

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Faculty of Political Science

Belgrade, September 2024

At the meeting of the Department of International Studies, held on August 29, 2024, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Iva Milutinović was formed with the following members: assist. prof. dr Goran Tepšić, asisst. MA Tijana Rečević and prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović. The Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies has accepted the proposal made by the Department.

After reading the master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following report.

R E P O R T

The master thesis of Iva Milutinović entitled "The Role of Youth in the Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the Organization Youth Initiative for Human Rights and the Forgotten Children of War Association" is 62 pages long and comprised of five chapters, along with the Introduction, the Conclusion and accompanying list of references.

The introduction outlines the ongoing ethnic, social and political divisions in the Western Balkans following the Yugoslav conflicts. It highlights the challenges in transitioning to peace, such as addressing war crimes and societal rebuilding as well as persistent inter-ethnic tensions and local dissatisfaction. The candidate emphasizes the often neglected role of youth in the peacebuilding and sets the research objectives to analyze youth involvement through specific organizations and their impact on reconciliation.

In the first chapter, the candidate examines peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-conflict societies, focusing on the former Yugoslavia and the role of youth. The chapter details the severe impacts of the 1990s Yugoslav Wars, including human rights abuses, ethnic tensions, and territorial disputes. It reviews various transitional justice efforts and notes the lack of consensus on the violence's causes and solutions, with ethnic groups often seeing themselves as victims. The chapter underscores the importance of restorative justice, civil society's role, and the need for intergroup contact and cultural approaches to reconciliation. It addresses the complexity of competing narratives and suggests accommodating multiple truths to foster understanding. Additionally, it highlights the critical role of youth in

peacebuilding, emphasizing their potential to lead initiatives and drive innovative solutions through education and activism.

In the second chapter, the candidate explains how three theoretical frameworks are utilized to understand the role of youth in peacebuilding. John Paul Lederach's approach focuses on reconciliation through direct human engagement, truth-telling, mercy, justice, and building relationships to address and heal past grievances. Johan Galtung's TRANSCEND method is presented as a way to address conflicts through non-violent, creative solutions, emphasizing empathy, dialogue, and transformation. The chapter also incorporates the 4Rs Framework by Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, and Smith, which underscores the role of education and social development in achieving sustainable peace by addressing inequalities and fostering social justice. Through case studies, the chapter demonstrates how these frameworks provide a comprehensive perspective on youth-led peacebuilding initiatives in the Western Balkans.

In the third chapter, the candidate explains the methodology used to examine the role of youth in peacebuilding within the Balkans, which includes case studies of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) and the Forgotten Children of War Association (ZDR). It details the use of semi-structured interviews with key participants and secondary data from organizational sources. The study focuses on the period from early 2018 to late 2023 to capture recent developments and trends within these organizations.

Chapter four examines two case studies to analyze youth-led peacebuilding efforts in the Western Balkans. The first case study focuses on the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), a regional network founded in Serbia in 2003. YIHR works to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and peace through education, youth summits, and various initiatives. The case study highlights YIHR's role in confronting past injustices, fostering democratic development, and supporting regional cooperation. The second case study explores the Forgotten Children of War Association, established in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This organization addresses the needs of children born from wartime sexual violence, advocating for legal and social recognition and supporting victims through education, art, and advocacy. The study emphasizes the unique challenges faced by these children and the Association's efforts to improve their visibility and rights. Both case studies utilize qualitative data from interviews and organizational reports to assess the impact of these youth-led initiatives on reconciliation and peacebuilding in the region.

In the fifth chapter, the candidate explores the promising role of youth in reconciliation within the Western Balkans. This chapter highlights how young people address

historical grievances and promote a shared vision of peace. It integrates theoretical frameworks from Lederach, Galtung, and Novelli et al. Lederach's emphasis on networking and relationship-building aligns with youth involvement, while Galtung's TRANSCEND method reflects the innovative, empathetic approaches of youth organizations. Novelli et al.'s 4Rs framework, which focuses on addressing conflict root causes through education, aligns with the efforts of organizations like YIHR and ZDR. The chapter also addresses the role of art and informal education in peacebuilding, concluding that these frameworks collectively provide a thorough understanding of how youth initiatives support reconciliation in the region.

The conclusion summarizes the thesis, stressing youth's critical role in reconciliation and peacebuilding in the Western Balkans. It highlights contributions through education, art, and cultural exchange, while noting the impact of nationalist rhetoric and institutional support on reconciliation and calls for further research on youth's role in global peacebuilding.

Based on this report, the Commission concludes that the master thesis "The Role of Youth in the Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the Organization Youth Initiative for Human Rights and the Forgotten Children of War Association" by Iva Milutinović fulfils all the formal criteria for the public defence.

The Commission:

assist. prof dr Goran Tepšić

assist. MA tijana Rečević

prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović

