IZVORNI ZNANSTVENI RAD

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Minority refugee return as a tool to reverse ethnic cleansing: the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina**; ***

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SUMMARY: In the post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, the internationally administered peacebuilding process stressed minority refugee return as an unprecedented tool for reversing outcomes of the war-time massive ethnic cleansings. This paper utilizes newly available statistical data to systematically assess the actual impact of the minority return process on the post-conflict demography of the country in regard to its intended goal of restoring its ethnic heterogeneity. By comparison of the 2013 census data to the pre-war demographic figures it is uncovered to what extent has the refugee return succeeded in reversing the ethnic cleansing of 1990s. Findings reveal significant group-related and regional differences in the impact of the return on reversal of homogenization effects of the conflict. The overall return rate of Bosniak minority communities is estimated at 48%, Croat at 27%, and Serb at only 11%. However, all three groups experienced both successful and failed outcomes of the process in different areas that follow wider regional patterns. In general, the country certainly lost significant part of its pre-war local heterogeneity in the war. Nevertheless, while effects of war-time homogenization have been confirmed in some areas, the minority return partially reversed cleansings in other regions.

KEYWORDS: **Minority Return, Refugees, IDPs, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethnic Cleansing**

Introduction

One of the most destructive side effects of violent conflicts are forced displacements of civilian populations. The rapid growth of civil wars since the Second World War has led to increasing number of refugees[1] displaced by violent conflicts throughout the world (UNHCR, 2016). Most troubling of these wars in respect to the forced displacement are ethnic conflicts that are frequently accompanied by ethnic cleansing campaigns, leading to displacements of whole distinct populations based solely on their identity (Mann, 2005). Displaced communities then become important political actors within the conflict dynamics which makes their further destiny very precarious (Weiner, 1992; Lischer, 2007; Salehyan, 2008; 2014; Long, 2013). Hence, once the fighting is over, a fundamental component of any peace process is a resolution of the refugee issue. The destiny of displaced population thus often becomes of central meaning for the whole peace-building process (Adelman, 2002; Johansson, 2010; Janmyr, 2015).

In theory, there are three options for a long-term resolution of the situation of a refugee population: local *integration* within the area of refuge, *resettlement* to another area, and *repatriation* to the area of origin (Hansen et al., 2008). In situations after ethnic cleansing, first two of these strategies effectively imply accepting the results of the cleansing campaign. Such approaches had dominated the conflict resolution strategies until 1990s, as integration and resettlement of refugees after violent conflicts leading to ethnic separations had been rather normal solution (Kaufmann, 1998; Chimni, 1999). However, new moral and political imperatives appeared in the sphere of international peacebuilding in the 1990s that made voluntary refugee return to the area of origin the preferred solution (Black, 2006; Bradley, 2013; Long, 2013).

Beyond rising general moral and liberal concerns, this new approach towards management of forced displacement was grounded in the 'peace by repatriation' theoretical argument. Its proponents argued that only the return of refugees to their places of origin can bring stability to volatile regions and as such is a necessary condition for sustainable peace to be restored after a violent conflict (Adelman, 2002; Johansson, 2010). Based on the assumption that protracted displacement or resettlement of refugees prevent the conflict from being durably settled, refugee repatriation became one of stumbling stones of the post-conflict peacebuilding.

1 The term refugee will be henceforward used in its substantial rather than legal meaning as designation for any person displaced from its place of residence, regardless if internally or across borders. Within this definition, it will not be further distinguished between refugees, IDPs and any other subcategories (see Barutciski, 1998).

From its very onset, the new international approach towards refugee repatriation was interdependent with developments on the ground in the Balkans through 1990s. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, violent breakup of once multi-ethnic Yugoslavia caused series of ethno-territorial conflicts leading to ethnic homogenization through massive displacement of population (Carmichael, 2003; Mulaj, 2008; Mojzes, 2011). While these refugee flows drew the attention of international community and thus triggered the search for new refugee policies, the post-conflict processes of late 1990s became a laboratory of new strategies of repatriation developed in response to previous developments (Long, 2013). Therefore, the Balkan refugee dynamics thus can be understood as both a cause and a consequence of the new international approach to the refugee return. Policies of massive internationally administered refugee return thus underwent their first test in the Balkans in late 1990s.

The focal point in all these processes was Bosnia and Herzegovina[2] that had been most severely hit by the regional conflict dynamics in general and by forced displacement in particular. During almost four years of the conflict between local ethnic factions and their external allies, half of the population was forced to leave their homes in the wake of ethnic cleansing campaigns performed by all sides (Hayden, 1993; Campbell, 1999; Stroschein, 2005). Post-war internationally promoted and facilitated repatriation process was intended to reverse results of the ethnic cleansing by restoring the pre-war demographic structure of the once multi-ethnic country (Tuathail and Dahlman, 2011). However, overall results of this unprecedentedly massive repatriation campaign remain questionable more than two decades after the war's end. This paper contributes to assessment of actual achievements of the refugee return process using the newly available statistical evidence from the 2013 population census.

The paper proceeds further as follows. First, empirical background of the B&H refugee return and its wider political context are discussed and relevant research questions are developed. Second, brief review of current state of art in the research of minority return in B&H is presented. The subsequent methodological section clarifies key definitions and concepts and presents the research design with all its important elements: level and unit of analysis and population of relevant cases. Findings from the quantitatively designed analysis of the statistical evidence are then presented in the main empirical section. Data on the municipal ethnic structure from 2013 are compared to data from 1991 census to estimate the actual outcome of the return process. In the conclusion, main findings are summarized and

2 Hereafter also B&H, these denominations are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

discussed in wider context of possible policy implications and suggestions for further research are developed.

Empirical background and research questions

In early 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina intensively suffered from an ethno-territorial conflict between multiple actors who identically defined their war goals in terms of ethno-nationalist exclusion and struggled for ideas of their respective nation-states. Due to that, the Bosnian war was not only accompanied with, but also carried out by massive ethnic cleansing campaigns that pulled half of the population out from their homes and effectively divided the territory into three ethnically homogenous units (Hayden, 1993; 1996; Campbell, 1999). While about 1.3 million people sought refuge outside of the country, mostly within the region and in Western Europe, another million was internally displaced as people fled to areas controlled by their ethnic co-patriots (Cousens and Cater, 2001). The war was finally terminated in 1995 through external pressure, as it reached a stalemate on the ground and the compromise Dayton peace deal was negotiated by Western diplomacy among the three parties and their respective kin states.

However, the Dayton Agreement was not only a compromise between the three hostile parties but also a bargain between two prominent conflict resolution strategies – one based on ethnic partition and another promoting re-integration and power-sharing (Kuperman, 2006; Woodward, 2001; Belloni, 2008). The peace settlement included elements of both of them that often clashed and created the so called *Dayton Paradox* (Tzifakis, 2007: 87). One of the most profound internal contradictions of the Dayton peace was the conflict between *cementing the ethnic divisions* created through the war and *restoring the pre-war multi-ethnicity*. In this regard, the issue of refugee return played a central role.

On one hand, to facilitate the peace the Dayton agreement (together with the foregoing Washington Agreement negotiated between Bosniaks and Croats) effectively partitioned the country along ethnic lines set by war into homogenous and politically autonomous entities, cantons and municipalities that served as guarantees for ethnic groups' security and political autonomy. On the other hand, contradictory to the principle of ethno-territoriality, one of the primary goals of the peacebuilding process was to restore the multiethnicity through reversing results of the ethnic cleansing, where the refugee return was intended to be the main tool (Donais, 2005; Black, 2006; Jansen, 2011).

Hence, once the open fighting was over, unprecedented internationally facilitated process of refugee repatriation was initiated to reverse effects of ethnic cleansing and return the country divided by war its pre-war highly multi-ethnic character (Bildt, 1996; Petritsch, 2001). While the return of refugees to areas controlled by their ethnic group went relatively smoothly and was effectively over within 4 years with success rate of above 50%, the process of *minority return* proved to be extremely problematic in tense post-conflict settings (Cox, 1998; Phuong, 2000). To protect their ethnic exclusivity over the territory gained in the war, representatives of all three groups strongly impeded the return of 'other' refugees to their 'own' areas (Tuathail and Dahlman, 2004; Bieber, 2006). These factors, combined with the insecure environment and general economic misery, effectively obstructed the minority return process for first post-war years.

In 1999, the international community acting through the OHR responded firmly to the unsatisfactory outcomes of the process and set the minority return agenda as its top priority (Ito, 2001). Active resistance to the return from local structures was largely suppressed after most obstructionist officials had been dismissed from their offices by unilateral decisions of the OHR (Heimerl, 2005). Thanks to that, and also to the generous financial and political backing by external actors, the minority returns gained a momentum in the period 2000-2003. According to official UNHCR figures, about 430,000, or 30% of the total number of minority refugees, completed the formal return process by the end of 2004. In the following years, the annual number of minority returns dropped to few thousands per year and the process can be considered effectively over after 2007 as only hundreds of returns have been recorded annually (UNHCR, 2011).

The international community, headed by UNHCR and OHR and including many other agencies, invested unprecedented amount of financial and political capital into the success of the return process (Black, 2002). Despite obvious problems, international community declared the refugee return to be successful already in early 2000s when one million refugees, or half of their total number, was declared to be back home or reintegrated in areas of resettlement. The international ruler of the country by then, Paddy Ashdown, celebrated the return of 1 million refugees as a *huge success* and stated that "*We've invented a new human right here, the right to return after a war*" (Glover, 2002). The official discourse of the international community on results of the return process presented through statements of HRs gradually shifted from that of *dissatisfaction* towards a *limited success* (see Petritsch, 1999; Ashdown, 2005; Schwarz-Schilling, 2007; Inzko, 2012).

Truly, the Bosnian return story can be considered as a relative success in comparative perspective, particularly in contrast to con-

flicts that have led to protracted displacements. Among others, in Cyprus, Israel-Palestine or Caucasus minority refugees have been seeking a durable solution for decades and most of them still have not returned home. In B&H, the achieved results are more satisfying. Two decades after the cessation of hostilities, the refugee issue is in fact almost fully resolved. According to the official figures reported by UNHCR, by 2016 there were 'only' 21,877 refugees from B&H registered in 36 countries throughout the world and 84,500 IDPs settled within B&H who are still in need of permanent solution (UNHCR, 2017b). Hence, about 95% of original refugees are technically considered to be either integrated in the area of refuge, permanently resettled or repatriated back home.

It is apparent from these figures that most displaced people were able to effectively solve their situation and, in practical terms, the Bosnian refugee experience can be considered as relative success (D'Silva and Imamović, 2015). However, is it appropriate to celebrate this outcome as clear success also in regard to the primary goal of return, which was to reverse the ethnic cleansing? In this regard, independent observers and scholars have been moderating the enthusiasm of international officials. Critical voices have been heard both from academia and from official international structures warning that out of already lower numbers of minority returnees who formally returned, many people in fact never intended to return for permanent living and only reclaimed their property to resell it, or left the area again shortly after the return (Kälin, 2009; Hammarberg, 2011; Brubaker, 2017). Several authors argued and also empirically proved that ethnic cleansing was rather confirmed through the post-Dayton years than reversed (Phuong, 2000; Tuathail and Dahlman, 2004; 2005; Žíla, 2016).

If the theory assumes that repatriation is the key to peace, and the goal of the return process in B&H was to reverse the ethnic cleansing, the primary question still holds: how successful was the return process? Or, more specifically, how many people belonging to local minorities truly returned for permanent living to their pre-war homes? More than 20 years from the onset of the return process, and 10 years after its actual end, it is a proper time to ask if the initial goals have been truly achieved. To contribute to answering this question, this paper analyses the newly available census data to assess outcomes of the minority return process. Considering ambitions of the process, its international dimension as well as its precedential character, such question is of certain relevance not only for the case of post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also for the post-conflict peacebuilding and refugee repatriation strategies in general.

State of the art

Since the Dayton, the refugee return process in B&H has attracted much scholar attention approaching the issue from different fields, perspectives and levels of analysis. However, despite the extensive record of the valuable research, overall outcomes of the process have remained systematically understudied due to the lack of reliable comprehensive figures, that only could have been supplemented by hardly collected data through a field research. Hence, the overall outcomes of the return process have remained largely unclear as existing literature is mostly regionally or thematically specific and does not offer a comprehensive picture based on statistical evidence. Nevertheless, since many of the published works are extremely insightful for a complex understanding of the issue, thematically sorted brief overview of the current state of art on the Bosnian refugee return process is presented in this section.

In the first post-Dayton years, scholars mostly focused empirically on the course of the return process in time and mapped achieved results, relying on official figures provided by the UNHCR (Cox, 1998; Black and Koser, 1999; Phuong, 2000). In the following years, as the complexity of the process fully appeared, research focused on more specific dimensions of the return. Several authors investigated critically the discrepancy between formal process of repatriation based on property restitution and the actual physical return, pointing out low numbers of real permanent returns (Philpott, 2005; 2006; Carlowitz, 2005; Williams, 2006; Sert, 2011). Other scholars focused on the international dimension of the process, investigating the roles and interests of external actors involved in the process (Ito, 2001), transformation of the international approach (Heimerl, 2005), or inconsistency between policies of international community, its moral claims, and local needs (Harvey, 2006; Jansen, 2006). From more constructivist perspective, several authors problematized the rigid understanding of *home* as the primary category of the return process, pointing to its possible changing and fluid character (Black, 2001; 2002; Jansen, 2007; Eastmond, 2006). Several scholars also focused on legal aspects of the return process, investigating its framing within the international law or human rights (Rosand, 1997; Bantekas, 1998). Ivanisevic (2004), Englbrecht (2004), Harvey (2006), Black et al. (2006) and Carlowitz (2005) also discussed the Bosnian return process within the broader regional context and compared it to the analogous processes in Croatia and Kosovo.

In contrast to the above presented rather problem-focused works, another body of scholars attempted to map the return process as such in more complex way, analysing its course and various aspects. To fulfil this goal, most of authors used geographically and/

or temporarily delineated case studies that focused on mostly discussed hotspot areas of the minority return. Belloni (2005), Lippman (2007), Porobič (2016), and Sivac-Bryant (2016) focused among other places on Bosniak return to Prijedor and neighbouring areas; Andrade et al. 2001, Dahlman and Tuathail (2005), Suljić et al. (2016) and Porobič (2016) on Eastern Bosnia; and Stefansson (2006)) or Badescu (2015) on the political centres of Banja Luka and Sarajevo. While these spatially zoomed case studies based on extensive fieldwork have brought extremely valuable insights into the understanding of the local dynamics of the return, they neither had an ambition nor were able to offer a comprehensive overview of the whole process and its outcomes.

While the UNHCR as the main executive actor of the whole process continuously reported about the course and achieved results of the return by publishing detailed statistical figures,[3] these numbers can hardly be considered as fully reliable within the wider context of the problem. Reasons for caution when reading the official figures are twofold. First, UNHCR was reporting about results of its own work, and as such the reported outcomes could be potentially biased by a pursuit to advocate its own efforts (Black, 2002; Tuathail and Dahlman, 2004). Second, and more importantly, it has been empirically proved in many areas that official numbers of achieved returns reported by UNHCR did not correspond to actual numbers of returnees permanently living in the target areas (Žíla, 2014a; 2014b). Moreover, UNHCR by itself in its reports regularly admitted that the reported data do not necessarily correspond to the number of persons who returned for permanent living as the figures only reflected those who successfully went through the administrative and legal process of return, regardless if they ever intended to return for permanent living (Kälin, 2009; Brubaker, 2017).

Contrary to the formalist perspective employed by UNHCR, several independent authors attempted to get a more comprehensive assessment of the overall outcome of the return process that would be directly related to its ultimate goal, i.e. to reverse the ethnic cleansing. Among them the most prominent are Tuathail and Dahlman (2004; 2005; 2006; 2011; Tuathail and O'Loughlin, 2009; Tuathail, 2010) who devoted extensive attention to the issue and combined the macro focus on the state level with micro case studies of selected areas to comprehensively map the course and results of the process. Similar to that, Rondić (2007) or Žíla (2014a, 2014b) also used multiple case studies to present a complex picture of the actual outcome of the

3 UNHCR had been publishing annual statistical reports about recorded returns disaggregated on municipal level and including information about ethnicity of returnees from 1996/1997 to 2007. Since 2008, only figures aggregated on the level of entities were published until 2011.

return process. Focusing locally on the return process as such, the NGO UZOPIBIH (2010) contributed into the field by extensive monitoring activities in all B&H municipalities investigating the actual number of returnees as well as their socio-economic situation. Working purely quantitatively, Bochsler and Schläpfer (2016) contributed to the debate by calculating estimates of present-day local ethnic structure of about half of the B&H municipalities. All above mentioned works in their assessments indicate that the actual achievements of the return process are limited in regard to its principal goal. However, none of these studies offered a comprehensive statistical evidence in direct relation to the return process. Hence, overall outcomes remain fuzzy, which makes the question of ethnic cleansing reversal difficult to answer.

It is important to notice that any earlier attempts to map comprehensively the outcome of the return process were limited by the lack of available statistical evidence. Until 2013, there had been no population census in B&H since 1991 that would reveal the post-war ethnic structure of the population on both macro and micro level. Due to the volatility of the issue, the 2013 census became highly politicized, the count was postponed several times and its results have been made public only in 2016 after another round of delays (see Bieber, 2013; Visoka and Gjevori, 2013; Perry, 2015; Hoh, 2017). While the figures on ethnic structure provided by the census are still subject to both political and methodological questioning and thus cannot be considered as fully reliable and valid, these can still be a valuable input into the debate over the outcome of the return process (Rose, 2016; Toe, 2016).

It is apparent from the above presented brief review of the state of art that the overall outcome of the return process in B&H remains unclear and largely understudied due to the lack of reliable local-level data. In response to this shortage, the aim of this paper is to analyse the newly available quantitative evidence to provide a comprehensive picture based on the statistical data.

Methodological considerations

In methodological terms, the presented research is framed as a quantitatively designed medium-N comparative case study. It is important to state clearly that the research is purely empirical and mainly descriptive in its nature. As such it is not directly related to any theoretical framework, and no hypotheses are developed and tested. Thus, the research is designed as an *intrinsic study* in which "(...) *the focus is on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation*" (Creswell, 2007: 74). Considering the above mentioned research background and lack of comprehensive evidence on the outcomes

of the return process in B&H, the author is convinced that collection of data and its descriptive analysis are valuable as such in regard to our understanding of this phenomenon. On the other hand, it is also apparent that due to its international context, complexity and precedential nature, the Bosnian case is of great importance for all theories related to refugee repatriation, ethnic cleansing management or peacebuilding in general. However, it is not an ambition of this single study to directly relate the presented empirical findings to these theoretical frameworks.

Subject of analysis

In the following evaluation of the return outcomes, the three main ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina (e.g. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs) will serve as primary analytical categories. While such an approach can potentially attract some reasonable criticism from advocates of rather non-ethnic or civic perspective, it is based on solid empirical and methodological grounds. In its very substance, the whole problem of the refugee return in B&H has been from its onset framed in ethnic terms. Since causes of the whole process were embedded in the ethnic cleansing, three ethnic groups became primary categories of the return process for both international community as the executive actor as well as for most scholars who dealt with the issue. Hence, without entering the debate on the political nature of the Bosnian conflict and subsequent post-conflict processes, this paper will follow this ethno-centric approach and fully accept the ethnic paradigm of the refugee return processes. Hence, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs will be considered as primary actors of investigated processes and their identities will not be further discussed or problematized, while other ethnic or non-ethnic categories will not be taken into account.[4]

Level of analysis

In contrast to some other post-ethnic-conflict states where clear winners and losers of the ethnic strife can be identified, the Bosnian case is specific due to its locally diverse outcomes and effects of displacements that had accompanied the conflict. To stay within the region, in Kosovo or Croatia the defeated ethnic groups can be clearly identified and as such they are considered minorities on all institu-

4 For broader discussion on appropriateness of using ethnicity as the central analytical category see the debate between Bochsler and Schläpfer (2016a; 2016b) and Cooley and Mujanović (2016).

tional levels. Hence, any Serb returning to Croatia or Kosovo is treated as minority returnee, while Croats or Albanians are automatically considered as the majority group (see Ivanisevic, 2004; Mesić and Bagić, 2011). In contrast to such a clear-cut situation, the Bosnian case is much more complex. As a consequence of the indefinite and locally diverse outcome of the conflict, each of three ethnic groups appeared in both majority and minority position in different areas. Hence, the Bosnian return process and its outcomes need to be analysed on the very local level. For the purpose of this paper, municipalities[5] will serve as the primary level of analysis. Municipalities have not only served as statistical and administrative units within the return process, yet they are also the main units of local socio-political administration. As such, the municipal level is appropriate for the analysis of refugees return outcome in its wider socio-political context, as other major works employing such an approach confirm (Rondić, 2007; Toal and Dahlman, 2011; Žíla, 2014a).

Unit of analysis

By combining the two above discussed analytical categories – ethnic groups and municipalities, the primary unit of analysis is derived: *local ethnic communities*. Hence, for analytical purposes, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs living on the territory of one municipality will be considered as homogenous units and actors. The author is fully aware of the necessary reduction of reality, simplification and generalization that such an approach implies. Nevertheless, he is also convinced that this analytical reduction is a necessary concession to the feasibility of a quantitatively designed study. Also, such a step is in accordance with the prevailing approach towards comparative research on minority refugee return not only in B&H (Toal and Dahlman, 2011; UZOPI-BIH, 2010), but also within the region (Ivanisevic, 2004; Djukanovic, 2008; Mesić and Bagić, 2011; Turk and Jukić, 2010).

Data sources and their limits

The presented analysis is based solely on official and publicly available primary statistical data. Census-based data on ethnic structure of

5 Present-day municipal structure will be used. In cases where present municipalities differ from the pre-conflict division (which is the case of most municipalities along the Inter-Entity Boundary Line), all pre-conflict statistical figures are converted to contemporary municipal units for the purpose of comparison. For more details on the post-Dayton municipal divisions and their ethno-political background see also Raos (2010).

all present-day B&H municipalities from 1991 and 2013 censuses are used to estimate the actual refugee return rate. This simple statistical analysis as such suffers from some important limits on the quality of data that are used, which can potentially undermine the validity and reliability of the findings. First, it is only an indirect yet justified approach for measurement of the return outcome since it reflects the actual population of local minority groups two decades after the end of the conflict. Second, while the 1991 census data are generally accepted as mostly valid and reliable, the data from the 2013 census as such allegedly suffer from limited validity and reliability. As the whole process of census-taking was highly politicized (Bieber, 2013; Perry, 2015) and methodologically contested (Zašto ne, 2014; Ajanović, 2016; Savić and Ignjić, 2016), the full validity of its results can be reasonably doubted. Regardless if due to politicizations or methodological shortcomings, it has been argued that the demographic data do not necessarily fully reflect the actual demographic situation on the ground. Critics of the methodology of the census as well as involved politicians generally argued that numbers of people permanently living in contested areas can be significantly lower, mainly due to different forms of migration or even politically motivated 'import' of non-residents for the census count (Karačić, 2013; Ajanović, 2016; Huseinović, 2016; Šajinović, 2016). Hence, criticism articulated by some observers and involved politicians assumes that figures for particular groups can be exaggerated due these methodological or political flaws. It is reasonable to assume that this problem could be more pronounced in minority returnee groups, for which the census was of great importance as it was supposed to determine their local post-conflict status, not only demographically but also politically.

Recognizing these limits on the data quality, developed findings need to be interpreted with caution and should not be taken as definite, also because of the still dynamic character of the Bosnian demography. On the other hand, the data from the 2013 are the first and the only statistical evidence that was collected systematically and based on widely accepted methodological principles since the war. Due to that, as *the best available evidence*, it is worth a systematic analysis despite its potential shortcomings. The results of this analysis can at very least serve as an empirical basis for further scholar discussion on both the method and findings and also as an incentive for further, more profound research on the topic.

Concepts and definitions

Defining the minority return

Before the actual assessment of minority return results, units of analysis relevant for the return process need to be identified. As the starting point, a clear definition of the minority return must be developed and specific criteria derived from it. At a first glance, the definition of minority return could seem straightforward and clear-cut, as it comprises all refugees or IDPs who return to "*a pre -war home which is located in an area now under the control of another ethnic group, whatever the ethnic distribution in the area prior to the war*" (Cox, 1999: 202; Adelman and Barkan, 2011: 81). Despite this seemingly simple formulation, the definition needs some clarification to delineate actual cases of minority return from alike yet conceptually different situations.

Logically, first and rather trivial presumption of minority return is that particular group was present in the area prior to the conflict. The definition per se includes any individual, relative or absolute numbers of the group in pre-war population are thus irrelevant. However, for analytical purposes of this paper, only larger communities that are relevant for the overall goal of the minority return process will be included. Hence, only groups that counted for at least 5% of total pre-war municipal population and consisted of at least 500 individuals will be considered relevant for the minority return process. Reasons for the application of these *relevance criteria* are two-fold. First is substantial – only demographically significant communities prior to the conflict are relevant for the overall goal of the minority return process – to reverse the results of the ethnic cleansing and restore multi-ethnic demography. Second reason is rather methodological as only numerically larger communities can be covered statistically with acceptable levels of statistical errors.

Second, to be relevant for minority return, the group had to be displaced from the area due to/during the conflict. Similar to the previous criterion, the definition in its general meaning includes any single individual that was displaced from its pre-war place of origin. Yet, *relevance criteria* will be applied again for analytical and methodological purposes. Only those groups that were displaced massively in high numbers will be considered relevant for the minority return process, regardless if the incentive for displacement came from their adversaries or from their own leadership. Hence, those groups that appeared in minority position after the conflict but had not been forced to leave the area through the war will not be included into the analysis.[6]

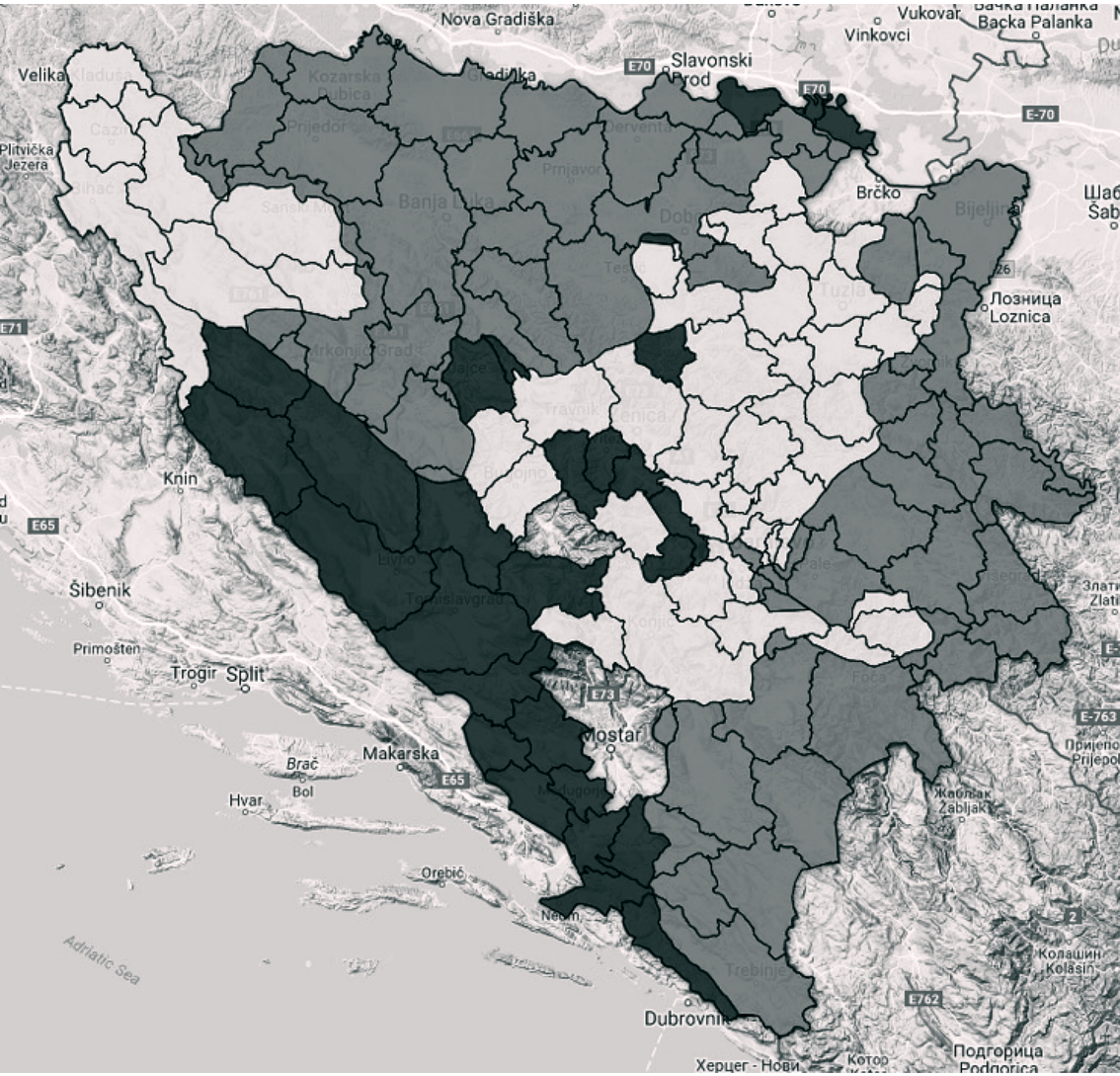
6 This is the situation of local Croat or Bosniak communities in some mixed areas where Bosniak-Croat conflict had not burnt out during the war (typically wider areas of Orašje, Tuzla or Bihać).

Third, and most important defining criterion of a minority returnee group is the post-conflict minority status of the group in the area of origin. In this regard, rather political control than numerical demographic makeup matters in the B&H context. The ambiguous outcome of the Bosnian conflict meant that the three ethnic groups militarily and politically dominated in different parts of the country when the war ended. In contrast to the state-level, where some sort of inter-ethnic compromise was reached by the peace deal, on the local level almost all municipalities were unambiguously controlled by single groups and the two other groups thus appeared in a disadvantaged minority position.[7] In this regard, the post-war demographic structure of municipalities is sometimes irrelevant. Despite the fact that particular ethnic communities in some areas appeared in demographically major position (such as Bosniaks in Vukosavlje or Serbs in West-Herzegovina municipalities), they remained in politically minor position as another group retained its political control of the area. The Map A shows local post-conflict majority groups on municipal level in accordance to the above developed conceptualization.

Population of relevant cases

By subsequent application of these three criteria, all together 145 local ethnic communities (62 Bosniak, 55 Serb and 28 Croat) in 114 (out of 144) present-day municipalities are identified as relevant for the minority return process. Distribution of these cases among minority groups and in relation to majority group is presented in the Table 1, together with their overall demographic counts. It is clear from this summarizing table that the minority return process concerned vast portion of the pre-war population in general as well as of all three ethnic groups. Overall, almost a third of B&H citizens became potential minority returnees.

7 Excluded from the further analysis are those municipalities that were internally divided with no clear politically dominant group at the end of the conflict. This is a case of only three municipalities: Brčko, Mostar and Gornji Vakuf where the local dynamics of return was specific due to the internal division on one hand and shared political control on the other. First two of them have been studied intensely within the international academia (e.g. Dahlman and Tuathail, 2006; Björkdahl, 2011; Moore, 2013).



MAP A: Politically dominant ethnic groups on municipal level, 1996: white = Bosniak, dark grey = Croat, light grey = Serb, no colour = shared/divided control.

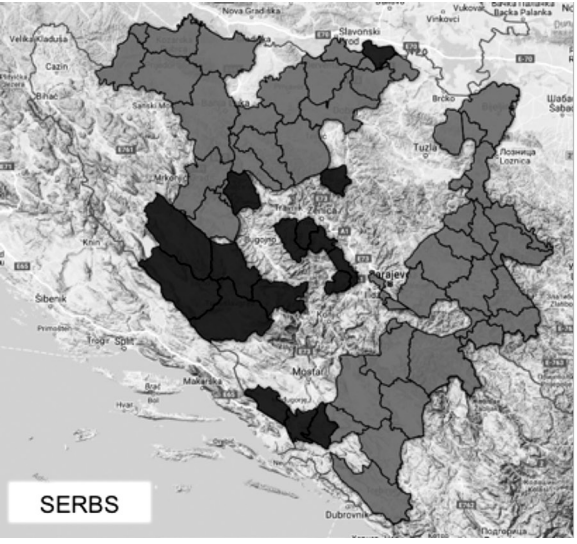
MINORITY RETURNEE GROUP	TOTAL CASES	BOSNIAK MAJORITY	CROAT MAJORITY	SERB MAJORITY	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL POPULATION 1991	% OF TOTAL POPULATION 2013
BOSNIAKS	62	x	16	46	551,709	29%	31%
CROATS	28	11	x	17	259,145	34%	48%
SERBS	55	40	15	x	469,364	34%	43%
TOTAL	145	51	31	63	1,280,218	29%	36%

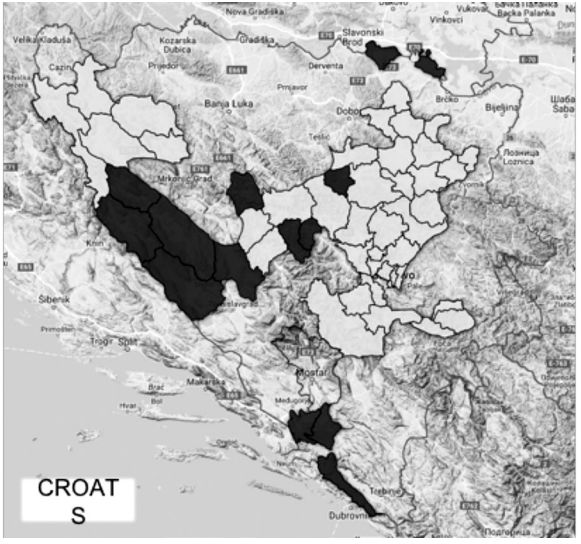
TABLE 1: Distribution of potential minority returnee communities and their overall demographic features.

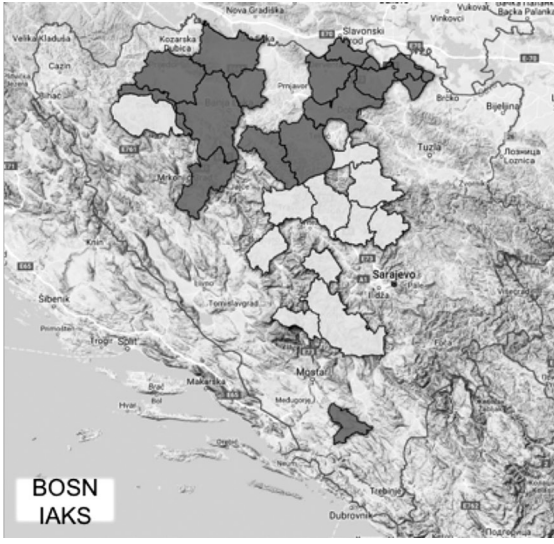
Territorial distribution of relevant groups within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is then presented in the set of Maps B to D separately for each of the three ethnic groups. By presenting the displacement and minority position of local groups, these maps clearly reflect local outcomes of the conflict and the territorial scope of the ethnic cleansing on all sides.

Defining a "success"

Before the assessment of the minority return success rate, the definition of a statistically *successful* return must be formulated. In theory, the ultimate goal of all repatriation strategies after any violent conflict is to get all people who fled because of the conflict back to their homes. However, due to different internal and external factors, the repatriation rate after ethnic conflicts only hardly reaches this ideal outcome. Uneasiness of the return is highest for members of those ethnic groups that have been or have become minority in their original place of residence. Return of these minority refugees is a highly







MAPS B-D: Local ethnic communities relevant for the minority return, colour indicates the *majority* group (white = Bosniak, dark grey = Croat, light grey = Serb).

politicized process that is usually complicated by combination of security, economical and psychological concerns on different levels. Lasting inter-ethnic tensions, persisting insecurity, painful memories, or even open reluctance of local majority and discrimination by authorities all together discourage minority refugees from voluntarily returning home (Adelman and Barkan, 2011; Fagen, 2011; Bradley, 2013; Long, 2013). Hence, it is not surprising that the success rate of minority return barely reaches the target rate of a complete return. Then, what is the quantitative threshold of minority return that can be already considered as success?

To set a quantitative threshold of success, it is useful to look into the empirical record of previous forced displacements and repatriation processes. While the concept of minority return as such was politically articulated for the first time in B&H in the late 1990s, analogous processes have been a natural part of post-conflict settlements in all conflicts accompanied by displacements in ethnically mixed areas. Hence, the following section will briefly look into the available historical evidence to see how much of success does the empirical record of minority return present.[8]

As already noted, the voluntary refugee repatriation as a preferred solution to displacement had not taken root before the late Cold War decades. Even in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the early post-colonial era, ethnic cleansing was usually cemented through resettlement or integration of refugees since their return was foreclosed, as the cases of expulsion of Eastern European Germans or 'population exchange' during the Indian-Pakistani conflict illustrate (Kaufmann, 1998; Adelman and Barkan, 2011). Similar to that, two major early Cold War ethnic conflicts, the Greek-Turk in Cyprus and the Israeli-Palestinian, led to massive flows of refugees who were never allowed to return to their homes for political and security reasons, thus creating infamous cases of decades-long protracted displacement (Zetter, 1994; Masalha, 2005). In contrast to that, after some of the later Cold War ethnic conflicts in the Horn of Africa or Southeast Asia minority refugees faced forced repatriation as they were expelled by their host states (Black, 2006; Fagen, 2006; Long, 2013).

However, ethnic cleansing was being gradually delegitimised during the late Cold War era and voluntary repatriation of refugees became a priority in conflict management through 1980s (Adelman and Barkan, 2011; Fagen, 2006). This shift of priorities was confirmed in early 1990s with the triumph of liberal ideas in the ideological struggle and the emergence of new moral and political imperatives (Long, 2013; Black, 2006). In response to the escalation of new ethnic

8 For more comprehensive comparative empirical record see also Black and Koser (1999), Dumper (2006), Bradley (2013), Long (201) or Hampton (2014).

conflicts and forced displacements, voluntary return rapidly became a top priority in the international peace agenda, the year 1992 was even declared "The Year of Voluntary Repatriation" by UNHCR (Zieck, 1997; Crisp, 2001). However, the reality of the post-conflict dynamics proved to be much more complex and not in all conflict regions these strategies could have been successfully implemented.

Most failed in terms of minority return was probably the Caucasus conflict region where effectively no minority refugees have returned to conflict zones (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh) controlled by the opposing party since the termination of open hostilities in mid-1990s until today (Johansson, 2009; Koch, 2015). In Africa, the most conflict-torn continent, the record is more ambiguous. In the infamous Great Lakes area, both relative successes (Rwanda, Mosambique, Angola) as well as serious failures (Burundi, DRC) were recorded (Crisp, 2000; 2010). Similarly, within the Horn of Africa, most ethnic groups returned successfully in Eritrea and Ethiopia, while Somalia and (South) Sudan have been shaken by permanent displacement due to the continuous conflict dynamics (Bariagaber, 2016). In contrast to that, in West Africa, where bloody wars were fought in Sierra Leone and Liberia, majority of the refugees successfully returned in the post-war years. Moving to completely different regional settings of Central America, in Guatemala, where hundreds of thousands of indigenous people were displaced during the war, most refugees returned home despite their vulnerable position (North and Simmons, 1999; Taylor, 2010). Turning to the Balkans, outcomes of the internationally facilitated minority return process have been rather weak in both Croatia and Kosovo, two major post-ethnic-conflict areas. In Croatia, it is estimated that only 10% of the expelled Serb population returned to the country for permanent living in last two decades, with mostly elder population of returnees (Mesić and Bagić, 2011; Bagić, 2012). In Kosovo, results are even worse as only several thousands out of about 150,000 Serbs who fled in the aftermath of the war returned to areas controlled by Albanians (Smit, 2006; KIPRED, 2006; Djukanovic, 2008). Overall, through the recent history of ethnic conflicts, we have witnessed whole range of outcomes in return processes in different regional contexts – from total failures in Cyprus, Palestine, Caucasus or Kosovo, through limited successes in Croatia or African Grate Lakes area, up to almost full returns in Guatemala, Mozambique or West Africa.

Based on the above presented empirical record, the demographic threshold for success of a minority return will be arbitrarily set on 30% of the pre-war population. Such a threshold can be considered relatively low, yet this step is grounded in both empirical and methodological considerations. First, the low threshold reflects the generally low success rate of minority return processes, in particular within

the Balkan regional settings. Second, even return of smaller yet still significant portion of the minority population can be interpreted as a relative success of the return process in regard to its ultimate goal, e.g. to reverse the outcome of the ethnic cleansing. Third, such a step is methodologically appropriate in respect to limited validity of demographic data as well as due to overall drop of population in many relevant areas.[9]

Findings

When monitoring the return process and measuring its success rate, two dimensions of return outcomes need to be distinguished – purely formal and actual. The former focuses solely on the number of people who successfully went through the legal and administrative process of return regardless of their further post-return destiny. The latter then considers the long-term perspective of returnees and focuses on the question if they truly returned to the area for a permanent living. As already discussed above, UNHCR limited its monitoring efforts only to the formal dimension of the process. As a consequence, it has presented results that in fact have never been achieved on the ground. While monitoring the formal dimension of return is relatively easy due to its administrative character, measuring the actual success of return is much more challenging due to the fluid local (post-)return dynamics. As already noted, several attempts have been made to map out the actual outcome of the minority return on the ground, yet these were either limited territorially (Rondić, 2007; Toal and Dahlman, 2011; Žíla, 2014a) or related only to the process of the return as such rather than to the desired outcome of the whole process, the reversal of ethnic cleansing (UZOPIBIH, 2010; UNHCR, 2011).

This paper attempts to fill this gap by offering an indirect measure of the success rate based on comparison of pre-war and present-day demographic figures. To estimate the actually achieved outcomes of the return process, newly available demographic data on local ethnic structure collected within the 2013 census are utilized. For all local groups that have been identified as relevant for the minority return, contemporary demographic figures are compared to the pre-war numbers to estimate the actual outcome of the return process. Since all groups identified as relevant for this analysis had been subject to

9 The total population of B&H in 2013 counted for only about 80 % of the pre-war population. Locally, this ratio ranges from 30% in peripheral municipalities that experienced massive outflows of population up to more than 150% in some central areas that recorded significant influx of refugees.

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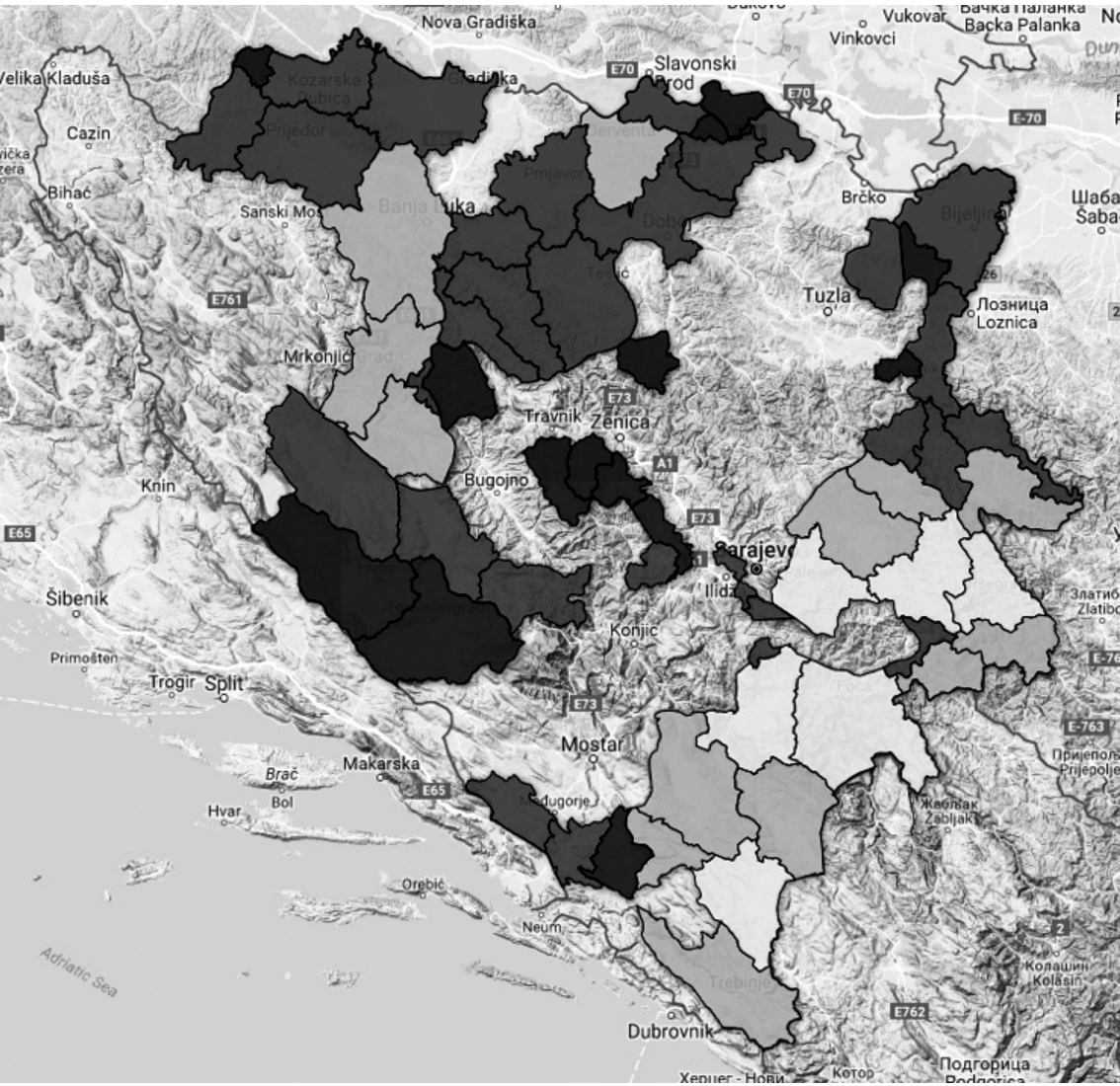
massive indiscriminate displacement and voluntary movement into areas dominated by other groups was very rare in the post-Dayton B&H, we can with high level of certainty assume that most members of these minority groups currently living in relevant areas are in fact returnees, or their descendants, regardless if they had been formally registered as such by the UNHCR. Hence, this indirect measure is able to directly indicate actual long-term success rates of return for all relevant groups with relatively high precision.

Summary of findings of this analysis is first presented in the Table 2. The aggregated values reveal important differences among achieved return rates of three ethnic groups in general. The Table 2 presents the overall estimated return rates for whole ethnic populations that were identified as relevant for the minority return. It is apparent that the return success rate indicated by the demographic data is certainly higher for Bosniak communities (45% in average, 48% in total), lower for Croats (27%, 27%) and very low for Serbs (11%, 12%).

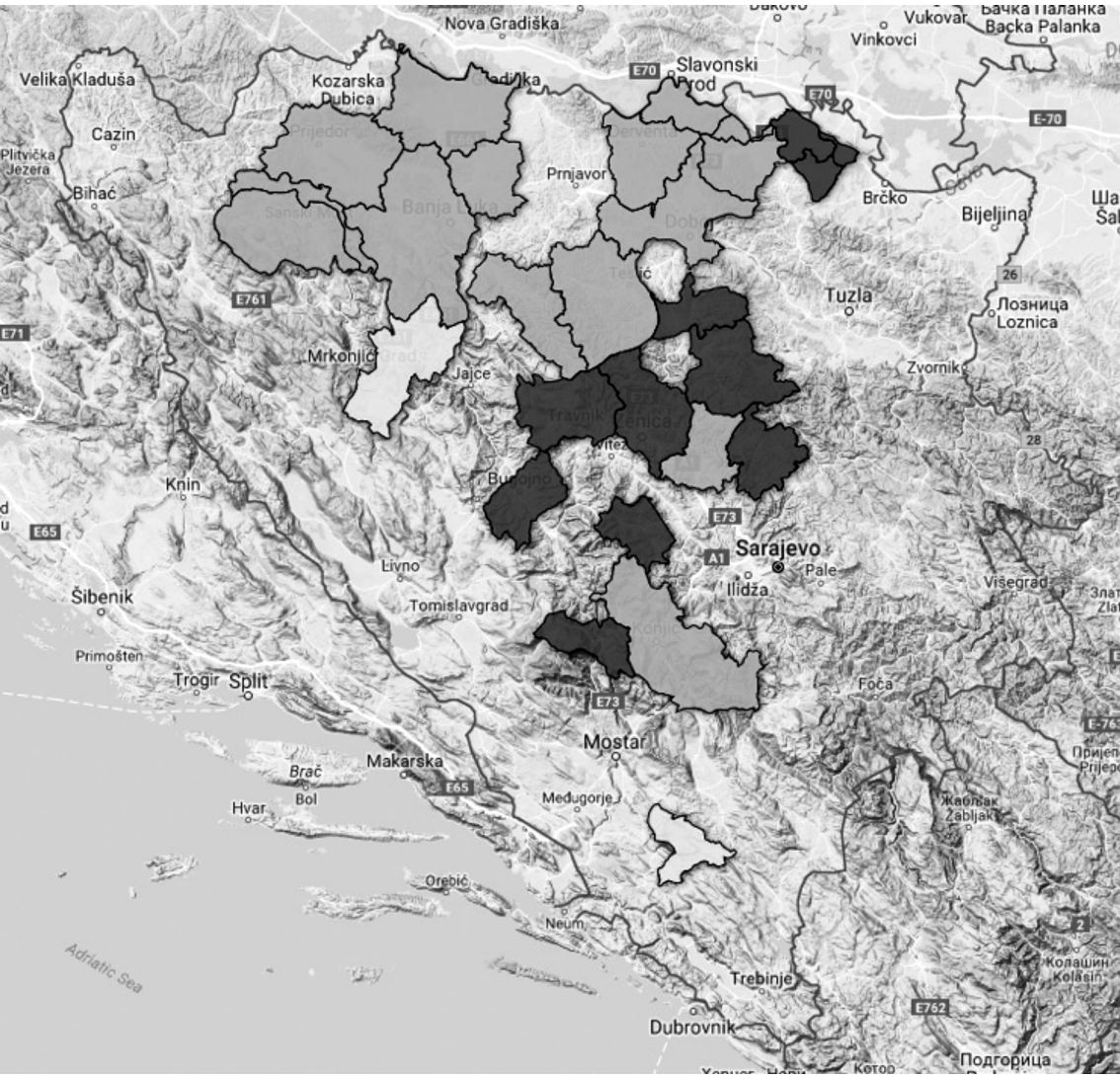
MINORITY RETURNEE GROUP	TOTAL CASES	POPULATION OF CONCERN	RETURNED POPULATION	SUCCESS RATE OVERALL	SUCCESS RATE LOCAL AVERAGE
BOSNIAKS	62	551,709	264,641	48%	45%
CROATS	28	259,145	71,412	27%	27%
SERBS	55	469,364	55,020	12%	11%
TOTAL	145	1,280,218	391,073	31%	29%

TABLE 2: Summary of total return rates indicated by the demographic figures.

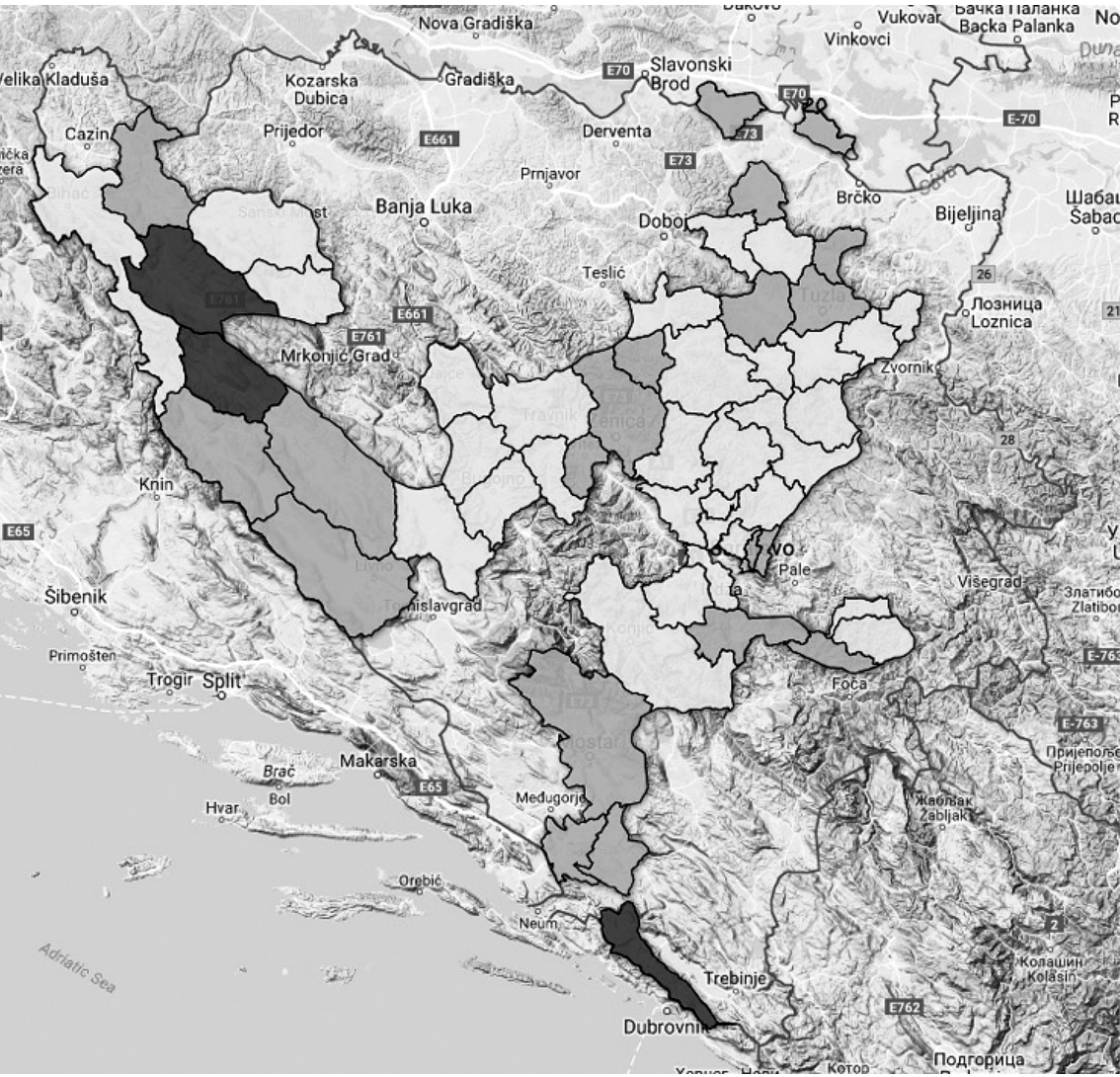
To reveal the spatial dimension of the return rate, territorially disaggregated municipal-level findings are then presented graphically within the maps E to G. Separately for each ethnic group, the map shows all municipalities relevant for minority return (coloured polygons). In all these areas, the estimated achieved success rate is presented through different colour shades (see the legend within the map).



MAP E: Estimated minority return success rate for relevant Bosniak communities.



MAP F: Estimated minority return success rate for relevant Croat communities.



MAP G: Estimated minority return success rate for relevant Serb communities.

It is clear from the above presented maps that for all three ethnic groups success rates of the return on municipal level follow wider regional patterns. Relevant municipalities thus can be clustered into larger geopolitical units according to the prevailing level of recorded success rate. These clusters are presented in the following table together with summarized municipal-level data.

GROUP	OUTCOME	REGION	OVERALL	MIN-MAX	AVERAGE	MUNICIPALITIES	MAJORITY GROUP
BOSNIAK	Success	Central Bosnia	86%	49%-103%	84%	Jajce, Novi Travnik, Vitez, Busovača, Kiseljak, Kreševo, Žepče, Prozor-Rama	Croat
		Central Herzegovina	65%	44%-75%	60%	Čapljina, Stolac, Ljubuški	Croat
		Western Herzegovina	67%	32%-78%	59%	Glamoč, Livno, Prozor, Tomislavgrad	Croat
		Northwest Bosnia - Prijedor area	56%	34%-86%	58%	Kostajnica, Prijedor, Kozarska Dubica, Novi Grad,	Serb
		Posavina	54%	27%-100%	56%	Odžak, Vukosavlje, Šamac, Modriča, Brod, *Derventa*	Serb, Odžak Croat
		Lower Podrinje	47%	34%-76%	53%	Lopare, Ugljevik, Zvornik, Osmaci, Milići, Bijeljina, Bratunac,	Serb
		Northern Bosnia - Doboj area	51%	42%-56%	49%	Teslić, Doboj, Kotor Varoš, Prnjavor	Serb
		Peripheral areas adjacent to cities of Sarajevo, Goražde and Jajce	39%	35%-41%	39%	Istočna Ilidža, Trnovo (RS), Novo Goražde, Jezero	Serb
	Ambiguous	*Northwest Bosnia - Banja Luka area*	*34%*	*16%-51%*	*34%*	*Banja Luka, Gradiška, Mrkonjić Grad, Čelinac, Kneževo, Šipovo*	*Serb*
	Failure	Upper Podrinje	17%	7%-26%	17%	Foča, Čajniče, Rudo, Višegrad, Srebrenica	Serb
		Eastern Herzegovina	13%	1%-22%	12%	Trebinje, Berkovići, Bileća, Gacko, Nevesinje, Kalinovik	Serb
		Romanija	10%	6%-17%	11%	Pale, Sokolac, Rogatica, Han Pijesak	
CROAT	Success	Eastern Posavina	35%	30%-69%	44%	Donji Žabar, Pelagićevo, Šamac	Serb
		Central Bosnia	40%	18%-58%	41%	Travnik, Fojnica, Maglaj, Zenica, Bugojno, Fojnica, Zavidovići, Vareš, *Kakanj*	Bosniak
	Ambiguous	*Central Herzegovina*	*17%*	*13%-32%*	*23%*	*Jablanica, Konjic, Berkovići*	*Bosniak, Berkovići Serb*
	Failure	Western Posavina	18%	12%-24%	20%	Derventa, Brod, Vukosavlje, Modriča	Serb
		Northern Bosnia - Doboj area	14%	10%-18%	14%	Doboj, Teslić, Kotor Varoš	Serb
		Northwest Bosnia - Prijedor area	25%	11%-28%	21%	Prijedor, Oštra Luka, Sanski Most	Serb, Sanski Most Bosniak
		Northwest Bosnia - Banja Luka area	18%	8%-24%	17%	Banja Luka, Mrkonjić Grad, Gradiška, Laktaši	Serb
SERB	Success	Eastern Herzegovina	61%	61%	61%	Ravno	Croat
	Ambiguous	*Western Herzegovina*	*27%*	*8%-43%*	*21%*	*Drvar, Bosansko Grahovo, Glamoč, Livno, Kupres*	*Croat*
		Northwest Bosnia - Bihać area	*12%*	*6%-35%*	*13%*	*Bihać, Sanski Most, Bosanski Petrovac, Bosanska Krupa, Ključ*	*Bosniak*
	Failure	Central Herzegovina	15%	2%-19%	12%	Mostar, Čapljina, Stolac, Konjic	Bosniak-Croat
		Central Bosnia	7%	1%-22%	8%	Bugojno, Donji Vakuf, Jajce, Travnik, Novi Travnik, Vitez, Zenica, Žepče, Kakanj, Vareš, Olovo, Kladanj, Zavidovići, Maglaj, Breza	Bosniak-Croat
		Sarajevo area	10%	3%-15%	9%	Hadžići, Ilijaš, Trnovo, Vogošća, Centar, Novo Sarajevo, Novi Grad, Stari Grad	Bosniak
		Goražde area	8%	6%-10%	8%	Goražde, Foča-Ustikolina, Pale-Prača	Bosniak
		Posavina	12%	10%-12%	11%	Orašje, Odžak	Croat
		Northern Bosnia - Tuzla area	11%	5%-17%	9%	Tuzla, Gradačac, Gračanica, Srebrenik, Lukavac, Živinice, Banovići, Kalesija, Sapna, Čelić	Bosniak

TABLE 3: Regional clusters according to the estimated minority return success rate.

Group-based and regionally clustered analysis presented in the table reveals significant disparities of success rates not only between groups as such but within single groups as well. Bosniaks returned in substantive numbers or even reclaimed their pre-war demographic position in majority of affected municipalities and wider regions, involving areas controlled by both Croats and Serbs. However, several areas of certain failure need to be highlighted. In particular, extremely low return rates in Upper Podrinje (17%), Romanija (11%) and Eastern Herzegovina (12%) regions are alarming as these indicate almost total demise of once significant regional Bosniak population, thus confirming the outcome of ethnic cleansing of the area.

Recorded return rates are generally considerably lower for Croats. In particular, Croat refugees returned in only very tiny numbers into most of the relevant areas now controlled by Serbs (21%). The only exception are three tiny municipalities in Posavina which are adjacent to Croat-dominated areas and where return rates are considerably higher (30%-69%). On the other hand, outcomes of the Croat return process are somewhat more promising in most of the Bosniak-controlled areas of Central Bosnia where certain success (40%) was recorded.

Definitely most unsatisfactory are the results of minority return of Serbs to almost all areas now belonging to the Bosniak-Croat Federation (11%). The only areas where certain success was recorded are two peripheral municipalities in Western Herzegovina (Drvar, 43%) and Bosnian Krajina (B. Petrovac, 35%) and tiny municipality of Ravno in Eastern Herzegovina (61%). In all other municipalities, regardless if controlled by Croats or Bosniaks, the recorded outcome can only be interpreted as clear failure. Hence, ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Bosniak- and Croat-controlled areas was largely confirmed.

Generally, besides the significant disparities between the recorded return rate of three ethnic groups in general, it is apparent that outcomes of the return process follow regional patterns also within single groups. Hence, the answer to the question of what effect had the minority return on reversal of ethnic cleansing and restoration of multiethnicity is dependent on both the region and the group of our focus. While ethnic cleansing of particular groups from some regions was confirmed by certain failure of minority return (e.g. Bosniaks from Eastern Herzegovina, Serbs from Central Bosnia, Croats from Western Posavina), in other regions it was significantly reversed through the minority return process (e.g. Bosniaks in Lower Podrinje, Croats in Eastern Posavina, Serbs in Western Herzegovina).

To assess comprehensively the outcome of the return process in regard to its ultimate goal, e.g. reversing the ethnic cleansing and restoring multiethnicity, it is also important to look at present-day local levels of ethnic heterogeneity and compare them to the pre-war

demographic situation. The overall changes in levels of ethnic heterogeneity can be best expressed by comparing the pre-war and current levels of the local ethnic diversity measured through the Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalisation index (ELF)[10]. The value of ELF index directly reflects the level of the overall ethnic heterogeneity and its comparison in time thus enables to track the aggregated demographic changes of all three ethnic groups. Comparisons of values of ELF in 1991 and 2013 for all B&H municipalities are presented in the Maps H with darker shades representing higher levels of heterogeneity.

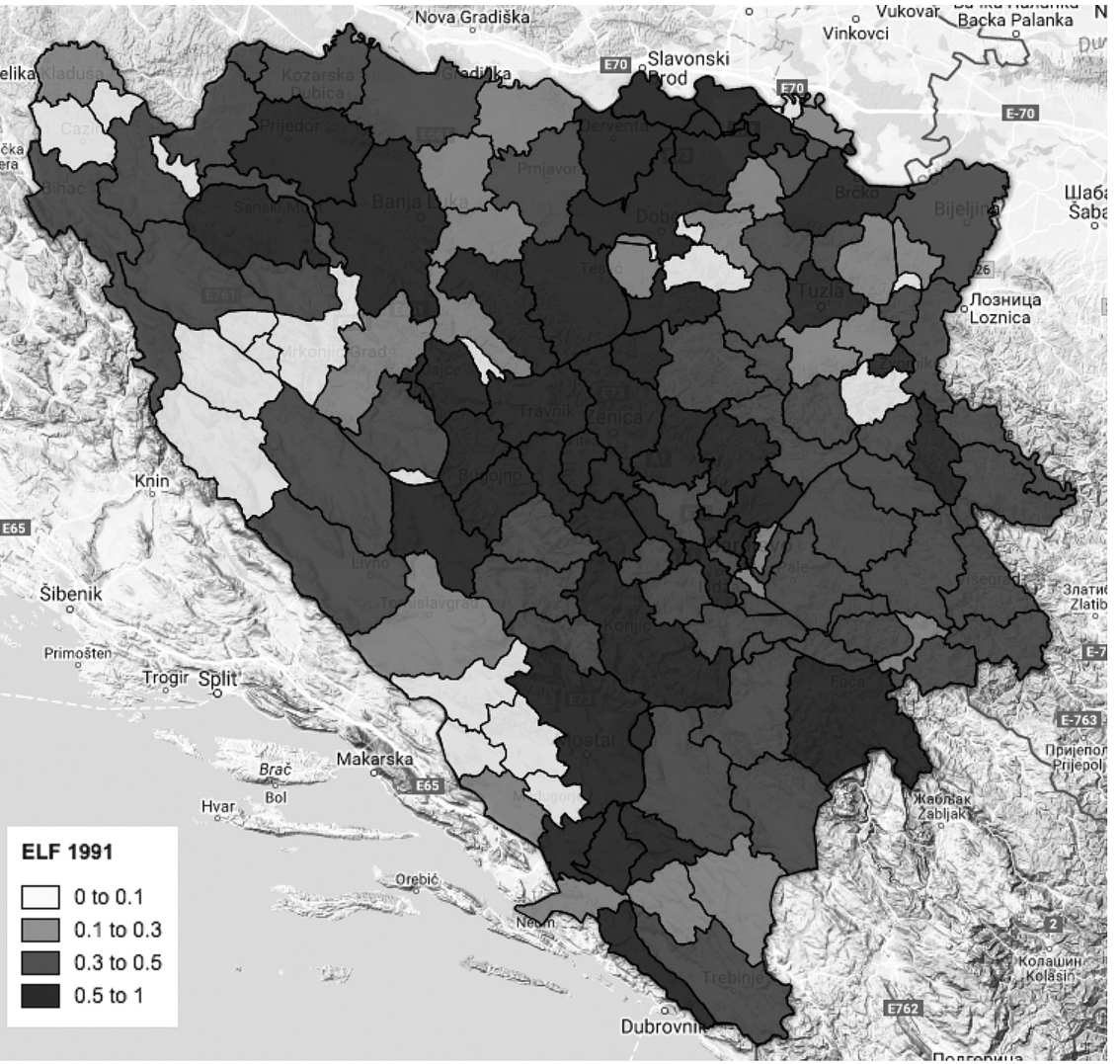
Maps clearly show long-term ethnic homogenization effects of the Bosnian conflict in general and ethnic cleansing campaigns in particular on the local demography throughout the country. In 1991 there were only few ethnically homogenous areas in B&H (ELF < 0.1) as most of the municipalities presented high or medium values of ELF. Nowadays, as the second map shows, in a direct consequence of the ethnic conflict and the failed minority return, there are much larger areas throughout the country that need to be considered as ethnically homogenous. Ethnic cleansing clearly succeeded in these territories. However, even most of the areas which preserved or restored some degree of their pre-war heterogeneity experienced significant drop of the heterogeneity level because of failed or weak minority return.

The presented comparison of pre-war and recent demographic data clearly indicates that achieved results of the minority return process are rather weak in regard to the intended reversal of ethnic cleansing. With few minor exceptional cases of success, massive cleansings of Serbs from FBiH and Croats from RS seem to have been rather confirmed than reversed during the two post-Dayton decades. On the other hand, Bosniaks and Croats in areas of their earlier mutual conflict as well as Bosniaks in large parts of RS by their return actually managed to reverse outcomes of the previous ethnic cleansing and certainly reclaimed their demographic position.

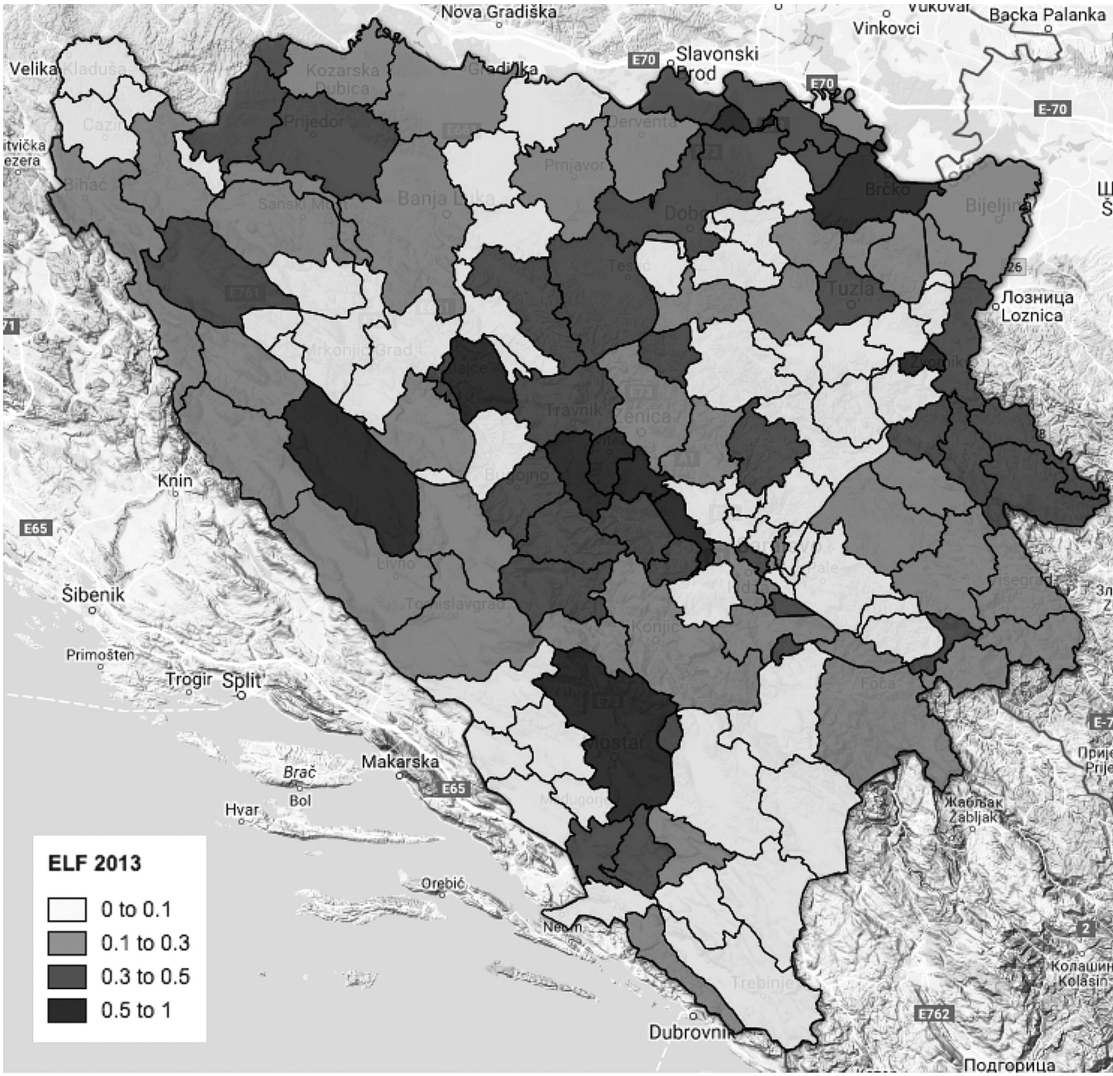
Concluding remarks and suggestions for further research

The paper utilized the newly available statistical evidence from 2013 census to estimate the real demographic outcome of the minority return process in B&H on the local level. Thus, its goal was to reveal if the ethnic cleansing of 1990s war was rather reversed or confirmed through the two post-conflict decades. Based on the data from the 2013 census, compared to the pre-war figures, the overall minority re-

10 The measure of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (ELF) reflects the probability that two individuals randomly chosen from the sample belong to different sub-samples (ethnic groups in this case). For more details, see Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005).



MAPS H: Comparison of municipal levels of ethnic heterogeneity: values of ELF in 1991 and 2013.


Nova Gradiška
Vinkovci
Backa Palanka
Velika
Slavonski Brod
E70
E-70
Prijedor
Banja Luka
Brčko
Bijeljina
Tuzla
Лозница
Loznica
Travnik
Knin
E65
Šibenik
Primošten
Trogir
Split
Makarska
Brač
Bol
Hvar
Orebić
Neum
Dubrovnik
Подгорица
Колашин
Kolašin
Жабљак
Žabljak
ELF 2013
0 to 0.1
0.1 to 0.3
0.3 to 0.5
0.5 to 1

turn rate of about 30% is estimated. Such an outcome can be considered as a relative success, particularly in comparative perspective both within the post-Yugoslav region and globally. However, important differences in the return rate among single ethnic groups were recorded. While an estimated share of 47% of all Bosniak minority refugees returned to areas of minority return, this is the case of only 27% of Croats and 11% of Serbs. Furthermore, significant territorial disparities of return rate have been revealed among different regions within single ethnic groups. Most importantly in regard to the central question of the ethnic cleansing reversal, some of once significant regional populations of all three ethnicities have not returned to distinct areas at all. Bosniaks from Upper Podrinje and Eastern Herzegovina, Croats from most areas of the present RS as well as Serbs from most parts of the FBiH including once Serb-dominated regions in Western Herzegovina and Sarajevo area. All these communities returned to their pre-war homes only in negligible numbers and their historically significant populations thus virtually vanished. Hence, ethnic cleansing of these regions has been confirmed in two post-Dayton decades. Southeast strip of B&H is now purely Serb, as well as historically intermingled areas of RS are cleansed of Croats and federal parts have lost their Serb population. Even areas that have preserved or restored some part of their pre-war heterogeneity have mostly not fully reversed the effects of ethnic homogenization caused by the war. Legacy of massive ethnic cleansing is thus clearly visible in most parts of the present-day B&H.

On the contrary, the minority return process succeeded in partial reversal of ethnic cleansing in several regions where pre-war demography has been partially or even fully restored. Thanks to the significant number of Bosniaks and Croats who returned to their respective minority areas, Central Bosnia has gained back large part of its pre-war ethnic intermixture, yet the Serb component is missing. Also, massive Bosniak return to Croat-dominated areas in Herzegovina and Serb-controlled parts in northern parts of RS have largely reversed results of the ethnic cleansing of these regions. For Croats and Serbs, the successful minority return is limited to peripheral areas in Posavina and Western Herzegovina, respectively. These regional patterns generally show that while ethnic cleansing was confirmed by failed minority return in some regions, it was successfully reversed in others. Hence, no definite general answer can be developed to the central question of the paper if the results of ethnic cleansing campaigns have been confirmed or reversed. While B&H as whole certainly lost important part of its pre-war local heterogeneity, the actual extent of this loss is more diverse and necessarily depends on both the group and the region of our focus.

In regard to recorded group-based and regional differences of return dynamics, further research should primarily focus on explaining the different pathways of post-conflict demography through comparative local-level research. Most importantly, scholars should attempt to identify different causal mechanisms and explanatory variables that have led to the contradictory outcomes of the return process in different areas. Such explanations would be of great universal value also for post-conflict refugee repatriation strategies in different regional settings.

Importantly, the census-based figures are not without limits as the whole process of census-taking was highly politicized. In response to these weaknesses of statistical data and their possible flaws, further research should go beyond the pure demographic measures and assess the actual outcome of the return process more comprehensively. Due to the lack of available reliable data, time-consuming and costly fieldwork will probably still play irreplaceable role in such further research. Besides, more quantitatively oriented scholars could attempt to verify census-based data as well as available alternative demographic figures systematically through their more elaborated triangulation, explain structural discrepancies between them, and thus uncover possible flaws and their structural causes. Ideally, combination of both of these approaches, qualitative fieldwork and systematic analysis of the quantitative data, would reveal where and why was the ethnic cleansing confirmed, and where it was reversed through the minority return.

Overall, the existing statistical evidence indicates that real achievements of the return process are different from what has been assumed and reported by the international community. Hence, the issue of minority return in B&H should attract further scholar attention, yet it must not be limited to the demographic dimension of the problem. Above all, scholars shall ask the question what is the actual situation of minority returnees on the ground today, more than two decades after the end of the war. Further research should go beyond the pure demography and investigate the local political socio-economic position of returnee communities. Political and socio-economic vulnerability combined with weak demographic record could further limit the impact of minority return and thus confirm results of ethnic cleansing even more than it already has done. In terms of policy implications, proper understanding of the outcome of the minority return would not only help us to identify most vulnerable areas where support of minority returnees is needed, but also to develop new and better post-conflict repatriation strategies that could be implemented in other (post-)conflict regions in the near future. From Syria, through Ukraine to South Sudan, the international community could be soon facing similar challenges as those it had been with difficulty dealing with in Bosnia and Herzegovina in last two decades.

Petr Čermák*

Povratak manjinskih izbjeglica kao sredstvo poništavanja etničkog čišćenja: slučaj Bosne i Hercegovine

SAŽETAK: U poslijeratnoj Bosni i Hercegovini, međunarodno upravljani proces izgradnje mira naglašavao je povratak manjinskih izbjeglica kao jedinstveno sredstvo poništavanja rezultata masovnih etničkih čišćenja za vrijeme rata. U radu se koriste novo dostupni statistički podatci kako bi se sistematično procijenio stvarni učinak procesa manjinskog povratka na post-konfliktnu demografsku sliku zemlje u odnosu na cilj obnavljanja njezine etničke heterogenosti. Usporedbom rezultata popisa stanovništva iz 2013. godine sa predratnim demografskim brojkama, stječe se uvid u to u kojoj je mjeri povratak izbjeglica uspio u poništavanju etničkog čišćenja iz 1990-ih. Rezultati pokazuju značajne grupne i regionalne razlike u utjecaju povratka na poništavanje homogenizacijskih učinaka sukoba. Ukupna stopa povratka bošnjačkih manjinskih zajednica procjenjuje se na 48%, hrvatskih 27% a srpskih na samo 11%. Međutim, sve tri grupe iskusile su i uspješne i neuspješne ishode procesa u različitim područjima koja slijede šire regionalne obrasce. Općenito, država je u ratu sigurno izgubila značajan dio svoje prijeratne lokalne heterogenosti. Ipak, dok su u nekim područjima potvrđeni učinci ratne homogenizacije, manjinski je povratak djelomično preokrenuo učinke čišćenja u drugim regijama.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: **manjinski povratak, izbjeglice, interno raseljene osobe, Bosna i Hercegovina, etničko čišćenje**

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