BOSNIA AND KOSOVO: AN UNDERSTANDING OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary theme of Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” has been used to explain recent conflicts, such as those in Bosnia and Kosovo in 1991-2001. How people have responded to this line of thinking, and how it relates to the collapse of Muslim-Christian relations as well as the inter-civilizational relations in Bosnia and Kosovo are explored in this thesis. The lessons learned about Muslim-Christian relations will provide a level of understanding needed for the unique cases of Bosnia and Kosovo to enable them to move forward in the twenty-first century.
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INTRODUCTION

Muslim-Christian understanding is a critical theme and at the core of many modern day conflicts. This thesis includes an exploration of inter-civilizational relations using the conflicts in Bosnia and in Kosovo in the 1990’s and early 2000’s as examples of Muslim-Christian relations within the framework of Samuel Huntington’s theory of the “Clash of Civilizations”. How did what seemed to be a good history of Muslim-Christian relations in Bosnia and Kosovo collapse in the 1990’s? Was this a clash of civilizations and were the two conflicts alike? In this thesis, I will analyze Huntington’s definition of civilization, present an explanation of what happened in these specific examples of Muslim-Christian relations, and offer lessons learned and the level of understanding needed for a way forward.
CHAPTER 1

THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?

Samuel Huntington began a debate within the international affairs community with his ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis published in “Foreign Affairs” in 1993. His subsequent book in 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, was offered as “an interpretation of the evolution of global politics after the Cold War” and aspired “to present a framework, a paradigm, for viewing global politics that will be meaningful to scholars and useful to policymakers”.¹ This contemporary theme continues to reverberate throughout the world as different scenarios evolve in the twenty-first century. In this section of my thesis, I would like to explore Huntington’s theory and definition of civilization as outlined in his article and book to begin to answer the question of “How did what seemed to be a good history of Muslim-Christian relations in Bosnia and Kosovo collapse in the 1990’s?”

Samuel Huntington wrote “The Clash of Civilizations?” in response to his former student Francis Fukuyama’s

article entitled “The End of History?” in 1989, which was later developed into a book, *The End of History and the Last Man*. Huntington responded to the one world paradigm of Fukuyama with his article on the theory of clash of civilization.

Actually, the intellectual debate about the clash of civilization had started much earlier by Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West* in 1918. In this book, Spengler defines history by civilizations (cultures) and makes civilization a term of reference for historical study. Bernard Lewis also mentions the term “the clash of civilizations” in his 1990 article entitled, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.”

The end of the Cold War changed the face of international politics and its civilizations into unfamiliar and uncertain entities. Huntington’s focus emphasizes conflict in the global arena. However, for one to simply focus on conflict and difference does not necessarily help understand the complexity of

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2 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang Des Abendlander, Gestault Und Wirklichkeit* (Munich, 1918). A translated paperback copy was made available by Oxford University Press in 1991.

relationships in the world, especially for those in Bosnia and Kosovo. In Huntington’s view, the seven or eight civilizations he mentions (Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American and possibly African)\(^4\) are meaningful entities with clear boundaries between them. Huntington is correct in arguing that civilizational identity is a potentially powerful political force and may be subject to political manipulation.

The central theme of Huntington’s book is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are defining the patterns of correlation in the post Cold War world. The most important differences among people are not ideological, political, or economic but are cultural. People define themselves in terms of religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. However, one notes that among all these identities, religion is the central defining characteristic of civilizations.\(^5\) Perhaps

a better definition of civilization, then, would be a definition of religion: something that involves the association of people in a manner resembling a religious institution which fosters a sense of meaning or relevance in relation to something greater than oneself.

Huntington makes the case that during the Cold War world conflict was, for the most part, defined by the clash between democracy and communism. With the end of the Cold War, the democracy versus communism stalemate was replaced by conflicts between civilizations. The civilizations involved were secondary to the political reality created by the Cold War. Thus, according to Huntington, since the end of the Cold War, certain newly “freed” civilizations have been asserting themselves on the world stage, resulting in clashes between the civilizations.

Another major point which Huntington promotes is that the end of the Cold War has accelerated a trend of the decline of Western values and culture, and the West faces the need to prop up itself to remedy its declining ability by imposing its values on non-Western societies. This is

5 Ibid.
a line of thinking that much of the Muslim world believes, and they resent Western “interference” as a result.

Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ belief that in the future most conflicts will be between civilizations is controversial on many levels. Part of the difficulty with Huntington is that he is not clear on the definition of civilization. He does not explain how and why different cultural factors—religion, ethnicity and language—form a civilization, or why there are seven or eight major civilizations.

There is no obvious relationship between the dynamics of civilizational conflict and the end of the Cold War. This is a key element of Huntington’s thesis, however, that in the post-Cold War world, civilizations will replace ideology as the fundamental source of conflict. Huntington notes:

The fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as flash points of crisis and bloodshed.⁶

Huntington places the 1,300 year-old conflict between Islam and Christianity alongside conflicts between Hindu

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⁶ Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 34.
India and Muslim Pakistan, and the Sudanese civil war and US-Japan trade tension.\textsuperscript{7}

Huntington’s vision of the future of civilization contradicts his image of civilization as susceptible to change. He writes:

People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations change over time. The cultures of peoples interact and develop. The extent to which the cultures of civilizations resemble or differ from each other also varies considerably.\textsuperscript{8}

Actually Huntington’s view focuses on the intractability of difference that the forces of the post-Cold War world are imposing. It is a line of thinking that conveys little sense of dynamism or interaction other than violent interaction.

Huntington attributes conflict to conflicting values and viewpoints, which are increasingly important to populations, and he uses expansive examples of civilizational conflict to illustrate his point. He uses examples of the Battle of Tours in 732 AD, the Gulf War in 1990, and conflicts in the Sudan, Burma, and Israel to

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.: 43.
illustrate the point that differences within civilizational groups are less likely to lead to conflict. One of the flaws in his thinking is that the range is so sweeping and general that it appears to lack substance and in fact is not entirely relevant. Huntington observes the existence of ethnic, racial or religious differences in certain conflicts, but actually tells us little about the causes of conflict.

When Huntington addresses Islam in his book, he notes that "it has been from the start a religion of the sword", that the "doctrines of Islam...dictate war against unbelievers," and that "a concept of nonviolence is absent from Muslim doctrine and practice." Any scholar of Islam knows this is completely incorrect and exactly the sort of cliqued rhetoric that the uninformed fall back on to explain this sort of conflict. Thus, many people in Western Europe and North America think that any conflict related to Islam is historically motivated or due to terrorism.

When considering inter-civilizational relations, Huntington traces the emergence of the ‘kin-country

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9 Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, 263.
syndrome’ in which states will rally to their civilisational brethren. The Western Christianity versus Orthodox Christianity and Islam fault line drawn on his Foreign Affairs article map splits former Yugoslavia in two, clearly showing he didn’t understand the population and history of Yugoslavia. With regard to the Yugoslavian conflict, Huntington argues that leading actors in Western civilizations rallied behind their co-religionists along kin-country lines in the form of intervention from “countries that are Muslim, Orthodox and Western Christian.” Huntington equates the conflict with the emotional response similar to the 1930’s Spanish War, when intervention arose from “countries that were fascist, communist and democratic.”

Finally, the idea that “human history is the history of civilizations” is problematic. People define

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11 Ibid.: 30.
12 Ibid.: 38.
13 Ibid.
themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and finally, at the broadest level, civilizations. In the case of Bosnia and Kosovo, one cannot equate their history simply with civilizations.

When it comes to the Muslim aspect of Muslim-Christian relations in a “West versus the rest” scenario, the problem with trying to separate civilization and Islam is that the manner of the Islamic faith lends itself to a unique world system that has been in place since the days of Muhammad. John O. Voll notes:

In these historical contexts, it is misleading and inaccurate to describe this vast multicultural grouping as a ‘civilization’. The conceptualization of Islam as a special ‘world-system’ is a useful way of going beyond the conceptual distortions of the term ‘civilization.’ However, if ‘world-system’ must only be used to describe world economic networks or large political-imperial world-systems, it is important to beyond those limitations as well.¹⁵

¹⁴—, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, 40.

Thus, Islam transcends civilizations, nation-states, language, and institutions to occupy its own special category of a world civilization.

**Alternative Views and Criticism of the ‘Clash’**

Huntington has been criticized for his interpretation of the break up of Yugoslavia and the subsequent disputes as primarily an instance of inter-civilizational conflict, not accounting for religion or politics as the cause. One critic of Huntington’s theory, scholar and Orientalist Edward W. Said, felt the theory perpetuates a “West against the rest” mentality.\(^{16}\) However, William Pfaff criticizes this line of thinking, noting that the conflict is not an inter-civilizational conflict based on years of history, but rather a political struggle between Serbs and Croatians: “It’s supposedly primordial hatreds are a twentieth-century phenomenon.”\(^{17}\) Pfaff argues that there can be peaceful coexistence of the culturally divided population. He stresses that the differences that exist


are differences of history rather than physical or anthropologically racial differences.\textsuperscript{18}

Resa Aslan calls the clash of civilizations “misguided and divisive rhetoric” and that this is not so much a cultural conflict as a religious one; that we are...in the midst of a “clash of monotheisms.”\textsuperscript{19} A religion can be defined as a set of beliefs, including belief in the existence of at least one of the following: a human soul or spirit, a deity or higher being, or self after the death of one’s body. A number of customs and rituals and sacred scriptures or stories are generally associated with such beliefs.

Huntington’s theory sparked debate not only with Pfaff, but also rebuttals in the political science and international affairs circles. A Foreign Affairs article by Jeane Kirkpatrick notes Huntington’s seven or eight major civilizations list as “strange” and comments:

\begin{quote}
If civilization is defined by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions and, if it is the broadest collectivity with which persons
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.: 101.

intensely identify, why distinguish “Latin American” from “Western civilization?” Like North America, Latin America is a continent settled by Europeans who brought with them European languages and a European version of Judeo-Christian religion, law, literature and gender roles. ...Both North and South America are “Western” European with an admixture of other elements.\textsuperscript{20}

In this same 1993 \textit{Foreign Affairs} issue, Albert Weeks notes that Huntington’s methodology is not new and is in fact a reflection on the “microcosmic” and “macrocosmic” aspects of international affairs, arguing that it was simply reminiscent of Toynbee’s 1940’s line of thinking.\textsuperscript{21}

In rebuttal to Huntington’s theory, Fouad Ajami remarks in his \textit{Foreign Affairs} article, “The Summoning,” that Huntington had underestimated the “tenacity of modernity and secularism in places that acquired these ways against great odds.”\textsuperscript{22} Interestingly enough, with the death of Huntington in 2008, Ajami later wrote: “he


\textsuperscript{21}Albert L. Weeks, "Do Civilizations Hold?," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 72, no. 4 (1993): 24. Weeks specifically notes, “In arguing the macro case in the 1940s, Toynbee distinguished what he called primary, secondary and tertiary civilizations by the time of their appearance in history, contending that their attributes continued to influence contemporary events.”

[Huntington] had come forth with a thesis that ran counter to the zeitgeist of the era and its euphoria about globalization. ”  

Ajami continues:

The 20th-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity. And Huntington had the integrity and the insight to see the falseness of a borderless world, a world without differences. (He is one of two great intellectual figures who peered into the heart of things and were not taken in by globalism’s conceit, Bernard Lewis being the other.)

One last observation comes from Francis Fukuyama, after Huntington’s death in 2008:

I disagreed with Sam on many of these issues. While I fully appreciate the power and durability of culture, and the way that modern liberal democracy was rooted in Christian cultural values, it has always seemed to me that culture was more useful in explaining the provenance than the durability of democracy as a political system....The gloomy picture he paints of a world riven by cultural conflict is one favored by the Islamists and Russian nationalists, but is less helpful in explaining contemporary China or India, or indeed in explaining the motives of people in the Muslim


24 Ibid.
world or Russian who are not Islamist of nationalists.  

Finally, a point gleaned from discussion with my mentor, Dr. John Voll, is that Huntington is instinctively right about the new era of global conflict, but his theory does not apply in terms of who shapes the enormous amounts of information and the flows of expertise which are big parts of power today. For instance, the people of India and China used to come to the United States (the West) for information systems knowledge and work, but now the West is looking to both of these places for expertise. This example of a flow of power is something that transcends and can’t be touched by any ‘clash of civilization’ theory.

**Conclusion**

Huntington sees the absolute alternative visions of the future as either a universal civilization based on the spread of Western ideology or as what he considers a reality of civilizational divides. But the world is moving to a divide best seen as one between the open

societies with accountable governments versus the rest, which has nothing to do with fault lines and clashes.

Towards the end of his book Huntington makes a call for greater understanding between different civilizations to “seek to understand the interests and perspectives of all parties involved....” This notion is basic to fundamental goals such as common security, peace, and sustenance. The challenge of our time lies in whether we are able to accept and accommodate the different views of others while maintaining our own. The pressure of a shrinking world, the proximity of different cultures to each other, and globalization in general makes increased understanding imperative, especially in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo.
CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YUGOSLAVIA

My father was an atheist and he always described himself as a Serb. OK, maybe we were Muslim for 250 years, but we were Orthodox before that and deep down we were always Serbs, religion cannot change that. We only became Muslims to survive the Turks.

Emir Kusturica

I would be remiss if I did not offer a short summary of the historical highlights of former Yugoslavia since some sort of a background is absolutely necessary to understand the depth of the conflicts. In the Appendix, there is a map of 1991 Yugoslavia, showing its location on the Adriatic Sea; its neighbors: Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania; and the division of Yugoslavia into six Republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia or BiH), Montenegro, and Serbia, with the two autonomous provinces within Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

The existing Slav tribes arrived in the Balkans from what is now Iran but were assimilated by the Slavs in the

sixth and seventh centuries. They were split up in the “Great Schism in Christianity”, when the Serbs in the southern and eastern areas became Orthodox Christian, while South Slavs in the northern areas, the Croats and Slovenes, became Catholic. The presence of Islam, of course, is due to the Ottoman Empires’ five hundred year reign and the Muslim population which grew over time due to shifting loyalties between the people, especially in Bosnia. John V.A. Fine notes:

The Ottomans extended toleration to people of the Book (Jews and Christians) and divided the population into communities under their respective religious heads, which eventually came to be called millets. The Catholics as an empire-wide body did not get a millet, but the Bosnian Franciscans received a charter to operate and thus on a local scale enjoyed the privileges of a millet which increased over time as more and more Bosnians came to staff the local Franciscan operation. The Franciscans were to be the only Catholic clergy operating in Bosnia for the whole post-1340 medieval and subsequent Ottoman periods.

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4 Ibid., 36.

5 John V.A. Fine, "The Various Faiths in the History of Bosnia: Middle Ages to the Present," in Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution
An important occurrence and epic defeat for the Serbs in Yugoslavian history was the Ottoman victory at Kosovo Polje (Blackbird’s Field) in 1389, which caused Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to be controlled by the Ottoman empire, while the Croatian and Slovene peoples were under the Hapsburg rule. 6 This battle and the death of Prince Lazar was to become the symbolic focus of Serbian political history transcending to modern times to show that Slavic Muslims and Serbs are ancient and fated enemies. 7 Throughout the seventeenth century, the various Hapsburg emperors strengthened their defensive strip to protect against Ottoman expansion into Europe. As well, the Serbs also distrusted Rome, as Misha Glenny notes:

Suspicion of Rome was a mighty force within the Serbian Orthodox Church,... the relationship between so many Serbs and Croats can perhaps trace its roots back a long way, but its flowering has been a relatively recent development. 8

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Serbian nationalism became a force during the nineteenth century, with their effort to claim independence as the Ottoman Empire slowly dissolved. Leslie Benson notes:

The divide between Christianity and Islam, in one sense so fundamental to the structure of Bosnian Society, was not related in any simple way to social and political cleavages. A Muslim population monopolized wealth and power, ruling over a servile Christian populace composed predominantly of Orthodox sharecropping peasants. But most Muslims were small-holding peasants, not big landowners, and shared the hardships of their Christian neighbors in lean years.9

Conflicts between all factions continued for the next fifty years, until May 1913, when Ottoman power ceased to exist and the Serbs reclaimed their former lands. Unfortunately, a sad credit to Yugoslavian history is the fact that in 1914 World War I was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb in Sarajevo.

The history of internal division continued developing within Yugoslavia through various civil conflicts, and in March 1941, Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact with Italy, Japan and Germany, as well as Romania, Hungary, and

9 Benson, Yugoslavia: A Concise History, 6.
Bulgaria to enter into World War II. Leslie Benson notes that the Yugoslavs killed far less of the Axis occupiers than they did each other; that the “guerilla war was a sideshow”; and that the end of World War II allowed the Communist Party to seize power “thanks to Stalin’s patronage”.\textsuperscript{10} After forty years of discussion since the end of the war, it was finally determined that approximately 1 million of 16 million Yugoslavs were killed, but questions still remain about “who suffered most at whose hands”.\textsuperscript{11} The Serbian ‘Chetniks’ versus the Partizans\textsuperscript{12}, the Croatian ‘Ustasha’, and the Bosnian and Slav Muslims and their rumored SS division, or at least of their Nazi or fundamentalist influence,\textsuperscript{13} were brutally pitted not only against Jews and others, but also against each other.

In 1945, Josef Tito assumed power, and assumed the role of President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1948 until his death in 1980. Power was

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[10]{Ibid., 73.}
\footnotetext[11]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[12]{Ibid., 75-78.}
\end{footnotes}
very important to Tito and even though many Yugoslavs had
died in World War II, Tito himself killed an estimated
250,000 people in "mass shootings, forced death marches
and concentration camps in the period 1945-6."\textsuperscript{14} Stalin’s
anti-religious influence over Yugoslavia remained in place
after Tito assumed power in 1945, with especially harsh
sanctions on the Muslim population. Surprisingly, Noel
Malcolm states:

\textbf{. . . the drive for recognition of the Muslims as a
nation in the late 1960’s and 1970’s was not
an Islamic religious movement. On the contrary,
it was led by Communists and other secularized
Muslims who wanted the Muslim identity in Bosnia
to develop into something more definitely non-
religious.}\textsuperscript{15}

All the details are far too complex to be explored in this
paper, but suffice it to say that there is a long history
in Yugoslavia based on the premise that whenever a leader
felt the need to exploit an certain ethnic group or
religion, it was done. Slobodan Milosevic (1941-2006), a
politician from Yugoslavia’s Socialist Party, manipulated
his way into the Yugoslav presidency in 1989 and became

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 193.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 200.
associated with Serbian nationalism. Milosevic and his allies were interested in personal enrichment and power, and they used nationalist fervor for their own ends.

However, under Milosevic’s tenure, Yugoslavia, especially Serbia, became internationally isolated. The breakup of Yugoslavia after the Cold War ended and the wars that followed were the result of political figures “grappling for economic and political domain” in a series of power struggles. Carole Rogel notes:

Yet both the breakup and the war have often been portrayed in terms quite removed from the very real factor of politics. This is partly because the leaders themselves wished to mask their motives, and partly because they needed popular support that could be mobilized only by evoking nationalist and religious causes. Outside observers, including journalists and representatives of foreign governments, frequently accepted such explanations for Yugoslavia’s tragedy without much questioning. Some did so out of naïveté, others because the area was exotic to them and because such cultures, in their view, seemed to be governed by inexplicable, non-rational forces.

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18 Ibid.
The truth is that historically there has been a long multicultural tradition where religious and ethnic differences were not reasons for hostility.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite sanction attempts by the UN, the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, and other attempts at international intervention, Yugoslavia continued to dissolve, with Milosevic manipulating the people and the truth, and promoting the brutal crisis in Bosnia. In 1995, Milosevic reached the height of his international stature as a diplomat when Western leaders praised him for his role in influencing the Bosnian Serbs to sign a peace treaty with their Muslim rivals, overseen by U.S. officials in Dayton, Ohio. The Dayton Agreement authorized a federal state consisting of two main entities, the Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat Federation, a new constitution, human rights protection, a plan for the return of refugees and economic reconstruction, and international troops to maintain peace.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Malcolm, Bosnia: A Short History, 268.
By the time the war finally came to Kosovo and Serbia, with NATO’s seventy-eight day bombing campaign in the spring of 1999, President Milosevic was being compared in the media as another Hitler for the atrocities committed under his leadership. After NATO started bombing, hundreds of thousands of Albanians fled to Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, and to Serbia proper. NATO justified its humanitarian intervention on the premise that had emerged during the conflict in Bosnia:

Military intervention against sovereign states is legitimate if it prevents or halts the abuse of human rights by a state against its own citizens. . . . Humanitarian considerations alone may justify war.21

The Yugoslav civil wars had been especially brutal, contradictory, and complex. All sides committed atrocities against the others, but most brutal were the actions of the Serbs. Yugoslavia today is rebuilding, with different dynamics and levels of rebuilding occurring in the different states. Leadership and religion and history still play a factor in the psyche of the people. However, despite the long history of conflict, the

conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo were not due to Yugoslavia’s conflictual nature alone, as many people have suggested as an explanation for what happened in Bosnia and Kosovo. Zlatko Isakovic notes:

The problem is that there is a lack of tolerance and protection for some religious minority rights: those who are in a dominant or ruling position do not care for the religious identification of those who do not support and follow them, even in cases when it is a matter of family traditions, national identification, beliefs, etc.\(^{22}\)

**The Main Players**

Bitter conflicts between Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Slovenes, Hungarians, and Albanians summarize the players in these conflicts. The intensity of Yugoslavia’s ethnic strife, well before the outbreak of war in 1991, was reflected in the existence of independent military organizations throughout the country. According to Huntington:

In coping with identity crisis, what counts for people are blood and belief, faith and family. People rally to those with similar ancestry, religion, language, values, and institutions and distance themselves from those with different ones. . . . In the former Yugoslavia, Russia

back Serbia, Germany promotes Catholic Croatia, Muslim countries rally to the support of the Bosnian government, and the Serbs fight Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Albanian Muslims. Overall, the Balkans have once again been Balkanized along religious lines.\textsuperscript{23}

Historically Bosnia had been set up as a buffer between Serbs and Croats, but with its diverse population and industrial importance Milosevic and others created the political and economic impetus for conflict. Ethnic nationalism also began to assert itself elsewhere in Yugoslavia: Slovenians, Croats, Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims, and Kosovo Albanians all wanted independence, most Serbs and Montenegrins in Serbia and other republics wanted to remain part of Yugoslavia.

\textbf{Bosniaks or Muslims}

The Muslim population came to include both the people who continued to practice Islam and those who did not but considered themselves a Muslim by ancestry or by virtue of culture and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{24} The conflicts merely increased Muslim recognition and identification within the Yugoslav

\textsuperscript{23} Huntington, \textit{The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order}, 126-27. See also Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 72, no. 3 (1993), 30.

\textsuperscript{24} Ira M. Lapidus, \textit{A History of Islamic Societies} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 786.
nation, as well as their identity with the worldwide Islamic ummah.  

Huntington’s portrayal of Islam is that Islam is too self-contained to adjust to any modernity or democracy. This image fails to acknowledge the divisions that which exist within Islam, exaggerates the degree to which ‘fundamentalist’ forces represent Islamic societies, and underestimates the degree of variance in the Muslim world, as we see in Bosnia and Kosovo. Huntington focuses only on Islam interacting with other civilizations in conflict rather than in peaceful interchange.

Similar to Islam in Indonesia or in some African countries, the Muslim population in Bosnia and Kosovo has its own “spin” on Islam. Christian Moe and Ahmet Alibasi note that contemporary Islam in Bosnia can be divided into a “mainstream” and a “new fringe.” Saudi Arabia and the High Saudi Committee as well as Iran funded the Bosniaks


during the war. Since the end of the Yugoslav war, Saudi Arabia has been increasingly active in Bosnia, helping to build new mosques to replace those destroyed in the war, and trying to “put their stamp on Bosnian Muslims” who do not want their brand of Islam. The Bosniaks gravitate more toward Sufism rather than Wahhabism or Salafism. As was noted, prior to the war, many Bosniaks weren’t the most religious people and didn’t necessarily define themselves as such. However those with the Orientalist view and many nationalist Serbs feared that the Muslims were trying to recreate the Ottoman Empire. It is highly unlikely that the Islamic Community will be swayed by any one interpretation of Islam.

Serbs or Orthodox Christians

There were actually two sets of Serbs: communist and religiously identified. The Orthodox Christians have Medieval roots, and the Orthodox Church is, according to

27 Ibid., 22-25.


Misha Glenny, “erroneously assumed to have been the sole bearer of Serbian identity” for the period of Ottoman rule.\textsuperscript{30} In fact, the Serbs’ strong family and cultural ties enabled them to survive as the Orthodox Christian religion through the history was influenced by the Greeks and the Russians and had no central controlling leader like the Vatican. When Tito died, the Serbs’ religious identity became more important. Milosevic ultimately used the Serbs’ religion in a nationalist fashion to promote his own goals.\textsuperscript{31}

**Croats or Catholics**

The Catholic religious history, like everything else in Yugoslavia, is complicated. The Franciscans settled in Bosnia in 1291, when Pope Nicholas sent two Franciscans to convert the Serbian ruler of Bosnia, although most historians place the first Franciscans in Bosnia in 1340.\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{31}Interestingly enough, those Serbs who left Yugoslavia during any of the conflicts, generally built Serbian Orthodox churches in the communities where they lived, all over the world.

\textsuperscript{32}Slavica Jakelic, "Religion and Collective Identity: A Comparative Study of the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia and
The Franciscans became the primary source of spiritual solace for the Catholics during not only the medieval period, but for the Ottoman rule as well.\(^{33}\) As a result, the Franciscans immersed themselves into the Bosnian way of life and the Bosnian people, living in houses among the people and working for a living, thus economically, politically and culturally overlapping in society.\(^{34}\) The Ottoman presence in Bosnia gave the Franciscans an important identity, which was unintended and uniquely Bosnian in character.\(^{35}\) The Franciscans were an aspect of society with special circumstances, and as Ivo Andric noted: "a unique, special type [of friars] within the Franciscan order as a whole and in the totality of the history of the Catholic Church."\(^{36}\) This explains the connection between Bosniaks and the Franciscans, who

Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia" (Ph.D. Diss., Boston University, 2004), 61.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 188. See also, Dana Joseph Bauer, "The Medjugorje Apparitions in Historical and Epistemological Perspective" (Ph.D. Diss., California State University, 2001).


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 154.
historically “get along,” unlike the connection between the Bosniaks and the Croats.

In 1881, Pope Leo XIII ordered a Diocesan priesthood to settle and take over into what was considered merely Franciscan missionary orders established in Bosnia. This papal order started a chain of disagreements between the Franciscans and the Diocesans, especially with the Bishop of Mostar, which continues today.\(^3\) The Franciscans were reluctant to hand over parish after parish, and the Diocesans thought the Franciscans were outrageous in their manner of inclusion into Bosnian society. In 1981, visions of the Madonna occurred in Medjugorje, which culminated in the site becoming a pilgrimage site controlled by the Franciscans, despite the Vatican “stripping certain parishes of their Franciscan control” in the area.\(^4\) Michael Sells writes an incredible account of the complicated Vatican versus Franciscan relations over the Medjugorje holy site:

\(^3\) Bauer, “The Medjugorje Apparitions in Historical and Epistemological Perspective.”

Medjugorje was the site of some of the most gruesome atrocities of WWII and served as an Ustashe stronghold; local Serbs and Croats had lived in repressed and unresolved tension over the WWII atrocities that had never been debated in public. . . . In 1991, intra-Croat clan warfare broke out over control of the lucrative pilgrimage industry, culminating in atrocities and mass killings. Around the same time, conflict escalated between the Bishop of Mostar and the Medjugorje friars who controlled the pilgrimage center. The increasingly wealthy Franciscans refused to cede control of several disputed local parishes to diocesan authorities. The Bishop of Mostar denounced the Medjugorje visions as a fraud. At one point militias attached to the Medjugorje Franciscans seized the bishop, held him overnight, beat him, and ceremonially stripped him of his ecclesiastical insignia. The Medjugorje Franciscans were accused by critics of engaging in cult practices and sexual exploitation. The Franciscans accused the Bishop of similar depravities, threatened to blow up the cathedral of Mostar, and barricaded a disputed church in nearby Capljina against any effort of the Bishop to assert diocesan control.39

The Franciscans are included in the dramatic history of the Catholic Church in Bosnia, and one wonders if their collective identity will win over the remaining Catholics in Bosnia today.40


Conclusion

The complex history of Yugoslavia has been influenced not only geographically and politically, but also by its religions. This brief look at some of the highlights of its history as well as the history of the three main religious groups sets the stage for a closer look at Bosnia: what happened and how Muslims and Christians interacted in the 1990’s.
CHAPTER 3

BOSNIA

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH or Bosnia) is about 19,741 square miles in size, slightly smaller than West Virginia, with a population of about 4 million, and a 12-mile wide access to the Adriatic Sea.\(^1\) BiH borders Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. The Dinaric Alps dominate its landscape, and timber, agriculture and mining are among its economic resources.\(^2\) Like Muslim-Christian Spain, Bosnia presents a very complex set of issues and experiences. People are often not aware of the long history of Bosnia as a context for today’s evolving Muslim-Christian relations.

A Brief History

Bosnia is a “pot” which can be described as a mini-Yugoslavia: ethnic, religious, nationalist, Islamic, European, Bosnian, foreign, and local. Bosnia is known as the “powder keg” of Yugoslavia, which itself is known to


be the powder keg of Europe. However, Bosnia can’t be defined as a nation-state. If one looks at classical nation-states, France began with many ethnicities, which eventually had a prominent one that could crush the others through hegemonic enforcement of a national identity.

The province was absorbed by Croatia during World War II. Caught between the Ustashas Croats and Chetnik Serbs, tens of thousands of Bosnians were killed during the war, particularly in the Chetnik genocide where the “bestiality of the killings (flaying, boiling alive) convey an intensity of ethnic hatred” which existed at the time.

The formation of a Communist regime in 1945 promoted Bosnian emigration to Turkey.

In Yugoslavia, Tito knew that there was a long history of rivalries and a national identity that had competing and conflicting narratives. He suppressed nationalism and balanced the power of one nationality against another. Tito sought to stay in power by avoiding war, while Milosevic, after failing to keep Yugoslavia


\[4\] Benson, Yugoslavia: A Concise History, 79.
together on Serbia-first terms, sought to stay in power by going to war. However, the theory that the different nationalities that made up Yugoslavia always wanted to kill each other due to their tribal rivalries and centuries-old hatreds is not true.

After 1966 President Tito adopted a tolerant nationalities policy, and recognized Bosnians as a separate and equal nationality within the Yugoslav state. The new policies were evidently intended to offset local Serbian and Croatian political pressures, since Muslim identity was not encouraged among Albanians and Turks or among Muslims living in predominantly Serbian provinces.

“The war in Bosnia was brought about not by ethnic hatreds as much as it was by evil men who could have been stopped at any point along the way,” notes Robert Kaplan in *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. The truth is that the Croats were fighting the non-Catholics, the Serbs were fighting both the Croats and the Muslims, the Muslims were fighting both the Croats and the Serbs, and the

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Croats’ Vatican-led Catholic population was fighting the Medjugorje Franciscans.⁶ According to David Gibbs:

The Bosnia conflict quickly became notorious for the scale of its atrocities, especially those perpetrated by Serb forces against Muslim civilians. The widespread practice of ethnic cleansing was often associated with the killing of noncombatants, and also the raping of women and girls. The single massacre at Srebrenica in 1995 is believed to have killed some eight thousand unarmed Muslims.⁷

Actually there was nothing spontaneous or inevitable about the explosion in Yugoslavia. Ambassador Zimmerman, who lived in Yugoslavia for many years and observed its collapse firsthand, noted:

The breakup of Yugoslavia is a classic example of nationalism from the top down—a manipulated nationalism in a region where peace has historically prevailed more than war and in which a quarter of the population were in mixed marriages. The manipulators condoned and even provoked local ethnic violence in order to engender animosities that could then be magnified by the press, leading to further violence.⁸

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⁸ Maass, Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War, 205.
With the collapse of the Communist government in 1990, the Bosnian Muslim Party of Democratic Action, headed by Alija Izetbegovic, called for an independent, secular, multi-national Bosnian state. Mark Hoare notes:

Izetbegovic's Islam was not an expansionist, hegemonic religion to be imposed on non-Muslims by force, but on the contrary a peaceful, inward-looking religion that would enable Muslims to achieve a harmonious society independently from non-Muslims.\(^9\)

The declaration of Bosnian independence led Serbs living in Bosnia and Herzegovina to declare their own Serbian republic, make war on the Muslims, and attempt by "ethnic cleansing" to drive them out of the region. The war was marked by horrifying episodes of torture, rape, and mass murder of Bosnian Muslims.\(^10\) The Serbian assault was also directed against mosques, historic building, and other artifacts in an effort to eradicate all signs of Bosnian identity. The United Nations attempted to intervene, but a UN arms embargo worked only to the advantage of the Serbs, and its peacekeeping forces were

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\(^9\) Hoare, *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, 375.

ineffectual. Eventually a Croatian-Bosnian alliance, with NATO air support, brought an end to the war.

The Bosnian War lasted almost four years, from November 1, 1991, to October 12, 1995. It was a brutal civil war, but the “involvement of Croatia and the rump of Yugoslavia” opened the conflict up to international intrusion in the form of United Nations intervention enforced by NATO.\textsuperscript{11}

**International Intervention Phase**

The UN passed several measures in hopes of mitigating the effects of the war without success. In 1993, the Vance-Owen peace plan, named after its authors, Cyrus Vance and David Owen, the former British foreign secretary, called for the Serbs to withdraw from a quarter of the territory they held in Bosnia. The big question at the time was whether Milosevic would force his followers in Bosnia to accept the deal. Yugoslavia was Eastern Europe’s richest and freest country and Milosevic knew that by playing the nationalist card and telling Serbs to forget about Yugoslavia and concentrate on fighting their

'enemies,' he could continue with his goal without U.S. intervention.

Milosevic controlled the media, especially television, refusing to let independent stations have any national frequencies, and controlled newspapers within the country, which were basically non-existent nor could anyone afford them. Milosevic was a well-trained Communist who understood the power and importance of propaganda.

According to New York Times reporter, Peter Maass, one needs to remember that Bosnia’s Muslims are Slavic, not Arab. They are not descendants of Turks or Saudis, they are native Slavs who converted to Islam when Bosnia was under Turkish rule. A man with blond hair and blue eyes in Bosnia is just as likely to be a Muslim as a Serb or Croat. People in Bosnia generally accepted and respected “the others’” religious identity prior to the war. The American media always referred to “ethnic rivalries” in Bosnia, but all the combatants were the same ethnic group--slavic.

Since Bosnia had been under Turkish domination from the fourteenth century until the nineteenth century, its
twentieth century Muslims were mostly of a privileged class: the landowners and mayors and professionals in the city centers. This is due to the fact that after the Turkish Empire fell apart, most Muslims in Bosnia managed to hold onto their positions of prominence. This privileged Muslim status continued after World War I not only when Bosnia became part of a country that was called 'The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes,' but then even when it later became Yugoslavia. The Muslims continued to live primarily in the cities, and generally speaking, the Serbs and Croats were the “country bumpkins.” As Washington Post reporter, Peter Maass, noted:

In the 1990s, most Muslims were nonreligious and lived like other city dwellers in Europe: Fathers went to work wearing ties and swallowed a shot of brandy after dinner (and often at breakfast), while their daughters had posters of Andre Agassi on their bedroom walls and their sons listened to Guns N’ Roses.  

To better understand the caliber of life of a Muslim in Bosnia in 1990, before the conflict, Maass notes:

The best way to understand Muslims in Bosnia is to think of Jews in America. Mecca was distant and unimportant to most Bosnian Muslims, just as Israel is distant and unimportant to most American Jews. Bosnia’s Muslims have lived with

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12 Maass, Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War, 70.
people of other faiths for centuries and have been diluted by it, to the extent that most thought of themselves not as Muslims but as Bosnians or Yugoslavs or Europeans. Same for the Jews in America, who call themselves Americans first, perhaps New Yorkers second and Jews third (if at all). Many Muslims married Christians in Bosnia, just as many Jews did in America. Equating a Bosnian Muslim with an Arab fundamentalist is about as accurate as equating an American Jew with an ultraorthodox Hasidic Jew living in Israel.  

Of course, the population that dominated the cities was more open than the populations in the countryside, and the majority of the Muslim population was located in the cities. This attitude, thanks to the war, changed radically and there is some speculation that al-Qaeda and the mujahadeen had an influence in the Muslims’ attempt to fight back during the conflict. I didn’t find much evidence that this is true, although terrorists sometimes bring up the cause of Bosnia in their rhetoric. Any change in attitude by the Bosniaks pre and post conflict should be considered with the words of Grand Mufti Ceric in mind:

The Serbs committed genocide against us, raped our women, made us refugees in our own country. And now we have a tribal constitution that says we have to share political power and land with

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11 Ibid.
our killers. We Bosnian Muslims still feel besieged in the city of Sarajevo.¹⁴

**Muslim-Christian Relations in Bosnia Today**

By the signing of the Dayton Accords in November 1995, Bosnia was divided into two states, one Muslim and Croatian, the other Serbian. NATO forces still occupy the province in an effort to create political stability and allow the several nationality groups to live together. None of the three religions were left untouched or unpersecuted by the war. Reports that aggression is escalating between the religions today does not bode well for future Muslim-Christian relations.

Serb authorities tried to promote the theory that Muslims themselves had destroyed the mosques in the hope of blaming Serbs and stirring global outrage. The war in Bosnia was so evil that the visual memories of the conflict are unforgettable: refugee families fleeing, people dying, parks turned into cemeteries, and destroyed mosques, libraries and other buildings. The goal of ethnic cleansing was not simply to get rid of Muslims--it

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was to destroy all traces that they had ever lived in Bosnia.

The brutality of the Serbs against the Muslims at Srebrenica and many other places as well as the deaths and containment camps, including rape camps, and reports that some of the UNPROFOR soldiers had sex with some of the captive Bosnian women, let alone the complete collapse of normal life was all completely devastating for the Muslim population.¹⁵ Mark Hoare notes that the Muslims fought back against the Serbs and the Croats:

. . . Despite their appalling suffering in the war of the 1990s and the failure of the West to support them, the Bosnian Muslims have been remarkably resilient in resisting the efforts of al-Qa’ida and the international Islamist movement to put down roots among them: no Islamist terrorist outrage has yet taken place in Bosnia-Hercegovina; nor has any Bosniak been implicated in Islamist terrorist acts abroad—testimony to the traditionally moderate Bosnian version of Islam and to the success of half a century of secularization under Titoism.¹⁶

The Muslims were guilty, too, of brutalities similar to the Serbs: of torching towns, brutal killing, and camps.¹⁷


¹⁶ Hoare, The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day, 409.
The Bosniaks did not start the war, and they fought back as allowed and justified by their faith. Thus one can easily understand how the war could intensify the identification of Bosnian Muslims with Islam.

The Dayton Agreement, while successful at ending the war, also created a decentralized system, with a mandatory twenty-seven percent Serb representation, and an undermining of the state’s authority and ability to move forward without international help.¹⁸ A New York Times editorial on February 23, 2009, “Bosnia Unravelling,” warns that: “Bosnia’s political leaders continue to prey on their countrymen’s ethnic prejudices and insecurities.”¹⁹ In a similar observation, a recent article in Foreign Affairs entitled, “The Death of Dayton: How to Stop Bosnia From Falling Apart,” notes:

In the past three years, ethnic nationalist rhetoric from leaders of the country’s three constituent ethnic groups—the Muslims, Croats,

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and Serbs—has intensified, bringing reform to a standstill.\textsuperscript{20}

Michael B. Humphreys, Head of the European Commission Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2002–6, noted the following in a “Letter to the Editor” in \textit{Foreign Affairs} responding to “The Death of Dayton” article:

For a short time, circumstances were favorable: there was a proactive high representative for Bosnia, and there were pragmatic leaders in the country committed to the EU’s agenda. During this period, significant progress was made. Defense reforms put in place a single army command-and-control structure for Bosnia, replacing what had effectively been three armies: Bosnia Muslim, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb. The creation of the Indirect Tax Authority brought in the first state-level taxation service and unified the customs and excise services. And the establishment of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council paved the way for significant improvement in the rule of law. Unfortunately, this period came to an end with the fall of the Republika Srpskas (RS) government led by the Party of Democratic Progress. This was followed by an overambitious attempt at police reform artificially linked to inflexible EU standards. The subsequent defeat of the constitutional reform process in April 2006 consolidated the position of Prime Minister Milorad Dodik in the RS and brought back Haris Silajdžić as the Bosnian Muslim member of the presidency of Bosnia. Bosnia has indeed shown, as McMahon and Western write: “state building is

not a problem to be solved but a process to be managed.\textsuperscript{21}

Obrad Kesic and Steven Meyer also note:

If Bosnia is to exist as a state, it must do so on its own terms—terms that would necessitate painful compromises by the people and leaders of all three ethnic groups. Pressure from the outside will only undermine any impetus by the local stakeholders to find a solution.\textsuperscript{22}

However, it is highly unlikely that war will actually return despite the rhetoric of each of the three ethnic groups. Andrew Radin notes:

The international community can help Bosnia only by focusing on incremental reforms related to economic development and to the technical requirements for European integration. Changing the state’s institutions may be essential for long-term growth, but it will take time and can only be done by the country’s elected leaders.\textsuperscript{23}

Today more than half of Bosnia’s Catholics have left the nations since 1992 and their exodus continues.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Michael B. Humphreys, "Letter to the Editor," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 89, no. 1 (2010).

\textsuperscript{22}Obrad Kesic and Steven E. Meyer, "Letter to the Editor," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 89, no. 1 (2010).

\textsuperscript{23}Andrew Radin, "Letter to the Editor," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 89, no. 1 (2010).

According to the Catholic News Agency, any returning Bosnian Catholics face difficulty in recovering confiscated property and suffer high unemployment. Of the three ethnic groups, the Catholic Croats feel they are now the group that is the most marginalized, with little protection and recourse under the Dayton Accords.

Bosnia faces the biggest crisis in fifteen years after the war, and hostility remains. The partitioned government is not working that well, and the countries are heavily sustained by foreign intervention. Because there is no strong central government, the powerful separate governments are hiding behind the Office of High Representative (OHR). The local politicians are a part of the problem, not part of the solution and ethnic tensions and corruption have remained unsolved since the civil war ended. Unfortunately, Bosnia is considered the most corrupt country in the region, and needs transparency. There are fourteen different police agencies in Bosnia, with no way to punish or go to trial. Let alone, the country is still full of arms and displaced people.

Due to the nature of the Dayton Accords, the two entities, the Federations of BiH and Republika Srpska
promote the same fear of "the other taking over," mistrust, and promotes inflammatory rhetoric as well as nationalist rhetoric which many feel could lead to renewed war. The Archbishop of Sarajevo, His Eminence Vinko Carindal Puljic wrote:

The universal orgy of relativism on the world stage has contributed to the relativity of all value systems in this country, as well as all individuals in BiH. Besides this, the particular problems of BiH—lack of respect for others and those who are different in identity, problems accumulated by historical, political, ethnic, and religious irrational charges—kindled unrest in the people of BiH, which escalated into the last war. Every war is the father of all evil and failure of civilization. 25

Perhaps the most striking thing about the Archbishop’s remarks that day was his earnest and humble nature in discussing the level of hate which has possessed Bosnia, both today and during the war. He also stressed that there would be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness. Archbishop Puljic continued:

The Brussels Declaration was jointly formulated, signed, and published by the high representatives of the four major world religions, which traditionally exist in BiH. The Declaration state in paragraph eight that

religions contribute to constructive dialogy among civilizations and not to a clash of civilizations. There is no alternative to dialogue among cultures, religions, and ethnic groups on the path towards peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the Vía Dolorosa that we must walk upon, because a culture of dialogue is the only way to coexistence and peace in BiH.\(^\text{26}\)

CHAPTER 4

KOSOVO

The belief that the conflict in Kosovo was over ethnic rivalry, tribal warfare, general non-civilization, or that they had been conflicted for centuries does not explain what occurred in Kosovo in the late 1990’s. Kosovo is a former sub-region of Serbia within the former Yugoslavia, which broke apart around the time the Cold War ended. Kosovo is slightly larger than Delaware, landlocked by Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, with approximately 1.8 million people, 88% Albanian and 12% Serb, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, or Turk.\(^1\) The general term Kosovar refers to anyone from Kosovo including Albanians, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Croats, and a number of other ethnic groups such as Turks, Slavic Muslims, Vlachs, Circassions, and Egyptians (gypsies or Roma or Ashkali).\(^2\) Today, the region is one of Europe’s poorest, with more than half of its people living in poverty. Although it


possesses rich mineral resources, agriculture is the main economic activity.³

A Brief History

According to Tim Judah, the Serbs, as Slavic people, began to transfer in “waves of migration from the middle of the sixth century A.D.” and the Albanians actually claim descent from the tribes that inhabited the region before time of the Romans.⁴ The region was the center of the Serbian empire until the mid-14th century, Serbians regard Kosovo as the birthplace of their state, and many Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries were constructed.⁵ Over the centuries, as the ethnic balance shifted in favor of Albanians, Kosovo came to represent a Serbian golden age, embodied in epic poetry. Important to the Kosovars is Serbia's defeat at the epic Battle of Kosovo Pulje in 1389, which ushered in centuries of rule under the Muslim Ottoman Empire. When the Ottomans arrived in Kosovo in the 14th century, most scholars seem

³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kosovo."


to agree that the majority of the population were Serbs, or at least an Orthodox Christian population that would later identify themselves collectively as Serbs. Over the centuries, this was to change, as Serbs migrated to what are today Serbia, Hungary, Bosnia and Croatia. For much of the Ottoman period, towns in Serbia and Bosnia were Turkish and Muslim-dominated, with Christians living as peasants in the surrounding countryside.

As Serbia began to emerge from Ottoman domination, beginning with the first Serbian uprising of 1804, as a principality still owing loyalty to the sultan, and then, after 1878, as a recognized and fully independent state, Serbs were increasingly attracted to live there and indeed given land and encouraged to migrate from the still Ottoman-dominated parts such as Kosovo. Geert-Hinrich Ahrens notes:

... because Serbs conceived the Ottoman Empire as the source of all evil, they came to see, to this very day, Islamic Slavs and traitors, and Kosovo Albanians, 95 percent of whom were Muslims, as enemies who had become part of the Ottoman state and civilization. As soon as they

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regained territory from the Ottomans, they turned against the Muslims who lived there.\textsuperscript{7}

However, Serbia regained control of Kosovo in 1913, and the province was incorporated into the Yugoslav federation.\textsuperscript{8} Muslims, Turks, and Albanians either chose to leave or were forced to flee. The wars of the twentieth century, that is the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the two World Wars, and then the wars of the 1990s, displaced millions upon millions, depositing Serbs and their neighbors where they are today. Tim Judah notes:

\begin{quote}
History molded the Serbian nation differently. Being a Serb today derives from being Orthodox. . . . Muslims, until the 1990s, were just “Muslims” and defined as such. Now, more often than not, they are called Bosniaks, even if, as in the case of Bosniaks in Kosovo, their ancestors always lived there, and not in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

Along these same lines, Noel Malcolm writes:

\begin{quote}
The main reason for the estrangement of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo lies, therefore, in modern political history. But the most important part of that history is the period from 1912 to the present. The massacres of Albanians during and following the initial conquest; the systematic maltreatment of Albanians in the inter-war year; the vicious
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 290.

\textsuperscript{8} News, "Timeline: Kosovo."

\textsuperscript{9} Judah, Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know, 17.
reprisals against Serbs during World War II; the heavy repression of the early Milosevic years: these are the most important factors in explaining any contemporary ‘estrangement.’ Compared with these, religion is just one part of the background.  

Serbs and ethnic Albanians vied for control in the region throughout the twentieth century. In the 1960s the suppression of Albanian national identity in Kosovo gave way to a more tolerant policy from Belgrade—an ‘Autonomous Province’ within Serbia.  

The 1974 Yugoslav constitution laid down Kosovo’s status as an autonomous province—“no longer under direct Serbian tutelage”—and the pressure for independence mounted in the 1980s after the death of Yugoslav President Tito.

But any resentment over Kosovar influence within the Yugoslav federation was reigned in by Slobodan Milosevic. On becoming president in 1989, he proceeded to strip

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Kosovo of its autonomy. A passive resistance movement in the 1990s failed to secure independence or to restore autonomy, although ethnic Albanian leaders proclaimed independence and a sovereign Republic of Kosovo and its succession from Serbia. The post-Cold War reorganization of Europe, the lack of “tools and mechanisms for conflict prevention and crisis management,” and the other conflicts in other countries overshadowed the apparently nationalist driven Kosovo conflict. The world was also distracted by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and for Washington, DC, in particular, by Clinton’s Lewinsky scandal.

In the mid-1990s an ethnic Albanian guerrilla movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army, stepped up its attacks on Serb targets. The attacks precipitated a major and brutal Yugoslav military crackdown. Slobodan Milosevic’s rejection of an internationally brokered deal

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to end the crisis, and the persecution of Kosovo Albanians, led to the start of NATO air strikes against targets in Kosovo and Serbia in March 1999.

**International Intervention Phases**

Kosovo has been the backdrop to a centuries-old and often-strained relationship between its Serb and ethnic Albanian inhabitants. It played an important role in Yugoslavia’s troubles in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Shortly after Tito’s death in 1980, religion became more important and disturbances in Kosovo set off the Albanians and the Serbs on a collision course, which polarized Yugoslavia politically. Julie Mertus notes:

> Until 1990, Kosovo was known as an “autonomous province” of Serbia, one of six Yugoslav republics. From 1968 to the mid-1980’s, Kosovo became increasingly more autonomous from Serbia.¹⁷

Ironically, when Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in 1991, and as Bosnia fell into four years of brutal warfare, Kosovo remained relatively calm. Only after the Dayton

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Peace Accords, in late 1995, did Kosovo’s Albanians opt for a militant policy toward the Serbs. Meanwhile the Serbs escalated their oppression of the local population and ethnic cleansing began to be carried out on a massive scale, but chaotically.\(^{18}\) International diplomatic intervention failed to diffuse tensions, and ultimately, NATO initiated military action to stop Serbia. NATO prevailed in the seventy-eight day engagement in 1999 and Kosovo was put under UN protection.\(^{19}\)

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 in June 1999 advocated the withdrawal from Kosovo of all the military, police, and paramilitary forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia together with a synchronized deployment of an international civil and security presence under United Nations auspices, respectively the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).\(^{20}\) Resolution 1244

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also arranged for the appointment of a special representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) to administer Kosovo and to coordinate closely with KFOR. The role of the international administration was to replace the Yugoslav authorities in the territory of Kosovo and to assume full interim administrative responsibility. The central tasks of UNMIK were to establish a functioning interim civil administration, including the maintenance of law and order; to promote the establishment of substantial autonomy and self-government, including the holding of elections; and to facilitate a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.  

In terms of scope and ambition, UNMIK's mandate was almost unprecedented by the standards of UN field operations. Iain King notes that little did they know that they had “waded into a long-running civil war between two nationalities each of whom asserted its right to dominate a single piece of territory to the detriment of the other.”  

As well, the EU mission, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) was founded on February 4,  

21 Ibid.  

2008, stepping in to help just in time for Kosovo to unilaterally declare independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. The territory immediately won recognition from the United States and major European Union countries.

But Serbia, with the help of its big-power ally Russia, has vowed to block Kosovo from getting a United Nations seat and does not recognize Kosovo’s independence. Russia, China, Spain and other countries refuse to recognize Kosovo’s independence, perhaps because of separatist movements in their own countries, which they do not want to encourage. While Serbia views Kosovo as the ‘cradle of their civilization,’ Albanians also claim Kosovo since, noted earlier, they maintain that their ancestors inhabited the area long before the Serb tribes arrived in the sixth century AD.

This seemingly intractable conflict is reminiscent of the Arab-Israeli conflict between Israel and Palestine in that both parties lay claim to the land. Noel Malcolm comments:

Serbs will never understand the nature of the Kosovo question unless they recognize first that the territory conquered in 1912 already had a majority non-Serb population, and secondly that the experience of alien, colonial rule is precisely what Serbian policy inflicted on that
majority population during most of the next eighty-five years.\textsuperscript{23}

The beneficiaries, Malcolm notes:

\ldots do not include the ordinary indigenous Serbs of Kosovo, whose lives have been darkened and distorted by unnecessary political conflict; nor, obviously, the Kosovo Albanians. \ldots \textsuperscript{24}

\section*{Muslim–Christian Relations in Kosovo Today}

Reconciliation between the ethnic Albanian majority, most of whom support independence, and the Serb minority remains elusive. Ira Lapidus notes:

In the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia Albanians never accepted the Yugoslav state as did Bosnians, and maintained their separate identity and territorial claims. Kosovo-Albanian identity was also defined in ethnic rather than in religious terms.\textsuperscript{25}

William Vendley and James Cairns also write:

Religion has been inexorably entwined in the wars of dissolution of former Yugoslavia due to the broad overlap of national and religious identity and history in the region. In Kosovo, however, the stark ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences between Serbs and Albanians have lessened the centrality of religion to the conflict. In addition, while the same three

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 461.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Lapidus, \textit{A History of Islamic Societies}, 788.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
religions that dominate the region are present in Kosovo (Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism), they are split between only two main national groups, since the Muslims and Catholics are, for the most part, both ethnically Albanian, and the Orthodox are ethnically Serbian... they have each compiled a record of positive and negative actions during the centuries that shape how they are perceived, particularly by members of different communities.  

For the Serb community and for the Serbian Orthodox Church, Kosovo holds particular historical and spiritual importance, which has lent the struggle over its destiny. Political forces in Serbia have misused this aspect of Kosovo’s history. Julie Mertus states:

Islam has never been a basis of organization for political action in Kosovo. Albanians identify themselves primarily as Albanians, not as Muslims or Catholics. . . . It is not uncommon in Kosovo <in 1999> for communities that are mixed Muslim, Catholic and atheist to respect both Islamic and Christian holidays.

Today, the Serbian minority lives in separate areas watched over by NATO peacekeepers. International diplomats have voiced concerns over the slow progress on their rights.

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27Mertus, Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War, 33.
A scan of a news source such as the World News Network in the month of April 2009 alone lists headlines about Kosovo featuring only negative articles: rejection of UNMIK’s 6 point plan, allegations of corruption, use of international police force against the Serbs, news of electric power outages for Serbian enclaves, complaints of incomplete legal frameworks being an obstacle to the functioning of a civil society in Kosovo, claims of manipulation of election process, and so forth. This is not an environment conducive to good relations between Muslims and Christians.

There have been complaints, too, regarding the lateness of the NATO campaign and its overall effectiveness for those seventy-eight days in 1999. Misha Glenny notes that “the breakdown of the Croat-Muslim alliance was a catastrophe for the Muslims,”28 as a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Kosovo Albanians had already been initiated by Serbian forces. The intervention was too late as hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, and

thousands of people died in the conflict. For example, Lester Brune notes:

. . . 40,000 Yugoslav National Army (YNA) troops with armored vehicles and artillery enabled thugs and secret police...to evict all Kosovars in house to house searches. Using systematic procedures, Serb secret police and paramilitaries shot resisters as well as men aged 20 to 50 while forcing women, children and old men to seek refuge either on foot or crowded into buses and trains headed for the border of Macedonia or Albania. Before the refugees left town, the Serbs raped women they desired; stole the refugees’ money, identity cards, and personal valuables; and forced Kosovars to sign papers deeding their property to Serbs who were former neighbors. In rural areas, they burned homes, killed live stock and destroyed troops. Further evidence of the orderly system of Serbs’ assaults was discovered after the war when UN officials found that all Kosovar schools were destroyed but not Serbian schools, all building used or owned by Serbs remained intact, and the highways and bridges useful to the YNA lacked the extensive damage Western experts expected.\textsuperscript{29}

The Kosovar human rights violations against the Serbs included kidnappings, killing, intimidation and detentions, but it was overwhelmingly the Albanians who suffered.

Did the NATO campaign ultimately stop Milosevic and the Muslim slaughter? Yes, but on another level, the NATO

\textsuperscript{29}Lester H. Brune, \textit{Kosovo Intervention and United States Policy} (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books, 2000), 83-84.
intervention also breached human rights principles with its random, ineffective bombing as Clinton did not want a ground invasion, and the collateral damage that included many civilian and unauthorized bomb hits including one to the Chinese Embassy.  

The human rights legacy in Kosovo is appalling, which doesn’t help with Muslim-Christian relations today. Each side of the conflict in Kosovo has been misguided through the rationale that the person who forgives is worse than the person who sins in the first place. Politicians took advantage of this ready-made mythology and turned this line of thinking into ‘he’s the enemy of God, and since he is, it’s incumbent for you to react as well.’ This religious narrative, that the “other” represented evil and Satan was the most horrific thing that people bought into during the conflict. The war in Kosovo is not a religious conflict at its core, but it used religion like the Crusades used religion for political purposes.

In a New York Times article by Peter Steinfels an

\[\text{Ibid., 86-88.}\]

interview in 1999 with Kosovo’s Islamic leader, Mufti Rexhap Boja, illustrates the willingness of those religious leaders at the time to engage in discussion, despite the ramifications of war:

He challenges the widespread impression that Balkan history is nothing but a chronicle of religious warfare. In Kosovo, it is quite the contrary, he said: three religious communities — Muslim, Orthodox and Roman Catholic — long coexisted peacefully. There are sacred sites of the Serbian Orthodox in Kosovo, he said, that for many years have been in the safekeeping of Albanian Muslim Kosovars, who consider them part of a national heritage and spared them damage even as ethnic conflict grew acute. In earlier years, imams and priests were often jailed by Communist officials in the same cells, and emerged friends. . . . What appeared to remain constant, however, was his conviction that with the aid of "civilized nations" — first among them the United States, in his eyes a model of religious pluralism — reconstruction and tolerance could overcome bitterness and revenge.32

This positive Islamic outlook can be understood with the words of ‘Alija ‘Ali Izetbegovic:

The Qur’an rarely addresses the individual. It more frequently addresses the people, and when it does, sometimes as citizens only. Man as a member of society is a child of this world, . . .


That which he shares with other people, and not his specific individual qualities, makes him a social being. If the individual and the society are shaped independently, according to different models and ideals, a conflict between the individual and the society is inevitable. According to Vendley’s and Cairn’s views, not only does religion offer a “code of ethics” but also “language and ritual that address human tragedy, suffering, and failure, as well as joy and transformation.” Religion has a presence socially at every level of society. It offers networking capabilities, offers a historical legitimacy, social welfare, education, and can be used to mobilize community members around “issues of social concern.” The efforts of religious leaders to open paths of dialogue have not gone unnoticed and their efforts carry symbolic significance.

Of course, as the years have progressed in Kosovo under the UN and EU occupation, such dialogue has not reached any effective level to the masses. Realistically, what role can religious institutions play in promoting

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35 Ibid.
tolerance, rebuilding trust, and supporting the rights of all to live in Kosovo in the aftermath of the violence, trauma, and hatred that this conflict has spawned?

According to John Voll in an article citing his lecture at the University in Kosovo in 2007: “Differences in religious conviction represent the best solution to the functioning of a modern society.”36 The KosovaLive article continues with a paraphrase of his comments:

If a secular society excludes a religious community from its surrounding, then it is destined to fail...and the current process of globalization is challenging the old-fashioned secularism, which has identified itself with the lack of belief in any significant religions. 37

Religious dialogue will be essential to create a climate in which Kosovo can begin to rebuild and reconcile.

Additionally, the inter-ethnic violence has been a continuous feature of the Kosovo reality in varying degrees, and the absence of the rule of law makes it extremely difficult to encourage any sort of civil society. A Helsinki Watch report notes:


37 Ibid.
Kosovo’s previous political authorities thus failed in their human rights obligations in two ways. First, they failed to protect Kosovo’s minorities from abuse. Second, rather than creating a criminal justice system that would offer protection to everyone in Kosovo...these are serious human rights failings; any lasting solution will have to guarantee full respect for the rights of Kosovo’s minorities, and...it cannot be said, however, that military occupation of Kosovo can accomplish that goal.38

The inadequacy of the rule of law also allows bogus war crime allegations to grow and fails to address the issue of property rights, which is one of the main issues of the conflict.39 Stephen Schwartz writes:

Albanians compared themselves to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, in that the world had treated them as distant, exotic, and not very desirable as neighbours or friends.40

During the “pressure cooker” of identities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, what one had was an emergence of an identity narrative which created the


40 Stephen Schwartz, Kosovo: Background to a War (London, UK: Anthem Press, 2000), 144.
national identity, but one could also have competing narratives but not necessarily a national identity. While the people of Kosovo have a shared history under the Ottoman Empire, the Muslims don’t view nationality but rather view their identities as Muslims.

Kosovars are either coping with, accepting, or rejecting diversity. Branislav Krstic-Brano is convinced:

...that the core of the conflict in Kosovo...is the unresolved clash between two rights: the historical right of the Serbian people—who had established their state, church, and culture in these territories, yet kept leaving them—and the ethnic right of the Kosovo Albanians, who have inhabited these same territories since long ago.  

In other words, the territory appeals to the Serbs’ ethnic heritage while the Muslims hope for an independent republic based on a changed ethnic structure.

In the case of Kosovo, it has declared its independence but it is struggling at this point to achieve success. Any attempt to regain the civil relations between the Serbs and the Albanian Muslims will be almost futile due to the wars and years of human rights violations on each side coupled with the long history of

the area. Together with more sufficient civil society structures and a functioning fair legal system, the best hope for repaired Muslim-Christian relations relies on their vision and acceptance of plurality and dialogue.
CHAPTER 5
A WAY FORWARD

To what degree were there clearly different identities and what lessons can be learned about Muslim-Christian understanding? How do we try to understand people of different religions? What does this tell us about inter-civilizational relations? How could something like the brutal killings between religious groups in Bosnia and Kosovo occur? Was this conflict a clash of civilizations or an engineered clash of religions?

The Yugoslav Wars lasted just over ten years, from June 25, 1991, to August 13, 2001. As central and eastern Europe emerged from the years of Communism, societies were exposed whose development had been frozen for decades. People who had previously been members of nations held by others’ conquests now emerged into an international community to take their initial steps toward democracy on the world stage. One could speculate that if ethnic and religious countries such as former Yugoslavia had been more transparent and more prepared to handle the corrupt leaders, they could have avoided war, but the leaders
preyed on the post-Communism chaos, on nationalist tendencies, and on the nativity of the people.

The dynamics of Muslim-Christian relations have been complicated throughout world history, and especially in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo. There are many lessons to be drawn, which generally is the case in a complex history. These include the fact that peace deals should not only end a war but be structured to establish “a just and sustainable peace,” and that “stable societies don’t just happen, they are built.”¹ A core concept in the repertoire for all involved is that religion can be distinguished from politics, and the goal should be to strive for understanding for a better means of survival using common universal values such as peace, justice and reconciliation while upholding religious values.

But how did the conflict get to the level where family members were killing other family members or neighbors of another religion and thinking it was okay to behave this way? This behavior was motivated mostly by politicians creating a nationalist fervor, for economic reasons, old hatreds, politics, using religion as the

driving force to accomplish the end result. When politicians were looking for a means of power, with the diverse populations of Bosnia and Kosovo, they already had a means in place. The nationalist fervor included the rhetoric, “He’s the enemy of God since he is, therefore it’s incumbent for you to react as well.” People are careful not to attribute the conflicts to old hatreds, but the leaders were able to tap into that to some extent in stirring up the masses for their ends. The religious narrative was easily bought into: the other person was representing Satan.

On this specific aspect of the conflict, Huntington notes:

A history of off-again-on-again slaughter, however, does not itself explain why violence was on again in the late twentieth century. After all, as many pointed out, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims for decades lived very peacefully together in Yugoslavia. . . . Other factors must have intruded in the last decades of the twentieth century.\(^2\)

Huntington also offers the idea that Yugoslavia had complicated processes that led to intercivilizational wars, with the biggest factor being the demographic shift,

\(^2\) Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, 259.
which took place in Kosovo. The downfall of the communist regimes, according to Huntington, left people finding new identities in the “old standbys” of ethnicity and religion, and their peaceful order “replaced by the violence of peoples committed to different gods.” I don’t agree with the demographic shift theory, and as far as the peaceful order being violently reordered by commitment to different gods, I would say that the clash is within all modern nations between people who accept others versus those who crave homogeneity through “domination of a single religious or ethnic tradition.” ‘Alija ‘Ali Izetbegovic notes:

As a result of historical reasons and political confrontations between Christianity and Islam, their kinship has very often been overlooked. That Islam accepts the Bible as a holy book and Jesus as God’s messenger has been ignored. This fact, if we draw all the necessary conclusions from it, could direct the relations of these two great world religions to an entirely new dimension in the future.

3 Ibid., 262.


5 Izetbegovic, Islam between East and West, 200.
To continue to answer the question of how someone could commit such atrocities, I would offer that the basic human qualities such as stupidity, sheer evil, jealousy, greed, or insanity also played a role in the conflict. The problem with such a brutal civil war is that when peace was declared, many people who had been ethnically cleansed had no place to go “home to,” as “the other” generally had taken over their home or apartment and weren’t willing to give it back. Also, consider the fact that after a civil war, life is supposed to go on as normal, but for many after the conflicts ended, those “others,” those former neighbors (who killed your family, or raped your sister, or held you captive in camps) are still living in your community. The end results of a civil war can take years to recover from emotionally and psychologically.

Most distressing is the fact that there is a whole generation of under 25 year olds who lived through the conflicts who need to be aware that religion does not need

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6For personal accounts of the war, see, for example, Semezdin Mehmedinovic, Sarajevo Blues (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1998); see also Savo Heleta, Not My Turn to Die: Memoirs of a Broken Childhood in Bosnia (NY, NY: AMACON, 2008); see also Maass, Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War.
to separate the population and that Bosnians or Kosovars have a shared history, with its foreign empires, trade routes, and migration that make the Balkan peninsula a very different and unique place than the other Muslim and Orthodox lands categorized by Huntington.

**Lessons Learned**

In this important paradigm shift for the Balkans, the Abrahamic religions need to cooperate. They need globalization of simple ethical standards: principles of humanity and reciprocity, brought about by public awareness.

There are many ways government and religion can work together for the good of the population and in the case of Bosnia, there is not necessarily one path. The Dayton Accords, while initially bringing peace, are now separating the population along ethnic lines and this is causing strife. The Dayton Accords pit the Serbs against the Muslims and Croats, and in the words of Archbishop Puljic, “unjust structures kindle an individual’s unrest”
and also labels it “structural destruction or destructive structure.”\textsuperscript{7} Peter Janke notes:

\begin{quote}
... aspirations towards ethnic nationhood run counter to today’s global economy, ignore regional moves towards the mobility of labor and will inevitably be frustrated by the inextricable overlapping and intertwining of populations. Due to history and past policies heterogeneity within states is inevitable, but avoidance of ethnic conflict presupposes acceptance of ethnic diversity by a central government strong enough to legislate common laws and to generate a broad-based respect. It is this framework that needs to be rebuilt democratically—a task with little chance of success.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

Since the Dayton Accords are not structurally working at this point, Bosnia has to form its own political system considering its history, culture of society, markets, and level of globalization. The State legitimizing violence and capitalism is problematic and there is a need for transparency. In the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, what is also needed is a sense of the power of spirituality from the religious leaders to mobilize people for a common cause within the framework of faith.

\textsuperscript{7} His Eminence Vinko Carindal Puljic, "Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 3.

\textsuperscript{8} Peter Janke, ed. Ethnic and Religious Conflicts: Europe and Asia (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth, 1994), ix-x.
The amount of international attention that the Balkan conflict received during the war is striking. During the years 1991 – 1999, political scientist David Gibbs notes that there were 1,020 front-page New York Times articles alone on the conflict.\(^9\)

The importance of the Tribunal Court at The Hague, which seeks justice for the war crimes, cannot be underscored enough. When one looks at the World News Connection for current news on Bosnia, or at the docket of the International Tribunal Court at The Hague, there is article after article about case after case where the people of Bosnia want acknowledgment and justice from the Serbs for various massacres and war crimes. The Serbs, of course, categorically deny that any ethnic cleansing or genocide occurred, especially in the case of Srebrenica where 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed, which had been under the protection of the United Nations. A recent resolution passed by Serbia’s Parliament was noted in a New York Times article of March 31, 2010:

The resolution expressed sympathy to the victims and apologized for not doing enough to prevent

the massacre, but it also stopped short of calling the killings genocide. The ruling coalition of pro-Western Democrats and Socialists hopes to win favor with the European Union and Western investors with the measure, which was adopted after a debate that lasted nearly 13 hours and was broadcast on live television.\(^{10}\)

The Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims all have a shared history under the Ottoman Empire as well as a European identity. However, one cannot forget that when we’re talking about interactions between Muslims and Christians, we’re talking about a shared repertoire of another sort: one divinity, creator, rules for humans, prophets, and scriptures. One of the core concepts in the repertoire should be that that religion can be distinguished from politics. The great religions are repertoires of symbols, and pluralism is simply multiple truths about the truth.

Huntington addresses the question of getting along in his own way, first noting that the ethnic conflicts and fault line wars had not been evenly distributed. Huntington writes:

In Bosnia, Muslims have fought a bloody and disastrous war with Orthodox Serbs and have engaged in other violence with Catholic Croatsians. In Kosovo, Albanian Muslims unhappily suffer Serbian rule and maintain their own underground parallel government, with high expectations of the probability of violence between the two groups.\textsuperscript{11}

Dialogue between Muslims and Christians should take place at many levels, from governmental to grass-roots, as a means of understanding one’s own faith better as one sees oneself in the mirror of ‘the critical eyes of the other’.\textsuperscript{12} The need of inter-religious dialogue is increasingly important, as evidenced by numerous recently published books on the topic, and will be one of the best means to reach commonality and peace in the twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{13} In the words of Tariq Ramadan, what is needed is “the emergence of a new ‘We.’”\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, 255.

\textsuperscript{12} Kate Zebri, Muslims and Christians Face to Face (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 1997), 36–37.

\textsuperscript{13} For examples of good sources of dialogue, see Rebecca Kratz Mays, ed. Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots (Philadelphia, PA: Ecumenical Press, 2008); see also J. Dudley Woodberry and Robin Basselin, ed. Resources for Peacemaking in Muslim-Christian Relations: Contributions from the Conflict Transformation Project (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2006); see also John Hick, God Has Many Names (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982); see also Catherine
A Common Word as a Way Forward

The Common Word initiative is an outcome of the letter to the leaders of Christian churches and communities throughout the world signed by 138 Muslim leaders and scholars in October 2007. This letter addressed the need for Muslims and Christians to reach a peace and understanding with each other based on two common theological revelations: to love God and to love one’s neighbor. In the fourth conference on the Common Word initiative at Georgetown University October 7-8, 2009, many religious leaders and scholars, including His Eminence Sheikh Mustafa Efendi Ceric, gathered for panel discussions. The gist of one of the panel discussions in particular—Panel 2—Religion, Violence and Peace-Building—was if religion has been part of the problem, it stands to reason that it must be a part of the solution. How do we better understand religion and violence, and religion and peace building? There is clearly the need for dedicated scholars and activist protagonists to


advocate for peace against violence showing the positive role of religion, especially in the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo.

All religions are interdependent and need to recognize the reality of others. The context for dialogue should be love of god and love of neighbor, which complement each other. The fundamental universal values of love, compassion, tolerance and forgiving need to be the pillars of dialogue. Through education, precedence to common points should be given and encourage the children to get to know and support the “other” with compassion, dialogue and co-operation, and encourage them to develop their spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values.

Religious leaders need to especially focus on mobilizing resources to educate the under-25 population, the population of the future. The “generative power of personal narratives in identity-formation” or storytelling and the process of writing their own stories could help young people realize that their messages would all be different and yet the same, and that the commandment to take care of each other is in all religions is so important that it will be the means for survival as a
There is the dangerous risk of those advocating religious totalitarianism will influence and convince the youth that their hatred and various exploits will “return their community to a fictional past when the community was pure, followed God’s path, and received God’s glory without complication.”\textsuperscript{16} The creation of concrete joint projects in inter-faith relations in communities would help people realize the importance of peace and justice, especially for the youth. Finally, networking can help deliver a message, and the establishment of new networks not currently in place can make the message fresh.

Religion is what defines everyone’s philosophy. In order to succeed, we need a good symbiosis in which people are living together in society in a way that is based on respect, with education the key element in understanding. In Bosnia, if the Serbs converted to Islam or vice versa, would the problems go away? Education and tolerance are essential but what is needed more is the understanding of the other religions themselves.

\textsuperscript{15} Eboo Patel et al., "Storytelling as a Key Methodology for Interfaith Youth Work," 35-36.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 39.
There are two current perceptions of Muslims and Christians in many societies which need to be removed: the perception of all Muslims today as terrorists or violent people who don’t know how to dialogue with others; while on the other hand, Christians are identified with Western world and are perceived as those who want to slay the others in the land.

Thus the goal and task of the Common Word is to understand for the future of our children. This can be accomplished only by a thorough education and the removal of false perceptions. Muslims and Christians (and Jews) are similar and have to learn to live with their similarities—morality, recognizing the same figures Adam, Noah, Eve, Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad, and the fact that the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur’an all illustrate the covenant with God. The basic tenets of “don’t shoot, don’t kill, don’t hate, and be good to your neighbor” need to be reiterated in the war torn countries that have lost sight of their humanity and religion.

In social spaces and in sacred spaces there can be a symbiosis of elements brought together. We need to rehearse and focus on the positive. In the cases of
Bosnia and Kosovo, the history is a mixed and ambiguous past, where the relationship with religion and violence has led to war, but religion has also at times set limits. Human nature does not change unless one reacts against violence. The present is complicated as well, with increasing global integration and increasing fragmentation which all have their own logic but no ethics. As His Excellency Sheikh Ali Gomaa noted at the panel discussion at the Georgetown University Common Word Conference:

Politics is too important to be left to politicians, while religion is too sacred to be left to the religious, and the issue of war and peace is too dangerous to be left to generals. The importance of symbiosis and general moral humanity cannot be stressed enough.  

Thus, the best resources will be needed to confront a complicated present and a dismal past. There is the need to develop a common moral vision to give moral direction and reason to act as a leavening force. One could say that what is needed is a marriage of righteousness with mercy. In the words of Seyyid Hossein Nasr:

Surely we, who respect and love Christ as you do, can meet and come together with you under

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the banner of what he has stated to be the two supreme commandments: to love God and to love the neighbor. We can also seek to extend, often in harmony with each other, the border of the definition of neighbor to include not only you and us but the whole of humanity, and even beyond that the rest of God’s creation.  

Finally, His Eminence Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia, at the audience of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on November 6, 2008, so aptly summarized the nature of the situation, not only in Bosnia and Kosovo, but in the world today:

Ours is a time of grave sins, such as: wealth without effort; pleasure without conscience; education without morality; business without ethics; politics without principles; science without responsibility; faith without sacrifice; and religion without compassion. But our hopes are many. Ours is a time of great opportunities in the sense that the rich nations must share their wealth with the poor nations; that men of full stomachs must understand the grief of hungry people; that poor children must share the joy of education and success in society with their peers; that refugees must return to their homes and share the blessing of safety and freedom with the rest of the world without racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

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Conclusion

In the case of Bosnia and Kosovo and the Muslim-Christian dynamic, it is through radical reform by education that the oneness of humanity will be accepted. It will take religious leaders, political leaders, and role models of all sorts to remind some of the people what they have forgotten: that despite superficial differences or perceived clashes of ethnicity or religion, every man wishes for peace, happiness, and fundamental human values. The question moving forward for Bosnia and Kosovo will be how to restructure the Dayton Accords to better accommodate the values, needs, and desires of the peoples, without international intervention and without aggressive nationalism escalating between the three religions.
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