

doi:10.5559/di.23.4.08

**Valentina Gentile
FROM IDENTITY-
-CONFLICTS TO CIVIL
SOCIETY: RESTORING
HUMAN DIGNITY AND
PLURALISM IN DEEPLY
DIVIDED SOCIETY**

LUISS University Press 2013, 168 pp.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the relationship between ethno-religious conflicts and civil society in the post conflict countries. One such manuscript, "From Identity-Conflicts to Civil Society: Restoring Human Dignity and Pluralism in Deeply Divided Society" authored by Dr. Valentina Gentile, addresses several interesting theoretical perspectives on the complex dynamics of civil society development in a democratic transition, particularly referencing it to the divided societies. Her conceptualization is grounded on two main assumptions: the idea of multiple identities and the idea of a society where individuals are linked to each other by virtue of their plural affiliations.

Gentile's analysis of culturalist and rational choice perspectives, with regard to the concepts of identity and conflict, is an important added value to this topic. The manuscript encompasses the understanding of civil society as a complex equilibrium among cultural, political and economic domains, from a historical perspective, incorporating many different accounts. The emphasis is placed on a deeper con-

sideration of the idea of the individual's identity, actions and motivations in the context of the interrelations between civil society, conflicts and post-conflict democratic transition.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter offers a general introduction to the concepts of identity-conflicts, democratic values such as human dignity and pluralism, and civil society. The second chapter analyzes the notion of contemporary ethno-religious conflicts, in the light of the so-called de-essentialized concept of identity applied to conflicts. The third chapter gives a detailed account of the concept of civil society and the idea of 'civility', while the final chapter is devoted to testing the theoretical approaches on an actual case of post-conflict transition, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Civil society, as described by Gentile, is a liberal reading of Hegelian conceptualization – an intermediate dimension between family and state, a bearer of specific cultural and historical developments, and of rights and values. Her analysis emphasizes political, economic and cultural features of Hegel's bourgeois society linked to the idea of multiple identities (p. 84). In this sense, civil society is defined as neither an autonomous public, nor a private sphere.

Gentile follows Amartya Sen's conception of identity, and she identifies with the concept. It is referred to as the sum of plural affiliations, interacting with economic and political features in the context of internal conflicts. When considering the link between identity and violence (p. 45), Gentile suggests the presence of individualist and culturalist reductionism. Upon tackling culturalist and rational choice approaches, stemming from a primordialist understanding of identity (p. 30) and rationally constructed actions and ideas, she accepts an individualist-rooted understanding of violence, which does not underrate the role played by identity-based claims.

From the philosophical point of view, two parts of the book deserve par-

ticular attention. The first is Gentile's theoretical analysis of a deeper conception of the culture of civility, as a specific kind of culture which serves as a foundation for building an autonomous democratic development of a society. She defines it as a non-institutional consensus on a specific tradition of civility, based on the shared values and traditions, which enables individuals to become part of a community of citizens and to accept the reciprocation, to reciprocate on the basis of values, such as condemnation of undemocratic regimes or respect of human dignity, coming from their shared culture of civility. Such conceptualization of the culture of civility adequately addresses the notion of justice within the process of transition of divided societies (p. 29). Gentile argues that the recent episodes of humanitarian interventions in situations of ethno-religious conflicts have shown that a deeper awareness about the meaning and impact of such theoretical issues is crucial, especially in addressing several aspects of 'civility' (such as non-violence, and protection of human dignity), which are already present in the Bosnian society.

Another interesting thing about the book is the conceptualization of agents of war, within the newly created communities of fear, private individuals or associations, known as 'cultural-war-entrepreneurs' (p. 52 and p. 60). Their main task is to intervene in the public arena and articulate their own mythology of the conflict, by using the concepts of religion, ethnicity or nation that are differentiated from one another. Gentile observes that these new agents create new local powers, based on race/ethno- or religious supremacy and Foucault's concept of 'bio-power', and are

able to extend the condition of war in situations of presumed peace (p. 32). These populist tools, used by the cultural-war-entrepreneurs, depend both on their narrow interests and purposes to manipulate the conflict and on the weak sense of individuality among the members of manipulated communities. In Gentile's view, the role and impact of actions these agents initiate within a conflict can be explained as an odd combination of two distinct ideas of conflict and war: a Hobbesian perspective of private war — *homo homini lupus est* — and a Rousseauian conception of the public interest.

This book is a significant development in the debate on civil society and post-conflict divided societies. It aims to be both a philosophical exposition of the observed concepts and research-based argumentation of the complex system of cultural, political and economic domains. While one could share Gentile's views with regard to the problem of leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to stress that the issues of conflict and violence, the essence of the agents' identity and their subsequent impact on the complex dynamics of civil society development in a post-conflict democratic transition period, can be understood in a different sense.

It can be argued that the identity relations between the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was used as a key case study of this book, were marked by the abrupt shift from peaceful into violent, within a deeper context of historical relations of the three ethnic groups involved in the conflict. The political or economic motivations of the elites were shaped by developments of the wider unconsolidated struggles for the maintenance of power and influence of power on the displaced and ambivalent identities. Bringing those identities into the framework of multiple interactions of powers, and within the particular context (for instance ancient inter-ethnic hatreds, modern-day hatreds, manipulation of past and history etc.) emerges as an odd permutation of net-

work, societal, political and territorial identity formation. The conflict space, which has been created as a result of these configurations, is a strong struggle for the power of different identity attributes shaped by a multiplicity of contextual settings.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that conflicting developments between peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina could also be explained by analyzing the social and identity policy inherited in the previous system, intertwined with the long-standing ex-Yugoslav ethnic and territorial-administrative politics and unresolved relations between the center and periphery, religion and ethnicity, power sharing and dominance of certain ethnic and religious groups.

Jasmin Hasić

doi:10.5559/di.23.4.09

KAFANOLOGIJA

Priredio Dragoljub B. Đorđević

Službeni glasnik, Beograd 2012., 648 str.

Kafana je doista fenomen u najizvornijem smislu riječi, "ono što se pojavljuje na samome sebi" i što za svoje pojavljivanje ne treba ništa drugo. Ona nije proizvod dane zbiljnosti, nego je – obratno – upravo ono što svojom samoutemeljenošću upravo poput crne rupe u sebe usisava cjelokupnu tu zbiljnost, neutralizira je, a onda joj daje novi oblik i smisao, takav da ona više ne može prepoznati samu sebe. *Kafana* ima svoj vlastiti "kôd", svoje vlastite "jezične igre" u Wittgensteinovu smislu – i onaj tko

ih ne poznaje lako će biti izvrgnut poruzi, manipulaciji i podsmijehu. Sjetimo se samo Andrićeva Alije Đerzeleza, koji – ne shvaćajući taj *kafanski* kôd – biva izvrgnut najvećem podsmijehu od onih koji vrlo vješto manipuliraju tim kôdom. Taj kôd razumiju svi prisutni, osim Đerzeleza, i odatle je tragikomedija još veća.

Kafana je navlastito balkanski proizvod: dok Englezi imaju pubove, Francuzi bistroe, Balkan ima *kafane*. One su nastajale s rastom građanskoga društva negdje na pola puta između sela i grada, nastajale su upravo u palankama i na razini one palanačke svijesti koju je tako zorno i kritički opisao Radomir Konstantinović u svojoj *Filosofiji palanke*. Dvije najvažnije institucije toga doba bile su crkva i *kafana*: poslije mise išlo se obvezno u *kafanu* na drugo "posvećenje". No razlika je između crkve i *kafane* golema u hijerarhijskom smislu: dok je u crkvi svećenik "primus inter pares", *kafandžija* je "prvi nejednaki među jednakima" zato što je gost uvijek u pravu i zato što mora ugađati svim njegovim željama, poput slugu. *Kafana* je, ako izuzmemo spomenutoga *kafandžiju*, čisto besklasno društvo: u nju navraćaju ljudi svih slojeva i zanimanja, od probisvijeta do pjesnika i znanstvenika, od popova do prostitutki. Ondje se sklapaju svi poslovi, padaju glave, rješavaju se sudbine, ali i pišu najljepše pjesme, posebice u boemsko doba Balkana.

Na razini povijesti pojma, *kafana* kao turcizam dolazi od starijega oblika "kahva". To je mjesto gdje se piju *kafa*, čaj i možda bôza. To ne razumiju ni Srbi ni Hrvati jer su se u *kafani* vazda opijali do iznemoglosti. Kada je u doba ramazana jedan kršćanin iznervirao već spomenutoga Aliju Đerzeleza, koji se u to doba odrekao i alkohola i cigara, pa je ovaj zapalio, što bi rekao Andrić – *belaj viđen i gotov*.

To je zapravo – korelaciju između naših *kafana* i naših duša – pokušao problematizirati u svom Zborniku *Kafanologija* Dragoljub B. Đorđević, čovjek koji se dugo bavi sociologijom kulture i morala u njezinim – samo prividno – marginalnim