POST-CONFLICT GENDER POLITICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – BETWEEN THE SAME CIRCLE OF PALMS WITH HUMAN SECURITY AND A SMALL STREAM OUTSIDE THE BOX

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POLITICI DE GEN POST-CONFLICT ÎN BALCANII DE VEST – ÎNTRE ANALOGIILE CIRCULARE CU SECURITATEA UMANĂ ȘI TENDINȚE FIRAVE DE DETAȘARE

Abstract. *Can the issue of gender politics trust to time and opportunity for better be discussed when it does not actually feel like that enough has been said, especially in the case of the Western Balkans?*

The effective experience of pre-definition or of a case closed applies when one attempts to tackle the issue of gender politics, its hitching with human security and its call of revelation in the Western Balkans.

The display of performing acts of the women`s role in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans has been multiply appreciated in analyses.

Throughout this article, we will be housing a linking overture that this aspect entertains with human security and, above all, we will be reckoning a manner of adjudication to the foreordained elements that still have an important impact core upon the issue of gender politics in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: *Human Security, Post-Conflict Environments, Gender politics, Gender Reconstruction, Western Balkans.*

Rezumat. *Pot oare dezbaterile legate de politicile de gen să își găsească momentul și oportunitatea pentru a fi discutate, chiar și atunci când se resimte situația că nu au fost făcute suficiente analize, în special în cazul Balcanilor de Vest?*

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Experiența efectivă a pre-definirii unui caz închis trenează în special când se încearcă abordarea problematicii politicilor de gen, a relevanței corelației cu securitatea umană și cu intromisiunile acesteia în aria Balcanilor de Vest.

Rolul femeilor în problematicile de reconstrucție post-conflict în Balcanii de Vest a fost apreciat și considerat apreciabil în multe analize. Pe parcursul acestui articol, vom încerca să întreținem legături analitice ale acestei problematici cu securitatea umană și, mai presus de toate, cu modalitatea în care elemente pre-stabilite sunt adjudecate pentru consolidarea unui impact al politicilor de gen în Balcanii de Vest.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Securitate Umană, Mediu Post-Conflict, Politici de Gen, Reconstrucție de Gen, Balcanii de Vest.*

1. From Military to Human – A Circle of Palms in Post-Conflict Environments. Which Role for Gender Politics?

Human security is the most important issue area in post-conflict environments. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, this assertion has the impetus and the driving force of a truism!

Nevertheless, it is worth being acknowledged as a one of the main aspects that correlates the contents of *human* and *military security*. *Human security* is a word of important transfer – one of the most impending and gradually transforming and transformative paradigm shifts that have occured in the post-Cold War era and that are still fostering larger and larger outlines for the current structural conditions of global and of the regional security environments, at the same time.

As Caroline Thomas and Peter Wilkin stress in their study, there is no grand detective style that needs to be undertaken, when arranging the subtler and more and more pervasive conceptual incomes of *human security*: „*The human security* endeavor represents a conscious attempt to relocate the security discourse, to move it from the terrain of an international system composed of discrete territorial units called sovereign states and to embed it in a global social structure composed of humanity in a capitalist world economy that has been developing since the sixteenth century. The emphasis shifts from the pursuit of the national interest to the fulfillment of *human security*"[1].

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[1] Thomas, 1998, 3.

Human security has a disturbing significance for other realms and for the components of the wide array of security – in the sense that it has plenty of discovering notes for all them and it is a prerequisite, that needs to be built up and not being ascribed demission.

Security needs to work as a panacea for the implementation of all the needful conditions of *human dignity*. Within the same study, J. Ann Tickner interlinks the fact that smaller pictures are beginning to matter more and more and that there is some form of escapism, that blocks the passage of the traditional approaches utilized so far to grasp the fullest meaning of the events underwent: „Feminist scholars tend to be skeptical of celebrations of beginnings and endings and historical turning points because there is evidence to suggest that times of "progress" are often regressive for women.

For example, the "triumph" of capitalism in the former Eastern bloc has been accompanied by a sharp decline in both the economic status and the level of political participation of women.

Given the increase in global inequality, the feminization of poverty, and the discriminations that women often face when they attempt to participate in the global market, feminist scholarship is questioning the triumphalist story of a borderless world that is being told by supporters of economic globalization.

Feminists also reject theoretical projects that offer universal, essentialist, or reductionist explanations of multifaceted and complex social relations".

Likewise, *gender politics* come across as an associated form of explanation of conspicous events, that have raising a series of questions and of inter-conditional relations with each other. *Gender politics* is far more than a general assumption or a general interpositions of opinion-making!

It draws its sap from the local interpretations and representations, sometimes disregarded, especially in post-conflict environments where this kind of attestations are encumbering the progress of outer projects.

Are there, in *gender politics*, also relative degrees? Do we need them? As Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Dina Francesca Haynes, Naomi Cahn harvest a more sensitive approach, „images of men in conflict center on the male as armed combatant, emphasizing *the masculinization of the military* and of war itself. Equally, images of women in situations of conflict abound. Such imagery is epitomized by the female refugee, the woman as mother, the woman as widow or experiencing loss, the aberrational woman as perpetrator, the woman as victim of sexual violence, and even occasionally, the woman as warrior.

The variance of images affirms the multitude of roles presented to or foisted upon women by the emergence of collective violence"[2].

Is *gender politics* a compensatory representation of the less-advantaged? Or, to better instill the semiotic nuance: is it a compensatory frame and perspective?

Gender politics has been recognized items of international accountability, as it seeks a reconciliation between different cultures of factors, especially in post-conflict emvironments. With an usual proeminence, women are being synthetised as strategic targets of vulnerability.

In war-torn environments, women gather plenty of resonance for being multi-dimensional actors with much exposure to vulnerableness. However, women are/can be *active reconstructive agents* of the dust and ashes of a broken state of affairs: „Conflict and *gender* analyses must not only pay attention to the so-called *gender* characteristics of women and men respectively, but should also take into account the diversity among women and their different roles and positions in armed conflict.

Women are a heterogeneous group of social actors, who on the one hand are determined to take on certain positions and roles in conflicts, but on the other hand deliberately choose to fulfil certain roles based on their strategies and goals.

Women must, thus, not only be seen as passive victims of armed conflict, but as capable actors, as well. They have even benefited from the windows of opportunity that conflict situations offer them. Although women do suffer in conflict, there are examples of women whose positions have improved during conflict, for instance through the expansion of women's economic and political responsibilities"[3].

When *human security* digresses, remediation is usually beyond reach, even if ulterior evidence, that emanates from alternative indicators, shows progress and positive dissemination.

Especially, in post-conflict environements, *human security* is one potent indicator of the *reconstruction* process of a society and of the re-engaging of vulnerable groups. One major target of the resource allocation programs are women and the enterprises they nurture for *post-conflict reconstruction*.

This is why, as related to *human security*, the *gender dimension* is very important in assessing some sort of a caretaker dimension. It is not solely oriented on women, on their accomodation and their role in post-

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[2] Tickner, 1998, 46-47.
[3] Ní Aoláin; Haynes; Cahn, 2011, 40.

conflict environment and to the manner in which they contribute to the *reconstruction* of a society from its foundation.

One of the most important degrees of expectation and of pertinence regards the associative component of *inter-gender relating* in the post-conflict environment and how the apportioning of issues and transition processes is stimulated by *inter-gender interaction*.

The *gender factor,* the *gender dimension*, or, simply, the *gender politics* in post-conflict dimensions is not introduced for exemplifying purposes, in order to showcase the manner in which *human security* prevails in the fixing obligations, that nurture its existence. It has a convoluted nature, demonstrating how a society`s re-invention can flare to new heights or not, in the process of complexly resolving security issues. Kfir Isaac collates this point by summarizing the purposeful address of Kofi Annan regarding women`s prerogative of involvement in post-conflict decision making: „[W]omen are every bit as affected as any man by the challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century - in economic and social development, as well as in peace and security. Often, they are more affected.

It is, therefore, right and indeed necessary that women should be engaged in decision-making in every area, with equal strength and in equal numbers... there is no policy for progress more effective than the empowerment of women and girls. Study after study has taught us that no other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health - including the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would also venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended"[4].

Kfir Isaac continues its exposé by venting into presenting the most insightful theoretical aim of post-conflict studies: „*Post-conflict reconstruction* literature grapples with epistemological questions of whether *post-conflict reconstruction* is about the physical rebuilding of the society, the attainment of justice for victims, or the transformation of the society, including changing social and cultural norms and how they are viewed and defined"[5].

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[4] Summary – Women`s Role in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, Clingaendael Institute, 2011.
[5] Isaac, 2012, 4.

We would have to add to the distinctions made by Kfir Isaac the fact that one of the most important focus of post-conflict studies regards also the way in which the dynamics of change is pursued or unpursued by the *gender dimension* and how some societal forces take prevalenve over others, when tackling the subject of achieving reconciliation after a conflict.

Stability is, thus, furthered, by the attainment of a *balanced gender involvement* or by the harmonisation of *gender involvemen*t in the reconstructive revisions, that the aftermath of a conflict brings forth. In some societies, *gender divisions* work against the stabilisation endeavors.

In others, the aim of introducing *post-conflict reconstruction* to a very diverse array of factors and forces has brought along plenty of advanatages. The inclusive, omni-directional view, that *post-conflict reconstruction* has to encompass, folds actors pertaining to all *genders*, so that the new institutional setting will meet all the essential conditions, beyond the instictive knowledge of rebuilding a society.

Apart from the development paradigm utilized in post-conflict studies, the specificities of every post-conflict society need to be properly addressed. A universal shape and form for reconstructive, sustained phenomena is usually too far-fetched for immediate and for long-term realities.

In the next section of this article, we will rivet upon the *gender dimension* in the *post-conflict reconstruction* of the Western Balkans. We will be considering especially how the involvement of women in the reconstructive tasks was received with the possibility of entertaining and what degree of salutation was given to the *gender politics approach* in the Western Balkans.

All too often, the Western Balkans were considered azimuths of perpetual instability, as Miron Rezun lays stress in connection to the Yugoslav Wars: „In this process of conflict resolution, it would be to no one's advantage to isolate any of the parties in a punitive manner or through expulsion from international bodies.

We cannot expect to find solutions, in other words, if the international media continue in their insensitivities to cultural identities and needs. Labeling and negative imaging regrettably do shape world public opinion, creating obstacles to the process of healing and reconciliation. Peacekeeping operations can only function in a climate where there is at least a modicum of sensitivity to all the issues.

It will take two generations, perhaps more, for any reconciliation culture to take effect. That means that UN peacekeeping will likely have to be committed to the area for as long as it takes, for we are dealing here

with what is essentially a hate culture, and it will remain a hate culture for a very long time[...]

Let us hope that what the Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Serbs of the former Yugoslavia have had to endure will not be repeated in other parts of Eastern Europe. Let us hope that the southern Slavs will forge a new identity for themselves, where there is no war, no murder, no suffering, no degradation"[6].

Consequently, the subject of *gender politics* cannot be, at first glance, received with plenty of kind and honest greeting. In the final appraisement, we will estimate how the duties of implementing a *gender politics* gist have extended duties upon the process of democratization.

The resumé of instances will be virtually aleatory: we will be scrutinizing a general discernement of the instrumentalities used, on the one hand and, on the other hand, we will be using matter-of-fact examples, in order to underscore the emphasizing structure of detail.

2. Gender Politics During War-Time And in the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of the Western Balkans – A Small Stream Outside the Box

We said, in the above-mentioned references, that the Western Balkans` relation with stability and with the stabilization structural efforts was a rather uneasy. This is not a simple suggestion of a biased argumentation.

In fact, the obstacles towards stabilization, that the Western Balkan countries have encountered, have not been brief, nor intemperate. *For the Euro-Atlantic structures, the Western Balkans have been othered and externalized*.

They were seen as a rapidly disintegrating world, nearby Europe, that would risk intoxicate the steadiness and constancy of the European integration with the fickle nature of the structural functionality and with the fluid variations *of the post-conflict reconstruction process*.

In the realm of providing the required facilities for improvement and for reform-undertaking, the Western Balkans have not been at all praiseworthy factors of relation. Nonetheless, EU has been trying to avoid the situation of not being overthrown from the Balkan situation.

The Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001) were being carried at the point of ideational confrontation between two parts of Europe: one enjoying the prerequisits of EU membership, on the one hand, and the other being

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[6] Rezun, 1995, 191-196.

transposed into ulterior surroundings, where nationalist fever has accompanied the process of seccessation: „Once unleashed, nationalism in Yugoslavia set on a collision course the two largest nationalities, the Serbs and the Croats. With a quarter of Serbs living outside Serbia, a centralized Yugoslav state was a guarantor of Serb security. For Croats and their history of opposition to Hapsburg rule, a decentralized state and weak federation meant control of their own destinies, unencumbered by inefficient state agencies and enterprises staffed and controlled by Serbs. Nevertheless, nationality issues could have been sorted out with democratic institutions in a confederation, with collective rights for minorities, and with systems of political representation in elections and collective decision rules in assemblies that would protect minority voice and favour coalitions rather than majority domination. With these reforms, nationalist leaders would have found it difficult to rally the citizenry to their cause"[7].

A presence in the Yugoslav crisis could have been a vote of international confidence in EU`s tenure as an actor that could spill over intra-European norms and institutional targets of stability in its geographical adjancency.

In this sense, one interesting comment has been made by the Luxemborg Foreign Minister, Jacques Poos, regarding the intervention in Yugoslavia: „It was the hour of Europe, not the hour of the United States"[8].

EU begun to test its missions of intervention and to, later on, screen their peace-building effects. For the US, like always the situation and the uncertainties that gradually reduced the prospect of non-intervention were different than for the European Union!

US was, at the breakup of the Yugoslavian Wars, nearly commencing to escape the period of polarisation, which has been characteristic of the Cold War. US was not eager to boost an enhanced status in the Balkans, at first and adopted a reserved approach towards the Balkan crisis.

The launch of an accomplished diplomatic initiative was not exhibited at first. But, afterwards, the US began to issue an outright concern for the situation. When the conflict no longer fit the „Europeanized limits" set by the US, US began to adopt the perspective of an involved military presence of American troupes, after their trans-atlantic partners began, in their turn, to strive in hesitation.

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[7] Oberschall, 2000, 982-1001.
[8] Juncos, 2005, 88-208.

As Ljubomir Čučić observes: „The US inaction in the Balkans from 1991 to 1993 reflects the absence of internal US foreign policy consensus. There was no common vision whether the United States should play an activist role in guaranteeing security in Europe's eastern areas"[9]. The situation in the Western Balkan follows a rather peculiar and traditional outlook regarding the suffering of women from war-inflicted violence. The paradigm strives in its simplicity: men are the ultimate inflicters of violence. This arises from the fact that men are the utmost shrivelling factors of power, of brute force and last, but not least of resources, that is: of raw material, needful in violent encounters.

In all sums of the effects considered, women are vulnerable targets – in societies that marginalize the image of women as emancipated societal agents and during wartime – when the access to resources is mainly ingrained in the masculinized settings, where the access of women is restrained.

Certainly, the drawing of a distributional condensed truth – according to which women are victims (meaning all women!) and men are utter repositories of violence (again: meaning all men!) is strained and all too obscure to be guaranteed with genuiness.

But, as plenty of factual indicators have shown, women are and have been easy targets of violence, especially in settings where their societal contribution has been depicted in very strict terms and not encouraged with further manumission: „War strengthens the already existing dominant marginalization of women. As a result, women tend to define themselves more often as the passive victims of war than as active strategists of survival in war and exile, although they are often more active than men in facing the new situation.

War increases their feeling of helplessness more than it increases their power; attacking their physical and mental health, war makes them dependent on others as it strengthens the social views which tend to maintain or intensify their submissive role. In war women generally feel helpless rather than empowered[...]

Public attention is mainly focused on rape, so much so that it is often considered a synonym for violence against women in general, especially in war. As we will see later, this attitude influences women's own definitions of violence.

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[9] Ljubomir, 1998, 136-150.

This can be understood up to a point, because in rape, as El Bushra points out so well, sex, war and power are all concentrated in one, representing the domination of the strong over the weak"[10].

The triad: vulnerability-fear-powerlessness was manifesting at its best during the Yugoslav Wars in the Balkans. Even if all these terms seem to act as perfect synonyms, they are equals from a sematincs point of view. All of the three are states, but, *vulnerability is a state of affairs*, to whose embodiment several factors have paid their contribution.

Fear is also a state of affairs, that signalls the fact that a threat is at hand and resources needed for preparation against the threat cannot be used. And, on a last scale of selection, *powerlessness* means the practical lack of resources to counter the manifestation of any act of violence, violement enforcement of will, or of brutality.

In the Balkans, the circumstances for women - their status and the ammendment of the societal conditions, adjacent to their societal status suffered modification in the post-war period, when women`s involvement in politics within the framework of universal voting, access to education, access to wellfare outcomes of legislation and of state politics –were adhesive attributes of the period`s revelations.

In the Western Balkans, compared to other parts of the world, they were still undernourished, but they existed as bare necessities of a changing society. One major scarcity, that is striken by obviousness in the Western Balkans, is the the permissive nature of legislation, which accounts for the unlocking of most acts of discrimination against women: „While *gender* rights have generally been subsumed under recently enacted human rights legislation across the region, the reality is that *gender* equality has enjoyed a de jure rather than de facto presence.

As such, discrimination against women persists, is pervasive and is manifest in both the public and private spheres. Laws to shield Balkan women from acts of violence and discrimination are rarely enforced, and efforts to rectify *gender* inequalities in schools, at work, and at home are similarly not a governmental priority.

This lack of enforcement is rooted in legal and political systems that have not sufficiently defined acts of *gender* discrimination or built an effective legal framework to successfully prosecute offenders"[11].

The repressive sexual attacks upon women during the Balkan Wars were only later on described and recognized by the international

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[10] Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000, 22.
[11] Strategy to Integrate Gender Equality In The Balkans Program, 2006.

legislation as war crimes, thorugh the adoption of *the United Nations Security Council Resolution No.1820 On Women, Peace and Security*.

One of the principal corrolaries of the post-Communist Western Balkans has been the rise of male-dominated societies. This has happened with a condensed essence, in order to give the disconcerted post-Communist societies a center of muscle predilection.

Ideas, principles, social norms needed to be recollected upon a content of powerful cognition that would prevent dissipation from happening. In the Western Balkans, the adevent of *reconstruction* did not happen in a smooth manner. Instead, it gave the rise to a patriarchal mentality in which the brawny elements were considered to have the utmost capacity to survive and deal with outer, heftier, countervailing forces.

During the Yugoslav Wars, women were bearers of the greatest responsibilities ever pointed to be granted completion – *they were carriers of the most profound effigy of nationalism: the perpetuation of a cultural and spiritual identity*.

Their familial status was not at all evasive, but rather, it was marked by exactitude: *they were the ones in charge with preserving an old-style family life: meaning the pre-war familiy life*. A nationalist revival and nationalism as a credo could not have been enforced without the alms of appropriation of the rightful carrying of a family life.

Here, the alms of women was extraordinary! The status of women was given the century-old disclosure and their reproductive qualities were accentuated the most. A woman who was uncapable of fulfilling these functions was seen as an unnecessary evil for the perpetuation of national and of statehood values. This kind of ostracization followed suit to the piecemeal development of events.

The idea of a woman to be emancipated was counter-animated and profoundly discouraged. There were very few values assigned to a woman`s status and a woman`s life needed to be carried strictly confined to the institutional and societal normative premises of this kind of life.

As war and war-time crises continued to spread, with the revival of a longforn psychology of ethnical purge, and with the declaring of independence of other states: Slovenia and Croatia, respectively in July and June 1991, in 1992 the Bosnian Crisis increased the knowledge, that a tedious continuance of the conflict would ascertain grave effects especially upon the non-combatant elements of war.

Women had to encounter various forms of violence. The immediate one was the impossibility of securing a living, with the loss of

their homes, and with the lack of financial support from their spouses, that were engaged in ethnic-cleansing militias.

Also, the fear of being rape victims was an everyday occurence: „Physical violence, most often in the form of the systematic rape of Muslim women in Bosnia by Serb forces, was central to the strategy of ethnic cleansing. Instances of women being specifically targeted in war zones is not new.

In the case of the new ethnically-based nation building in the former Yugoslavia, however, this practice has a specific meaning. It was part of a massive *gender* ed population transfer, if not outright genocide, that operated as a crucial symbolic and material element in the forging of new boundaries between ethnic collectives.

This massive forced transfer resulted in women and children being exposed to various forms of violence. The worst attacks on women happened in the areas of the bloodiest fighting – those regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia where Serbs, Croats, and Muslims had lived in close proximity to one another before Yugoslavia's collapse.

The concept of women as symbols and reproducers or nurturers of the nation and its cultural identity made them important in the destruction of the opposing ethnic-national group. War reinforced the influence of religious traditionalism that demanded the withdrawal of women from policymaking positions where they might moderate the extreme nationalistic tendencies that surfaced in all of the camps.

Thus, Croatian nationalism gave the Catholic Church in Croatia greater influence, reinforcing its traditional view of the role of women. In Bosnia, Islamic extremists demanded that women receiving aid cover their heads, a step toward keeping them "in their place"[12].

Apart from having at their disposal enough resources to render some sort of management for the situation, the circumstances in which the women found themselves were spiralling in a threatening domino. After, men were on the battlegrounds, where they fought for preserving an exploitative life – in the draw lines of the familiy as they saw, specifically as they were taught to see and implement in everyday practices.

The humanitarian catastrophe of the Western Balkans had one knifelike *gender   dimension*, emerging from an exploitatory notion of submissive status and from a submissive kind of protection.

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[12] Yugoslavia, Women and the Wars That Accompanied the Disintegration of Yugoslavia, October 2013 (date of accession).

One of the depots of the Communist era in the Western Balkans was that women`s societal obligations were execedentary to the rights and to the possibilities awarded for their fulfillment.

Women were receptacles of a familial life. In the post-conflict recontruction process of the Western Balkans, women had *the overarching role of building and disseminating a new type of social and of political culture, if they wanted their voices to be heard*.

The reconfiguration of gender roles was one of the biggest challenges, that women had to face in the *reconstruction* period of the Western Balkans. Ensuring not one, but several and diverse roles for themselves, would prove out to be a Gargantuan task.

Political mobilization of women – that would have to amount to the period of maximal alteration in the Western Balkans, from all points of view – had to be legitimately encouraged and propelled. Women`s individual grievances had to stop from resulting only in individual inquetudes and concerns.

They had to be transformed into greater and more alert and dynamic social concerns to whose resolution the whole societal forces needed to take part in and perk up. Also, the reconfiguration of *gender* roles had to be taken up within the critical deficiency of the resources needed for such a monumental task.

In all sorts of analyses, the reason that women can also be profiteers from war-time situations, cannot work to find any due equivalent here. In some lines of thinking, women can also draw plenty of financial advantages from the unveilings of conflicts, by having to replace men in the workfield and by having to take on their responsibilities.

In the case of the Western Balkans, women lacked the training, the education and also the labor market where they could represent an asset. In the case of the Western Balkans, women were obligated to remain in their communities and endure the war atrocities and did not have the chance to exercise non-traditional roles.

Despite the divisive nature of the post-Yugoslav societies, the only remainant trait was that women were marginalized in the public sphere and given an ulterior status of limitation in the familial surroundings.

In the post-conflict environment, the specified emerging differences in human capital development, as far as the conditionalities of education, wage and the lack of a wage equalizer for the same workload and work specificity delivered, stopped women from becoming active members of *the post-conflict reconstruction process*.

Gender gaps in earning have been the main causation mechanism, that directed the estimates of *gender reconstruction* in a downward way.

An equal representation of women seems more like a chimera, in both the political and institutional settings, on the one hand and in the labor market, on the other hand.

This turbinates with other aspects of social life: child-care, labor market non-discrimination issues, labor market`s principle of equal opportunities. In the Western Balkans, women did not have the important genetrix to take on the *reconstruction* endeavors and to speak out for a deeply marginalized social group.

Firstof, the challenge was the striking unavailability of a legislation that would lay the grounds for *gender reconstruction*. Legislation regarding *gender discrimination* suffered from a great shortfall. Women did not have a legislative basis to access, whenever they felt that their social conditions necessitated institutional interference.

More than that, the training to access the legal instruments – as scarce as they were – was another missing piece from the whole puzzle. The hypothesis, that there are good sides of war-waging for the non-combatant elements, was not a successful explanation for the case of the Western Balkans. The pre-war conditions for women and for women`s social status did not prove to be reversible.

The Western Balkans were nearly envisaging newly-improved theathres of social and economic consolidation. Perhaps more than minorities, women had to prove that they deserve the status of being considered valued new entrants.

Women had a very fragile occupancy in the check-and-balances mechanism, that was triggered by *the process of democratization*. During wartime, a woman`s body was a haven of survival – not of personal survival, but of the surival of a nation and, most of all, of an ethnicity.

Nina Lončarević gives a running and up-to-the-minute description of the situation that women in the Balkans are now traversing: „Being a woman in the Balkans If we look at the constitutions of different Western Balkan countries, it appears they all follow the human rights legislation. Unfortunately, this is the case only on paper.

It is a fact that women are usually concentrated in clerical, sales and services jobs and are underrepresented in management. The positions women usually hold are in sectors traditionally ruled by women – child-care, care for the elderly and the disabled, education, health care, social care, etc.

According to data from 2009, women across Europe earned 17.4% less than men on average. *Gender* pay gap in the Western Balkan countries is estimated to be from 20% to 39%.

It is also a fact that very few women own enterprises; they are usually employees. As a result of differences in years of service, lower wages and lower education, women's pensions are lower than men's later on. Today's society finds it hard to imagine women accomplished both as mothers and as career women.

The underdeveloped child care system further undermines women's self-confidence because there is higher pressure on them to take care of children. The value of women's unpaid housework and community work is estimated at 10–35 % of the GDP worldwide, amounting to $11 trillion in 1993.

Even worse is the position of women in rural areas, whose economic development is, as a rule, not among the governmental priorities in developing economic policy"[13].

Furthermore, women are usually considered active reconstructive agents, appealing to the grassroots-type of organizations. Their societal involvement in post-war environments is usually seen as a trusted archive of minding for the interest and for welfare of several other groups, that have suffered from being ejected by the usual conndrums of the post-war decision-making.

Usually, seen as an agent with positive implications in the post-war environments, in the Western Balkans, usually the red flags, especially the ones regarding the process of European integration were given to the *gender -related public issues*, apart from the cases of the needy institutional-building efforts, that needed to be taken.

For the domestic institutional environs, women were factors of dragging on uncertainty for the future. Certainly, they were not major influential factors of *the process of democratization*. Where does *the process of democratization* in the case of the Western Balkans stand?

The better-than worse answer cannot be a satisfying quantifier any longer: „According to Freedom House, Croatia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro are 'semi-consolidated democracies', Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina are 'transitional governments' or 'hybrid regimes', and Kosovo is a 'semi-consolidated authoritarian regime'.

All countries except FYROM have maintained the same regime label since 2003. Likewise, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (2012) indicates that only Croatia and Serbia qualify as 'democracies in consolidation', whereas the other Balkan states may be collectively described as 'defective democracies': they hold relatively free

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[13] Lončarević, 2013, 27.

elections but fall short of adequately ensuring political and civil rights or the effective separation of state powers.

Here again, the picture is one of relative stability insofar as the democratic status of the countries in the region has remained unchanged since the early 2000s, with the partial exception of Serbia, which moved from a defective to a consolidating democracy.

Thus, despite the fact that these countries continue to be ruled by elected governments, democratic performance throughout the region has not yet acquired a real positive dynamic"[14].

The limpness of the legislative reform, combined with the many loopholes of the structural reforms plied in the Western Balkans` institutional purlieu, dragged on *the process of a feminized society* – by which we mean, an inclusive role played by women and an inclusive and equal representation, based on *an equal gender distribution elbow grease*. The Western Balkan countries are still trying to outstrip patriarchalism and its ensuant wobbly effects.

Argumentative Completion

The Western Balkans` post conflict-reconstruction is a multi-faceted story of development and of engrossing ill-favoured chances for a balanced transformation. The *gender politics* parameter was not remarkably prescient of its alteration potency, as it was in other post-conflict environment.

Gender politics was an absentee, at first, from *reconstruction* purposes and societal aims. As a new sensible memoranda of reforms, required for the process of European integration, the *gender dimension* began to be properly addressed. It was an exterior inducement, not a natural tendency, embodied in clear-cut steps.

As far the democratization progeny in the Western Balkans is concerned, Andrew Baruch Wachtel`s opinion is different from the point of view raised within this article: „Like their Western European counterparts, the Balkan states have, for the most part, become monoethnic parliamentary democracies.

Their economies are market oriented and highly urbanized, and their populations are almost entirely literate. By 2003, both Romania and Bulgaria had been welcomed into the NATO security alliance, and they joined the EU together in 2007.

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[14] Balfour, 2013, 30.

Both countries can now be considered well integrated into Western Europe, a goal toward which they had been striving since their creation as nation-states in the mid–nineteenth century. Although the same processes are less advanced in Albania and the Yugoslav successor states (with the exception of Slovenia, which is already both a NATO and an EU member), they will eventually follow suit.

When this process is complete, probably sometime around 2015–20, the Balkans as they were understood from the late eighteenth century on will exist only as a memory preserved in the historical, artistic, and linguistic record and passed down in many rituals of everyday life.

Someday perhaps, when the term balkanization is used to describe events in some other part of the world, it will have to be explained for the inhabitants of what is increasingly known as Southeast Europe"[15].

Apart from the *gender dimension*, there is plenty of a stirring pathos, that will remind the world`s memory of the great encounter with violence and with despair, suffered by the Western Balkan states, especially because of its accumulation with little margin for counter-action, in the past period.

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[15] Wachtel, 2008, 124-125.

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