The end of 2020 for Bosnia and Herzegovina marked 25 years since the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, colloquially known as the Dayton Peace Agreement. For Bosnia and Herzegovina this marked the start of a contradictory peacebuilding process. These contradictions both maintain peace and keep the country in a perpetual state of conflict. 25+ years since the end of the war is an appropriate time to reflect, examine, and analyse the successes and failures of the peacebuilding process, framed by the solutions set out in the peace agreement.

Peace neither starts nor ends with the act of the signing of a peace agreement. Building peace should be an inclusive and reflective process grounded in the lived experiences of those affected. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the peace process has had none of this. Bosnians and Herzegovinians have been suffering the consequences of an imposed and flawed peace agreement for more than 25 years, burdening their political, economic, and social relations. Without a shift in narrative and approaches to peacebuilding, the war will continue to shape their lives for many more years to come.

We told this story of a country 25 years into its peacebuilding efforts that went beyond mainstream narratives and understanding of the peace agreement and its consequences.

The essays told by two local feminists analyse the impact the Dayton Peace Agreement has had on people’s lives, written from the perspective of those whose bodies have been exposed to its workings. While the Dayton Peace Agreement can be looked at from several different perspectives, this series of nine essays will highlight five themes and their gendered nature: historic and geopolitical context of the politics of peace negotiations and peacebuilding; (de)militarisation of war and peace; ethno-nationalism and division of the territory and power; international civilian administration and its neocolonial character; and neoliberal influence on peacebuilding and dealing with the past.

Through these themes, the authors reflect on how the war and the peace have been interpreted, applied, projected, and reproduced within the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society and how a process of peacebuilding, firmly grounded in neoliberal ideology, has generated results contrary to the very essence of peace. Bringing in a feminist counter-narrative to a neocolonial, patriarchal, and militant framework these essays offer a perspective on how to start repairing the social fabric torn apart by the war and its consequences.

Visit our dedicated page for Bosnia and Herzegovina