

Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović<sup>1</sup>University of East Sarajevo  
Faculty of PhilosophyUDK  
316.662-055.2(497.6)  
305-055.2(497.6)

---

## WOMEN ACTIVISTS AND WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AS ACTORS OF THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: WHAT CLAIMS, WITH WHAT SUCCESSES?

**ABSTRACT** This article analyzes and discusses women's political representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), focusing on the role of women parliamentarians and activists as critical actors. The theoretical section outlines their role and key challenges in achieving substantive gender outcomes. The qualitative research and analysis examine the representative claims they have raised in BiH to broaden the political agenda to include women's issues related to gender-based violence, equal political representation, women's social rights, mainly related to motherhood, and the status of marginalized women, and gender just-peace. Successes have varied and are recognized primarily concerning domestic violence, but improvements are needed in this area as well. Overarching demands for gender equality in politics face various obstacles, especially given the complicated political system that favors ethnic representation and social repatriarchalization in post-conflict society. Despite some small successes, it is even more difficult to achieve substantial results when it comes to marginalized women such as Roma and LBT women in an unfavorable social and political context.

**Keywords:** political representation of women, Bosnia and Herzegovina, critical actors, women's movement, women activists, women parliamentarians, gender-based violence, gender equality in politics, marginalized women

---

1 E-mail: [zlatiborka.popov.momcinovic@ff.ues.rs.ba](mailto:zlatiborka.popov.momcinovic@ff.ues.rs.ba)

## INTRODUCTION

Political representation is at the heart of debates about the degree of democracy in political processes and institutions (Celis 2009, 95). Representation is significant for women because they have always been politically marginalized (Mansbridge 1995, 29) and continue to face severe social disadvantages that should be addressed and represented in decision-making (Young 1997, 351).

Nonetheless, women's political representation has increased significantly over the past two decades and is considered one of the most important modern political trends (Hughes and Paxton 2019, 47). Across the globe, there are improved laws and policies that support women's representation. Yet, in most countries, there is a gap between the law on the books and the law in practice (Htun and Weldon 2018, 24), and simply including women in representative institutions can hardly change the manly way of doing and representing politics (Čičkarić 2015, 48). On the other hand, successes should not be downplayed (Lovenduski and Guadagnini 2010, 164). As Htun and Weldon note: "Most people today think violence against women ought to be a crime and see it as a violation of human rights," which was not always the case (2018, 52).

While the burgeoning feminist literature has analyzed the various aspects and challenges of women's representation, much more research is needed in post-socialist European countries, including the Balkans (Dahlerup and Antić Gaber 2017, 308). It is widely recognized that state paternalism and male democracy are the hallmarks of post-socialist countries (Čičkarić 2015, 50), including the post-Yugoslav states. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), patriarchy is further entrenched due to the war in the 1990s and the continuum of gendered violence between the war and the post-war period (Kostovicova et al. 2020, 255), as well as the ethnocratic political system that privileges ethnic representation (Mujkic 2007, 116). Also, most research on women's political representation in BiH has focused on formal procedures and descriptive representation in political institutions (Popov-Momčinović 2022, 209). Moreover, feminist analyses have primarily explored how the conservative social and political climate in BiH favors essentialist representations of women as victims or as peacemakers, particularly in the context of women's activism in civil society (e.g., Helms 2013, Spahić-Šiljak 2014; Deiana 2018).

To add to the existing body of knowledge and to analyze and discuss the substantial outcomes of women's political representation in BiH, in this paper, I will focus on the representative claims of actors, as suggested by some scholars (e.g., Saward 2006, 298, 299; Childs and Krook 2009, 126; Celis and Lovenduski 2018, 153; Lovenduski and Guadagnini 2010, 168). First, I will outline the fundamental principles, including dilemmas of women's political representation, focusing on the role of elected women and activists as critical actors and then explain their role in the context of BiH. Further, I will elaborate on the main findings of the qualitative analysis, which focused on the representative claims and perceptions of success by the elected women and activists. Finally, I will discuss and conclude the results by relating them to existing knowledge and debates.

## THEORETICAL PART

Most research and debate on political representation of women has focused on women's underrepresentation in politics in a descriptive sense, and the focus then shifted to the substantive issues of representing women's interests in decision-making (Celis and Erzeel 2015, 45). Women MPs are seen as key actors because the election provides the authority for representation, and parliaments are places of deliberation where, according to Iris Young, women's issues are actually created (Young 1997, 352, 357). Speaking for women, including their perspectives in parliamentary debates, and proposing pro-women legislation is often seen as "representative action in itself" (Celis 2009, 97). Despite various attempts to establish a clearer link between women's presence in parliaments and action on behalf of women, it is recognized that this relationship is "messy" (Childs 2006, 18) and influenced by other factors such as women's party loyalties and party ideology (Mackay 2008, 127). While research has generally confirmed that left-wing women MPs are more likely to represent women, these findings cannot be easily extrapolated to the broader processes of women's substantive representation (Celis and Erzeel 2015, 48). Studies have shown that conservative women MPs tend to be gender-aware and able to speak for women (Schreiber 2018, 57). In addition, there are various constraints all women face in formal politics, where institutions "privilege a mas-

culinized political agenda and reproduce gender norms of behavior” (Celis and Childs 2020, 29). For example, despite progress in descriptive representation of women, this may serve non-feminist goals, such as “electing more women, but only those who reinforce rather than challenge the status quo” (Krook 2003, 113). Against this backdrop, it has been proposed to focus on the processes of gendering political debates (Lovenduski 2005, 8) and to track actors, relationships, and interactions in both formal politics and civil society (Mackey 2008, 125, 126).

In this regard, women’s movements are considered to be “more promising candidates” for engendering democracy by representing diverse interests of women and working to hold institutions accountable (Cornwall and Goetz 2005, 799). According to comparative research of Weldon, the presence of a strong and autonomous women’s movement in a country is more important for women’s representation than the number of women in parliaments (Weldon 2011, 36). Also, in earlier times, many women’s groups distrusted mainstream politics, and direct participation was considered ideal (Rai 2003, 21). In the early 1980s, however, women’s movements began to call for greater representation of women in political bodies (Lovenduski 2005, 1) and to view the state as a means of overcoming inequality (McBride and Mazur 2013, 660), often at the cost of abandoning more radical feminist projects (Cornwall and Goetz 2005, 790).

In transitional countries, despite wide variations, the mobilization of the women’s movement, particularly the continuation of past activism, was critical to gendered outcomes in some Latin American countries (Viterna and Fallon 2008, 685). In the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe, on the other hand, women as a group were “among the losers of the transition, both in terms of their social and economic status and their political representation” (Brunnbauer 2000, 151). This is often associated with the “domestication” of women and demobilization of women’s groups (Brunnbauer 2000, 154), and the gradual improvement came about primarily through international influence and the spread of international norms (Waylen 2011, 159). These norms, on the other hand, improved transnational learning and cooperation of women’s movements across national borders, leading, among other things, to the diffusion of gender quotas in politics (Krook 2006, 315) and the establishment of women’s policy agencies (Hausman and Sauer 2007, 25). These agencies

are an important arena for articulating women's issues and can assist women's movements in articulating women's perspectives in the public (Weldon 2010, 234). This shows that various actors should be considered when analyzing women's political representation, especially in the case of BiH, where political parties, leaders who are men, and ethnic elites dominate the public arena (Gavrić 2023, 8).

## **STATE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION – BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

In a post-conflict BiH society, the role of women is usually perceived as symbolizing the victimhood of the nation/ethnic group (Helms 2013, 5). As in other post-Yugoslav countries with direct war experiences, women's suffering is recognized in dominant national constructs and everyday nationalism (Krasniqui, Sokolić, and Kostovicova 2018, 472). Due to poor governance and economy, many women focus on the daily survival of their families (Majstorović 2011, 297). They are exposed to masculine dominance and control due to structural gender inequalities (Kostovicova et al. 2020, 255). The political system established in the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) gives priority to the rights of the three constituent peoples – Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, while “a citizen's membership in a political community is determined by his or her membership in an ethnic community” (Mujkic 2007, 116). Also, the multi-level federal system – two entities and de facto federal units (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), a Brčko district, and ten cantons in FBiH enable the three major ethnic groups to have a high degree of segmental autonomy (Gavrić 2023, 12). The three ethnic groups are perceived in an essentialist way as “self-inclosed, homogenous particularities,” and ethnic issues dominate political debates, mostly as “conversation stoppers” (Mujkic 2007, 114, 118). Ethnonational consociationalism is considered hostile to gender equality for prioritizing ethnic representation, making gender equality perceived as irrelevant or too complicated (Kapić 2021, 127).

However, women have also been activated, especially in civil society, where they have more freedom to articulate their needs than in formal politics (Popov Momčinović 2013, 118; Deiana 2018, 100). Immediately after the war, women's groups began to advocate for the return of refugees, justice for

women survivors of wartime sexual violence, and ethnic reconciliation, and have formed various coalitions to advocate for legislative changes (Spahić Šiljak 2014, 33, 121). Despite significant achievements, many of their initiatives were externally funded, and the results were ambivalent (Helms 2013, 91), including the general apolitical orientation and avoidance of a feminist identity (Popov Momčinović 2013, 157) and the inability to mobilize the support of other women (Pupavac 2005, 397). Women's movement actors in BiH are also overwhelmed with various issues, including service delivery, which hinders their overall mobilization and critical potential (Porobić and Mlinarević 2019, 181).

Nonetheless, “the influence that women wield in the NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is unprecedented” (Simmons 2007, 181). Immediately after the war, activists launched the “There are more of us” campaign for equal representation of women in politics. The campaign was carried out throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in smaller towns and rural areas, and was supported by the OSCE Mission and USAID (Aganović 2015, 42). As Krook explains, activists often demand quotas for normative and pragmatic reasons – they believe that women should have greater and more equal representation to achieve justice. They also believe that the goals of the women's movement can be more easily achieved if more women are elected (Krook 2003, 110), which was also the case in BiH (Simić 2015, 92). The campaign was successful, and the first gender quotas were introduced in 1997, which significantly increased women's descriptive political representation. However, the fact that women's representation has fluctuated from then to now (Table 1) also proves that gender equality in politics is “routinely marginalized” (Kapić 2021, 127). After the parliamentary elections in 2022, the percentage of women in parliaments at state and entity levels is 26.3%. This is higher than in some post-socialist countries that are members of the EU (Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania), which did not reach 20% (Shreeves and Zamfir 2023, 4), but lower than in other post-Yugoslav countries. In Slovenia, the percentage of women in parliaments is 37.8%, in Serbia 34.8%, in Croatia 31.8% and in Montenegro 28.4%.

Furthermore, Porobić and Mlinarević argue that the prevailing understanding of women's political empowerment as formally increasing the number of women in politics and in the current ethnic-national political system of

	1990	1996	1998	2000	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018	2022
<b>House of Representatives/ Parliamentary Assembly of BiH</b>	2.9%	2.3%	30.2%	7.1%	14.3%	11.9%	21.4%	23.8%	21.4%	24%
<b>House of Representatives/ Parliament of FBiH</b>	/	5%	14.9%	17.1%	16.9%	23%	17.3%	21.4%	26%	28%
<b>National Assembly of RS</b>	/	2.4%	22.9%	18.1%	21.4%	25.5%	21.7%	15.6%	14%	27%

**Table 1. Descriptive Representation of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1990 to the 2022 Parliamentary Elections (State and Entity Level)**

(Sources: Kadribašić et al. 2000; OSCE 2023, 11)

divisions has little to no possibility of having a significant impact on political decisions (2019, 182). On the other hand, some women politicians seek to represent other women substantively (Berry 2018, 176) and are seen as critical actors working with the women's movement (Popov Momčinović 2022, 221). Indeed, many successful initiatives are the result of the collaboration of activists and women MPs. In 2006, for example, women's organizations organized a campaign, "For the Dignity of Survivors." They worked with women MPs to press for the recognition of rape survivors as civilian victims of war (Helms 2013, 207). Women's organizations and some women MPs (especially Ismeta Dervoz) also played a crucial role in the successful campaign to ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention (Gavrić 2023, 12), which is a major international treaty establishing comprehensive legal standards to eliminate gender-based violence. In general, however, women politicians are usually viewed and portrayed as political ornaments of predominantly masculine politics (Helms 2013, 187). One of the reasons is that active and outspoken women in BiH politics do not receive adequate public support and are usually stereotyped and discredited (Mulalić and Karić 2020, 30). It is, therefore, important to avoid essentializing women in BiH as inactive and to show a more profound process in women's political representation.

## DATA AND METHODS

I designed my research based on insights into the importance of the processual dimension of representation, focusing on the role of critical actors and their claims. Critical actors are understood as “deliberators” who insert women’s issues into the political debate, bring different and additional perspectives (Celis and Erzeel 2015, 60), and also encourage others to act (Childs and Krook 2009, 138). Claims are a political action in which one or more individuals act on behalf of a larger group, in this case, women. They are contestable and contested in that they resonate with existing concepts and understandings (in this case, gender equality) and create something new (Saward 2006, 302, 303).

I conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with women MPs and activists as critical actors. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed for various response options and covered a wider period of the interviewees’ actions. In 2022 and 2023, I interviewed 13 women MPs elected at different levels (state, entity, and canton) and 18 activists. The limitation of my research design is that I did not include other critical actors recognized in the literature, such as feminist men politicians and representatives of women’s policy agencies.

The women MPs interviewed come from center-left, liberal, center-right, and right-wing parties and all three constituent peoples. I contacted them for the interview because they are known for advocating for women’s issues in various ways. Most of the activists are from prominent feminist organizations in the urban centers of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Tuzla, and other cities (Bijeljina and Zenica). I also conducted two interviews with activists from small towns, one of whom represents a highly impoverished community (Bosansko Grahovo) away from urban centers and is also recognized as a prominent feminist voice in the public sphere. In addition, two lesbian activists and a prominent Roma activist provided insights into representing these marginalized groups. The issues of other marginalized women (rural women and women with disabilities) were part of my earlier research.

I have fully transcribed interviews verbatim and then coded them based on the research questions. The general research question of this paper is: How do women activists and parliamentarians act and perceive women’s



political representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina? The research questions are: What claims have women MPs and activists made? How successful is the process of representing women perceived to be? Successful representation means that a substantial result has been achieved regarding women's representation, which is interpreted here as acceptance of the claim by decision-makers and a perceived improvement in gender equality in a given area.

I used both descriptive and interpretive coding and selected the portions of the interviews as empirical evidence that answered the research questions using Microsoft Word, as explained by Philip (2019, 89–120). The quotes I selected for analysis represent illustrative and typical perspectives. Considering that the analysis is based on self-reported behavior and that the results can be vulnerable to bias, the validity of the analysis is ensured by reviewing reliable media sources, webpages of women's organizations, and official parliamentary documents and webpages.

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

### *WHAT CLAIMS?*

The parliamentarians and activists interviewed mentioned various claims they had made recently and in other periods. These include issues of discrimination against women and gender-based violence, the social and health rights of women, especially pregnant women and mothers, childcare, gender equality in politics, and gender-just peace. They also address the rights of marginalized groups such as children with disabilities and their mothers/parents, Roma women and LGBTI persons, and women survivors of wartime sexual violence.

As for women MPs, they launched various initiatives dealing with domestic violence during parliamentary sessions and through participation in parliamentary working groups, e.g.:

*I was a member of the working group that drafted the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. (WMP, Serb Democratic Party).*

Women MPs often have issues related to motherhood on their agenda, e.g.:

*... The Law on Alimony Fund entered the procedure yesterday. It was proposed by the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Sports, but it was mainly women MPs who lobbied for it... (WMP, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats).*

Issues of discrimination against women and sexism emerge during the parliamentary session, prompting women MPs to react and raise claims:

*An opposition deputy insulted the women minister, and I spoke up and said that I did not want to hear such insults against women, and we managed to get it included in the Parliament's rulebook that it is expressly forbidden to insult women... (WMP, Party of Democratic Progress).*

The claims also refer to the status of marginalized women and their political representation:

*As a member of the Joint Human Rights Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, I have fought hard to ensure that women who meet the same requirements as men are elected to the Council of National Minorities in BiH, where the Roma community, the largest community of national minorities, has never had a woman member ... and in Tuzla there is an example of a brilliant Roma woman who runs a women's organization and has a master's degree, but unfortunately even that has become a bit complicated (WMP, Our Party).*

There are initiatives within political parties to improve the political representation of women and to advance the work of women's interest organizations:

*Then I told the chairman of the party commission that drew up the party's program and statute that we must introduce gender equality because we are a social-democratic party... (WMP, Social Democratic Party).*

*...I organized the round table in the party's women's organization on the issue of biomedically assisted fertilization... (WMP, Social Democratic Party).*

*I have proposed to the party executive that 5% of the salary of women MPs*

*should go to the women's interest organization so that they have their budget (WMP, Democratic Front).*

Activists also mentioned the claims for equal representation of women, some of which they launched in collaboration with some women MPs. For example, two women MPs from *Our Party* (Marinković Lepić and Borudžija), in cooperation with activists, have launched an initiative in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH to change the law so that 40% of women are represented in the executive. There is cooperation when it comes to gender-based violence, and at the moment, there are joint meetings of activists and some women MPs (including a man MP, Saša Magazinović, from the Social Democratic Party) to include femicide in the Criminal Code. An activist from Banja Luka mentioned the collaboration with elected women who are members of the Street Naming Committee at the local level to name streets after women.

To make the claims visible, activists organize protests and street actions, such as the protests against femicide that took place simultaneously in thirteen municipalities on October 14, 2022, and various street actions against gender-based violence again and again:

*I like that kind of street activism ... when we do our performance of violence and femicide and stop at the traffic circle, and people honk at us. And that's something to see, feel, and remember (an activist from Zenica).*

A Roma women activist explained an interesting street action during the month of Roma women activism (March 8 to April 8). Since discrimination against Roma women is widespread, the activists approached women passers-by and gave them flowers to dispel the prejudice that Roma women only ask for something for nothing.

As some claims are still not accepted and there are problems in the implementation of existing laws, international mechanisms are also important when it comes to the discrimination against women and gender-based violence:

*When we could not directly achieve a change in the law through our initiatives,*

*we chose to communicate this to the UN women's rights committee<sup>2</sup>, which was then returned through recommendations. This is a slower way but quite effective in the long run* (an activist from Bijeljina).

*We participated in preparing the Grevio<sup>3</sup> report and asked for it because we saw that some non-Roma organizations that wrote some reports had either incomplete or wrong information...* (a Roma women activist from Tuzla).

## HOW SUCCESSFUL IS THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?

When it comes to successes, both parliamentarians and activists recognize some improvements as well as setbacks. They refer to the most recent claims but provide a more general explanation, especially activists and women MPs with more experience.

The respondents recognize the biggest improvements in the combat against domestic violence. According to the activist from Sarajevo and a pioneer of the movement, progress in this area is easiest to track because *“before, there were no shelters, nor was domestic violence recognized in the laws.”* However, the initiative of women's organizations united in the “Safe Network” (*Sigurna mreža*) to introduce a bill on protection against domestic violence in the Federation of BiH (the law from 2005 does not comply with the Istanbul Convention) has still not been adopted after so many years of struggle. An activist from Banja Luka, whose organization provides shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence in Republika Srpska, added that other services should be funded by the state, such as the SOS helplines, as required by the Istanbul Convention. In the Federation of BiH, shelter funding is not yet properly regulated. However, women's activists from an organization running a shelter in Sarajevo Canton have managed to get the cantonal government to provide 100% of the funding. In addition, interviewees also problematize the successes. Some women MPs say

---

2 The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an expert body established in 1982, composed of 23 experts on women's issues from around the world.

3 The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), established for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul convention.

that dealing predominantly with gender-based violence and discrimination marginalizes women politicians in political processes and decisions that are not specifically related to women. Similarly, some activists state that focusing on gender-based violence leads to a depoliticization of the women's movement.

As for political representation, the activists, the pioneers of the movement, point to their first successful initiative to introduce gender quotas after the war, which resulted in a high number of elected women:

*For me, this campaign for the first quotas was the best example of the joint efforts of the movement... and we have worked so hard, we went to almost every village, we talked to so many people, and that's how it should be... (an activist from Banja Luka).*

Nowadays, so many years after the introduction of quotas, the results are not satisfactory, and some activists are questioning their own approach to empowering women in politics:

*I have been training women in politics since 2006, and honestly, I do not see any results, and even the statistics are against us. It would have been better if we had trained men politicians to be reasonable... (an activist from Sarajevo).*

Some activists are more realistic and say that this is a gradual process. They also believe that only when more women are elected, which is still not the case in BiH, will women politicians will be better able to represent other women substantially. However, some doubt that this could ever happen given the firm men leadership in political parties, regardless of the ideological spectrum, and the current political system based on ethnonational divisions. A few activists argue that expecting too much from elected women is unrealistic, as they have their own ambitions and goals. One activist who specifically works on women's political participation says that the mere presence of women in parliament is very important and that they should not take too much criticism in a society full of prejudice against women and women politicians. Activists often highlight individual women legislators on whom they can rely, and women MPs often make similar comments. In

general, many consider the majority of women elected to be passive or not active enough but still emphasize that women should have equal representation. Some cite individual examples of outstanding women MPs, and often indirectly include themselves in this group when explaining initiatives they have introduced. According to some women MPs, the problem lies in the functioning of representative bodies in BiH, which lack the democratic political culture necessary for successful deliberation. A woman MP from the *Party of Democratic Progress* made the following comparison:

The National Assembly of Republika Srpska sessions are really good to watch, better than the “Zadruga,<sup>4</sup>” because it is a real reality show at the moment ... There were even fistfights and all sorts of things.

The high degree of party fragmentation and inter-party conflicts also contribute to the fact that representative bodies are a venue that is often unsuitable for women’s political representation. For example, due to the lack of political agreement, the new government was not formed at the level of the Federation of BiH during the 2018–2022 legislative term. The government of the previous legislature continued to operate with a technical mandate, which led to a lack of trust and a democratic deficit. As a woman MP from the *Democratic Front* said, the government was also understaffed. Even during the pandemic, there was no agreement on who should take over the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, although these were crucial in the Covid 19 situation, and it was more than challenging to work in such a context. The women activists also confirmed this and stated that it was difficult to launch any initiative at the level of the Federation of BiH during that time.

Some progress has been made in improving the statute of the Social Democratic Party as the largest party on the left in BiH concerning gender equality in politics. At the same time, the liberal *Our Party* has already enshrined the principle of parity in its program as part of the 50-50 initiative. There are also some procedural improvements when it comes to parliaments. At the

---

4 *Zadruga* (“Cooperative”) is a notorious reality show that airs on TV Pink from Serbia. It enjoys regional popularity but is highly controversial for promoting violence and aggression.

initiative of a woman MP from the *Party of Democratic Progress*, the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska were improved to prohibit derogatory terms against women and sexism. However, overarching proposals for gender equality in politics, such as amending the electoral law to ensure that more women are elected, have met with resistance, despite the concerted efforts of some women MPs and activists who have joined together in the coalition “Let us Share the Responsibility Together” (*Podijelimo odgovornost zajedno*). According to the activist from Banja Luka, the situation is similar to another overarching initiative of women’s organizations, “Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform” (*Građanke za ustavne promjene*).

Sometimes, insufficient success is also related to the fact that there were too many burning issues and problems for women from the war until today:

*Because everything bad that could have happened, actually happened to women in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war. And mass rapes and persecutions and murders and the loss of jobs and the exclusion from political life ... and all had to be rebuilt (an activist from Bijeljina).*

Against the backdrop of these unfavorable conditions and despite some improvements, the situation of marginalized women is even more problematic. Therefore, Roma women’s organizations often focus on helping women directly and engaging in various activities for their education and economic empowerment (e.g., establishing the first Roma women’s cooperative), providing primary health care, and mediating between the Roma community and institutions. There has been some progress in the political representation of Roma women. The interviewee said that there are now some Roma council members at the local level who are women. Despite the failure of the initiative of woman MP for affirmative action regarding Roma women’s participation in the Council of National Minorities in BiH, there has been success in other bodies:

*... We have another important body, which is the Roma Committee of BiH [Odbor za Rome] at the state level, and since there were never any Roma women there, we lobbied and received support from the Ministry of Human Rights,*

*the Agency for Gender Equality, the Gender Center of FBiH, and some other institutions. For the first time, five Roma women joined this body, and I was the chairperson. We saw an upsurge during my tenure (a Roma woman activist from Tuzla).*

As for LBT women, the retraditionalization of society and the fact that ethnonational parties vehemently oppose LGBTI rights make success even more difficult. Nevertheless, lesbian activists point to the importance of the successful organization of the Pride march in Sarajevo in 2019, and it was lesbian activists who were most visible during that time. However, the general context remains unfavorable, and for the lesbian activists interviewed, it is inconceivable that women who are not heterosexual could be in a position of political power and decision-making. The case of an interviewed woman MP from *Our Party*, who was the only one to say she had taken an initiative that addressed this group of rights – the introduction of the same-sex partnership law shows how these issues are silenced and marginalized in representative bodies:

*In the last two years, I have asked the parliamentary question on the state of the drafting of the law on same-sex partnership five times, to which I have received no response... An attempt is made not even to include such a question in the minutes of the session to avoid such an issue in our society... (a WMP, Our Party).*

For activists, it is particularly painful that a gender-just peace is still a long way off so many years after the end of the war in BiH, which is also mentioned by women MPs from the center-left parties (*Social Democratic Party* and *Democratic Front*) and the center-right party (*Union for a Better Future of BiH*). The initiative of 13 women's organizations within the coalition "Peace with a Woman's Face" to declare December 8 as the official day of remembrance for the women victims of war was rejected three times. A small progress is that the exhibition "Peace with a Woman's Face" was organized in March 2023 in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. When it comes to women survivors of wartime sexual violence, the existing law expires in 2025, and women activists are now advocating for its extension. Recently, a significant breakthrough was made at the initiative of the "The Forgotten



Children of War Association” (*Udruženje Zaboravljena djeca rata*), which gathers children born out of wartime rape. With the support of other women’s and civil society organizations, the association raised claims so that the state would finally, so many years after the end of the war, recognize these children as a specific, vulnerable social group. The amendments to the Law on Civilian Victims of War were adopted in July 2022 in the Brčko District and at the entity level of the Federation of BiH in July 2023. However, in Republika Srpska, the work of this association faces resistance even though it brings together children of all ethnicities. As an activist said, the authorities use various strategies to prevent its activities, for example, arguing that the organization is not registered at the entity level of Republika Srpska and, therefore, cannot organize “The Breaking Free” exhibition in public institutions, as required by the methodology of this activity.

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS WITH CONCLUSION

Despite the ethnocratic political context that pushes aside women’s “complex identities, experiences, and needs” (Deiana 2018, 100), the analysis shows that women MPs and activists make different claims in the public sphere. The quantitative upsurge of women’s organizing in civil society has given women a place in the public arena to raise various issues and demands, especially in the immediate postwar period when women’s presence in politics was negligible, and women’s groups completely took over the issue of representation. After the introduction of the gender quotas, more women were elected, which also provided space for raising various claims in formal politics. Important issues were discussed; some were launched in collaboration with elected women, and all interviewed reflected at least some of them.

Regarding scholarly debates about conservative vs. feminist claims, the women MPs interviewed from the center-left, liberal, center-right, and right-wing parties act and represent women’s issues. This is consistent with the recognition that critical actors are not exclusively leftist and necessarily feminist (Celis and Erzeel 2015, 59) and that they all can contribute to deliberative processes. However, in a fragmented political system that favors ethnic representation, women from conservative parties do not challenge the basic principles of the BiH political system, which favors ethnicity over

other identities and, in one way or another, goes hand in hand with prevailing patriarchal values. In some cases, they openly oppose progressive feminist demands of the women's movement and some women MPs (Popov Momčinović 2022, 217, 218). This confirms findings from the global literature that it is not realistic to expect all women politicians to work together for a feminist agenda (Celis and Erzeel 2015, 59).

On the other hand, the fact that even conservative women MPs support or address issues that are actually part of the feminist agenda is sometimes seen as a strategy to avoid losing potential votes because the broader society and political culture accept some of the content of liberal feminism (Childs and Celis 2011, 221). For example, despite retraditionalization in BiH society, certain rights from socialist times have actually remained intact, including those that cause ideological disputes and conflicts in other countries, such as reproductive rights. As they are among the rights that have been enjoyed for decades, this has undoubtedly reduced the possibilities of conservative mobilization against reproductive rights (Popov Momčinović and Ždralović 2023, 119, 120), in which conservative women play an important role in some other countries.

Interestingly enough, not all women's groups and activists use the label "feminist," and some avoid associating with lesbian initiatives (Bilić and Selmić 2019, 170) and openly advocating for LGBTI rights (Popov Momčinović and Ždralović 2023, 120). Also, due to the lack of capacity of state institutions, including those responsible for gender equality, women's organizations have been and continue to be torn between raising claims and providing the "safety net" that the BiH government is supposed to provide (Simmons 2007, 179). The enormous needs and problems that women constantly face in BiH's post-war society overwhelm women's organizations with various activities that often involve an ethic of care approach that can serve conservative purposes and offer little opportunity to shake patriarchal norms (Ždralović and Popov Momčinović 2023, 60). For this study, only activists who describe themselves as feminists were interviewed, and they confirmed that such a division exists in the women's movement in BiH, which has also been discussed in other research (e.g., Popov Momčinović 2013; Helms 2013).

Regarding achievements, both the women MPs and activists interviewed believe that some important progress has indeed been made in line with the liberal-feminist agenda, as reflected in improved legislation. The existing literature suggests that “the legal and institutional frameworks guiding gender equality norms, standards, and practices in BiH are largely in place” (Simić 2015, 91). However, it is important not to assume that legal changes guarantee feminist outcomes (Mazur and McBride 2013, 657), especially in post-socialist countries where legal solutions were adopted under international influence and primarily as part of efforts to align with EU standards (Waylen 2011, 159). This is also consistent with the rise of neoliberal ideology, which focuses on procedures rather than substantive change (Outshoorn 2010, 146, 155).

The greatest successes have been achieved in combating domestic violence against women and children. Women’s organizations have been at the forefront of raising claims in this area since the end of the war and continue to do so because, despite significant progress, some laws are not being introduced or need to be improved to bring the gender-based violence issues in line with the Istanbul Convention. For example, better regulation of funding for women’s shelters and other services for victims, recognition of femicide in the penal code, and establishment of a crisis center for rape victims. One of the demands was finally adopted at the time of writing. The bill on funding the SOS lines is in the parliamentary process in Republika Srpska, and, as reported in the media, both women and men MPs will vote for it (Milojević 2023). On the other hand, activists and women MPs often doubt that the successes in this area have been achieved at the price of excluding women from the “mainstream” of politics. It should not be forgotten, however, that gender-based violence is a central factor in women’s subordinate status (Weldon 2011, 41). Therefore, other forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment, rape, and stalking, should be much more on the agenda of activists and women MPs.

As for gender equality in politics and political representation, this continued to be a priority for most of the women’s movement as women disappeared from politics with the rise of patriarchal ethno-nationalism. Despite the dissatisfaction and doubts about what the presence of women in politics can substantially achieve in the society of BiH, it is believed that only then

concrete changes and improvements are possible (Simić 2015, 92). Despite various pitfalls and disappointments, this argument is constantly present with variations. The insights of both activists and women MPs confirm that legislative changes (especially quotas) have been crucial to improving women's representation but that substantive change is more than slow. Women MPs recognize certain improvements in procedural changes to ensure gender equality in decision-making, at least in political parties on the left, and improvements in the parliamentary code of ethics when it comes to sexism and discrimination due to their initiatives and work. However, broader initiatives to improve women's political representation face obstacles. The claims for equal representation of women in the executive branch have met with resistance, and various joint initiatives of some women politicians and activists to improve the electoral law (such as the initiative *Podijelimo odgovornost zajedno*) usually fell off the radar. Similarly, some initiatives of joint efforts by women's groups, such as the "Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform" (*Građanke za ustavne promjene*), established in 2013, are out of sight from the minds of the places where political decisions are made. As Ždralović asserts, it is precisely the type of initiative that should not be ignored because it is a comprehensive proposal that is important for the substantive outcomes (Ždralović 2021, 325, 326). Contrary to issues related to gender-based violence and the position of marginalized groups such as children with disabilities and their parents/mothers, the lack of support of men politicians for the initiatives dealing with the improvement of gender equality in politics is evident.

In addition, women MPs point to the problems of severe party fragmentation, constant political disputes and deadlocks, lack of political culture, and inefficiency of representative institutions, as well as a general lack of will in the various parliamentary bodies responsible for human rights and gender equality to advocate for women's issues truly. As the literature suggests, the major problem is the dysfunctional political apparatus and poor governance that benefits only a small political elite (Kostovicova et al. 2020, 257), as well as the pervasive control by patriarchal ethnonational gender orders (Ždralović 2021, 326). In this context, the problem interviewees mentioned that women politicians lack the awareness and courage to initiate or support various demands becomes clearer. Nevertheless, women MPs have

launched various initiatives, some in collaboration with the women's movement, some have been adopted, some have not, and some are in the process of consultation and deliberation. Initiatives dealing mainly with women's issues related to traditional gender roles (especially motherhood), such as the introduction of the Law on Alimony Fund (2022), as well as the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (2019), were adopted in Republika Srpska. However, this can hardly be interpreted as the result of gender sensitivity on the part of the government. The constant ethnic homogenization in this entity and the recent tendencies to suppress civil society and, primarily, the open calls by the President of Republika Srpska and the Banja Luka City Mayor to protect patriarchal values prove this. The experience in the Federation of BiH, on the other hand, shows that there are problems with the acceptance of some claims related to traditional gender roles (such as the protection of mothers), which is more due to the complex political structure and complicated political circumstances. As a result, some women's organizations in FBiH are directing their demands to the cantonal level, and at least in some cantons (such as Sarajevo and Tuzla cantons), there are certain improvements. In disadvantaged cantons like Canton 10, however, even some essential claims, such as access to basic health and social services, are not recognized, according to an activist who works in a small, impoverished community there.

This proves that despite some progress, gender equality has generally taken a back seat in the society of BiH, faced with various problems that often serve as a pretext for marginalizing gender equality. This unfavorable context has a particularly detrimental effect on the position of vulnerable groups such as Roma and LBT women, who need much more state protection. Due to the various forms of discrimination these marginalized women face and the lack of institutional support, organizations dealing with these groups are additionally bound to provide them with direct assistance and support (Ždralović and Popov Momčinović 2023, 59). Still, there is some progress regarding the inclusion of Roma women and their organizations in at least some national minority bodies. It is important to note that some successes were achieved with the support of women's policy agencies and that a woman MP, in her initiative (although it was not adopted), greatly appreciated the work of a prominent Roma woman activist. This also confirms the

importance of cooperation and support, which should not be abandoned, even if they are not always successful. In the case of Roma women, the lack of support from men (probably due to the limited number of reserved seats for Roma in institutions representing national minorities) is also a major problem. In general, LGBTI rights seem to be the most marginalized in the public sphere despite some progress in anti-discriminatory laws. There are few civil society organizations representing their demands, and the peculiarity of BiH is that there are no specific lesbian organizations, and foreign donors assume that these issues are covered by organizations of groups working “on sexual emancipation” (Selmić and Bilić 2019, 170). Moreover, transgender issues are rarely on the agenda of local activists and international actors (Gavrić and Čaušević 2021, 150). Popular attitudes are also highly hostile, and in this context, some LGBTI organizations have ceased to exist or have withdrawn from the public sphere (Gavrić and Čaušević 2021, 82, 116). When it comes to political parties, only the liberal *Our party* openly advocates for this group of rights. It cooperates with activists, but the joint initiative for the adoption of the Law on Same-Sex Partnerships in the Federation of BiH has not yet been adopted. Of particular concern is that the Republika Srpska authorities are currently even preparing discriminatory legislation to restrict LGBTI organizing altogether (Kurtić 2023).

In the unfavorable context, many women politicians refrain from being more assertive, while some focus on gender equality issues, but these are seen as low priority in mainstream politics (Popov Momčinović 2022, 216). This, in turn, opens the door for greater collaboration between elected women and activists in formulating demands. However, due to the dubious attitudes towards feminism and the fact that more outspoken feminist voices are usually discredited in society (Mulalić and Karić 2020, 30), the reach of these activities remains questionable. Some women MPs focus on initiatives that address the situation of some marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities and their mothers/parents, and some of these claims have been adopted. On the other hand, the fact that these rights fall under the jurisdiction of the lower levels of government (entities and cantons) reduces the possibility of cooperation at the state level and also harms the cohesion of the women’s movement. As a result, the possibility of jointly bringing about significant political change is low, as many activists pointed out,

and some previous analyses also confirm that women's activism is unlikely to translate into more significant political influence (Björkdahl 2012, 300; Deiana 2018, 11). Political and ethnic divisions are mainly reflected in the position of women survivors of wartime sexual violence, whose rights are regulated differently depending on the entity level, with the Federation of BiH offering better regulation and higher benefits. At the same time, the law in Republika Srpska requires an extremely high threshold of 60% of bodily harm (Simic 2017, 327). Considering that these women are repeatedly used as a powerful symbol of ethnic victimization, the possibility of their cooperation across ethnic identities, including alliance-building with other women's groups, is dwindling (Deiana 2018, 114). The recent successful initiative of the *Forgotten Children of War Association*, supported by various women's groups in BiH, represents a significant breakthrough. Still, various obstacles in organizing the activities and initiatives in Republika Srpska prove the persistence of the ethnonational power divide.

In sum, while institutions worldwide downplay women's initiatives in various ways, particularly by making some outcomes less possible (Franceschet 2011, 64), the ethnic structure of institutions in BiH, the weakness of various gender equality mechanisms, and poor governance exacerbate these problems. Moreover, there has always been a gap between the normative democratic ideals of equality and democratic practice (Lovenduski 2019, 32). The unfavorable conditions in BiH and the various problems faced by women, many of which date back to the time of the war, deepen this gap. Therefore, it is important not to give up on representation (Lovenduski and Guadagnini 2010, 164), and movement actors and at least some women politicians continue their efforts in this regard, which need to be continued and further researched. Given that men politicians support some initiatives and not others, their role as (potential) critical actors in future research on BiH should also be examined more closely.

## REFERENCES

- Aganović, Arijana (2015). "1995–2003: Postdejtonska borba za ravnopravnost spolova." In *1995–2015. Žene i politički život u postdejtonskoj Bosni i Hercegovini*, edited by Saša Gavrić and Majda Zagorac, 37–57. Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar, Agencija za ravnopravnost spolova BiH.
- Berry, Marie E. 2018 *War, Women and Power. From Violence to Mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Björkdahl, Annika. 2012. "A Gender-Just Peace? Exploring the Post-Dayton Peace Process in Bosnia." *Peace & Change* 37 (2): 286–317. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0130.2011.00746.x
- Brunnbauer, Ulf. 2000. "From Equality without Democracy to Democracy without Equality? Women and Transition in Southeast Europe." *South-East Europe Review* 3: 151–168.
- Celis, Karen. 2009. "Substantive Representation of Women (and Improving it): What it is and Should be About?" *Comparative European Politics* 7 (1): 95–113. doi: 10.1057/cep.2008.35
- Celis, Karen, and Silvia Erzeel. 2015. "Beyond the Usual Suspects: Non-Left, Male and Non-Feminist MPs and the Substantive Representation of Women." *Government and Opposition* 50 (1): 45–64. doi:10.1017/gov.2013.42
- Celis, Karen, and Joni Lovenduski. 2018. "Power Struggles: Gender Equality and Political Representation." *European Journal on Gender and Politics* 1 (1–2): 149–166. doi: 10.1332/251510818x15272520831085
- Celis, Karen, and Sarah Childs. 2020. *Feminist Democratic Representation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cornwall, Andrea, and Anne Marie Goetz. 2005. "Democratizing Democracy: Feminist Perspectives." *Democratization* 12 (5): 783–800. doi: 10.1080/13510340500322181
- Childs, Sarah. 2006. "The Complicated Relationship between Sex, Gender and Substantive Representation of Women." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 (1): 7–21. doi: 10.1177/1350506806060003
- Childs, Sarah, and Mona Lena Krook. 2009. "Analysing Women Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors." *Government and Opposition* 44 (2): 125–145. doi: 10.1111/j.1477-7053.2009.01279.x



- Childs, Sarah, and Karen, Celis. 2011. "The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with Conservative Claims?" *Political Studies* 60 (1): 213–225. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00904.x
- Čičkarić, Lilijana. 2015. "In/visibility of Women in Politics." *Teme* 39 (1): 43–59.
- Dahlerup, Drude, and Milica Antić Gaber. 2017. "The Legitimacy and Effectiveness of Gender Quotas in Politics in CE Europe." *Teorija in praksa* 54 (2): 307–316.
- Deiana, Maria-Adriana. 2018. *Gender and Citizenship. Promises of Peace in Post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Franceschet, Susan. 2011. "Gendered Institutions and Women's Substantive Representation: Female Legislators in Argentina and Chile." In *Gender, Politics and Institutions. Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, edited by Mona Lena Krook and Fiona Mackey, 58–78. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gavrić, Saša, and Jasmina Čaušević. 2021. *From Demedicalisation to Same-Sex Marriage: A Contemporary LGBT History of the Western Balkans*. Belgrade: Belgrade Pride, Pride Society.
- Gavrić, Saša. 2023. "Understanding Substantive Representation of Women in Consociational Post-Conflict Political Systems." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* October: 1–19 (published online). doi: 10.1080/13537113.2023.2266155
- Hausman, Melissa, and Birgit Sauer, eds. 2007. *Gendering the State in the Age of Globalization. Women's Movement and State Feminism in Postindustrial Democracies*. London, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Helms, Elissa. 2013. *Innocence and Victimhood: Gender, Nation, and Women's Activism in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Htun, Mala, and Lauel S. Weldon. 2018. *The Logics of Gender Justice. State Actions on Women's Rights Around the Globe*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes, Melanie M., and Pamela Paxton. 2019. "The Political Representation of Women over Time." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights, Gender and Politics*, edited by Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook and Netina Tan, 33–51. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Kadribašić, Adnan, Barbara Chiarenza, Maida Čehajić Čampara, and Lejla Ramić Mesihović. 2020. *Baseline Study on Barriers to Political Participation of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: UNDP.
- Kapić, Tajma. 2021. "The Gendered Implications of Consociational Peace Agreements: A Sub-national Level Analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Journal of Rule of Law Transitional Justice and Human Rights* 12 (12): 123–138.
- Krook, Mona Lena. 2003. "Campaigns for Candidate Gender Quotas. A New Global Women's Movement?" in *Women's Movements. Flourishing or in Abeyance?*, edited by Sandra Grey and Marian Sawer, 105–115. London, New York: Routledge.
- Krook, Mona Lena. 2006. "Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide." *Politics & Gender* 2: 303–327. doi: 10.1017/S1743923X06060107
- Kostovicova, Danisa, Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, and Marsha Henry. 2020. "Drawing on the Continuum: A War and Post-war Political Economy of Gender-based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22 (2): 250–272. doi: 10.1080/14616742.2019.1692686
- Krasniqui, Vjollca, Ivor Sokolić, and Danisa Kostovicova. 2020. "Skirts as Flags: Transitional Justice, Gender and Everyday Nationalism in Kosovo." *Nations and Nationalism* 26: 461–476. doi: 10.1111/nana.12593
- Kurtic, Azem. 2023. "With Anti-LGBT Law, Bosnia's Dodik Borrows from Orbán's Playbook." *BalkanInsight*, April 5. Accessed July 21, 2023. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/04/05/with-anti-lgbt-law-bosnias-dodik-borrows-from-orbans-playbook/>
- Lovenduski, Joni. 2005. "Introduction: State Feminism and Political Representation of Women." In *State Feminism and Political Representation*, edited by Joni Lovenduski, 1–19. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo: Cambridge University Press.
- Lovenduski, Joni, and Marila Guadagnini. 2010. "Political Representation." In *The Politics of State Feminism. Innovation in Comparative Research*, edited by Dorothy E. McBride and Amy G. Mazur, 164–192. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Mackey, Fiona. 2008. "‘Thick’ Conception of Substantive Representation: Women, Gender and Political Institutions." *Representation* 44 (2): 125–139. doi: 10.1080/0034489080207960
- Majstorović, Danijela. 2011. "Femininity, Patriarchy and Resistance in the Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Review of Sociology* 21 (2): 277–299. doi: 10.1080/03906701.2011.581802
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1995. "What is the Feminist Movement?" In *Feminist Organizations. Harvest of the New Women’s Movement*, edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, 27–34. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- McBride, Dorothy E., and Amy G. Mazur. 2013. "Women’s Policy Agencies and State Feminism." In *Oxford University Press Handbook on Gender and Politics*, edited by Georgina Waylen, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola and Laurel S. Weldon, 654–678. Oxford and New York: The Oxford University Press.
- Milojević, Milkica. 2023. "U budžetu mora biti novca za pomoć žrtvama nasilja: poslanici podržavaju inicijativu za SOS telefon". *Srpskainfo*, July 3. Accessed July 21, 2023. <https://srpskainfo.com/u-budzetu-mora-biti-novca-za-pomoc-zrtvama-nasilja-poslanici-podrzavaju-inicijativu-za-sos-telefon-foto/>
- Mujkić, Asim. 2007. "We, the Citizens of Ethnopolis." *Constellations* 14 (1): 112–128. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8675.2007.00425.x
- Mulalić, Muhidin, and Mirsad Karić. 2020. "Women’s Political Participation and Representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: General Elections 2014 and 2018." *Marmara University Journal of Political Science* 8 (1): 27–42. doi: 10.14782/marmarasbd.712277
- OSCE. 2023. *Rezultati istraživanja: Prisutnost principa i politika rodne ravnopravnosti u političkom životu Bosne i Hercegovine: od podrške kandidatkinjama, preko imenovanja do zastupljenosti žena u tijelima zakonodavne vlasti nakon Općih izbora 2022. godine, pa do vidljivih i nevidljivih prepreka tokom njihovog mandata*. Sarajevo: OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Outshoorn, Joyce. 2010. "Social Movements and Women’s Movements." In *The Politics of State Feminism. Innovation in Comparative Research*, edited by Dorothy E. McBride and Amy G. Mazur, 143–163. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Philip, Adu. 2019. *A Step-by-Step Guide to Qualitative Data Coding*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini. Artikulacija jedne kontrakture*. Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar, Centar za empirijska istraživanja religije u Bosni i Hercegovini, Fondacija CURE.
- Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2022. “‘There Are More of Us’: Political Representation of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” In *Social Justice in Post-Communist Societies*, edited by Bojan Vranić and Nemanja Anđelković, 203–225. Beograd: Udruženje za političke nauke Srbije, Univerzitet u Beogradu – Fakultet političkih nauka.
- Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka, and Amila Ždralović. 2023. “Religion and Gender in Bosnian-Herzegovinian Ethno-Populist Stabilocracy.” In *Religion, Gender, and Populism in the Mediterranean*, edited by Alberta Giorgi, Júlia Garraio and Teresa Toldy, 106–129. London and New York: Routledge.
- Porobić Isaković, Nela, and Gorana Mlinarević. 2019. “Sustainable Transitions to Peace Need Women’s Groups and Feminists: Questioning Donor Interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *Journal of International Affairs* 72 (2): 173–190.
- Pupavac, Vanessa. 2005. “Empowering Women? An Assessment of International Gender Policies in Bosnia.” *International Peacekeeping* 12 (3): 391–405. doi: 10.1080/13533310500074507
- Rai, Shirin M. 2003. “Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women: Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State?” In *Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State? Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*, edited by Shirin M. Rai, 15–39. New York: Manchester University Press.
- Radio Sarajevo. 2023. “Nasilje nije privatna stvar: vrijeme je za usvajanje Zakona o zaštiti od nasilja u porodici u FBiH!.” *Radio Sarajevo*, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Accessed July 22, 2023. <https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala teme/nasilje-nije-privatna-stvar-vrijeme-je-za-usvajanje-zakona-o-zastiti-od-nasilja-u-porodici-u-fbih/486493>

- Saward, Michael. 2006. "The Representative Claim." *Contemporary Political Theory* 5: 297–318. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300234
- Shreeves, Rosamund, and Ionel Zamfir. 2023. *Briefing: Women in Politics in EU. State of Play*. Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)739383\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS_BRI(2023)739383_EN.pdf)
- Simić, Olivera. 2015. "Gender (In)equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." In *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Christine M. Hassenstab and Sabrina P. Ramet, 87–107. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Simic, Olivera. 2017. "Drinking Coffee in Bosnia: Listening to Stories of Wartime Violence and Rape." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 18 (4): 321–328.
- Simmons, Cynthia. 2007. "Women's Work and the Growth of Civil Society in Post-War Bosnia." *Nationalities Papers* 35 (1): 171–185. doi: 10.1080/00905990601129446
- Spahić Šiljak, Zilka. 2014. *Shining Humanity: Life Stories of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2010. *Political Power and Women's Representation in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Selmić, Adelita, and Bojan Bilić. 2019. "(In)visible Presences: PitchWise Festival as a Space of Lesbian Belonging in Bosnia and Herzegovina." In *Lesbian Activism in the (post)Yugoslav Space: Sisterhood and Unity*, edited by Bojan Blić and Marija Radoman, 163–189. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schreiber, Ronnee. 2018. "Is There a Conservative Feminism? An Empirical Account." *Politics & Gender* 14: 56–79. doi: 10.1017/S1743923X17000587
- Viterna, Jocelyn, and Kathleen M. Fallon. 2008. "Democratization, Women's Movements, and Gender-Equitable States: A Framework for Comparison." *American Sociological Review* 73 (4): 668–689. doi: 10.1177/0003122408073004
- Waylen, Georgina. 2011. "Gendered Institutional Analysis: Understanding Democratic Transition." In *Gender, Politics and Institutions. Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, edited by Mona Lena Krook and Fiona Mackey, 147–162. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Weldon, S. Laurel. 2010. "Beyond Bodies: Institutional Sources of Representation for Women". In *Women, Gender and Politics: Reader*, edited by Mona Lena Krook and Sarah Childs, 231–239. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weldon, S. Laurel. 2011. *When Protest Makes Policy. How Social Movements Represent Disadvantaged Groups*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Young, Iris Marion. 1997. "Differing Group Representation." *Nomos* 39: 349–376.
- Ždralović, Amila. 2021. "Izbornog zakonodavstvo Bosne i Hercegovine – rodna analiza." In *Reforma izbornog zakonodavstva Bosne i Hercegovine*, edited by Ivan Cvitković, 313–329. Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine.
- Ždralović, Amila, and Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović. 2023. "(Un)doing Feminisms Their Own Way: The Activism of Marginalized Women's Organisations in Local Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Croatian Sociological Review* 53 (1): 39–65. doi: 10.5613/rzs.53.1.2

Received/Primljeno: July 24, 2023

Changed/Izmenjeno: October 24, 2023

Accepted/Prihvaćeno: November 4, 2023

## Aktivistkinje i parlamentarke kao akterke političke reprezentacije žena u Bosni i Hercegovini: koji zahtevi, sa kakvim uspesima?

---

Zlatiborka POPOV MOMČINOVIĆ

Univerzitet u Istočnom Sarajevu  
Filozofski fakultet

**Sažetak:** Ovaj članak analizira i razmatra političku reprezentaciju žena u Bosni i Hercegovini (BiH), fokusirajući se na ulogu parlamentarki i aktivistkinja kao kritičkih akterki. Teorijski deo opisuje njihovu ulogu i ključne izazove u vezi sa postizanjem suštinskih rodnih ishoda. Kvalitativno istraživanje i analiza ispituju reprezentativne zahteve koje su iznele u BiH da prošire političku agendu kako bi uključile ženska pitanja vezana za rodno zasnovano nasilje, ravnopravnu političku zastupljenost, socijalna prava žena, posebno vezana za majčinstvo, položaj marginalizovanih žena i rodno pravedan mir. Uspesi su različiti i prepoznaju se pre svega u vezi sa nasiljem u porodici, ali su potrebna poboljšanja i u ovoj oblasti. Sveobuhvatni zahtevi za rodnom ravnopravnošću u politici suočavaju se sa različitim preprekama, posebno imajući u vidu komplikovan politički sistem koji favorizuje etničku zastupljenost i društvenu repatrijarhalizaciju u postkonfliktnom društvu. Uprkos malim uspesima, još je teže postići suštinske rezultate kada su u pitanju marginalizovane žene poput Romkinja i LBT žena u nepovoljnom društvenom i političkom kontekstu.

**Ključne reči:** politička reprezentacija žena, Bosna i Hercegovina, kritički akteri, ženski pokret, aktivistkinje, parlamentarke, rodno zasnovano nasilje, rodna ravnopravnost u politici, marginalizovane grupe žena