

## CHAPTER 4: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### 4.1. Introduction

The Bosnian armed forces used conscription throughout the Bosnian war for independence, which began almost immediately upon international recognition of the new state in 1992 and lasted until the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace—more commonly referred to as the Dayton Agreement—in 1995. Far from merely being a peace treaty, the Dayton Agreement included a constitution for the new state and detailed descriptions of its new political institutions, drafted with extensive oversight from members of the international community—most notably, the United States. Conspicuously absent from this otherwise comprehensive blueprint for statebuilding, however, was any substantial effort to create a centralized military. Instead, each of the three formerly warring ethnic parties—Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Bosnian Serbs—maintained de facto control over their own armies. The result was a classic ethnic security dilemma.<sup>1</sup> Amidst an atmosphere of extreme mutual distrust, each ethnic army continued to use conscription—despite continually downsizing the number of their enlisted personnel—for a decade after the Dayton Agreement had established the first permanent instruments of government for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and made three ethnic communities partners in a single state.

This institutional inertia governed military design for all three communities in BiH until 2002, when the new High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated a process of defense reform. A first defense reform commission permitted conscription to continue when it issued its recommendations in September 2003. However, the second

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35 (1993), 27–47.

Defense Reform Commission report required a full transition to an all-volunteer force on January 1, 2006, only a few months after issuing its recommendations. Bosnia remained a virtual international protectorate, which raised the question: what changed? What was different about the initial period of military design that led BiH to build a conscript army?

This chapter compares the conditions in which military design choices were made to explain why policymakers considered a volunteer army both feasible and desirable in 2005, but not in 1995. I also engage in a process-trace of the 2005 Defence Reform Commission's decision to end conscription. This allows me to determine what actors were responsible for military recruitment decisions and what motivated their preferences at each point in time. By looking forward in time from the initial point of military design to examine a policy change, I can make inferences about the counterfactual: under what circumstances would actors have elected for volunteer forces after the Dayton Accords? In doing so, I am able to gain additional traction in identifying the actors and conditions that influenced the decision to use conscription in 1995.

I find that the actors responsible for military design changed throughout this period. I argue that despite the international involvement in Bosnian independence and political development, external actors intentionally avoided influence over organizational aspects of the new state's military design. In the absence of a strong, external patron willing to lead the way on these military matters, local preferences determined military design. Furthermore, these local preferences were defined by what the leaders of each ethnic community perceived as a highly threatening environment. A weak central government and continued ethnic mobilization meant conflict and ethnic cleansing could easily re-erupt on short notice, making it too risky a proposition for any one party to

unilaterally reduce its available manpower. Thus, this case of military design is representative of my third causal pathway: Domestic threat perceptions determined the initial recruitment practices in BiH in the context of major external security concerns.

This chapter similarly provides evidence against several alternative explanations about the use of conscription. It suggests, contrary to many realist expectations, that actors continue to view conscription as the preferable form of military recruitment, despite advances in technology that have made volunteer militaries more accessible. Furthermore, while historical experiences, including colonial practices, may affect policymakers' preferences for conscription, they are not determinative. Intervention by foreign actors can overpower these preferences, or even change them.

To support my argument, I rely primarily on memoirs and original interviews with policymakers who were involved with defense reform in Bosnia throughout this period. Interviews, in particular, were important to capture the micro-level causal processes that my theory predicts.<sup>2</sup> While much has been written on defense reform in Bosnia, the role of conscription takes a back seat in these studies to the more contentious issues of military and defense integration. This makes it difficult to discern precisely how recruitment fit into broader debates over military organization and what factors weighed most heavily on the outcome. Indeed, a key goal in using interviews is to determine *who* made the key decisions about recruitment and why. Therefore, my interviews provided important information about the decision-makers and their goals that is typical of studies

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<sup>2</sup> Cathie Jo Martin, "Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect," in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 109–124 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013): 119.

engaging in process tracing.<sup>3</sup> They provided causal process observations that were useful both for determining the values of my independent variables and to challenge arguments emphasizing a culturally deterministic mechanism of military diffusion.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.2. Interview Methodology**

I began by contacting individuals who were directly involved in Bosnian defense reform processes, and used a snowball technique to identify additional interviewees. While snowball sampling risks biasing data by decreasing the representativeness of the sample, this is not a major concern in my study. My goal is to process-trace the creation of the BiH military. When process-tracing, “one cares less about getting a representative sample” than about learning “who is responsible for causing the particular action” or “how events unfold.”<sup>5</sup> I am not studying responses themselves so much as I am using the interviewees as “expert sources of information.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, a snowball technique increased my ability to access important respondents.

I spoke with 18 people who were intimately familiar with different aspects of the creation and development of the Bosnian army. This is a substantial portion of those who were influential on issues relating to conscription in Bosnia, and included all those who were identified in existing literature and through my interviews as the *most* important. It quickly became clear that the community of defense policymakers for BiH is fairly small,

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<sup>3</sup> Julia F. Lynch, “Aligning Sampling Strategies with Analytic Goals,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 31–44 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013): 36.

<sup>4</sup> James Mahoney, “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research,” *World Politics* 62:1 (2010): 120–147.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, “Crafting Interviews,” 113; Lynch, “Aligning Sampling Strategies,” 40.

<sup>6</sup> Beth L. Leech, Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, and David C. Kimball, “Lessons from the ‘Lobbying and Policy Change’ Project,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 209–224 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013): 214.

and that those focusing on conscription constitute an even more specialized group. By around the fourteenth interview, interviewees were identifying the same set of people as influential or knowledgeable about recruitment decisions—many of whom were people to whom I had already spoken.

Respondents included people working at all levels of policy formulation, from military officials and technical advisors, to ambassadors, civil servants, and Bosnian cabinet ministers. Most were associated with the international community in some form, most often as representatives or employees of NATO or the OSCE, rather than parties representing policymakers for BiH. Twelve interviewees were or are now American nationals, though only five of these represented American interests at the commissions. Indeed, most interviewees stressed their role as members of an organization or institution. They explicitly and preemptively distanced themselves from the preferences or actions of a government they did not represent. Furthermore, two of three Bosnians I interviewed were Defense Ministers, one of whom attained this position as a direct result of the Defense Reform Commissions. Twelve interviewees were directly involved in the Defense Reform commissions as full members of the secretariat or as part of working groups. Information about what periods of defense reform the respondents participated in is available in table 5.1.<sup>7</sup>

Erich Bleich and Robert Pekkanen distill the array of critiques often levied at interview methods into three categories of potential concern: how representative are the interviewees of the broader sample population, was the interview of sufficient quality to

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<sup>7</sup> The Appendix to this chapter has more information on my interview methodology. Most interviewees agreed to be identified. Some, however, requested anonymity because they were unsure about the continued confidentiality of some information. I have only used names or other identifying information when I was granted explicit permission to do so.

reveal the right information, and how accurate is the researcher's report of the interview content?<sup>8</sup> I hope to have alleviated concerns about the representativeness and quality of my interviews by having described my methods in this section. However, it is important that I demonstrate that I am not cherry-picking quotes or hearing what I want to hear. To that end, I attempt to be clear about the extent to which the sentiments and facts reported by interviewees reflect responses from others who had similar knowledge.<sup>9</sup> I also report responses suggestive of mechanisms other than those that I hypothesize. While some respondents attributed the choice of recruitment system to multiple factors, the weight of evidence from interviews, memoirs, and secondary literature suggests that military threats and international pressure were the most important factors.

### **4.3. Military Design and the Dayton Agreement**

The military design agreed to during the Dayton Agreement reinforced the war-time status quo. Bosnia's constitution created a weak central state, with most powers belonging to the two Entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation) and Republika Srpska (RS)—which represented the country's Muslim and Croat population, and Bosnian Serbs, respectively. This allowed the Entities to assume control over military and defense decisions. While the constitution gave the central government control over foreign policy, its responsibility for preserving the country's "sovereignty, territorial

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<sup>8</sup> Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen, "How to Report Interview Data," in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 84–105 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). While several interviewees noted that their memory was a problem when answering some questions, this only led to the need to end an interview early in one instance. Moreover, many interviewees continued to work in Bosnian defense reform for years after the creation of the all-volunteer army, while others have been interviewed on similar subjects repeatedly since then as well—facts that should decrease recall bias.

<sup>9</sup> I also contacted all interviewees to discuss how I was using quotes before publication. Most interviewees replied and continued our dialogue.

integrity, political independence, and international personality” was contingent on the “division of responsibilities between the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”<sup>10</sup> The Entities also had explicit authority to take appropriate measures to “provide a safe and secure environment for all persons” in their territories, as well as residual powers not explicitly assigned to the institutions of the central government.<sup>11</sup>

Most tellingly, the constitution makes several references to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s multiple armed forces, even establishing a Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) to coordinate their activities. The SCMM was Bosnia and Herzegovina’s sole defense institution in the years after Dayton. The Entities maintained complete autonomy to continue to administer their own armed forces. In fact, the Federation itself was so weak that even the Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces remained separate, meaning there were essentially three armies instead of two. All three continued their wartime practice of conscription.

The international community invested little time and energy in redesigning the military institutions of the newly independent central state it helped to create. However, the United States and its allies devoted substantial efforts to downsizing and demobilizing wartime forces, which they perceived as necessary to reduce overall tension levels and the likelihood of renewed conflict. Annex 1-B of the Dayton accords established strict limits on arms importations, as well as a clear force ratio that would define final military sizes of each of the armies.<sup>12</sup> However, the principal vehicle for achieving demobilization

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<sup>10</sup> General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFAP), Annex 4, Article 3, Sections 1 and 5. November 21, 1995. Available at <http://peacemaker.un.org/bosniadaytonagreement95>.

<sup>11</sup> GFAP, Annex 4, Article 3, Sections 2 and 3.

<sup>12</sup> GFAP, Annex 1-B, Article IV.

and downsizing was the “Train and Equip” program for the Federation army. This program was intended to recreate a balance of power between the Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs by improving the capabilities of the Federation forces. By canceling out the RS advantage in equipment, Train and Equip was a major incentive convincing Bosniaks to sign the peace deal.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike constitutional provisions such as the SCMM that established new chains of command and organizational procedures, Train and Equip could work within the existing institutional framework of the Federation army. It worked by helping Federation troops to learn new skills, not by redesigning the military and its relationship to society.

Nonetheless, the existence of Train and Equip raises the question of why the United States was willing to exert influence in one realm of military policy—capabilities—but not in other realms that could arguably have a larger and longer lasting effect. Changes to organizational policies that would reinforce military power-sharing through unified recruitment mechanisms could potential reduce the security dilemma, while eliminating conscription altogether would reduce each side’s ability to quickly mobilize large segments of the population.

There are several reasons why this may have been the case. I argue in the next section that the international community viewed changes to military organization—which disrupt both existing domestic power structures and the external balance of power—as too threatening to the fragile peace. Train and Equip, on the other hand, contributed to peace by reinforcing a balance of power. The United States did not believe that a major

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher J. Lamb, Sarah Arkin, and Sally Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program: A Lesson in Interagency Integration of Hard and Soft Power* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2014); See also Derek Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 164.

change such as a transition to an all-volunteer force would reinforce peace, given the volatile security environment. Any effort to make such a drastic change carried too great a risk of backfiring. As a result, international policymakers spent little time thinking about how such organizational changes could even be implemented. While Bosnian leaders clearly also preferred to retain conscription, it was the fact that the international community had other priorities and so approached military change cautiously that led to recruitment continuity, not Bosnian intransigence.

#### **4.4. International Interests and Domestic Military Design**

Upon first inspection, BiH appears to be a deviant case: its continued reliance on conscription would run in contrast to the expectations of all existing theories about when states should use compulsory recruitment policies.<sup>14</sup> Bosnia gained independence at a time when military effectiveness-based arguments would expect the need for conscription to be at an all-time low. The end of the Cold War, coupled with advances in capital-intensive technologies, was reducing the need for states to rely on costly, manpower-intensive armies for defense. At the same time and for the same reasons, the international environment itself was less threatening, and therefore allowed states to be less concerned with traditional security and territorial defense. The presence of 60,000 NATO-led peace enforcement troops on the ground in BiH should also have eliminated the need for local forces to provide security.

The United States, in particular, devoted time, money, reputation, and personnel—including 20,000 troops—to negotiating and enforcing the Dayton

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<sup>14</sup>Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

Agreement. One might expect, then, that the international community's considerable effort to design political institutions in Bosnia would have also carried over to military reform. Cultural or organizational arguments would suggest that the extensive role of the United States in creating and enforcing the Dayton Agreement and training and equipping the new Bosnian army should produce emulation, resulting in the establishment of an American-style volunteer military. Similarly, the heavy-handed influence of foreign actors in completely rewriting the Bosnian constitution and administering political institutions reduces the likelihood that pre-independence practices would automatically be replicated in the new state.

As this chapter will show, local threat perceptions determined military policies in the period of statebuilding that followed the Dayton Agreement. International actors were deeply invested in securing peace in Bosnia. Importantly, however, foreign intervention in the new state's military design was actually intentionally minimized during the Dayton negotiations, and was essentially absent for years afterwards. The only state with the resources and interests to act as a military patron, the United States, viewed more overt intervention into military policies as too destabilizing the fragile peace that had been achieved. As a result, it was domestic politicians' preferences and beliefs about local security that were most relevant to the continued use of conscription in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war.

Evidence that Bosnia's foreign benefactors wanted to distance themselves from military design emerged early in the negotiation process. While the European Union and the United States played active roles in negotiating and implementing the peace settlement, both actors viewed interference in the organization of the post-conflict

militaries as a bridge too far. This is somewhat surprising given the extent of foreign military activities in Bosnia both before and after Dayton. This is particularly true for the United States. Ultimately, while Europeans contributed to the peacebuilding effort, it was the Americans who called the shots. As the first High Representative of BiH wrote, it is a “simple and fundamental fact that on key occasions the United States was the only player who possessed the ability to employ power as a political instrument and when forced into action was also willing to do so.”<sup>15</sup> If any foreign power was able to expend further resources to reshape the Bosnian army, it was the United States.

This was not something that interested the United States during the mid-1990s. Instead, elites driving Bosnia policy in the U.S. viewed Bosnia as a quagmire that had unfortunately engaged American reputation and its commitment to NATO.<sup>16</sup> The best solution was to stabilize the region and get out, with as little commitment as that goal would allow. As one high ranking member of NATO’s Stabilization Force (SFOR) said, “Did we want to have 22,000 troops committed to the Balkans in Europe? No! We thought it was a European problem, but to make this work the US had to step up.”<sup>17</sup>

This can be seen in part through the limited American efforts to influence military design during the war. The Americans indicated an initial willingness to engage in military design when it mediated a cease-fire and federation agreement between Bosnian Muslims and Croat forces in February 1994.<sup>18</sup> U.S. policy intended to decrease Bosnian

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998): 387.

<sup>16</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 13; Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America’s Bosnia Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 140.

<sup>17</sup> Gen. William Crouch, June 22, 2016, Interview #7.

<sup>18</sup> Charles R. Shrader, *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia: A Military History, 1992–1994* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003): 160.

Serb bargaining leverage by ending the conflict between Muslims and Croats and strengthening their military forces. The Federation Agreement signed in Washington on March 1, 1994 called for the unification of their two armies, including the establishment of a joint command.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, a small advisory mission of 15 American officers, led by a retired U.S. major general, was dispatched at the end of 1994 to integrate the Muslim and Croat forces into a single federal army.<sup>20</sup> However, divisions between the two sides proved insurmountable. As long as they continued to compete for territory against the Bosnian Serbs, there was no shared Federation military for Americans to help develop. Fighting continued to erupt between Bosnian Muslims and Croats, and military cooperation between them was virtually non-existent by the time planning for comprehensive peace negotiations at Dayton began in October 1995.<sup>21</sup> This failure of externally-driven military design may have been due to the absence of a strong American belief in its necessity or the existence of extremely high barriers—including animosity between combatants—to successful intervention. In either case, recruitment decisions remained in the hands of local actors throughout the war.

American goals for Bosnian military development at Dayton were even less ambitious. The primary goal of the United States was to end the conflict quickly with the minimal necessary long-term investment. It is easy to lose sight of this due to the broad scope of the Dayton Accords, of which large portions are dedicated to establishing

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<sup>19</sup> Framework Agreement for the Federation (Washington Agreement), Attachment I, Chapter II, Article 1. March 1, 1994. Available at <http://peacemaker.un.org/bosniawashingtonagreement94>.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Cohen, "US to Help Form Muslim-Croat Army in Bosnia," *New York Times*, October 21, 1994; David Ottaway, "U.S. General Plays Down Bosnia Role," *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Roger Cohen, "Tension Undercuts Alliance of Muslims and Croats," *New York Times*, October 9, 1995; Mike Redman, "Joint ABiH-HVO operations 1994: A preliminary analysis of the Battle of Kupres" *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 16:4 (2003): 2.

civilian governmental institutions. Some participants, including the United States' chief negotiator, Richard Holbrooke, preferred a more comprehensive, maximalist approach to the peace agreement.<sup>22</sup> Negotiations at Dayton not only focused on military-security issues relating to the separation of forces and control of territory, but also on establishing and overseeing civilian institutions—including elections and ethnic representation in government—designed to create a lasting settlement in a stable state. As Derek Chollet wrote, “If Dayton’s first goal was to end the war, its second goal was to maintain Bosnia as a single state.”<sup>23</sup> However, this very much remained a secondary goal—one that was a means to the end that was lasting peace.

Wherever statebuilding threatened peace, Americans resolved this conflict of interest in favor of the latter. Although the Dayton Agreement included extensive provisions on new civilian institutions, efforts to enforce major changes to military design were viewed as potentially too destabilizing. The United States viewed the military situation as the key to securing peace—and consequently this absorbed most of its attention.<sup>24</sup> According to this logic, international efforts would be devoted to ending the war and preventing the resumption of hostilities. Furthermore, this could best be achieved not by forcibly integrating hostile forces into a new military, but by establishing an internal balance of power among the existing armed forces.<sup>25</sup> This led to a hands-off approach to military design that left Bosnians in control of recruitment and other

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<sup>22</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*; Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 192.

<sup>24</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*; Bildt, *Peace Journey*.

<sup>25</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, 144, 150.

organizational decisions. The active American role in statebuilding did not extend to the realm of military design.

A chief advantage of this minimalist approach was that it limited the American commitment to a process the Clinton administration had little desire to be a part of. The United States had few if any tangible security interests to protect in Bosnia. Its decision to intervene in 1995 was ultimately motivated by concerns over the credibility of American leadership and the future of the NATO alliance, both of which had been challenged by the intractability of the Bosnian conflict.<sup>26</sup> As a result, American policy was very much constrained by domestic support and interest. Having already felt compelled to engage in Bosnia, “policy was driven by the need to get out” and avoid a long-term military presence.<sup>27</sup> The administration thus had little interest in devoting the resources necessary for sweeping military change. American policymakers were unhappy with the need to deploy 20,000 troops to Bosnia and would have preferred to rely on a unified and effective Bosnian military for local security.<sup>28</sup> However, that would have required a longer period in which more American peacekeepers and military trainers would have needed to be present in Bosnia. The Clinton administration had even less of a desire to provide the more substantial commitment of military resources that would be necessary to reform the Bosnian military.<sup>29</sup> It wanted solutions that would allow it to disengage as quickly as possible, with low costs and limited public attention.

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<sup>26</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 13; Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*.

<sup>27</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, 150; Bildt, *Peace Journey*, 385.

<sup>28</sup> Gen. William Crouch, June 22, 2016, Interview #7.

<sup>29</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton, May 17, 2016, Interview #3; Marshall Harris, June 14, 2016, Interview #4.

One of the most difficult and controversial examples of this is the debate over the length of the American-led peace enforcement force's (IFOR) mission. Before participants even arrived at Dayton, the White House had decided and publicly announced that IFOR would complete its mission and withdraw within twelve months. The NSC Principals Committee made this decision after little debate, and with the goal of preventing "mission creep" and repeats of the disastrous 1993 intervention in Somalia.<sup>30</sup> According to Ivo Daalder, the NSC staffer responsible for formulating U.S. policy on Bosnia at the time, "just as IFOR's narrow mission was framed around more limited objectives, so the one-year deadline was constructed on the basis of an exit strategy that had a more limited purpose than advocates of a durable peace in Bosnia had in mind."<sup>31</sup> While the administration ultimately extended the deadline for withdrawal and transitioned IFOR into a "Stabilization Force" (SFOR), its initial deployment was only possible on the understanding that its authority was driven by a short-term mission designed to ensure a military balance, not nation-building.<sup>32</sup>

Another advantage to avoiding questions of military design at Dayton was that it set goals that seemed more feasible. Holbrooke would later lament not devoting more effort to insisting on greater military reform.<sup>33</sup> However, my interviewees suggested that, with or without greater foreign assistance, not much more could have been accomplished in terms of post-war defense reform. Clifford Bond, the American ambassador to Bosnia during the first Defense Reform Commission, summarized this common sentiment: "It

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<sup>30</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, 149

<sup>32</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, 148; Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 160; Bildt, *Peace Journey*, 300.

<sup>33</sup> Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 361.

was a peace agreement. They did what could be done. The sides weren't about to disarm."<sup>34</sup> The relationships between the three ethnic groups were not conducive to the level of cooperation needed in an integrated military. They were too fraught with hostility and distrust—"just what you would assess at the end of a war, with all of the emotions that were attached to that."<sup>35</sup> The perception was that this made compromise on military reform more difficult than compromise on other areas. The United States insisted that when it came to military reform, any more room for disagreements could potentially derail the entire peace process. American policymakers rejected military reform as too dangerous.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, issues like military design were a lower priority than political compromises. As one interviewee who participated in the Dayton negotiations described the atmosphere there, "For most of the things at Dayton, we were like, "can we get this done now?"<sup>37</sup> For the United States, the answer to this question when it came to military reform was "no," allowing for greater domestic control over recruitment issues.

These debates are important evidence in favor of the argument that Bosnian preferences were decisive. Military design was not at the top of the agenda for American policymakers during the Dayton Agreement negotiations. Given existing Bosnian military practices and the likelihood of renewed conflict, reforming the military in any way was considered a costly endeavor that few members of the international community desired to undertake. The threat environment made major military reform particularly risky. Thus, the main reason there was no push from the international community toward

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<sup>34</sup> Amb. Clifford Bond, May 9, 2016, Interview #1.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. William Crouch, June 22, 2016, Interview #7.

<sup>36</sup> Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords*, 193–4.

<sup>37</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton, May 17, 2016, Interview #3.

a volunteer army in 1995 was that such an effort had to high a probability of undermining peace.

Conversely, it is less likely that Americans simply encountered too much resistance from Bosnians to enforce their agenda. For one, local actors were not inherently opposed to volunteer forces, but rather wanted to maintain a balance of capabilities. The main Bosniak goal was to maintain high levels of readiness with large reserve forces to prepare for potential conflict with an RS force that, with reinforcements from Serbia, would outnumber them. Bosniak leaders ideally preferred a single army for both Entities, which by virtue of their larger numbers within the country, they believed they could control.<sup>38</sup> Conscription, then, was only viewed as necessary so long as an independent Serbian force continued to be a threat. Indeed, this was ultimately the compromise that was struck at the 2005 Defence Reform Commission. However, as the discussion earlier in this chapter shows, the United States clearly preferred to stay out of military design altogether, and was not interested in potentially disrupting the peace by forcing the dismantlement of the Entity armies.

Not only did the United States want to avoid excessive interference in Bosnian military affairs, but it is likely that the Bosnian army would have looked very different if the United States had viewed military reform there as a worthwhile investment. Many interviews noted that American preferences were to have a single, professional military in BiH. One high-ranking American military commander said, “The long term intent was to have a single entity that was capable of providing defense inside of Bosnia and that three

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<sup>38</sup> Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 38.

warring factions were disarmed and contributing to a peaceful political unit.”<sup>39</sup> Other interviewees stressed that Americans were uncomfortable with the idea of three armies in one state, but that more time would be needed to build support for such drastic change.<sup>40</sup> While negotiators do not appear to have debated the merits of interfering in Bosnian recruitment practices, there is little reason to expect that they would have, given their attitude toward making changes in other aspects of military design. Thus, it is difficult to speculate how American perceptions might have differently evaluated the role and purpose of conscription in an environment more conducive to reform. However, ultimately it is clear that a lack of willpower or resources led the United States to subordinate its preferences about military design to the more urgent goal of peace.

Even though some members of the international community realized that the long-term stability of Bosnia depended on creating a unified and professional military, key international actors viewed such reform as too demanding and risky in the short-term. Instead, “ending the war, separating the armies, and preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina were the driving motives of the negotiators, not necessarily building a sustainable peace.”<sup>41</sup> For now, international actors cared most about establishing peace; ensuring it could be sustainable would only complicate matters. Military reform would have to be a problem for a later date.

#### **4.5. Local Threat Perceptions after Dayton**

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<sup>39</sup> Gen. William Crouch, June 22, 2016, Interview #7

<sup>40</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton, May 17, 2016, Interview #3; Amb. Robert Beecroft, July 26, 2016, Interview #12; Defense Reform Commission Secretariat staff member, July 26, 2016, Interview #14

<sup>41</sup> Tobias Pietz, “Overcoming the Failings of Dayton: Defense Reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in *Bosnian Security after Dayton: New Perspectives*, edited by Michael A. Innes, 155–172 (New York: Routledge, 2006): 159.

The failure to integrate the wartime armed forces of the three ethnic groups had important consequences for their recruitment practices. It meant each group maintained the capacity to restart the war. This in turn incentivized both sides to stay armed and able to fend off renewed invasion on short notice, exacerbating an already unstable and tenuous peace. Thus, the most formative years for military design took place in a dangerous environment, in which both the Federation and the RS perceived that major territorial conflict still threatened their independent existence. Bosniaks continued to view conscription as vital for its role in creating a large reserve force that could be called upon for defense on short notice.

The widespread perception that war could easily erupt again was reinforced by indicators of the international community's shaky commitment, represented most clearly by the efforts to limit IFOR's authority and deployment. As Roberto Belloni writes, "third parties' passive, short-term and less than daring approach did little to help a population traumatized by years of war," allowing nationalists to continue to engage in ethnic cleansing.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, "no one had much confidence that peacekeeping forces would easily deter another round of fighting."<sup>43</sup> Instead, the American approach to peacebuilding immediately after Dayton single-mindedly focused on creating a balance of military capabilities between the Bosniak and Bosnian Serb communities. Their preferred program for achieving this goal was the Train and Equip program. However, it was not intended to make structural changes to the army or its relationship to society.

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<sup>42</sup> Roberto Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia* (New York: Routledge, 2007): 23.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Lamb, Sarah Arkin, and Sally Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program: A Lesson in Interagency Integration of Hard and Soft Power* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2014): 100–101, 106.

According to Jim Pardew, who led the Train and Equip program, recruitment “was their job, not mine. The military had to raise their army. They were in the position of needing to figure out how to raise their army and what kind of army they could afford.”<sup>44</sup>

These decisions from the international community both reflected and reinforced a mutually threatening atmosphere within BiH and the expectation that peace would be temporary. Rohan Maxwell and John Andreas Olsen, both of whom served in advisory roles during various stages of post-Dayton Bosnian defense reform, argue that “high levels of mistrust...shaped the military structure of BiH,” causing both entities to maintain “relatively large, conscript-based forces that regarded each other as potential enemies.”<sup>45</sup> The Train and Equip program was intended to create a military situation in which both sides could feel comfortable demobilizing troops, but was viewed as necessary precisely because the security environment was so precarious.<sup>46</sup> While it ultimately achieved its goal of permitting downsizing, tensions remained high. By February 1998 the Federation army included only 45,000 active duty troops, whereas this number was 100,000–200,000 higher less than a year earlier. However, conscription permitted all sides large numbers of reserves to be called up on short notice. If downsizing was to take place, Bosniaks would only allow this in a manner that would permit fast remobilization and immediate territorial defense. Although Pardew reported

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<sup>44</sup> Amb. Jim Pardew, June 14, 2016, Interview #5

<sup>45</sup> Rohan Maxwell and John Andreas Olsen, *Destination NATO: Defence Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2003–13*, RUSI Whitehall Paper 80 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge Journals, 2013): 23; See also Heinz Vetschera and Matthieu Damian, “Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The role of the international community,” *International Peacekeeping* 13:1 (2006): 29–30.

<sup>46</sup> Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 105–106.

Bosnian politicians like Izetbegovic preferred a smaller, better trained force, they felt constrained by popular demand to maintain a larger, war-ready force even in peacetime.<sup>47</sup>

Even while the armies were demobilizing and the balance of power was shifting, wartime threat perceptions persisted.<sup>48</sup> Responses during my interviews support Maxwell and Olsen's view that local policymakers built the military with fears of renewed conflict in mind. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized the high level of tensions and mistrust immediately after the Dayton Agreement. They made statements like "The sides weren't about to disarm," and "they wanted to mobilize, not demobilize!" to explain why the Entities did not engage in more aggressive military reform in the mid-to-late 1990s.<sup>49</sup> One respondent who worked closely with entity army commanders for SFOR in the late 1990s as the Chief Inspector General for the entity armed forces said that Bosniaks resisted reform "because they always thought in the back of their mind that they would have to go back to war, so they wanted to sustain numerical and weapons and equipment superiority."<sup>50</sup> The first BiH Defense Minister, Nikola Radovanovic, also argued that the precarious situation between the neighbors continued to dominate how the entities thought about the defense through the early 2000s, during the first Defense Reform Commission: "the argument was that following the experience in the '90s it was important to be able to defend."<sup>51</sup> This same official suggested that major reforms that

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<sup>47</sup> Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 38, 106, fn 659.

<sup>48</sup> Pietz, "Overcoming the failings of Dayton, 155.

<sup>49</sup> Amb. Clifford Bond, May 9, 2016, Interview #1; Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton, May 17, 2016, Interview #3.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Tomasovic, May 13, 2016. Interview #2.

<sup>51</sup> Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17.

would reduce readiness were unlikely in this environment: “In 1995 there was civil war. Ten years after that we were talking about a single military. It was a surprise.”<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.6. The Transition to an All-Volunteer Force**

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the threat of invasion continued to loom, causing Bosnian politicians to want to maintain an army that had the capability to mobilize quickly. However, there was almost no overt discussion among policymakers about the use of conscription in these early years after independence. I argue that this is consistent with the advantages of maintaining conscription in such highly charged and uncertain security environments. If policymakers were preoccupied with security, one reason for an absence of debates about recruitment policies is that there was nearly universal agreement that it would be necessary for preparing an adequate defense against renewed Serbian aggression.

It is particularly clear that this was the case once the international community began to urge greater defense reform. The process leading to Bosnia’s abolition of conscription on January 1, 2006 offers a useful point of comparison for evaluating my arguments. The same variables—international intervention and threat perception—can explain this change in recruitment practices. But, precisely because international actors began to explicitly pressure for the reduction and elimination of conscription, recruitment practices featured more prominently in debates among Bosnian policymakers. The explicit role of conscription during the process of defense reform that began in 2003 also demonstrates weaknesses in alternative explanations of conscription based on culture.

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<sup>52</sup> Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17.

Between the Dayton Agreement in 1995 and the first Defense Reform Commission in 2003, the international community ramped up not only its interest in affecting military practices in Bosnia, but also its institutional ability to enforce military reform. At a December 1997 meeting in Bonn, the Peace Implementation Council (PIC)—the group of fifty-five countries and agencies that underwrite the peace process in Bosnia—enhanced the powers of the High Representative in BiH, the office established by the Dayton Agreement and appointed by the PIC to oversee civilian implementation of the peace treaty.<sup>53</sup> These new “Bonn Powers,” as they became known, gave the High Representative broad powers to enact binding decisions in BiH and to remove public officials who violated the Dayton Agreement.

As other scholars have noted, international influence was responsible for nearly all the outcomes of the defense reform process.<sup>54</sup> This was also the case for the abolition of conscription. A public scandal in which it was discovered that an RS-owned firm had been selling weapons to Iraq—known as the Orao Affair—coupled with the investiture in 2002 of a new and activist High Representative—Lord Paddy Ashdown—led to renewed interest from the international community in using its influence to enact change in BiH military structures. This shifted control over BiH military structure back to the foreign powers, and in particular, to the United States. Europeans staffed many of the bodies that were influential in defense reform, including the Office of the High Representative, from which the impetus for reform initiated, and the OSCE, which had chief responsibility for

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<sup>53</sup> Maxwell and Olsen, *Destination NATO*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, “Power-sharing or Partition? History’s lessons for keeping the peace in Bosnia,” in *Bosnian Security after Dayton: New Perspectives*, edited by Michael A. Innes, 23–50 (New York: Routledge, 2006): 41; Slobodan Perdan, “Bosnia: SSR under International Tutelage,” in *Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform*, edited by Timothy Donais, 253–272 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008): 253.

assisting with military downsizing and parliamentary oversight.<sup>55</sup> However, American influence in NATO, control of SFOR, and institutionalized responsibility for military aspects of the Dayton Agreements again gave the United States an outsized role. The OSCE representative at the first Defense Reform Commission was an American, Ambassador Richard Beecroft. Similarly, the United States insisted that an American lead the first Defense Reform Commission.<sup>56</sup> As a result, while the broad goals of defense reform were set by Ashdown, many of the specific policy changes implemented by the commissions reflected American strategic thinking.

Defense reform occurred in two main phases, arising out of two internationally-initiated and -led Defense Reform Commissions that issued their reports in 2003 and 2005.<sup>57</sup> While these commissions ostensibly only made recommendations that then had to be enacted by the BiH Parliament, they were *de facto* binding. The American chairmen of each commission were careful to craft recommendations and agreements that they knew would make it through Parliament. One said, “I made sure that members of the commission had political authority to make commitments on behalf of their parties or governments, so it was *politically* binding.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, international actors were

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<sup>55</sup> Christian Haupt and Jeff Fitzgerald, “Negotiations on Defence Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in Predrag Jurekovic and Frederic Labarra, *From Peace Making to Self Sustaining Peace: International Presence in South East Europe at a Crossroads?* Report of the 8<sup>th</sup> Workshop Study Group, “Regional Stability in South East Europe” (Vienna: National Defence Academy, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15

<sup>57</sup> Though technically there was a third, intermediate mandate for defense reform in 2004. Rohan Maxwell, personal communication on July 27, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6. However, this does not mean gaining approval was always easy. Jim Locher noted that the first Defense Reform Commission’s recommendations had to be approved by the BiH, Federation, and RS governments, as well as by each parliament: “These were not easy tasks. Defence Reform was a highly emotional and controversial topic.” It is consistent with my argument that the transition to conscription required

unified in their insistence on reform, and although Ashdown had publicly declared he would not use his Bonn powers, it was widely recognized that he was prepared to impose change if it was not forthcoming.<sup>59</sup>

The international community was active at all levels of the Defense Reform Commissions. General policy level discussions and formal decisions were made by the full membership body, which included high-ranking representatives from the United States, each of the Entities, the SCMM, the OSCE, SFOR, and the EU, or else in informal meetings outside the commission. Much of the work to generate specific policy prescriptions and technical language was done by the Secretariat and various working groups, which were similarly made up of national representatives and technical advisors. The core team of the Defense Reform Secretariat was primarily made up of international actors.

Working groups included representatives from each entity, as well as the Ministry of Defense once it was established, their lawyers and legal advisors, interpreters, and technical or military experts, often from the OSCE, depending on the group or issue being discussed. They met off-site every few weeks. Politically difficult issues tended to be hashed out in a top-down fashion before the working groups presented possible models to the commission. Members of each working group were present at all commission meetings, and some members of the working groups participated in both

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high levels of international influence that Locher seems to have found the process more contentious — see below.

<sup>59</sup> Haupt and Fitzgerald, “Negotiations on Defence Reform,” 167.

commissions. Details of legislation were often decided in working groups that adopted a technical and non-partisan approach to the issue.<sup>60</sup>

The first Defense Reform Commission left conscription in place, though it cut the number of conscripts in half and reduced the service term for conscripts from six to four months.<sup>61</sup> The second Defense Reform Commission, whose recommendations were issued only two years later, eliminated conscription altogether. At each commission, military recruitment was a contentious issue for representatives of the Federation and RS. Federation representatives continued to prefer conscription, which they viewed as vital to their security. The RS, meanwhile, was less *prima facie* opposed to a volunteer force, but was nonetheless wary of any measures that would further decrease its power and autonomy relative to the Federation.<sup>62</sup> However, for the members of the international community who guided the defense reform process, it was only one among many aspects of the defense infrastructure that needed to be reformed. Only once the first Defense Reform Commission made headway into unifying the Entity armies and reducing tensions between them did international actors demand a complete end to conscription.

#### 4.6.1. Foreign Actors' Goals for Defense Reform.

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<sup>60</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6; Lena Andersson, July 4, 2016, Interview #9; Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

<sup>61</sup> At the time of the first Defense Reform Commission, the Federation army included 13,200 professional soldiers and 8,400 conscripts. Defence Reform Commission, *The Path to Partnership for Peace*, Defense Reform Commission 2003 Report (Sarajevo: September 2003): 87.

<sup>62</sup> Legal Advisor at Second Defense Reform Commission, June 21, 2016, Interview #8; Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11; Selmo Cikotic, July 27, 2016, Interview #13; Defense Reform Commission Secretariat staff member, July 26, 2016, Interview #14. One interviewee described the Serbs as the most attached to conscription of all parties at the first Defense Reform Commission. However, this could have been strategic opposition: my discussions with other interviewees suggests that the RS's stated opposition to abolishing conscription at this time may have been contingent on the fact that the Federation clearly had no intention of ending conscription at that time. Lena Andersson, July 4, 2016, Interview #9.

With foreign powers now choosing to intervene in Bosnian military design, it was their threat perceptions that would shape military recruitment practices. While members of the PIC did not necessarily concern themselves with whether BiH would use conscription, this did become an important issue for the bureaucrats and diplomats who implemented defense reform. These foreign actors were tasked with creating a unified and affordable *peacetime* BiH army that could participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. They knew that PfP was a particularly attractive goal for the Bosniaks, as full NATO membership would provide a firm security guarantee. Consequently, the international community focused heavily on this goal.<sup>63</sup> The international actors designed the BiH defense reforms based on their own understandings of what an army with these goals should look like.

Defense reform efforts began in late 2002, when then High Representative Paddy Ashdown seized upon the Orao scandal in RS to demand greater strides towards military professionalization and the strengthening of the civilian chain of command. The possibility of NATO membership was the principal carrot offered by the international community that motivated the reform process. During the 2003 Defence Reform Commission, the international committee focused on enhancing state-level controls and the affordability of the BiH armed forces as the main requirements for PfP membership. While the international actors driving defense reform believed conscription was inefficient, they adopted a similar attitude as during and immediately after the Dayton Agreement: conscription took a back seat to operational reforms that were viewed as

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<sup>63</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11; James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15; John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16

higher priority.<sup>64</sup> According to Jim Locher, the Chairman of the first Defence Reform Commission,

We thought that eliminating might be an outcome but we were pleased to secure a 50 percent reduction. There was only so much you could do in the first commission. Again, when the first Defence Reform Commission started, no one thought there was any possibility of defense reform. I remember a meeting with all of the ambassadors from European Union countries on my second day in Sarajevo, and each one of them told me defense reform would not happen.<sup>65</sup>

Another interviewee intimately familiar with Bosnian defense reform during the entire period under examination expressed similar sentiments, noting that administrative unification was not achievable in 2003 and it was not clear whether this would change in the future.<sup>66</sup> The reductions in conscription at the first Defence Reform Commission were not necessarily viewed as an intermediate step on the way to all-volunteer force. NATO would not concern itself with the state's domestic recruitment policies as long as there was force reduction.<sup>67</sup>

This suggests that in 2003 the international community appears not to have been fully prepared to impose change for which Bosnians were not yet ready. While PfP membership was an established goal, the attitude to change remained cautious. These

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<sup>64</sup> Haupt and Fitzgerald, "Negotiations on Defence Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina"; DRC 2003; on Dayton: General William Crouch, June 22, 2016, Interview #7; Defense Reform Commission Secretariat staff member, July 26, 2016, Interview #14; John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

<sup>65</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15.

<sup>66</sup> John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

<sup>67</sup> Ric Bainter, July 26, 2016, Interview #14; John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

external reformers agreed conscription was bad for Bosnia, but still allowed local preferences to dominate military design. James Locher described conscription as “just not that important to me at the time.”<sup>68</sup> The Bosniak fear of Serbian aggression remained high; this deterred members of the Defence Reform Commission from insisting on the elimination of conscription.<sup>69</sup> Locher said that this was “not a case of the international community forcing its vision on everyone. For defence reform to be effectively implemented, the ideas needed to be owned and advanced by the Bosnians. This was their commission, and it had to be and be seen as their commission.”<sup>70</sup> Rohan Maxwell similarly described the 2003 Defence Reform Commission as the best outcome achievable given Bosnian political opposition at the time: it was “a lowest common denominator thing” and “there was no appetite” for eliminating conscription.<sup>71</sup> Another interviewee argued that conscription was left in place because “we wanted them to make their own decision based on financial logic.”<sup>72</sup> While one interviewee who worked on both Defence Reform Commissions characterized the changes to BiH military design as subject to enormous external pressure—to the extent that the parties “felt they had to come to those compromises,”—he concurred with others’ conclusions that agreements

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<sup>68</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15. Locher added, “There were much higher priorities, such as placing all military forces under national control, creating a national Ministry of Defense, Joint Staff, and Joint Command, and reducing the size of active and reserve forces.” This is consistent with the priorities described by other interviewees and in existing literature on Bosnian defense reform.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Radin, “The Limits of State Building: The Politics of War and the Ideology of Peace” (PhD diss. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012): 110–111; Ric Bainter, “The Elephant in the Room: Defense Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Deconstructing the Reconstruction: Human Rights and Rule of Law in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina*, edited by Dina Francesca Haynes, 235–256 (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15.

<sup>71</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

<sup>72</sup> John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

about conscription were limited by locals' threat perceptions in 2003.<sup>73</sup> This sufficiently raised the cost of enforcing a volunteer army on the unwilling Bosnians to lead an already skeptical international community to temper its goals.

#### 4.6.2. The Tipping Point

This international attitude changed at the beginning of the 2005 Defence Reform Commission. The initial mandate of this second commission was to enforce the decisions made in 2003. It was not a given, after that commission, that a second round of reforms would be necessary. Rather, Ashdown called for a new Defence Reform Commission after another scandal highlighted the shortcomings of existing implementation efforts: evidence emerged that Bosnian Serb forces had been assisting in the protection of war criminal Ratko Mladic.<sup>74</sup> As a result, there was no initial focus on transitioning to an all-volunteer force.<sup>75</sup> However, the international community was even more determined to enforce its desired reforms at this point in time: "The entire frame of reference had shifted...It was no longer a question of whether the state could assume complete control of all armed forces, but rather a question of how and when it would happen."<sup>76</sup>

Raffi Gregorian, the American choice to co-chair the second Defense Reform Commission, was a particularly powerful force behind the change in the international community's attitude toward conscription.<sup>77</sup> While the international community's perception by the First Defense Reform Commission was that conscription provided no benefit to BiH, its members were not prepared to eliminate it. According to Rohan

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<sup>73</sup> Ric Bainter, July 26, 2016, Interview #14.

<sup>74</sup> Bainter, "The Elephant in the Room," 252.

<sup>75</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11; Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17.

<sup>76</sup> Bainter, "The Elephant in the Room," 252.

<sup>77</sup> Amb. Clifford Bond, May 9, 2016, Interview #1.

Maxwell, “2005 was the year we started thinking about it [conscription],” though there was “no mandate to do anything.”<sup>78</sup> He added that one of the first things Gregorian did, before the commission even started its work, was to present a document to him that included ending conscription as a big picture goal.<sup>79</sup> Gregorian himself acknowledged that ending conscription and reinforcing the professionalization of the armed forces was “not a requirement but we [members of the reform commission and Bosnian political leaders who signed it] went above and beyond,” to make the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina more efficient.<sup>80</sup> The motivation was designing a military that was cost efficient and effective at its likely missions with NATO. Gregorian said the international community “did not see a continuing need for conscription because it doesn’t actually help [Bosnia]. You’re not actually facing invasion.”<sup>81</sup> It was the greater power of the international community in 2005, and particularly how those goals were implemented by American policymakers, that allowed for the transition to an all-volunteer force at that time.

Therefore the reforms of the second Defence Reform Commission reflected the international community’s—especially the United States’s—perceptions of how the BiH armed forces should address the country’s most pressing threats. The international architects of the new and unified Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) did not perceive renewed ethnic conflict to be particularly likely, and saw BiH as facing a low threat of major land conflict. In sum, “The AFBiH [was] not designed to provide

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<sup>78</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

<sup>79</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

<sup>80</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6.

<sup>81</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6.

stand-alone territorial defense against regional neighbors.”<sup>82</sup> As early as the 2003 Defence Reform Commission, international actors had recognized that the Bosnian military’s force size and structure was inappropriate to the types of missions it would likely have to participate in: peacekeeping and support operations, not major land warfare.<sup>83</sup> Even in the 1990s, according to the international community, “there was not a lot of military purpose” for the entity armies.<sup>84</sup> SFOR was meeting all the country’s security requirements. Bosnian policymakers had little ability to withstand the redoubled efforts of the international community, which was now committed to military reform.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there was substantial opposition within Bosnia, especially among Federation officials, to ending conscription. Gregorian argued that “the issue of conscription was a big deal. Right up to the last minute there were retired generals who were trying to push civil defense training in high schools, et cetera...”<sup>85</sup> Gregorian also cited the importance of providing for a reserve force of exactly half the strength of the active forces as part of the final deal that ended conscription, as this may have at least symbolically compensated for the loss of compulsory military training. Maxwell’s perception was that there were fewer obstacles to this reform. However, his account of events also emphasized the importance of first convincing Bosniaks that they were not getting tangible benefits from conscription and that it was unaffordable in the long run.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, some of the actors who were opposed by the time the commission

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<sup>82</sup> Rohan Maxwell, “Bosnia-Herzegovina: From Three Armies to One,” in *New Armies from Old: Merging Competing Military Forces After Civil Wars*, edited by Roy Licklider, 179–194 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014): 189.

<sup>83</sup> Maxwell and Olsen, *Destination NATO*, 35–6, Vetschera and Damian, “Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina”; Lord Ashdown, October 6, 2016, Interview #18.

<sup>84</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15.

<sup>85</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6

<sup>86</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11

issued its recommendation may have had less influence on policy outcomes by this time. The BiH Presidency—under possible international pressure—“had decided that all general officers would be retired” before the new commission.<sup>87</sup> This suggests that Bosnia would not have eliminated conscription if not for the work and preferences of the international community.

As a result, there was a permissive environment in which the policymakers at the second Defence Reform Commission could recommend, and in fact enforce, the abolition of conscription—once they had decided this was an important goal. With no security logic underpinning support for conscription to prepare for extended land warfare, the particular preferences of the international reformers determined BiH recruit practices after 2005. The international actors who dominated Bosnia’s defense reform process came from countries where conscription was seen as a policy only necessary for high threat environments. Their preference for volunteer forces in low threat environments is evident in the arguments they emphasized during the Defence Reform Commission negotiations. Volunteer recruitment was widely touted by the international community as more economically efficient and appropriate for other military missions. Defense reformers emphasized in their conversations with Bosnians that conscription was not giving them the security value that they thought it did.<sup>88</sup> They focused particularly on its high cost but low yield, especially given limited training requirements.<sup>89</sup> The high costs of conscription also failed to provide even basic amenities for recruits, who were often sent home on the weekend because the entity armies could not afford heating.

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<sup>87</sup> Maxwell and Olsen, *Destination NATO*; Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11

<sup>88</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6.

<sup>89</sup> Maxwell and Olsen, *Destination NATO*; James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15; Interview #6; Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17.

Additionally, a member of the conscription working group of the first Defense Reform Commission noted that the advisors limited their analysis of potential recruitment policies to their implications for defense; they did not consider whether conscription would affect opportunities for nation-building or other consequences for society.<sup>90</sup>

These arguments are consistent with a process of military design that is heavily reliant on the professional experience and prior beliefs of those leading the reforms, who were from countries that favored volunteer systems and did not view military recruitment as a tool for reshaping society. Maxwell argued that the multilateral nature of the Defence Reform Commissions limited the “tendency on the part of some international actors to offer solutions that replicate those of their home countries.”<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the beliefs of the reformers about the proper uses of conscription seem to have had an important effect on how they molded the Bosnian military. This is evident in the Conscription and Reserves Information Paper that prefaced the 2005 Defence Reform Commission’s report. It concluded, “Forces based on compulsory military service are mainly suited for territorial defence purposes, as a generally acknowledged internationally principle. No NATO country deploys conscripts abroad unless they have specifically volunteered for such service. Conscript forces would be almost useless for the most likely future missions of the AFBiH...”<sup>92</sup> This document reflected the beliefs of the American co-chairman of the second Defence Reform Commission, Raffi Gregorian, and guided his efforts when it began.<sup>93</sup> Rather than a large, readily expandable military, Bosnian forces would need to

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<sup>90</sup> Lena Andersson, July 4, 2016, Interview #9.

<sup>91</sup> Maxwell, “Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 185.

<sup>92</sup> Defence Reform Commission, *AFBiH: A Single Military Force for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Defense Reform Commission 2005 Report (Sarajevo: September 2005): 35.

<sup>93</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

be highly professional to prepare for peacekeeping missions and interoperability with NATO. This was the point of helping Bosnia join PfP.

The international community clearly entered the second Defence Reform Commission with the perception that BiH would not need a military capable of meeting major land warfare and renewed ethnic conflict. However, there is reason to believe that had the threat environment been different, the international community would not have been as concerned with transitioning BiH to a volunteer force. Ashdown, the principal driver and final arbiter of Bosnia's defense reform, explicitly highlighted the pointlessness of conscription for BiH's anticipated peacekeeping missions, and countered, "If the state was threatened like any other state then it [conscription] would have been reasonable."<sup>94</sup> Another interviewee who was influential throughout the defense reform process raised the similar points, referencing in particular his experience advising defense reform in other countries that did face such threats and maintained conscription.<sup>95</sup> It was the international community's emphasis on force reduction and affordability in light of a low threat environment that led to Bosnia's transition to an all-volunteer force.

#### 4.6.3. Implications of Bosnian Resistance to Reform for Initial Recruitment Decisions

Importantly for the theory, these reforms were implemented despite continued Bosnian perception of high threats that they believed would necessitate conscription. Americans had to work hard to enforce their version of a peacetime army over Bosnians' "inherited wartime mentality."<sup>96</sup> The reasons interviewees gave for Bosnian resistance to

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<sup>94</sup> Lord Paddy Ashdown, October 6, 2016, Interview #18.

<sup>95</sup> John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16. Drewienkiewicz has also worked on defense reform in Armenia—"which maintains a very effective conscript system"—and South Sudan.

<sup>96</sup> Selmo Cikotic, July 27, 2016, Interview #13.

these efforts reinforces the argument that local preferences for conscription were for military and security, rather than cultural, purposes. In the words of one interviewee, “Bosniaks wanted a large force and large reserve force because that’s the only army they had to defend themselves. Getting [them] to agree to dramatic reductions in reserve or overall force or reduce conscription was a tough sell.”<sup>97</sup> As noted above, senior BiH official emphasized “the experience in the ‘90s” as placing a premium on the entities’ belief in defense, especially given the continued existence of war time units.<sup>98</sup> Bosniak officials adamantly sought assurances at the first Defence Reform Commission that they would not be required to give up conscription until there was state-level control over all armed forces—in other words, until there was no longer a separate RS army that could threaten them.<sup>99</sup>

Some people have argued that local elites recognized that the NATO presence eliminated threats to their security by the time defense reform began.<sup>100</sup> However, the reluctance of entity actors, especially Bosniaks, to end conscription before the state established a monopoly on force suggests that the local threat perceptions still saw war as likely. In addition, Bosniak acquiescence to ending conscription did not indicate a fundamental shift in their threat perceptions. As described above, “the enormous amount of external pressure” meant that “there’s no real buy-in from anyone.”<sup>101</sup> This risk of backsliding has led to efforts to limit the size of the army altogether, as the only option

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<sup>97</sup> Lejla Gelo, June 21, 2016, Interview #8; Similar sentiments by Ric Bainter, July 26, 2016, Interview #14; Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6.

<sup>98</sup> Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17.

<sup>99</sup> Bainter, “The Elephant in the Room,” 248

<sup>100</sup> Radin, “The Limits of Statebuilding,” 108; Vetschera and Damian, “Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 38.

<sup>101</sup> Ric Bainter, July 26, 2016, Interview #14.

for reducing the likelihood that the ethnic communities will once again view reignited conflict as a serious possibility. This offers further evidence that the international community's willingness to enforce its preference for a volunteer military fit for a low threat environment has played a major role in BiH military design.

#### **4.7. Alternative Hypotheses**

Bosnian policymakers' fear of renewed existential conflict is not the only factor that could have led them to adopt strong preferences for conscription after Dayton. There are two other ways they could have settled on a policy of conscription. First, pre-existing cultural norms or organizational practices could have led them to view conscription as the most effective military practice for establishing security given the severe threat environment. In other words, would other actors in the same position have also used conscription to defend against a potential Bosnian Serb threat, or might a volunteer force have served just as well? Such an explanation would stress the particular military heritage of policymakers within Bosnia. This account parallels the common argument that former British colonies use volunteers because of an internalized distaste for citizen armies or a respect for individual rights: did Bosnians prefer conscription not because it was the best solution to a highly threatening environment, but because of a Yugoslav culture that perceived conscription as appropriate or effective?

This counterfactual is impossible to test with certainty, but there are some indicators that Bosnians were constrained by the existing threat environment, not by historical experiences, when designing their army. On the one hand, many people have suggested that Bosnian defense planners were strongly influenced by their experience in the Yugoslav army, which in turn had adopted many Soviet-style traits. According to this

view, Bosnian policymakers may have just wanted to continue using the recruitment practices with which they were most familiar. Indeed, “it was clear that conscription was something they were accustomed to,” and financial constraints on the Bosnian army meant that there was “no plan for the future of the Federation after the war.”<sup>102</sup> Falling back on historical experience or perceived cultural tropes could be particularly tempting during periods of uncertainty and speedy potential mobilization, since adopting new recruitment practices would require many other changes to the way the military trains and functions.

The Bosnian experience with conscription ran deep. Both the Bosniak and Bosnian Serb armies were offshoots of the Yugoslav People’s Army, “which was deliberately used as an integrative tool,” reinforced by conscript service—outside the recruit’s home region—that ensured “most males experienced a common rite of passage.”<sup>103</sup> As one senior American participant in the second Defense Reform Commission said, “All of the Entity army people on both sides had ‘grown up’ in Yugoslavia, where you had a core army but the entire population was armed and trained and after your service you joined the reserves and had huge stockpiles in anticipation of partisan warfare and invasion. And that’s the framework in which they all thought about this stuff.”<sup>104</sup> A senior OSCE representative pointed to an even deeper historical basis for conscription: He recalled that the reason military recruitment policies weren’t addressed earlier was that “it was just assumed due to the cultural history of Yugoslavia, Austria-

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<sup>102</sup> First quote from Lejla Gelo at Second Defense Reform Commission, June 21, 2016, Interview #8; Second quote from Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 108.

<sup>103</sup> Maxwell in Licklider, “Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 183. See also Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, for the history of the Bosniak and Bosnian Serb armies.

<sup>104</sup> Raffi Gregorian, June 16, 2016, Interview #6.

Hungary, that we thought conscripts would have to be retained.”<sup>105</sup> Radovanovic supported this view, arguing that “what is mentioned quite often here is not necessarily about culture and socialization, but is more to prepare young boys and maturation.”<sup>106</sup>

However, Bosnians were also exposed to American military practices both during the war and after Dayton. Familiarity with certain military practices did not stop them from adopting reforms in other areas, or from wanting to adopt more NATO-esque policies. The Train and Equip program made particular strides toward changing Bosnian perceptions about what military practices to emulate. The program was administered primarily by the private military contractor MPRI, which was comprised of former U.S. military personnel and “took pride in the facilitating the execution of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>107</sup> The aim of this policy was “to build a NATO-type military,” and was a rare point on which Bosniaks, Croats, and Americans agreed.<sup>108</sup> Through the Train and Equip Program, according to Rohan Maxwell, the Federation “had largely bought into the notion that, ‘this is the US system, this is a better system.’”<sup>109</sup> According to Locher, Bosnians were eager to adopt new military practices and it came down to the OSCE to adjust their advice given Bosnian history to facilitate this process: “You can’t just take US or German practices and apply them. What would work in a Bosnian context? But they said they want to look like a NATO military, so ‘what do we need to do to move in that direction?’ But we needed to modify it.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, the post-Dayton period created an opportunity for Bosnia to deviate from historical military practices. Bosnian officials

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<sup>105</sup> Amb. Robert Beecroft, July 26, 2016, Interview #12.

<sup>106</sup> Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17

<sup>107</sup> Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 29.

<sup>108</sup> Lamb et al., *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 36, 107–109.

<sup>109</sup> Rohan Maxwell, July 21, 2016, Interview #11.

<sup>110</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15.

were clearly not constrained by or wedded to these past practices, and actively sought to emulate new models in many other, non-recruitment, areas. This is evident in their acceptance of the Train and Equip program, as well as in the fact that they wanted greater integration early in the reform process. As Clifford Bond said, “Bosniaks did not believe reforms went far enough....[Bosniaks] thought that ‘Everyone else is moving in the direction of Europe and do we want to be left out?’”<sup>111</sup>

The fact that Bosnians prioritized effective defensive capabilities and still sought to retain conscription, despite efforts to emulate the United States in other ways, suggests that military circumstances created incentives for conscription. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized the threat environment as the major determinant of Bosnian preferences. One Defense Reform Commission working group member said “Bosniaks believed that Croats and Serbs could rely on Croatia and Serbia for protection, while they did not have a protector. They felt that if they got rid of conscription they wouldn’t be able to defend themselves.”<sup>112</sup> Without these threat perceptions, there would have been less commitment to maintaining conscription.

Second, might conscription have served some purpose other than territorial defense that was more important to those responsible for Bosnia’s military design? If this was the case, the threat of renewed conflict merely may have been useful rhetoric designed to justify a potentially unpopular policy that would serve other interests of the political elite. This is a particularly important possibility to evaluate because NATO’s security guarantee could have reduced the need for the Entities to optimize their

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<sup>111</sup> Amb. Clifford Bond, May 9, 2016, Interview #1

<sup>112</sup> Lejla Gelo, June 21, 2016, Interview #8.

militaries for conflict. One recurring concern in security sector reform and disarmament programs is unemployment: if there are not enough economic opportunities in post-conflict situations, a surplus of ex-soldiers can be destabilizing.<sup>113</sup> Thus, it may be the case that states that are already in the process of demobilizing and weakening the military may nonetheless choose to conscript to reduce unemployment and maintain control of armed individuals. A participant at the Dayton Agreement negotiations said that participants wanted to make sure that enough former combatants had career paths into the army or police, while an observer at the first Defense Reform Commission noted that a fear of what newly unemployed soldiers would do in civilian society characterized many of the debates at that time.<sup>114</sup> However, these concerns ran up against the broader emphasis on demobilization and cost-saving.

The more common non-military argument in favor of conscription was that it had cultural value as a vehicle for socializing youth, especially young men. All entity actors viewed mandatory military service as an important mechanism, if not for active political indoctrination, at least for turning boys into men: “There was this perception in Bosnia that it was part of becoming a man.”<sup>115</sup> While this likely meant Bosnian politicians had an emotional or cultural attachment to conscription that made them more reluctant to abandon it, ultimately these arguments served a more fundamental military logic, and were not intended to support state-level integration. As one interviewee involved in

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<sup>113</sup> Pietz, “Overcoming the failings of Dayton,” 163.

<sup>114</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton, May 17, 2016, Interview #3; Amb. Clifford Bond, May 9, 2016, Interview #1. See also Lamb et al., who reference veteran opposition to demobilization programs due to “bleak” job prospects in the civilian economy. *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 106.

<sup>115</sup> James Locher III, July 30, 2016, Interview #15; John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16; Nikola Radovanovic, August 17, 2016, Interview #17; See also Maxwell and Olsen, *Destination NATO*, 24.

defense reform in Bosnia for more than a decade noted, “all the reasons for conscription were to keep the communities divided.”<sup>116</sup> This meant that conscription took on added significance for Bosniaks, who viewed conscription’s “stamp on young men” as providing additional cohesion and reserves that were necessary given the fact that they were the only ethnic community with “no big brother to come to their aid.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, conscript socialization focused on the ethnic communities, and no one ever suggested expanding this logic in service of integration or unification across the communities.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

Conventional wisdom would attribute the Bosnian preference for conscription to the institutional legacy of the country’s Yugoslav heritage or other aspects of its domestic culture. Such arguments, while consistent with some actors’ preferences, obscures the real preferences that motivated conscription, and the possibilities for broader reform, within Bosnia. Local security concerns and territorial defense, not domestic statebuilding, dominated debates over military design in the years following the Dayton Agreement. The threat of major, renewed land warfare was so high that the peace treaty’s international guarantors largely intentionally avoided the issue of military design, leaving multiple armed forces in place that continued to view each other as enemies. While the resolve and interest of the international community—in this case, essentially the High Representative and the United States—in creating a more effective and efficient BiH military increased with time, it was not until 2005 that it enforced its recruitment preferences. This was particularly challenging because Bosnian and American

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<sup>116</sup> John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

<sup>117</sup> John Drewienkiewicz, August 15, 2016, Interview #16.

perceptions of the threats facing BiH and the purpose its army should serve differed so dramatically. International policymakers did not see a need for a Bosnian military capable of fighting a major war, and worked hard to extract concessions that would support their preferred deference reform policies. Without this external pressure, which overcame the institutional inertia of entrenched defense attitudes within the country, there is no indication that Bosnia would have adopted an all-volunteer force.

## Appendix

On average, interviews lasted 30–40 minutes, with only one interview lasting less than 20 minutes. One interview was in-person and lasted several hours, while the rest were conducted either over the phone or via Skype. Interviews were semi-structured: I went into them with a list of questions to ask or topics to cover, but the tone was generally conversational and sought “to retain sufficient indeterminacy in the interview to allow for unanticipated insights.”<sup>118</sup> I began most interviews with an open-ended question asking the interviewee to tell me about his or her role in Bosnian defense reform, focusing on a specific episode or institution when applicable. Following Matthew Beckmann and Richard Hall’s advice about interviews with policy elites, I focused my efforts on “extract[ing] systematic information about [their] *actual behaviors on specific issues*....”<sup>119</sup> I asked them to recall their goals in initiating certain decisions, whether those goals changed, and about any obstacles to their implementation. Often, one of the most useful questions I asked was toward the end, when I would inquire about who else was involved in specific decisions or whom else I should talk to. This allowed me to identify the pivotal figures in recruitment decisions and to triangulate key information about the actions and attitudes of other important policymakers.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Martin, “Crafting Interviews,” 110.

<sup>119</sup> Matthew N. Beckmann and Richard L. Hall, “Elite Interviewing in Washington, DC,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 196–208 (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2013): 198, emphasis in original.

<sup>120</sup> Layna Mosley, “Introduction. ‘Just Talk to People’? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 1–28 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013): 6–7; Lynch, “Aligning Sampling Strategies,” 36.

			Military Reform Participation				
Inter- view #	Name	Level of Policy <sup>121</sup>	Dayton Agreement or Prior (1995)	Post- Conflict Stabilization (1996– 2001)	First Defense Reform Commissi on (May 2003	Second Defense Reform Commissi on (2004– 2005)	Ongoing Reform Efforts (2006– Present)
1	Clifford Bond	US Ambassador to Bosnia	No	No	Yes	No	No
2	Robert Tomasovic	Inspector General for Entity Armed Forces	No	Yes	No	No	No
3	Anonymous	Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton	Yes	No	No	No	No
4	Marshall Harris	President of Acquisition Support Institute	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
5	Jim Pardew	Negotiator at Dayton; Head of Train and Equip	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
6	Raffi Gregorian	Director of Bosnia Policy at U.S. State Dept; Co-chair of Second DRC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	William Crouch	Commanding General, SFOR	No	Yes	No	No	No
8	Lejla Gelo	Legal Advisor for DRC Secretariat	No	No	No	Yes	No
9	Lena Andersson	OSCE Advisor; DRC Working Group Member	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
10	Vanja Matic	OSCE Interpreter and DRC Working Group Member	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Rohan Maxwell	Senior Political-Military Advisor & Chief, Politico-	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>121</sup> Note that many interviewees were involved in policy at different levels at different times. The information here refers to their position during the most important period on which my interviews focused.

		Military Advisory Section, NATO HQ Sarajevo					
12	Robert Beecroft	Special Envoy for Federation, OSCE Representative	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
13	Selmo Cikotic	Negotiating Team for Bosniaks at Dayton, Defense Minister of BiH	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
14	Ric Bainter	Legal Advisor and Chief of Staff at DRC	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
15	James Locher III	Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, DRC Chairman	No	No	Yes	No	No
16	John Drewienkiewicz	Military Advisor to High Representative, 2005 DRC Vice-Chairman	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Nikola Radovanovic	Defense Minister of BiH	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
18	Lord Paddy Ashdown	High Representative, 2002–2006	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No