoral lists. It may be necessary to introduce a temporary affirmative measure of reserved seats, which would award at least 40% of seats to women MPs. The participation of women in the Legislature - the key space for decision-making - is a precondition for all other social and political change.
- Executive bodies and other bodies whose members are appointed by the Elected Officials cannot continue to exclude women from their membership.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marina Veličković was born in 1992 in Sarajevo. She graduated from the Law Faculty at the University of Bristol in the UK in 2013 and she obtained her LLM in International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). She obtained her work experience at the UNDP in Sarajevo, The Office of the Prosecutor in The Hague and the NGO *Minority Rights Group* in London. She was the director of the Human Rights Center at the University of Bristol in 2012/2013, where she worked on coordinating research projects. She has been working with the Sarajevo Open Centre since 2014. She currently works as a freelance researcher, a translator and as a columnist for the magazine *Školegijum*.

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“Political parties are the ones that create politics and through their activities; they can change traditional attitudes, promote empowerment, and make women more visible and better educated”.

Ismeta Dervoz

