Faith Communities as Potential Agents for Peace Building in the Balkans

An analysis of faith-based interventions towards conflict transformation and lasting reconciliation in post-conflict countries of former Yugoslavia

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Executive Summary

This report provides a detailed exploration of the practice of faith-based peace building in the post-conflict successor states of former Yugoslavia. It arose from NCA's requirement for practical data and analysis which could be used to develop a coherent strategy to facilitate reconciliation processes in the Balkans in cooperation with its local partners. The study offers an overview of the region's religious communities and then proceeds to identify the prinicipal faith-based peace builders, both individuals and organisations, and analyses the approaches they apply in advancing inter-faith dialogue and diapraxis, as well as faith-based advocacy and education. By way of conclusion, the report outlines principles of good practice emerging from the study which may be built upon in any future peace building interventions in the region.

Primary souces of information for the study were field interviews with religious leaders and local clerics, members of faith-based NGOs and peace activists, conducted over two ten-day trips to the region. These were supplemented by a thorough review of contextual documentation that included a range of historical and develoment literature, religious publications, relevant journalism and unpublished NGO programme documents.

Background to the study

Much progress has been made towards achieving peace and stability in the territory of former Yugoslavia as the various wars and conflicts that have afflicted the region over the past sixteen years have abated. However, deep-seated divisions, mutual mistrust and even fear remain in the minds of the region's populations, based upon perceptions of ethnic, cultural and religious difference, and the sense of injustice and wrongs suffered during the past conflicts. Continuing antagonisms between ethnic and national communities are exacerbated by various forms of institutional segregation, territorial isolation and nationalistic political prejudice.

Religious communities and the significance of religion

For all the main ethno-national populations of former Yugoslavia religion is a constitutive element of national identity. Consequently religion has been essential to the growth of nationalism and concomitant antagonisms between neighbouring national groups. In the Balkans, religious affiliation and religions as institutions are as much political subjects as they are matters of faith. With the possible exception of the Kosovan Albanians, for whom religion is not a defining factor in national identity, religion has played an important role in the populist nationalist-oriented state-building projects arising from the break-up of former Yugoslavia.

In keeping with their nationalistic orientation, the mainstream religious communities address first and foremost the collective, sectarian dimension of the particular faith constituency. In neglecting the spiritual and values-based aspects of individual faith, the focus has been largely liturgical and antiquated.

Priests and imams at the grassroots rarely possess much authority among their congregations, owing to low levels of education and religious literacy, and limited capacity for leadership in either the moral or political sense. As institutions, however, the main faiths command considerable respect among their constituencies, enabling their leaders to play prominent and sometimes influential roles in politics. This invasion of public space, particularly apparent in the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia, endangers the capacity of the region's young democracies to maintain a healthy separation of the Church and State and flies in the face of their constitutions.

The role of religion during the Balkan conflicts

It is generally agreed that the Balkan conflicts were not religious in nature; religious differences were not the cause of conflict and religious leaders played no part in the conduct of the wars.

However, owing to the identification of religion with national identity and the hatred stirred up by the ethno-religious rhetoric of nationalist leaders, religion proved to be 'a rationale for ongoing violence and the complete breakdown of inter-ethnic rapport'. Religious leaders themselves did little to condemn unambiguously those who started the conflicts and they signally failed to expose or denounce atrocities done by their own nation. In seeking to fulfil their own mission to protect and promote the ethno-nation or to gain credibility with the nation, religious leaders forgave their religious creed for 'national idolatry' and therefore supported and legitimised aggressive nationalism and war.

Faith-based peace building

There are remarkably few faith-based or faith-led peace building initiatives being carried out in the Balkans. With rare exceptions, the contribution of official church channels to peace building in the Balkans has been disappointing. Political interests rather than spiritual concerns have prevailed, affecting credibility and preventing the faith communities from taking full advantage of their own freedom from the constraints of the communist era. Faith leaders have focused more on such worldly concerns as their legal and constitutional status, the return of former wealth in land and property, with a great deal of attention to church building and re-building programmes.

The most prominent attempts at stimulating interfaith peace building have concentrated on establishment of leadership-level Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs), in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia. The aim has been to create lasting institutions for interfaith cooperation and dialogue that might create wider pressures for peace in society or politics. With the possible exception of Macedonia, these efforts have failed. Religious institutions are ill-prepared to take on the role of peace builders and *lead* their congregations towards reconciliation, owing to fear of nationalist public opinion within their own communities. Leaders appear to have little moral compunction in emphasising the importance of retributive justice over reconciliation, and where they do engage in interfaith activities, they seem to believe that abstract and anodyne declarations about cooperation and tolerance are sufficient in themselves to bring healing.

The Macedonian case reveals the importance for the creation of successful institutions of input from non-partisan foreign theologians in facilitating dialogue at both theological and humanistic levels, strong political support from the State, practical and moral support of a competent NGO with a detailed understanding of both secular and faith-based civil society, and external support and pressure from within the wider faith community abroad.

At the grassroots, peace building within the religious communities centres on rare "one-off" NGO-like organisations that embody an ideal of inter-faith cooperation in the multi-religious nature of their membership and governance structures. Led by charismatic mavericks who often incur the ire of their own religious establishment, the insistence of these organisations on our common humanity and a shared God, as well as the moral teachings of the Scriptures, represents a return to what one commentator has called the 'theological center'; that is, a values base which emphasises trust between people, the need to accept responsibility for past actions, social justice, the acceptance of difference, and forgiveness.

Religious education

The religious communities place a high value on religious education, both in schools and within colleges of higher education. In the post-conflict period the main religions have lobbied successfully, with the assistance of nationalist political parties, for the introduction into public schools of single confession religious education, including the teaching of the catechism. Wherever it is provided, religious education is taught in segregated classes and a comparison of text books has shown that for all faiths and countries, subject content is similar in emphasising doctrine, ritual and church / community history and being strictly confessional; that is, little attention is paid to other religions. Most commentators agree this model of religious education is divisive, but ironically this is an area where the religious communities have a shared interest and have

achieved unusually good cooperation through negotiation and debate within the theological faculties.

Theological faculties and seminaries enjoy a certain degree of independence from the religious leadership, and a license to venture theological reinterpretations.   While they remain conservative establishments, generally inwards-looking and concentrated on accepted doctrine and church history (and therefore, national history), there are signs that more innovatory and outward-looking streams are gaining weight in all communities, leading to a gradual liberalisation of religious thought and the emergence of practical courses tackling difficult issues such as peace building, reconciliation, or genocide.

Civil society's contribution to faith-based peace building

This study identified five basic types of faith-based civil society organisation active in peace building that may be divided into two clear categories: 1. Organisations external to the faith communities. These comprise independent peace building NGOs that may or may not be inspired by the individual faith of their leaders and staff, and   2. Organisations within or connected to the faiths. These include theological faculties, think tanks, multi-religious faith-based NGOs and faith-based NGOs attached to and founded by individual faiths.

In terms of peace-building, the key to the usefulness of institutions within the faith communities lies in the degree to which they are **of the religious community**, without being **the religious community**. In other words, being of the community they are trusted by religious officials, whilst not being the community, they still have a measure of autonomy.   They are recognised as authorities in their sphere and are relatively free of "political" interference from the hierarchy. This privileged position allows such institutions to explore new areas – such as ecumenical action or interfaith dialogue.

Those organisations that are able to maintain a critical distance from their own hierarchy, or are positioned beyond it, recognise each other's spiritual commitment and integrity. However they inevitably constitute a minority in their own faith communities and their initiatives risk remaining "one-offs". The challenge over coming years is to extend their achievements more broadly. This will involve strengthening regional programmes that coordinate the efforts of a diversity of faith-based peace activists, institutionalising peace building and reconciliation studies for new clergy and building the organisational and relational capacities of new inter-religious institutions "**of** the religious communities.

The report identifies the following principles of good practice:

1. Start from the *individual* believer

The key lesson learned from peace-building efforts in the Balkans is that the process of dialogue needs to start with a personal change of heart. Various forms of discursive training will assist both victims and perpetrators to come to some degree of reconciliation through acknowledgement and forgiveness.

2. Build on positive experience

The field visits reveal that many faith-based initiatives have failed or even proved counter-productive; however there is an identifiable core of good practice that needs to be encouraged and sustained. This is gradually spreading across the region in the form of conferences, meetings, familiarisation, youth exchanges and so on.

3. Operate at several levels, coordinate – and communicate

Faced with the enormity of the task of healing the wounds of sectarian violence, it is necessary to operate at many levels at the same time: internally from the parish or local mosque to the top of the hierarchy and externally through structures that are affiliated to the faith communities. It is not necessary, or even desirable, for one agency to address all the levels. Rather it is essential for all the relevant actors to coordinate with each other, not just at a national level but across the region.

4. Encourage innovative thinking

Without new ideas, the institutions of faith communities can become very conservative. It is necessary therefore to identify and engage with whatever institutional opportunities there are to explore new dialogue initiatives. Throughout the region, there is a new trend of think tanks and other centres specialised in researching the changing external context on behalf of their faith communities. Some of these explore inter-religious dialogue. These structures deserve support.

5. Promote good management

Compared with NGOs, faith communities are often poorly managed. Transparency is weak, decision-making centralised and planning not generally used. Better administration of faith communities would greatly help improve the public's understanding of the role and purpose of faith communities and would also benefit inter-religious dialogue indirectly.

6. Engage with wider stakeholders

Although an intrinsic part of civil society, faith communities are not natural partners with other civil society organisations (CSO). Unpractised in democratic customs, religious leaders react badly to criticism and their followers can retaliate with violence on occasions. In return, CSOs publicly question the values, legitimacy and transparency of the faith institutions. Trustworthy intermediaries are required to bring about the necessary rapprochement within the civic arena.

7. Build capacities of clergy

There is little or no in-service training in the region for priests, pastors or imams and so no body of good practice has built up in this important area, unfortunately. However all faith communities are paying renewed attention to their theological faculties and seminaries, which present an excellent opportunity for ensuring a well-informed and progressive new generation of clergy.

8. Plan for the long term

Given that faith community institutions are not generally good at dialogue with the religious other, any inter-religious healing process is by definition going to be long term. Its history ensures that the Balkans will be one of the hardest in which to achieve reconciliation between sectarian groups. The case is far from hopeless but progress needs to be measured in decades rather than years.

Acronyms used in the text

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEC	Conference of European Churches
CfP	Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights (Osijek, Croatia)
CNA	Centre for Non-Violent Action (Belgrade & Sarajevo)
CRD	Centre for Religious Dialogue
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
DPA	Dayton Peace Accords
EHO	Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (Novi Sad, Serbia)
ETS	Evangelical Theological Seminary (in Osijek, Croatia)
FBO	Faith-based organisation
FIN	Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo (*Fakultet Islamske Nauke*)
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*)
IMIC	International Multi-religious Inter-cultural Centre
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IRC	Inter-religious Council
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MAC	Montenegrin Autocephalous Church
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MOC	Macedonian Orthodox Church
MCIC	Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation
MRI	Inter-religious Institute in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Medjureligijski Institut*)
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NDH	Independent State of Croatia – World War II Fascist regime (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
QPSW	Quaker Peace and Social Witness
RAND	Regional Address for Non-Violent Action
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RS	Serbian Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Republika Srpska*)
SBiH	Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Stranka za Bosnu I Hercegovinu*)
SEEP	South East Europe Ecumenical Partnership
SDA	Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*)
SFOR	NATO-led international peacekeeping or Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
SOC	Serbian Orthodox Church
TERCA	Training Education Research Consulting Action
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRP	World Conference of Religions for Peace
WV	World Vision
YMO	Yugoslav Muslim Organisation

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

NCA has been working in the Balkans, with a particular focus on Kosovo, since 2000, carrying out a range of activities broadly focused on peace building and social reconstruction. Although all countries have made major advances in establishing security, stability and economic development, peace across the region remains fragile. The region's various populations remain largely unreconciled and the healing process of coming to terms with the past, of revealing and accepting the truth, and of forgiving and being forgiven, has a long time yet to run. Over the years there have been many initiatives aimed at achieving reconciliation, but these have often been short-lived and carried out on an *ad hoc* basis. NCA has established that rectifying a lack of consolidated and institutionalised reconciliation processes in the Balkans should be one of its main programmatic foci.

In 2004 an external evaluation of NCA's programme recommended that NCA develop activities to assist senior and local religious leaders engage in institutionalised forms of dialogue and diapraxis. In the same year, NCA supported its core regional partner, MCIC from Macedonia, to deliver Bridging Religions, an integrated inter-religious confidence building programme including dialogue and exchange between theological faculties in Macedonia.

More recently, NCA has sought to develop a coherent planned strategy to enable reconciliation processes in the Balkans in cooperation with its local partners. As early as September 2006, NCA partners, headed by MCIC, suggested the undertaking of a study of the region's faith communities and their potential for building peace. This study would run parallel to, but also inform, the process of programme formulation that NCA partners are currently engaged in.

1.2 Aim

To conduct a study on faith communities in the Balkans (the region of the former Yugoslavia) in order to identify their potential to act as agents of peace building and reconciliation in post-conflict environments in which ethno-national communities remain divided and mutually antagonistic.

The study's conclusions will assist NCA and its partners in targeting suitable and willing participants for peace building interventions and in devising more appropriate means of capacity building and facilitation.

1.3 Content and Scope

The exploratory and heuristic nature of the study means that its boundaries remain largely undefined. However, wherever possible the study will:

- o Outline the potential of the region's religious communities for serving as agents for peace in the present day Balkans, including the identification of practical approaches the communities may undertake in this work and how this work may be supported by other actors - local, regional and international;
- o Describe the political and social role/s played by religious communities regionally and in their respective societies, including an examination of the influence within individual religious and national communities wielded by official policies. In addition, the study will seek to identify and examine cases where actions taken on the ground by individual religious leaders diverge from official policy. The study will attempt to gauge the influence respectively of official and 'divergent' policy at the community level;

    o   Identify where faith communities may fill the gaps in the ongoing implementation of post-conflict settlements in the region; how may faith communities advance the political process?[1]

1.4 Methodology

The primary sources of information for the study were 41[2] interviews carried out with a range of religious leaders and local clerics, members of faith-based NGOs (FBOs) and NGO activists active in religious dialogue, diapraxis, peace building and restorative justice. These were carried out by the consultants during two ten-day field trips to Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia, and Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia respectively, during early December.

Field data was supplemented by and given contextual meaning by a range of academic and development literature, religious publications and journalistic material that describe and analyse social and political events in the region from before the outbreak of conflict until the present time. In addition, unpublished documents, such as NGO project proposals or field analyses, and personal testimony were accessed wherever they provided relevant data.

1.5 Assumptions guiding the study

While recognising that faith and religious institutions have often played important roles in causing conflict and perpetrating acts of violence, this study proceeds from the assumption that religions also represent considerable potential for peace building. All religions offer ethical visions that support social justice and facilitate empathy with the suffering of those on the other side, which can motivate people to act in support of reconciliation. The three Abrahamic faiths in particular (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) contain clear instructions for peace building (Smock 2006), guiding us towards apology and forgiveness.

Religions, through their institutions, which often permeate both the social and the political spheres, provide peace building and its practitioners a means of communication with those embroiled in conflict, both at the national and grassroots levels. The networks that religious actors can access, local and international, often provide alternative opportunities for dialogue and different perspectives on issues that may lie at the centre of the conflict (Harpviken & Røislien 2005).

However, religions' special concern for the spiritual, emotional and social well-being of people means that they often find particular resonance in the community and in smaller groups. Within the community, religious actors very often occupy positions of trust which affords them influence and enables them to lead the local population in the direction of peace. In contrast to many other peace builders, religious actors are long-term players who live among and often belong to those involved in the conflict (Little & Appleby 2004).

Lastly, religion and spirituality of themselves may provide the basis for common ground (Harpviken & Røislien 2005), leading mutually antagonistic parties to find communion through joint worship.

1.6 Definitions

Peace building: The full range of activities carried out by individuals and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political and cultural institutions characterised by an ethos of tolerance and non-violence.

Conflict transformation: The replacement of violent with non-violent means of settling disputes. It is a broad field including, for example, not only grassroots

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[1] See Annexe 4 for full ToR
[2] See Annexe 2 for a full list of interviewees

activities such as mediation and negotiation between disputants and education in non-violent communication, but also institutional arrangements for enforcing treaties and peace accords, advocacy for peace – both locally and internationally -, and observation and monitoring of peace settlements and social and political reforms (adapted from Little & Appleby 2004).

Inter-religious dialogue: Involves people of different religious faiths coming together in a process of positive exchange. It is not limited to verbal exchange alone, and most importantly it is not intended to be a debate. Rather it aims at mutual understanding and includes an acknowledgement and respect for difference and the values of other religions and cultures. It may take place among a variety of types of participants at different social levels. Inter-religious dialogue, may include: faith leaders coming together to advocate for peace, elite interfaith bodies engaged in conflict mediation, grassroots participants working towards cross-community interaction, theologians among hostile groups highlighting scriptural similarities in order to mitigate points of conflict, conflict resolution training for an inter-religious group as the basis of inter-religious dialogue (Adpated from Garfinkel 2004).

Reconciliation: A process leading to the positive reconfiguration of relations between previously antagonistic parties, involving both truth and forgiveness. It entails addressing concerns about the past without entering into a cycle of recrimination, requiring revelation, transparency and acknowledgement. It is also a process of restoring friendly relations achieved through envisioning a future that enhances interdependence (Adapted from Lederach 1997 & Mial et al.1999).

1.7 Limiting factors on the study

Access:

Identifying a broad range of relevant actors – both individuals and organisations – in all the countries / regions covered by the study proved to be difficult and time-consuming. The main difficulty was, and a major finding of the study is, that there are remarkably few faith-based or faith-led peace building initiatives being carried out in the Balkans. Consequently, the researchers consulted mainly with already well-known activists and faith-based organisations (FBOs), whose views and activities have been documented elsewhere.

A further problem was that many prospective interviewees, especially representatives of the region's faiths, were not available for interview at the time of the field trips, owing to prior work commitments or health problems. For example, the head of the Catholic Church in Kosovo, Bishop Gjergji, and his nearest advisors and colleagues including peace activist Don Lush Gjergji [no relative], were all in the USA on an episcopal trip from November until after Christmas.

For most of those contacted, peace building was either just a small part of their regular work duties, or was a civic activity performed outside of formal employment. Consequently, some informants were able to contribute barely an hour to discussion of the study's sensitive and complex issues.

Time limitations.

Contacting interviewees and organising field-work interviews from distance, proved to be extremely time-consuming. Carrying out interviews in the field was also relatively inefficient, as much time was spent in travelling between locations – about four days out of ten was spent 'on the road' for

the researchers' respective field-trips. As a result of this, the time allocated to analysis and documentation of the research findings was reduced to a bare minimum.

<u>Availability of documentation</u>

The researchers have consulted a wide range of supporting literature to place the study's findings in context. Reading includes, histories and political studies of the Balkans, recent media reports and think-tank studies, EU and UN reports, as well as papers on inter-faith peace building, both theory and practice. However, the number of practice-oriented documents on faith-based peace building in the Balkans which are based in experience is extremely small. A variety of book chapters by American peace activists, such as David Steele or Paul Mojzes, amount to so many versions of the same practical initiatives taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Macedonia some years ago now.

Informants in the field were rarely able to provide documentation with supporting data or analysis for this study that went beyond quite general description of activities. Few case studies and no evaluations were available, so it was difficult to gain a more complete picture of activities described, especially when trying to assess outcomes and potential impact.

2. Post-conflict context of the Balkans

Much progress has been made towards achieving peace and stability in the territory of former Yugoslavia as the various local and regional wars and conflicts that have afflicted the region over the past sixteen years have abated. In former war zones, formal ceasefires have been followed quickly by wholesale efforts under international tutelage to achieve social reconstruction, including disarmament, the restoration of public administration, the establishment of formal democracy, the reconstruction of infrastructure and houses, and the return of property to pre-conflict owners. Achieving the return of displaced persons and refugees has proved especially difficult, and success in this field has been limited.[3]

The emphasis on immediate post-conflict recovery has now long passed in all countries, having been superseded by an emphasis on longer-term economic development on the one hand, and a region-wide process of institutional capacity building and policy reform on the other, designed to prepare each country for eventual entry into the European Union.[4] Continued foreign assistance, upon which the region is more or less dependent, is made available for the reform of state institutions (especially the police and justice systems and the fight against corruption), the strengthening of governance, including decentralisation, the establishment of cross-sector cooperation and the proper functioning of systems of government self-finance.[5]

However, countries continue to experience a variety of social dislocations caused by their experience of conflict. Deep-seated divisions, mutual mistrust and even fear remain in the minds of the region's populations, based upon perceptions of ethnic, cultural and religious difference, continuing trauma and the sense of injustice and wrongs suffered during the past conflicts.

For example, in **Serbia**, while attacks on minorities have largely abated in multi-cultural Vojvodina, there remain sporadic attacks on ethnic minorities in Southern Serbia and the Sandžak. Progress

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[3] In Macedonia there are still 2,700 refugees and displaced persons unwilling to return (IDMC 2007), while in Serbia there remains 104,000 refugees (from Croatia and Bosnia) and 208,000 IDPs from Kosovo (EU 2007c)

[4] Croatia is expected to join the EU in 2009. Macedonia officially became an EU candidate country in December 2005, although negotiations have yet to start. Albania signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2006, while BiH and Serbia are currently negotiating for a SAA.

[5] Pre-accession assistance (IPA) from the EU alone to the countries of former Yugoslavia in 2007 is: Bosnia and Herzegovina €62.1M, Croatia €161M, Kosovo €68.3M, Macedonia €58M, Montenegro €31.4M & Serbia €164.8M. This excludes regional and cross-border assistance.

in Southern Serbia has been made in creating a multi-ethnic police force, but there are still tensions between Albanians and Serbs concerning representation in public bodies. In September 2007 the main Albanian political actors issued a declaration reiterating their January 2006 request for 'comprehensive political and territorial autonomy and institutional links with Kosovo.'

In Serbia's Sandžak, religious divisions within the Bošnjak (Muslim Slav) community have led to a number of outbreaks of violence and the situation is generally deteriorating (EU 2007e).

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, heightened ethno-national tensions surrounding nationalistic political campaigning in the 2006 general election continued throughout 2007. In autumn 2007, during the most severe political crisis of recent times, concerning voting rights of national minorities in parliament and long-lasting negotiations over reform of the police,[6] there was widespread panic across the country as war was once again widely predicted after the state government resigned and the government of the Serb-dominated Entity (Serbian Republic) threatened a referendum on self-determination and a variety of measures to disrupt the State and its federal structure.

In **Kosovo**, distrust between Albanian majority and Serb minority populations is so great that there is a situation of almost total segregation and an absence of communication, even in situations where Serb enclaves[7] are contiguous with Albanian settlements, such as in southern town of Orahovac / Rahovec. Major disturbances aimed at the Serb population by Albanians across the whole of Kosovo in March 2004, during which over 4,000 Serbian Kosovars and Roma were driven from their homes and 19 people lost their lives, revealed the continuing potential for violence in the province. Since that time, further violence has been avoided, largely due to a further process of disengagement, or voluntary isolation by Serb communities. In recent months, as the province has moved towards a possible international ruling on its status vis-à-vis Serbia[8] to which it still formally belongs, or a unilateral declaration of independence by Albanian Kosovar politicians, tensions have risen over fears of eventual outbreaks of inter-communal violence or paramilitary clashes across ethnic lines.

Throughout the region generally, different ethnic and national communities tend to be isolated geographically, occupying separate spaces in urban environments and different villages in the country. Patterns of resettlement after conflict very often reflect the fissures of war and previously mixed or multinational environments are now likely to be dominated by majority populations. Where ethnic cleansing has taken place, its broad imprint has not been wiped out. There is little social contact between national communities and employment opportunities remain structured according to nationality.

In areas such as Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and Kosovo, ethnic and national differences are further entrenched institutionally by peace settlements that define the State in

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[6] Local political leaders failed to honour a 30 September deadline to agree on police reforms necessary to proceed to a signing of an EU SAA. Talks had been going on for over two years. On 19 October the International High Representative, Mirslav Lajcak, introduced a simplification of the decision-making process in the Bosnian government, by reducing its ethnically-based quorum. Serb leaders saw this as a means of strengthening central institutions at the expense of the two Entities, especially their own, the Republika Srpska. Resignations and mass demonstrations followed – See BIRN: Bosnia Faces Turmoil, 01.11.07

[7] There are approximately 130,000 Serbs remaining in Kosovo, 55,000 of which are concentrated in and around the northern half of the town of Mitrovica, and 75,000 scattered across the whole province in numerous isolated enclaves under the protection of NATO-led KFOR protection force.

[8] After the failure of the UN Security Council to endorse the report of the UN Special Envoy to Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, which recommended a form of conditional independence for the province, the UN Secretary General ordered a further round of talks between Serbia and the Albanian Kosovars to be mediated by a troika of representatives from the US, EU and Russia. A statement or decision was widely expected after the reporting deadline of 10 December 2007, but no such statement was issued. The incoming Kosovan government has made it clear that it will declare independence unilaterally sometime in January or February 2008 and expects the support of the US and the majority of EU countries.

terms of 'constituent peoples' rather than citizens, and further encourage the rule of nationalist political parties which remain in or around power in all the region's countries.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH), the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) of 1995 effectively comprise the constitution which stills remains in force. The DPA specify a complicated division of powers that has resulted in a weak State and the splitting of the country into three nationally determined spheres of political authority. The BiH State is firstly diminished by being a quasi-protectorate led by an internationally appointed High Representative who remains in place today twelve years after the war. Secondly, the State is represented by a joint presidency composed of leaders of each of the three constituent peoples, and a government of all the nations possessing few formal powers. Consequently, the State has been both unable and unwilling to develop a sense of nationhood or Bosnian identity around which ordinary Bosnians might rally. Effective power and administrative capacity lie with two 'Entities', the Federation of Bošnjaks and Croats and the Serbian Republic (RS), whose geographical areas (51% and 49%) respectively reflect the wartime gains of the respective parties and the national composition of the population after the wartime ethnic cleansing. The Federation is further divided into ten cantons possessing major powers in tax raising and social policy, which were defined in such a way as to create a balance of power between Croat and Bošnjak national interests (Sterland 2006).

In keeping with its nationally determined political structures, politics in BiH is conceived of as an arena in which to safeguard national interests – territory, entitlements, rights and income – in relation to the country's other national populations, rather than as means to take decisions concerning social policy or the allocation or resources throughout the whole country. Time and again, BiH politicians have shown themselves unable to reach agreement over policy or legislative change as they have sought to use talks and negotiations as a way of 'holding out' for one's own interests at all costs; that is a means of continued conflict by non-violent means.

Protection of language and cultural rights of major populations under human rights legislation provides the conditions for a further institutional form of segregation through school systems that allow different national groups to receive education separately in their own language according to curricula that present their own nationally exclusive understanding of history, culture and religion.

In **Serbia** the introduction into minority population schools in 2006 of textbooks in Croatian, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Slovak, as well as general advances in the use of minority languages is seen as a generally positive development for ethnic relations (EU 2007b). However, the segregation of children from constituent peoples in both Macedonia (Macedonian and Albanian) and BiH (Bošnjak, Croat and Serb), along ethnic lines means that children and youth have very little contact with their peers from other ethnic groups at a time when their personalities and fundamental worldviews are forming. Of particular concern is the tendency of ethnically segregated schooling to teach distorted and one-sided history, especially concerning the recent conflict-ridden past, which can only deepen inter-ethnic tensions and the lack of mutual understanding in the longer-term.

How to deal with the past more generally so that violent conflict and the awful human rights abuses of the past sixteen years do not occur again remains a pressing problem for individuals and the collective across the region. While the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague provides a suitably high profile arena for seeing that justice is done concerning the worst human rights offences, it has shown itself to be cumbersome and limited in its range.[9] Furthermore, criminal justice, with its focus on the perpetrator and its goal of retribution, does little to assist individuals to come to terms with past events, to fulfil the need to tell their stories, to open up to truth, and ultimately to recreate social relationships and achieve reconciliation.

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[9] The ICTY is due to finish its proceedings in 2010, after which all cases will be transferred to national courts. Serbia has already tried a handful of war crimes cases. Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently instituted a War Crimes Chamber to try sensitive cases, but the many thousands of lesser claims will be tried in the local courts.

After a number of false moves over the years, there now appears to be an acceptance that state-level forms of institutionalised truth and reconciliation processes that have been mooted are not going to work, if only for the simple reason that in almost all countries the political parties and politicians who hold power remain those who were in power during the region's conflicts.

Instead, there is region-wide need for more informal means and mechanisms to allow people to recreate relationships across national and cultural divides, to speak about the past, to create new forms of exchange and understanding, new channels of communication and to discover new ways of carrying out joint activities.

3. Religion and Religious Communities in the Balkans

3.1 Religion and ethno-national identity

For all the main ethno-national populations of the territory of the former Yugoslavia religion is a constitutive element of national identity. Despite the presence of a host of minority churches in the region whose members are not associated with any particular national grouping, such as Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses or Old Catholics, Croats and Slovenes are predominantly Roman Catholics, while Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins are almost exclusively Orthodox Christians. In the case of the Bošnjaks, their original name, [Slavic] Muslim, indicates the centrality of religious affiliation in the formation of a national identity distinct from that of Catholic or Orthodox Christian neighbours.

As early as 1989, before the extent of the post-Tito reawakening of national consciousness became clear, Pedro Ramet remarked that religion is also essential to the growth of nationalism and concomitant antagonisms between neighbouring national groups. In this way, in the Balkans religious affiliation and religions as institutions are as much political subjects as they are matters of faith. Michael Petrovich (cited in Perica 2004:5) points out that 'religion [in former Yugoslavia] is not so much a matter of private conscience as of one's public identity' and that in history the identification of religion and nationality was so great that a religious conversion in a great many cases automatically entailed a change of nationality – especially in the eyes of others.[10]

Some commentators have remarked that religion, and society generally, in the Balkans remains 'pre-modern' or 'pre-Enlightenment'. That is, religion does not form 'a separate form of theory and practice which influences other human activities, but that [it] is an inseparable part of human consciousness which permeates human identity, including national identity.' The promotion of national freedom in Western societies has been the domain of civil society working in conditions of relative political freedom. The countries of former Yugoslavia, are only now, after fifty years of Titoist communism and a further period of nationalist domination, developing working democracies and pluralist political systems.

3.1.1 Serbian Orthodox Church

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) is an unashamedly nationalist organisation and in common with all the Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe, it has come to be perceived as 'the historic repository of nationhood, national values, and quite often, as the saviour of a nation's very

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[10] In the past, religious conversion of Albanians in Kosovo, usually the forced Islamicisation of Roman Catholics, did not involve changing one's ethnic identity. Albanian Kosovars are both Muslim and Catholic. However, there is evidence of two-way changes of ethnic identity and also of religion between Serbian Orthodox and Muslim Albanians in Kosovo right up to the end of the 19th century (Duijzings 2000: 13-14)

existence' (Perica 2002: 5).   There is an intimate association between the Serbian Orthodox Church, the ethnic community and the State, owing to their convergence in history and the development of myths which combine stories of national destiny and religious sacrifice in what has been described as a 'Serbian faith' that has little to do with religion as either theology or a set of personal beliefs and convictions (Petrovich quoted in Perica 2002: 6).

While the Serbs have inherited the collaborative relationship between church and State established by the Byzantine Empire (Johnston & Eastwold 2004), the intimate link between the two institutions, and so the joint role of political leadership and pastoral care, was created at the establishment of the SOC's autonomous status in 1219 by Saint Sava, brother of the first Serbian king, Stefan Prvovenčani.   The apotheosis of this partnership in the Serbian imagination came during the rule of Emperor Dušan (1331-1355) who established a vast Serbian empire and elevated the SOC within this empire to the status of patriarchate.   To this day, the brilliance of this short-lived medieval state and the centrality within in of the SOC remains, to the majority of the Serbian people, an image of a much yearned for paradise lost (Djordjević 1998: 152).

The SOC has two main issues concerning its self-defined role as protector of the Serbian people. Firstly, it is clear in expressing the belief that the Serbian nation *is* the religious community. That is, that 'one who is not Orthodox is not Serb, and that all Serbian Orthodox should live in the same state' (Powers 1998: 234).

Secondly, the SOC gives voice to the overwhelming sense of victimisation (Powers 1998: 234) that is felt by the Serbian nation, which comes out of a history of perceived loss, betrayal, and suffering at the hands of others.   Primarily, this consists of the central Kosovo myth and subsequent subjugation of the Serbian nation during five hundred years' of Ottoman occupation, combined with the memory of atrocities at hands of the Ustaše in the Second World War, in particular those suffered in the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp.   The history is completed by expressing a feeling of being discrimated against during Tito's Yugoslavia, or by drawing attention to the current isolation of Serb communities in an internationally and Albanian-controlled Kosovo.

3.1.2 Macedonian Orthodox Church and Montenegrin Autocephalous Church

When, during the turmoil surrounding the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1990-92, **Macedonia** successfully established the right to declare the first Macedonian state in the modern era it was the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) which provided the answer among all the contesting views (Greek, Slav – Bulgarian or Serb -, even Albanian) as to who exactly are the Macedonians. The answer was simple: all those who are members of MOC (Perica 2002: 174). The mutual symbiosis of church and national identity is clear from the emergence of the MOC as an independent entity during Tito's Yugoslavia.   Macedonia as a republic and Macedonians as a nation were given recognition for the first time by Tito immediately after World War II, as part of the communist regime's nationalities policy that sought to create a complicated division and balance of powers within the federal state.   It was only after this time that concerted action by Macedonian clergy to establish autocephaly from the Serbian Orthodox Church[11] bore fruit.   The MOC was declared autocephalous in 1967, and at the time was proclaimed to be an important step in 'the full establishment of the independence of the Macedonian people and nation' (Ramet 1998: 314).

In the 1980s, a self-styled Montenegrin Autocephalous Church (MAC) appeared, claiming to be the only legitimate Orthodox Church in **Montenegro**, but it has remained unrecognised by the other Orthodox churches and operates in parallel with the SOC. However, as with the MOC, the MAC's progress has been intimately linked to the recognition of the Montenegrins as a nation distinct from their Serb cousins, and the long road to independence from Serbia and the declaration of a Montenegrin state in 2006. Since 1998, when the then president Milo Djukanović put the country on a pro-independence course, the MAC has received official support as a symbol of Montenegrin

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[11] The SOC had been in control of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia since the end of World War I. Before that the Macedonian Church had been controlled from Bulgaria.

identity and statehood, and achieved both institutional permanence and popular acceptance with many Montenegrins (see Public Opinion Surveys: www.cedem.cg.yu)

3.1.3 Roman Catholic Church

Today, Croatian cultural and national identity is closely identified with Catholicism. However the association of the Church and nation was established more recently than that of its main Christian rival in the Balkans, the SOC. Throughout the 19th century the Catholic church championed the cause of both Croats and Slovenes, but it was only in the second half of the 19th century that the Church underwent a process of 'ethnicisation' or 'nativisation' in **Croatia** and Croatian areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina,[12] with the employment of Croatian priests and the self-conscious linking of faith to Croatian culture and its monuments (Perica 2002: 8).

Over the years, two main streams of Croatian ethno-religious nationalism developed. The first, the Illyrian movement of Archbishop Josip Strossmayer in the 19th century, placed an emphasis on creating unity between Croatia and Serbia (and thus also between the RCC and SOC) on the basis of shared ethnicity and language. More dominant, from the early twentieth century on, has been that associated with the political ideal of establishing Croatian independence, which stresses closeness to Catholicism and Western culture (Powers 1998: 226). RCC insistence on an organic link between the Church and the Croatian people, and on the Church as the only true representative of the nation and its interests during communist times created fears in the Party that the Catholic Church was a *de facto* secessionist organisation (Ramet 1989: 319). Cardinal Kuharić, Archbishop of Zagreb from 1970 until his retirement in 1997, summarised these fears in 1991, five years after Croatia had broken away from former Yugoslavia: 'The Church among the Croats has always represented the rights of the Croatian nation, like those of every other ethnic nation, to freedom' and 'the guarantee of freedom for every ethnic nation is the State.'[13]

3.1.4 Islamic Community

It is among Slavic Muslim populations in former Yugoslavia, or Bošnjaks, as they have come to call themselves (since the adoption of this name by Bosnian Muslims in 1993 in their attempt to create a national identity based in concepts of a Bosnian territorial and cultural inheritance), that the association of religion and ethnic or national identity is most complete (Irwin 1989: 393). While this may seem self-evident from the nation's very name, the history of awakening of Muslim consciousness and the establishment of a Muslim national identity and a nationalist movement in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** does not always bear this out.

Traditionally Muslims distinguished themselves from other groups around them, usually Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, on religious grounds alone. In the interwar years, during the first Yugoslavia, the Muslim political party the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (YMO) gained some prominence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was broadly in favour of Yugoslavia as a political alliance of the South Slav peoples and often received support from the State owing to its potential to counter the two most powerful nationalities. Although it succeeded in gaining some recognition as the political voice of Islam, YMO was clearly a landowners' party and did not claim to represent the whole Muslim population (Allcock 2000: 370). This being said, in 1939, Edvard Kardelj, Tito's future deputy, remarked the growth of a Muslim ethnic identity that went beyond religious communion (Irwin 1989: 381).

During the time of communist Yugoslavia, the regime deliberately promoted a secular 'Muslim' identity as a means to stop either Serb or Croat populations dominating in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These efforts culminated in the designation of a Muslim ethnicity in 1961, upgraded

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[12] It was only during this time that the Orthodox and Catholic communities in Bosnia started to identify themselves as Serbian and Croatian respectively.

[13] Catholic Press Agency, Zagreb: An account of an interview with Catholic Weekly, *Glas Concila*, 3 January, 1996, quoted in Powers 1998: 226.

to full nation status in 1968. From this time on the Bosnian Muslims were given unparalleled support from the regime, which insisted on denying the existence of a link between Islam and Muslim national identity. They were assisted in this by the strenuous efforts of Muslim intellectuals with connections to the Party, and by and large the majority of Bosnian Muslims remained wedded to the idea of Yugoslavia until the eve of its break-up in 1991 (Cohen 1998: 60).

Nevertheless the 70s and 80s also saw increasing agitation from sections of the *ulema* or Muslim clerics for the forming of a Muslim republic, according to the same principle that allowed the Serbs or Macedonians their own republics (Ramet 1989: 325). The break-up of Yugoslavia and the subsequent radicalisation and increasing islamisation of the Muslim community in the nationally charged atmosphere of the 1990s, especially in war-torn Bosnia, has led to the emergence of three identifiable strains of Muslim national identity and nationalism: 1) Islam as little more that a common ethnic marker, a symbolic resource which more or less defines the secular group. 2) Radical Muslim nationalism in which identity is based in active Islamic faith and practice combined with other historical, cultural and territorial markers of slavic identity. 3) Pan-islamic nationalism that perceives Islam as a political community of believers beyond ethnic or territorial belongings (Bougarel, undated).

3.1.5 Albanians of former Yugoslavia[14]

In contrast to the Serb, Croat and Bošnjak communities, the Albanians of former Yugoslavia (inhabiting primarily Kosovo, Macedonia and South Serbia) do not resort to religious imagery or language when constructing their sense of national identity. Clearly this is because the wider Albanian nation is religiously heterogeneous, with sizable Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Bektashi populations. In history, religious cleavages have created conflict within the nation and the main vehicle for creating national unity has been language, Albanian being distinct from the languages of Slav or Greek neighbours. Common culture and the idea of Albania has led to the emergence since the 19th century of a kind of 'civil religion' of Albanianism, reified in song, poetry and other literary works.

In former Yugoslavia, there is a tendency to greater religious homogenisation of the Albanians, with the greater majority being Muslim, and the minority being Catholic. In **Kosovo**, for example, Muslim Albanians outnumber Catholic Albanians by more than nine to one.[15] Here religion appears to have played no part in political mobilisation, with Muslims and Catholics both found in prominent positions during the years of resistance against Milošević's Serbia, and after. This is despite the fact that interviewees for this study detected that the local ulema of approximately 600 Kosovan imams was a repository of nationalist fervour.

3.2 Religion in everyday life

3.2.1 Religious belief in the general population

Gauging the number of active believers among the region's religious communities is not easy, but overall numbers of regular worshippers is low relative to total population. While the number of those professing to be atheists is very small, members of all faiths appear to adopt a secular approach to religion, valuing it for its more obvious public ceremonial and cultural features than as a source of personal spirituality and moral guidance.

The region's secular outlook appears to be a feature of society inherited from the time of the communist regime in former Yugoslavia, which tolerated religious observance,[16] albeit

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[14] The following section is taken almost completely from Duijzings 2000: 157 - 161

[15] In certain southern Kosovan towns, e.g. Prizren or Rahovec, there are also small, but significant numbers of Muslims belong to various Sufi orders, or Dervish houses, which are quite distinct from the Sunni mainstream.

[16] In the early years in Yugoslavia, the communist party was officially hostile to all forms of religion, which were considered traditional and regressive. Over time, starting from the break with Stalin in 1948, policy softened

unenthusiastically, and maintained a strict separation of state and religion. Over the 50s and 60s there was a sharp falling off of religious worship and spirituality, and a marked growth in agnostic and atheistic views (Perica 2002: 219). In the census of 1953, 86.6% of the Yugoslav population declared themselves as believers, but by 1969 this had fallen to 39%. Perhaps more interesting is that in 1990, on the eve of the break-up of Yugoslavia, when nationalist fervour had now been brewing for almost ten years in most parts of the country and at a time when national leaders were encouraging their populations to engage more in religion, those declaring themselves as believers had risen only marginally to 43%, while the non-religious and atheists stood at 48% (Cohen 1998: 48).

During the 1990s, nationalism and conflict appeared to create a renaissance in religious observance. Interviews suggest that the surge was to a large extent concentrated among the younger sections of the population, tended to emphasise the collective ceremonial aspects of religion, particularly in situations of nationalist conflict or cultural competition, and was short-lived. It is dangerous to generalise too much about this, because there was also clearly a growth in spirituality, including the renewal of traditional forms of religious dedication – such as the taking of monastic orders in the SOC[17] -, as well as the appearance of forms of fundamentalist beliefs previously unknown in the Balkans – such as Wahhabism and Salafism among the Bosnian and Serbian Muslims.[18] Conclusions from the field interviews, however, are that ordinary lay members of religious communities possess a generally low level of religious literacy and only a small minority of believers might be called active.[19]

3.2.2 Social and political leadership

Informants agree that in general, at the community level religious leaders of all faiths exert little influence over their constituents, from either a moral or political perspective. Christian priests, particularly those of the SOC, and local imams are very often poorly educated,[20] rarely possessing more than secondary school education. At this level priests are often lacking in leadership qualities, or as one informant put it, typically they "do not understand the role of religious leaders to hold society to account morally." Instead it is more likely that the local priests, by cleaving to the ethno-religious aspects of their faiths, will be active promoters of nationalist attitudes in the mosque or church.

An exception to the apparent low levels of authority commanded by religious leaders at the village level is the Catholic priests in **Western Herzegovina**. Possibly owing to their greater prominence in the daily lives of ordinary people gained by the importance placed by the Catholic Church on

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unofficially, until the liberalising reforms of the 1960s ushered in a more permissive society – although one in which the association of religion with shows of national identity continued to be suppressed (Ramet, 1989).

[17] Two Serb interviewees remarked on the increase of young Serb Orthodox from urban centres around the former Yugoslavia taking the 'extreme' step of opting for a monastic life – so much so that nearly all the younger monks in Kosovo were from outside the province.

[18] Small numbers of the followers of Wahhabism have been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the war, when Mujahadin fighters were thought to have introduced this extreme form of Islamic worship. During 2007, after a number violent incidents involving Wahhabis at local Sarajevo mosques, there have been calls on the Islamic Community to take measures to control the movement (see Ahmetašević, N., Balkan Insight 21 March 07). In Serbia's predominantly Muslim Sandžak, police discoveries of bomb making equipment was linked to a small number of the region's approximately 200 Wabbi members (see Maksimović, Z. Balkan Insight 15 June 07)

[19] One Serb informant said that of the total number of those considered to be Serb Orthodox, perhaps 6 million adults and children in total, only around 300,000 were considered by the Church to be active worshipers.

[20] The low educational standard of many priests and imams is a result of the lack of training facilities in communist times and the tendency at the time for cadre to be drawn from traditional rural backgrounds. The Roman Catholic apprentices often received more advanced education by being sent for schooling in Italy and elsewhere. Since 1990 all religious groups have increased the number of training schools and theological faculties. E.g. At the end of the 1980s there were only two madrasas in the Balkans – one in Sarajevo, one in Pristina – and one theological faculty in Sarajevo. By 2000 there were 6 madrasas in Bosnia and one each in Kosovo, Macedonia and Sandžak, as well as two new higher schools in Bosnia and one in Kosovo (Bougarel, undated) Today, of the 600 imams working in Kosovo, 115 have passed through the Faculty of Islamic Studies, opened in 1993).

pastoral care,[21] they are reported to possess the authority of moral arbiter in many places. One informant claimed that in the political sphere one could achieve very little without first gaining the approval of the local Catholic priests. This is a lesson not lost on the Croatian nationalist political party the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) which, according to Ivo Marković, the prominent Franciscan peace activist, has bribed the often impoverished Catholic priests on a number of occasions to gain their support during election campaigns.[22]

Understanding the influence of churches and religious communities as institutions and through their leaders is a little more complex. In **Serbia** there is the feeling, perhaps born out of frustration, that the churches have little influence on public life. This is particularly so for the large number of minority faiths, including the Protestant churches of Vojvodina, which appear to take on a public role and address their believers through the media only at times of high religious festivals (such as Easter or Christmas). The SOC, however, in accordance with its own myths of origin, sees itself as part of the State. Accordingly, its bishops are cited on a daily basis in the Serbian media pronouncing on all things from public morals to foreign policy, and as an institution it claims the right to be consulted on a variety of issues by dint of 'its righteous place in society' (B92 news 06/04/07). Owing to its reputation in history as the only institutional protector of Serb interests, and its central role in the formation of Serbian identity, the SOC is the most respected public institution in Serbia (and also in Montenegro even, where it remains more trusted than its Monetegrin rival – see www.cedem.cg.yu). Its public activity owes a lot to the personal style and even political and social views of its bishops, as well as those of its overall leader the Patriarch,[23] but in general the SOC is listened to and is a major force in shaping public opinion.

It is over the issue of **Kosovo** that the SOC is perhaps most active politically. Here the hard-line nationalist Bishop Artemije has been a constant public advocate of non-negotiation and no compromise with the Albanian Kosovars, whom he portrays as jihadist Muslim extremists and drug traffickers. Other bishops, such as Amfilohije, Bishop of Montenegro and the Littoral, have contributed to the SOC's putting on the cloak of national leadership on this issue by appealing, for example, for foreign (Russian and Chinese) support in blocking international attempts to impose a diplomatic solution (B92 news 02/04/07).

The licence the SOC enjoys to proclaim on all and anything is a sign for some commentators (Vukomanović 2005), Petakov 2007) of the extent to which the SOC has been able, since the fall of Milošević in 2000, to occupy the position of *de facto* state religion. Despite the passing of a new law on religion in 2006, which defines equal rights to seven 'traditional' religious communities,[24] the SOC has managed to gain additional rights and powers which make it first among equals. As early as December 2000 the army adopted Serbian Orthodoxy as its religion on the grounds of historical continuity and cultural importance, and the appointment of a SOC Bishop for army relations has led to mass christenings of soldiers. The SOC has also been singled out for special financial support, including the imposition of a special levy or tax on all postage stamps to pay for the completion of the Saint Sava Cathedral in Belgrade, as well as provision of 250 Euro / month subsidy to all SOC

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[21] The pastoral role of all the main religions in the region is judged to be either poorly developed or absent.

[22] According to Ivo Marković during the recent Croatian general election, in which Bosnian Croats may vote, the ruling HDZ attempted to buy the support of Catholic priests with a rumoured 20 – 30 million Kuna (3 – 4 million Euro). Ivo Marković made similar allegations about the Bosnian HDZ concerning its radical nationalist election campaign in 2000 (see interview with Marković by Stojan Obradović at Marković's website: www.pontanima.ba)

[23] The current Patriarch, 93 year-old Pavle, is at the time of writing extremely ill and has been more of less incapacitated for some months.

[24] The Religions Law of May 2006 is highly controversial and considered by many to be discriminatory, including the Council of Europe and the OSCE. It recognises only seven religious communities – the SOC, Roman Catholic Church, Slovak Lutheran Church, Reformed Church, Evangelical Christian Church (another Lutheran Church), and the Islamic and Jewish communities. These groups will receive substantial state financial support, VAT exemptions, and the right to perform marriages, burials and to maintain marriage registers. Other religious communities would be denied these rights and have strongly criticized the bill. A major criticism is that the only communities recognized are essentially mono-ethnic, thus discriminating against multi-ethnic religious communities, making the law unconstitutional (see reports 30/07/04 & 23/05/06 at www.forum18.org)

priests and monks working in Kosovo and beyond the borders of Serbia. In addition, the theological faculty of the SOC has been incorporated fully into the state-run Belgrade University. SOC influence within both the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education is such that one commentator (Rajić 2005) has remarked that both ministries act as if they were branches of the SOC.

Perica (2002) makes the claim that in **Croatia** Catholicism also operates as a *de facto* state religion and that the country is prone to the same clericalist tendencies that are clearly at work in Serbia. However, while the admittedly nationalist Church among the Croats enjoyed disproportionate secular power during the Tudjman era, this has been superseded by a stricter application of legislation designed to enforce the separation of religion and State.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, religious leaders, particularly the respective heads of the Islamic Community and the Catholic Church, Reis-ul-Ulema Mustafa Cerić and Cardinal Vinko Puljić, are prominent in public life. In line with their pastoral concern for the ethno-nation they are most visible in attempting to influence the course of formal politics which remains both nationally determined and nationalistic. Cerić's support in the last elections of 2006 of the Party for BiH's (SBiH) candidate for the Bošnjak seat in the tripartite presidency, Haris Silajdžić, is believed to have been instrumental in Silajdžić's success. At the same elections Puljić publicly threw all his weight behind a new anti-reformist Bosnian Croat party, HDZ 1990, which had formed in protest at the original HDZ in BiH's support for proposed constitutional amendments which would have strengthened the power of the State over the local interests of the nations.

In **Kosovo**, Albanian members of the Catholic Church and Islamic Community were not convinced that their leaders are able to influence the ethnic community on mass, whether on spiritual or political matters. All are clear that religion should not have a place in politics, and they expressed the belief that the Albanian Kosovar community places greater trust in its politicians than in its religious leaders. This being said, there are indications that over the past year, during the high tension surrounding the seemingly interminable negotiations over Kosovo's status, religious leaders have shown an increasing willingness to act as political agents by making public declarations in support of Albanian claims to independence.

3.2.3 Religious education in schools[25]

Some form of religious education has been introduced into public schools in all the successor countries of former Yugoslavia,[26] with the exception of Montenegro and the non-Serb areas of the province of Kosovo, which retain the tradition of secular schooling inherited from former Yugoslavia. In all countries, except Slovenia,[27] the model adopted is multi-confessional and multi-denominational, but the classes available rarely cover all the registered religious communities.

Although religious education is usually optional, and an alternative subject such as Civic Education (Serbia) or Ethics (Croatia) may be offered, in almost all cases its introduction has been at the insistence of the dominant religious communities which have pressed, with the support of major nationalistic parties, for confessional religious education. Wherever it is provided, religious education is taught in segregated classes and a comparison of text books has shown that for all faiths and countries, subject content is similar in emphasising doctrine, ritual and church / community history and being strictly confessional; that is, they give little attention to other religions. In Bosnia and Herzegovina all three main religions, SOC, Islam and Roman Catholicism explicitly link religion to national identity.

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[25] The following section is based on Kubarić, Z. & Moe C (eds.) (2006) *Religion and Pluralism in Education*, Novi Sad: CEIR

[26] In Macedonia, optional religious education will be made available in public schools from the start of 2008/9 school year, which in theory will be multi-confessional and denominational.

[27] Slovenia has an optional non-confessional subject, Religions and Ethics.

While the motivations for introducing confessional religious education are more than likely those of cultural defence (and it should not be forgotten the conditions of ethno-national conflict during, or after which religious education was introduced in these countries), aimed at bolstering both faith and national identity, a number of informants for this study, particularly those from Serbia and BiH, singled out religious education in schools as an important factor in reproducing national divisions and antagonisms in society.

3.3 The role of religion in the Balkan conflicts

It is generally agreed that the Balkan conflicts were not religious in nature; that is, religious differences were not the cause of conflict, religious leaders or religious fanatics were not to the fore in conducting the wars, and religious conversions were not sought through fighting. Rather, wars were fought over resources, principally territory, as well as economic and political capital, in the name of the ethno-nation. However, owing to the identification of religion with national identity, the wars came to embody important ethno-religious elements, expressed through the rhetoric of nationalist leaders as a means of demonstrating their credentials to command. Whether or not nationalist leaders believed their own ethno-religious rhetoric,[28] at the level of the masses it was taken quite seriously (Johnston & Eastvold 2004: 223), and would provide 'a rationale for ongoing violence and the complete breakdown of inter-ethnic rapport' (Cohen 1998: 65). The effectiveness of the messages of religious motivation and hate is illustrated by the massive destruction wreaked on religious monuments across the region, but also witnessed in prayers on the battlefield, clergy in uniform, religious insignia in battle and combat units bearing the name of religion.

The charge levelled against the religious communities, however, is that they did very little to distance themselves from the wars. In particular, little was done to condemn unambiguously those who started the conflicts or assisted them to spread, and there was a signal failure to expose or denounce atrocities done by their own nation. In seeking to fulfil their own mission to protect and promote the ethno-nation or to gain credibility with the nation, religious leaders forgave their religious creed for 'national idolatry' and therefore supported and legitimised aggressive nationalism and war (Dugandžija 2001 & Powers 1998).

Arriving at a balanced assessment of the activity of each religious community over this period is extremely difficult as official policies changed over time, depending on the political situation at any one moment, and the activities of individual priests on the ground were not always in accordance with decrees from on high. So, for example, Cardinal Kuharić of Zagreb and Cardinal Puljić of Sarajevo 'strongly condemned the extremism and violence of the Bosnian Croats during the Croat-Muslim fighting of 1993 and efforts to create Greater Croatia,' gaining the opprobrium of both Tudjman's government and the Bosnian Croat leadership (Powers 1998: 229). Later, however, in 1995, many RCC leaders expressed their joy at Tudjman's resort to violence to retake Serb-held areas in Croatia, and there was a singular silence at Serb claims of ethnic cleansing of the 200,000 or more inhabitants of Krajina and Eastern Slavonia (Powers 1998: 230).

3.3.1 Serbian Orthodox Church

From early on in the Yugoslav crisis, the SOC showed itself to be clearly ambivalent towards Milošević, pleased with his politics of promoting Serb interests throughout the region, but suspicious of the regime's openly socialist orientation. Following Serb-Croat fighting in 1991, the outbreak of war in Bosnia in April 1992 and the imposition of sanctions on the rump Yugoslavia, the SOC and its leadership adopted an openly hostile stance towards Milošević, Patriarch Pavle even calling for his resignation (Cohen 1998: 71).

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[28] It has been remarked that of all main nationalist leaders of the time, almost all, with the notable exception of Alija Izetbegovic, were ex-members of the Communist party who had hitherto shown no interest in religion whatsoever. Commentators have often concluded that only Alija Izetbegovic and Radovan Karadžić behaved as if they were true believers of their respective faiths.

From another perspective the SOC should be perceived as an important actor in fanning the flames of nationalism and inciting violence by its persistent and often exaggerated depictions of persecutions suffered by minority Serb communities in the region. As early as 1982 twenty-one leading Serbian Orthodox clerics issued what became known as the 'Appeal'[29] in which, as a response to the high levels of Serb migration[30] from the province and the disproportionately high fertility rate of Albanian Kosovars, it was stated that 'it is not exaggeration to say that a planned GENOCIDE (emphasis in original) is being perpetrated against the Serbian people in Kosovo' (Filipović: 358).   The signatories included three of the SOC's most respected theologians, Atanasije Jevtić, Irinej Bulović and Amfilohije Radović who would all participate in an inflammatory public campaign in defence of Serbianism over the next ten years. In *Pravoslavlje* [Orthodoxy], the official publication of the SOC, again from 1982, Atanasije talks of 'Albanian Nazis' with a long-term goal of 'extermination of the Serb people' and a 'genocidal intention' that has risen from the level of whispers to that of 'psychological and physical terror' (Radić 1998: 164).

The SOC did not limit itself to attacks on Albanian Kosovars.   Atrocities against Serbs committed by Croats and Muslims in Croatia and BiH under the Fascist Ustaša regime during the World War II were revisited again and again in church publications. In the atmosphere of heightened national tensions as communist Yugoslavia began to unravel, the SOC issued statements about a 'resurrected Ustaša' against which Serbs should stand firm. In 1990, the Council of Bishops of SOC gained permission from the State to excavate and rebury with proper burial rights World War II Serb victims of mass murder across BiH, work which continued for most of 1991 (see Radić 1998: 164 -170).

Concerning the conduct of the wars across the Balkans, the role of the SOC is considerably more complex. At the grassroots there are certainly incidents of individual priests participating in the conflict by blessing fighters and celebrating atrocities, the most notorious being the case of Father Gavrilo of Prvina filmed while blessing members of the Scorpions paramilitary group prior to their murdering of six young men and boys from Srebrenica (see also Sells 1996 for other such cases). On other hand, there are examples of Serbian priests giving succour to members of other nationalities and also seeking dialogue. Father Sava and the monks at Dečani, in Kosovo, are a good example, who gave shelter to Albanians and Roma, as well as local Serbs, during the NATO bombings of 1999.

Concerning the wars in **Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the leadership of the SOC maintained broad support for the local Serb leaderships and their aims of establishing breakaway Serb states, while generally dodging moral questions concerning violence and injustice. Patriarch Pavle was the most forthright in the SOC in promoting conciliation, making repeated calls for peace before and at the beginning of the BiH conflict,[31] warning Serb soldiers against aggression and comitting atrocities, and taking the unprecedented step during wartime of meeting with the religious leaders of the other two participants in the conflict. At the same time, however, Pavle was not beyond adopting a provocative stance, refuting publicly in 1991 the possibility that Serb populations in the Krajina could ever form part of a Croatian state, citing reasons of genocide over the Serbs in World War II[32] (Radić 1998). In 1993, Pavle's refusal to support the Vance-Owen peace plan, which attempted to create a balance of powers between the three warring factions, suggested he could not accept relinquishing any of the 70% territorial control the Serb forces had gained through military conquest up to that point.

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[29] The Appeal By The Clergy Of The Serbian Orthodox Church was issued on Good Friday 1982

[30] Allcock (1999) says that 'studies conducted by (Serb) social scientists, however, have indicated that economic reasons, and considerations of social advancement, have provided the principal motive force for the migration of Serbs [from Kosovo], and not ethnic conflict.'

[31] In some cases, these were issued in cooperation with or as a result of meetings with other national or religious leaders, such as Alija Izetbegović and the Mufti of Belgrade, Hadži Hamdia Jusufspahić, on separate occasions.

[32] Pavle presented his concerns in a letter to Lord Carrington, the head of the International Conference on Yugoslavia, in which he said that Serbs in the Croatian border regions could only have a future under the same roof with Serbia and that 'It is time to comprehend that the victims of genocide cannot live together with their former but perhaps also their future executioners.' These thoughts were also presented to all participants of the peace conference in a second letter.

Over the three-and-a-half years of the Bosnian war, leading SOC bishops maintained strong support for the Bosnian Serb political and military leadership. *Pravoslavlje* was to write that the Bosnian Serb army fought in accordance with the Orthodox tradition and modelled itself on previous Serbian national heroes (Radić 1998: 176). On the occasion of various peace negotiations and the presentation of peace plans over the course of 1994 and finally in 1995, the Council of Bishops was always unable to provide its assent for reasons of partitioning of the Serb people (from the fatherland) and lack of self-determination (that is, the right to be incorporated into Serbia).

In **Kosovo**, as the Kosovan Albanian resistance against the Serbs turned to violence in 1998, the future hard-line Bishop Artemije with his personal advisor and spokesman, Father Sava of Dečani, was extremely active in creating an alternative voice to that of Milošević and Belgrade, one that stressed moderation and called for real dialogue with the Kosovan Albanians. In the immediate aftermath of the bombings he sent out a potentially powerful message of conciliation by meeting with KLA commander, Hasim Thaçi (24 June 1999). However, over time, and as a response to seemingly uncontrollable levels of violence inflicted on the Serb community by the Albanian majority seeking revenge, Artemije's public activity turned to concentrate on the strenuous lobbying of the international community to protect his community.

3.3.2 Islamic Community

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** it can be reasonably argued that the Bosnian Muslims were the greatest victims from the outbreak of war, as they were the group which identified most with former Yugoslavia, both from a political point of view and from their position as one of the most secular groups. The Muslims were also the group least prepared militarily for conflict. Despite this their leadership, effectively the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), even in its earliest stages showed signs of increasingly militant pan-Islamism among many of its leaders who made strong overtures to the Islamic community and local imams for support. Religious figures showed full support for the SDA and Izetbegović's brand of Islamic politics, being present at all its meetings from the start. In effect a 'marriage of convenience' was created between the two, which gave religious legitimacy for SDA leadership, while strengthening position of Muslim clerics and the Islamic Community in society.

Writing in *Dani* (a leading Bosnain weekly political magazine) in 1999 (2 July), Xavier Bougarel makes the case that during the war, the Islamic Community in BiH, headed by the newly appointed Mustafa Cerić (more 'enthusastic' on Islamic observance than the displaced moderate Reis of former Yugoslavia, Jakub Selimovski), cooperated with the pan-Islamists in the SDA to carry out a radicalisation and Islamisation of public life, including the Army of BiH, to the disadvantage of those Serbs, Croats and any other non-Muslims that had remained loyal to the new state. Islamisation of the masses was resisted by the ordinary people, and the Islamic Community and the SDA would resort to utilising Islam and its stricter practices, allied to features of more specificly Bosnian culture as a way of strengthening a Muslim national identity and controlling the population. Cerić, for example is notorious for re-introducing the *fetwah* (theological decree) banning the consumption of pork and alcohol and also the practice of mixed marriages, although he was not completely successful in imposing his will.

Paul Mojzes (in Velikonja 2003) notes that the practice of sending theology students to very conservative Islamic countries contributed to the Islamisation in BiH and increased a fear of Christians that could only have a negative effect on the conflict. We might also add the Islamic Community's receipt of considerable financial aid from these same countries, as well as the acceptance of extremist mujahideen fighters into the Army of BiH.

Bougarel implies that the conditions of war were broadly advantageous to the Islamic Community, despite the enormous damage inflicted on the country's mosques, which might explain the

apparent unwillingness of Reis Cerić during the war to compromise or to preach a message of peace.

3.3.3. Roman Catholic Church

Archbishop Franjo Kuharić was always clear that he wanted to maintain a separation of state and religion during and after the wars in Croatia and BiH, and was not willing to endorse Tudjman or his HDZ party. However, many Catholic bishops considered the HDZ as both the party that best represented Croatian interests and as an all-Croat anti-communist movement that would provide greater autonomy for the Church among the Croats. Kuharić and other bishops supported both the independence of Croatia and the establishment of the HDZ in BiH and thus *de facto* legitimised the forces that would effect the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia (Mojzes in Velikonja 2003).

Once war had broken out, in both Croatia and BiH, the RCC leadership, as we have seen, was alone in criticising the excesses of its own national forces, even if these criticisms were not sustained in the long run.

3.4 Relations between the religious communities

Not surprisingly interfaith relations, especially between the main religions associated with the ethno-nation, reached their nadir during the conflicts of the 1990s, a point from which they are still struggling to rise. However, inter-religious relations in the past were never close and there is no history of concerted interfaith collaboration in the region at either the grassroots level or within the hierarchies. Where cooperation has been fostered between the Christian denominations, or with the Islamic Community, by and large it has been 'sporadic' and 'a result of individual enthusiasm' (Perica 2002: 15). In former Yugoslavia there was also regular informal contact between faith leaders at the community level, such as the local imam taking coffee with the Orthodox priest, or joint membership of cultural associations.

On the other hand, there is much evidence to suggest deep-seated enmity between the main religions at varying times, particularly between the RCC and the SOC over issues related to national politics in the first Yugoslavia (Radić in Velikonja 2003). During Tito's Yugoslavia the SOC remained antipathetic to the RCC owing to the support lent by the Catholic Church and many of its priests to the World War II Croat fascist regime, the NDH (Independent State of Croatia) which had pursued a genocidal policy against both the Serb nation and the SOC.

As a result of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), the Catholic Church made attempts to improve relations with the Orthodox Church and other Christian denominations. In 1966, the RCC initiated annual interfaith prayers in all its dioceses in Yugoslavia, partly building on an initial spontaneous collaboration between the Catholic bishop of Split-Makarska and a local SOC priest in Dalmatia. The SOC did not respond to the ecumenical initiative of the Vatican council, owing to the suspicion that it was a ploy to increase RCC political power, but also to the antagonisms continuing from World War II. Perica (2002: 32-3) says that despite this, 'a kind of ecumenical movement' occurred at the grassroots across Yugoslavia at this time, drawing in Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, Jews and also Orthodox priests, which was especially strong in BiH.

Interviews made it clear that the orientation of the RCC as a religion remains ecumenical and this is a constant challenge to tendencies towards insularity and mistrust that Catholic priests in former Yugoslavia may be subject to as a result of the recent conflicts. Officially and at the broad international level, the SOC is committed to ecumenism. Not only has it been a member of the World Council of Churches, which brings together most Protestant and Orthodox denominations in the world, since 1968, it is also an active participant of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which has been underway since 1980. However, by nature the SOC is wary of ecumenical initiatives and two informants to this study made it clear that this wariness is a serious impediment for both leaders and ordinary SOC priests to improving relations with other confessions.

4. Work towards Reconciliation by Religious Communities in former Yugoslavia

4.1 Elite initiatives

In a report on the proceedings of an inter-religious conference in 2002 which brought together religious actors and NGO peace activists from BiH to discuss reconciliation in the region, Paul Mojzes remarks that while peace keeping (undertaken by international security forces) had to that date been successful, peace making or peace building by the major religions was hardly occurring at all (Mojzes 2002: 3). This statement reflects the continuing paucity of religiously based peace-building initiatives at all levels across the region.

The most prominent attempts at stimulating interfaith dialogue in former Yugoslavia have been those that aim to enlist the support and active participation of the leaders or elites of the major religious communities in order to establish institutional means of creating interfaith cooperation and dialogue that might create wider pressures for peace in society or politics. In the main, the field has been dominated by successive attempts, first in BiH and then in Kosovo and Macedonia, to create formal Inter-religious Councils, under the leadership of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), an American-run coalition of world religions. In order to fulfil its mission of promoting peace throughout the world, the WCRP works mainly to establish permanent Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs), usually registered as national NGOs, at the leadership level in conflict and post-conflict countries. To date, the WCRP boasts of having instigated IRCs in 55 states around the world since it first became involved in religious peace-building efforts in the 1970s.

The experience of IRC's in the region is decidedly mixed. Those times when the IRCs have functioned as they were intended, with their members showing leadership while speaking with one voice against conflict and violence, illustrate the importance of religious hierarchies for interfaith dialogue and the promotion of peace. Far too often, however, religious leaders have demonstrated their unwillingness or inability, owing to political constraints within their own communities, to participate in substantive forms of cooperation.

4.1.1 Inter-Religious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In BiH, the WCRP faced considerable challenges in gaining the confidence of religious leaders to embark on a process of interfaith dialogue. Enlisting support for a first meeting in October 1996 was only achieved through a careful process of negotiation in unilateral meetings and by bringing international pressure to bear from within the faith communities, such as from the Vatican and Patriarch Aleksi and Mitropolitian Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, on the local Roman Catholic and Serb Orthodox leaders respectively. Later on, as the Islamic Community dragged its feet over signing up to what would be the IRC's statement of values and founding document ('Statement of Shared Moral Commitment') and also cancelled a conference planned for December 1996 owing to 'internal politics', the WCRP turned to Islamic leaders Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan, Kamel al Sharif, Sectretary-General of the International Islamic Council, and Dr al Obeid, Secretary-General of *Rabitat* to persuade Bosnian Muslim officials to remain in the negotiation process (Buckner 2005).

The IRC, consisting of the leaders of the four traditional faiths in BiH[33] - Vinko Cardinal Puljić, Catholic Archbishop of Sarajevo, Reis-ul-Ulema Dr Mustafa Cerić, head of the Islamic Community in BiH, Mitropolitan Nikolaj, the leading Serb Orthodox bishop in BiH and Mr Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish Community – was inaugurated on 9 June 1997. In the early years the IRC met every two months and also attended a large number of internationally organised peace conferences in the region and beyond. The various declarations that the IRC issued at this time calling for peace, tolerance, reconciliation and unity were considered to be brave and important. A good example is

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[33] The IRC is not completely representative of BiH's religions. The various, Protestant denominations are not included, and the large Franciscan community is represented by the Catholic Archbishopric.

the *Statement of Public Repentence*, issued by the Bosnian Catholic and Orthodox leaders in 1998, asking for forgiveness for what each group had done to the other. A case study of the IRC (Buckner 2005) assesses that 'by the end of 1999, the IRC was speaking with one voice on matters of religious cooperation and coexistence across the globe,' and that in total the Council 'exerted a significant influence on the propagation of religious tolerance and reconciliation after the war.'

On the other hand, shows of religious unity were often greeted with scepticism by ordinary Bosnians. Gojko Berić, a Sarajevan journalist acclaimed for his ceaseless war on nationalism, remarked in December 2001 (when the festivals for Eid and Christmas unusually coincided) on seeing the IRC's Christian and Muslim leaders appearing together on TV as they exchanged messages of peace and seasonal goodwill, 'I know that there isn't an iota of honesty or brotherly love between them. If there were, their flocks would not be so alienated (Berić, 2005: 36, consultant's translation).

Two conflicts within the IRC membership in 2003 and 2004 led to the Council effectively ceasing to work while apparently confirming Berić's cynicism. In August 2003 the Presidency of BiH received an invitation from the Vatican to sign a Concordat and establish a formal relationship between the two countries. With the Concordat the Catholic Church would be able to register with the Vatican and achieve greater protection within BiH. The Presidency asked to receive the advice of the IRC at a specially convened meeting, which Cardinal Puljić was unable to attend. The IRC failed to come to a definitive decision owing to the Cardinal's absence, a position he interpreted as an unwillingness to support the Catholic Church in the matter. The Cardinal withdrew from the Council in August 2003 and in a further miscommunication he accused the Reis-ul-Ulema in a newspaper article in the spring of 2004 of being unsupportive after Dr Cerić had written letters in support of the Cardinal to the government.[34]

Later in 2004, a second conflict affecting the IRC occurred, resulting this time in the SOC interrupting its participation. On 1 April, SFOR international peace keeping troops raided SOC property in Pale in their search for indicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić. In the process the local Orthodox priest and his son were both badly injured in an explosion. The WCRP expressed it condolences for the attack in a note to Mitropolitan Nikolaj, but not all the members of the IRC condemned the use of violence. The SOC was outraged not only at SFOR's behaviour, but also at the IRC's failure, and so formally withdrew from the IRC in protest. With half of the Council now missing, the Jewish and Islamic representatives suspended the IRC in April 2004.

In 2005, with the IRC still inactive, the assessment of a UNDP team investigating transitional justice in BiH reported that 'none of the religious leaders interviewed[35] [...] demonstrated a strong inclination to play an important role in promoting reconciliation or inter-faith dialogue among their constituencies.' Even though the IRC leaders have now officially reconciled their differences and the Council is again working, the IRC is today often dismissed scornfully by grassroots peace activists as an expensive irrelevance. It has reduced the frequency of its regular meetings to only three, maybe four times a year and, while in theory it is still the highest forum for establishing interfaith dialogue and moral leadership in BiH, its main task is to act like an NGO governing body by giving guidance to a variety of dialogue projects administered at a lower and less public level by the organisation's professional full-time Secretariat. These include, for example, yearly youth

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[34] It was the conclusion of IRC members Mustafa Cerić and Jakob Finci that the Cardinal's behaviour had more to do with an internal conflict within the Conference of Catholic Bishops (who are four in number in Bosnia) concerning inter-religious cooperation.

[35] These included IRC members Dr Mustafa Cerić (Islamic Com.), Jakob Finci (Jewish Com.), as well as Mato Zovkić (Vicar General of the Catholic Church in BiH and advisor to Vinko Puljić) and Vladislav Radujkovic, General Secretary, Orthodox Diocesis of Banja Luka. .

camps, exchanges between Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic (Fransiscan) theology students, or the promotion of the new Law on Religion through the organization of round tables in the community.[36]

During conversations with members of the Secretariat, as well as Council member Jakob Finci, it was suggested that the IRC is doing little nowadays to promote its goals of 'increasing the awareness of the importance of inter-religious dialogue' in BiH and of 'promoting the relationship between the State and the faith communities through mutual commitments.' Finci, who has been one of the most vociferous and persistent advocates for the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission in BiH,[37] said the IRC potentially had an important role in working publicly to establish greater trust between the nationalities of BiH, as the process of truth telling was not enough on its own. However, not only did he doubt whether the greater mass of people actually heed what their religious leaders say, he was clear that the Council members had come to an understanding not to talk of difficult or sensitive issues which might divide the group – such as, forgiveness, or responsibility of the faith community, or the role of religion in politics. Instead, over time the IRC had limited its interractions to subjects such as establishing a legal framework for freedom of workship, or the restitution of property taken by the Yugoslav regime after World War II.

Members of the Secretariat agreed that, aside from the ongoing process of seeking justice for war crimes, lasting peace and reconciliation in BiH depended on a general process of opening up of society to truth. Religious leaders, and by extension the IRC, had a special role here in, firstly calling people to reveal the facts of the past and to tell their own stories and, secondly to promote forgiveness on the one hand and spiritual understanding and support for the victims of these histories on the other, through public advocacy. However, religious leaders were judged to be ill-prepared to accept this responsibility owing to fear of pubic opinion within their own communities.

4.1.2 Inter-Religious Council in Kosovo

Enthused by its apparent success in BiH, the WCRP made an early attempt in the immediate post-conflict chaos to establish an Inter-Religious Council in Kosovo, modelled on similar lines. Apart from a Council of the province's main religious leaders, a working group of six high-level priests and imams (two from each of the Islamic Community, RCC and SOC) would undertake regular inter-faith communication, draft statements and carry out advocacy for peace. A women's group and what is described as a group of 'enthusiasts' were formed to engage in practical, grassroots inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue. However, today, Kosovo's IRC no longer functions, its working group met for the last time in 2003 and the coffin lid was put on the Council's grassroots activities by the ethnic disturbances of March 2004.

Historically, relations between the main religions in Kosovo have not been close (Zefi 2006), but cooperation between their leaders was established at a Conference of Religious Leaders on 18

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[36] Originally, the IRC set up 5 working groups: legal affairs, women's group, youth group, media and religious education. Interviews with the secretariat and Jacob Finci suggest that these groups are now more or less moribund. Projects are organised for specific groups by the secretariat if resources are available.
The legal affairs group submitted a draft of the Law on "Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religious Communities and Churches" to the Presidency in late 2002. After revisions at the Ministry of Human Rights and full parliamentary process, the Law came into force in summer 2004.
The women's group was established in 2003 with a 'focus on social problems in BiH, such as poverty, education of the poor, women's rights and fostering cultural and religious heritage.' The group undertook a number of humanitarian projects to poor and displaced families, but also organised multi-faith seminars. Its most recent work was 'the publication of a book on religious customs of Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholics and Jews in BiH in March 2005. Education Working Group has worked together with Association of Blind Persons of BiH, to produce audio recordings of religious music and significant religious texts by the Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic communities for distribution to blind persons around the country. – www.mrv.ba
[37] In 2000, Jacob Finci founded the Association of Citizens for Truth and Reconciliation which worked to translate his and others' ideas into a draft law which was handed to the Ministry for Human Rights in 2002. There it has stayed, as there is little enthusiasm in the ministry, state government, or parliament for adopting such a commission.

March 1999, in Vienna, on the eve of the NATO bombing of Serbia.[38] The conference had been organised by a Jewish American peace NGO *The Appeal of Consciousness* and funded by the Austrian government. At the conference Bishop Artemije (SOC in Kosovo), Mufti Qemajl Morina (Islamic Community of Kosovo) and Bishop Marko Sopi (RCC) issued an appeal to all communities condemning the escalating violence, inter-ethnic hatred and the destruction of religious sites in Kosovo. However, the timing of the conference, so late in the course of both the increasing violence on the ground and the diplomatic process in France, condemned the religious leaders' first attempts at inter-faith dialogue and advocacy for peace to irrelevance.

After the official cessation of hostilities in June 1999, despite the general chaos and continuing violence, particularly against the Serb civilian population, the WCRP was able to build upon the apparent initial readiness of religious leaders to work together. On 13 April 2000, during a visit to Kosovo of members of the BiH IRC, Bishop Artemije, Mufti Rexhep Boja and Bishop Sopi created an IRC in Kosovo and issued a further statement condemning all forms of violence, especially that against innocent civilians and committing themselves to work together for peace and the respect of the human rights.

Subsequent IRC meetings appear to have been restricted to the joint attendance of leaders at conferences on foreign soil.[39] At one such meeting, organised by NCA in Oslo 2001, the Council succeeded in endorsing a plan or action to promote dialogue and the process of reconciliation among the inhabitants of Kosovo. This plan was to be overseen by the IRC's working group, but despite active facilitation, as well as administrative and financial support, from WCRP's office in Pristina (and also NCA), the working group achieved very little. In 2003, the IRC effectively ceased functioning after the working group met for what turned out to be the last time. A bitter dispute arising over the failure to implement the Oslo plan, brought to light a history of repressed resentments and antagonisms concerning the recent war, religious legitimacy and even the ownership of certain religious monuments.

Already by this time, it was clear that the IRC's leaders did not feel capable of meeting – partly for reasons of security, but mainly because of lack of leadership, commitment to dialogue and unwillingness to confront the nationalist politics of their respective ethnic communities. The disturbances of 17 March 2004, when nineteen people lost their lives and thirty Serb Orthodox churches were severely damaged or destroyed effectively drew a line under the IRC's work. The IRC failed to act in unison in condemning the violence and indeed the reluctance of individual leaders to address their own community in an appropriate manner deepened the mutual grievances of the religious leaders. It was only after March 2004 that Bishop Artemije, under whose jurisdiction all Serb Orthodox priests and monks in Kosovo fall, made clear the extent of his dissatisfaction with the position of the Serb community in Kosovo, by blocking all further official contacts between members of the SOC and their counterparts in the other faiths of the Albania community.

4.1.3 Interfaith conference in Kosovo 2006

An event that created some hope for an end to the hiatus in dialogue at the leadership level was a two-day Conference on Peaceful Coexistence and Dialogue in May 2006, instigated and supported by NCA in Kosovo, and hosted by the Serb Orthodox Patriarchy in Peć / Pejë. The conference was made possible by direct involvement of Patriarch Pavle and the SOC's Belgrade authorities who from 2005 on began publicly to adopt a more conciliatory position over Kosovo than Bishop Artemije. While Artemije was able to prevent the effective participation of a number of prominent Serb attendees, most notably Father Sava of Dečani, he had no authority to impede the Synod's

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[38] The Vienna conference coincided with the last days of the diplomatic Rambouillet peace negotiations. Failure by the Serbian delegation to sign the proffered agreement on 18 March, in contrast to the Kosovan Albanians, led to the start of the NATO bombings on 24 March.
[39] Locations included: Amman, Oslo, Sarajevo, Ankara and Tirana

official delegates, the abbot of the monastery of Dečani, vicar Bishop Teodosije and Bishop Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral.

The conference resulted in an ambitious, if unspecific, agenda covering eight points for regular meetings at leadership and municipal level,[40] interfaith dialogue and exchange activities between communities. NCA is working towards the organisation of a follow-up event sometime in 2008,[41] but the singular lack of initiative towards fulfilling the agenda from the religious communities themselves at any level is an indication of the general absence of real interest for this type of dialogue. In addition, continuing total segregation of the Albanian and Serbian communities, and the overawing effect of the seemingly endless political stalemate surrounding Kosovo's status, brings into question the feasibility of practice-oriented religious dialogue in Kosovo at this time.

4.1.4 Council for Inter-Religious Cooperation in Macedonia

Macedonia presents an exceptional case of inter-religious cooperation in the Balkans at the leadership level, even though its IRC is not registered and remains organisationally weak. Macedonia is the only former Yugoslav republic whose religious leaders, at the outbreak of hostilities in 2001, formally asked their followers not to take up arms against each other. The declaration made by the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) and the Islamic Community was agreed at a meeting in Morges, Switzerland, in June 2001. This high-level agreement was achieved through the good offices of the Council of European Churches and the World Council of Churches via its cooperating agency on the ground, a national NGO, the MCIC. What was remarkable about the declaration was that both communities, which are associated with the Macedonian and Albanian national populations respectively,[42] had been engaged in an ongoing public spat over theology, cultural and ethnic difference and political influence over recent months. This quarrel reached its climax in the very month of the declaration with the MOC calling for a holy war against Albanian 'terrorists who are stealing our territory' (Perica 2002: 175), justifying war as the only way of achieving lasting peace (Medienhilfe 2001).

The declaration was followed up a year later with the first of a series of international conferences on inter-religious dialogue organised by US theologians Paul Mojzes (Methodist) and Leonard Swidler (Roman Catholic) from the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Scholars Trialogue and sponsored by, amongst others, the US Institute for Peace (USIP) and the World Conference for Religions and Peace (WCRP), once again.

The first conference, 'Confidence Building Between Churches and Religious Communities in Macedonia Through Dialogue', was held in Ohrid in May 2002. It too was remarkable for receiving domestic political support in the highest quarter. It was the then President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, who approached USIP with a request for support to inter-faith cooperation in Macedonia, believing that it could help prevent the country sliding into civil war and at the same time strengthen civil society (Smock 2004). Attended by 50 representatives from Macedonia's Orthodox, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Jewish communities (with a further 40 foreign religious scholars), the conference resulted in agreements by church leaders to appoint members to an Inter-religious Council, to meet regularly amongst themselves - even without the motive of a crisis - and to build cooperation between theological faculties.

In contrast to Kosovo and BiH, where WCRP was the main facilitating organisation, the conference agreements and other confidence building measures were operationalised by a local agency, MCIC, in its Bridging Religions Programme of 2002 – 2005, and subsequent extension to 2008. This programme not only worked directly with the religious leaders (its steering committee became the IRC in 2003 when the MOC joined), it also initiated a comprehensive programme of theological

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[40] See the 'Common Statement' from the Conference 2006

[41] The Islamic Community in Kosovo made clear its readiness to host this event in 2007. However, Artemije's continued intransigence has necessitated approaching the SOC once again at the central level as in 2006.

[42] 95% of Macedonians are Orthodox Christians, while 98% of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia are Muslim.

exchange and dialogue, between students and lecturers of the Macedonian Orthodox and Islamic faculties, and published a range of inter-faith information (a bulletin, a religious directory, calendars). Perhaps most significantly, in 2006 the IRC brought priests and imams together in a number of towns where the religious communities were segregated in order to discuss peaceful co-existence. It is by this kind of activity that the positive atmosphere developed between the religious communities may be passed onto to their congregations.

When Mojzes and Swidler returned late in 2004 for a round of lectures and meetings, and again in 2005 they found progress on all agreements and that leaders 'were working very well together, indeed'. The IRC had organised a number of inter-religious consultations at the municipal level on a draft new Law on Religions, after which it spent four whole days to draft a joint commentary to parliament, with recommendations.[43] Mojzes and Swidler (2005) were impressed with the spirit of cooperation and the level of understanding between the leaders, drawing attention to the fact that 'in 2001 the Muslims and Orthodox were killing each other while falling into civil war, and the religious leaders were not talking with each other.'

By 2007, the government was ready to organise a large scale conference of its own – the World Conference for Dialogue Between Religions, which was funded by UNESCO and which drew important religious figures from around the region to discuss peace, religion and education and common values with the representatives of 45 countries. The IRC was a major player at this conference.

Despite the generally positive assessments of the Macedonian IRC, some commentators, including those who are close to the IRC and MCIC's Bridging Religions programme, are more pessimistic. There is concern that over the last twelve months or so (2007), the IRC has become less active. The IRC remains poorly developed and depends to a large extent on the practical assistance of MCIC for many of its activities.

However, the Macedonian case is important because it has managed to combine a range of intervention levels to a positive outcome. There was early action at the elite level of global representative councils; the power of declarative action by the religious leaders themselves; the authority of detailed follow up by international theologians – partly, because Mojzes is originally Yugoslav; the patient and systematic work by a competent, local NGO with a detailed understanding of both secular and faith based civil society in Macedonia; and of course government support. The participation of a neutral NGO is unique in a region where secular civil society is much more likely to be opposed to the churches, or at least the dominant church.

4.1.5 Conclusion

The above three attempts to establish institutionalised forms of religious dialogue and reconciliation illustrate a number of features of religious communities and their leaderships that appear to be common across the region. Firstly, religious institutions are ill-prepared to take on the role of peace builders and *lead* their congregations towards reconciliation. Regardless of the mandate for peace building they are provided with by scripture, religious communities rarely have a clear policy or strategy concerning this issue. It is instructive, that in only one case during fieldwork, that of the Islamic Community in BiH, were religious representatives able to point to a clear written policy concerning inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation.[44] Generally where reconciliation is concerned the religious communities are what one Croatian informant described

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[43] The new Law of Religions, expected to come into force during 2008, is intended to provide more religious freedoms, in line with European and general international standards. However, concerns remain over whether more than one denomination from each religious community will be able to register or not. The MOC currently maintains a monopoly on legitimate Orthodox worship, effectively outlawing the Serbian Orthodox Church's Ohrid Archdiocese. Similarly, the Bektashi Community has no separate legal existence from the Islamic Community. Further draft versions of the law have cast doubts on the legality of minority religions building their own places of worship – see Djenović 1997.

[44] This document – Platforma Islamske zajednice u BiH za dijalog - available from the Faculty for Islamic Studies in Sarajevo, remains in a draft format and has not been broadcast to the members of the Islamic Community.

as *complacent*. Leaders appear to have little moral compunction in emphasising the importance of retributive justice over reconciliation, and where they do engage in interfaith activities, they seem to believe that abstract and anodyne declarations about cooperation and tolerance are sufficient in themselves to bring healing.

All religious communities find dialogue and reconciliation difficult to pursue, as they remain politicised, particularly in regard to nationalism and ethnic identity. In addition, deep divisions within many of the mainstream communities concerning struggles for internal power or policy vis-à-vis the ethno-nation and nationalist political parties, undermine the legitimacy of inter-religious activities entered into on behalf of the community.[45]

There is strong evidence that many religious leaders are intolerant of other faiths or denominations. This includes antipathy towards major religious communities born of the ethno-religious struggles of the past, as well as prejudice against minority or non-conformist denominations within one's own religion, and also faith-based organisations that are not directly connected to or under the control of the religious leaders.[46] .

4.2 Peace building from among the rank and file

4.2.1 Facilitating first contacts

For over ten years theologian and peace activist David Steele carried out conflict resolution trainings and facilitated interfaith dialogues with middle-level and grassroots religious leaders, first in Croatia and BiH during and after their respective wars, and then in post-conflict Kosovo. The aim of this work, which was sponsored by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), was to encourage the development of a 'critical mass of support for peace building by reconstructing relations in the community and developing constructive ways of handling grievances and differences' (Steele 1998: 246). It was offered as an alternative to 'traditional' approaches to interfaith dialogue which focus on engaging religious hierarchies in high-level official forums, such as the IRCs outlined above, which tend to be driven by the need to produce formal statements. According to Steele, in former Yugoslavia this has meant 'certain disputed topics are avoided, or that events become power contests between factions intent on controlling the outcome' (Steele 2002: 76). In addition, the peace process becomes dominated by lectures and empty formal debate rather than interaction involving all relevant parties.

Steele developed a specific cyclical technique or process relying heavily on storytelling before proceeding to concrete measures that were intended to 'guide people of faith away from the entrapment of nationalist hostility' into becoming 'agents of reconciliation.' The technique sought to assist people firstly to develop a full understanding of their own and their community's sense of victimisation, and then to explore with those from other religious communities the peace-building resources within their faith traditions.[47] Steele's accounts are liberally illustrated with stories of personal healing, acceptance of wrongdoing, and achievement of mutual understanding through an exploration of each other's faith. There are even moments of reconciliation and forgiveness.

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[45] Apart from the cases referred to above concerning SOC policy in Kosovo and the RCC's participation in the IRC of BiH, the most seriously divided community at present is the Islamic Community in Serbia's Sandžak. Here two factions, with separately appointed Grand Mufti, are vying for the loyalty of all of Serbia's Muslims. At the heart of the schism are questions of allegiance to local political parties (and by association to political factions within Serbia more generally), as well as the issue of whether the Islamic Community in Serbia should fall under the authority of the Islamic Community in Sarajevo or not.

[46] In BiH the RCC leadership dismisses members of the Franciscan order and peace activists (such as Marko Oršolić and Ivo Marković), who have been vociferous in opposing nationalism in the Church and upholding the separation of religion and formal politics, as 'only pleasing the non-Catholics.'

[47] See Steele, D 2003 for a detailed explanation of his 8-step process to break the cycle of victimisation and revenge. Also, Steele, D 1998.

Encouraging as Steele's written accounts are, his project has certainly not resulted in the critical mass of grassroots religious peace builders that were originally hoped for. Peace building initiatives originating in and carried out by the ordinary rank and file of religious officials are seemingly scarce. NCA Kosovo staff members working with local priests and imams towards interfaith dialogue report that there is almost no demand at the grassroots for this kind of activity. They are not aware of any other similar initiatives underway in Kosovo, and firmly believe that the few local level interfaith meetings that have taken place within the project so far would not have been possible without NCA's intervention.

Although the almost total segregation of Serbian and Albanian communities, and the prevailing political polarisation and extreme uncertainty in Kosovo makes grassroots activity especially difficult, the situation does not appear to be greatly more favourable elsewhere in the region. As already observed, local clergy are subject to a range of disincentives to seeking dialogue with their counterparts in other religions. Poor education, including low levels of religious literacy, especially of imams and SOC priests, leaves clerics ill-equipped to engage in theological or moral exchange. Often they are also poor communicators and are lacking in appropriate relational skills. At the village level in particular, priests are as prone to nationalism as are the members of their congregations. It may not be acceptable to be seen to be seeking contact with the "enemy", and in small, enclosed communities such behaviour may carry the risk of personal injury from local nationalist thugs. Priests and imams are also just as likely as anyone else in the locality to have suffered injury or loss during the war. Seeking reconciliation, therefore, may become as much a personal battle as a duty born of religious leadership in the community. Lastly, disapproval or even censure from those higher up in the religious hierarchy, may create seemingly insurmountable barriers.

Steele's writings point to two lessons. Firstly, that external facilitation is often needed to bring people together initially – both in the sense of providing logistical support for travelling across real or perceived lines of ethno-religious demarcation, and for providing a safe space where people do not feel threatened or at risk if they wish to express themselves. Where hierarchies are powerful and exert tight control, the external facilitator will have to work hard to gain the trust of high-level leaders to obtain permission to engage those at the grassroots. In a recent presentation to CSIS (2006), Steele explained how he worked for a period of two years (1993–5) with bishops of the SOC before attempting a multi-religious event that included Serbian Orthodox priests. External facilitation also provides religious leaders with a structured and non-threatening procedure and a set of techniques for exploring their own feelings, making safe contact with others, creating group trust and working together towards real dialogue and possible reconciliation.

The importance of facilitation to constructive interaction is illustrated by the ultimately non-productive experiences of two religious dialogue groups established by the WCRP in Kosovo as part of the IRC initiative. A working group of ordinary clerics or "enthusiasts" representing the three main faiths (Serbian Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam) met every few months over a period of about three years from 2001. The very act of meeting represented a positive achievement and could not have been realised without the good offices of WCRP. However, during the meetings, the participants were not able to "find a common language" and indeed, owing to a lack of direction and sensitivity in the mediation, over time the process degenerated into acrimonious debate and recrimination.

WCRP also established a parallel group for lay women with an interest in, or connection to religion.[48] The intention at the beginning was to talk about politics and areas of life where faith had a place. Inevitably the first meetings were difficult and the participants were mistrustful of one another. Here the process broke down almost immediately as painful experiences were opened up too quickly and once again accusations were exchanged over the numbers of killings, kidnappings, or forced evictions suffered by each side at the hands of the other. The women then made a

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[48] For example, intertviewee Svetlana Stević is married to the local SOC priest at Zvećan and runs the charitable organisation Mother of the Nine Jogović (Majka devet Jugovića), whose president is Bishop Artemije.

decision to avoid all contentious subjects, in effect excluding the possibility, or perhaps postponing the opportunity to work towards reconciliation. Instead, the group did attempt to find common ground by discussing a variety of subjects to which they could all identify as women – bringing up children, women's role at work or in religion, abortion etc – as well as organising a small number of exchange visits to religious sites during times of religious celebration.[49] According to the way it was described in interview, the women's group did establish cooperative relations between those of different faiths, and a form of cultural understanding was beginning to emerge. However, the shock of the disturbances of 17 March, 2004 forced an interruption in the work of both dialogue groups from which neither recovered.

In the long run, the failure to reconvene either working group owed more to the closure of WCRP's Kosovo office during the course of 2004 than lingering fears about those on the other side of the ethnic divide. The absence of a local organisation, however rudimentary, for carrying on the work of the working groups, led to their inevitable demise when the international facilitator, administrative body and funding agency left Kosovo. The second lesson to be gained from Steele's work is that interfaith dialogue is a long-term undertaking that requires a sustainable institutional setting in which to take place. At the grassroots, this will entail seeking the assistance of a local NGO or more likely encouraging and training participants to form their own organisation to carry on the work. Steele's work spawned two such participant-owned institutions, both of which originally grew up organically out of the wish of participants to 'to meet simply to further develop their relationships:' The Centre for Religious Dialogue (CRD), with offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, and the Inter-religious Centre in Belgrade (Steele 2002: 86).

4.2.2 Inter-Religious Centre, Belgrade – dialogue in a safe environment

Unfortunately, the CRD, after having played a key role in negotiating the formation of the IRC in BiH, has ceased working. The Inter-religious Centre, however, is now entering its twelfth year and has become part of the inter-religious landscape of Serbia and the region. It was officially founded in 2000 as a local organisation, but originally grew out of a group of people who began to meet and work together informally after a seminar in Valjevo in December 1997. In the group, which contained Orthodox, as well as Catholics and Protestants from Vojvodina, were Muslim leaders from Novi Pazar that were attending a dialogue session for the first time at the invitation of the Serbian Orthodox bishop, Bishop Lavrentije of Šabac-Valjevo.[50] From the very start, the group has been led by Catholic Serb Marijana Ajzenkol,[51] who is otherwise a teacher of mathematics and unusual among the members and users of the Centre in being neither a cleric nor an administrator in one of the religious communities.

The meat and drink of the Centre are the monthly meetings on a range of spiritual and cultural subjects – for example, a series on religious inspiration in art, or a programme of liturgical music sung by a local choir - that are attended by between ten and one hundred people, which have been organised in continuity since the Centre first convened. The Centre's aim is to provide a neutral space where individuals of the faith communities can meet in a safe environment. Ajzenkol believes that the Centre's longevity is built upon the trust that exists between its various

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[49] In 2003 women from the Islamic and Roman Catholic Communities visited the Serb Orthodox Monastery at Gračanica, and Serb women visited Catholic Churches and Mosques in Pristina.

[50] In a presentation to CSIS in 2006, Steele describes a remarkable moment of responsibility and generosity on the part of a SOC deputy bishop which led to the drawing-in and enthusing of the Muslim newcomers from Novi Pazar. Steele had been exploring the concept of religious confession and had traced it in the workshop back to its roots in the Old Testament and how it had been linked to the traditional lament for one's own suffering. At the end of the session, the deputy bishop recounted how a Serbian soldier who had been in the war in BiH had come to him and asked for confession – which in the SOC is done publicly in front of the congregation for all to see – for his part in the massacre of innocent civilians which he had been ordered to take part in. The deputy bishop then challenged all Serbian Orthodox priests present to apply the model of confession to themselves to acknowledge the terribly destructive role that their government, their soldiers and their church had played in the region's wars. This was shared with the Muslims present.

[51] Marijana inherited her Catholicism from her Croat father

individuals, which is now so complete that they no longer need to refer to each other's faiths. The purpose of the meetings is to go beyond the giving out of information to establish real communication as a basis for long-lasting relationships. The only expectation is that people will listen to each other and be a witness to their faith, rather than try to convince. Clerics of the various faiths appreciate the meetings because they are under no obligation to speak or pronounce; instead the meetings present one of the few opportunities for them to simply listen.

Other features of the Centre's work include the early encouragement and support of Bishop Lavrentije and Roman Catholic Archbishop Perko, prayer meetings, as well as periodical three-day retreats at various religious venues around Serbia (Ajzenkol 2007), and the reception of other inter-religious groups from the region sharing similar views and methods, with which it is networked. These include, RAND, Ivo Marković and his Pontanima Choir, as well as its current main donor, the Mennonite Central Committee.[52]

Despite the Centre's longevity, it is difficult to discern any impact arising from its activities. For example, the different faith communities have not yet managed to pray together; they pray for each other, but not with each other. Ajzenkol is also disappointed that the churches have not been able to build peace in the hearts of believers; that is, the Centre has not influenced the faiths to advocate for peace within their own congregations. For her, this will only be achieved once the faiths have begun to examine their own structures and reform themselves in line with the demands of contemporary life.

4.2.3 Bosnian Franciscans – positive provocation

In Bosnia, renowned Franciscan peace activists Ivo Marković and Marko Oršolić would agree with Ajzenkol in taking a critical stance to the mainstream religious institutions. No doubt influenced by the traditionally independent position the Franciscan order occupies in relation to the Vatican, and led by the Franciscan orientation to be a Witness to God's love - to act in the world with people and create a balance between action and spirituality (Conrad 2007) -, both friars have founded inter-religious grassroots organisations whose aim is to establish effective interfaith dialogue in order to promote healing between the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way they have distanced themselves from their own Bosnian Catholic hierarchy, and mainstream religious institutions generally, owing to what they consider to be their continuing support for nationalism and cultural separatism (Oršolić 1998: 263).

Ivo Marković founded the Face To Face Inter-religious Service (*Oči u Oči*) in 1996, with a mission to promote inter-religious dialogue, cooperation and understanding in BiH as a 'positive response to the widespread despair and ethno-religious hatred infecting the society of BiH.' In conversation, Marković emphasises the fear that ordinary people in BiH still have of cooperating, sharing and living with the "other", and the part that nationalist leaders continue to play, even now twelve years after the war, in increasing that fear. For Marković fear can only be dispelled by showing trust in the "other", creating relationships and crossing boundaries.[53] Face To Face aims to do this by seeking common ground and communion between the religious communities through dialogue, sharing traditions and prayer.

Since 1998 Face To Face has held at least two events annually, usually in the Franciscan church of Saint Anthony, that bring leaders of all the local religions together with members of the general

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[52] See below p. 37 for RAND and MCC.
[53] Ivo Marković has crossed real ethno-religious boundaries on his own on many occasions at a time when it was still dangerous to do so, exhibiting great emotional courage and physical bravery. His father, many of his family and most of his village were killed during the Muslim-Croat war in 1993. Later he visited, made peace with and ultimately made friends with Bošnjak IDPs that were occupying his father's and his brother's houses (Conrad 2007). After the war Marković also spent one day a week going on this own to Pale, the Serbian wartime capital in the mountains outside Sarajevo, to make contact with and talk to Serbian Orthodox priests and ordinary people. At the time this was extremely risky. Eventually the local Bosnian Serb police warned him off, claiming he was dangerous. From that time on, Marković only went with the accompgniment of foreign guests, for security (Shenk & Shenk 1999).

public in an act of joint worship. Every year in January, an ecumenical prayer service is held for members of the Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Churches, as well as Bosnia's small Protestant communities. Children from the surrounding region are invited regularly with their religious leaders to visit Sarajevo and be taken of a tour of the main places of worship of the city's four main religions (Serbian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Islam and Judaism). Over the years, Face To Face has organised seminars on women in theology in cooperation with women's NGOs Medica and Women to Women (*Žena Ženama*), and since 2006 it has been running a programme to assist women undertake graduate-level religious education in order to build a cadre of religious leaders with experience in grassroots peace building.

Face To Face is most famous for its multi-religious Pontanima choir, which has gained fame throughout the region and beyond. It was formed in 1996, partly out of necessity, when Marković and musical director Josip Katavić were faced with a shortage of Catholic singers at the re-forming of the choir at St. Anthony's after the war. However, Pontanima's orientation was always clear. Its aim is 'to create a symphony of religions, to bring together through song the three springs of monotheistic religion: Judaism, Christianity and Islam' (Conrad 2007). Initially its twelve singers concentrated on singing Christian music from the Western tradition, but gradually, as the choir grew to its present size of almost 70, Orthodox, then Jewish and finally Islamic songs were added to the repertoire.

From the start the choir has toured the villages and towns of BiH, with the aim of being a 'positive provocation' to those 'enslaved by nationalism, that there is another way to be, that religions can make positive contributions' (Conrad 2007). Despite being the object of occasional hostility from individuals with severely entrenched views, the choir is received enthusiastically wherever it goes. Interestingly its message has proved to be all too provocative for the leaders of Bosnia's Islamic and Roman Catholic communities, who have withdrawn their early support for Pontanima on the grounds that it is promoting syncretism.

IMIC, the International Multi-religious Inter-cultural Centre, "Together" (*Zajedno*) founded by Marković's fellow theologian and inmate at St. Anthony's, Marko Oršolić, shares much in common with Face To Face.   It too has a mission to work towards reconciliation through inter-religious dialogue and joint action in the community, emphasising togetherness of people from both a humanistic point of view and from the specifically historical perspective of a shared Bosnian cultural heritage. Most importantly, the call to dialogue is found in common 'religious roots' and the recognition that God in the monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, is one and the same (Oršolić 1998: 263).

Oršolić founded IMIC as long ago as 1991 (UN Human Rights Day, 10 December), as a response to the clouds of war gathering over BiH. Bringing fifty influential people from both secular and religious public life in Sarajevo together, its original form was that of an elite peace movement using the weight of philosophical and theological thought, combined with moral outrage, to bear on the politics of the time. During the war, as Oršolić recounts, joint prayer, meditation and a 'trialogue' for peace was established between members of Christian, Islamic and Judaic faiths. A key part of this was the organising of a number of high-profile more or less intellectually oriented symposia or conferences with the participation of theologians from Germany, USA and elsewhere.[54]

At the same time IMIC, in cooperation with the Bavarian Council of Churches, had established a centre in southern Germany to assist refugees from Sarajevo. This established the model for the type of organisation that IMIC has developed into today – a more or less project-based professional humanitarian-cum development NGO, carrying out a range of activities broadly influenced by the idea of religious dialogue. These include: running a 'house of peace' and multi-religious centre in the possibly appropriately named village of Silence (*Tišina*) in northern Bosnia

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[54] See Oršolić 1998: 267. Foreign theologians included Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, once again, and representatives of the Lutheran Church and Quakers in Bavaria, Germany.

which acts as a reception centre for returnees, providing temporary accommodation, preventative medicine, educational resources and document registration; coordinating a programme for inter-religious dialogue between religious leaders who work with youth from BiH, Croatia and Serbia, run by US NGO IREX in the USA; long-standing cooperation with Arizona State University to undertake research in BiH connected with religious tolerance among youth, religious education, religious heritage, and women's status in public life and politics.

Oršolić, himself, is a ceaseless advocate for social justice and religious truth in Bosnian society, who has repeatedly challenged religious leaders for forsaking spirituality in their quest to strengthen their religions as institutions, and for resorting to traditionalism and exclusionism in their compulsion to safeguard the ethnic nation. In particular, he has taken the Croatian Catholic Church to task for its support of nationalism in the recent wars and its failure (along with the Vatican) to acknowledge its implicit condoning of Nazi and Fascist atrocities of World War II,[55] arguing that it is impossible to expect the Serbian Orthodox leaders to condemn recent crimes if neither the Catholic or Islam hierarchies have still not denounced the crimes of sixty year ago.[56]

Face to Face and IMIC have survived with the support almost exclusively of foreign donors, especially Protestant churches, such as the Mennonite Central Committee, that share their enthusiasm for peace and the call to religious witness. Both organisations remain small and, although they cannot claim to have effected major change, they have both succeeded in different ways in providing visible and lasting models of peaceful co-existence that offer real hope for the future in BiH. The success of Face To Face and IMIC is largely dependent on the charisma of their leaders, Ivo Marković and Marko Oršolić and their anti-establishment, non-conformist views.[57] Ironically it is these views that makes these two peace builders so unpalatable to the religious mainstream and thus denies them of the support necessary to broaden their appeal to the masses.

4.3 Educational establishments as promoters of peace

The work of Oršolić and Marković illustrates the special contribution that religion can bring to peace building when freed from nationalism and the politics of identity. While these two Franciscans are treated as dissidents and non-conformists with the Bosnian Catholic Church, their insistence on our common humanity and a shared God, as well as the moral teachings of the Bible, represents a return to what Mozjes has called the 'theological center', when pointing out the direction needed for the Balkan religions to act effectively as peace builders (in Velikonja 2002). That is, a values base which emphasises trust between people, the need to accept responsibility for past actions, social justice, the acceptance of difference, and forgiveness.

4.3.1 Theological faculties, seminaries and colleges

The various seminaries, faculties and other religious colleges for undergraduate and postgraduate studies for those studying to be clergy, theologians and religious educators around the region are the sites where this values base is reproduced and disseminated. These colleges are also where much of the new social and theological thinking within the religions might be expected to take place. As educational establishments, they have a potential role in promoting peace in their coursework to students, but also in providing outreach to priests and imams and lay educators (teachers of religion in schools) to assist them adopt more conciliatory positions. In a special report for USIP on religious education, (2005), David Smock asserts that education on other religions is particularly important in universities and seminaries in countries where religious conflict is a problem. Knowledge of other religious communities is an effective antidote to hatred of other

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[55] Oršolić expounds this themes most explicitly in a historically documented book, Zlodusima nasuprot: Religija i nacionalsociajalizam (Against the Evil Ones: Religion and National Socialism), 2006.

[56] Ivo Marković is also an outspoken critic of the Catholic hierarchy's nationalism.

[57] Oršolić in particular appeals to Yugo-nostalgics, including the secular and atheist. He has his own page on a website dedicated to the Tito era – www.titoslavija.com – run by a humanist peace campaign.

faiths. In addition, the report claims that it is equally important to foster religious dialogue at the academic level, as at the grassroots.

Evidence shows that theological courses remain largely focused on the scholarly aspects of one's own faith, and that at the university level, the religious communities are doing little to teach each other's faith, or to promote aspects of peace building, such as inter-religious dialogue. The Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS) in Osijek, Croatia, which provides training for the Protestant churches in the region,[58].is a notable exception.   Not only does it adopt a holistic and integrative approach to all coursework that promotes respect for students' common Christian experience rather than adherence to a single dogma, it has begun to provide a number of important opportunities for students to apply themselves to the conditions of continuing conflict and violence in the Balkans.   The core course includes subjects such as, the Theology of Reconciliation, Mission as Transformation – Gospel and Culture, and the Psychology of Religion. ETS also offers a Masters in Practical Theology, which includes a unit on Conflict Resolution, as well as an extra-curricular course in Alternatives to Violence, run in cooperation with the Osijek Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights.[59] In addition, ETS has recently opened its own Centre for Justice Peace and Reconciliation,[60] which is developing a new Masters course in Peace Practice, whose specific purpose is to provide young pastors with in-depth training in peace-building. The positioning across the divided parishes of former Yugoslavia of clergy skilled in non-violent methods is one of the most beneficial faith-based peace-building activities available.   The absence of such skills amongst parish-level clergy of all types is a major constraint to reconciliation.

In Sarajevo, the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIN), has recently initiated a course in genocide studies as part of its three main theological undergraduate degrees. This is clearly a defensive response to the atrocities suffered by the Islamic Community in BiH at the hands of both Serb and Croat forces during the war (and not least the outrage of the Srebrenica massacre), and its main focus is the suffering of the Bošnjaks in the years 1992-5. On the other hand, the course places this experience in the context of other genocides or mass exterminations in history, so attempting a wider historical, religious and social understanding of other peoples that have suffered similar or worse fates in the twentieth century (cases include the Jewish Holocaust, Rwanda, and Cambodia). Most interesting is the presence of Ivo Marković as a visiting speaker, lecturing on the atrocities committed by Bosnian Muslims during the war, as seen from the Croatian perspective.

In Skopje, the Orthodox Faculty has made important efforts in recent years to expose its students to the Muslim faith and to other Christian traditions present in Macedonia. It achieved this under the auspices of NCA-sponsored church-based peace-building programme (2003-2008), Bridging Religions. Faculties deliver lectures to each others' students as part of a broader confidence-building and dialogue initiative. A key learning point of this programme was that inter-religious dialogue has greater impact and sustainability when it is NOT between the highest ranks of churchmen, but amongst those just below them. However dealing with lower levels of hierarchy is not always sufficient protection for dialogue initiatives, as the case of the Islamic Faculty in Skopje shows. Long term collaborators in the Bridging Religions programme were summarily dismissed (one at gun point) in 2007 during a sudden change of political leadership of the Islamic community.

An interesting development in the SOC is the emergence of an increasing number of liberal-minded graduates from the main Serbian Orthodox faculties in Belgrade and Foča (eastern Bosnia). At present the SOC is dominated by hard-line bishops, but many other SOC leaders might be classed as traditionally minded moderates, who are characterised by a conciliatory approach to other faiths in the region, but retain the essentially national orientation of the traditional SOC.

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[58] Though founded to serve Yugoslavia by the Slovene theologian Peter Kuzmić in 1972, the ETS now attracts students from Europe and Africa and brings faculty members from the United States.

[59] See below p. 37

[60] The Institute is run by former MCIC staff member, Juljana Tesia, with the support of Marinko Pesić, formely of Lutheran World Federation, Croatia.

Liberals, however, are remarkable in that they champion democracy and modernity, are politically internationalist and pro-European, and above all advocate internal reform, wishing to distance Serbian Orthodoxy from formal politics on the one hand, and the determining hand of nationalist thought on the other. The liberal stream in the SOC remains a minor one, often vilified for its supposed apostasy.[61] During interviews, the appearance of more liberal voices from those graduating from the Orthodox faculties, particularly among lay theologians and educators, was mentioned on no less than three occasions, from Serb, Muslim and Croat quarters.

At FIN and the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Pristina (Kosovo), professors are keenly aware of the generally low level of education among imams. By and large graduate-level education has only been available to the still relatively small numbers of imams trained in the post-communist period.[62] Although both faculties officially promote interfaith understanding through their teaching, they are aware that ignorance and low religious literacy contribute to high levels of nationalism and hostility to other religions among the majority of imams. Both establishments suggested an outreach programme with imams as a means of promoting greater religious understanding, and practical cooperation with Serbian Orthodox or Catholic priests. For the mainstream religions such schemes appear beyond their reach for the time being, owing to their heavy administrative burden and the high costs involved. For now, only ETS, ministering to a much smaller group of pastor graduates than the main religions, that is able to run an outreach programme of sorts, inviting former students to attend ETS conferences and events and visiting the parishes round the Balkans

At a different level, the faculties and seminaries of the region's religions maintain relatively regular contacts with each other. There is evidence that professors of theology are engaged in more or less informal debates on points of theology, and also that religious leaders may often use the faculties as a diplomatic means of keeping open channels of communication. In BiH the leaders have institutionalised the mediatory role of the faculties and academic theologians by founding an Inter-religious Institute (MRI) during 2007 as a means to 'serve as a bridge between churches and religious communities on the one hand, and politics and civil society on the other.' Although the MRI is officially an outgrowth of the Inter-Religious Council (and its Assembly is composed of the leaders of the religions that compose the IRC), its agenda and mode of operation are distinctly academic in character. The MRI, whose director is a Muslim scholar from FIN, is a forum for religious communities, with other groups, to carry out 'reasoned discussion of issues of common interest,' such as, 'ethical issues related to the shaping of society from the believers' point of view', 'the role of religious communities and churches in civil society in BiH,' and 'the European context.' It will carry on this work through lectures, conferences, workshops, seminars, courses, and working groups.'[63]

The region's faculties have also provided the site for dialogue and negotiation between religions on the subject of introducing religious education, including the teaching of the catechism, into public schools in most of the countries of former Yugoslavia. This is an area of rare shared interest in which cooperation has been easily achieved. For example, in Macedonia, the main religions have come to an agreement that religious education, when it is introduced in 2008, should include some classes about other religions. In BiH, faculty representatives of the three main religions (Islam, RCC, & SOC) worked together to remove any information that promoted a negative image of adherents of BiH's other religions.

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[61] The leading Serbian Orthodox liberal thinker, lay theologian Mirko Djordjević, has received death threats and his house has been bombed. He is most usually denounced as a Communist. In addition, during the course of this study, one Serbian interviewee ventured the opinion that the only future for the SOC was for its Orthodoxy to be officially uncoupled from the idea of the Serb nation. He was very clear, however, that he did not want this view to be attributed to him.

[62] For example, there are around 600 imams working in Kosovo. Graduate training for imams has only been available in Kosovo since 1992 when the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Pristina was established. Since that time the Faculty has trained a total of 115 imams.

[63] To date its only event has been an International Consultation on 'Religion and the Secular State: Role and Meaning of Religion in a Secular Society from Muslim, Christian and Jewish Perspectives, with a focus on South-East Europe', 21-24 October.

4.3.2 Religious education in schools

For most informed commentators, especially peace activists, religious education in schools is divisive, considered more as a means of keeping communities apart than extending mutual knowledge among the different faiths. Insistence on teaching the catechism effectively excludes all those not of the particular faith being taught. Although it is universally offered as an optional course, most children attend in all countries for fear of being singled out as different, or because their parents, bowing to nationalist pressures in society, do not want to expose themselves as being non-aligned nationally or religiously.

The exclusionary intentions of the religious communities concerning religious education is clearly illustrated by the case of a pilot course on the Culture of Religions in BiH (intended to teach students about all four main religions practiced in BiH) introduced by the OSCE and the Goethe Institute into a number of schools since 2003. Despite the fact that the pilot is not offered as a replacement or an alternative to religious education, all religious communities have all expressed their opposition to the scheme. The Catholic Church in particular has mounted strong opposition on the grounds that the course would lead to 'a new unrest, division and conflict', and that it promotes religious relativism and syncretism. In 2003, Catholic opposition led to the Croatian ministers of education in Croat-dominated Cantons effectively blocking the introduction of the subject in all these areas (OSCE 2007).

In Sarajevo, concern among peace activists over the divisive effects of religious education has led to an innovative project that attempts to use the religious teachings of the particular subject taught in school as the basis for promoting inter-faith understanding and tolerance. Here, parents and pupils are offered a confusing combination of choices concerning religious education. They may choose between Islamic studies, Catholic religion or Civic Education in primary schools. In addition Culture of Religions is offered to all pupils in all primary and secondary schools. However, enthusiasm for Culture of Religions is reportedly low, and over 90% of pupils in the town choose Islamic Studies, reflecting the post-war Bošnjak majority in Sarajevo.

In 2007, a coalition of regional peace organisations, including CNA BiH, MCC, RAND and led by local Muslim activist, Amra Pandžo-Đurić undertook as practical examination through ten workshops of key Islamic texts included in the school textbooks to arrive at the theological proofs of Islamic tolerance towards other faiths. The lessons of the workshops, as well as practical descriptions of how to repeat the workshops in the classroom, and also a number of other key texts[64] have been included in a teachers' handbook, which is scheduled to be printed with the blessing of the Reis-ul-ulema, in early 2008. The aim is to introduce the handbook into schools over the course of the next school year.

4.3.3 Conclusion

The religious communities place a high value on religious education, both in schools and within colleges of higher education. It is considered highly important for securing young new believers and ensuring adherence to a single dogma and a single institutional hierarchy. Understanding the advantage of inculcation at an early age, religious communities take a more or less exclusionary stance towards the teaching of religion in schools, and it is extremely difficult to introduce inter-religious or multi-religious educational initiatives in the region.

Theological faculties and seminaries in all cases enjoy a certain degree of independence from the religious leadership and license to venture theological reinterpretations. While they remain conservative establishments, generally inwards-looking, concentrated on accepted doctrine and church history (and therefore, national history), there are signs that more innovatory and outward-

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[64] Texts include, a letter from the prophet Mohammed pleading peace towards Christians, and a text issued by the Reis-ul-Ulema at the time of the killing of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by Serb Gavrilo Princip (the event which sparked the First World War) calling for an end to any retributive violence against the Serbian population.

looking streams are gaining weight in all communities, leading to a gradual liberalisation of religious thought and the emergence of practical courses tackling difficult issues such as peace building, reconciliation, or genocide.

5. NGO practice of reconciliation

With rare exceptions, the contribution of official church channels to peace building in the Balkans has been disappointing. Political interests rather than spiritual concerns have prevailed, affecting credibility and preventing the faith communities from taking full advantage of their own freedom from the constraints of the communist era. Though highly influential in the political arena, faith leaders have focused more on such worldly concerns as their legal and constitutional status, the return of former wealth in land and property, with a great deal of attention to church building and re-building programmes.

Faith leaders have generally neglected the type of spiritual education that could have prepared congregations to fulfil principled, value-based roles in post war social rehabilitation. Instead the focus has been largely liturgical, insular and antiquated. Although the numbers of self-declared believers have risen sharply in former Yugoslavia, as elsewhere in the former communist world, the faith communities have struggled to provide leadership via well-educated priests and imams. The quality of preaching is generally low and conservative, reflecting the poor education and low status of the clergy under the atheist regime. Furthermore the faith communities have generally resisted opportunities to use the public education system as a means of information about the religious "other", preferring, as we have seen to reinforce the divisive positions of ethno-nationalist politicians through religiously dogmatic instruction in the classroom. This invasion of the public space by particular faith interests endangers the capacity of young democracies to maintain a healthy separation of the church and state and flies in the face of their constitutions.

Opinion polls throughout the region show a high degree of popular trust in faith institutions. There are reasons why this should be so, but they clearly do not include a profound understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation amongst the "people of the book" or their spiritual guides. Commentators point to a new centralised religious orthodoxy replacing the previous atheist one, in which, for example, it is important to display an appropriate religious affiliation in order to obtain and keep scarce employment. As a result of this politicisation of the spiritual sphere,   the formal institutions of faith communities themselves may wield power and influence over their adherents without necessarily holding the moral high ground in the region's democratic transformations.

> Faith-based civil society is not sure what is expected of it. Religious communities are conditioned by their experience to fight for their rights, while they should be focused upon *serving* their constituency. Instead they put politics and property first. The spiritual element in the churches is currently bankrupt. The churches should be able to recognise the individual, but they do not.
> *Marijana Ajzenkol*

The task of encouraging good governance and holding politicians to account has generally fallen to other areas of civil society: the independent media, for example, and human rights movements, which enjoy much less popular appeal and are often labelled as unpatriotic. Instead these earn more credibility with the "Yugoslav-minded" urban intelligentsia and with international bodies responsible for peace-keeping and democracy building, owing to their commitment to the rule of law underpinned by basic freedoms and respect for diversity. Although very influential in seeing off Milosević in Serbia, for example, this segment of civil society is now regarded as much weaker in several Balkan countries. It competes on unfavourable terms with ethno-religious nationalism and is often singled out by faith institutions as a "communist" opponent. It includes the remnants of the anti-war movement of the 1990s which, in its weakened state in Serbia, lives in fear of a nationalist backlash directed against itself and other minorities and already experiences various degrees of harassment, including threats and organised disruption of its public meetings.

For its part, this area of civic action is hostile to the mainstream faith institutions. Its adherents are indeed often self-proclaimed atheists, but their opposition is largely political rather than religious and especially directed against the statist ambitions of Orthodoxy in Serbia – which, unlike Croatia, shows no signs of clearly separating religion and the state. Of the NGOs visited in Belgrade, Civic Initiatives and the Centre for Non-Violent Action are examples amongst many others that view with alarm the increasing vilification of minorities as "sects" and the potential for religiously-inspired violence over the independence of Kosovo. Right-wing pressure groups have already succeeded in silencing moderate clergy, such as the venerable Orthodox theologian Mirko Djordjević,[65]. With the support of other academics who regard Serb Orthodoxy as entering a dangerous phase of medieval fundamentalism, this segment of Serbian civil society is currently preparing an expose of extreme nationalist positions within the Orthodox Church. This is likely to become the focus of an active campaign by Serbian civil society in defence of civic rights and freedoms in the period immediately before and after the independence of Kosovo.

Peace activists like these argue that appeasement of mainstream faith institutions that seek temporal power for anti-democratic purposes is counter-productive and must be resisted. Their arguments seem irresistible. They support the rights of minority religions and occasionally find religious counterparts within the mainstream faith institutions who agree that too much identification of the state with a particular religion is good for neither. Mirko Djordjević is one example. In Bosnia, the Franciscan friars and the NGOs they have formed, is another. Their peace-building credentials are beyond reproach, but as we have seen, their relationship with the official channels of their own churches is anything but good and they are by and large marginalised. In other words they have very little impact on their institutions, *at present.* In the long term, it is these individuals that need support with a view to encouraging a re-think within their faith institutions.

Despite occasional successes at the margins in the Balkans, there is general agreement that institutional approaches to inter-faith dialogue, such as the IRC initiative, have failed to deliver reconciliation. This does not mean that "traditional" institutional methods should be abandoned where they appear to have worked, as in Macedonia. However the peace-building theologian David Steele has forcefully argued instead that the rebuilding of relationships "is more important than solving particular social problems, resolving specific disputes, or issuing public statements of agreement or intent".[66] The issue is to identify the organisational mechanisms that have proved successful in re-building these relationships, and the programmatic forms that they take. The field visit to Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia identified five basic types that may be divided into two clear categories: 1. Organjsations external the the faith communities. These comprise independent peace building NGOs that may or may not be inspired by the individual faith or their leaders and staff, and 2. Organisations within or connected to the faiths. These include theological faculties, think tanks, multi-religious faith-based NGOs and faith-based NGOs attached to and founded by individual faiths.

5.1 Organisations internal to the Faith Communities

The key to the usefulness of institutions within the faith communities lies in the degree to which they are **of the religious community**, without being **the religious community**. In other words, being of the community they are trusted by community officials, whilst not being the community, they still have a measure of autonomy. They are recognised as authorities in their sphere and are relatively free of "political" interference from the hierarchy. This privileged position allows such institutions to explore new areas – such as ecumenical action or interfaith dialogue – which the highest officials can disown if necessary (for example if hard-liners at the grassroots protest too much).

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[65] See above note 61
[66] Steele in Smock ed. 2002, p 73

<u>Theological Faculties</u> are a good example of this type of faith institution. They are undeniably of the church, since they reinterpret the scripture for each new generation, but they are not the church – indeed, like the ETS of Osijek, they can represent several churches. According to the current Dean – a Romanian - one of the major achievements of the ETS is that its degree course effectively breaks down suspicion between the many reformed churches that are historically active in the Balkans. Young pastors who arrive with no vision of any tradition but their own, leave four years later with a deep understanding of Protestant Christianity in all its forms and with lasting relationships across the continent and beyond

Faculties occasionally use <u>Think Tanks</u> as a way of compartmentalising the inter-religious dialogue function even further away from the core business of the church. An example is the Centre for Peace and Social Issues at the Christian Cultural Centre founded by a senior professor of the Orthodox Seminary in Belgrade. Several elements of the Peace Centre's mission statement would be regarded as decidedly subversive by the SOC hierarchy, yet it is free to make links and contacts with similar Christian organisations.[67] The founder, Radovan Bigović, cooperates in a regional ecumenical capacity building initiative (Building Bridges) managed from Osijek, by the Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights (CfP) and funded by the Church and Society Commission of the WCC Conference of European Churches.

In BiH the religious leaders have recently created their own multi-religious 'arms length' think tank, the Inter-religious Institute (MRI), charged with carrying on the dialogue that they appear incapable of achieving in the IRC. Indeed the MRI is officially an outgrowth from the IRC (and its Assembly is composed of the leaders of the four religions contributing to the IRC), and its stated role is to "serve as a bridge between churches and religious communities on the one hand, and politics and civil society on the other." The MRI's director is a Muslim scholar from FIN and its permanent members are primarily senior university theologians. A quick glance at MRI's agenda, which appears to include all issues concerning faith beyond pure theology and the history of religion, suggests that its real purpose is to provide a plausible way for religious leaders to distance themselves from process of dialogue.[68]

A separate category of what could be described as <u>"Unique" Multi-religious Structures</u> also makes an important though un-measurable contribution to transformational relationships. These "one-offs" include outright dissenters like the Bosnian Franciscans and young Orthodox churchmen on the rise within Archbishoprics, such as Presbyter Ivica Todorovski, of MOC. What they have in common is a deep spiritual commitment to dialogue and reconciliation as well as the facilitation skills to share it. It is no surprise that they are well known to each other and in regular communication. They include the following: Centre for Peace, Inter-Confessional Dialgoue and Cooperation: "KIFA, CEPHAS, or Peter"; Inter-Religious Centre, Belgrade; Face To Face (*Oči u Oči*); and IMIC (*Zajedno*).

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[67] "… human rights, freedom and peace, of a democratic state, promoting inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue, tolerance and cross-relating communal life, supporting European values seen as basically Christian values…"

[68] The MRI's main themes of interest are: 1. Ethical issues related to the shaping of society from the believer's point of view: Importance of faith in God in society; Spiritual values in civil society and democracy; Human dignity and human rights; Underlying social principles; Political ethics; Responsibility of media; Business ethics; Bioethics; Ecology. 2. Role of religious communities and churches in civil society of BiH: Fostering truth, justice, reconciliation, prevention and healing of conflicts; Improving of understanding, affinity, solidarity and openness of the citizens and peoples of BiH; Conveying love and common responsibility for BiH as a joint homeland of all; Cultural, ethnic and religious identities. 3. European context: European integrations, European constitution, our history within Europe; Inter-religious cooperation in BiH as a model for Europe; EU as an inspiration for bridging differences and fostering different values; Contibution of religious communities and churches to shaping of Europe; Cultural and religious identiies. - To date the MRI's only event has been an International Consultation on "Religion and the Secular State: Role and Meaning of Religion in a Secular Society from Muslim, Christian and Jewish Perspectives, with a focus on South-East Europe," 21-24 October 2007.

**Centre for Peace, Inter-Confessional Dialogue and Cooperation
"KIFA, CEPHAS, or Peter"**

KIFA is the product of an inter-religious collaboration between eight individuals of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals. They are also in touch with the Catholics. Ivica, who studied for his PhD in Bulgaria, is the President and the Vice President, Kosta Milkov, is in Oxford doing a D.Phil in preparation to be a pastor. Along with three other MOC members of the group, Ivica is a trainer, qualified in the latest phase of the CEC-sponsored Building Bridges Programme.

According to Ivica, testifying to peace is deeply linked with the personality of the priest, but it is also a learned skill. The training has created close links with the Evangelicals., thus opening the door to inter-Christian dialogue in Macedonia. Also inter-faith dialogue – in a recent discussion with Muslim theologians, they found similarities between Sufi and Christian approaches to peace. Ivica finds many Orthodox are closed to dialogue. His friendship and shared spiritual experience with Kosta (based on critical interpretation of the Bible and not on history) has sensitised him. He now urges believers, especially Muslims,   to speak of their personal relationship with God, which helps them to be honest and open. For Ivica, the individual is key – the big mistake is to globalise and stereotype the other.

He has attended the series of Macedonian inter-religious conferences , but in his experience they do not get anywhere. He feels there is a new generation in all the religious communities that approaches their religion as a personal discovery of God rather than to build their national identity.

New organisations like KIFA depend on the energy of exceptionally gifted young churchmen who try to set up new initiatives alongside their existing jobs. This is not practicable. They need additional human and material resources if they are to reach their potential.

Faith-based NGOs with a focus on charitable works and service delivery form a fourth type of organisation inside specific churches. They have a strong commitment to the diaconal work of their churches and address extreme conditions of poverty and abandon brought on by the disruption of transition and war within parishes. Virtually all of these NGOs remain dependent upon international solidarity for their funding – many from the development agencies of sister churches abroad. The Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation, EHO, is a good example of a faith-based NGO which combines a strong diaconal programme with a critical stance in relation to inactive leadership within its member churches.

Unlike the other structures in the "internal" category, many of these NGOs, especially those established by the Orthodox churches, suffer from a lack of autonomy. This prevents them from providing the church with the innovatory function so important for inter-religious dialogue and peace-building. Instead they tend to serve a public relations function, satisfying the basic needs of the congregation or promoting the "party line". Diakonia Agapes of Albania, Philanthropy of Serbia and Pokrov of Bulgaria are examples of faith-based NGOs with little or no commitment or contribution to meaningful inter-religious dialogue.

As they mature and gain confidence, these development organisations will become content with being of the church without trying to be the church itself. They will better serve their churches by establishing missions of their own and forging more autonomous identities. This will take time and more reflective leadership with a less conservative outlook.

5.2 Independent Peace-building NGOs External to the Faith Communities

5.2.1 Organisations with a mission to carry out peace building

As discussed above it is good development practice for local faith-based NGOs to maintain a degree of autonomy from their parent churches. Apart from many other reasons, the skills of professional development management are quite different from those required to lead churches effectively. For inter-religious dialogue it is especially important that peace-building NGOs are not overly identified with a particular faith community. The field visits identified two such local NGOs, both with a regional reach. These are the Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights of Osijek, Croatia (CfP) and the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC).

Neither of these organisations are **of** the church. However, unlike the majority of Balkan NGOs, they both embrace faith communities as an essential part of civil society and recognise their essential role in peace-building and reconciliation. They are also ecumenical in outlook and their staff and governing boards reflect the religious and ethnic make-up of their societies. They are able to function effectively in peace-building because they have the respect of religious communities and their hierarchies, the skills of peace-building, a track record in managing inter-religious programmes and strong, well run organisations. They constitute the "local presence" that David Steele describes as an essential ingredient of success in relationship building for peace.

CfP and MCIC have their religious peace-building roots in an ambitious programme of the WCC SE Europe Ecumenical Partnership (SEEP). Early in the new century SEEP established three "hubs" with the intention of coordinating the activities of its partners across the region. The Humanitarian Hub led by Philanthropy never got off the ground, but CfP developed an effective Peace Hub while MCIC focused on strengthening partner organisations through the Capacity Building Hub. As previously mentioned, both organisations have also developed skills in working with faith communities for peace. In the interest of capitalising on their work with faith communities, there are good reasons for considering drawing the networking experience gained by these two Hubs closer together, and the specific professional skills that they involved.

Although CfP's peace work is rooted in its award-winning reconciliation work in war-torn Eastern Slavonia, it has spread across the region through a select body of trainers specialised in faith-based reconciliation work. These are grouped around the Catholic peace activists Otto and Ana Raffai of RAND[69] (Regional Address for Non-Violent Action) of Sesvete, Croatia and localised offices of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) such as TERCA (Goran Bubalo) in Sarajevo and MIRAMIDA Centre for Peacebuilding Exchanges of Croatia. Goran Bozicević of MIRAMIDA, for example, was instrumental in helping Presbyter Ivica Todorov establish the Centre for Peace, Inter-confessional Dialogue and Cooperation in Skopje.

Amongst international donors of this type of work, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) stands out as another critic of "elite" peace building efforts. MCC's experience of attempting to cooperate with the IRC in BiH is that it is extremely difficult to obtain practical cooperation with religious leaders owing to their connections with formal politics.. Instead MCC supports David Steele's approach of shared spirituality and trust at the grassroots. In particular it has fostered long-term relations with the Franciscans in BiH, as the order enjoys considerable autonomy from the Catholic establishment, is committed to pastoral care, provides access to the grassroots and shares the MCC's spiritual concerns. It is currently working in close cooperation with the Bread of St. Anthony's, the humanitarian arm of the Franciscans in Sarajevo, to provide training for trauma healing in the community, as a means of dealing with the past through pastoral care. At the same time it has been a supporter of Ivo Marković and the Face to Face for over ten years. In BiH, where MCC has its regional office, it pursues a strategic approach to peace building by working through local institutions. This includes an Alternatives to Violence programme in local prisons and peace education in schools through the ministries of education.

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[69] RAND's team also includes a member of one the reformed Churches in Croatia

In 2006, MCC co-sponsored a meeting organised by RAND at which several Peace Hub partners were amongst 11 organisations that explored questions such as how to build peace in our region as members of our respective religious communities? This is intended to be the first of an ongoing series of consultations between organisations that make up what is in effect a regional coalition of FBOs for peace.

5.2.2 Multi-mandated INGOs

Many of the larger INGOs active in the region in post-conflict reconstruction and development are formally faith-based organisations. As part of this study those faith-based INGOs retaining a presence in BiH and Kosovo were contacted to find out whether and to what extent they are active in faith-based peace building. Apart from NCA, which is the only INGO currently active in this field in Kosovo, World Vision appears to be only other case of an INGO implementing projects directly targeted at inter-faith dialogue and diapraxis. A few initiatives have been supported in both Kosovo and BiH (including the establishment of a municipal inter-faith council in Kosovo, funding support to the IRC in BiH, as well as to Face to Face, and the development of school text books in one area of BiH for the pilot course Culture of Religions, on the basis of dialogue and research by religious leaders and pedagogues from twenty schools), but commitment to a broader more general and materially oriented development agenda, as well as the exigencies of short-term project funding has meant that WV has been unable to dedicate the time and human resources necessary to establish a coherent, strategic approach in this field.

5.3 Conclusions

There is no new structure that offers a unique solution to more effective faith-based communities in their peace building roles in former Yugoslavia. Instead there is a mosaic of actors playing roles that are useful in varying degrees. These actors are self-selecting in that they recognise each other's spiritual commitment and integrity. However they inevitably constitute a minority in their own faith communities and their initiatives risk remaining "one-offs". The challenge over coming years is to extend their achievements more broadly. This will involve – amongst others - strengthening such programmes as Building Bridges and Bridging Religions, achieving greater regional coordination of the principal actors, institutionalising peace building and reconciliation studies for new clergy and building the organisational and relational capacities of new inter-religious institutions "**of** the religious communities" such as KIFA of Skopje and the Christian Culture Centre of Belgrade.

6. Conclusions and principles of good practice that emerge from the study

Here we do not refer to the many theoretical peace-building constructs and models, rather the practical and positive experience of engaging faith communities in peace-building in former Yugoslavia.   These include:

1. Start from the *individual* believer

In the faith-based approach to peace-building, forgiveness is a core value in the Christian and Islamic traditions. The key lesson learned from peace-building efforts in the Balkans is that the process of dialogue needs to start with a personal change of heart. Through various forms of training (dealing with the past, non-violent action and so on) both victims and perpetrators come to some degree of reconciliation through acknowledgement and forgiveness.

These same principles are adaptable to the broader field of inter-religious dialogue, allowing individuals to overcome stereotypes and prejudices directed collectively to the religious other. Experience seems to indicate that without a personal change process, injunctions to the faithful from on high – even from their religious community leaders - carry little weight.

Approaching believers on an individual basis runs contrary to current practice in all the faith communities, which address first and foremost the collective, sectarian dimension of the particular faith constituency. Good practice defined here as an individual conversion experience exists only at the margins.

2. Build on positive experience

Even if positive experience is marginal in terms of current impact, it represents a solid foundation on which to build. The field visits reveal that many faith-based initiatives have failed or even proved counter-productive; however there is an identifiable core of good practice that needs to be encouraged and sustained. This is gradually spreading across the region in the form of conferences, meetings, familiarisation, youth exchanges and so on. Experiences that have failed in some contexts, such as the Inter-religious Councils, have prospered in others. This suggests that timing is important and different interventions are relevant in different sequences. Formal IRCs for example are least likely to work (even if they are most needed) when ethno-religious tensions are highest. A focus on joint declarations may be more appropriate in such circumstances – as a precedent, at least, for future cooperation.

3. Operate at several levels, coordinate– and communicate

Faith-based peace-builders can have much in common with their secular colleagues, including a competitive streak. In order to attract scarce funds and attention they tend to insist their approach is the only valid one. Faced with the enormity of the task of healing the wounds of sectarian violence, it is however necessary to operate at many levels at the same time: internally from the parish to the top of the hierarchy and externally through structures that are affiliated to the faith communities. It is not necessary, or even desirable, for one agency to address all the levels. Rather it is essential for all the relevant actors to coordinate with each other, not just at a national level but across the region. This requires the various stakeholders to be aware of the potential complementarities of their approach with that of others.

Unfortunately, there has been no previous overview of the various faith-based peace-building approaches and individual initiatives remain un-contextualised and little known beyond a small circle of theologians and practitioners. Documenting experience and communicating lessons learned is an important element of good practice that requires more attention.

4. Encourage innovative thinking

Without new ideas, the institutions of faith communities can become very conservative. It is necessary therefore to identify and engage with whatever institutional opportunities there are to explore new dialogue initiatives. Throughout the region, there is a new trend of think tanks and other centres specialised in researching the changing external context on behalf of their faith communities. Some of these explore inter-religious dialogue and a minority has also embraced methods of bringing about transformational relationships. These structures deserve support.

A degree of autonomy from the formal faith community structures is necessary for these bodies to achieve their innovatory work. Unless the faith communities are totally politicised, the hierarchy generally puts up with inter-religious dialogue in these bodies, even if they do not necessarily agree with the sentiments.

NGOs connected with the faith communities need to recognise and acknowledge that their work can improve by maintaining a certain distance from the faith institutions. Uncertain of their own status, they tend to seek ever closer contact - often becoming "holier than the Pope" in the process. As a result they get in the way of inter-religious dialogue rather than promoting it.

5. Promote good management

Compared with NGOs, faith communities are often poorly managed. Transparency is weak, decision-making centralised and planning not generally used. Better administration of faith communities would greatly help improve the public's understanding of the role and purpose of faith communities and would also benefit inter-religious dialogue indirectly.

Experience in former Yugoslavia suggests that it is more effective to involve professional local NGOs in the management of specific faith-based dialogue programmes, rather than to attempt the reform of church structures so that they can implement them directly. Although rare, there are a few NGOs with a detailed understanding of faith issues and a commitment to promoting dialogue in the interests of peace-building. Where these are trusted by the faith communities, they should be encouraged to help them in the design and implementation of specific programmes.

The local NGOs need to be inclusive, impartial and discreet in their dealings with the faith communities. Discretion is especially important because faith communities are often plagued with embarrassing internal conflict – the former Yugoslavian communities being no exception in this regard. Their low management capacity often makes the conflicts worse, but training in non-violent methods by NGOs can also help clerics improve their diplomatic skills and prevent conflicts from erupting so regularly.

6. Engage with wider stakeholders

Although an intrinsic part of civil society, faith communities are not natural partners with other civil society organisations (CSO). Unpractised in democratic customs, church leaders react badly to criticism and their followers can retaliate with violence on occasions. In return, CSOs publicly question the values, legitimacy and transparency of the faith institutions.

Polarisation between faith-based organisations and CSOs is not necessarily inevitable. Relations will improve as the faith communities progressively reform themselves and reflect more closely their underlying, shared values. Civic space can also be used constructively to bring the attention of the public to important issues of the day through workshops, panel discussions, debates and other forums. For example, the Open Society in Macedonia supported an open discussion on the introduction of religious education to public schools and the faith communities participate in the annual NGO Fair.

So far the faith communities still look to the state rather than to the civic arena for protection and influence. There is a need of more good examples of the separation of church and state, as seems to be emerging in Croatia, for example.

7. Build capacities of clergy

There is little or no in-service training in the region for priests, pastors or imams and so no body of good practice has built up in this important area, unfortunately. However all faith communities are paying renewed attention to their theological faculties and seminaries, which present an excellent opportunity for ensuring a well-informed and progressive new generation of clergy. It is especially important in the Balkans to move beyond the traditional "preach and pray" skill base by equipping new clergy with advanced dialogue and facilitation skills. Good practice is also developing around better understanding of each other's faiths through exchange lectures.

8. Plan for the long term

Given that faith community institutions are not generally good at dialogue with the religious other, any inter-religious healing process is by definition going to be long term. Its history ensures that the Balkans will be one of the hardest in which to achieve reconciliation between sectarian groups. The case is far from hopeless but progress needs to be measured in decades rather than years.

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Annexe 2. Interviews carried out

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Randy Puljek-Shank, Representative for Southeast Europe, **Mennonite Central Committee**, Sarajevo

Ahmet Alibašić, Director, **Inter-religious Institute in BiH** & lecturer at **Faculty of Islamic Studies,** Sarajevo

Fr. Marko Oršolić, Director, **International Multi-religious Inter-cultural Centre, "Zajedno",** Sarajevo

Fr. Ivo Marković, Director, **Face To Face**, Sarajevo

Zlatica Kljuno & Emir Kovačević, Programme coordinators, **Inter-religious Council in BiH**, Sarajevo

Amra Pandžo-Djurić, Peace activist and Director, "**Small Steps": Association for Dialogue in the Family and Society**

Adnan Hasanbegović, Peace activist, **CNA - Centre for Non-Violent Action**, Sarajevo

Jacob Finci, President, **Jewish Community of BiH** and member of **Inter-religious Council in BiH**, Sarajevo

Claudia Bade, Programme Manager, **World Vision BiH**, Sarajevo

Msgr. Mato Zovkić, Vicar General, **Roman Catholic "Vrhbosanska" Archbishopric**, Sarajevo

Goran Bubalo, Peace activist & Director, **TERCA**, Sarajevo

Croatia

Snježana Kovašević, Project officer, **Building Bridges Programme**, **Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights**, Osijek (telephone & field interview)

Marinko Pesić, collaborator of **Centre for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation**, formerly of **Lutheran World Federation**, Osijek

Dr Corneliu Constantineanu, Academic Dean, **Evangelical Theological Seminary,** Osijek

Ana & Otto Raffai, & Mihael Sečen, **RAND – Regional Address for Non-Violent Action,** Sesvete

Kosovo

Jorun Lunestad, Programme Manager (inter-religious dialogue), **Norwegian Churcg Aid**, Pristina

Dr Qemalj Morina (vice Dean) & *Xhabir Hamiti* (lecturer), **Faculty of Islamic Studies**, Pristina

Drita Bala, project coordinator (inter-relgious dialogue), **Norwegian Church Aid,** Pristina

Don Llika, **Roman Catholic priest**, Pristina

Fr. Sava Janjić, Hiermonk and Bishop Teodisije's spokesman, **Dečani Serbian Orthodox Monastery**, Dečani

Ivan Radić, Peace activist & Coordinator, **Kosovo Nansen Dialogue**, Mitrovica (north)

Svetlana Stević, Director, **NGO "Mother of the Nine Jugović"**, Zvečan

Rick Spruyt, Project Director, **World Vision Kosovo**, Pristina

Isak Vorgučić, Director, **Radio KIM**, and former Serbian Orthodox monk, Čaglavica

François Perez, Consultant for Inter-religious Dialogue, **Norwegian Church Aid** (telephone interview)

Macedonia

Aleksandar Krajlovski, Deputy Director, **MCIC – Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation**, Skopje

Derviša Hadzić-Rahić, Project officer, **Bridging Religions in Macedonia Programme, MCIC**

Msgr Antun Cirimotik, Director of **Caritas**, representative of **Inter-religious Council in Macedonia**, Skopje

Methin Izeti: formerly of the **Islamic Faculty in Skopje**, currently professor of the **Islamic Faculty in Novi Pazar**, Serbia – interview in Skopje

Dr. Ismail Bardhi – ex-Dean of **Faculty of Islamic Sciences**, current faculty of **Jewish University of Los Angeles,** Skopje

Presbyter Ivica Todorovski, **Centre for Peace, Inter-Confessional Dialogue and Cooperation**, Macedonian Orthodox Arhbishopric, Skopje

Ratomir Grozdanovski, Dean, **Orthodox Faculty**, and Head of **Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church**; and *Mihail Cekov*, pastor of the **United Methodist Church**, Skopje

Serbia

Ana Bu, Programme Director, **EHO – Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation**, Novi Sad (telephone interview)

Károly Béres, Director, & *Robert Bu*, Programme Director, **EHO – Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation**, Novi Sad

Msgr. Stanislav Hočevar, **Roman Catholic Archbishop of Belgrade**, Belgrade

Dr Milan Vukomanović, Associate Professor **Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy**, University of Belgrade, Belgrade

Muhamed Jusufpahić, Mufti of the **Islamic Community of Belgrade and recently, of Serbia,** Belgrade

Ivana Franović, Peace activist, **CNA - Centre for Non-Violent Action,** Belgrade

Dubravka Velat and *Miljenko Dereta* – civil society activists, **Civic Initiatives**, Belgrade

Radovan Bigović, Proto-Presbyter of the **Serbian Orthodox Church**, academic and founder of **Christian Culture Centre,** Belgrade

*Zorica Trifunovi*ć, Peace activist and Director of **QPSW Serbia**, Belgrade

Marijana Ajzenkol, Mathematician and Secretary of the **Inter-religious Centre, Zemun**, Belgrade

Annexe 3. Questions used in interviews

1.a What are the continuing challenges for achieving lasting peace in your society and the wider region?

1.b What tensions between and within communities continue as a result of past conflict and political transition (from former Yugoslavia)?

2. What are the social and political roles played by the respective religious communities [your community] in your country / society?
   ➢ What are the official policies of the respective religious communities [your community] regarding reconciliation, dealing with the past and peace building more generally?
   ➢ How do religious communities / leaders [your community and leaders] influence policy making at the governmental level?
   ➢ What influence do [your] religious leaders wield over their constituencies at the community level?

3. What practical approaches to date have been / are being undertaken by religious communities towards resolving conflicts and building lasting peace in your environment?
   ➢ How effective have these efforts been?
   ➢ What lessons can be drawn from them?

4. In what ways are the religious leaders and communities [your community and leaders] (and other religious actors) willing and able to play a part in rising to the challenges outlined in question one above?
   ➢ How might this be supported by or fit in with other initiatives or actors?
   ➢ What are potential obstacles to the action you propose / envisage?

NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID

Terms of Reference
for
Consultancy to
Norwegian Church Aid / The Balkans for

A study of

"Faith Communities as potential agents for peace building in the Balkans "

Name of consultants: Bill (Peter William) Sterland and John Beauclerk (independent consultants)

NCA reference: PID 13741 – Regional Peace-building Programme, the Balkans

Time frame: October 1 – December 31, 2007

1. Background

Throughout the Balkans a variety of initiatives aimed at achieving reconciliation within the region have been carried out.   These includes, dialogue programmes, seminars and conferences, inter-ethnic projects of various kinds, as well as initiatives undertaken by the authorities in order to establish institutionalised 'commissions' or forums for various ways of dealing with a past of violence, wars, ethnic cleansing, religious persecution, marginalization of minorities i.a. These initiatives, all well-intentioned, have borne some fruit, but there is still a very long way to go. There is a need to get on from 'islands of good' to consolidation and institutionalisation of processes, for victims as well as perpetrators to tell the stories of violations and atrocities, of wounds received and inflicted, of getting to know about 'the other side', for myths to die, and for more truth to be revealed. There is a need for justice, not only through public, legal court procedures, but also in some way for compensation to take place for the benefit of the victims and 'restorative' justice for the perpetrators. There is a need to be able to forgive and to be forgiven. Overall this amounts to what can only be a long-lasting and painful healing process, but the future of the Balkans hinges on it. If the past is not dealt with, wars and hostilities will continue to erupt, people will continue hating each other, the myths will proliferate and the power play will continue its journey with all the destructive legacies of the past.

Past and present peace-building activities
Since 2000, NCA has been engaged in activities for religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, with a particular focus on Kosovo. This has proven to be a rewarding, but also a complicated task which has encountered quite a few set-backs. In 2004, an evaluation of the programme took place, giving valuable recommendations for further work. These pointed out the need for visible commitment by senior and local religious leaders through an institutionalised form of dialogue and diapraxis, and a more systematic approach to community based peace building,

in particular in multi-ethnic communities and potential return locations. Since 2005, part of the community-based peace-building activities have been implemented in cooperation with the partner Kosovan Nansen Dialogue.

In October 2006, NCA Balkans conducted an internal review of the Kosovo dialogue programme. The review also included the dialogue programme as part of a regional peace-building programme.

In Macedonia, since 2004, NCA has been supporting its core partner, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), to carry out a dialogue programme in Macedonia, "Bridging Religions". This programme focuses on religious theological faculties and includes the exchange of lecturers, exchange visits and the establishment of an Inter-religious Council. Representatives of 5 faith communities are targeted - Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant (Methodists), Jewish and Muslim.

Since 2007 NCA has been cooperating with its partner Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) on a cross-border programme that facilitates meetings between youth from Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

In all relevant programmes NCA endeavours to mainstream peace building, in order to encourage peaceful and respectful coexistence and inter-action between the various ethnic and religious groups.

A narrowed down focus
Over the years NCA has endeavoured to identify specific thematic focus areas, which correlate with the rights and needs of communities in a Balkan context and with the strategy for NCA in general. Recently three specific 'problem areas' have been identified which need to be addressed in addition to the broader areas of NCA engagement in the region. These are:

1) The lack of consolidated and institutionalised reconciliation processes in the Balkans
2) Sexual and gender-based violence / trafficking
3) The Roma as the most marginalized minority group in the Balkans – with lack of education as one of the main problems.

In 2007, when revising NCA's 5 year plan 2005-2009, Conflict Resolution and Peace-building was included as one of three thematic areas in the Western Balkans Sub-regional Plan.

NCA Partners' Seminar in 2006
In order to create a coherent planned strategy to enable reconciliation processes in the Balkans, NCA Balkans arranged a brainstorming and capacity-building seminar for all its regional partners. The aim of the seminar was to take a joint decision on a programme of work for NCA and its partners that would spearhead an institutionalising of some kind of a reconciliation process in the Balkans. This partner seminar took place in May 2006, and its main theme was "A Balkans settlement with the past?"

All the NCA partners in the region were represented at the seminar, and at the concluding session, the partners decided to form a Task Force for follow-up of action on the points identified by the partners.

NCA partners' Task Force
The Task Force has met three times, in September and December 2006, and in July 2007.

Various initiatives were discussed, both as individual country activities and in relation to a regional approach. Some of the ideas concerned extending existing approaches in the region; for example, those related to dialogue programmes. Others were more drastic in the sense of dealing with the past with a focus on truth and reconciliation. *The overall idea was to see if we could develop a regional strategy for peace-building which could have its outlets in the*

individual countries.

Study on the role of religious leaders in The Balkans
At the September 2006 meeting an important decision was made. On the suggestion of one partner (MCIC), NCA and partners should initiate assessments of the Balkans' faith communities and their potential for building peace. At the Task Force meeting in December of that year, NCA suggested that, rather than delegating the responsibility to the partners, and rather than NCA implementing the assessment ourselves, we should engage an external partner to do the assessment / study on our behalf. The meeting agreed to this. After one attempt to engage an organization to conduct the study failed, two independent consultants during summer 2007 agreed to take on the task (if funds could be found).

As a preliminary work title for the study / assessment NCA propose: *The role of faith communities in the Balkans during and after the wars, and their potential to serve as change agents for peace.*

NCA partners' seminar July 2007 and Meeting in Task Force
The annual partners' seminar took place July 2-4. Recognizing that a regional strategy or plan for a Balkans peace-building programme should be partner-owned and not an NCA operational programme, the main point on the agenda was to return to the commitment made by the partners in 2006 and to work very practically to see whether it was possible to prepare a regional strategy. Bill Sterland was engaged as facilitator for the Seminar. Immediately after the Seminar the partners' Task Force met, Bill Sterland was invited to participate. The meeting decided that each of the relevant partners should do a mapping in their own country / context to 1) assess the situation with the view to the legacies of wars and conflict and the impact in their community, 2) assess what is being done in the way of conflict resolution and peace-building, 3) what are the gaps and needs, and 4) what actions could be taken.

The meeting also confirmed that the study of the faith communities should take place, and Bill Sterland was after the meeting asked whether he could take on the task – to which he agreed (provided that funds could be found)

2. Description of consultancy assignment
The study should serve as support documentation to NCA and partners' work on a regional peace-building programme.

The preliminary assumption as regards to the faith communities role is two-fold – a "yes" and a "no":
- Yes, there is a potential for peace-building in the faith communities. Reconciliation, representing the basis for peace, is imbedded in the theology, clearly outlined in the Christian faith, but also in various ways in Islam. And the faith-communities are deeply involved in the different communities on various levels. The leaders of the communities follow their members from birth to death, through joy and sorrow – in all aspects of life. And there are individuals who could play an important part to build peace. BUT
- No, the leaders of the faith communities, and also some of their members, have been deeply involved in atrocities or have not condemned atrocities committed by their own group towards the other. Likewise, the faith communities are to a large extent politicized, and members are not able to or willing to see the other side, to get out of one's own 'trench' and look to the 'enemy' in order to recognize the suffering of the other. Experience has also shown that there is a fear of one's own group. That is, members of the separate communities, divided by religion and ethnicity, are very often too afraid to act against the sentiment of one's own group.

The consultants will base the study on:
  o Interviews with key non-partisan informants active in the fields of religious dialogue, peace building and restorative justice;
  supported with documentary material including:
  o Published accounts and analyses of the wars and subsequent events in the region

wherever relevant, including academic and development literature, religious publications, personal testimony and journalistic material;
- o Unpublished testimony and analyses from development agencies, NGOs and other civil society organisations working in the fields of religious dialogue, peace-building, restorative justice, human rights and other relevant areas;
- o 'Grey materials', that is project and programme documents from NGOs and other civil society organisations that provide relevant data.

3. Objective
To conduct a study on faith communities in The Balkans to identify their potential to act as agents of peace building and reconciliation in post-conflict environments in which ethno-national communities remain divided and mutually antagonistic.

Specifically the study will
- o Outline the potential of the region's religious communities for serving as agents for peace in the present day Balkans, including the identification of practical approaches the communities may undertake in this work and how this work may be supported by other actors, both local, regional and international;
- o Describe the political and social role/s played by religious communities regionally and in their respective societies, including an examination of the influence within individual religious and national communities wielded by official policies. In addition, the study will seek to identify and examine cases were actions taken on the ground by individual religious leaders diverge from official policy. The study will attempt to gauge the influence respectively of official and 'divergent' policy at the community level;
- o Identify where faith communities may fill the gaps in the ongoing implementation of post-conflict settlements in the region; how may faith communities advance the political process?

Wherever necessary in answering these questions, data and evidence will be placed in the context of the political break-up of former Yugoslavia, the subsequent wars in the region and the ongoing history of post-conflict settlements in the region.

4. Reporting
The study should result in a document of 50 pages to be presented to NCA Balkans office by
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5. Timing
- - The study will take place from October 1 to December 31, 2007.